

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
Military Order of the Purple Heart
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Pittsburgh, PA 15206



MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART
CHAPTER 455

Winter Issue 2009

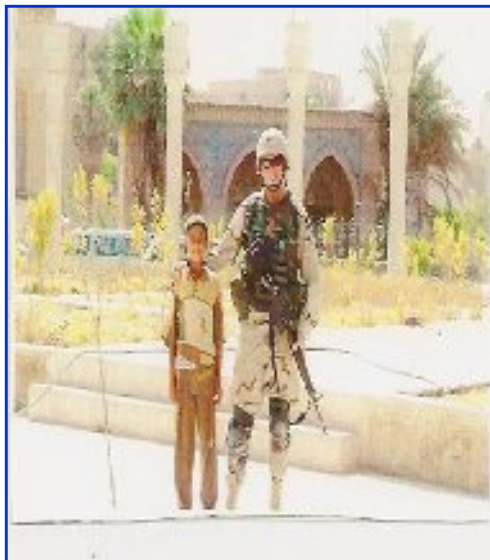
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PURPLE HEART NEWSLETTER

EDITOR – JAMES LANG
COMMANDER – JOSEPH SERENKA

ASST. EDITOR – DAN WILHELM
CHIEF OF STAFF - HARRY CLARK

S/Sgt. James Kephart “In the Circle” in Bagdad where Saddam’s Statue was torn down with Iraqi civilian June 28, 2004



S/Sgt. James Kephart Gets Printer Donated
To Chapter 455

When I got the newsletter and I read a piece about it might be coming to an end, because we had no money to purchase a new printer. I thought that it's a shame an organization solely for combat wounded veterans and a good moral booster as the newsletter would end because of funding or lack of I should say. I told myself no way! I will get the chapter a new printer somehow or someday I would make it happen. This would be my mission to make this happen.

I told some people at my work about the printer and I was shocked at how many people wanted to help and donate money for a new printer. With in a month we collected more than enough money for a printer and as much ink and supplies to get the newsletter going again.

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WOMAN GAINS SILVER STAR IN AFGHANISTAN



KHOST, Afghanistan—Pfc. Monica Brown cracked open the door of her Humvee outside a remote village in eastern Afghanistan to the soft pop of bullets shot by the Taliban fighters. But instead of taking cover, the 18 year old medic grabbed her bag and ran through gunfire toward fellow soldiers in a crippled and burning vehicle.

Vice President Cheney pinned Brown, of Lake Jackson Texas, with a Silver Star in March for repeatedly risking her life on April 25, 2007, to shield and treat her wounded comrades, displaying bravery and grit. She is the second woman since World War II to receive the nation's third-highest combat medal.

Within a few days of her heroic acts, however, the Army pulled Brown out of the remote camp in Paktika province where she was serving with a cavalry unit because, her platoon commander barred her from such missions.

“We weren't supposed to take her out” on missions “but we had to because there was no other medic,” said Lt. Martin Robbins, a platoon leader with Char-
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lie Troop , 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, whose men Brown saved. “By regulations you're not supposed to,” he said, but Brown “was one of the guys, mixing it up, clearing rooms, doing everything that anybody else was doing.”

In Afghanistan as well as Iraq, female soldiers are often tasked to work in all-male combat units not only for their skills but also for the culturally sensitive role of providing medical treatment for local women, as well as searching them and otherwise interacting with them. Such war-zone pragmatism is at odds with Army rules intended to bar women from units that engage in direct combat or collocate with combat forces.

Military personnel experts say that as a result, the 1992 rules are vague, ill defined, and based on an outmoded concept of wars with clear front lines that rarely exist in today's counterinsurgencies.

“The current policy is not actionable,” concluded a Rand Corp study last year on the Army's assignment of women. ‘Crafted for a linear battlefield,’ the policy does not conform to the nature of warfare today and uses concepts such as “forward and well forward [that] were generally acknowledged to be almost meaningless in the Iraq theater,” it said.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, noncombat units in which women serve face many of the same threats that all-male combat arms units do and are performing well, commanders say. “Army personnel were consistent in their perception that a strict adherence to the Army policy would have negative implications” and that the policy should be revised or revoked, the Rand study said.

Brown never imagined she would be a soldier, let lone one decorated for gallantry in combat. Growing up in central Texas, she had bounced around to nine schools, moving frequently with her brothers and mother, a nurse, before going to live with her grandmother Katy at age 15.

Despite the itinerant life, Brown excelled academically. She graduated from high school
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**WOMAN GAINS SILVER STAR
IN AFGHANISTAN**
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**TOPPS SALUTES THE TROOPS
WITH TRADING CARDS**

a year and a half early-a day after turning 17. She planned to enroll in college, but that changed when her brother Justin, who was a year older an like a twin, was drawn to the Army.

Justin had long dreamed of becoming an infantryman, and on day they stopped by the recruiting office together, Brown said in an interview in Khost. On impulse, she offered to join with him. Grinning, they announced the decision to their grandmother, who said she “didn’t feel it was the right time with the war on.”

But Brown persuaded her grandmother to allow her to join with her brother before she turned 18. Justin “was older, but she was always the caretaker, always the boss,” Katy Brown said.



MUSIC THERAPY PROGRAM

Led By: Dan Wilhelm with the Ladies Auxiliary and volunteers. Halloween & Christmas.



This year’s Topps N. F. L. card set includes two Tomlinsons: LaDainian, a running back with the San Diego Chargers; and Wyatt, a staff sergeant based at the United States Army Recruiting Battalion in Kansas City, Mo.

“It’s an unbelievable thrill,” said Wyatt, a Kansas City native who grew up rooting for the Chiefs. “Some of the guys here have been teasing me about it. They’re now calling me Rookie card.”

Sergeant Tomlinson, 29, is one of 11 Armed Forces Fans of the Game nominated by their home teams. Their cards are among the 440 that make up the Topps set. Randomly placed in packs of 10, the armed forces cards have become collector’s items.

“We wanted to pay tribute to our soldiers in some fashion,” said Clay Luraschi, the director of product development for Topps. “We went
(continued on page 8)

VA Plans Clinic In Cranberry

The Veterans Administration has approved plans to open an outpatient clinic in Cranberry.

One of 31 new clinics to be opened for veterans in 16 states, the Cranberry clinic is scheduled to begin operations in 2009. The VA has not yet decided on a location.

“It will be a midsized clinic, and we’re anticipating that 3,000 veterans will be served there from the Cranberry area and close proximity,” said Paula McCarl, responsible for voluntary services and public affairs for VA Butler Healthcare.

She said primary care and probably behavioral health services will be provided at the clinic.

A site for the clinic has not been determined.

Community-based outpatient clinics already exist in Monaca, Uniontown, Washington, Kittanning, New Castle and Greensburg.

ONE CHAPTER HELPING ANOTHER

It’s another year and Chapter 9 has donated money to help Chapter 455 with our many projects. We would like to thank John Gochnour, Jerry Turkowski, and Commander Anthony Gower and the members of Chapter 9.

**HIGHLAND DRIVE VA
NOW HAS VALET PARKING**

When you first come into the parking lot by building 1 you have to go half way through the lot and you will see a booth. The booth is closer to building 2. It is much easier to go there first instead of looking all over the lots for a space. Anytime after 8:00 a.m. it’s almost impossible to find a space.

DONATIONS FOR PLAQUES

We are asking our members if they would be interested in donating money for the Military Order of the Purple Heart Memorial Plaques which is listed in the Purple Heart Magazine for soldiers killed in action, and wounded in action, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan. We also honor veterans from other wars. The price of the plaques is \$37.50 and so far at our meetings we have been able to collect enough money to cover a few plaques we have already bought. As you know every day another soldier is killed or wounded and we would like to honor their families with a plaque. The few plaques we have given have been greatly appreciated.

CHAPTER 455 PHONE NUMBERS

**COMMANDER – JOE SERENKA
OFFICE – 412-954-5165
FAX – 412-954-5171
E-MAIL – MOPH455@YAHOO.COM
WEBSITE– www.chapter455.org**

CHAPTER 455 MEETINGS

Our meetings are held the last Wednesday of the month at the VA Hospital at Highland Drive at 10:00 am sharp. Our office is in building one, 6th floor, room 6023W. Recently we have been having our meetings on the 2nd floor in room 2010W in building one because we have more room. After the meeting a lunch will be provided. If you need more information please call at 412-954-5165 and ask for Jim or Dan.

**LINCOLN’ BIRTHDAY
February 12, 2009**

**PRESIDENTS DAY
February 16, 2009**

**WASHINGTON’S BIRTHDAY
February 22, 2009**

I want to thank all our members who donated money toward the plaque fund and I want to give a special thanks to Conrad Black, John Bowman, Robert Bucholtz, Dom Cersosimo, Peter Cerussi Nick Combitchi, Raymond Fritz, Lou Gambogi, John Gochnour, Scott Havelka, Joe Kenney, Wayne Lamping, Harry McCracken Joe Mlinac, James Pella, Joe Rukat, Joe Serenka, Sid Singer, Ed Vogel, John Wright, DAV Chapter 8, Italian War Vets, Jewish War Vets, Uhlman –Horne VFW Post 456.

BOOSTER'S - JAN. 1, 2009 TO DEC. 31, 2009

**MIKE & VERONICA BLAZEVIK
JOHN & CATHERINE COLLINS
WAYNE DONALDSON
HOWARD & EDNA EICHNER
CHARLES & IRENE HALL
WILLIAM & LINDA HYSLOP
ROBERT & GRACE MATASICH
DAN & BEVERLY WILHELM**

SPECIAL BOOSTER'S

**JOHN & CAROLYN ABRAM
EDWARD & SUSAN BARKER
LT. & MRS. GEORGE BIGELOW
CONRAD BLACK & MARILYN OBRIEN
ROBERT & FLORENCE BUCHOLTZ
VANCE & MARGARET CARTER
DOMINIC & BETTY CERSOSIMO
PETER CERUSSI
ANDREW & DOROTY CHEROK
HARRY CLARK
JAMES & RENAE COSTABILE
MICHAEL & MICHELE CUMMINGS
JOHN & LINDA DENK
RAY & PEARL FRITZ
LOU & GLORIA GAMBOGI
JOHN & DONNA GOCHNOUR
SCOTT & MAUREEN HAVELKA
NICOLE & SHANNON HAVELKA
EMIL HOSKO
IRA C. HOUCK JR.
JOHN & DOROTHY HRIBAR
GEORGE HUMMER
LENNY KASUBICK
JOE & LOIS KENNEY
BROCK KEPHART
JAMES & JULEEN KEPHART
DENNIS & MARSHA KING
FRANK & ANNE KRAVETZ
LARRY KUSHNER
WAYNE & KAREN LAMPING
LOU & DOLLY LaCIVITA
JIM & BETSY LANG
MICHAEL LASKOWSKI JR.**

**MASSARO CORPORATION
STEVE MASSARO
JOE MLINAC & DONNA MADEJA
OLIVER McCLELLAND
COL. ALEX & MOLLY McClINCHIE
HARRY McCracken
DARRYL MERRISON
JAMES PELLA & MICHELE HANSON
MICHAEL & MICHELE RATWAY
ERNE & NANCY RIVERS
NICK & ROSE RECH
STANLEY & MARY ROZANSKI
CHESTER & M. JANE SATTIAUX
JOE & ANNA MAE SERENKA
LINDA RICKETTS
JOE & KATHRYN RUKAT
SID & BARBARA SINGER
MARK & NANCY SUTTON
LARRY & MARY UPLINGER
ROBERT & RUTH VANCE
NICHOLAS VIGLIONE
ED & JOAN VOGEL
ED & CHERYL WERLE
JOHN & PATTY WRIGHT**

The environmentalists received this picture as an explanation for why so many ships were hitting whales. (Terry Bradshaw at the helm.)



**DEPARTMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA
MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART**

These two pages will be dedicated to the Department of Pennsylvania M. O. P. H. It will include news and current events going on in the state.

Please send your comments and your suggestions to Harry Clark at 786 Hartley Rd., Bedford, PA 15522.

The Department MOPH website is up and running and can be brought up on your computer by entering the following:

Go to Yahoo www.purpleheartpa.org

RECRUITMENT INCENTIVE PROGRAM

The 2008 Department Convention approved a Recruitment Incentive Program. The Chapter that recruits the most new members in excess of 15 by May 31, 2009 will receive \$500. Recruitment must be done by Chapter members only and not the National Service Officers. Contact Harry Clark for more information. (address above)

**NO PURPLE HEARTS
FOR PTSD**

The Purple Heart will not be awarded to service members suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, the Pentagon confirmed Monday.

“It’s not a qualifying Purple Heart wound,” said Defense Department spokeswoman Eileen Lainez, although she added that “advancements in medical science may support future re-evaluation.”

The decision, reached Nov. 3 but not made public until now, followed months of evaluation by military and outside officials. That evaluation was spurred when Defense Secretary Robert Gates was asked at a May press conference whether he would support awarding the Purple Heart to PTSD sufferers.

Gates said the idea was “clearly something that needs to be looked at.” His undersecretary for personnel and readiness, David S.C. Chu, decided against making such awards after conferring with the Pentagon’s Awards Advisory Group, which includes “awards experts” from the Office of the Sec-

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retary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the military services, the Institute of Heraldry and the Center for Military History, according to Lainez. Gates concurred with that decision, Lainez said.

The Purple Heart “recognizes those individuals wounded to a degree that requires treatment by a medical officer, in action with the enemy or as the result of enemy action where the intended effect of a specific enemy action is to kill or injure the service member,” Lainez said.

PTSD “is not a wound intentionally caused by the enemy from an outside force or agent, but is a secondary effect caused by witnessing or experiencing a traumatic event,” she said.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can develop “after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened.”

The affliction is one of several reported in high numbers among veterans returning from duty in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, both marked by long tours and high exposure to combat trauma.

Lainez listed several additional factors in the Pentagon’s decision:

The requirements that a qualifying Purple Heart wound be caused by “an outside force or agent” provides a fairly objective assessment standard that minimizes disparate treatment between service members. Several members could witness the same traumatic event, for instance, but only those who suffer from PTSD would receive a Purple Heart.

Current medical knowledge and technologies do not establish PTSD as objectively and routinely as would be required for this award at this time.

Historically, the Purple Heart has never been awarded for mental disorders or psychological conditions resulting from witnessing or experiencing traumatic combat events—for example, combat stress reaction, shell-shock, combat stress fatigue, acute stress disorder, or PTSD.

Lainez stressed that the Pentagon is working hard to encourage service members and their families to seek care for PTSD.

Service Director— Harry Clark

REQUEST FOR SUPPORT IN AIDING HOMELESS VETERANS

American Legion members and others in Pennsylvania and across the Country with an interest in aiding Homeless veterans are encouraged to participate in an on-line project being conducted by the "Home and Garden TV" organization during the coming months of Jan. and Feb.

Locally in Philadelphia, the American Legion Housing for Homeless Veterans Corporation (HHVC) has partnered with the group "Rebuilding Together Philadelphia" (RTP), <http://rebuildingphilly.org/> in conjunction with the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) to provide a proposal and identify recommendations for physical plant improvements to the local homeless veterans facility in Philadelphia's Frankford section operated by HHVC.

<http://www.hgtv.com/about-us/change-the-world-philadelphia/index.html>

With the acceptance of the proposal, Philadelphia has been included with eight (8) other nominated cities for facility improvement grants totaling \$115,000. \$40,000 will be awarded to the seven (7) other nominated cities based on the merits of their proposals. Among the nominees, there will be no losers and the winners will be the veterans who are residing in the facilities identified in need of support.

Lets get everyone on-board by going on-line beginning New Year's Day.

Service Director
Harry Clark

SOME OF THE HISTORY OF THE PURPLE HEART

The Military Order of the Purple Heart of the USA, Inc. was founded on Nov. 8, 1932 and received its Congressional Charter on Aug. 26, 1958, Public Law 85-761, 85th Congress.

The MOPH Service Foundation was established on Sept. 12, 1957. The primary purpose of the foundation is to raise funds, primarily, for the MOPH of the USA, Inc's veterans programs of service, welfare rehabilitation, education and information.

(continued)

On Feb. 10, 1971, an agreement was reached with the Service Foundation and the Department of PA whereas our department would receive fifty percent of the net from Thrift/Recycling stores located in Philadelphia in order to conduct a service program. Service offices are located in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia supervised by the Department Service Director who represents the MOPH in Southwest PA. These three individuals recovered 20+million dollars in benefits for our veterans and families during the past fiscal year.

Limitations on these funds preclude the expenditure of funds outside the Commonwealth of PA and two years of funds must be on hand at all times. Grant money given the Chapters must be expended during the fiscal year or receipt and Chapter General/Administrative funds must not exceed two years in dollar amounts.

During the past fiscal year the net income for the MOPH foundation derived from PA was: thrift stores \$436,952.43 and \$3,167,448.16 from the car program. Our Department receives 50% of the net from thrift stores but no funds from the car program.

Our Department programs are conducted by 20 Chapters and 14 LAMOPH units at 10 VA hospitals, 40 VA community based outpatient clinics, 6 State Veterans Homes and numerous nursing/personal care homes.

Walk the wards at any of the 10 VA Hospitals, 40 community based outpatient clinics and 6 State Veterans Homes throughout our Commonwealth and visit the brave men and women who served those agonizing years during America's wars, then you will know why their battles are not yet over. Nothing hurts like being forgotten yet nothing helps like being remembered . When Benjamin Franklin wrote the words "Time Cures All" he had never seen what a mortar shell or a machine gun does to a person's body, or what years in a POW camp does to their mind.

Our veterans stood by America when the country needed them. We, as a nation, must not let them down when they need our help now.

Service Director
Harry Clark

**S/Sgt. James Kephart Gets Printer Donated
To Chapter 455
(continued from page 1)**

I would like to thank the employees at Massaro Corporation who raised \$750.00, Steve Massaro who donated \$250.00, and Lenny Kasubick from Indiana University of Pennsylvania who donated \$100.00.

I would like to add all of these as special boosters in the newsletter and a big thank you for their generosity. I could not have achieved this goal without them. I thought I am an Iraq wounded veteran and I realize that the older veterans who made this country great their numbers are decreasing by the day. In order to keep this chapter going and the organization going, it was my time to step up to the plate. I just want the older veterans to know that all that they worked hard for would not be lost or forgotten but rather continued on for the future.

I just wish I could do more to help our veterans out. This is my first step to help our Chapter 455 and it will not be the last. I look forward to the day I could get a chance to meet all the members and thank you all for your service and the time that you all volunteer is appreciated.

Thanks again,
James Kephart

**TOPPS SALUTES THE TROOPS
WITH TRADING CARDS
(continued from page 3)**

to the N. F. L. and they were totally on board with it, and immediately began asking teams began asking teams to nominate soldiers from their respective cities.”

The other Topps trading card troops are Capt. John C. Cochrane Jr. of the Navy (nominated by the Jets); Col. Marc Hendler, New York Army National Guard (Giants); Lance Cpl. James A. Lenihan, Marine Corps Reserve (Cincinnati); Specialist Mark M. Middlebrook, Army (Jacksonville); Maj. Sean Ryan, Army (Denver); Sgt. Philip LaBonte, Michigan Army National
(continued)

Guard (Detroit); Cpl. Ryan M. Lenser, Marines (Green Bay); Senior Airman Gabriel Bird, Louisiana Air National Guard (New Orleans); Sgt. Christopher Ames, Marines (Arizona); and Sgt. Traci Williams, Army Reserve (Seattle).

Williams is the only women in the group and the first Topps has featured on a professional football card.

UPDATE ON NEWSLETTER

We now have a new printer thanks to Jim Kephart, Massaro Corp. employees, Steven Massaro, and Lenny Kasubick they also donated ink, cash, and some stamps, which will save us the cost of printing the newsletter. I want to give a special thanks to all of them. I also want to thank my wife Betsy and my brothers wife Donna Lang for setting the printer up and all the hours they spent helping print the newsletter.

We still need donations for the 2009 newsletter which will take us through the year 2009. The donations stay the same at \$6.00 which covers postage, ink, labels, seals, and misc. You will be listed as a special booster if you donate \$10.00 or more.

I am also asking that if anyone would like to place an ad in the newsletter it will cost \$25.00.

In the upcoming newsletter I would like to put pictures and stories on how our members got their Purple Hearts, so please send in your information.

You will now be able to get the newsletter on the internet and other information about Chapter 455 at www.chapter455.org.

If I forgot to put your name on the booster list or if you need more information please let me know. I will be at the office at 8:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. on Mon. & Wed. during the month.

ph: 412-954-5165

Thank you,
Jim Lang
Editor

