



# DRAGON'S BREATH

*Dahran Memorial Division Newsletter*

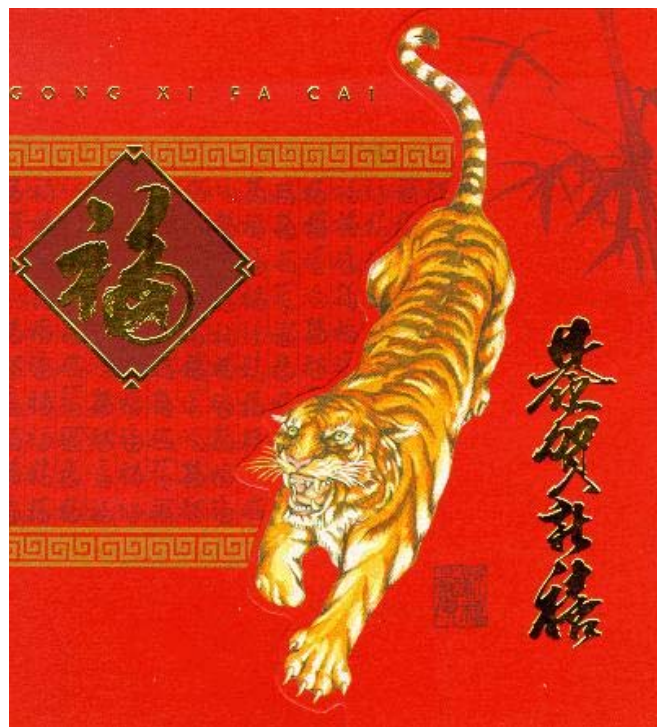
January 2010

No. 27

Meeting Announcement

## Chinese New Year

2010: The Year of the Tiger



**100 SR**

**January 28, 2010**

**Venue at time of reservation • 878-1074**

## China Post 1 Officers and Board

	2009 (Outgoing)
<i>Commander</i>	<b>Daniel S. Boothby</b>
<i>1st Vice Commander</i>	<b>Cory Frances</b>
<i>Vice Commander - Membership</i>	<b>Anthony Rios</b>
<i>Vice Commander - Fundraising</i>	<b>Hans J. Stockenberger</b>
<i>Vice Commander - Social</i>	<i>Vacant</i>
<i>Treasurer</i>	<b>Tom Sedberry</b>
<i>Adjutant</i>	<b>C. DiAnne Boothby</b>
<i>Chaplain</i>	<b>Dwain Camp</b>
<i>Sergeant-at-Arms</i>	<b>Christopher Rudie</b>
<i>Newsletter/Historian</i>	<b>David W. Tschanz</b>

## Become a Member of China Post 1

*Becoming a Member of the China Post 1 Dhahran Memorial Division*



**There are three types of membership:**



### **Regular Member**

To become a regular member you must have served in the Armed Forces of the United States. Optionally you can be a US citizen who served with Allied Armed Forces during any period of conflict to which the United States was a party. Conscientious Objectors and others who refuse military discipline or do other nonqualified service are not eligible.

### **Sons of the American Legion**

Membership in this group is open to a sibling, child or grandchild of a veteran that was on active duty during any of our periods of conflict

### **Friends of China Post 1**

The "Friends of the Dhahran Memorial Division – China Post 1" is a social membership open to anyone who does not qualify in the above categories. Membership allows you admission to our gatherings as well a subscription to our newsletter and a place on our mailing list.

For additional information, as well as a membership form, please contact Randle Rushing, Vice Commander – Membership

## Commander's Corner



Hi All,

Here it is the end of 2009, beginning of 2010, and the end of my 3<sup>rd</sup> year as Commander. This will be my last chance to speak to you all from this Commander's Corner.

I would like to start by congratulating the 2010 Executive Board for being willing to serve and for being elected by the membership to do so. It is a privilege and honor to be part of the Board and to serve our Active Duty, Veterans, their families as well as our Patriotic American Community here in Dhahran.

I wish the new Commander; Cory Frances, well, and offer him my support and best wishes. I am not being replaced by a coup; I stepped down to allow fresh ideas and fresh energy to step up to the role.

I also would like to thank those that have been so supportive of me over the past years. I thank the Exec Board members, those that filled appointed positions and all the friends, family members and supporters of CP1 that have allowed us to be so successful in our Patriotic Observances and charitable fund raising. A special thanks to all the Marines stationed at Dhahran over the past three years for

your support, protection and sponsoring of events. Thanks to the current and Past CG's and Consulate personnel that have been supportive of CP1.

I encourage all of you to give Cory and his leadership team the same support and enthusiasm that you have given me. I know that Cory will be looking to continue hosting some of our fun nights as well as our important Patriotic Observances. Please watch your calendars as notices go out and plan to attend throughout 2010. The first event I encourage you to attend is on Jan 28th and will be a catered dinner and will include the introduction and installation of your new Commander and Leadership Team. It would be a great night to come and meet the new team. It would also be a great time to stop by and renew your membership for 2010!

I encourage you to help our membership to grow by doing three things;

- Pay your 2010 annual membership fee of 150 SR.
- Invite friends that support what CP1 DMD stands for to come attend and join.
- Attend the dinners and functions, to have a good time, support continued patriotism and raise funds for charities supporting the troops.

My Thanks and Best Wishes to you All,

DAN



## The American Legion

GENERALS WARD & CHENNAULT & LT HELSETH  
CHINA POST 1

### Soldiers Of FORTUNE

Dear Potential China Post 1 Member:

Enclosed is the CP1 application form for you to complete. It is a 2-sided form. Please complete both sides. A copy of your DD-214 must be submitted with the application. If you do not have ready access to your DD-214, please submit it as soon as possible. A copy of your discharge certificate will be accepted as temporary documentation for application into China Post 1 but a copy of your DD-214 needs to be submitted when you have access to it. We normally give a grace period of 1 year to submit the DD-214.

#### Dues

There is an annual dues assessment of \$40 paid directly to the National China Post 1 Headquarters in Houston, Texas. The initial check is sent with the application from the Dhahran Memorial Division Office. There is also a SR150 dues payable annually to support the local Dhahran Memorial Division – China Post 1 chapter.

Sincerely,

Tony Rios  
Vice-Commander – Membership

**(Contact Tony for a copy of the CP1 Application form)**

## The Reluctant Vassal

### *How to Lose a Kingdom Without Really Trying*

*David W. Tschanz*

The Prince of Antioch was dead.

Raymond of Poitiers had refused to abandon his army when the battle of the Fountain of Murad had turned against him. The Muslim general, Nur ed-Din, took advantage of the headless state of the Crusader domain and pushed as far as Antioch, only abandoning its siege on the approach of the armies of the King of Jerusalem, Baldwin III.

The government of Antioch was thrust into the hands of Raymond's young widow, Constance, who acted as regent for her infant son, Bohemond II. Baldwin had no intention of wasting his time or forces in protecting territories that were not, properly speaking, a part of his kingdom. Hence he was anxious to marry off Constance to some powerful baron.

Constance, on the other hand, was not in a hurry to remarry. A pretty young widow she had been married, while still a child, to a middle aged man. Now she rejected the succession of suitors the king proposed to her and decided that she would marry for love.

After several weeks of searching she made her choice. Impatient, Baldwin gave his consent as soon as heard the Princess had selected a husband without even inquiring as to who the man was. He should have. The selection would eventually antagonize Constantinople, inflame all of Islam and set loose a vengeful Saladin -- bringing about the destruction of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the worst military disaster of the Crusader era.



#### **A Fateful Choice**

Constance's choice was an utterly obscure knight, Reynald des Chatillon. The penniless younger son of an Angevin family of the minor nobility, he had only recently arrived in Antioch with plans to enter the service of some wealthy baron. A warrior of unbridled ferocity, he possessed nothing but youth, courage and good looks.



Reynald was also crude, thickheaded and stubborn. Deaf to considerations of prudence, principle or expediency he would be a most reluctant vassal. And he was quick to take offense.

Hearing that Aimery of Limoges, the Patriarch of Antioch, had made several snide remarks about his background, he seized the prelate. Not content with flinging him into prison Reynald had Aimery flogged until he bled and then exposed on a tower in full sunlight, smeared with honey to attract wasps and flies. Baldwin demanded Reynald release the Patriarch and restore him to power. Aimery was set free, but fled Antioch, taking refuge in Jerusalem.

In 1156 Reynald launched an expedition against Cyprus, a Byzantine possession, while the Emperor

Manuel Comnenus was engaged in battle along the Danube. Quickly overcoming its defenses, Reynald treated the Cypriots to an example of his charity. The entire island was ravaged. Towns were burned, churches sacked, women rape, monks and nuns mutilated and men who tried to defend themselves slain without mercy. Cyprus' devastation was so complete that it has never recovered from his visitation. Reynald returned to Antioch with enough booty to enrich the city for decades -- then squandered it all away in a month.

A year later Manuel marched on Antioch, intent on avenging Cyprus. Terrified the heretofore unrepentant Reynald begged for mercy. Appearing as a supplicant, barefoot and bare armed he prostrated himself in the dust at Manuel's feet. At the urging of his Patriarch, Manuel forgave the Prince.

Reynald then contented himself with plundering the countryside outside his borders and basically making life miserable for the peasants under Nur ed-Din's suzerainty. A year after his humiliating conference with Manuel, the Prince of Antioch was taken prisoner by Nur ed-Din. Reynald had been caught rustling cattle, the rightful owners of which were Christians. He was taken to Aleppo and tossed in prison where Baldwin nor Constance made a single move to free him.



Reynald de Chatillon begs Emperor Manuel I Comnenus' forgiveness

### **The Lord of Kerak**

In 1177 Humphrey of Toron, the Lord of Kerak died. Kerak was the capital of Oultre Jordain, the area east of the Jordan River. The imposing, formidable castle dominated the main north-south road, the King's Highway (the old Via Trajani) connecting Jerusalem to Aqaba as well as the principal pilgrimage and trade routes between Egypt, Damascus and the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Baldwin IV placed considerable pressure on Humphrey's widow, Etienne (Stephanie) de Milly to wed his newest favorite, the former Prince of Antioch, Reynald des Chatillon.

After his release Reynald attached himself to the court of the King of Jerusalem. Constance's death in 1163 had left him without any claim to Antioch though he still insisted on being referred to as Prince. Reynald fought at Baldwin's side and the leper king, who was impressed with Reynald's military prowess, briefly contemplated placing Reynald in command of an invasion of Egypt. When Etienne became a widow, Baldwin saw a way to both reward Reynald for his services and secure the southern part of his kingdom.

Neither time nor confinement had mellowed Reynald. Still stubborn, proud, independent and arrogant he ruled from Kerak like a bandit chief.

Reynald spent the first year forging alliances with the local Bedouins. Together the knights and nomads raided the caravans passing near his castle. But in 1181 Baldwin concluded a truce with Saladin, suspending the low level hostilities between the Muslim and Christian territories. Reynald, Baldwin's vassal, was expected to respect the king's sworn truce.

Reynald responded to the peace by penetrating Arabia with a mixed force of knights and Bedouins. Along the Darb Al-Hajj they fell on a caravan bound for Mecca from Damascus. The booty was enormous. Reynald returned to Kerak richer than he had left and smugly satisfied.

Saladin sent emissaries to Baldwin demanding the return of the stolen property and reproaching him for violating the truce. Worried by the possible repercussions, Baldwin instructed Reynald to comply. The Lord of Kerak was not about to cooperate and told the king's envoys that "he would not give up the caravan no matter what the king might do."

Raging inwardly, Baldwin had to tell Saladin that he could not control his vassal. Whether he believed Baldwin or not, the refusal enraged Saladin. He responded by marching towards Kerak but the Crusader field army, despite its numerical inferiority, was able to defeat the Saracens near Tiberias. Saladin conducted a short siege of Beirut then withdrew into Syria.

### Unchecked

Seeing his unpunished refusal as a great victory, Reynald grew bolder, organizing more attacks on Muslim territory. In 1183 he assembled a fleet that sailed south from the Gulf of Aqaba into the Red Sea, pillaging and terrorizing the coastal cities. At the same time he announced plans for a massive offensive deep into the Arabian peninsula. To anyone who would listen he announced his intention to march on Makkah and "destroy the Kaa'ba then seize Medinah and overthrow the tomb of that insignificant swineherd."

That his actions were foolhardy is an understatement. Not even the most powerful Frankish kings considered such a bold undertaking. Now, when the kingdom's existence was hanging by a mere thread, a vassal of the king, a man whose strength lay only in his boldness and a few hundred knights lit the fuse that sent terror and shock through all Islam. If Reynald had been Saladin's paid agent he could not have found a better way to cement Muslim unity and create an atmosphere of jihad better.

The Islamic world rumbled. Saladin reacted with disbelief, then indignation, as the ripples of Reynald's boasts spread throughout Syria. It changed him. In the past he had been a cool politician willing to live with the Franks, now he became a paladin of jihad. Saladin commanded his brother to set sail from Egypt and the Muslim ships destroyed Reynald's pirates in a lightning campaign. Reynald's forces were met on the road to Mecca by a party of Seljuk Turks and routed. Against all odds the Reynald made his way back to the impregnability of Kerak. The approach of winter meant that for the time he was safe from anything Saladin, then in northeastern Syria, might do.

In November Reynald and Etienne celebrated the wedding of her son Humphrey to the Princess Isabella of Jerusalem. Guests and merrymakers from throughout the Crusader states filled the castle. Music echoed in its hallways. Lookouts in the tower must have rubbed their eyes in astonishment when, as the party reached a crescendo, the banners of Saladin's army appeared in the town below, heralding his arrival.

Saladin achieved complete surprise. The town fell on the first assault, its inhabitants fleeing across the bridge over the ravine into the castle. The gate would have been taken were it not for a single knight, Iven, who held it against the attackers while workmen behind him hurried to saw through the wooden bridge. As it fell into the ditch, Saladin set up six siege engines in the town and two on the mountain behind it. The castle rocked under the constant bombardment.

In one of the more celebrated instances of chivalry in action, Etienne sent food from the wedding feast to Saladin along with a message reminding him of how the Sultan, when a prisoner in the castle, had once held her in his arms when she was a child. Saladin inquired as to which tower the wedding party was in and ordered his men not to fire on it, but merrily continued to attack the rest of the Kerak.

As December began little progress had been made in reducing the fortress. Word reached Kerak that the King of Jerusalem was heading south at the head of an army. Saladin broke off the siege and withdrew. He was back again the following July. The first assault failed because the defenders had spent the winter building their own artillery and used these to keep the Muslim's at a distance. Saladin then concentrated on filling in the ditch between the castle and the town and building elaborate shelters to



Reynald on Saladin's statue (Damascus)

protect his men. Once again the impending arrival of a relief force forced him to break off after four weeks.

A four year truce between the Crusader states and Saladin was negotiated later that year by Raymond III, Count of Tripoli. The treaty specified that both sides would respect the territory and possessions of the other. Someone forgot to tell Reynald.

Again he ignored the truce and attacked a large caravan traveling from Damascus to Cairo. Among the travelers was Saladin's sister. Reynald gathered up the treasure booty and threw the hostages in the dungeon demanding a ransom for their release. Saladin asked Guy of Lusignan, the King of Jerusalem for the return of the caravan and the prisoners. Guy, like Baldwin IV, found Reynald unrepentant, recalcitrant and as unruly. Reynald rebuffed him, explaining that he "was master on his land like the king was on his."

### The Fruits of Arrogance

The second truce broken, Saladin was now intent on finishing off the Franks. Mobilizing the armies of Damascus, Aleppo, Egypt and northern Syria he marched across Galilee. In the words of the Arab chronicler al-Imad, the sight of the army "made men think of the Last Judgment."

Guy marshaled his forces. On July 4, 1187 the two armies clashed near Lake Tiberias at the battle of Hattin. When the day was over, Saladin had destroyed the Crusader army. Among the 15,000 prisoners were the King of Jerusalem, the Grand Master of the Knights Templar, and Reynald des Chatillon. It must have seemed like a gift from heaven.



Saladin executes Reynald after Hattin

Ordering the prisoners to his tent, Saladin offered Guy water, indicating his life would be spared. When Guy passed the cup to Reynald, Saladin reminded his adversary that it was the king, not he, Saladin, who had given him to drink. Saladin then offered Reynald the choice between converting to Islam or being executed. The 60 year old Lord of Kerak spat. Saladin swung his sword and executed him on the spot. Saladin reassured the terrified Guy. "A king does not kill another king but that man's perfidy knew no bounds." Guy, along with 15,000 other Franks was taken in chains to Damascus.

The destruction of most of the Crusader field army was crushing. Fortresses, bereft of hope of an early relief, panicked. Saladin marched south reducing fortress after fortress. Saone and Tiberias fell in a day. Acre surrendered without a fight. Jaffa, Caesarea and Ascalon followed in rapid succession. Then Jerusalem was forced to yield. Europe was galvanized into assembling the Third Crusade but its arrival was still two years away.

Saladin marched on Kerak again and began his third siege of it in March 1188. After an eight month siege in which the starving garrison was reduced to eating cats and dogs, the castle finally capitulated in November. With the fall of Montreal a few months later the Frankish domination of Outre Jordan was over, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was expunged and the remaining Crusader states were demoralized; all due in a large part to a broken truce, an ambushed caravan and a reluctant vassal.

## BATTLE OF ATHENS

### *World War II Vets Enter Tennessee Politics*

*David W. Tschanz*

Officially, the "Battle of Athens" in McMinn County, Tennessee began and ended on August 1, 1946. Following a heated competition for local offices, veterans in the insurgent GI Non-Partisan League took up arms to prevent a local courthouse ring headed by state senator Paul Cantrell and linked to Memphis political boss Ed Crump from stealing the election. When Sheriff Pat Mansfield's deputies absconded to the jail with key ballot boxes, suspicious veterans took action. A small group of veterans broke into the



KNOX HENRY (center) BECOMES SHERIFF AS GI'S LICK POLITICIANS

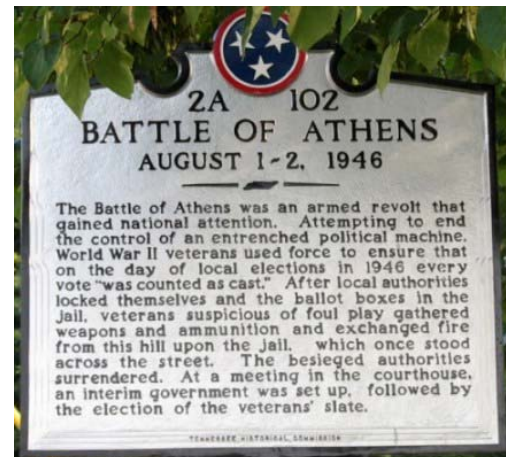
ASSOCIAT

local National Guard Armory, seized weapons and ammunition, and proceeded to the jail to demand the return of the ballot boxes. The Cantrell-Mansfield deputies refused, and the veterans, now numbering several hundred, opened fire. The ensuing battle lasted several hours and ended only after the dynamiting of the front of the jail. The surrender of the deputies did not end the riot, and the mob was still turning over police cars and burning them hours later. Within days the local election commission swore in the veteran candidates as duly elected. The McMinn County veterans had won the day in a hail of gunfire, dynamite, and esprit de corps.

The battle of Athens stands as the most violent manifestation of a regional phenomenon of the post-World War II era. Seasoned veterans of the European and Pacific theaters returned in 1945 and 1946 to southern communities riddled with vice, economic stagnation and deteriorating schools. Undemocratic, corrupt, and mossback rings and machines kept an iron grip on local policy and power. Moreover, their commitment to the status quo threatened the economic opportunities touched off by the war. Across the South, veterans launched insurgent campaigns to oust local political machines they regarded as impediments to economic "progress."

In Athens, the Cantrell-Mansfield ring colluded with bootleg and gambling interests, shook down local citizens and tourists for fees, and regularly engaged in electoral chicanery. While communities such as Knoxville, Oak Ridge, and Chattanooga boomed, Athens languished, and veterans returned to a community beset with more problems than opportunities. When Cantrell and Mansfield employed their typical methods to nullify the veterans' votes and reform efforts, the ex-soldiers resorted with the skills and determination that had brought them victory overseas.

Although recalled fifty years later with a certain amount of local pride, the battle of Athens initially proved a source of embarrassment, and many residents abhorred the violent, extralegal actions of the veterans. The image of gun-wielding hillbilly ex-soldiers shooting it out with the Cantrell-Mansfield "thugs" that blazed across national and regional newspaper headlines enhanced East Tennessee's reputation for violence and lawlessness. The Good Government League, empowered by the veterans' victory, scored few successes in its efforts to eradicate the vice, corruption, and arbitrary rule of machine government. Nevertheless, the battle of Athens exemplified the southern veteran activism of the postwar period and defined the disruptive political impact of World War II.



## The History of the Purple Heart

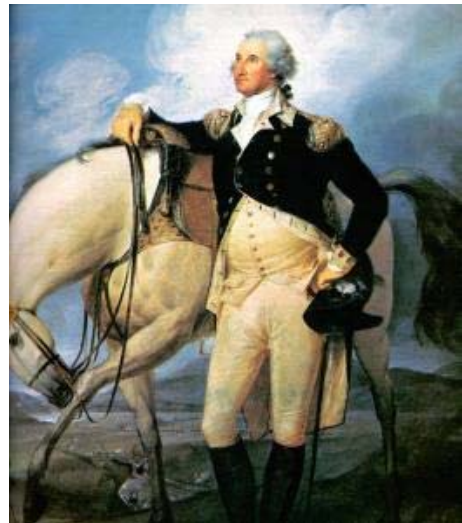
David W. Tschanz

The *Order of the Purple Heart for Meritorious Valor*, commonly called "The Purple Heart", is the oldest military decoration in the world in present use and the first award made available to a common soldier. It was created by General George Washington.

Washington is often pictured as a cold, stern soldier, a proud aristocrat, a martinet. Perhaps he was all of these at times. Yet he always showed sympathy and concern for his troops, and was not too proud to pray, humbly on his knees, for his beloved country and for the men who served it, and him, so bravely and loyalty. His keen appreciation of the importance of the common soldier in any campaign impelled him to recognize outstanding valor and merit by granting a commission or an advance in rank for the person concerned. In the summer of 1782 he was ordered by the Continental Congress to cease doing so - there were no funds to pay the soldiers, much less the officers!

Deprived of his usual means of reward, Washington searched for a substitute. Shortly after receiving the "stop" order from Congress, he wrote his memorable General Orders of August 7, 1782, which read in part as follows:

*The General, ever desirous to cherish virtuous ambition in his soldiers as well as foster and encourage every species of military merit, directs that whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed, the author of it shall be permitted to wear on his facings, over his left breast, the figure of a heart in purple cloth or silk edged with narrow lace or binding. Not only instances of unusual gallantry but also of extraordinary fidelity and essential service in any way shall meet with due reward... The name and regiment of the persons so certified are to be enrolled in a Book of Merit which shall be kept in the orderly room... Men who have merited this distinction to be suffered to pass all guards and sentinels which officers are permitted to do... The order to be retroactive to the earliest stages of the war, and to be a permanent one... The road to glory in a patriot army and a free country is thus open to all.*



Sergeants. Elijah Churchill, William Brown, and Daniel Bissell Jr. are the only known recipients of this award during the Revolutionary War. On May 3, 1783, Churchill and Brown received the Purple Heart. Bissell received his on June 10, 1783. It was never officially abolished, however the badge was allowed to fall into disuse and was forgotten as no further awards were made after the Revolutionary War.

### Found Again

Prior to the celebration of General Washington's Bi-Centennial in 1932, a search for his papers was initiated. After having been lost or misfiled for almost 150 years, the General Order of 1782 was discovered. With it were the dramatic accounts of three soldiers who received the decoration at Newburgh, N.Y., at Washington's Headquarters. The Book of Merit has not yet been found.

Beginning in 1927, several efforts by the Army and private citizens attempted to revive the "Badge of Military Merit." Finally on January 7, 1931 General Douglas MacArthur confidentially opened the case with the objective of having the new medal issued on the bicentennial of General Washington's birth. The War Department announced the "new" award on February 22, 1932.

At that time the Navy Department did not authorize the issue of the Purple Heart, but President Franklin D. Roosevelt amended that. By Executive Order on December 3, 1942, the award was extended to the Navy, Marine Corps, and the Coast Guard beginning December 6, 1941.

President Harry S. Truman retroactively extended eligibility to the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard to April 5, 1917, to cover World War I.

President John F. Kennedy extended eligibility on April 25, 1962, to "any civilian national of the United States who, while serving under competent authority in any capacity with an armed force..., has been, or may hereafter be, wounded."

Army regulations, amended June 20, 1969, state that any "member of the Army who was awarded the Purple Heart for meritorious achievement or service, as opposed to wounds received in action, between December 7, 1941 and September 22, 1943, may apply for award of an appropriate decoration in lieu of the Purple Heart." Thus the award was restricted to those wounded in action.

President Ronald Regan, on February 23, 1984, amended President Kennedy's order, to include those wounded or killed as a result of "an international terrorist attack."



**The New Medal**

There are no records of the first individual who received the revived and redesigned Purple Heart. This revived form is of metal, instead of perishable cloth, made in the shape of a rich purple heart bordered with gold, with a bust of Washington in the center and the Washington Coat-Of-Arms at the top. The latter is believed to have been the source of the stars and stripes of the American Flag.

Intrinsically, the Purple Heart is the world's costliest military decoration - nineteen separate operations are required to make it from the rough heart stamped from bronze to the finished medal, plated with gold and enameled in various colors, suspended from a purple and white ribbon.

**Military History Trivia Quiz**

*Answers to Last Month's Quiz*



1. Where is the only place where the U.S. Flag is never in the dark, is flown 24hrs a day, and there is not a light on it?

*Answer: The Moon*

2. Who was the person who patented the motion picture?

*Answer: Patented in 1867 by William Lincoln*

3. Where does the name WD-40 come from?

*Answer: Water Displacement, 40<sup>th</sup> Attempt*

4. In the 82nd Airborne patch, what do the 2 AAs stand for?

*Answer: All American*

5. Finally, on an old fashioned type of jump boat how many stiches are in the heel, outside sole, and front of the boot.

*Answer: Corcoran Jump boots (Army Jump Boots) have 82 stiches on the inside of the sole and 101 stiches on the outside of the sole in honor of the 82nd and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Divisions actions during WW II.*

## Final Word

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*Since this is my last issue as Dragon's Breath editor, Dan said I could write an editorial if I wanted. Instead, let me leave you with this story. See you from time to time at meetings. - DWT*

I put my carry-on in the luggage compartment and sat down in my assigned seat. It was going to be a long flight. "I'm glad I have a good book to read. Perhaps I will get a short nap," I thought.

Just before take-off, a line of soldiers came down the aisle and filled all the vacant seats, totally surrounding me. I decided to start a conversation.

"Where are you headed?" I asked the soldier seated nearest to me.

"We're being deployed to Afghanistan after training in Pettawa."

After flying for about an hour, an announcement was made that sack lunches were available for five dollars. It would be several hours before we reached the east, and I quickly decided a lunch would help pass the time.

As I reached for my wallet, I overheard a soldier ask his buddy if he planned to buy lunch. "No, that's a lot of money for a sack lunch. I'll wait till we get to base."

"Probably wouldn't be worth it," his buddy agreed.

I looked around at the other soldiers. None were buying lunch. I walked to the back of the plane and handed the flight attendant a 50 dollar bill. "Take a lunch to all those soldiers."

She grabbed my arms and squeezed tightly. Her eyes wet with tears, she thanked me. "My son was a soldier in Iraq; it's almost like you are doing it for him."

Picking up ten sacks, she headed up the aisle to where the soldiers were seated. She stopped at my seat and asked, "Which do you like best - beef or chicken?"

"Chicken," I replied, wondering why she asked. She turned and went to the front of plane, returning a minute later with a dinner plate from first class.

"This is your thanks."

After we finished eating, I went again to the back of the plane, heading for the rest room. A man stopped me. "I saw what you did. I want to be part of it. Here, take this." He handed me 25 dollars.

Soon after I returned to my seat, I saw the Flight Captain coming down the aisle, looking at the aisle numbers as he walked. When he got to my row he stopped, smiled, held out his hand and said, "I want to shake your hand." With a booming voice he said, "I was a soldier and I was a military pilot. Once, someone bought me a lunch. It was an act of kindness I never forgot." I was embarrassed when applause was heard from all of the passengers.

Later I walked to the front of the plane so I could stretch my legs. An elderly man who was seated about six rows in front of me reached out his hand, wanting to shake mine. He left another 25 dollars in my palm.

When we landed I gathered my belongings and started to deplane. Waiting just inside the airplane door was a man who stopped me, put something in my shirt pocket, turned, and walked away without saying a word. Another 25 dollars!

Upon entering the terminal, I saw the soldiers gathering for their trip to the base.

I walked over to them and handed them 75 dollars. "It will take you some time to reach the base. It will be about time for a sandwich."

These soldiers were giving their all for our country. All I could give them was a couple of meals. It seemed so little, but ten young men left that flight feeling the love and respect of their fellow travelers.

A veteran is someone who, at one point in his life, wrote a blank check made payable to the United States of America for an amount "up to and including my life."

That is the real meaning of Honor.