

MEDAL OF HONOR AWARDEES

MARY EDWARDS WALKER

AND

FRED WILLIAM ZABITOSKY

MSG DONNA BUSH.

The Medal of Honor is the highest honor one country can give to an individual. The Medal of Honor is awarded by the President for valor in battle. Their actions must be up and beyond the call of duty, while engaged with the enemy. They were recognized for their self sacrifice and personal bravery that their actions wouldn't have been expected. Some even gave the ultimate sacrifice their lives. Their actions must be recorded and verified. This is then reviewed by the highest level of the Military. There is a variety of recipients, from all services, some were male and one was a female. They all had the same belief, that was their dedication to their country.

### Mary Edwards Walker

Mary Walker was born November 26, 1832 in Oswego, New York. She was raised in Oswego along with her five sisters and her brother. Her father was a doctor. Mary was a strong advocate for woman's rights. She had strong feelings about dress reform. She defended the woman right to wear bloomers, now known as pants today. By the end of the 19th century the minds were being changed and women wore their bloomers and took up the new sport of bicycling. When Mary Walker spoke at a function on woman rights she wore men's clothes.

Mary went to Medical College of Syracuse, New York in June of 1855. She was the first female to be accepted at the college. During this time there was only a small number of women doctors. She was also the first female to graduate as a doctor at the age of 21.

One year after graduating, Mary married her fellow student, Albert Miller. At their wedding, Mary dressed in her bloomers and a man's coat. She even did the unthinkable and kept her maiden name. They established a business together in Rome, New York. The public still didn't except the fact that their was woman doctor. This ideology put a strain on their business and then they had to close. They divorced 13 years later.

When the Civil War broke out Mary went to Washington to join the Union Army. She was not accepted as a medical officer. Due to Mary's strong belief in her work and her dedication to country, she served as a unpaid volunteer. She was the first female assistant surgeon working in the US Patent Office in Washington. Mary Walker went from the office environment to the front lines. She served on the front lines for two years as a nurse. She served in many battles, Chickamauga, Chattanooga and Fredericksburg.

General George Thomas appointed Mary Walker as surgeon to the 52nd Ohio Infantry Regiment. Colonel Dan McCook, commanding officer was very pleased to have her assigned to his unit, but his enthusiasm was not accept by the unit. Dr. Mary Walker crossed enemy lines on numerous occasion to assist the victims of war. She would take supplies from the federal stores to treated woman and children who were sick and dying.

In April of 1864, just south of the Georgia/Tennessee border, Mary Walker who was dressed in full uniform was mistaken as a soldier and taken as a prisoner. She was a prisoner for four months. She was let go because she was traded man for man. When Mary found out she was traded for a Confederate Officer she was quite

please knowing she was traded equally for a man. Mary returned to her unit the 52nd and spent the rest of her time practicing at a Louisville female prison and orphan asylum in Tennessee. When Mary Walker concluded her service she was paid a monthly pension of \$8.50 and increased to \$20.00 a month.

President Johnson signed a bill on November 11, 1865 that awarded Dr. Mary Edwards Walker the Congressional Medal of Honor. She was recognized for her outstanding meritorious service and her numerous war contributions.

A day Mary Walker will never forget was in 1917 when her Medal of Honor along with 910 others were taken away. Congress changed the criteria for receiving the Medal of Honor to include "actual combat with an enemy." Dr. Mary Walker refused to return her award and wore it proudly every day until she died in 1919. Due to her granddaughters efforts, President Jimmy Carter reinstated her medal in 1977.

### Fred William Zabitosky

Fred William Zabitosky is one of the many great war heroes of America. Zabitosky was born on October 27, 1942 in Trenton, New Jersey. He was brought up in a poor family, with very little discipline. As a soldier in the Army, he served four tours in Southeast Asia during Vietnam, and it was during his third tour that he received his Medal of Honor.

When Fred Zabitosky was very young his brother died of lockjaw at the age of six. This caused his father to begin drinking, and eventually causing him to lose his

business and all forms of financial security. When Zabitosky turned fifteen his father left the family, making Zabitosky “the man of the family”. To support the family, Zabitosky was practically forced to drop out of high school to work several jobs to make more money.

Then one day, at the age of seventeen, Zabitosky looked at his life and realized that he was getting nowhere fast. He realized through the army, he could both receive good pay to support his family, and finish his high school education at the same time. It was that day that Zabitosky joined the Army to make something better of himself. He then found himself outside of the New Jersey area for the first time, as he was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia for basic training.

After basic training at Fort Benning he was sent on his first tour to Europe. He was stationed in Germany, where he lived a vigorous life of working almost everyday. During his three years in Germany Zabitosky quickly moved through the ranks from E1 to and E4 and also received Outstanding Soldier of the Month. However, when his tour ended and his time was up, he left the Army to go back home to New Jersey.

While in New Jersey, he continued to support his family with a dead end construction jobs. Not long after working with the construction job in New Jersey, Zabitosky found himself once again looking at his life and realizing that he was getting nowhere with these dead beat jobs in New Jersey. So once again, Zabitosky found himself deciding to be a soldier and join the Army. However, this time he didn't want to just be a “regular soldier” he wanted to go Airborne. He was then sent back to Fort Benning, Georgia to go to airborne and jump school. After the training, he tested for the Special Forces and became a Green Beret.

While with the Green Berets he trained for seven months in their main program. Then, in 1963 Zabitosky completed his Special Forces training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Zabitosky was assigned to the Special Forces A-Team. The A-Team was a

close group of ten enlisted men and two officers that treated each other like brothers, and did everything from work to go out for a night on the town together. Shortly after joining the A-Team, Zabitosky and the team were sent to Alaska for four months of training.

After training in Alaska, Zabitosky came back to the states and was married in 1964. Shortly after his marriage Zabitosky and A-Team were sent to Vietnam. Due to his rigorous training with the Special Forces Zabitosky was not scared to be in Vietnam, he was actually confident. During this first tour Zabitosky served in Vietnam, the job of the Green Berets was to organize the Montagnard mountain tribesmen. During one of his patrols Zabitosky noticed smoke coming from the jungle, so he took a company to check it out. He and his company were ambushed by soldiers wearing the green uniform of the North Vietnamese Army. The Green Berets relief force was called in, and in a later briefing it was reported that this was the war's first NVA confirmation. When September finally came around it was time for Zabitosky to return to the United States.

He came home to a baby boy and a wife that he had not seen in a whole year. However, not long after returning he wanted to go back to Vietnam, so he volunteered to go back with the 5th Special Forces Group. The Special Forces group he was now with were assigned to a "special project." They were to train South Vietnamese agents and infiltrate them into the North. Zabitosky's job was to train them on the parachute operations, demolitions, and communications.

Again Zabitosky's time came and it was time for him to return to the United States. He once again got bored and volunteered to go back to Vietnam. This was to be his third and most memorable term, for it was this term in which he received his medal of honor. His mission this time in Vietnam was to infiltrate across the Laotian and Cambodian borders and monitor the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It was very dangerous

work, for the simple fact that if captured the enemy would not take prisoners.

During one of his border crossing patrols the objective was to determine the enemy's troop concentrations. While moving through elephant grass and bamboo thickets the men realized they were in the middle of an NVA complex. Unfortunately, they weren't the only ones who realized this, NVA also noticed the soldiers, and it was not long before guns were firing on both sides. The team was ordered to withdraw to the landing site. While the team withdrew Zabitosky remained shooting his CAR 15 mini M-16 while setting clay more mines. With an A1E strike force on its way to drop 750 pound bombs and Napalm all around him. When he made it back to the site they defended the area against three NVA companies while waiting for evacuation. The team was beginning to run low on ammo when after an hour and a half of defending their positions, three helicopters finally arrived.

These helicopters were known as slicks, helicopters stripped bare to ensure maximum capacity. These helicopters were unable to extract the soldiers from the landing zones, and radioed the soldiers to move five hundred yards to a new landing zone. After the first helicopter was loaded and took-off the NVA realized what was happening and regrouped and started moving towards the new position. The six remaining soldiers made it to the second helicopter and got in. However, shortly after the helicopter took off a rocket propelled grenade hit the tail causing it to explode. The explosion sent Zabitosky on fire about twenty feet from the burning wreckage. He heard screams coming from the wreck, and with a broken back and several broken ribs Zabitosky walked to the burning heap and pulled the pilot out. He then went back for the copilot, and just when he got him out the helicopter exploded. The explosion flung both Zabitosky and the copilot away. Zabitosky then put the copilot on his shoulder and made his way toward the chase helicopter. The chase helicopter flew back toward the crash site, and without landing picked up Zabitosky and the two

pilots. Zabitosky was flown to a hospital in Pleiku, South Vietnam where he was nursed to health for six weeks. When he was healthy, he once again returned to the United States.

It was for this heroic performance that he was awarded the medal of honor. Where he remained for a while, however the temptation of going back to Vietnam got the best of him and he returned in 1981. This time he was there to look for Missing in A (MIAs) and Prisoner of War (POWs) in Laos. However, out of the 688 missing there was only one that returned from Vietnam.

Fred William Zabitosky was one of the greatest american warriors. He came from a poor family and to help support them he joined the Army. While in the Army he joined the special forces and became a Green Beret. During his time, he served four terms in Vietnam and was awarded the highest medal achievable, The Medal of Honor.

Dr. Mary Edwards Walker and Fred William Zabitosky have served this country proudly and have received recognition for their contribution to this great country. It takes a special person to dig deep and sacrifice their lives for their fellow American. I'm sure there are other great American who deserved the medal but under circumstance, there was no one their to tell the story. Their are about 200 Medal of Honor recipients alive today who can tell you their heroic story.

References:

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Medal of Honor by Bruce Jacobs – published 1956

<http://ngeorgia.com/people/walker.html>.