

Black Non-Commission Officers Medal of Honor Recipient of
World War II

By
SGM Danny Robinson
Student #509

CWO Ken Hodge
Lesson # C555
Group Room L10
2 March 2006

MILITARY HISTORY BRIEF OUTLINE
BLACK MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT OF WORLD WAR II

I. Introduction:

A. References.

1. Allen ,Robert L. and Carter, Allene G. Honoring Sergeant Carter. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.
2. U.S. Army Center of Military History. Medal of Honors. 14 Dec. 2005. <<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/mohb.htm>>.

B. This research paper discussed how blacks in the military during World War II (WWII) were fighting two wars simultaneous. They were fighting the enemies of American in foreign countries, and fighting American laws to provide them with the same freedom and right that they were fighting for in foreign countries. Black Soldiers has always contributed to the American way of life without the recognition of just how much they contributed. Some fifty years later after these heroes are dead and buried the American government recognize seven of them for the action.

II. Body:

I. Segregation in America

II. Discipline

III. Training

IV. Formation

V. World War II heroes

III. CLOSING

- A. Summary
- B. Questions
- C. Concluding

Black Medal of Honors Recipient during World War II (WWII)

Segregation in America

Black Soldiers have made major contribution to the success of American freedom. During World War II blacks had to fight American's laws just to be able to fight for freedom in American. Black Soldiers were not thought to be good enough to fight for this country; however, they did have rights as American people. Once black Soldiers got the opportunity to join the American fighting force, they still were not allowed to fight with the American Arms forces. Black American was fighting on two fronts, first they was fighting the dangers enemies of American. This was an every prevailing enemy of our country and of all human values in German, Italy, and Japan. Secondly, blacks was fighting the Jim Crow laws at home in the United States. The arms forces were a reflection of the American society, a society that was segregation (Cash, et al 3). Some of the black people in the southern states voice their opinions about fight for a country that do not want you in their military. There was commenting such as if the whites do not want us to fight with them, let them fight and die by themselves.

Many blacks knew that to make a different in the way society think and to break through the segregated barriers that they would need to do it from the inside. By joining in the fight abroad, they knew that it would help them defeat the enemy in the United States. However, prior to joining the military many of them knew that they would be killed but they was willing to die for their country and equality. Black Soldiers want the opportunity to help establish the claim to equal citizenship for themselves, their families, community, and for generations of black American to come. Black Soldiers that server in the Army during World War II server with distinction, they was not truly recognize for their valor and heroism, this was all because of the color of their skin and the mindset of society.

White America's attitude about blacks in the military can be sum up by saying the military became a segregated institution. Black recruitment was not a priority because reenlistment rates were so high among the blacks, there was very few vacancies for new volunteers. Mobilization for World War II modified recruitment for blacks but never eliminated segregation (Cash, et al 29). Because of the Army Segregation policy, only white officers could command black units. When it came to awards recommendation, only white officers could make a recommendation. During World War II, it is said that white field commander recommended black Soldiers for the Medal of Honor but it was down graded by higher command or the recommendation was never forward from higher headquarter to the Department of the Army for processing. The Department of the Army had no official documentation for recommendation of a black Soldier for the Medal of Honor (Cash, et al 27).

The Department of the Army contracted Shaw University to research why black Soldiers were not recommended for, or received the Medal of Honor during World War II. Shaw's research show more than 50,000 black Soldiers were actually engaged in combat against the enemy and midway through the research the Army tasked Shaw to compile a list of all blacks Distinguished Services Cross recipients (Cash, et al 16). The reason for the list was so the Army, if it so choose, would reconsider some of them for the Medal of Honor. The Army reconsider and recommended seven black Soldiers for the nation highest Medal, the Medal of Honor. However, before the President could award the Medals to the seven Soldiers, Congress had to waive the 1952 statutory time of limitation to grant the Medals of Honor for deeds of heroism in World War II. Some fifty years later seven black soldiers would be honor for their valor and heroism during World War II. Among the seven honorees was First Lieutenant Vernon J. Baker, (the only one still living), Sergeant First Class Edward A. Carter, Jr., Private John R. Fox.,

Private First Class Willy F. James, Jr., Staff Sergeant Ruben Rivers, First Lieutenant Charles L. Thomas, and Private George Watson (Carter & Allen 41). During this research paper, two Medal of Honor recipients NCOs will be discussed, Staff Sergeant Edward Carter and Staff Sergeant Ruben Rivers.

Discipline

Staff Sergeant Eddie Carter was raised by his mother and father; they lived in Los Angeles, India, and later in China. His father was an evangelist and missionary and his mother was a missionary with the Holiness Church. While living in China, Carter grew into a robust teenager. Like many teenagers, Carter enjoyed playing sports such as football, track, boxing, and baseball; he also learned to speak Hindustani, Mandarin Chinese, and some German (Carter & Allen 79).

As SSG Carter became an older teenager, he became more rebellious, so his father enrolled him in a Chinese military academy. During Carter five years in the military academy he became an expert shooter, he enjoyed military training. In 1932, he volunteered to join with the Chinese and British Forces to fight against Japanese, but his father disapproved and got him out of it because Carter was under age. The older he got the more he and his father did not see eye to eye. In 1935, while still a teenager he was offered a job as a Merchant Marine and his father let him take the job. In 1936, he joined the Spain Loyalist Forces who was fighting against German (Carter & Allen 80). While he was fighting the Loyalist, he fought side by side with them. After two and a half years of fighting, the Loyalist was defeated and Carter moved back to Los Angeles. Carter was not as rebellious, for he had grown into a man.

On 26 September 1941, Carter enlisted into the United States Army (Carter & Allen 88). After eight years of serving his country with distinguish valor he was denied reenlist. General

Mark Clark, then the Sixth Army commander questioned Carter loyalty; the General did not like the idea of blacks in the Army. Carter never received a reason of why he could not reenlist at the time of his discharge. The next day he went to Washington D.C. to the Pentagon to get some answer, but no one would talk to him. General Clark had made the comment that Eddie was a member of an organization that advocates the overthrow of the government through force or violence (Carter & Allen 156). Carter solicited the help of the ACLU to assist him in getting an answer; they were not able to get an answer either. Carter never reenlisted.

Training

The journey of these Medals of Honor began when SSG Carter reported to training on 26 September 1941 at Camp Wolters, Texas. He was shock at how prejudice the Army and the people in Texas were. When the instructors told him to do something he did it, he wanted to avoid trouble. He baffled his instructors by his achievement of near perfect scores in shooting, after very little training. Training lasted for four months and just before it ended in January, he narrowly escaped death. With an 80 pounds pack on his back, Carter fell into a reservoir. Unable to swim and no help from the white instructors all of the other black soldiers though he was dead. Carter was under water for more than four minutes before he surface and pulls himself to safety. After training Carter and all of the others black Soldiers was assigned to an all color unit as cooks, truck drivers, stevedores, and engineers rather than combat duty. He was assigned to 3535th Quartermaster Truck Company at Fort Benning Georgia (Carter & Allen 89).

SSG Ruben Rivers entered the Army on 15 January 1942. His training was similar to that of SSG Carter, except he received his training at For Benning, Georgia. During this time, black Soldiers live in tents and substandard facilities. They was located away from the major post facilities, this increase the time it took for them to get to the training sites and decrease their

training time during the day. Since the training day was short it took them longer to train, therefore contributing to the mine set that blacks was slow to learn. The Army sought black instructors to train them, there were not enough, and the black instructors present did not have the technical experience to instruct. In April 1942 at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana SSG Rivers and SSG Carter received two years of intense armored training. The training was on light tank operation, mechanics warfare, M-S light tank, and .30 caliber machine guns.

Formation

Upon completion of their Boot Camp both SSG Carter and SSG Rivers was assign to an all color unit. In 1942 black Soldiers was allow to volunteer for combat duty, but not as a Non-commission Officer (Cash, et al 29). At the time SSG Carter had already attain the rank of Staff Sergeant, but he quickly gave it for the opportunity to go to combat. Specialist Carter was assign to Third Army, Twelfth Armored division and Specialist Rivers was assign to 761st Battalion, better known as the "Black Panthers".

Heroes

In 1942, these Soldiers volunteer for combat duty to fight for their country and they did it with distinction. On 8 November 1944, SSG Rivers and his team came under small arm and mortal attack. The enemy set a road block on the road that they was traveling, while under direct fire SSG Rivers, without regard for his personal safety courageously climbed out of his tank and attached a cable to the road block and removed it. His action prevented a serious delay in the offensive and resulted in a successful attack. November 16, 1944 SSG Rivers' tank hit a Teller antitank mine that hurled the tank sideways. When the medical team arrived, they found him with a hole in his leg where part of his knee had been. The medics clean and dressed the wound and attempted to inject him with morphine but he refused the injection and to be evacuate for

medical care. Rivers got to his feet, took over another tank, and led the way across the bridge, despite his wounds he engaged two German tanks and disabled them both. He was still in great pain when he took on two more tanks, forcing them to withdraw (“Medal of Honor”).

The morning of November 19, 1944 the enemy had one of the 761st tank pin down under heavy fire. Rivers took an antitank gun and laid down fire on the enemy tank allowing his comrades to escape with their lives. That same morning he received fire from the enemy tanks at close range, and then the Germans shot two high explosive rounds into Rivers’ tank killing him instantly. SSG Rivers did not have to die that morning, three days earlier, he received a wound that could have got him evacuated to the rear, but he would not leave his comrades (“Medal of Honor”).

SSG Eddie Carter served with the Twelfth Armored Division, which was organized into three combat commands. SSG Carter unit, the Fifty-sixth Infantry, was part of Combat Command B. On 23 March 1945, Carter and his men came under fire from a warehouse; they quickly scattered and took cover. Carter volunteered to lead three men to recon the warehouse, two of his men were killed, and the third one was wounded in minutes. Carter continued to advance along and was wounded multiple times in the process. Despite his wounds, he managed to take out two machine-gun nests and a mortar crew. He also killed six Germans and took two prisoners that day. SSG Carter refused to be evacuated until he pointed out the German machine-gun positions, which allowed the mission to be completed. Carter was shot nine times; while at the hospital he was presented the Purple Heart. Carter went AWOL from the hospital and re-joined his unit, later his platoon took over a German hospital. Some reports say he killed 50 Soldiers during his combat tour of duty (Carter & Allen 105).

Conclusion

During WWII, the Army reflected the laws and norms of society; America was very segregated, and so was the Army. Just as the white lawmakers and white people in America, thought black people were inferior to them, so did the white people of all ranks in the Army. When in reality, the white were so afraid that if they gave blacks the opportunity to fight in the war that it would prove their inferior theory to be wrong and it did. SSG Carter and SSG Rivers contributed a great deal to the freedom that this great country enjoys. It took America more than 50 years to recognize and present the nation highest medal to these two black Non-Commission Officers for their outstanding contribution. Injustices in America is unjust regardless of the color of you skin. Although society and the Army is still dealing with equality for all, at least society and the Army are now dealing with this problem. By these few black Soldiers receiving the Medal of Honor, especially the NCOs, society and the Army now knows that Black NCOs can get the job done. All seven black Soldiers that received the Medal of Honor deserved to have it presented during the war.

Work Cites

Allen, Robert L. and Carter, Allene G. Honoring Sergeant Carter. New York:

HarperCollins, 2003.

Cash, John A., Covverse, Elliott V. III, Gibran, Daniel K., Griffin, Robert

K. Jr., Kohn, Richard H. The Exclusion of Black Soldiers from the Medal
of Honor in World War II. North Carolina: McFarland, 1997.

U.S. Army Center of Military History. Medal of Honors. 14 Dec. 2005

<<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/mohb.htm>>.