



VETERANS ADVOCATE

The History of the Purple Heart

Special points of interest:

- History of the Purple Heart
- VA Home Loans
- Hepatitis C
- Question and Answer

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Acts of courage shape human history. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope. Robert F. Kennedy

The Order of the Purple Heart for Military Merit, commonly called "The Purple Heart," is an American decoration - the oldest military decoration in the world in present use and the first award made available to a common soldier. It was created by one of the world's most famed and best-loved heroes - General George Washington.

For General George Washington, finding the money to execute the war was as tough as fighting the British. He spent countless hours in front of the Continental Congress or meeting with wealthy colonists in an effort to fund the Revolution. One of his creative ways to keep his soldiers fighting on when the pay envelopes were not forthcoming was to grant a commission and promote men in rank. In the summer of 1782, while awaiting

word of the final terms of formal surrender, Washington learned from Congress that there was no money to pay the officers either. Deprived of his usual means of reward, he must have 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."

These were the first military awards ever made for the common soldier. The first Badges of Military Merit were awarded on May 3, 1783. The first went to Sergeant Elijah Churchill, a 26 year old from Connecticut. In November, 1780 Sergeant Churchill commanded an attacking force which successfully destroyed a British *Continued on pg. 3*

VA Guaranteed Home Loan

Q: How can I get a VA-Guaranteed home loan?

A: You may obtain a VA-guaranteed loan through a lender (mortgage company, bank or savings and loan). VA's guaranty on the loan protects the lender against loss if payments are not made. The guaranty amount depends on the loan amount and whether you have previously used some entitlement. Basic entitlement is \$36,000, but that can be increased to \$60,000 for certain loans. This means it may be possible to obtain a VA loan of up to \$240,000 depending on your income and debt level and the appraised value of the property.

Q: How can I obtain a copy of my certificate of eligibility?

A: VA does not keep copies of previously provided certificates, but you may apply for a new certificate of eligibility.

Q: Can I use my eligibility more than once?

A: Yes, If the mortgage has been paid in full and you have disposed of the property, you may request a restoration of entitlement. If the loan has been paid in full but you still own the property, you may use entitlement one additional time by requesting a one-time restoration of entitlement. If you previously used only a portion of your entitlement to purchase a home, you may be able to use the unused portion of entitlement on another home.

Q: Do you need to be a military veteran in order to purchase a home acquired by VA through foreclosure?

A: No. You do not need to be a veteran in order to purchase a property acquired by VA through foreclosure. Please contact a local real estate professional for more information on VA properties available in your area.

For further information regarding VA home loans, please contact them at 1-800-827-0611. Or contact your local county service office.

Facts about Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a serious health problem that affects about four million people in the United States. In some people it can cause liver failure or liver cancer. It is the #1 reason for liver transplants in the United States. Hepatitis C is a virus that can, over many years, slowly damage and destroy the liver. Some people can live with the virus without any symptoms or complications.

The VA recommends that all veterans with any of these risk factors be tested for hepatitis C:

- ★ A blood transfusion before 1992.

- ★ Using needles to inject "recreational drugs".
- ★ Snorting drugs like heroin or cocaine through the nose.
- ★ Exposure to other people's blood through skin or mucous membranes (mouth and eyes).
- ★ Tattoos or body piercing.
- ★ Hemodialysis.
- ★ Multiple sexual partners, or a history of sexually transmitted diseases.
- ★ Unexplained liver disease.

Many people with hepatitis C have no symptoms, so they do not even know they have it.

Some people complain of fatigue or mild abdominal pain.

We suggest hepatitis C testing for everyone who has one or more of the risk factors. A blood test can be done to detect hepatitis C.

If you have hepatitis C, or believe you may have one of the risk factors, please contact your local County Veteran Services Office for more information.

History of the Purple Heart Continued

supply fort on Long Island and took 300 prisoners. A year later, in October, Churchill was the only man wounded in a successful raid against the British stronghold at Ft. Slongo on Long Island.

The second was bestowed on 20 year old Sergeant Daniel Brown for his actions at the climatic battle of Yorktown on October 14, 1781. Sergeant Brown led an attack over the body-piercing obstructions and captured the fort in minutes. Cornwallis soon surrendered in the last major confrontation of the Revolution.

A month later, a third "Purple Heart" was awarded to Sergeant Daniel Bissell, another Connecticut soldier. Bissell was a spy who posed as a deserter who provided Washington with exacting details on British troop strength and cannon placement around New York City. He was later impressed into British Navy before effecting his escape.

Lost or misfiled for almost 150 years among the War Department Records at Washington, D.C., this important paper came to light during the search for Washington's papers prior to the celebration of his Bicentennial in 1932. With it were the dramatic accounts of these three soldiers who received the decoration at Newburgh, N.Y., at Washington's Headquarters. The book of merit has not been found. The U.S. War Department revived the Purple Heart decoration on February 22, 1932.

The Purple Heart is no longer a

strip of degradable cloth. It is made of heart-shaped metal, rimmed in gold and suspended from a purple and white ribbon. In the center of the rich purple heart is a bust of George Washington. The Purple Heart medallion, which begins life as a stamped piece of bronze, requires nineteen steps to construct and is the world's costliest military decoration. It is also, since its revival, the world's oldest still in use.

Over the years, the criteria for winning a Purple Heart have been tweaked several times. Originally only for Army troops, Franklin Roosevelt opened the award to the Navy, Marine Corps and the Coast Guard during World War II. John Kennedy extended the Purple Heart to civilians who were wounded while serving "in any capacity with an armed force." Ronald Regan included those wounded in an international terrorist attack. The Purple Heart is awarded to members of the armed forces of the U.S. who are wounded by an instrument of war in the hands of the enemy and posthumously to the next of kin in the name of those who are killed in action or die of wounds received in action. It is definitely a combat decoration.



*No act of
kindness, no
matter how small,
is ever wasted.*
Aesop

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DON'T QUIT

*Don't quit when the tide is lowest,
For it's just about to turn;
Don't quit over doubts and questions,
For there's something you may learn.
Don't quit when the night is darkest,
For it's just a while til dawn;
Don't quit when you've run the farthest,
For the race is almost won.
Don't quit when the hill is steepest,
For your goal is almost nigh;
Don't quit, for you're not a failure
Until you fail to try.
—Jill Wolf*

Service Office Closed

The Anoka County Veteran Services office will be closed on the following dates:

Thursday, July 4, 2002
Independence Day

Monday, September 2, 2002
Labor Day

We highly recommend that you call the office to make sure that there is a service officer in to see you before you arrive. We are a walk-in office and see clients on a first come first serve basis.

Minnesota State Fair begins on August 22, 2002.

Be sure to visit the MN State Department of Veterans Affairs Information booth It is located on the outside corner of the 4-H building.

Question: I have been service connected at a 10% rate since I got out of the military. I think my condition has gotten worse. If I ask for in increased rate, is it possible that the VA will reduce my 10% rate?

Answer: It is possible, but unlikely. If a veteran has been service connected for at least ten years, that service connection can not be severed unless the condition was based on fraud or if the person's military records should show that military service or character of discharge (honorable, general, dishonorable, etc.) was not adequate for benefits.

If the rate of disability has been in effect for twenty years that rate is protected and can not be reduced except under the same circumstances as the above. Normally, as we age, health problems seldom get better and requesting an increased rating for any service connected disability is simply a matter of informing the VA that the condition has worsened. Often, veterans assume that if the VA has rated a person at 0%, that this is a denial of service connection. Actually, a 0% rating indicates that the VA will not compensate the veteran with a monthly disability check, but agree that the disability is related to military service.

