

commissioned this study and saw it through. Together, your support and painstaking research made this day possible. Without it, we would not be able to meet our obligation as a people to an extraordinary group of soldiers to whom we owe the greatest debt. Because of the hard work you have done, history has been made whole today and our Nation is bestowing honor on those who have long deserved it.

Fifty-two years ago on an August day, Harry Truman stood where I stand now and awarded 28 Medals of Honor to veterans of World War II in the largest such ceremony ever held. President Truman described those medal recipients as a great cross-section of the United States. "These men love peace but are able to adjust themselves to the necessity of war," he said.

I believe Harry Truman was one of our greatest Presidents. He had not a shred of discrimination in his bones. He integrated the Armed Forces. But that day, something was missing from his cross-section of America. No African-American who deserved the Medal of Honor for his service in World War II received it. Today we fill the gap in that picture and give a group of heroes, who also love peace but adapted themselves to war, the tribute that has always been their due. Now and forever, the truth will be known about these African-Americans who gave so much that the rest of us might be free.

Today we recognize seven men as being among the bravest of the brave. Each of them distinguished himself with extraordinary valor in the famous words, "at the risk of his life, above and beyond the call of duty." In the greatest struggle in human history, they helped to lead the forces of freedom to victory. Their deeds remind us anew of the indomitable power of the human spirit. And they always will be remembered by men and women who cherish liberty.

As recipients of the Medal of Honor, their names join the roles of America's heroes, along with Sergeant York, Eddie Rickenbacker, Jimmy Doolittle, Audie Murphy, General Robert Foley and Senator Bob Kerrey, and only some 3,400 Americans in the entire history of the United States.

For these men, heroism was a habit. Ruben Rivers of Oklahoma was awarded a Silver Star while fighting in France in late 1944. A week later he was terribly wounded when his tank hit a mine. Refusing an order to withdraw, Ser-

geant Rivers took command of another tank. He radioed in, "I see him. We'll fight him." And he kept on fighting until his second tank was hit and he was killed.

Edward Carter, the son of missionaries, was crossing an open field in Germany when he was wounded five times. But Staff Sergeant Carter continued to advance, and when eight of the enemy tried to capture him, he killed six, took two prisoner, and brought them back for interrogation.

In the face of overwhelming danger, they never wavered. As he led a task force in France, Lieutenant Charles Thomas was wounded by intense fire. While helping others to find cover, he was wounded again and again and again. But he refused evacuation until he had made sure that his forces could return fire effectively.

While scouting a forward position, Private First Class Willy James was pinned down for an hour. But he made his way back to his platoon, planned a counterattack, and volunteered to lead the assault and then was killed going to the aid of his wounded platoon leader.

They were selfless. When Private George Watson's ship was attacked by enemy bombers, over and over and over again he helped others to make it to liferafts so that they might live, until he himself was so exhausted, he was pulled down by the tow of the sinking ship.

When the enemy surged into a town in Italy and drove out our forces, Lieutenant John Fox volunteered to remain behind in an observation force post. He directed defensive artillery fire, and eventually he insisted that that artillery fire be aimed at his own position. He said, "There are more of them than there are of us." The barrage he so bravely ordered killed him. And when our forces recovered the position, they found his riddled body among that of 100 German soldiers.

One of these heroes is here today. In an assault on a mountain stronghold in Italy, Lieutenant Vernon Baker wiped out three enemy machine gun nests, an observer post, and a dug-out. I must say that Mr. Baker has not quite abandoned doing the impossible. I learned before this ceremony that he is now 77 years young, but last year he got the better of a mountain lion that was stalking him. [Laughter] I was also very moved, as I'm sure many of you were, by the comments quoted in today's Washington Post—or last weekend—about Mr. Baker's creed in life. He was asked how he