The Presidential Citizens Medal

By Ronald E. Fischer

The Presidential Citizens Medal is one of a series of awards bestowed by the President of the United States. It is the second highest civilian award in the United States, second only to the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The Medal was established by executive order on November 13, 1969, by President Richard Nixon, to recognize individuals "who [have] performed exemplary deeds or services for his or her country or fellow citizens." The award is only eligible to United States citizens, and may be awarded posthumously. (1)

Executive Order 11494 of November 13, 1969

Establishing the Presidential Citizens Medal

By virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, it is ordered as follows:

Section 1. Medal Established.

The Presidential Citizens Medal (hereinafter referred to as the Medal), together with accompanying ribbons and appurtenances, is hereby established for the purpose of recognizing citizens of the United States of America who have performed exemplary deeds of service for their
country or their fellow citizens.

Sec. 2. Award of the Medal.

(a) The Medal may be bestowed by the President upon any citizen of the United States at the sole discretion of the President.
(b) The announcement of the granting of the Medal and the presentation ceremonies may take place at any time during the year.
(c) Subject to the provisions of this order, the Medal may be conferred posthumously.

Sec. 3. Design of the Medal.

The Army Institute of Heraldry shall prepare for the approval of the President a design of the Medal, citation, and ribbon.

Sec. 4. Prior Orders.

The establishment of the Medal shall not operate to terminate any other medal and this order shall not be deemed to supersede the whole or any part of any other Executive order.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
November 13, 1969.

Richard Nixon

The medal ranks second in Presidential awards, after the Presidential Medal of Freedom and before the third award, the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor. The medal was intended initially to be awarded to famous and or high ranking Americans that did not qualify for the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Beginning in 2010, President Obama began a program of nationally soliciting nominations of unknown special Americans that have dedicated much of their lives to selflessly serving others.


Recipients:
The first recipient of this medal was famed Porto Rican baseball player Roberto Clemente. He spent much of his time during the off-season involved in charity work. When Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua, was affected by a massive earthquake on Saturday December 23, 1972, Clemente (who had been visiting Managua three weeks before the quake) immediately began arranging emergency relief flights. He soon learned, however, that the aid packages on the first three flights had been diverted by corrupt officials of the Somoza government, never reaching victims of the quake.

Clemente decided to accompany the fourth relief flight, hoping that his presence would ensure that the aid would be delivered to the survivors. The airplane he chartered for a New Year's Eve flight, a Douglas DC-7, had a history of mechanical problems and sub-par flight personnel, and it was overloaded by 4,200 pounds. It crashed into the ocean off the coast of Isla Verde, Puerto Rico immediately after takeoff on Sunday December 31, 1972.

Clemente was the recipient of a total of three major National awards. President Richard Nixon, on May 14, 1973 Presented his family the Roberto Walker Clemente Congressional Gold Medal and the Presidential Citizens Medal. Later on July 23, 2003 President George W. Bush, presented his family Presidential Medal of Freedom. (3)

Citizens Medal Citation

"All who saw Roberto Clemente in action, whether on the diamond or on the front lines of charitable endeavor, are richer for the experience. He stands with the handful of men whose brilliance has transformed the game of baseball into a showcase of skill and spirit, giving universal delight and inspiration. More than that, his selfless dedication to helping those with two strikes against them in life has blessed thousands and set an example for millions. As long as athletes and humanitarians are honored, Roberto Clemente's memory will live; as long as Citizens Medals are presented, each will mean a little more because the first one went to him."(2)

President Regan presented the Presidential Citizens Medal to Mr. Raymond Weeks at a Veterans Day Ceremony on November 11, 1982
"For more than 50 years, Mr. Weeks has exemplified the finest traditions of American voluntarism by his unselfish service to his country. As director of the National Veterans Day Celebration in Birmingham, Alabama, for the past 36 years, Raymond Weeks, a World War II veteran himself, has devoted his life to serving others, his community, the American veteran, and his nation. He was the driving force behind the congressional action which in 1954 established this special holiday as a day to honor all American veterans." (1)

Some of the other recipients include (2):

- Henry "Hank" Aaron (2001)
- Albert Abramson (1998)
- David M. Abshire (1989)
- Clarence Alexander (2011)
- Muhammad Ali (2001)
- Juan Andrade (2001)
- Richard Lee Armitage
- Brooke Astor (1988)
- Hubert Dickey Ballantine (1981)
- Arnold O. Beckman (1989)
- Ezra Taft Benson (1989)
- Dr. Mitchell Besser (2008)
- James H. Billington (2008)
- Dr. Forrest M. Bird (2008)
- Milly Bloomquist (2011)
- James Scott Brady (1989)
- Jaime Escalante (1988)
• T. Berry Brazelton (2012)
• Ward Brehm (2008)
• Ruby Bridges (2001)
• Roberta Diaz Brinton (2010)
• Daisy M. Brooks (2010)
• Ronald H. Brown (2001) (Posthumous)
• William F. Buckley, Jr. (1989)
• Adam Burke (2012)
• Don R. Cameron (2001)
• Frank C. Carlucci (1983)
• Raymond Castellani (1995)
• Raymond G. Chambers (2008)
• Betty Kwan Chinn (2010)
• Cynthia M. Church (2010)
• Roberto Clemente (1973) (Posthumous)
• Bruce Cole (2008)
• Charles Colson (2008)
• Mary Jo Copeland (2012)
• Carol Coston, O.P. (2001)
• Archibald Cox (2001)
• Chester A. Crocker (1989)
• Arthur Culvahouse Jr. (1989)
• Rachel Davino (2012) (Posthumous)
• Joe Delaney (1983) (Posthumous)
• Charles DeLisi (2001)
• Bob Dole (1989)
• Michael Dorman (2012)
• General Wayne A. Downing, USA (Ret.) (2008)
• Samuel Nelson Drew (1995) (Posthumous)
• Kenneth M. Duberstein (1989)
• Lawrence Eagleburger (1991)
• Vijaya Lakshmi Emani (2011) (Posthumous)
• Mike Feinberg (2008)
• Edwin J. Feulner (1989)
• Arnold Fisher (2008)
• Max M. Fisher (1989)
• Zachary Fisher (1995)
• Marlin Fitzwater (1993)
• John P. Foley, S.J. (2008)
• Malcolm S. Forbes (1989)
• Donald R. Fortier (1989) (Posthumous)
• Robert C. Frasure (1995) (Posthumous)
• Robert M. Gates (1992)
• Robert P. George (2008)
• Susan Retik Ger (2010)
• Dana Gioia (2008)
• Maria Gomez (2012)
• C. Boyden Gray (1993)
• Jack Greenberg (2001)
• Elinor C. Guggenheimer (1997)
• Richard N. Haass (1991)
• Dorothy Height (1989)
• Charlton Heston (1989)
• David Hermelin (2000) (Posthumous)
• John S. Herrington (1989)
• Samuel J. Heyman (2008)
• David D. Ho (2001)
• Dawn Hochsprung (2012) (Posthumous)
• Don Hodel (1989)
• Mary K. Hoodhood (2010)
• Leamon Hunt (1984)
• Janice Jackson (2012)
• Pamela Green Jackson (2012)
• Bernice Young Jones (1996)
• I. King Jordan (2001)
• Herman Kahm (1989) (Posthumous)
• Max Kampelman (1989)
• Richard James Kerr (1991)
• Robert M. Kimmitt (1991)
• Russell Kirk (1989)
• Lane Kirkland (1989)
- Wendy Kopp (2008)
- Dr. Joseph C. Kruzel (1995)
- Dr. Donald W. Landry (2008)
- Janice Langbehn (2011)
- Patience Lehrman (2012)
- Dave Levin (2008)
- Anthony Lewis (2001)
- Alan Lovelace (1981)
- Jeanne Manford (2012) (Posthumous)
- Adair Margo (2008)
- Martin Mathews (1981)
- Oseola McCarty (1995)
- Kimberly McGuiness (2010)
- Bob Michel (1989)
- Jeffery L. Miller (2008)
- Billy Mills (2012)
- Irene Morgan (2001)
- Erwin Morse (2008)
- Constance Baker Motley (2001)
- Jorge Muñoz (2010)
• Anne Marie Murphy (2012) (Posthumous)
• William H. Natcher (1994)
• Lisa Nigro (2010)
• Dr. David Paton (1987)
• Claiborne Pell (1994)
• Pete Peterson (2000)
• Mary Ann Phillips (2010)
• Donald E. Powell (2008)
• Elizabeth Cushman Titus Putnam (2010)
• Anne-Imelda M. Radice (2008)
• Arnold Lewis Raphel (1989) (Posthumous)
• Susan Retik (2010)
• Rozanne L. Ridgeway (1989)
• Helen Rodriguez-Trias (2001)
• Adele Rogers (1973) (Wife of William P. Rodgers, Secretary of State)
• John F. W. Rogers (1985)
• Edward L. Rowny (1989)
• Edward Roybal (2001)
• Robert Rubin (2001)
• Senator Warren B. Rudman (2001)
• Charles Ruff (2001) (Posthumous)
• Myrtle Faye Rumph (2010)
• Lauren Rousseau (2012) (Posthumous)
- Elbert Rutan (1986)
- Richard Rutan (1986)
- Rabbi Arthur Schneier (2001)
- Eli J. Segal (2001)
- John F. Seiberling (2001)
- John Sengstacke (2001) (Posthumous)
- Mary Sherlach (2012) (Posthumous)
- Terry Shima (2012)
- The Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth (2001)
- Gary Sinise (2008)
- Victoria Soto (2012) (Posthumous)
- Larry Speakes (1987)
- Stuart K. Spencer (1989)
- Adrian St. John (1995)
- Elizabeth Taylor (2001)
- Strom Thurmond (1989)
- Armando Valladares (1989)
- John Volpe (1983)
- Vernon A. Walters (1989)
- Admiral James D. Watkins, USN (Ret.) (2008)
• Raymond Weeks (1982)
• John C. Whitehead (1989)
• Charles Z. Wick (1989)
• Marion Wiesel (2001)
• Harris Wofford (2012)
• Robert L. Woodson, Sr. (2008)
• Patrisha Wright (2001)
• Joseph R. Wriht, Jr. (1989)
• Sidney R. Yates (1993)
• Jeana Yeager (1986)

Hubert Dickey Ballantine and Martin Mathews were jointly awarded the 1981 Citizens Medal as founders of the Matthews-Dickey Boy's Club.

The teachers Rachel Davino, Anne Marie Murphy, Lauren Rousseau, Victoria Soto and school administrators Mary Sherlach and Dawn Hochsprung who perished in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting defending their students were jointly awarded the 2012 Citizen Medal posthumously.[1]

The medal is a disc of gilt and enamel, based on the Seal of the President of the United States, with the eagle surrounded by a wreath of leaves. The reverse has the raised words "To", a space for engraved naming, "From the President of the United States", There is a federal shield below, with a sprigs of Oak Leaves on each side. The medal is suspended on a ribbon, dark blue with a light blue central stripe and white edge stripes.
The President of the United States of America
Awards this
Presidential Citizens Medal
to
Lauren Rousseau

Rachel D’Avino, Dawn Hochsprung, Anne Marie Murphy, Lauren Rousseau, Mary Sherlach, and Victoria Soto dedicated themselves to their students and to the community of Newtown, Connecticut. Some had been at Sandy Hook Elementary School for only weeks; others were preparing to retire after decades of service. All worked long past the school bell
to give the children in their care a future worthy of their talents. On December 14, 2012,
unthinkable tragedy swept through Newtown, etching the names of these six courageous
women into the heart of our Nation forever. The United States honors Rachel D’Avino,
Dawn Hochsprung, Anne Marie Murphy, Lauren Rousseau, Mary Sherlach, and Victoria
Soto for their extraordinary commitment to the students of Sandy Hook Elementary School.

The White House
Washington, D.C.
February 15, 2013

Award document for Sandy Hook shooting victim Lauren Rousseau found on the OMSA Forum (4)
Jeanne Manford
(Posthumously)

In an era when peaceful protests were met with violence and coming out was a radical act, Jeanne Manford knew she had to stand by her son, Morty. Side by side, they marched proudly down the streets of New York on Stonewall’s anniversary, calling upon other parents of gay and lesbian Americans to show their children the same love and acceptance. Jeanne’s courage lives on in the progress she fought for and in PFLAG, the organization she founded, which today claims more than 200,000 members and supporters in over 350 chapters. For insisting that equality knows no bounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, the United States honors Jeanne Manford.
Example of machine engraving found on the reverse of the current Presidential Citizens Medal as awarded in 2012
George Weiss, an NCA volunteer at Fort Snelling National Cemetery, received the 2010 Presidential Citizens Medal from President Obama in a White House ceremony Aug. 4. George and 12 other people were selected to receive the medal from over 6,000 applicants.

Weiss is a founding member of the Fort Snelling National Cemetery Memorial Rifle Squad and a member of its Friday Squad. Since the Memorial Rifle Squad was founded in 1979, Weiss and the other members of the Memorial Rifle Squad have performed military honors every day there has been burials at Fort Snelling National Cemetery. For 30-plus years the Memorial Rifle Squad has performed this duty regardless of the sometimes extreme weather conditions in Minneapolis. So far they have performed military honors for more than 56,400 Veterans.

Weiss, one of six founding members of the rifle squad, began as the youngest member and is now the last survivor of the original six. The average age of the volunteers is 71.6 years old.
Mary Ann’s work is so extraordinary she was one of 13 Americans, out of 6,000 nominated in 2010, to be awarded by President Obama the Presidential Citizens Award, the 2nd highest civilian award our country has to offer.
This is recognition that is truly deserved. Mary Ann is a special, human being. From her citation,

To: MaryAnn Phillips, From Star Valley Ranch, WY

Caring for America’s injured service members, MaryAnn Phillips embodies strength and grace. An American citizen living in Germany, Phillips volunteers with Soldiers Angels at Landstuhl Air Force Base. She spends countless hours at the bedsides of our wounded warriors and their families, caring for them, encouraging them, and grieving with them. Phillips receives the Citizens Medal for putting her patriotism into action on behalf of our troops and our nation. (5)

References:


