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National Purple Heart Week, 1982

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Just 200 years ago, on August 7, 1782, General George Washington established the Honorary Badge of Distinction/Badge of Military Merit—which we now know as the Purple Heart—at Newburgh-on-Hudson.

When General Washington directed the creation of the Badge of Military Merit specifically to honor our lower-ranking soldiers, he demonstrated a philosophy unheard of in contemporary Europe, which reserved military honors for officers and members of the nobility. Thus, our Nation's first military award recognized the spirit of voluntarism and selfless dedication of the average American which has been so fundamental to the American way of life ever since.

After the Revolutionary War, the Purple Heart fell into disuse but was revived in 1932 by President Herbert Hoover as an award to be presented to Army personnel who were wounded or killed in combat against an enemy of the United States. It later was authorized for Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard personnel, and, now, all armed services personnel as well as certain civilian nationals are eligible to receive it.

Countless Americans have been wounded in combat while defending our great Nation against armed enemies. Because of the nature of their injuries, these Purple Heart recipients bear their battle wounds for life. Many more have made the supreme sacrifice, giving their lives for their country.

It is most fitting that this special group of veterans be recognized for their outstanding contributions to our Nation's security. It is also most fitting that we recognize the bicentennial anniversary of the creation of the Purple Heart and the fiftieth anniversary of its reestablishment as well as the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

The Congress, by House Joint Resolution 526, has authorized and requested the President to proclaim the first week in August as National Purple Heart Week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate the week beginning August 1, 1982, as National Purple Heart Week. I call on all Americans to join in honoring Purple Heart recipients who have served and those who still serve our Nation with distinction.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 30th day of July, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and seventh.

Ronald Reagan