

# Medal of Honor

## Pfc. John D. Magrath



Pfc. John D. Magrath enlisted on 4 March 1943 and joined the Army's newly formed division of mountain troopers—the 10th Mountain Division. Magrath served as a radio operator during combat operations in Italy and was killed by enemy artillery on 14 April 1945. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

Pfc. John D. Magrath became the first 10th Mountain Division soldier to receive the Medal of Honor when he was posthumously awarded the Nation's highest military honor for his actions on 14 April 1945 while serving with Company G, 85th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division, near the town of Castel d'Aiano, Italy. His citation reads,

He displayed conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty when his company was pinned down by heavy artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire, near Castel d'Aiano, Italy. Volunteering to act as scout, armed with only a rifle, he charged headlong into withering fire, killing two Germans and wounding three in order to capture a machine gun. Carrying this weapon across an open field through heavy fire, he neutralized two more machine-gun nests; he then circled behind four other Germans, killing them with a burst as they were firing on his company. Spotting another dangerous enemy position to his right, he knelt with the machine gun in his arms and exchanged fire with the Germans until he had killed two and wounded three. The enemy now poured increased mortar and artillery fire on the company's newly won position. Pfc. Magrath fearlessly volunteered again to brave the shelling in order to collect a report of casualties. Heroically carrying out this task, he made the supreme sacrifice—a climax to the valor and courage that are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service.

The medal was awarded on 18 July 1946 and presented to Magrath's family by a First Army officer (White House award ceremonies did not begin until 1980). Monuments were subsequently erected in Magrath's honor at Camp Funston on Fort Riley, Kansas, in 1955 and near Castel d'Aiano, Italy, in 2009.

In 1956, an elementary school in Norwalk, Connecticut, was named in his honor. And, in 1995, Fort Drum renamed its fitness facility the Magrath Sports Complex in his memory. ■



The Magrath Sports Complex has the distinction of bearing the name of the 10th Mountain Division's first soldier to receive the Nation's highest military honor. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)