



Specialist Five James C. McCloughan

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# MEDAL OF HONOR

## VIETNAM WAR

**M**ichigan native James C. McCloughan was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Donald J. Trump in a 31 July 2017 White House ceremony for actions “of gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty” from 13 to 15 May 1969 during the battle of Battle of Nui Yon Hill in the Republic of Vietnam. McCloughan is credited with saving the lives of at least ten soldiers while being wounded several times during the fight. During the ceremony—the first such award presented by Trump—the president described McCloughan’s bravery: “He would not yield, he would not rest, he would not stop, and he would not flinch in the face of sure death and definite danger.”

McCloughan, then a private first class, was assigned as a combat medic with Company C, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division, when the unit air assaulted into an area near the city of Tam Kỳ in Quảng Nam Province. “Charlie Company” came under heavy small arms and machine gun fire almost immediately, and two U.S. helicopters were shot down. McCloughan ran one hundred meters through the withering gunfire to reach a wounded pilot, and then he carried the pilot back through the fire to safety.

Later that day, a Charlie Company platoon conducting a reconnaissance patrol was ambushed by a large North Vietnamese Army force and suffered heavy casualties. McCloughan again exposed himself to enemy fire, running into the ambush to pull two soldiers to the safety of a nearby trench. He was wounded by a rocket-propelled grenade during the rescue, but he ignored a direct order to stay

back and moved into the fire four more times to save other soldiers. McCloughan refused evacuation to stay with the company.

As the fighting continued the next day, McCloughan was wounded a second time by small arms fire and shrapnel while aiding two wounded soldiers in a rice paddy. In the face of an attack from three sides by two North Vietnamese companies and seven hundred Viet Cong soldiers, he continued to expose himself to enemy fire to rescue wounded soldiers while fighting to repel the attack. That night, he volunteered to hold a strobe light in an open area, and still while under fire, to provide a marker for a much-needed resupply drop. He continued to fight and treat the wounded throughout the night.

McCloughan was inducted into the Pentagon’s Hall of Heroes on 1 August 2017 by Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis. In his remarks, Mattis remarked to the members of Charlie Company in attendance, “Jim held the beacon for you that night in 1969. Today he is the beacon and we are humbled and honored in holding him high—a guide to others to keep their souls fit and always do the best they can, always serve each other.”

There have been 3,517 Medals of Honor awarded as of 23 October 2017. This was the second awarded to a member of Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment. Another medic, Pfc. Dan Shea, received the award posthumously in 1971. Shea was killed during the same operation while carrying a wounded soldier to safety.

Read more about Jim McCloughan on the Army’s Medal of Honor site at <https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/mccloughan/>.



**Right:** Former Spec. 5 James C. McCloughan gives his remarks 1 August 2017 during the Medal of Honor Hall of Heroes induction ceremony at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. (Photo by Sgt. Alicia Brand, U.S. Army) **Above:** Graphic courtesy of U.S. Army.

