



Sgt. 1st Class Junior Dean Edwards

*Medal of Honor
Korean War*



This Month in NCO History: Jan. 2, 1951 – Glory At Changbong- Ni, Korea

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Sgt. 1st Class Junior Dean Edwards just missed out participating in World War II. But he soon cemented a place in history during the Korean War.

Edwards, born Oct. 7, 1926, in Indianola, Iowa, was drafted into the Army in 1945 just after his 18th birthday. He worked as a cook and was being trained as an infantryman when World War II ended. Edwards was discharged in August 1946 and took a brief respite from military life before re-enlisting in June 1947. By the end of 1950, he was a noncommissioned officer in the Korean War serving with E Company, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division.

A day after New Year's Day 1951, Edwards responded to a fierce enemy attack with gallant actions, acts during which he paid the ultimate price and for which he would receive the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military accolade.

That day — Jan. 2, 1951 — Edwards and his platoon were assisting in the defense of a strategic hill near Changbong-ni, Korea, located north of Cheong-song, where elements of the 2nd Infantry Division would suffer severe losses a month later.

Edwards' platoon was forced out of its position after the group came under fire from an enemy machine gun set up on adjacent high ground, according to his Medal of Honor citation. With his platoon pinned down, Edwards made the decision to charge the emplacement alone, hurling grenades as he advanced. The enemy withdrew, only to return after Edwards exhausted his ammunition. Edwards secured more grenades and again charged the machine gun's position. He reached the emplacement, killing the crew and neutralizing the weapon, but was forced back by hostile small-arms fire.

As Edwards renewed his supply of grenades a second time, the enemy emplaced another machine gun and resumed fire. Edwards rushed a third time into a hail of gunfire, silencing the second gun and eliminating its crew. Edwards was mortally wounded during the third assault but, according to the citation, "his indomitable courage and successful action enabled his platoon to regain and hold the vital strongpoint. ... Edwards'

consummate valor and gallant self-sacrifice reflect the utmost glory upon himself and are in keeping with the esteemed traditions of the infantry and military service."

Edwards was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously during a ceremony Feb. 1, 1952. Edwards Hall at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, and Camp Edwards near Kumchon, Korea, are both named after him. He is buried in Indianola. ■



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