



SgtMaj John L. Canley Receives the Medal of Honor

In a long-overdue ceremony at the White House in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 17, Sergeant Major John L. Canley, USMC (Ret) received the Medal of Honor for his gallantry and intrepidity from Jan. 31 through Feb. 6, 1968, while serving with “Alpha” Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment in the Republic of Vietnam. Then-Gunnery Sergeant Canley assumed command of the company and led numerous attacks against fortified positions. He repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire as he carried numerous Marines to safety despite his own wounds.

Sergeant Major Canley initially received the Navy Cross for his heroic actions, but the award was upgraded to the nation’s highest award for valor after a prolonged campaign by his fellow Marines from Alpha Co, 1/1.

(Editor’s note: To learn more about the process of upgrading SgtMaj Canley’s award, see page 14.)

Born in Caledonia, Ark., John Canley joined the Marine Corps at the age of 15 after using his older brother’s paperwork to enlist. He served for more than 28 years and retired as a sergeant major. His personal decorations include the Bronze Star with combat “V,” the Purple Heart, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with combat “V,” and the Combat Action Ribbon. Additional awards and decorations include seven Good Conduct Medals, the Rifle Expert Badge (11th Award) and the Pistol Expert Badge (16th Award).

Compiled from press releases

Above: SgtMaj John L. Canley, USMC (Ret) is introduced by President Donald J. Trump at the ceremony in which SgtMaj Canley received his Medal of Honor at the White House in Washington, D.C., Oct. 17.



WHITE HOUSE



CPL DAISHA JOHNSON, USMC

President Donald J. Trump places the Medal of Honor around the neck of Sergeant Major John L. Canley, USMC (Ret), at the White House in Washington, D.C., Oct. 17. Canley was the 300th Marine to receive the MOH.



The President of the United States in the name of The Congress takes pleasure in presenting the MEDAL OF HONOR to
GUNNERY SERGEANT JOHN L. CANLEY
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy while serving as Company Gunnery Sergeant, Company "A," First Battalion, First Marines, First Marine Division from 31 January to 6 February 1968 in the Republic of Vietnam. Company "A" fought off multiple vicious attacks as it rapidly moved along the highway towards Hue City to relieve friendly forces that were surrounded by enemy forces. Despite being wounded in these engagements, GySgt Canley repeatedly rushed across fire-swept terrain to carry his wounded Marines to safety. After his commanding officer was severely wounded, GySgt Canley took command and led the company into Hue City. At Hue City, caught in deadly cross fire from enemy machine gun positions, he set up a base of fire and maneuvered with a platoon in a flanking attack that eliminated several enemy positions. Retaining command of the company for three days, he led attacks against multiple enemy fortified positions while routinely braving enemy fire to carry wounded Marines to safety. On 4 February, he led a group of Marines into an enemy occupied building in Hue City. He moved into the open to draw fire, located the enemy, eliminated the threat and expanded the company's hold on the building room by room. GySgt Canley then gained position above the enemy strong point and dropped in a large satchel charge that forced the enemy to withdraw. On 6 February during a fierce firefight at a hospital compound, GySgt Canley twice scaled a wall in full view of the enemy to carry wounded Marines to safety. By his undaunted courage, selfless sacrifice, and unwavering devotion to duty, GySgt Canley reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

Right: Deputy Secretary of Defense Patrick M. Shanahan inducts SgtMaj John L. Canley, USMC (Ret), into the Hall of Heroes at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 18. Gen Robert B. Neller, left, Commandant of the Marine Corps; Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer, second from right; and SgtMaj Ronald L. Green, right, also participated in the ceremony.



SGT AMBER L. SMITH, USA





CPL DAMON MCLEAN, USMC

Left: SgtMaj John L. Canley, USMC (Ret), renders a salute during a parade held in his honor at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., on Oct. 19. It is tradition for the Barracks to host a parade for Marines who receive the Medal of Honor.



CPL DAISHA R. JOHNSON, USMC



SGT ROBERT KNAPP, USMC

Above: Gen Robert B. Neller, Commandant of the Marine Corps, left, presents the Medal of Honor Flag to SgtMaj John L. Canley, USMC (Ret), during a parade in his honor on Oct. 19 at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C.

Left: SgtMaj John L. Canley, USMC (Ret), gathered with fellow Marines from 1st Bn, 1st Marines at the White House on Oct. 17. The Marines were members of A/1/1 in Vietnam when Canley served as their company gunnery sergeant in 1968. Mrs. Dolia Gonzalez, mother of Sgt Alfredo Gonzalez, who posthumously received the Medal of Honor for his own heroic actions while serving with 1/1 at the time, in the wheelchair to the right of SgtMaj Canley, also attended the ceremony.