

America's National Veteran Award



Also in 1954 (the year Veterans Day officially became a federal holiday), Weeks and Birmingham established the National Veteran Award for “presentation each year to a United States citizen who has distinguished himself as a veteran.” Also from a “History

of National Veterans Day” compiled in 1981, “the award is presented in Birmingham on the evening before Veterans Day, at a banquet especially arranged to honor the recipient, which is a highlight of the celebration.” The World Peace Banquet shifted to a luncheon on Veterans Day prior to the parade. Honorees receive an “eagle plaque” and their name is engraved on a permanent National Veteran Award trophy maintained on display in Birmingham.

The first National Veteran Award was presented to the Honorable Edwin H. Rees in “recognition of his outstanding contribution sponsoring the bill that created Veterans Day for the nation.” Outstanding honorees have followed annually from across the United States.

A few of our personal favorites and those who may be especially well-known to our readers follow:

In 1970, General Omar Bradley, inaugural World Peace Banquet Speaker in 1947, returned as National Veteran Award honoree for his

“continuing contribution as General of the Army to the defense of his country and freedom throughout the world.”



In 1971, Birmingham honored for the nation Lt. General James Doolittle, “the man who led the famous bomber raid on Tokyo” to help end World War II. The U.S. also honored General Doolittle with the Medal of Honor.

In 1972, Brigadier General and film star James “Jimmy” Stewart was honored “for his continuous contribution in the field of motion pictures and television, and the entertainment of service men and women around the world.”

In 1973, the Award was presented to Brigadier General Charles Lindbergh “for his massive contribution in the field of conservation and development and particularly in the field of aviation since his ‘solo flight’ from New York to Paris in 1927.”

In 1976, Astronaut Neil Armstrong was honored “for his scientific feat of successfully landing on the moon.”

A few of the celebrity honorees likely well-known to you: film star Captain Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Admiral Hyman Rickover, General Alexander Haig, Senator Barry Goldwater, and Senator Howell Heflin.

In 2006, our Patriotism in Action nominee, Lt. General Hal Moore was honored. LTG Moore has been profiled in film and print for his extraordinary leadership as a battle commander in the movie starring Mel Gibson, “We Were Soldiers,” as well as in books and television documentaries.

In 2011, Colonel Bill Voigt (USAFR Retired) was honored for his 25 years of servant leadership as president of National Veterans Day. He stepped in as a leader after Raymond Weeks died in 1985 and soon was selected president. Bill’s loyal service and perseverance perpetuated a foundation laid by Weeks for another generation.

To learn more of the National Veteran Award Honorees, visit www.NationalVeteransDay.org.