

***For Immediate Release***

**16 August 2018**

At 10am on 31 August 2018, the non-profit foundation Purple Hearts Reunited and the Louisville Metro Police Department will reunite seven families with their lost Purple Heart Medals. The event will take place at the Louisville Metro Hall in the Mayor's Gallery, located at 527 W. Jefferson St. Louisville, Kentucky. This ceremony is open to the media.

The Purple Hearts were recently discovered within the evidence collection vault of the Metro Police Department. These medals were associated with a burglary case in 1995 and for unknown reasons, the medals were never claimed. For the last 23 years, these medals have been waiting to find their proper homes.

When servicemen and women are wounded or sacrifice their life in times of war, our country awards the service member or their family with a prestigious award in the form of the Purple Heart. Certain circumstances can lead to these medals being misplaced, lost, or even stolen. Below is a short description of the seven medals being returned in August.

**1. SK3c Kenneth L. Sullivan, WWII:** Storekeeper 3rd Class Kenneth Lee Sullivan was born 25 December 1913, the second oldest of five children of Arlie L. and Anna (Kleinhenz) Sullivan of Louisville, Kentucky. Kenneth worked as a Salesman for the Falls City Brewing Company before enlisting in the U.S. Navy on 25 June 1940. He was assigned to the U.S.S Astoria (CA-34), a New Orleans Class Heavy Destroyer. During this time, he served in Pearl Harbor, The Battle of the Coral Sea, Midway, and The Solomon's. During the Battle of Savo Island on 9 August 1942, the ship was attacked and sunk by 7 Japanese cruisers and 1 destroyer. 219 men were reported missing or killed. Storekeeper 3rd Class Kenneth Lee Sullivan was Killed in Action and is listed on the Walls of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, Manila, Philippines. His medal will be returned to his nephew Mr. Kevin Sullivan of Louisville, KY.

**2. 2LT Carl F. Ellinger, WWII:** 2nd Lieutenant Carl F. Ellinger was born 28 February 1917, the middle of three children to William W. and Marguerite (German) Ellinger of Louisville, Kentucky. Carl enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps, received his commission as 2nd Lieutenant and was assigned to the 579th Bomber Squadron, 329th Bomber Group, 2nd Bomb Wing, 8th Air Force, the Pilot of the B-24 Liberator, "B-Bar" stationed out of Wendling, Norfolk, England. He married the love of his life, Cerelda Bell Barker and from this union on 6 September 1944 they had a daughter Joyce Ann, though Carl never had the chance to meet her. On 24 April 1944 four months before the birth of his daughter, Carl was flying his eighth mission as squadron leader of a bombing raid. At 3:58 PM 2nd LT Carl Frederick Ellinger and his crew were shot down by the Germans over Meslin-Eveque, Belgium. Carl is interred at the Ft. McPherson National Cemetery, Maxwell, Nebraska. His medal will be returned to his daughter Ms. Joyce Ann Walker of Louisville, KY.

**3. Ensign Robert L. Leopold, WWII:** Ensign Robert Lawrence was born 11 November 1916, the youngest child of three to Lawrence and Ima (Schwabachs) Leopold of Louisville, Kentucky. Robert Leopold received his BA from the University of Louisville in 1938. He had been president of the Student Council and a member of the Law Honor Council and a football player. Robert enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserves on 12 Dec 1940. Following training in Wyoming, he was appointed midshipman 16 September 1940 and commissioned ensign 24 May 1941, reporting for duty on board the U.S.S Arizona (BB-39) on 22 Aug 1941. His administrative duty was Communications Watch Officer. Shortly before 08:00 local time on 7 December 1941, Japanese aircraft from six aircraft carriers struck the Pacific Fleet as it lay in port at Pearl Harbor, and wrought devastation on the warships and installations defending Hawaii. The bombs and subsequent explosion killed 1,177 of the 1,512 crewmen on board at the time including Ensign Robert Lawrence Leopold. In 1943, Leopold's sister Ms. Helen S. Leopold sponsored the USS Leopold (DE-319) an Edsall-Class Destroyer Escort built for the United States Navy. Named for Ensign Robert Lawrence Leopold she was the only U.S. Naval vessel to bear the name. Unfortunately, the ship was sank on 9 March 1944 just South of Ireland. He is listed as Missing in Action on the Tablets of the Missing, Honolulu Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) Honolulu, Hawaii. His medal will be returned to his son Mr. Thomas Plaut.

**4. F2c Lenvil L. Watkins, WWII:** Fireman 2nd Class Lenvil L. Watkins was born 30 September 1919 to Robert Albert and Mary (Pevelar) Watkins of Louisville, Kentucky. Lenvil enlisted for service in the US Navy on 5 October 1937 and was assigned to the U.S.S Arizona (BB-39), first stepping aboard her on 5 February 1938 in California. The Arizona was a Pennsylvania-class battleship

built for and by the United States Navy in the mid-1910s. Named in honor of the 48th state's recent admission into the union, the ship was the second and last of the Pennsylvania class of "super-dreadnought" battleships and was last stationed at Pearl Harbor. Shortly before 08:00 local time on 7 December 1941, Japanese aircraft from six aircraft carriers struck the Pacific Fleet as it lay in port at Pearl Harbor, and wrought devastation on the warships and installations defending Hawaii. The bombs and subsequent explosion killed 1,177 of the 1,512 crewmen on board at the time including Fireman 1st Class Lenvil Leo Watkins. He is listed as Missing in Action on the Tablets of the Missing, Honolulu Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) Honolulu, Hawaii. His medal will be returned to his niece Ms. Tina Darst.

**5. *SIc George J. Burch, WWII:*** Seaman 1st Class George Joseph Burch was born 26 Sep 1924, the second oldest of six boys to Daniel W. and Edna C (Putnam) Burch of Louisville, Kentucky. George grew up in Louisville and enlisted for service on 11 December 1942 in the US Naval Reserves. He attended training at Great Lakes Naval School and on 19 August 1943 he was assigned to the Fletcher Class Destroyer, U.S.S Halligan (DD-584). The Halligan was assigned to carrier escort duty, submarine patrols and bombardments of several beachheads. In total the Halligan earned six Battle Stars for the Occupation of Kwajalein, Majuro and Eniwetok atolls. Marianas, Leyte Gulf, Luzon Lingayen Gulf Landings, Iwo Jima Assault and the Okinawa campaign. On 26 March 1945, off the coast of Okinawa, his ship hit a mine which exploded her two forward magazines. Most of the survivors gathered on the fantail but George wasn't among them. The Halligan lost 165 out of a total complement of 325 men, including 20 of 22 officers. He is listed as Missing in Action on the Tablets of the Missing, Honolulu Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) Honolulu, Hawaii. His medal will be returned to his brother Dr. Kenneth Burch.

**6. *F1c Wilbert T. Bray, WWII:*** Fireman First Class (F1c) Wilbert T. Bray was born 21 Jun 1908, the third of five children to James M. and Sally (Collins) Bray of Louisville, Kentucky. In 1940, Wilbert married Thelma H. Jacob and had a son Thomas Wilbert Bray. On 12 Feb 1944, Wilbert enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserves and was assigned to the Fletcher Class Destroyer, U.S.S Bush (DD-529). Fc1 Bray was present for bombardments at New Guinea, Battle of Leyte in the Philippines, and the landings at Iwo Jima. The U.S.S Bush met her end during the final campaign of the war on 6 April 1945, when she was hit by 5 Japanese Kamikaze planes near Okinawa. Seventy-nine officers and men were killed that day and Fc1 Bray was listed on the tablets of the missing at the Honolulu, Hawaii National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl). His medal will be returned to his son Mr. Thomas Bray.

**7. *PFC Clarence A. Allgeier, WWII:*** Private First Class Clarence A. Allgeier was born 14 Oct 1925, the youngest son of four to Joseph E. and Rose V. Schoenbachler Allgeier in Louisville, Kentucky. When Clarence was six weeks old his mother passed away in her rocking chair while rocking him to sleep. Clarence's aunt Mary "Mayme" Raque stepped in to help raise Clarence. Clarence attended school in Louisville, graduated from Xavier high school and worked for Plainview Dairies before entering the Army in December 1943. In December 1944 Clarence was shipped overseas and assigned to Company I, 3rd Battalion, 255th Infantry Regiment, 63rd Infantry Division serving in the European Theatre. On evening of 16 February 1945 under intense enemy 88 artillery, mortar and machine gun fire, PFC Clarence A. Allgeier was Killed in Action on a hill overlooking Wiesviller, France. He is buried at the Epinal American Cemetery and Memorial, France. His medal will be returned to his niece Ms. Jackie Allgeier-Carslen.

The original Purple Heart, designated as the Badge of Military Merit, was established by George Washington – then the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army – by order from his Newburgh, New York headquarters on August 7, 1782. The Badge of Military Merit was only awarded to three Revolutionary War soldiers by Gen. George Washington himself. General Washington authorized his subordinate officers to issue Badges of Merit as appropriate. From then on, as its legend grew, so did its appearance. Although never abolished, the award of the badge was not proposed again officially until after World War I. General Douglas MacArthur, confidentially reopened work of a new design and by Executive Order of the President of the United States, the Purple Heart was revived on the 200th Anniversary of George Washington's birth, out of respect to his memory and military achievements, by War Department General Order No. 3, dated February 22, 1932. Today, the Purple Heart is a United States military decoration awarded in the name of the President to those wounded or killed while serving, on or after April 5, 1917.

An estimated 1.8 Million Purple Hearts have been awarded in our nation's history. Today, in addition to being awarded to those who fight overseas, the Purple Heart is also given to military personnel who display bravery and valor as prisoners of war and while fighting certain types of domestic terrorist.

[Purple Hearts Reunited](#) is a nonprofit foundation that returns medals of valor to veterans or their families in order to honor their sacrifice to the nation. Since its beginning, the organization has returned over 500 lost medals, traveled over 100,000 miles, visited over 42 States, and has directly affected the lives of over 1 Million people. They were also recently highlighted on the popular History Channel show American Pickers.

## CONTACTS

PHR Founder: Zachariah Fike, 315-523-3609 or [purpleheartsreunited@gmail.com](mailto:purpleheartsreunited@gmail.com)

PHR Executive Director, Sarah Corry, 802-734-7715 or [sarah@purpleheartsreunited.org](mailto:sarah@purpleheartsreunited.org)

PHR Director of Operations, Jessica Jaggars, 802-349-9667 or [jessica@purpleheartsreunited.org](mailto:jessica@purpleheartsreunited.org)