

NAVY CROSS



BILLY HOWARD

Gunnery Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps
E Company, 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, 3rd Marine Division (Reinforced)
Quang Ngai Province, Republic of Vietnam, 21 March 1966
Entered service at: Hialeah, Florida

Citation:

The President of the United States takes pride in presenting the Navy Cross (Posthumously) to Billy Howard (554586), Gunnery Sergeant, U.S. Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism as Company Gunnery Sergeant, Company E, Second Battalion, Fourth Marines, THIRD Marine Division (Reinforced), Fleet Marine Force, during Operation TEXAS in Quang Ngai Province, Republic of Vietnam on 21 March 1966. Upon arrival in its assigned helicopter landing zone, Company E came under withering enemy small-arms and automatic weapons fire from three directions. The volume and effectiveness of this fire forced the battalion to modify its tactical plan and move Company E to a newly designated line of departure. Braving heavy enemy fire, Gunnery Sergeant Howard moved from heli-team to heli-team as they arrived in the landing zone providing instructions for this re-disposition of forces. Once deployed on their assigned line of departure, and upon completion of preparatory air and artillery fires, Company E commenced an assault against the hamlet of Phuong Dinh (2). After crossing an open rice paddy, and when within twenty-five meters of the objective, Company E was struck with a vicious fusillade of small arms, automatic weapons, recoilless rifle, and mortar fire. The volume and intensity of the enemy fire immediately inflicted numerous friendly casualties and had the majority of the company pinned down, unable to move in any direction. Seeing his Company Commander trapped in heavy cross fire and incapable of movement, Gunnery Sergeant Howard immediately seized the initiative and dashed forward from a relatively secure position to the point of furthest contact. With full knowledge that his life was in jeopardy, he moved among the dead and wounded and supervised their evacuation to the rear. In complete defiance of the enemy and braving certain death, he rallied his fellow Marines to leave their covered positions and continue the assault. His indomitable fighting spirit, fearless leadership, and outstanding courage inspired his men to charge aggressively forward and destroy the enemy fortifications. Mortally wounded during this assault, Gunnery Sergeant Howard, by his great personal valor and unswerving devotion to duty, reflected great credit upon himself, the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.