

After Braving Gunfire To Save Comrades, Army Vet Gets Highest U.S. Military Honor

Monday, May 19, 2014 | Greg Botelho and Ashley Fantz, CNN

Kyle White now has two pieces of metal to wear -- one, a bracelet inscribed with the names of his six comrades killed in an ambush in Afghanistan, the other, a Medal of Honor given to him for his valor that ensured that death toll wasn't higher.



Speaking minutes after President Barack Obama gave him the highest military honor, White insisted the two emblems are equally significant. They both represent his family on that day six years ago -- the seven others who, like him, survived as well as those who did not. The former Army sergeant said Tuesday he owes it to these men, whom he calls "my heroes," to live his life well, even now that he's left the military, and with honor.

"Though I am still uncomfortable with hearing my name and the word 'hero' in the same sentence, I am now ready for

the challenge of proudly wearing this piece of blue fabric and carved metal with the same reverence that I wear the bracelet. And I vow to live up to the responsibility of doing so," White said.

Not long before, Obama recalled White's bravery and that of his colleagues. The President paid tribute to those who died that fall day in Afghanistan and those who survived. They had done everything their country could ask for and more. "Kyle, members of Chosen Company, you did your duty," Obama said. "And now it's time for America to do ours."

White himself insisted that the Medal of Honor cannot really be an individual award, calling it "a testament to the trust we have in each other and our leaders." Still, the President said that he deserved to be singled out. A high school freshman when the Twin Towers fell on September 11, 2001, White joined the Army and was just 20 years old and 21 months into his military service when he faced the ultimate test. He aced it, and in doing so represented the best of what Obama called the "9/11 generation (which) has proven itself to be one of America's greatest."

"Today," the President said to a crowd that included White, his parents and many of his former comrades, "we pay tribute to a soldier who embodies the courage of his generation."

Attacked in 'ambush alley'

On Tuesday, White dressed in full uniform. But on most other weekdays, he now wears a suit to his job as an investment analyst at a bank in Charlotte, North Carolina -- a job that he's admitted to Obama, with a laugh, is less exciting than his previous job in the Army.

The Washington state native joined up after high school, following the lead of his father, a former Army Special Forces member. His service had, like many other members of the military, earned him a ticket to Afghanistan as his platoon's radio telephone operator. He was there on November 9, 2007, walking back from a meeting with elders with his unit of 14 and a squad of Afghan army soldiers. "They knew not to stop, they had to keep moving," Obama recalled of the group walking single-file with a cliff to their right and a steep, rocky slope to their left. "They were heading into an area known as ambush alley."

In an interview prior to the award ceremony, White told CNN how the group walked "down this little incline and looking into the valley, (when) I hear this single shot. Then two shots, then the echo, then fully automatic gunfire." Taking so much fire, members of his patrol were separated as they tried to take cover. White was finishing off his first magazine and beginning to load another one when a rocket-propelled grenade exploded, knocking him unconscious. Moments after he came to, an enemy round hit a rock just inches from his head. The shrapnel and rock fragments cut his face. Dazed, he struggled to take in what was happening. He and four others had been separated from the other soldiers, who'd jumped from a cliff. White administered first aid to one wounded soldier using the only cover available: a single tree. That soldier would survive. It was at that point in the attack that White realized his radio wasn't working. He looked out and saw a member of his patrol about 30 feet away whose wounds were so bad that he could not move. White ran toward him, braving enemy fire. White was able to drag the wounded man back to the tree. But the man's injuries were too severe, and he died.

Risking death, again and again

White continued to risk himself to help his fellow warriors, again running from cover into enemy fire to reach the platoon leader. White told the military publication [Stars and Stripes](#) that he could see the

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leader's helmet and assault pack, but he couldn't tell whether the leader was alive. White had to see, he said. White crawled toward the man. It was too late. He was dead. White figured he would be killed. But he would do what he was trained to do. He would carry out his duty. "It was never a choice," he explained to CNN. "I told myself from the beginning that I was going to be killed, you know... just the amount of fire ... I'm not gonna make it through this." But he kept focused. The soldier White had dragged to the tree earlier was hit again, this time in the knee, so the White wrapped his belt around the man's leg, creating a tourniquet. Then White found a working radio on a deceased comrade and called for artillery and helicopter gunships to help. Finally, maybe, there could be hope. But then a friendly mortar round landed near White. "I remember just red hot chunks of metal like the size of my palm just flinging by your head," he told Stars and Stripes. Suffering a concussion, White managed to hang on, waiting for helicopters to evacuate him and others with him that day. When help arrived, he told his rescuers to put the other wounded aboard first.

A soldier, changed

Speaking with National Public Radio this week, White said the experience -- from the violence to the wait -- seemed like "forever." And it hasn't entirely gone away, all these years later. "It's something you still think about every day," White said. "I still have these images from that day burned into my head. But it's something, as time goes on, it gets easier." But something inside him changed, he said. "Even to this day, you know, I can't say if it was something good or bad. ..." he told NPR. "And that was pretty much the reason why I decided to leave the Army."

White first returned home and trained other paratroopers. When it came time for White to re-enlist, he thought hard about whether doing so felt right. He decided against it because he doubted that he could devote his complete heart and mind to it, he told NPR. It was unacceptable to him to continue in the service and then, perhaps, be deployed to Afghanistan. Service members deserve a leader who is all in, he explained.

Obama called him on February 10 to tell him he'd be given the Medal of Honor. He's the 10th recipient of that award for his actions in Afghanistan, and the seventh surviving recipient. Four service members received the Medal of Honor -- all posthumously -- for actions in the war in Iraq, according to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

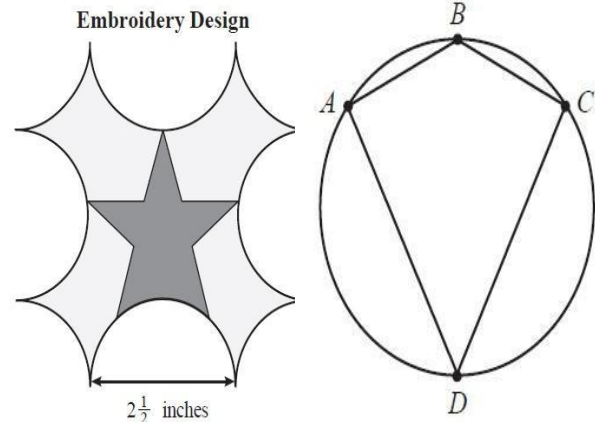
In a brief statement to reporters after Tuesday's ceremony, White called the Medal of Honor "a symbol of the responsibility all soldiers knowingly face when they depart for distant lands in defense of the nation, a responsibility that locks us all in the bonds of brotherhood." As such, White couldn't help but think about his brothers in arms. "Without the team," he said, "there could be no Medal of Honor. That is why I wear this medal for my team."

1. In appropriate paragraph form, compare and contrast the pros and cons associated with an inadvertent delay in recognizing heroic actions. What essential components should one take into consideration prior to nominating one for the Medal of Honor? Identify specifically what is meant by President Obama's statement, "Kyle, members of Chosen Company, you did your duty. "And now it's time for America to do ours." Thoroughly explain your reasoning and provide specific artifacts and evidence *not* limited solely to article above to support your response. Create and illustrate a Venn Diagram to effectively explore relationships and patterns and to make arguments about relationships between sets.

(LA.910.3.2.2; LA.910.1.6.2; MA.912.D.7.2; MA.912.A.10.1)

2. Suffering a concussion, White miraculously managed to persevere, waiting for helicopters to evacuate him and others with him that day. When help arrived, he told his rescuers to put the other wounded aboard first. Supposedly, while eagerly anticipating the aforementioned aerial recovery operation, White secured the perimeter via detonating a series of explosive devices. To address the unforgiving terrain, a projectile was dispensed at an initial upward velocity of approximately 88 feet per second with a starting height of precisely 6 feet intended for an enemy insurgent strategically positioned 40 yards away. Write the equation in standard form. Evaluate the discriminant by employing the vertical motion formula to determine if the ball will reach the receiver. **(MA.912.A.10.1; MA.912.A.7.2; MA.912.A.7.8)**

3. Comparable to a memorial bracelet inscribed with the treasured names of his six fallen comrades killed in an ambush in Afghanistan, a military marketing organization created an embroidery design of a stylized star emblem. The perimeter of the design is made by alternating semicircle and quarter-circle arcs. Each arc is formed from a circle with a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch diameter. There are 4 semicircle and 4 quarter-circle arcs, as shown in the diagram below. To the nearest whole inch, identify the perimeter of the figure to acquire an estimate as to how much material will be required. An alternative more simplistic design was created by a local competitor as an inscribed kite enclosed within a circle. If the measure of arc ADC is 255° , what is the measure, in degrees, of $\angle ADC$? Explain your reasoning. **(MA.912.G.6.5)**



4. Using contextual clues only, determine the most complete and accurate definitions of following italicized terms: *inscribed*, *ambush*, *valor*, *reverence*, *testament*, *embodies*, *ambush*, *embodies*, and *posthumously* as obtained from the passage above. Additionally, use each word in a complete sentence to demonstrate further comprehension. **(LA.910.1.6.3; LA.910.1.6.1)**

5. Identify and thoroughly support your reasoning regarding which of the following that best describes the author's attitude toward military personnel: flippant disregard, mild frustration, passive resignation or an informed citizen. Explain the intended purpose of this article and identify any indicators or supporting evidence, which suggest the author may possess a bias for or against Kyle White receiving the Medal of Honor years after his heroic actions. Provide an inference previously discharged service members who've have committed acts of heroism above and beyond the call of duty may derive from this material. The point of view employed throughout the passage is best described as first person, second person, third person, or a combination of first and thirst person. Explain specifically how the image above contributes to the validity of the aforementioned passage. **(RI.9-10.1 – 10.6)**

6. **SARASOTA MILITARY ACADEMY WORD-OF-THE-WEEK** Provided the fact that the passage is incomplete, create an updated concluding paragraph aligned with the passage above incorporating the italicized term: *Unbridled* adj. Unbounded; unrestrained. **(LA.910.1.6.1; LA.910.1.6.5)**

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