

FOUR FREED TRENTON 6 DEFENDANTS VOW TO FIGHT FOR OTHER TWO

HOMELESS GI HONORED

Orphan Soloist Given Nation's Highest Medal

Congressional Medal of Honor, First Since Spanish-American War, Goes to Youth Found on Park Bench; He Was an 'Excellent Singer, Bright, Cheerful Youth' Who Called Orphanage Home

By STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Greater love hath no man than this . . .

NEW YORK—One cold day in November, seven years ago, the Rev. Harry C. Eva, founder and head of the Home for Homeless Boys at 462 E. 158th St., was walking in Union Park, at that time a famous meeting place for Communist sympathizers.

Curled upon one of the benches was a shivering, slim youth of 15, who thankfully accompanied him to the home and a warm bed and food.

Last week, official announcement came that that same youth had earned his country's highest military award for gallantry in action on the Korean front, where he gave his life to defeat Communist terrorism.

Was Wounded Repeatedly

He is Pfc. William Thompson, 22, a member of Company M, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Division, who was wounded repeatedly in an enemy attack near Haman, Korea, last August 6, but continued to pour machine gun fire into the attacking Red forces until he was killed.

Pfc. Thompson remained at the home, a non-sectarian institution supported by voluntary contributions, to become one of its special charges and to gain prominence as a soloist on the home's Samaritan Center choir.

The Rev. Mr. Eva, a Presbyterian minister and himself an orphan, explained for the AFRO how the fatherless youth, the product of a broken home, had come to be considered a member of his own family. "My wife and I," he said, "found Willie to be a youngster of unusual character. He was helpful, cheerful and willing, and very close to us."

He Was So Small . . .

"Like William Summerford, who is our organist and pianist now, Willie was our head worker at Sunday school services. And when he left us to enter the service, I really felt that I'd be lonely without him."

With a catch in his voice, the Rev. Mr. Eva recalled, "Willie was so small, though, I really didn't expect the Army to take him. But when he came back, proudly showing off his uniform, I told him I knew he'd make a good soldier." He was so small, though, I really didn't expect the Army to accept him. But when he came back, proudly showing off his uniform, I told him I knew he'd make a good soldier."

Called It His Home

One of the rules of the orphan home is that youngsters who leave to get jobs cannot return to live but this was waived in the case of Willie, who was always welcome to come back, the Rev. Mr. Eva said. Up until he entered the Army at Ft. Dix, N.J. in January, 1948, he called the two-story building, just off Melrose Ave., his home, and gave it as his address.

On June 21, at 11 a.m. in the Pentagon Building, in the Nation's Capital, General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will present Pfc. Thompson's Brooklyn, Harry Henderson, the soldier's stepfather and an unemployed elevator operator, will also attend.

First in 53 Years

The award to Pfc. Thompson will be the first to a colored soldier since the Spanish-American War, 53 years ago. Fourteen received the honor in the Indian War, twenty-one in the Civil War and six in the Spanish War, including Dennis Bell, 85, 1713 Sixth St., N.W., Washington, only living recipient. No colored soldier received the award in World Wars I and II.

Eyewitness Account

An eye witness account of the heroic soldier's action is given by his platoon leader, 2nd Lt. Herbert H. Wilson, 111 Morningside Ave., New York City.

"On the night of August 6, I was platoon leader of the 1st Platoon of Company M which was attached to a task force securing a small village. After delivering supporting fire for the task force we were ordered to go out of action and move to an assembly area nearby. Shortly after we got there we were attacked by a large number of enemy troops.

One Gun Knocked Out

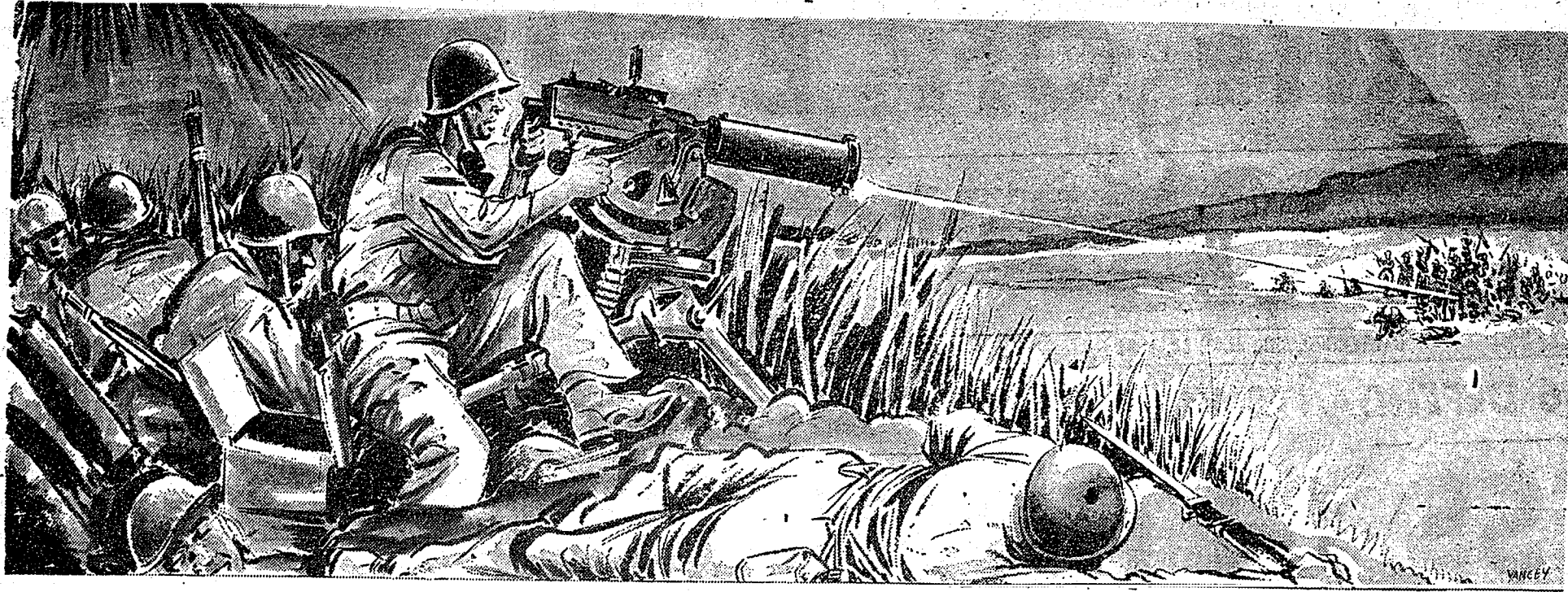
"I ordered my section to set up their machine guns and open fire. Shortly after opening fire the No. 2 gun of the section was forced to go out of action due to heavy enemy fire.

"However, Pfc. William Thompson, gunner on the other gun, remained in position and continued to fire when the order was given to withdraw. I ordered Pfc. Thompson to withdraw with the rest.

"At this time I saw that he had been wounded in several places and was bleeding profusely.

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Heroic New York Soldier Who Lost Life in Korea Awarded Congressional Medal



"Singing Willie" Thompson held the Korean roadway alone, covering the retreat of his comrades until he was killed.

—Medal of Honor

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ly. Pfc. Thompson said that he had been hit and was not going to move back but would cover beyond the call of duty and brought honor to himself, the military service and to his company."

What Citation Says

The Medal of Honor citation for Pfc. Thompson reads as follows:

"Pfc. Thompson, Company M, 24th Infantry Regiment, United States Army, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy near Haman, Korea on 6 August 1950.

"Then, if he could not get out, he would take a lot of the enemy with him."

Refused to Be Pulled Away

"The squad leader, Cpl. Washington and another man then tried to pull Thompson away from the gun, but he fought them and succeeded in getting back to the gun and began firing again.

"When I left the area, Thompson was still firing and the enemy, who by then were very close, were throwing grenades at him."

General Matthew B. Ridgway, Commander in Chief of the Far Eastern Command, gave this recognition to the gallantry of Pfc. Thompson:

"This splendid soldier fought with distinct gallantry and fortitude for the ideals of freedom and protection of his fellow soldiers. His personal bravery and self-sacrifice were far above and be-

States Army, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy near Haman, Korea on 6 August 1950.

"While his platoon was reorganizing under cover of darkness, fanatical forces in overwhelming strength launched a surprise attack on the unit. Pfc. Thompson set up his machine gun in the path of the onslaught and swept the enemy with withering fire, beating them down momentarily, thus permitting the remainder of his platoon to withdraw to a more tenable position.

"Although hit repeatedly by grenade fragments and small arms fire he resisted all efforts of his comrades to induce him to withdraw, steadfastly remained at his machine gun and continued to deliver deadly, accurate fire until mortally wounded by an enemy grenade.

Pfc. Thompson's dauntless courage gallant sacrifice reflects the highest credit on himself and upholds esteemed traditions of the military service."

Was Liked by All

Col. Arthur S. Champeny, commander of Pfc. Thompson's regiment, in a letter to the soldier's mother, said:

"Your son was liked by all of his associates. He was a swell soldier, performing all tasks assigned to him in a cheerful and efficient manner, thereby winning the commendation of his immediate superior and the respect of his comrades.

"News of his death comes as a severe shock to all of us."



Mrs. Mary Henderson, New York City, reads telegram announcing her son, Pvt. William Thompson, killed in Korea, had been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the first such award in 62 years.