

Above and Beyond

Documentary shows why Pueblo's Medal of Honor recipients are heroes

Learning about the Medal of Honor and the soldiers who have received it changes people.

Pueblo filmmaker Brad Padula learned that firsthand as he filmed *Beyond the Medal of Honor*, a documentary about his city's four Medal of Honor recipients. The work left him awestruck by the lives and sacrifices not just of these men, but of all veterans and active-duty military.

The Medal of Honor recognizes heroism, but it is about something more, Padula says. It embodies going above and beyond the call of duty.

Pete Lemon echoes that sentiment. Lemon is author of the book, *Beyond the Medal*, which details the stories of 90 Medal of Honor recipients. He is also one of the youngest living recipients of the Medal of Honor and a motivational speaker.

"The film describes what these people are made of, what was important to them when they were growing up, and how they grew up and who influenced them," says Lemon, who resides in Colorado Springs.

The Medal of Honor has existed since 1862, when President Abraham Lincoln signed it into law. It is the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force that can be bestowed by Congress on an individual serving in the U.S. armed forces.

Pueblo has raised four men who were awarded the Medal of Honor, the most recipients found in any city in the United States.

Padula's film, which debuted on PBS on Veterans Day 2004, describes the essence of the award through each man's story. The film blends interviews with recipients, eyewitnesses, historians, family and colleagues, as well as footage and photos from the National Archives.

Beyond the Medal of Honor grew out of a contract Padula's company, Capture It Productions, had to record a Medal of Honor gathering held in Pueblo in 2000. The highlight of the event was the unveiling of four bronze statues depicting Pueblo's Medal of Honor recipients.



Filmmaker Brad Padula (center), co-producer Frank Provenza (left) and photographer John Schymos worked together on *Beyond the Medal of Honor*.

“During that time, Medal of Honor recipient Pete Lemon approached me and mentioned that we ought to do a documentary on these four guys.”

Soon after that initial conversation, Pueblo Medal of Honor recipient William J. Crawford passed away.

Lemon, who eventually became a co-producer and partner on the project, called Padula again to suggest that they cover Crawford’s funeral, which they did in March of 2000.

A month later, a second of the four recipients passed away. Carl L. Sitter was to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

“So, we hustled out to Washington, and that’s really when it dawned on me that this was a great story,” Padula says.

The project became a passion. Over the next few years Padula and lead photographer John Schymos filmed interviews with surviving Pueblo Medal of Honor recipients Raymond G. “Jerry” Murphy and Drew D. Dix. They also acquired existing interviews with Sitter and Crawford and footage from the National Archives.

“As producers, I don’t know that we did anything all that great,” Padula says. “We just turned the camera on these men who told their stories, which are just phenomenal stories.”

Lemon also approached the H. Ross Perot Foundation for funding, and Perot underwrote production costs and an accompanying high school curriculum, purchasing copies of the film for more than 17,000 public and private high schools across the United States.

Padula says the lessons the film captures and shares examine patriotism, leadership, courage, honor and duty.

“It’s inspiring,” he adds. “You walk away. You go to your job the next day, and there might be things you do differently.”

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