

= Ross A. McGinnis =

Ross Andrew McGinnis ( June 14 , 1987 ? December 4 , 2006 ) was a United States Army soldier who was killed in the Iraq War and was posthumously awarded the United States ' highest decoration for bravery , the Medal of Honor . While serving as the gunner in a HMMWV , his convoy was attacked and a hand grenade was thrown into his vehicle . McGinnis was subsequently killed in action when he deliberately threw himself on the grenade , saving the lives of at least four other soldiers in the vehicle . He was the fourth soldier to receive the Medal of Honor during the Iraq War , which was presented to his family following his death .

= = Early life and education = =

McGinnis was born in Meadville , Pennsylvania on June 14 , 1987 to Romaine and Tom McGinnis . Although he was born in Meadville he grew up in Knox , 90 miles north of Pittsburgh , after his family moved there when he was three . When he was in kindergarten , his teacher gave him a paper that at the top said " When I grow up , I want to be \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ " and he wrote " an Army Man " . When he was growing up he became involved in the Boy Scouts of America , enjoyed working on cars , and was an athlete playing multiple sports . He played basketball and soccer through the YMCA , and Little League baseball . He attended Clarion County public schools and graduated from Keystone Junior / Senior High School in 2005 . He had two sisters , Becky and Katie .

= = Career = =

McGinnis had wanted to be a soldier since kindergarten and joined the Army through the Delayed Entry Program on his 17th birthday , on June 14 , 2004 . Following basic training at Fort Benning , Georgia , he was assigned to the 1st Battalion , 26th Infantry Regiment , in Ledward Barracks , in Schweinfurt , Germany .

In August 2006 , aged 19 , the regiment was deployed to eastern Baghdad and he was serving as a .50 caliber machine @-@ gunner in a HMMWV during operations against insurgents in Adhamiyah . On December 4 , while his platoon was on mounted patrol in Adhamiyah , a grenade was thrown into his vehicle . He shouted a warning to the other four men in the vehicle , so they could prepare for the blast . When one of the men responded they could not see where the device had landed , instead of jumping out of the gunner 's hatch , McGinis threw his back over the grenade , absorbing the bulk of the blast . He was killed instantly , but the other occupants were able to survive with only minor injuries .

He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia and his grave can be found in section 60 , site 8544 . Since the beginning of the Iraq War , he is one of five known United States servicemembers who have thrown themselves on a live grenade . The other personnel known to have done this are Marine Corporal Jason Dunham , Navy SEAL Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael A. Monsoor , Marine Corporal Kyle Carpenter , and Marine Sergeant Rafael Peralta . McGinnis was the fourth recipient of the Medal of Honor in the course of the Iraq War .

A ceremony was held in the east room of the White House on June 2 , 2008 in which the medal was presented to his family by President George W. Bush . In addition to his family and the President , many other notable people attended the ceremony , including the Vice President , the Secretary of Veterans Affairs James Peake , Secretary of the Army Pete Geren , Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne , General Jim " Hoss " Cartwright , and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs . Several members of Congress also attended as did members of McGinnis ' unit from Iraq , including the other soldiers from the vehicle he sacrificed his life to save .

= = Awards and decorations = =

In addition to the Medal of Honor he also received a posthumous promotion to specialist as well as the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart .

= = = Medal of Honor citation = = =

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty :

Private First Class Ross A. McGinnis distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as an M2 .50 @-@ caliber Machine Gunner , 1st Platoon , C Company , 1st Battalion , 26th Infantry Regiment , in connection with combat operations against an armed enemy in Adhamiyah , Northeast Baghdad , Iraq , on December 4 , 2006 .

That afternoon his platoon was conducting combat control operations in an effort to reduce and control sectarian violence in the area . While Private McGinnis was manning the M2 .50 @-@ caliber Machine Gun , a fragmentation grenade thrown by an insurgent fell through the gunner 's hatch into the vehicle . Reacting quickly , he yelled " grenade , " allowing all four members of his crew to prepare for the grenade 's blast . Then , rather than leaping from the gunner 's hatch to safety , Private McGinnis made the courageous decision to protect his crew . In a selfless act of bravery , in which he was mortally wounded , Private McGinnis covered the live grenade , pinning it between his body and the vehicle and absorbing most of the explosion .

Private McGinnis ' gallant action directly saved four men from certain serious injury or death . Private First Class McGinnis ' extraordinary heroism and selflessness at the cost of his own life , above and beyond the call of duty , are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself , his unit , and the United States Army .

= = = Other honors = = =

A PBS Special Report chronicled the life of McGinnis as told by his parents , friends and the people of his hometown of Knox , Clarion County , Pennsylvania .