

= John Basilone =

John Basilone (November 4 , 1916 ? February 19 , 1945) was a United States Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant who received the nation 's highest military award for valor , the Medal of Honor , for heroism during the Battle of Guadalcanal in World War II . He was the only enlisted Marine to receive both the Medal of Honor and the Navy Cross in World War II .

He served three years in the United States Army with duty in the Philippines . He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1940 and was deployed to Guantánamo Bay , Cuba , and then to Guadalcanal where he held off 3 @, @ 000 Japanese troops after his 15 @-@ member unit was reduced to two other men . On the first day of the Battle of Iwo Jima , he was killed in action , after which he was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism . He has received many honors including being the namesake for streets , military locations , and a United States Navy destroyer .

= = Early life = =

Basilone was born in his parents ' home on November 4 , 1916 in Buffalo , New York , the sixth of ten children . His first five siblings were born in Raritan , New Jersey , but the family was living in Buffalo when John was born ; they returned to Raritan in 1918 . His father , Salvatore Basilone , emigrated from Colle Sannita , in the province of Benevento , Italy in 1903 and settled in Raritan . His mother , Dora Bencivenga , was born in 1889 and grew up in Manville , New Jersey , but her parents , Carlo and Catrina , also came from Benevento . His parents met at a church gathering and married three years later . Basilone grew up in the nearby Raritan Town (now Borough of Raritan) where he attended St. Bernard Parochial School . After completing middle school at the age of 15 , he dropped out prior to attending high school .

= = Military service = =

= = = U.S. Army = = =

Basilone worked as a golf caddy for the local country club before joining the military . He enlisted in the United States Army in July 1934 and completed his three @-@ year enlistment with service in the Philippines , where he was a champion boxer . In the Army , Basilone was initially assigned to the 16th Infantry at Fort Jay , before being discharged for a day and reenlisting and being assigned to the 31st Infantry .

After he was released from active duty , he returned home and worked as a truck driver in Reisterstown , Maryland . After driving trucks for a few months , he wanted to go back to Manila , and believed he could get there faster in the Marines than in the Army .

= = = U.S. Marine Corps = = =

He enlisted in the Marine Corps in July 1940 from Baltimore , Maryland . He went to recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island , followed by training at Marine Corps Base Quantico and New River . The Marines sent him to Guantánamo Bay , Cuba for his next assignment , and then to Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands as a member of D (Dog) Company , 1st Battalion , 7th Marines , 1st Marine Division (D / 1 / 7) .

= = = Guadalcanal = = =

During the Battle for Henderson Field , his unit came under attack by a regiment of approximately 3 @, @ 000 soldiers from the Japanese Sendai Division . On October 24 , 1942 , Japanese forces began a frontal attack using machine guns , grenades , and mortars against the American heavy machine guns . Basilone commanded two sections of machine guns that fought for the next two

days until only Basilone and two other Marines were left standing . Basilone moved an extra gun into position and maintained continual fire against the incoming Japanese forces . He then repaired and manned another machine gun , holding the defensive line until replacements arrived . As the battle went on , ammunition became critically low . Despite their supply lines having been cut off by enemies in the rear , Basilone fought through hostile ground to resupply his heavy machine gunners with urgently needed ammunition . When the last of it ran out shortly before dawn on the second day , Basilone held off the Japanese soldiers attacking his position using his pistol . By the end of the engagement , Japanese forces opposite their section of the line were virtually annihilated . For his actions during the battle , he received the United States military 's highest award for valor , the Medal of Honor .

Afterwards , Private First Class Nash W. Phillips , of Fayetteville , North Carolina , recalled from the battle for Guadalcanal :

Basilone had a machine gun on the go for three days and nights without sleep , rest , or food . He was in a good emplacement , and causing the Japanese lots of trouble , not only firing his machine gun , but also using his pistol .

= = = = War bond tours and marriage = = = =

In 1943 , after receiving the Medal of Honor , he returned to the United States and participated in war bond tours . His arrival was highly publicized and his hometown held a parade in his honor when he returned . The homecoming parade occurred on Sunday , September 19 and drew a huge crowd with thousands of people , including politicians , celebrities and the national press . The parade made national news in Life magazine and Fox Movietone News . After the parade , he toured the country raising money for the war effort and achieved celebrity status . Although he appreciated the admiration , he felt out of place and requested to return to the operating forces fighting the war . The Marine Corps denied his request and told him he was needed more on the home front . He was offered a commission , which he turned down , and was later offered an assignment as an instructor , but refused this as well . He requested again to return to the war and this time the request was approved . He left for Camp Pendleton , California , for training on December 27 .

While stationed at Camp Pendleton , he met his future wife , Lena Mae Riggi , who was a Sergeant in the Marine Corps Women 's Reserve . They were married at St. Mary 's Star of the Sea Church in Oceanside , on July 10 , 1944 , with a reception at the Carlsbad Hotel . They honeymooned at an onion farm near Portland .

= = = = Iwo Jima = = = =

After his request to return to the fleet was approved , he was assigned to Charlie Company , 1st Battalion , 27th Marine Regiment , 5th Marine Division during the invasion of Iwo Jima . On February 19 , 1945 , he was serving as a machine gun section leader in action against Japanese forces on Red Beach II . During the battle , the Japanese concentrated their fire at the incoming Marines from heavily fortified blockhouses staged throughout the island . With his unit pinned down , Basilone made his way around the side of the Japanese positions until he was directly on top of the blockhouse . He then attacked with grenades and demolitions , single @-@ handedly destroying the entire strong point and its defending garrison . He then fought his way toward Airfield Number 1 and aided a Marine tank that was trapped in an enemy mine field under intense mortar and artillery barrages . He guided the heavy vehicle over the hazardous terrain to safety , despite heavy weapons fire from the Japanese . As he moved along the edge of the airfield , he was killed by Japanese mortar shrapnel . His actions helped Marines penetrate the Japanese defense and get off the landing beach during the critical early stages of the invasion . He was posthumously awarded the Marine Corps ' second @-@ highest decoration for valor , the Navy Cross , for extraordinary heroism during the battle of Iwo Jima .

Based on his research for the book and mini @-@ series The Pacific , author Hugh Ambrose

suggested that Basilone was not killed by a mortar , but by small arms fire that hit him in the right groin , the neck and nearly took off his left arm .

= = = = Burial = = = =

He was interred in Arlington National Cemetery in Section 12 , Grave 384 , grid Y / Z 23 @. @ 5 .
Lena M. Basilone died June 11 , 1999 , at the age of 86 , and was buried at Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside , California . Lena 's obituary notes that she never remarried , and was buried still wearing her wedding ring .

= = Awards and decorations = =

GySgt . Basilone 's military awards include :

= = = Medal of Honor citation = = =

Basilone 's Medal of Honor citation reads as follows :

The President of the United States in the name of The Congress takes pride in presenting the
MEDAL OF HONOR to

SERGEANT JOHN BASILONE

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

for service as set forth in the following CITATION :

For extraordinary heroism and conspicuous gallantry in action against enemy Japanese forces , above and beyond the call of duty , while serving with the 1st Battalion , 7th Marines , 1st Marine Division in the Lunga Area , Guadalcanal , Solomon Islands , on 24 and 25 October 1942 . While the enemy was hammering at the Marines ' defensive positions , Sgt. BASILONE , in charge of 2 sections of heavy machine guns , fought valiantly to check the savage and determined assault . In a fierce frontal attack with the Japanese blasting his guns with grenades and mortar fire , one of Sgt. BASILONE 'S sections , with its gun crews , was put out of action , leaving only 2 men able to carry on . Moving an extra gun into position , he placed it in action , then , under continual fire , repaired another and personally manned it , gallantly holding his line until replacements arrived . A little later , with ammunition critically low and the supply lines cut off , Sgt. BASILONE , at great risk of his life and in the face of continued enemy attack , battled his way through hostile lines with urgently needed shells for his gunners , thereby contributing in large measure to the virtual annihilation of a Japanese regiment . His great personal valor and courageous initiative were in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service .

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

= = = Navy Cross = = =

Basilone 's Navy Cross citation reads as follows :

The President of the United States takes pride in presenting the NAVY CROSS posthumously to

GUNNERY SERGEANT JOHN BASILONE

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

for service as set forth in the following CITATION :

For extraordinary heroism while serving as a Leader of a Machine @-@ Gun Section , Company C , 1st Battalion , 27th Marines , 5th Marine Division , in action against enemy Japanese forces on Iwo Jima in the Volcano Islands , 19 February 1945 . Shrewdly gauging the tactical situation shortly after landing when his company 's advance was held up by the concentrated fire of a heavily fortified Japanese blockhouse , Gunnery Sergeant BASILONE boldly defied the smashing bombardment of heavy caliber fire to work his way around the flank and up to a position directly on top of the blockhouse and then , attacking with grenades and demolitions , single handedly destroyed the entire hostile strong point and its defending garrison . Consistently daring and aggressive as he

fought his way over the battle @-@ torn beach and up the sloping , gun @-@ studded terraces toward Airfield Number 1 , he repeatedly exposed himself to the blasting fury of exploding shells and later in the day coolly proceeded to the aid of a friendly tank which had been trapped in an enemy mine field under intense mortar and artillery barrages , skillfully guiding the heavy vehicle over the hazardous terrain to safety , despite the overwhelming volume of hostile fire . In the forefront of the assault at all times , he pushed forward with dauntless courage and iron determination until , moving upon the edge of the airfield , he fell , instantly killed by a bursting mortar shell . Stouthearted and indomitable , Gunnery Sergeant BASILONE , by his intrepid initiative , outstanding skill , and valiant spirit of self @-@ sacrifice in the face of the fanatic opposition , contributed materially to the advance of his company during the early critical period of the assault , and his unwavering devotion to duty throughout the bitter conflict was an inspiration to his comrades and reflects the highest credit upon Gunnery Sergeant BASILONE and the United States Naval Service . He gallantly gave his life in the service of his country .

For the President , JAMES FORRESTAL
Secretary of the Navy

= = Other honors = =

Basilone has received numerous honors , including the namesake of a United States Navy destroyer , a postage stamp and several plaques , monuments , geographical landmarks , a bust in San Diego 's Little Italy in a piazza named for him , Piazza Basilone , and a residential building at Montclair State University . In 2011 , Basilone was inducted into the New Jersey Hall of Fame .

= = = USS Basilone (DD 824) = = =

The United States Navy commissioned USS Basilone , a Gearing @-@ class destroyer , in 1949 . The ship 's keel was laid down on July 7 , 1945 , in Orange , Texas , and launched on December 21 , 1945 . His widow , Sergeant Lena Mae Basilone , sponsored the ship .

= = = USS John Basilone (DDG 122) = = =

The future USS John Basilone (DDG 122) will be commissioned in 2019 .

= = = Marine Corps buildings and landmarks = = =

The Marine Corps has named infrastructure after him on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton , including an entry point onto the base from Interstate 5 called " Basilone Road " ; a section of U.S. Interstate 5 running through the base called " Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone Memorial Highway " ; and a parachute landing zone called " Basilone Drop Zone " .

= = = Namesakes from outside the Marine Corps = = =

In addition to the honors bestowed from the Marine Corps , a wide variety of non @-@ military institutions have also chosen their name based on Basilone . Some of these include : the football field at Bridgewater @-@ Raritan High School is called " Basilone Field " , and on the wall of the fieldhouse next to the field is a mural honoring Basilone ; the Knights of Columbus Council # 13264 in his hometown is named in his honor ; an overpass at the Somerville Circle in Somerville , New Jersey on U.S. Highway 202 and 206 that goes under it ; the New Jersey Turnpike bridge across the Raritan River is named the " Basilone Bridge " ; the new Bridge that crosses the Raritan River in Raritan at First Avenue and Canal Street ; a memorial statue featuring him holding a water @-@ cooled Browning machine gun is located at the intersections of Old York Road and Canal Street in Raritan (childhood friend Phillip Orlando sculpted the statue) ; a plaque at the United States Navy Memorial in Washington , D.C. ; a bust in Little Italy San Diego at Fir and India Streets (the war

memorial is dedicated to residents of Little Italy who served in World War II and Korea , and the area is called Piazza Basilone) ; the Order of the Sons of Italy In America Lodge # 2442 in Bohemia , New York is named in his honor ; and the Raritan Public Library has the Basilone Room where memorabilia about him is kept . In 1944 , Army Barracks from Washington State were moved to a site in front of Hansen Dam in Pacoima , California and rebuilt as 1 @, @ 500 apartments for returning GIs . This development was named the Basilone Homes and was used until about 1955 . The site is now a golf course .

= = = Parade = = =

The memorial parade for Basilone along Somerset Street in his hometown of Raritan has been held since 1981 and became a celebration of the close @-@ knit community .

= = = In media = = =

On November 10 , 2005 , the U.S. Postal Service issued the " Distinguished Marines " stamps honoring four Marine Corps heroes including Basilone .

The 1967 film First to Fight features Chad Everett as " Shanghai Jack " Connell , a character based on " Manila John " Basilone .

The Pacific (2010 miniseries) : Basilone along with two other Marines became the basis of a 10 @-@ part HBO miniseries The Pacific . Actor Jon Seda stars as Basilone .

In Episode 6 of the 2007 PBS documentary " The War : A Ken Burns Film " showed footage of a backpack with the name J Basilone stenciled on it .