

VFW Recognizes Pfc. Milton L. Olive III

Olive became the first African-American Medal of Honor recipient of the Vietnam War

Feb 13, 2020

Today, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) recognizes Medal of Honor recipient U.S. Army Pfc. Milton L. Olive III.

Olive joined the Army in his birth city of Chicago, Ill., in 1964 and by 1965 was serving in Company B, 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam.



Pfc. Milton L. Olive III

On Oct. 22, 1965, Olive's platoon faced a heavy volume of enemy fire and were pinned down temporarily. The platoon then retaliated by assaulting the Viet Cong positions causing the enemy to flee. As the platoon pursued the insurgents, Olive and four other soldiers were

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moving through the jungle together when a grenade landed in their midst. Without thinking of his own welfare, Olive grabbed the grenade and fell on top of it to absorb the blast saving the lives of his fellow soldiers.

For his bravery, selflessness and ultimate sacrifice, Olive was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on April 21, 1966, when President Lyndon B. Johnson presented the medal to his father and stepmother.

Olive became the first African-American Medal of Honor recipient of the Vietnam War.

Olive was a true hero and selfless soldier who placed the lives of his fellow soldiers before self in defense of freedom.

This is part of a series of VFW feature articles to be published throughout February 2020, highlighting African-American veterans who have made outstanding contributions to our military and society.