

Remembering Corporal Dunham

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Next to being elected president, the greatest honor bestowed on an American is the Congressional Medal of Honor, awarded for extraordinary courage in battle. A Medal of Honor winner is so venerated in the military that officers stand up when an enlisted medal recipient enters a room. The award is not given out lightly. In World War I, 124 Medals of Honor were awarded. In World War II, with millions mobilized, only 464 were. In Korea, there were 132 recipients. In Vietnam, 245 Medals of Honor were bestowed.

In Iraq, there'd been only one, Sgt. Paul Ray Smith, whose valor in the early days of the war was recounted in these pages last year by Fred Barnes ("A War Without Heroes? Only If You're Reading the Mainstream Media," December 26, 2005). Then, on November 10, President Bush announced that a second Medal of Honor for bravery in Iraq would be awarded (posthumously, like Sgt. Smith's) to Marine Corporal Jason Dunham.

In April 2004, Dunham was struggling in hand-to-hand combat with a terrorist. When the terrorist rolled a grenade near his fellow Marines, the president said, "Corporal Dunham did not hesitate. He jumped on the grenade to protect his fellow Marines. He used his helmet and his body to absorb the blast." He died so that members of the Marine squad he led would live. Bush got choked up as he talked about Dunham.

Dunham's story was news, especially since the medal is awarded so rarely. The Associated Press wrote a story about Dunham. The Washington Post ran a brief story. Katie Couric mentioned Dunham on the CBS Evening News. On NBC's morning Today show, Campbell Brown interviewed Dunham's parents.

But America's supposed paper of record, the New York Times, took no notice of the award in its nationally circulated print edition. (The paper ran a short AP story online.) The rarity of the award argued for front-page treatment, and one of the Times's rivals, the New York Post, put Dunham on page one. The Times's other rival, the Daily News, found room for two stories--one on the president's announcement and another on how the news was greeted in Dunham's hometown of Scio, N.Y. Everyone knows the Times is antiwar. That doesn't make ignoring a home-state Medal of Honor winner any less unprofessional.