



NATIONAL
MEDAL of HONOR
MUSEUM FOUNDATION



JOHN BACA

BRANCH: UNITED STATES ARMY

RANK: SERGEANT (RETIRED)

COMBAT: VIETNAM WAR

MEDAL OF HONOR ACTION: *WHILE SERVING ON A RECOILLESS-RIFLE TEAM, THEN SPECIALIST 4 BACA PARTICIPATED IN A MISSION TO INVESTIGATE THE DETONATION OF AN AUTOMATIC AMBUSH DEVICE WHICH OCCURRED FORWARD OF HIS UNIT'S MAIN POSITION. WHILE ON THE MISSION A FRIENDLY PLATOON WAS AMBUSHED BY ENEMY FORCES NEAR-BY. SPC. 4 BACA RELOCATED HIS RECOILLESS RIFLE TO THE PLATOON'S DEFENSIVE PERIMETER. AT THAT TIME THE ENEMY LOBBED A GRENADE AT HIS POSITION. WITHOUT REGARD FOR HIS OWN LIFE, SPC. 4 BACA QUICKLY PLACED HIS HELMET OVER THE GRENADE AND THEN LAID ON HIS HELMET, ABSORBING THE BLAST. SPC. 4 BACA'S SELFLESS ACTION SAVED LIVES OF EIGHT FELLOW SOLDIERS.*

MEDAL OF HONOR CITATION: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Sp4c. Baca, Company D, distinguished himself while serving on a recoilless-rifle team during a night ambush mission. A platoon from his company was sent to investigate the detonation of an automatic ambush device forward of his unit's main position and soon came under intense enemy fire from concealed positions along the trail. Hearing the heavy firing from the platoon position and realizing that his recoilless-rifle team could assist the members of the besieged patrol, Sp4c. Baca led his team through the hail of enemy fire to a firing position within the patrol's defensive perimeter. As they prepared to engage the enemy, a fragmentation grenade was thrown into the midst of the patrol. Fully aware of the danger to his comrades, Sp4c. Baca unhesitatingly and with complete disregard for his own safety, covered the grenade with his steel helmet and fell on it as the grenade exploded, thereby absorbing the lethal fragments and concussion with his body. His gallant action and total disregard for his personal well-being directly saved eight men from certain serious injury or death. The extraordinary courage and selflessness displayed by Sp4c. Baca, at the risk of his life, are in the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit on him, his unit, and the U.S. Army.