

“OUR NATION’S HIGHEST HONOR”

“Our Nation’s Highest Honor” is a HoustonPBS production that will air in September in conjunction with the premiere of the new Ken Burns series “The War”. The HoustonPBS program is intended to add a local perspective to the broader national series on World War II. In his preliminary research the program’s producer, Jim Fisher, identified over thirty regional topics on the war and home front for consideration, of those only two topics selected for production. Although many of the other topics are significant, and may be produced at a later date, this story was selected because it showcases an exceptional group of veterans who distinguished themselves far beyond their peers. The program will lay out their contributions and the personal qualities of this unique group of men, all of whom believe their accomplishments are little more than what any other person would have done under the circumstances.

An important aspect of this program is that it will embrace the entire broadcast region served by HoustonPBS. This approach presents many challenges, including finding and interviewing appropriate family members, as well as the complex logistics involved in securing their stories for the production. The family connections reach as far away as the San Antonio and Dallas areas, and also include Port Arthur, Sugar Land, Eagle Lake, Madisonville and College Station. Of the nine principle veterans to be featured only one, Congressional Gold Medal recipient Mr. Matthew Plummer, is still living.

The Medal of Honor for individual gallantry was established by Gen. George Washington in 1782, since that time only 3,459 have been awarded, 614 of those posthumously. Just 31 of these medals were attributed to the state of Texas in World War II, this program will include eight of those recipients. Two of CMOH recipients from our area are Hispanic, underscoring the contributions of this culture to the united effort of our country during this global conflict.

A united effort notwithstanding, no African American soldier was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in the Second World War. A half century elapsed before that oversight was addressed when seven veterans, all having received the Distinguished Service Cross for valor during the war, were subsequently awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1997.

A decade later; by act of Congress, the Congressional Gold Medal, the nations highest civilian award, was given to the Tuskegee Airmen in 2007. A member of that group, and one of the unit's select group of flight instructors responsible for shaping the careers of these famous aviators, will be one of the individuals featured.

The program is intended to go beyond the single event that brought each of these men "**Our Nations' Highest Honor**", it will allow the viewer to know who they were, why they served; and, for those that returned from the war, what they accomplished with their lives. The program will illustrate how their memories continue to be honored by the U. S. military, and by their respective communities; serving true even for those who made the supreme sacrifice during the war. Their names are recorded to history, used to name streets, and attached to buildings, but no broadcast in this area has ever honored them as a group. This program will provide a proper tribute to these great men.

Primarily told through the memories of their family members, the following men will be included in "**Our Nations' Highest Honor**":

1. Lucian Adams, - Port Arthur, Texas
Congressional Medal of Honor for action October 28, 1944
2. Eugene Everhart, Sr. - Texas City, Texas
Congressional Medal of Honor for action November 12, 1944
3. James Fields - Houston, Texas
Congressional Medal of Honor for action on September 27, 1944
4. Macario Garcia - Sugar Land, Texas
Congressional Medal of Honor for action on November 27, 1944
5. Johnnie D. Hutchins (KIA) - Weimer/Eagle Lake, Texas
Congressional Medal of Honor for action on September 4, 1943
6. Thuman Kimbro (KIA) - Madisonville, Texas
Congressional Medal of Honor for action on December 19, 1944
7. Raymond L. Knight (KIA) - Houston, Texas
Congressional Medal of Honor for action on April 24, 1945
8. Eli Whiteley - Georgetown/College Station, Texas
Congressional Medal of Honor for action on December 27, 1944
9. Matthew Plummer (LIVING) - Houston, Texas
Congressional Gold Medal as Tuskegee Airman, Flight Trainer