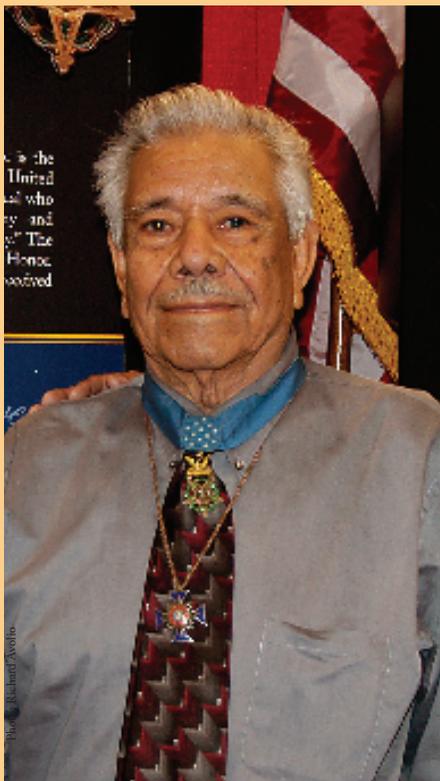


TWO OF ARIZONA'S LATINO MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS



Silvestre H. Herrera, World War II Private First Class, U.S. Army, Company E., 142d Infantry, 36th Infantry Division.

On March 15, 1945 Herrera advanced with his platoon along a wooded road near Mertzwiller, France, until they were stopped by heavy enemy machinegun fire. As the rest of the unit took cover, Herrera made a one-man frontal assault on the strong point and captured eight enemy soldiers.

When the platoon resumed its advance it was subjected to fire from a second machinegun nest beyond an extensive minefield. Pvt. Herrera again moved forward, disregarding the danger of exploding mines, to attack the position. He stepped on a mine and lost a foot.

Despite his injury, he staggered ahead on his good leg, only to step on a second mine, losing his remaining foot. With both of his feet severed, despite intense pain and continuing blood loss, Herrera began fighting on his knees. He pinned down the enemy with accurate rifle fire while a friendly squad captured the enemy guns by skirting the minefield and rushing in from the flank.

Herrera's extraordinary courage and heroism resulted in the capture of two enemy strong points and the taking of eight prisoners.

Jay Vargas, Vietnam Major (then Capt.) Vargas, U.S. Marine Corps, Company G, 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade.

On May 1, 1968, though suffering from wounds he had incurred while relocating his unit under heavy enemy fire the previous day, Maj. Vargas led Company G and two other companies in an attack on Dai Do, a fortified village.

He maneuvered his men across 700 meters of open rice paddy while under intense enemy mortar, rocket and artillery fire. The troops gained a foothold in two hedgerows on the enemy perimeter, only to be held down by intense enemy fire.

Leading his reserve platoon to help the beleaguered men, Maj. Vargas inspired his men to renew their advance, while taking out a number of enemy bunkers. He refused aid after being wounded by grenade fragments. Vargas moved about the hazardous area, re-forming his unit into a strong defense perimeter at the edge of the village.

Just after the village was secured, the enemy began a series of counterattacks, which lasted throughout the night but were unsuccessful, as Company G stood firm. The marines launched a renewed assault through Dai Do, and on to the village of Dinh To after receiving reinforcement the next morning. However, the enemy launched a massive counterattack, resulting in hand-to-hand combat. Vargas remained in the open, encouraging and helping his marines when he was hit a third time in the three-day battle.

His battalion commander sustained a serious wound, and Vargas, disregarding his own pain, crossed the fire-swept area and carried his commander to a safer position, then resumed encouraging his men in the open while helping to organize the battalion's perimeter defense.



Photo: David Leal