

# John Basilone



## One-Man Army

The success of the Allied assault on Guadalcanal hinged on the skills of the machine gunner, and there was none better than Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone.

During the defense of the Marine airstrip in late October of 1942, Basilone was everywhere at once: manning a machine gun; repairing a weapon in the dark while under fire; racing barefoot to the supply dump to grab 132 pounds of ammunition and returning to distribute it to his comrades so they could fend off the murderous assault; ordering the repositioning of a machine gun and directing its fire; and roving back and forth to trouble spots, all the while shouting words of encouragement and inspiring his men with his courage and stamina.

Within days after the battle, Basilone received the Congressional Medal of Honor. After a hero's welcome home and a short stint as a spokesman for war bonds, Basilone returned to the front, remarking, "I'm staying with my boys." He perished during the assault on Iwo Jima, earning him the Navy Cross.

Basilone is the only enlisted man in World War II to receive the nation's two highest awards for valor. And With a postage stamp released in his honor in 2005 and a 2010 HBO miniseries on the war in the Pacific featuring him prominently, it is clear his bravery resonates even today.



### **YEAR BORN/DIED**

1916-1945

### **WAR**

World War II

### **RANK/ORGANIZATION**

Gunnery Sergeant  
U.S. Marine Corps

### **PLACE/DATE OF HEROIC ACT**

Lunga Area, Guadalcanal,  
Solomon Islands  
October 24-26, 1942

### **COMPANY/DIVISION**

1st Battalion, 7th Marines,  
1st Marine Division

### **WHEN/WHERE INDUCTED**

July 11, 1940  
Baltimore, Maryland

### **CITY OF BIRTH**

Buffalo, New York