

Courage and Calvin Graham

The year was 1942. World War II was under way and Calvin Graham was eager to serve his country. His enthusiasm to join was contagious and impressed the Naval recruiting sergeant. Soon, Calvin was a member of the U.S. Navy.

Calvin was assigned to the S.S. South Dakota. He served in a number of battles during his tour, one of which he shot down 7 enemy planes.



S.S. South Dakota

But it would be the battle at Guadalcanal that would truly make him a hero.

At one point during the battle, his ship drew heavy fire and was hit in a number of places. The attack left many wounded and dead. Calvin Graham volunteered to stay aboard ship and help evacuate the casualties, risking his own life in the process.

Receiving burns in a number of different places didn't deter Calvin from completing his job of rescuing a number of fellow sailors.

For his heroism, Calvin Graham received the Presidential Citation, Bronze Star for Bravery, and The Purple Heart. No doubt Calvin was a hero.

However, a year into his service Calvin received orders to return home and report to headquarters for disciplinary action.

That's right, disciplinary actions.

His shipmates wondered what was going on, why he was suddenly taken off the ship and transferred out. He was not only a hero to them, but a valuable member of the crew.

Once his plane arrived in Corpus Cristee Texas, Calvin was immediately arrested and put in the brig (Navy jail). After a 2 months stay, he was stripped of all his medals, his service record erased as though it never existed, and was tossed out of the service. Not honorably discharged, but rather thrown out with no indication he even served.

His crime?

I guess you could say his crime was that he was too anxious to serve his country.

Or maybe you can say that he had the extraordinary skill of convincing people to see things his way.

But the crime on the books in the Navy records tell all. He was too young to enlist.

You see, Calvin Graham, the sailor who shot down 7 enemy planes, risked his life to evacuate the men on the ship that day, the person who would receive the Bronze Star for bravery among several other medals,

Calvin Graham...

was just 12 years old.