



## WINGS of VALOR

*Honoring America's Aces*

### FACT SHEET ABOUT AMERICA'S ACES

- ***Wings of Valor: Honoring America's Fighter Aces***, is a commemorative book to preserve the legacy of these heroic men and their aerial combat achievements. The book consists of contemporary black and white photographs of the Aces, along with their stories of the combat actions that made them heroes.
- **Definition of An Ace:** A combat pilot who received a special distinction by destroying five or more hostile aircraft in air-to-air combat. This includes Aces in World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam.
- There were 60,000 aviator pilots from both World Wars, the Korean War and Vietnam War and only 1,450 of them (less than 2%) achieved Ace status.
- Of the 1,450 American Aces, 17 Aces were also awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, 4 of which will be featured in the *Wings of Valor* book.
- When the WOV project began in mid-2012, there were 160 living Aces. The project has been a race against time: only 79 are alive today and most are in their 90s.
- The 79 remaining Aces reside in 25 different states.
- The youngest living Ace, Brigadier General R. Steven Ritchie, USAFR (Ret) is the Air Force's only Ace pilot of the Vietnam War.
- The living American Ace credited with the most confirmed aerial combat kills is Colonel C. E. "Bud" Anderson, with 16 ¼ kills.
- The American Ace with the most confirmed aerial combat kills was Major Richard I. Bong, with 40 kills. Major Bong died in 1945, after he had returned to the U.S. He died testing a new plane out of Burbank, CA.
- The American Fighter Aces Association (AFAA) was founded in 1960 to recognize the 1,450 American combat pilots that received the special distinction of becoming an Ace during both World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam.
- Lieutenant General Charles G. "Chick" Cleveland currently serves as the AFAA's President.
- The Museum of Flight is the home of the AFAA. Located in Seattle, Washington, the Museum is one of the largest air and space museums in the world, attracting more than 400,000 visitors annually.
- The Congressional Gold Medal is an award bestowed by the United States Congress to persons who have performed an act that has an impact on American history and culture that is likely to be recognized as a major achievement in the recipient's field long after the actual achievement.
- The first such medal was awarded to George Washington in 1776. A single Gold Medal will be awarded collectively in honor of the American Fighters Aces in recognition of their heroic military service and defense of our country's freedom throughout the history of Aviation warfare. The official award ceremony will be held in Emancipation Hall of the U.S. Capitol on May 20, 2015. Efforts are being taken by the AFAA to assure the attendance of as many Aces as possible at the award ceremony and the following reception.



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### HISTORY OF ACE GOLD MEDAL LEGISLATION:

- February 14, 2013: Bill H.R. 685 was introduced by Rep. Sam Johnson of Texas
- May 19 -20, 2014: Passed Congress with a unanimous vote
- May 23, 2014: Signed by President Barack Obama and became Public Law 113-105
- May 20, 2015: Official award ceremony to be held in honor of the AFAA and Aces in Emancipation Hall of the U.S. Capitol

### BACKGROUND ON LEAD PHOTOGRAPHER AND AUTHOR

#### **Lead Photographer**

Nick Del Calzo is the Creator and Photographer of *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty*. The book became a New York Times Best Seller. The Medal of Honor collection of portraits is on permanent display in the Hall of Heroes at the Pentagon, the only such exhibition in the Hall of Heroes. Del Calzo is also the creator and photographer of the critically acclaimed photographic book, *The Triumphant Spirit: Portraits & Stories of Holocaust Survivors*. His award-winning work has been showcased in exhibitions nationwide. His portraiture has been featured on the CBS Sunday Morning show and CNN, and his work has been recognized in the Congressional Record and numerous national publications. More recently, he created and founded a new program, *Saluting America - Honoring Military Service: Past & Present*, which has been implemented in Colorado schools. The program is designed to promote patriotism and raise youth awareness of the sacrifices made by our Nation's active duty military personnel and our veterans

#### **Author**

Peter Collier is the founding editor and currently a consultant to Encounter Books. He has worked as an author and editor for the last thirty years. During that time, he has written novels, short stories and screenplays, along with best-selling biographies. Referred to in the New York Times as "America's premier biographer of dynastic tragedy," Collier is best known for *The Rockefeller: An American Dynasty*; *The Kennedys: An American Dream*; *The Fords: An American Epic*; and *Destructive Generation* (all with David Horowitz). He is also the author of *The Fondas: A Hollywood Dynasty* and *The Roosevelts: An American Saga*. Recent books include *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond the Call of Duty*, with photographs by Nick Del Calzo and in 2012 the *Political Woman: The Big Little Life of Jeanne Kirkpatrick*.