

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2059

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Edwin Cole “Ed” Bearss, in recognition of his contributions to preservation of American Civil War history and continued efforts to bring our nation’s history alive for new generations through his interpretive storytelling.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 28, 2015

Mr. CONNOLLY (for himself, Mr. MEADOWS, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. GOSAR, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. WITTMAN, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. HURT of Virginia, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. WELCH, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. CHABOT, Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. KIND, Ms. HAHN, Mr. KENNEDY, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. COOPER, Mr. TED LIEU of California, Mr. GOWDY, Mrs. LAWRENCE, Mr. DESAULNIER, Mr. CARTER of Georgia, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Mr. BERA, Ms. GABBARD, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. ROYCE, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. YOHO, Mr. PERRY, Ms. FRANKEL of Florida, Mr. HIMES, Mr. FOSTER, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Ms. SINEMA, Mr. UPTON, Mr. PIERLUISI, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, Ms. ESTY, Mr. AGUILAR, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. PETERS, Ms. SEWELL of Alabama, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. COURTNEY, Mr. HECK of Washington, Mr. HUFFMAN, Mr. ASHFORD, Mr. BECERRA, Mr. SCHRADER, Mr. SIRES, Ms. GRAHAM, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. CARNEY, Mr. TURNER, Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. HANNA, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mr. WALBERG, Ms. TSONGAS, Mr. SMITH of Nebraska, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. ROHRBACHER, Mr. HOYER, Mr. RENACCI, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. FORBES, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. ROONEY of Florida, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. COSTA, Mr. KILMER, Mr. QUIGLEY, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. ROGERS of Alabama, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. HURD of Texas, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. BEYER, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, and Mrs. COMSTOCK) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to Edwin Cole “Ed” Bearss, in recognition of his contributions to preservation of American Civil War history and continued efforts to bring our nation’s history alive for new generations through his interpretive storytelling.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds the following:

5 (1) Edwin Cole “Ed” Bearss was born June
6 26, 1923, in Billings, Montana, to Omar and Vir-
7 ginia Bearss.

8 (2) During a 40-year career with the National
9 Park Service, Mr. Bearss distinguished himself as
10 one of America’s preeminent historians, particularly
11 in the field of the Civil War, not only through his
12 work to preserve the places in which our nation’s
13 history was forged but also through his captivating
14 interpretive storytelling about the people and events
15 that shaped those places.

16 (3) His own family traces its genealogy to the
17 Mayflower on his mother’s side and to 1636 on his
18 father’s side.

19 (4) Mr. Bearss’ lifelong love affair with the
20 Civil War was kindled during his youth when he

1 read a biography of Confederate cavalry commander
2 J.E.B. Stuart. Even at an early age, Mr. Bearss
3 demonstrated a knack for committing facts to mem-
4 ory, a skill that helped him win school contests in
5 history, current events, and geography.

6 (5) He graduated high school in May 1941 and
7 the following year joined the U.S. Marine Corps,
8 serving with the 3rd Marine Raider Battalion during
9 the invasion of Guadalcanal and the Russell Islands.
10 He was badly wounded in gunfire at “Suicide
11 Creek”, Cape Gloucester, New Britain, while serving
12 with the 7th Regiment, 1st Marine Division.

13 (6) Upon returning home, Mr. Bearss attended
14 Georgetown University, obtaining a bachelor’s de-
15 gree in Foreign Service studies, and later attended
16 Indiana University, earning a master’s degree in his-
17 tory.

18 (7) It was during a fortuitous visit to the Shi-
19 loh National Military Park in Tennessee, on a tour
20 with the park historian, where the seeds were plant-
21 ed for Mr. Bearss’ future career with the National
22 Park Service.

23 (8) In 1955, he landed a job as park historian
24 at the National Battlefield Park in Vicksburg, Mis-
25 sissippi, where his research helped fill in missing

1 pieces of Civil War history. None were more signifi-
2 cant than the discovery of the U.S.S. Cairo, a long-
3 lost Union ironclad gunboat sunk by Confederate
4 submarine torpedoes in 1862 that was buried in the
5 mud of the Yazoo River. Mr. Bearss later authored
6 a book on the “sinking and salvage” of the ironclad.

7 (9) It was during his tenure at Shiloh that he
8 met his wife, Margie, a teacher who shared Mr.
9 Bearss’ love of history. They had three children,
10 Sara, Cole, and Jenny.

11 (10) Mr. Bearss became the National Park
12 Service’s chief historian in 1981. Following his re-
13 tirement in 1994, he was recognized with the title
14 Chief Historian Emeritus, a fitting title as his re-
15 search and recounting of our nation’s history con-
16 tinues to this day.

17 (11) He still travels throughout the year to our
18 nation’s Civil War battlefields. He once said, “You
19 can’t describe a battlefield unless you walk it.”. Any-
20 one who has spent time with Mr. Bearss touring a
21 battlefield, sometimes braving the elements, en-
22 thralled by his prodigious tales regards him as a Na-
23 tional Treasure. His unique chronicling of our na-
24 tion’s history has been described as a “transcen-
25 dental experience” of “Homeric monologues” punc-

1 tuated by “colorful, vivid images”. Mr. Bearss him-
2 self has been described as a cross between “a good-
3 natured platoon sergeant and Walter Cronkite”. He
4 lectures with his eye closed, so he can “see” the his-
5 tory better, he once said.

6 (12) Mr. Bearss has received multiple honors
7 for his contributions to the preservation of our na-
8 tion’s history: the Harry S. Truman Award in 1961
9 for Meritorious Service in the field of Civil War his-
10 tory, Man of the Year at Vicksburg in 1963, in-
11 ducted a member of the Company of Military Histo-
12 rians in 1964, the Nevins-Freeman Award from the
13 Chicago Civil War Roundtable in 1980, the Depart-
14 ment of the Interior’s Distinguished Service Award
15 in 1983, and a commendation from the Secretary of
16 the Army in 1985. The Secretary of the Interior at
17 the time, James Watt, called Mr. Bearss “unques-
18 tionably the most productive historian in the history
19 of the National Park Service”.

20 (13) To this day, Mr. Bearss continues to tour
21 the country visiting battlefields and Civil War orga-
22 nizations, keeping America’s history fresh in the
23 minds of future generations.

1 **SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

2 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of
3 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-
4 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements
5 for the presentation, on behalf of the Congress, of a gold
6 medal of appropriate design to Edwin Cole “Ed” Bearss,
7 in recognition of his contributions to preservation of
8 American Civil War history and continued efforts to bring
9 our nation’s history alive for new generations through his
10 interpretive storytelling.

11 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For purposes of the
12 presentation referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary
13 of the Treasury (hereafter in this Act referred to as the
14 “Secretary”) shall strike a gold medal with suitable em-
15 blems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the
16 Secretary.

17 **SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

18 The Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
19 bronze of the gold medal struck pursuant to section 2
20 under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, at
21 a price sufficient to cover the cost thereof, including labor,
22 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses,
23 and the cost of the gold medal.

1 **SEC. 4. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

2 The medals struck pursuant to this Act are national
3 medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United
4 States Code.

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