

The Valley Forge Cross is awarded to 16 South Dakota National Guard members for their heroic actions during the 1972 flood in Rapid City, SD



Valley Forge Medal

The South Dakota National Guard took center stage at the 95th General Conference of the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS). The official program at the Oklahoma City Conference honored a disproportionate number of South Dakota Soldiers. Almost all of the individual awards presented at the conference were received by South Dakota National Guard Soldiers, as their lifesaving efforts during the Rapid City flood of June 9th and 10, 1972 were recognized on the national stage.

A highlight of the 1973 General Conference was the initial presentation of the NGAUS Valley Forge Cross, created recently as a means of honoring Guardsmen who performed acts of heroism at risk of their own life.

General Creighton Abrams, Army Chief of Staff; Maj. Gen. Francis Greenlief, Chief NGB; and Maj. Gen. Henry McMillan, NGAUS President, presented the Valley Forge Cross to ten officers and enlisted members of the South Dakota Army Guard, all heroes of the tragic Rapid City flood of June 1972. They had been flown to Oklahoma City to receive the Valley Forge Cross.

The ten receiving the award at Oklahoma City were:

Maj. Clarence Knapp
Cpt. James Whitehead
Master Sgt. Manuel Torres
2nd Lt. Michael Bowlby
2nd Lt. John Parke
Spec. 6 Maylon Schuh
Sgt. Darrell Heimes
Spec. 5 Warren Nelson
Spec. 4 Curtis Peterka
Pvt. 1st Class Charles Cederburg

Four additional South Dakota Valley Forge Cross recipients were unable to make the trip to Oklahoma City:

Sgt. Aubrey Sylvester

Spec. 5 Randall Jastram

Spec. 4 Vincent Siemonsma

Pvt. 1st Class Gary Reinhold

Two South Dakota Soldiers, 2nd Lt. Gary Engelstad and Pvt. 1st Class Freeman Phillips, were honored posthumously.

This information was printed in the "NATIONAL GUARDSMAN MAGAZINE" dated December 1973.

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