

Lieutenant Colonel Matt Louis Urban (1919-1995)

Born to Polish immigrant parents in Buffalo, NY, on August 25, 1919, Lt. Col. Matt Louis Urban has been recognized as the "most decorated American combat soldier of World War II." Urban was awarded a total of 29 decorations, virtually every combat medal possible, including seven Purple Hearts and the Congressional Medal of Honor.

As a U.S. Army Infantry Captain, Urban was actively involved in six major campaigns in Tunisia, Sicily, France and Belgium over a 20-month period, during which he was wounded seven times and returned to combat within days of each injury. German soldiers, who nicknamed him the "Gray Ghost" for his persistence in returning to battle, were known to aim small-arms and artillery fire at him personally and reluctantly admired him for his superior combat leadership. The legend of Urban's heroism under fire began in an assault on Hill #609 in North Africa. Despite seemingly overpowering German forces, young Captain Urban singly and successfully charged against the enemy, steadily firing and reloading his weapon and shouting words of encouragement to his troops behind him.

Lt. Col. Urban was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by President Jimmy Carter on July 19, 1980, and was properly recognized for his outstanding service to his country. While awarding Lt. Col. Urban the Medal of Honor, President Carter identified him as the "most decorated American combat soldier of World War II" and described his bravery in a battle on September 3, 1944, on the Meuse River in Belgium. "Captain Urban quickly moved from his command post to the lead position of the battalion. ...He personally led a charge towards the enemy's strong points. As the charge moved across the open terrain, Captain Urban was seriously wounded in the neck. Although unable to talk above a whisper from the paralyzing neck wound, and in danger of losing his life, he refused to be evacuated until the enemy was routed and his battalion had secured the crossing-point on the Meuse River. Captain Urban's personal leadership, limitless bravery, and repeated extraordinary exposure to enemy fire served as an inspiration to his entire battalion. His valorous and intrepid actions reflect the utmost credit upon him and uphold the noble traditions of the United States Army."

Lt. Col. Urban died in 1995 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Let us know about your heritage!

Before returning this coloring contest entry, list the country (or countries) from which your ancestors immigrated to America:

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