

April 21, 1942

[Presentation of Congressional Medal of Honor]

FDR Speech File

1417

PRESENTATION OF THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR
BY THE PRESIDENT TO LIEUTENANT EDWARD H. O'HARE,
IN THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, APRIL 21, 1942, AT
11.00 A.M., E.W.T.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, now will you step right up here. We have two ceremonies. The first is to congratulate a new Lieutenant Commander Edward H. O'Hare. If you will notice his sleeve, he is only a Junior Lieutenant. He hasn't had time yet to get the 'fixings' that go with the rank of Lieutenant Commander.

This is an appointment by the Secretary of the Navy which I have approved. All you have to do is to tear off the lower half and return it to the Bureau of Navigation and keep the top half. (laughter)

And then the other is, I think, more important. (reading):
"The President takes pleasure in presenting the Congressional Medal of Honor to Lieutenant Edward H. O'Hare, U. S. Navy, for services as set forth in the following Citation:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in aerial combat, at grave risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty, as section leader and pilot of Fighting Squadron 3, when on February 20, 1942, having lost the assistance of his team-mates, he interposed his plane between his ship and an advancing enemy formation of 9 attacking twin-engined heavy bombers. Without hesitation, alone and unaided he repeatedly attacked this enemy formation at close range in the face of their intense combined machine-gun and cannon fire, and despite this concentrated opposition, he, by his gallant and courageous action, his extremely skillful marksmanship, making the most of every shot of his limited amount of ammunition, shot down 5 enemy bombers and severely damaged the 6th before they reached the bomb release point.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

"As a result of his gallant action, one of the most daring if not the most daring single action in the history of combat aviation, he undoubtedly saved his Carrier from serious damage."

And with that in one hand, then we go ahead and do the little ceremony itself -- the Congressional Medal of Honor. And if Mrs. O'Hare is more skilled with her fingers than I am, she will do it.

Put this around his neck. You may have to undo that in order to get it around his neck.

Now you put it round his neck, and I will shake hands with you (O'Hare). (laughter)

(Newsreels and stills were taken of this ceremony, with newspapermen on hand also)

THE PRESIDENT: There is the case, and there is the button. Now you are outfitted. (laughter)

I think that's fine.

(Not given to Press)

Presentation of the Congressional Medal of Honor
by the President to Lieutenant Edward H. O'Hare,
in the President's office, April 21, 1942, at
11.00 A.M., E.W.T.

STATEMENTS FILE

THE PRESIDENT: Well, now will you step right up here. We have two ceremonies. The first is to congratulate a new Lieutenant Commander Edward H. O'Hare. If you will notice his sleeve, he is only a Junior Lieutenant. He hasn't had time yet to get the 'fixings' that go with the rank of Lieutenant Commander.

This is an appointment by the Secretary of the Navy which I have approved. All you have to do is to tear off the lower half and return it to the Bureau of Navigation and keep the top half. (laughter)

And then the other is, I think, more important.

(reading): "The President takes pleasure in presenting the Congressional Medal of Honor to Lieutenant Edward H. O'Hare, U. S. Navy, for services as set forth in the following Citation:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in aerial combat, at grave risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty, as section leader and pilot of Fighting Squadron 3, when on February 20, 1942, having lost the assistance of his team-mates, he interposed his plane between his ship and an advancing enemy formation of 9 attacking twin-engined heavy bombers. Without hesitation, alone and unaided he repeatedly attacked this enemy formation at close range in the face of their intense combined machine-gun and cannon fire, and despite this concentrated opposition, he, by his gallant and courageous action, his extremely skillful marksmanship, making the most of every shot of his limited amount of ammunition, show^x down 5 enemy bombers and

severely damaged the 6th before they reached the bomb release point.

"As a result of his gallant action, one of the most daring if not the most daring single action in the history of combat aviation, he undoubtedly saved his Carrier from serious damage."

And with that in one hand, then we go ahead and do the little ceremony itself -- the Congressional Medal of Honor. And if Mrs. O'Hare is more skilled with her fingers than I am, she will do it.

Put this around his neck. You may have to undo that in order to get it around his neck.

Now you put it round his neck, and I will shake hands with you (O'Hare). (laughter)

(Newsreels and stills were taken of this ceremony, with newspapermen on hand also)

THE PRESIDENT: There is the case, and there is the button. Now you are outfitted. (laughter)

I think that's fine.