

Full Award Citation – 2nd Lt. Robert M. Viale Medal of Honor

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pride in presenting the Medal of Honor (Posthumously) to Second Lieutenant Robert M. Viale, United States Army, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty on 5 February 1945, while serving with Company K, 148th Infantry Regiment, 37th Infantry Division, in action at Manila, Luzon, Philippine Islands. Forced by the enemy's detonation of prepared demolitions to shift the course of his advance through the city, he led the 1st platoon toward a small bridge, where heavy fire from three enemy pillboxes halted the unit. With two men he crossed the bridge behind screening grenade smoke to attack the pillboxes. The first he knocked out himself while covered by his men's protecting fire; the other two were silenced by one of his companions and a bazooka team which he had called up. He suffered a painful wound in the right arm during the action. After his entire platoon had joined him, he pushed ahead through mortar fire and encircling flames. Blocked from the only escape route by an enemy machinegun placed at a street corner, he entered a nearby building with his men to explore possible means of reducing the emplacement. In one room he found civilians huddled together, in another, a small window placed high in the wall and reached by a ladder. Because of the relative positions of the window, ladder, and enemy emplacement, he decided that he, being left-handed, could better hurl a grenade than one of his men who had made an unsuccessful attempt. Grasping an armed grenade, he started up the ladder. His wounded right arm weakened, and, as he tried to steady himself, the grenade fell to the floor. In the five seconds before the grenade would explode, he dropped down, recovered the grenade and looked for a place to dispose of it safely. Finding no way to get rid of the grenade without exposing his own men or the civilians to injury or death, he turned to the wall, held it close to his body and bent over it as it exploded. Second Lieutenant Viale died in a few minutes, but his heroic act saved the lives of others.