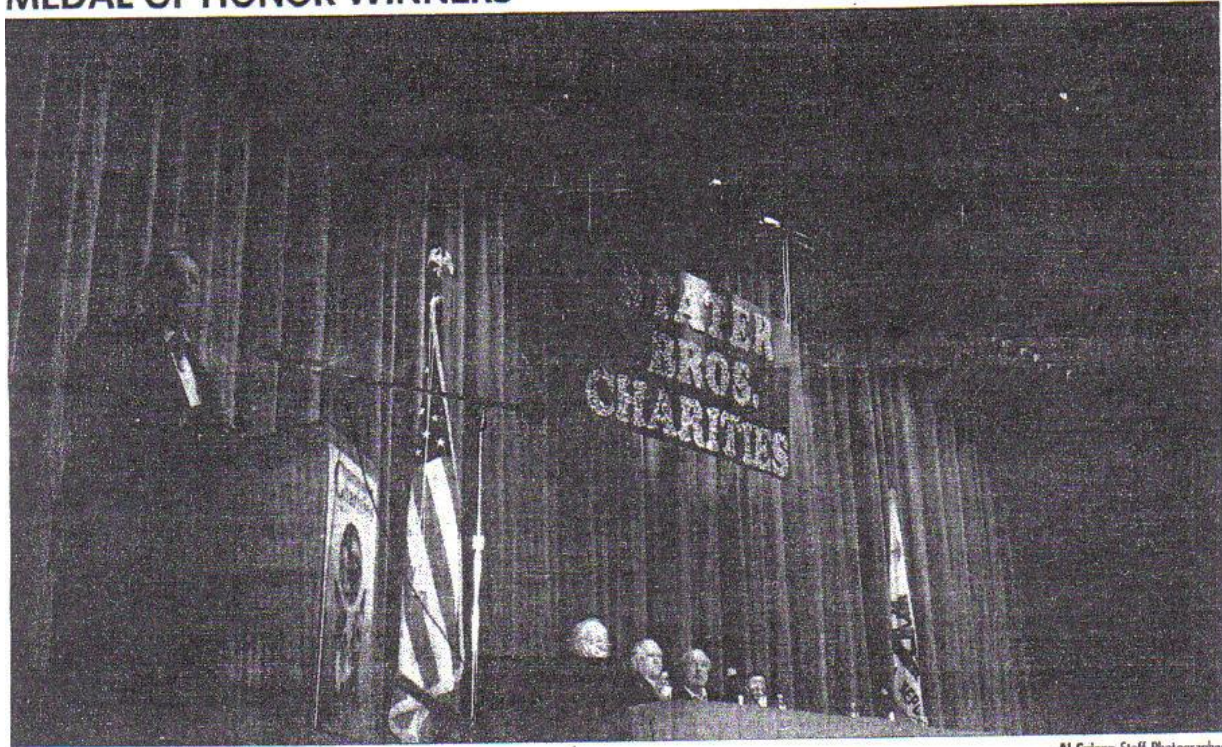


MEDAL OF HONOR WINNERS



Al Coizon Staff Photographer

Medal of Honor recipient Ronald E. Ray answers questions at a Stater Bros. Charities-sponsored presentation at Colton High School on Tuesday. Five Vietnam War recipients of the Medal of Honor spoke to 1,100 Reserve Officers Training Corps cadets at Colton High about gallantry, patriotism, heroism and character.

Heroes talk to cadets

ROTC event held in Colton

By Michael J. Sorba Staff Writer

COLTON — Marine Corps Capt. Jay R. Vargas braved gunfire and grenades while beating back the enemy with his bullets and blade to save the lives of a commanding officer and a Marine who suffered a severed arm.

Vargas went without sleep in the more than 36 hours leading up to the battle. Only after victory was secured did he accept treatment for a bullet wound and shrapnel. For his bravery, President Richard M. Nixon presented Vargas with the Medal of Honor, the highest military decoration, on May 14, 1970.

"When one man falls, there's

"When one man falls, there's always another Marine there to pick him back up."

Jay R. VARGAS
Medal of Honor recipient

always another Marine there to pick him back up," Vargas told about 1,100 Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadets gathered at Colton High School on Tuesday.

The cadets hailed from high schools in San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

Vargas and four other Medal of Honor recipients spoke to them as part of a special event presented by Stater Bros. Charities, the philanthropic arm of the San Bernar-

dino-based supermarket chain. The men encouraged cadets to stay on the right track and fielded questions about their combat experiences.

"There is absolutely no greater American patriot than what you see before you," Stater Bros. Markets Chairman and CEO Jack H. Brown told cadets.

Brown is friends with the five recipients: Army Pfc. John F. Baker, Marine 1st Lt. Harvey C. Barnum Jr., Army 1st Lt. Ronald E. Ray, Army 1st Lt. James A. Taylor and Vargas; and asked them to speak to the cadets. Ranks listed are from when the men received the medal. All men served in the Vietnam War.

Redlands High School cadet Dominick Ho said he was inspired by a story Taylor told detailing his experience as a high school football star. Taylor said he grew a

"big head" after making the varsity squad as a freshman and achieving success early in the season. His arrogance made him lazy at practice and he stopped being a team player, Taylor said.

His coach quickly brought him back down to earth by kicking him off the team. After pleading with him and promising to shape up, Taylor said his coach let him back on the team.

"He taught me the greatest lesson in my life," Taylor said. "When I was in combat, Coach was there with me."

Ho, who hopes to one day fly helicopters in the Air Force or Army, said he won't soon forget Taylor's story.

"If you think about just yourself, then there will be no one there to catch you if you fall," Ho said.

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