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The Medal of Honor graphic novel series is brought to you through the generous sponsorship of GENERAL DYNAMICS.
LIEUTENANT COLONEL WILLIAM J. DONOVAN OF THE 16TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 42ND DIVISION, LED HIS RECRUITS ON A THREE-MILE OBSTACLE COURSE IN FULL PACKS AND GEAR.

1918.

WHAT THE HELL'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?

I HAVEN'T LOST MY BREATH!

WILD BILL DONOVAN

BUT HELL, WE AREN'T AS WILD AS YOU ARE, BILL.

FROM THAT DAY ON HE WOULD BE "WILD BILL."
WILLIAM J. DONOVAN
was born in Buffalo, New York, on New Year's Day, 1883.

He excelled in study and in sports. Deciding against the priesthood, he became a successful lawyer.

At the age of twenty-nine he organized and led a cavalry troop for the New York National Guard.

Two years later he married.

I thought you would choose someone of your own class.

He deployed to the border to support General John J. Pershing's Mexican expedition to find the bandit and revolutionary Pancho Villa.

Donovan was promoted and joined the 95th regiment, the famed "Irish" regiment of New York City.

Redesignated the 165th regiment and moved into the 42nd "Rainbow" division, the men soon joined other doughboys of the American expeditionary forces in the killing fields of France.
February 1918. Donovan wrote to his wife Ruth that he felt thrilled at the danger of combat like a “youngster at Halloween.”

Come on, boys, buck up!

Beggin you, Sir, should you be wearin’ your rank and insignia? They’re a target for the enemy.

They can’t hit me and they won’t hit you.

That same month, Donovan’s fighting Irish were assigned to the French Sixth Army.

Donovan led his men in rescuing soldiers and officers trapped when the regimental dugout collapsed under a bombardment.

I am the French Awarded Croix de Guerre to the rescuers.

Donovan initially refused it until a Jewish soldier in the unit received the same recognition.

In September, General Pershing awarded him the Distinguished Service Cross for valor during the Aisne-Marne campaign that summer.
OCTOBER 1918.

THE MEUSE-ARGONNE OFFENSIVE.

WILD BILL LED HIS MEN TOWARD THE GERMAN LINE.

Almost two miles separated the trenches of the two armies.

A hellscape of artillery and machine gun fire.

In total disregard for his own safety, Donovan urged his men toward the German position.

Come on, boys! We’ll never get them if we stop!

All along the Kriemhilde Stellung, the German main line of defense, the enemy mowed down Donovan’s men from the safety of bunkers.

Where the hell is that coming from?

Deadly fire from their flank slowed the advance.

By early afternoon, more than half of the battalion was killed or wounded before they had even seen a German.
Still, Donovan drove them on with the example of his own courage.

Get up, son. We'll have them on the run soon.

Donovan's men advanced further than any others in the division.

But they no longer had the strength to break through the line.

They left too many of their buddies dead in the mud behind them.

Sir, ain't you afraid, standing in the clearing like that?

Nobody in this regiment was ever afraid, old sport.

The advance stalled. Donovan requested support.

Tell them I need tanks! Run, man!

His regiment pinned down and the assault stalled, Donovan scouted ahead under the cover of darkness.
THE NEXT MORNING, DONOVAN LED HIS MEN FROM COVER TO PRESS THE ATTACK ONCE MORE.

A MACHINE GUN BULLET STRUCK HIM IN THE LEG, BREAKING THE BONE.

THOUGH HE'D ORDERED MEN WITH SIMILAR WOUNDS TO BE EVACUATED, DONOVAN STAYED ON.

YOU NEED PROPER CARE, SIR.

NOT WHILE THE FIGHT'S STILL ON!

WE'VE PAID FOR THIS GROUND, FELLOWS, I'M FOR KEEPING IT.

HE WAS DETERMINED THAT THE ASSAULT CONTINUE.

WHEN THE TANKS FINALLY ARRIVED, THEY WERE TURNED BACK BY THE DEADLY ACCURACY OF THE GERMAN ARTILLERY.

THEY'RE WITHDRAWING.

COLONEL DONOVAN, THE GERMANS ARE PREPARING A COUNTER-ATTACK.
DONOVAN CONTINUED TO DIRECT HIS MEN IN THE DEFENSE OF THEIR POSITION.

BRING UP THE BOSTERS! AND SWING THAT MACHINE GUN AROUND!

THE COUNTER-ATTACK WAS SMOTHERED, BUT THE REGIMENT HAD BEEN DEVASTATED.

DONOVAN COUNTERWANDED A NEW ORDER TO RESUME THE ATTACK.

AFTER MORE THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS IN BATTLE, HE ORDERED A WITHDRAWAL.

THOUGH HE WOULD NOT LEAVE THE FIELD UNTIL RESERVES ARRIVED TO HOLD THE LINE.

FATHER, YOU’RE A DISAPPOINTED MAN. YOU EXPECTED TO HAVE THE PLEASURE OF BURYING ME OVER HERE.

I CERTAINLY DID, BILL, AND YOU ARE A LUCKY DOG TO GET OFF WITH NOTHING MORE THAN YOU’VE GOT.

IN 1923, AFTER INTENSIVE LOBBYING BY HIS FRIEND FATHER FRANCIS P. DUFFY, DONOVAN WAS AWARDED THE MEDAL OF HONOR AT A CEREMONY ATTENDED BY FOUR THOUSAND VETERANS.

HE DONATED THE MEDAL TO HIS REGIMENT.

TO THE BOYS WHO ARE NOT HERE, THE BOYS WHO ARE RESTING UNDER WHITE CROSSES IN FRANCE OR THE CEMETERIES OF NEW YORK, ALSO TO THE BOYS LUCKY ENOUGH TO COME THROUGH.
This was not the end of Wild Bill’s service to his country.

He became a U.S. Attorney battling rumrunners and busting trusts.

Throughout the 1930s Donovan visited countries across Europe and Asia to gather intelligence.

Donovan founded a spy agency that became the Office of Strategic Services in the Second World War.

The OSS was a predecessor to the CIA.

In 1944, he landed with the Allied troops at Normandy and took on the role of directing espionage and sabotage missions across the European Theater.

William J. Donovan is the only American to have received the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal, and the National Security Medal.

The end
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