

Type of Material: Feature Screenplay

Title: Call of the Purple Heart

Number of Pages: 102

Author: James McEachin

Circa: Present Day

Analyst: Linda Pine

Genre: Autobiographical/War

LOG LINE: An African-American Korean War veteran must face his demons to give closure to the family of his former Lieutenant who was killed in action.

OVERVIEW: Alternately sweet and harrowing, the framing device for the story is the discovery of a Purple Heart medal belonging to McEachin's Lieutenant (now dead some 60 years). McEachin's literal journey to return the Purple Heart to the family is mirrored by McEachin's very personal journey to find closure.

SCRIPT: RECOMMEND

WRITER: RECOMMEND

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
CONCEPT:		X		
STORY LINE:	X			
CHARACTERS:	X			
DIALOGUE:		X		
COMMERCIAL APPEAL:	X			

SYNOPSIS:

JAMES MCEACHIN is a man haunted. Haunted by survivor's guilt for being the only man to walk away from an ambush in the Korean War. Haunted by the very real physical scars he still retains from that war. Haunted by the fear he will not find peace while still alive.

Still suffering from nightmares and flashbacks, McEachin receives a

phone call from a woman who claims to have the Purple Heart medal awarded posthumously to SCHENK who was his commanding officer killed in the very ambush that haunts McEachin.

KIMBERLY is a housewife in North Carolina with three kids and a husband who served tours in Kuwait and Afghanistan. She is a clever yard sale junkie who sells her finds for profit on eBay. She finds Schenk's Purple Heart and decides she can't sell it. She tracks down McEachin and calls him at his home in Los Angeles. McEachin was a successful actor and writer, and is suspicious of Kimberly. Kimberly explains the provenance of the medal and McEachin believes her.

The resurfacing of Schenk's medal aggravates McEachin's PTSD and he has flashbacks that merge with reality. He commiserates with his best friend (also a veteran) ROSS. The story of how Schenk died and McEachin survived is gradually revealed in their conversations and McEachin's continuing flashbacks.

The discovery of the Purple Heart medal begins a dialogue in Kimberly's family. She herself is ambivalent about the military, and this manifests in conversations with her husband KEITH (who is himself a veteran), and her two sons GAVIN and TRISTEN. Gavin and Tristen have always said they wanted to join the military and are asking their mother how she feels about that for the first time.

McEachin visits his wife in a nursing home where she is incapacitated and cannot speak. The love between these two characters is tangible and it is clear that she is his anchor.

Kimberly tracks down Schenk's surviving family and it is decided that the Purple Heart will be returned to them and that they will in turn give it to the University Schenk attended. McEachin gets permission to include this transaction during a Korean War Memorial rededication that he has been invited to speak at.

McEachin's flashbacks increase in frequency and intensity. He decides to "return to the scene of the crime" in Korea to test and confront his memories. His South Korean hosts take him back to river where all his comrades were slain.

McEachin has a flashback to the day Schenk died. Their squad was assigned to rescue a young man who had been tortured and left to die. Everything goes wrong during the mission and it becomes clear that it was an ambush with the dying man as bait. Somehow, McEachin survives, but is wounded badly. Delirious and quite possibly dying, he is kept alive and finds his way back to the American forces through the intervention of a BLOND HAIRE D SOLDIER who may or may not exist, and who may or may not be a manifestation of Jesus.

McEachin returns home shaken and disturbed. Ross tries to talk to him about what he experienced in Korea, but he is reticent.

McEachin and Kimberly, Kimberly's brood and Schenk's family all meet in San Pedro, California aboard a majestic battleship for the ceremony. The Purple Heart finds its rightful home. McEachin gives a stirring speech

about honor and country.

McEachin and Kimberly's family were to make another stop with Schenk's Purple Heart in another ceremony in Washington D.C. Before this can happen, Ross discovers a gun with ammo with an article about suicide among veterans in McEachin's car. McEachin, for the first time in the film, asks for help.

McEachin's continued struggle with PTSD, combined with the support of those that care deeply for him, lead him to summon his courage again. The story ends with McEachin checking-in to a VA hospital to begin treatment for PTSD.

COMMENTS:

This is a straightforward and earnest script. The writer's first-hand experience informs the script and enables him to create rich characters, especially his own. Writer clearly understands the language of cinema. This is most obvious in the war flashback scenes, which are harrowing and real.

The way our country treats its veterans (especially those of controversial wars), is on display here, but never in a ham-handed way, nor is McEachin's character self-pitying. Writer strikes a good balance, honoring the views of soldiers and pacifists alike.

The story is inspirational and patriotic without veering into jingoism.

When McEachin admits he needs help, and finally accepts it, it is moving and affecting.

Writer's voice is unique and vital. Writer's experiences in "real-life" and then his decades as a screen actor, give him a combination of skill sets that is uncommon and special.

Linda Pine 2/20/15