

Thanking Our Veterans

NOVEMBER 2019

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A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO
ELGIN COURIER



Local veterans' organizations hold annual parade

On November 2, the local American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts celebrated Veterans' Day early, as well as their 100-year anniversaries, with their annual parade down Elgin's Main Street. Local military organizations such as Camp Swift, local businesses such as Rush Chevrolet and Elgin organization such as the Purple Diamonds and the local scouting troops, marched down Main Street to honor local veterans. This year's grand marshal was James Martinsen, a 23-year-old Marine who died earlier this year in an accident.

See more photos online at www.elgincourier.com



The parade is led by this truck from Elgin General Store.



The Purple Diamonds were an energetic and festive part of the parade.

Photos by Julianne Hodges



Before of the start of the parade, American Legion post commander John Quagliani (right) hands out small American flags to the parade viewers.



The Fort Hood Marching Band played marching tunes as they made their way down Main Street.

Veterans' Day events in Bastrop County abound

By Dock Jackson
Bastrop County Reporter

From the "Heroes and Hot Rods" Cruise-In Event to the Salute to Bastrop County Veterans to the Veterans' Day Car Show to the Red, White and Blue Banquet, Bastrop County was bustling over last weekend with a variety of events. There was something for everyone in Bastrop, Elgin and Smithville

between November 8 and 11. Beginning on the Friday night before Veterans' Day, the cars began assembling in downtown Bastrop as the Bastrop Area Cruisers brought drivers and onlookers to town. It was the preview before the big car show on Saturday. Early Saturday morning, more vehicles, vendors and displays added to

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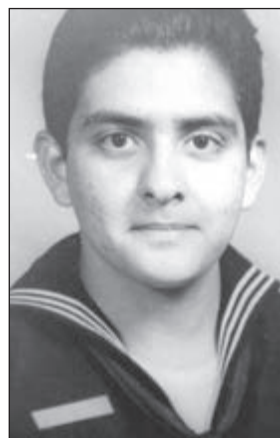
Local veteran goes on the flight of a lifetime

By Ron Ramirez

From the first time he ever heard about Honor Flight, Alfredo "Freddy" Gonzalez knew he would love to be chosen and honored to partake in that wonderful program.

But as he told me, "I wasn't sure I was even deserving enough to be considered."

But after some urging from his wife, Terry



Alfredo "Freddy" Gonzalez.
Courtesy photo

Gonzalez, and others, Freddy submitted the proper application paperwork and then went on about his life.

Freddy reminisced how he and his buddies, Bobby Ramirez and Jesse Renteria, were in the Naval Reserves while still in high school. Bobby and Jesse joined the active duty Navy, and after graduation, Freddy joined as well. He served

from 1969 through 1971. His job title was Military Police but he did whatever duties he was assigned, whether it had to do with his job description or not.

He first served on a destroyer tender, the USS Bryce Canyon. He was in Pearl Harbor and the tender was tasked with ensuring the destroyer was always in battle-ready

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Comforting quilts awarded to veterans

On the evening of Veterans' Day, First Baptist Church of Elgin held a ceremony gifting special Quilts of Valor to many local veterans.

The ceremony started with an explanation of the significance of the quilts and the history of the Quilts of Valor foundation by Quilts of Valor representative Pamela Ficklin. The idea began in 2003 when Catherine Roberts' son was deployed in Iraq. She had a dream of a young veteran awake in the middle of the night, brought to despair by the trauma of war, according to the Quilts of Valor website. Then, a quilt was wrapped around him, changing his despair to hope and wellbeing. As a result, Roberts began what would become Quilts of Valor to give veterans across the country special quilts to comfort them.

Next, Navy Captain Ray Volluz, who would later present the quilts and the

certificates (pictured in each photograph with the veterans and their quilts here), addressed the audience. Each veteran filled out a card asking them to share where they spent basic training and what was their most memorable assignment; Volluz opened up by sharing his own answers to those questions and some stories from his time in military service.

After the quilts—20 in total on Monday night, not including more veterans who were not present—were awarded, the women who made each of the quilts by hand were recognized. The quilters were: Robbie Cordell, Pamela Ficklin, Nina Parr, Geralyn Elmore, Margaret Head, Luann James and Gini Carroll.

To close out the ceremony, Tara Minor led the audience in singing the anthem for each branch of the military.

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Not pictured:

Holly Allen, Air Force Staff Sargent, 2007-2015
Adam Dunbar, Army W02, 2003-2014
Larry Head, Army Spec. 5, 1967-1969

Harold Nelson, Army, 1972-1975
Ed Ponder, Army Corporal, 1951-1953
Greg Schmidt, Navy E3, 2005-2009
Bobby Walker, Army SP5, 1951-1955



Kenneth Allen, Coast Guard Seaman first class, 1946-1947



John Parr, Air Force Lt. Col., 1968-1989



Allen Leatherwood, Marine Corporal, 2001-2005



James McCutcheon, Army Staff Sargent, 1960-1966



Sarah Neidig, Air Force E3, 2001-2003



Bo Godfrey, Air Force Sargent, 1968-1972



James T. Walters, Air Force Master Sargent, 1966-1970



Harold Langley, Air Force Major, 1958-1978



Cassie Schmidt, Navy E3, 2005-2009
Photos by Julianne Hodges



Estevan Franco, Army Staff Sargent, 1990-1992



Gilbert Rangel, Army Sargent, 1986-1994



Randy Rust, Navy Seaman, 1974-1977



Cassidy Kerlin, Navy EN3, 2007-2010



**LCPL,
Kyle Mogonye**

- United States Marine Corps 2009 - 2013
- Camp Pendleton 1st Battalion 5th Marines
- Deployed to Sangin, Afghanistan in 2011

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George Diebel



Curtis W. Dildy



Harold Dildy



Jerry Dittrich



Jeronimo Dominguez



Alonzo Dominquez



Walter Doss



Donald Douglass



David Dube



Ray Dudley



Adam Dunbar



Milton Dusek



Dale Dyer



Herbert Allen Edmonson



Howard Eisenbeck



Carl W. Eklund



Rudolph L. Eklund



Jamale Ellison



Emily Embree



Anton Erdman



W.C. Estes



Marcos Estrada



Brian W. Fakkema



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Lyle Gordon



Curtis Griffin



Julie (Jaecks) Grijlava



Jason Gross



August E. "Uce" Gruetzner



Bryan Guckian



Howard Guckian



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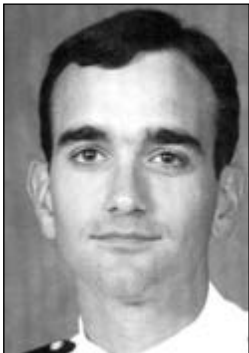
Taylor W. Metcalfe



Tom Brooks Metcalfe



Farrel "Buddy" Meyer



Ken Meyer



Michael Meyer



R. G. Meyer



Jim Miller



W.E. Miller



Charley Mogonye



Jim V. Mogonye



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Hector Montemayor



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Sam Morgan



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Brendon Neely-Otts



Alton Neidig



Roy Neidig



Chester "Buddy" Nelle



Arthur Nerkowski



Harry Nessbeck



Otto R. Nesslbeck



Chester Newman Sr.



Kurt Nilsson



Herb Nitkin



Maynard Norwood



Joe Nunez



Migel Nunez



Joseph O'Conner



Veronica Ochoa



It is our pleasure and our privilege to serve and salute our local veterans. To the men and women in our community and around the country who have sacrificed to protect our freedom, we thank you greatly for your service.

ELGIN COURIER
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Richard L. Osburn



Raymond Ott



Edward T. Owens Jr.



Robert A. Owen



Roland Jonse Palacios



Jeffrey P. Pekar



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Jesus Peña



Joe Pena



Patrick Matthew Peña



Richard Peña



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Matthew Pittman



Carl J. Poehrer



Meto Pokorney



Ronnie Polston



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A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES: OUR VETERANS

On Veterans Day, we pause to reflect on the courage, dedication and loyalty of our nation's military veterans. Throughout history, their hard work and sacrifice have kept us safe and protected our freedom. We owe them a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid, and we salute them for their service. To all of the brave men and women who have sacrificed to put their country first, we thank you.

**A special thanks to these local veterans for their
courage, sacrifice and service.**

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Daniel Williams



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Jack W. Wilson



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Frankie Wright



Tobit Wyche



Anthony Yanez



Curtis J. Young

Thank you Veterans

Albert Lopez
Ignacio Mendez
Iram Mendez
Jaime Orlando Mendez
Manuel Mendez
Maurilio Y Mendez

Sabas Mendez
Juan Raul Muniz
Jose Louis Sauseda
Alfredo Selvera
Daniel Selvera
Louis Selvera

Reynaldo Selvera
Walter Stevens
Jesse Ubias
Juan Ramon Ubias

QUILT ...

From Page 2

Photos by Julianne Hodges



Doug Rawlings, Army SP4, 1973-1976



Pete Reyes, Army SP4, 1963-1970



Tom Williams, Navy seaman 1964-1970



Ramiro Garza Sr., Army E4 Spec., 1968-1971



Jacob Morton, Army E4 Spec., 2012-2015



William James, Army Sargent Major, 1954-1991



Justin Gwinn, National Guard Sargent, 2003-2011

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EVENTS ...

From Page 1

the festivities, and at 11 a.m. a procession of heroes with honor guards and officials marched to the stage where many heroes were introduced and the celebration was well underway. The 2019 NCO Veteran of the Year was awarded to 1st Sgt. Michael J. Mallocote, and the 2019 Officer Veteran was awarded to Col. Anthony E. Poletti. Brigadier General Charles M. Schoening was the guest speaker.

Following the salute to these veterans and others, there were more cars to view as the Bastrop Area Cruisers hosted their Veterans Day Car Show with awards in over 20 categories.

Saturday night featured the Red, White and Blue

Banquet with more tributes and honorees including special guest speaker Dr. Charles W. Edwards, Jr. who saluted the Vietnam-era veterans for the service they provided to the United States. He reminded us all of the many sacrifices that were made by these brave men and women and encouraged us to “Remember, Reflect, Honor and Celebrate the contributions these veterans made in serving our country.” Other highlights included the Bastrop Honor Choir under the direction of Bill Owens’ exceptional musical contributions for both the day and night tributes.

On Monday at 11 a.m., a ceremony for veterans was held at the Smithville VFW Post 1309. Free food was served following the ceremony, and a building fundraiser was also held.



Retired Marine Dianna Greenwood was Mistress of Ceremonies at the Red, White and Blue Banquet. She is congratulating guest speaker Dr. Charles W. Edwards for his speech at the event.



The much anticipated awards presentation drew a huge crowd at the Bastrop Area Cruisers Veterans Car Show.



World War II veterans Paul Cross (Marines), Lawrence Reed (Marines), Bill Swinney (Air Force), John Levermann (Army) and James Kershaw (Navy)

Photos by Dock Jackson



The Blue Flame Cruisers showed their support for the Veterans Day Car Show.



The Bastrop Honor Choir under the direction of Bill Owens provided music for the program.



Luigi's Italian Restaurant in Elgin catered the Red, White & Blue banquet. Owner Afrim Mehmetaj and his team proudly served 585 guests at the event. Pictured are Mehmetaj (left) and co-worker Albert Vasquez (right).

Courtesy photo



Left to Right: 2019 NCO Veteran of the Year 1st Sgt. Michael J. Mallicote, Guest Speaker Brigadier General Charles M. Schoening, Assistant Adjutant General of Texas, and Col. Anthony E. Poletti, 2019 Officer Veteran of the Year.

FLIGHT ...

From Page 1

condition. His next assignment was on a destroyer, the USS Lloyd Thomas. The ship was stationed off the Vietnam coast and provided fire support as directed onto the coast line. He served as part of a bomb squad. They were responsible for loading the powder and the bombs into the big naval guns firing at selected targets.

His last assignment was a gunner on a river boat. These boats patrolled the rivers and coast line looking for enemy trying to sneak into South Vietnam or illegal arms being smuggled into the country. Freddy said these were small but fast boats with a typical crew of four to five sailors, each behind a machine gun mounted on the boat. I asked him if he was ever scared, and he replied he was scared every time he went out because you never knew who or what you were going to run into.

Austin is one of several cities nationwide that have the privilege to serve as a departure point for Honor Flight, the ultimate veteran's trip to Washington D.C. These veterans must have served during World War II, the Korean War or the Vietnam War. They are taken to visit memorials dedicated to military service and sacrifices. All members of Honor Flight are

volunteers and contributions go directly towards the flight, hotel and miscellaneous fees to successfully provide this noble trip for these men and women.

A few months later, Terry was going through the mail, and one letter caught her attention immediately. It was from Honor Flight! Together, they opened the letter and were thrilled to see that Freddy's application had been approved. He was flying to Washington DC on the Jack N. Miller Memorial Honor Flight # 63, leaving on October 18. They had a couple of weeks to prepare and Freddy was beyond thrilled at the news. Unknown to him, Terry, his wife, had a lot of coordination to take care of before then. She read and researched what was needed before, during and after the flight and realized Honor Flight wanted as many family and friends involved in the departure and arrival as possible. She coordinated vehicles, times and family members to represent Freddy well at Bergstrom Airport. She also worked to make sure posters and other surprises would be ready for her husband.

The Honor Flight consists of a paid flight, hotel and any fees required for the memorial visits. It only paid for the veteran himself (there were no female veterans on this flight), so any accompanying guests had to pay full fare.



Freddy Gonzalez and his fellow Honor Flight travelers visited the Korean Memorial.

Courtesy photo

The trip was an overnight trip only, leaving Friday early afternoon and returning Saturday late afternoon.

On his departure date,

Freddy and 40 other chosen veterans were gathered together by Honor Flight volunteers and were recognized by marching in a procession

to the plane and having hundreds of passengers clap and thank them for their service as they made their way to the Southwest Airlines aircraft.

While in Washington D.C., the veterans were treated to several beautiful sights such as the Arlington National Cemetery, the WWII Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial Wall, the Marine Memorial and the Naval Museum of the Pacific War. They also drove by and saw the Washington Monument and the MLK Memorial. The trip was hectic, but each veteran had a volunteer helper called an Honor Guardian to ensure they had all the help they needed.

After a wonderful time in D.C., they happily boarded their plane for the return trip. Again, they were honored boarding in Washington. Freddy also mentioned a very nice surprise they got enroute to Austin. One of the Honor Flight volunteers got on the plane intercom and announced it was time for “Mail call”! Freddy said this immediately brought a buzz as how many of the veterans remembered how much they had looked forward to mail call when they were in Vietnam or Korea or any other place in the world where they had to get a letter from a loved one to hear from home.

The Honor Flight veterans had not known that their wives or family had gathered

cards so that they could be given out during “mail call” on their way back to Austin. Freddy was thrilled when he was given a large envelope full of cards from loved ones. He said it was quiet for a time while they read the cards and even saw tears in some of the veterans’ eyes. He said it was a beautiful and totally unexpected surprise, and he wanted to thank his wife Terry for all the work she did in making it possible.

On arrival, the recognized veterans were treated to a hero's welcome. Again, Color Guards presented the flags as the group departed the flight to thunderous applause and encouragement from the many onlookers. Freddy was lucky enough to have more than 20 family members and friends on hand to welcome him home with enthusiastic clapping and homemade posters thanking him for his service. It was a moment he will never forget and will never stop being grateful for the opportunity.

I asked Freddy how he felt after the whole experience was over, and he simply said, “Ronnie, it is just great to be an American.” Right on Freddy. Right on.

Honor Flight Austin is a non-profit organization that accepts donations. For more information on Honor Flight, call 1-888-530-8880 or email contact@honorflightaustin.org.



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ACC celebrates veterans and their supporters

The Austin Community College Elgin Campus, with American Legion Post 295 and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6115, hosted a celebration of local veterans on Veterans' Day.

Eduardo Hidrogo, a local veteran who has served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, who ACC administrator and ACC Elgin Veterans Committee member Henry Leal described as "coming with a bit of American history," was the first speaker. Hidrogo described Veterans' Day as a big part of his life ever since he was 16 years old, and he shared the

history of Veterans' Day.

Next, American Legion post commander John Quagliani shared a poem about the importance of veterans, their stories and their service. Finally, VFW post commander Chuck Swain spoke about the history and significance of Veterans' Day and the importance of celebrating and thanking veterans.

Three people from ACC were also given awards during the ceremony to recognize individuals who were instrumental in starting the first ACC Veterans' Day Commemoration in 2014 and have provided support for

veterans' initiatives. Dr. Louella Tate, dean of student affairs at the Round Rock campus, was recognized for helping veteran students throughout the ACC district. BethAnn Warwick, veteran outreach coordinator from the Highland campus, was recognized for her work in assisting veteran students district-wide. Sylvia Galvan Gonzalez, executive dean of counseling from the San Gabriel campus, was recognized for her support of the first ACC Elgin Veterans' Day Commemoration in 2014.

Photos by Julianne Hodges



Many attendees salute for the Pledge of Allegiance.



From left to right: Rebekah Romero, Brienne Kent, Alicia Valero and Margarita Ruiz from the Elgin High School NJROTC carry the flags.



VFW post commander Chuck Swain (left) and American Legion post commander John Quagliani (right) present an award to ACC veterans' outreach coordinator BethAnn Warwick.



Local World War II veteran Eduardo Hidrogo was one of the main speakers at Monday's ceremony.

McDade honors local veterans

On the Friday morning ahead of Veterans' Day, before the start of the school day, McDade ISD students and McDade community members gathered in the high school gym to celebrate their local veterans. The keynote speaker was Tim Williams, a former Marine and husband of principal Frances Williams.

Williams recalled while he was in school, he realized he didn't have a plan after high school. He said serving in the Marine Corps was the best decision he ever made; it made him the person he is today, it taught him many lessons, and it gave him a bond with other veterans. He encouraged young people who want to serve in the military, adding they would "embark on an amazing adventure."

Photos by Julianne Hodges



Former Marine Tim Williams talks about his experience in joining the military after high school.



McDade ISD band director James Baker plays taps on the trumpet.



As the McDade ISD choir sang the anthem for each branch of the military, veterans of that branch stood up.



McDade ISD students gathered on Friday morning at the beginning of the school day for the salute to veterans.

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