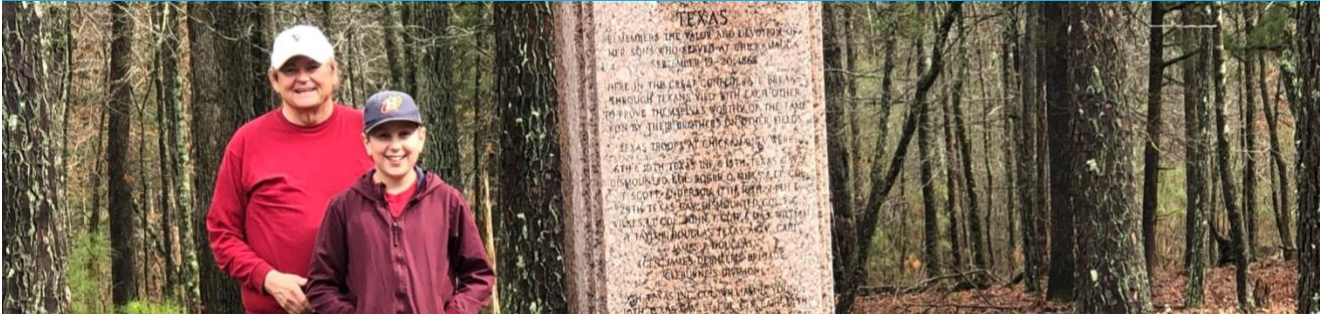




# Tales of Texas

## NEWSLETTER



May 2024

This issue of Tales of Texas is a Memorial Day edition. We take a look at American heroes and their sacrifices for freedom's sake.

The setting of the edition is Chickamauga National Battlefield and its immediate environs on the Georgia-Tennessee border.

The two photos, by the author, in the masthead are the first Republic of Texas flag and the author and grandson at the granite "TEXAS" marker at Chickamauga Battlefield. Other photos in this edition are from Texas state websites, MoH Heritage Center, public domain or taken by the author, with the exception of the US Army riderless horse at the Alamo which was taken by Katie O. French and used by permission.

Comments? Go to website listed below.

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## What Is A Hero?

Merriam-Webster defines a hero this way: an illustrious warrior; a person admired for achievements and noble qualities; one who shows great courage.

America has heroes who come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and both genders.

## Medal of Honor

My grandson, Lincoln, and I had the honor and privilege to visit the National Medal of Honor Heritage Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The heritage center is contingent with the Chickamauga National Historic Park which is home to a Civil War battlefield. As it happens, the very first Medals of Honor were awarded to federal troops at Chickamauga in 1863. It is for this reason the Medal of Honor Heritage Center is there.

There will be a National Medal of Honor Museum completed in 2025 in Arlington, Texas. For now, the MoH Heritage Center is a home dedicated to American heroes.

As visitors to the museum observe the individual displays, they become aware of interactive exhibits which involve recipients of the Medal of Honor. A question is posed to the American hero, and he answers it. The questions are designed to offer visitors insight into how people think who go "above and beyond the call of duty."



# Tales of Texas



Colonel Jack Jacobs  
US Army, MoH

**“What is Personal Responsibility?”** Colonel Jack Jacobs, (MoH, US Army, Vietnam) answers, “In the crucible of combat, one of the most important things you learn is the value of expending energy for somebody else – that it isn’t about you, that it’s for all of us together.”

**“What is Courage?”** Master Sergeant Leroy Petry (MoH, US Army, Afghanistan) answers, “There are different types of courage. Sometimes being able to ask your math teacher for help takes courage. Whatever we struggle with, it takes courage to ask for help. It wasn’t courage that motivated me on the battlefield. It was love. Love for my guys.”

Major General Pat Brady (MoH, US Army, Vietnam) answers, “A courageous person is a person who reaches a breaking point but doesn’t break. It takes courage to do what’s right. A coward will not stand up and do what’s right.”



Master Sergeant Leroy Petry  
US Army, MoH

**“What is Patriotism?”** Corporal Hershel “Woody” Williams (MoH, USMC, Iwo Jima) answers, “I learned it at school. Mom and Dad were too busy trying to make a living. A dedicated elementary school teacher taught me the Pledge of Allegiance and to love my country and respect our flag. The love of country and pride in being an American that she instilled in me guided me for the rest of my life.”

The greatness of heroes and the love of country is going out of style for many people. Great Americans, many of whom gave their very lives for us, are now vilified, and cast off as common trash. I hope teachers, especially in elementary school, realize the awesome responsibility that rests on their shoulders. Teaching youngsters the love of country was a bedrock of my education. Like Corporal Williams, it was my teacher who taught me the pledge of allegiance.



# Tales of Texas



Major General Pat Brady  
US Army, MoH



Corporal  
Woody Williams  
USMC, MoH

The same patriotic narrative pervaded the television programs I watched. A great American, Walt Disney, produced many movies about American history and the heroes who proved their courage. The purpose of those movies was not to be historically accurate in every detail, but to instill the big picture of taking pride in being an American to millions of young boys and girls of the 60's. Walt Disney wanted us to know we stood on the shoulders of giants. Walt Disney's personal hero was Abraham Lincoln. He created a robotic presentation of President Lincoln which, under the conditions of his will, still operates at his theme parks.

There is an award presented to those who serve our country in the dangerous environs of outer space. The **Congressional Space Medal of Honor** recognizes the sacrifice of astronauts who dedicate their lives to space travel. Congress has presented the award 17 times (all posthumously). The Medal of Honor Heritage Center rotates featured stories. The one we read has a "Tales of Texas" connection. Along the way, we learned a new word: "aspirational."

The featured recipient was Lieutenant Colonel Richard "Dick" Scobee. Colonel Scobee entered service as a mechanic in San Antonio. His *aspirations* allowed him to advance from mechanic to pilot, to astronaut, to commander of the Challenger Space Shuttle. Like all recipients of the Medal of Honor, Colonel Scobee's legacy is one of service, courage, and integrity.

The Medal of Honor was not created until 1863. So, what about heroes who gave their lives prior to the Civil War? Archivists and researchers, both amateur and professional, work tirelessly in military records, university libraries, and national and state archives to uncover the names of honored dead who may become lost to history. Visiting national historical parks and county squares reveals great Americans you may never have heard about. Statues and plaques create an atmosphere of wanting to learn more.



# Tales of Texas



State of Texas  
Legislature  
Medal of Honor

The State of Texas Legislature awards our state’s highest honor: The Texas Legislature Medal of Honor. You may not be aware of its existence, having been awarded only seventy-five times (thirty-eight times posthumously). If you visit the Capitol in Austin, the Texas Medal of Honor exhibit is on the Ground Floor, North Wing. Stop by when you have a chance.

The latest presentations of the Texas Medal of Honor were in March 2024. Governor Abbott presented the families of US Army Sergeant Major Jerry Lynn Bell and US Army Master Sergeant Mike Peña for their heroic sacrifices in Vietnam and Korea.

No Texas salute to heroes of Memorial Day would be complete without our original heroes of the Texas Revolution. We remember “Old Ben Milam” and the First Battle of Bexar, James Fannin and the executions of Goliad, William Travis and the defenders of the Alamo, the widows and orphans of the “Runaway Scrape,” and the nine Texans who lost their lives at San Jacinto. They received no medals, nor did they fight for such recognition. We are the ones who reaped the benefits of blood sown across Texas.

Each year there is a ceremony at the Alamo attended by the U.S. Army. The Alamo was home to the U.S. Cavalry who installed the “hump” on the Alamo to make it look complete and give the old chapel its now iconic shape. It’s always appropriate to “Remember the Alamo!”

The Medal of Honor Heritage Center at Chickamauga recognizes the president who first presented the Medal of Honor: Abraham Lincoln. In this present day, the sixteenth president’s words have never been more appropriate, “A nation that does not honor its heroes will not long endure.”



The Alamo  
2024