



Fort Sam Houston Memorial Services Detachment



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We're on the Web!
 Check out our new site at:
<http://www.fortsamhoustonmsdhonorguard.org>

For publicity requests/
 Information, please email
MSDPublicity@gmail.com

2025 just flew by-and the 5 MSD squads completed 1573 services for the year!

We also bid a sad farewell to several of our members who passed during this year. RIP to our missed personnel:

- Nolan Martin
- Fred Balderrama
- James Ogilvie
- Debra Eaton
- Leonilo Portillo
- Eugene Toifl
- Martin Robles

In 2025 we also set up a new webpage as well as new Facebook and LinkedIn pages. Check us out and follow us for the latest news!
<http://www.fortsamhoustonmsdhonorguard.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/FortSamHoustonMemorialServicesDetachment>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/fort-sam-houston-national-cemetery-memorial-services-detachment-msd/>

Happy New Year and we look forward to 2026!
 Deb Parsons, Publicity Chair

COMMANDER'S CORNER



Greetings All! My name is Jacqueline Jones, and I am honored to step into the role of leading this Memorial Services Detachment. Like many of you, I believe deeply in service, accountability, and taking care of our own. These are the values that have guided me throughout my military and civilian career.

Before looking ahead, I want to take a moment to express sincere appreciation to the prior leadership and to all those who have supported this organization over the years. The foundation that exists today was built through dedication, sacrifice, and countless hours of service. Your commitment, guidance, and continued support have preserved the mission and ensured this organization remains a source of pride and purpose for our veteran community and their loved ones. I am grateful for the trust placed in me to carry that legacy forward.

My background includes years of experience in military leadership, public service, administration, and program management, with a strong focus on organization, training, and operational effectiveness. I've served in leadership and support roles across the U.S. Air Force, law enforcement agencies, probation services, and most recently in veteran-focused memorial and ceremonial operations. These experiences have shaped my leadership style, one rooted in teamwork, transparency, and respect for mission and people.

Looking ahead, one of my priorities is to bring our organization further into the digital world in a way that supports, not replaces, our traditions. This includes improving how we manage records and rosters, strengthening internal communication, and exploring digital tools that make it easier for members to stay informed, engaged, and connected. Thoughtful modernization will help us operate more efficiently, preserve our history, and ensure continuity for future generations of veterans who will carry this mission forward.

As I take on this responsibility, my commitment is simple: to support our members, strengthen our operations, and honor the mission that brought us together. I believe this organization's success depends on clear communication, shared purpose, and looking out for one another, just as we did in uniform.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve and look forward to working alongside each of you as we continue supporting veterans, their families, and our community with pride and professionalism.

Respectfully,
Jacqueline "Jackie" Jones

MONDAY SQUAD

Bowren musters out after 10 years



Ron Bowren, an Oklahoma transplant who forged two adult careers -- one in the Army and a second one as a funeral director/embalmer -- capped 10 years of active service with Monday Squad when he mustered out during a ceremony in the squad room in October.

A retired sergeant major, Bowren wore multiple hats as a worker bee for the squad, serving as a rifleman, bus driver, flag folder/presenter and electronic bugler

"I enjoyed driving the bus the most," said Bowren. "But mainly, I just looked forward to every Monday so I can serve MSD again and be around the squad. I enjoy every one of them."

Admittedly low-key and soft-spoken, Bowren also is a stalwart regular, as seen on Channel 12 on Sunday mornings with the choir of First Baptist Church of San Antonio, where he's also a deacon. Bowren's military experience was launched, albeit somewhat involuntarily in 1966 when, after losing his college student deferment, he was drafted into the Army, leading to two years spent as a reconnaissance specialist. He was discharged honorably, but later reenlisted and was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division in what became a career move that lasted 26 years; and included duty in Germany and Hawaii, plus tours in Saudi Arabia and Iraq during Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

Bowren eventually found a niche that fit in being reclassified as a chaplain assistant, a credential that allowed him to serve as senior sergeant major of the VII Corps Chaplain Office, assisting chaplains with religious support while visiting subordinate units throughout the VII Corps theatre of operations during the Middle East conflicts. Ron's final duty station was as sergeant major of the Army Pacific Command Chaplain Office at Fort Shafter, Hawaii.

"Losing my student deferment way back then, was my fault," said Bowren. "Low academics. But going through that was ultimately good. Combined with the military experience, it helped me grow up and become more disciplined."

Bowren remembers the chaplain assistance experience as beneficial, noting, "It taught me skills and gave me experience about human behavior and compassion. It led to a decision to enroll in courses in mortuary science (at San Antonio College). While doing that, I worked parttime at local funeral homes to get experience and knowledge."

It led to his second career of 20 years in the funeral homes industry, during which he spoke to some Fort Sam/MSD officials who pitched membership in MSD.

"Anytime I see somebody wearing a military cap," said Bowren, "I always approach them and pitch the value of MSD, what it does for veterans. The message can't be sent enough."

Rarely idle, Bowren now has a new endeavor, serving as what he calls a "listener" throughout the wards of Brooks Army Medical Center. Explained Ron: "When I'm over there, I get chances to visit patients. To listen and to bring words of encouragement to them."

MONDAY SQUAD



ERNIE GAMEZ MUSTERS OUT

The Italian word for it is "Finito." Finito as in "over and out."

Expressed another way, by one of show business' all-time supporters of the military, Bob Hope, the appropriate expression would be "thanks for the memories."

That's what Monday squaders were reminded of on Dec. 22 when entrenched "Old Guard" stalwart Ernesto "Ernie" Gamez mustered out for the final time, ending his rock-solid tenure of nearly 11 years with the squad.

A San Antonio lad who enlisted in the Army virtually right out of high school with the objective of gaining some vocational training paid for by Uncle Sam, Ernie also married his Burbank High sweetheart Carmen in the midst of that short flurry. Their ensuing married life -- especially after his military obligation was completed -- was rewarding as Ernie eventually landed a job as a collections department manager for a finance company, which was to launch a career in banking and finance that included management during his peak years for Randolph Brooks Federal Credit Union.

Before all that though, came the Vietnam experience in 1966 during which Gamez (after serving accompanied-by-spouse duty tours in Germany and at Fort Hood) spent nearly a year in the Iron Triangle northwest of Saigon, battling the Viet Cong, mud and rain, mosquitos, scorpions, booby traps and punji sticks. tasked, too, with additional upgraded duties as a platoon sergeant, Ernie survived to return home. and soon thereafter, civilian life.

"My military experience got me that first job in collections," says Gamez, looking back. "And I had served my time, done my duty. I got to go home to fight the civilian world."

And then Carmen Gamez, his bride, lost her battle with cancer in 2006. She is now interred at Fort Sam Houston, along with their son, Sonny. It's a circumstance that has added sentiment and meaning for Ernie virtually every time he's driven through one of the cemetery gates for honor guard duty. He met his second wife Rita in 2008, and they got married a year later. Ernie credits Rita for pitching MSD membership to him after a luncheon guest speaker had mentioned its merits to her.



A staunch participant from the get-go, Ernie served on the board as MSD finance officer in 2018-19.

"I remain proud to have been of service for my fallen veterans," said Gamez. "We provide their final sendoff and tribute. Yes, they're gone now, but memories of them live on."

And with those parting words, Gamez mustered out from MSD quarters -- for the final time.

Thanks for the memories, Ernie.

Ernie Gamez, who wrapped up his 10 1/2-year service with the Monday Squad on Dec. 22, is shown with his wife, Rita, and the gifted display case depicting both his in-country-Vietnam Army service in the 1960s as well as his devoted service to MSD..

MONDAY SQUAD

MILESTONES BONANZA FOR STEVE SHAFFER

For Steve Shaffer, 10,000 is more than simply a nice, round number. Beyond that, those five digits became especially significant recently when Shaffer logged his 10,000th hour of active service with the Monday Squad.

Truly a milestone.

"But I can't tell you the exact date when I hit 10,000," Shaffer said recently. "It was sometime in the last few months."

Adding to the occasion, Shaffer also was poised to reach another milestone with the arrival of the new year.

On Jan. 6, the 67-year-old Air Force retired master sergeant was to mark 20 years of active service in MSD -- all of it in the ranks of the Monday Squad.

In the lengthy, 35-year history of Fort Sam Houston's Memorial Services Detachment, Shaffer's back-to-back milestones would seem to place him in elite company. Also, en route to logging those milestone numbers, he served an eight-year tour as squad leader from 2013 to 2021.

In light of all that, Shaffer has been selected Monday Squad's 2025 Volunteer of the Year, an annual award that's decided by squad leaders.

Asked what he considers most meaningful about his lengthy MSD experience, Shaffer said, "That feeling you get from being involved and being part of delivering final respects and honors for the families of the military veterans. To be involved in that final sendoff, it is special."

An East Coast lad who grew up in the Upstate New York hamlet of Jamesville (southeast of Syracuse), Shaffer made what became a career decision when he enlisted in the Air Force in 1977. It came after serving first-responder stints as, first, a volunteer fireman, then as an emergency medical technician. In the Air Force, Steve demonstrated an aptitude and interest in becoming a medic. It turned out to be an ideal fit as he fashioned a 24-year active duty career. It included billets at a number of bases in Texas, plus overseas tours at installations in Greece and Turkey. Highlights included being assigned as the first medical technician credentialed to perform minor surgical procedures without the requirement for a physician to be present. Taking that type of duty a step further, Steve later became qualified as an independent duty medical technician.

A subsequent heavy-responsibility assignment was at Wilford Hall at Lackland Air Force Base as the noncommissioned officer in-charge at the only Department of Defense organ transplant unit. By the time he retired from active duty in 2001, Steve's resume also included serving as non-commissioned officer in charge of Global Aero-Medical Scheduling.

The subsequent volunteer endeavor involving MSD occurred four years later, in 2005.

Shaffer said he chanced to read an article in the San Antonio Express-News about this "veterans helping veterans" organization. MSD officials were conducting a recruiting drive and their pitch appealed to Shaffer.



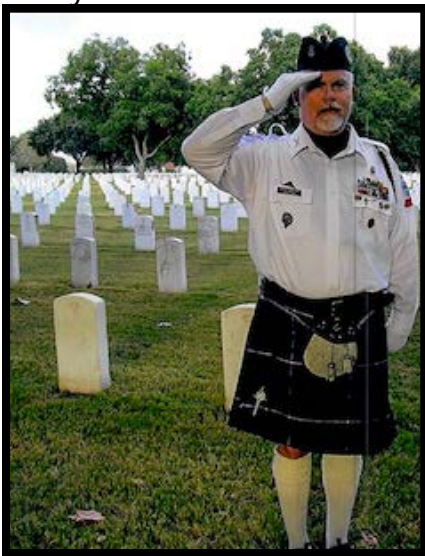
MONDAY SQUAD

"So, then I drove over to the cemetery just to get more information. It turned out to be like a job interview," recalled Shaffer. "I sat down with the assistant director of the cemetery and answered a lot of questions. At the end, I was told (by then-Monday Squad Leader Rudy Munoz) I was being invited to join and so I should come back the next Monday to find out how things were run."

The only uniform items issued that day were two shirts -- one long-sleeve one and one short-sleeve one -- plus a ball cap, a garrison cap and some accessories. Other necessities -- black pants, shoes, socks, belt, T-shirt -- had to be purchased at the new member's expense. Looking back, Shaffer said he remembers, for the next two Mondays, he was instructed to show up in civilian clothes and try to be "invisible" that is, standing behind trees as he tried to catch glimpses of the "routine" ... how a military memorial service is conducted. On the third Monday, Shaffer was permitted to "suit up," albeit strictly to observe. Finally in the fourth week, Shaffer was told he would be participating fully -- carrying a rifle and shooting live rounds right before Taps were played. In the months that followed, Shaffer branched out, serving as a flagger and also an electronic bugler. Then, 18 months after joining the squad, Shaffer was appointed assistant squad leader. Which led to being promoted to squad leader in 2013. He served in that billet for eight years.

Shaffer's MSD scrapbook includes a photo showing him in a "modified" uniform. "Modified" because he was wearing a Scottish kilt.

"I wore the kilt that day in honor of Saint Andrew's Day (the patron saint of Scotland) and also for all my fellow Scotsmen who are buried at Fort Sam," said Shaffer, underscoring his Scottish ancestry.



Steve donned his kilt in honor of Saint Andrews Day (patron saint of Scotland), and for all of his fellow Scotsman buried at Ft Sam. He has Scottish blood in him, the kilt colors are of the Douglas clan, where his paternal Grandmother's family line comes from. The Douglas clan was in charge of keeping and protecting King Robert the Bruce's' (the same Robert the Bruce in the movie Braveheart) heart after he had died. They were known and feared for their bravery and fighting skills.

Fast-forwarding to today, one senses Shaffer's leadership and demeanor add a certain credence to Monday Squad operations. Asked if he has had any thoughts -- after 20 years -- about riding off into the sunset, Shaffer said, "I feel like I will stick around until it's clear, to me ... that it's time to go."

Nowadays, Shaffer maintains his MSD service only by commuting on most Mondays from his home in Corpus Christi.

Steve's wife, Linda, also has a military background. She is a retired Army lieutenant colonel who served as a combat nurse in Iraq, then later as an instructor for four years at Fort Sam Houston. They met through the church in which both were members.

Steve noted their personal story includes a special moment that occurred in May 2019, at a Fort Sam memorial service for Linda's father, who was a decorated World War II veteran.

"And Monday Squad performed the final honors," recalled Steve. "And I presented the flag from the service to the veteran's daughter -- who was, of course, my wife."

TUESDAY SQUAD

Tuesday Squad Member Robert Grzywa “Griz”



Bob “Griz” Grzywa was born in 1960 in Milwaukee Wisconsin. Graduated from Premontre Catholic high school in Green Bay, Wisconsin in 1978. Went to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott Arizona earning a degree in Aeronautical Science graduating summa cum laude and receiving the Provost’s award. He was a flight instructor teaching single, multi-engine, instrument, and commercial students before joining the United States Air Force in 1984.

During nearly 13 years in the service, he was an instructor and fighter pilot, flying the T-37, RF-4, and F-15E. He served and flew combat missions in operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He also flew combat missions supporting NATO operation Deliberate Force and Decisive Endeavor in Bosnia. He was based and deployed at Reese AFB, Randolph AFB, Bergstrom AFB in Texas, RAF Lakenheath, England, Shaikh Isa Air Base, Bahrain, Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, and Aviano Air Base, Italy. After separating from the military, he flew for over 28 years as a pilot for Southwest airlines, 25 years as a captain. During that time, he logged over 23,000 hours in the Boeing 737. He has been married for 42 years, has three children and four grandchildren.



TUESDAY SQUAD

Tuesday Squad members Recognized for their Service.

On 2 December 2025, several Tuesday Squad members were recognized by outgoing MSD commander Manny Mendoza for their outstanding service.

The certificate reads: "Their support for the MSD is reflected in the MSD's success over 34 years, during which it has rendered military honors to over 37,000 military veterans at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery."

The following Tuesday, Squad members were recognized:



Sergeant Major (SGM) Rick Davila, USA (Retired)



Not pictured:
Mark D. Jordan, US Army



Jesse Benavides, USAF (Retired)



Mike De La Rosa, US Army



Colonel Jay Baker
USAF (Retired)
Tuesday Squad Bugler



Jose Retna, USAF
(Retired)

Congratulations to the Memorial Support Detachment (MSD) members for their dedicated service, often honoring fallen heroes and living veterans with respect, especially at Fort Sam Houston.

TUESDAY SQUAD

Tuesday Squad Member of the Year Memorial Support Detachment (MSD) Awardee Lawrence Cabanilla

(Left) Lawrence Cabanilla was presented with the Squad Member of the Year Award by outgoing Commander Manny Mendoza. Lawrence has supported Tuesday Squad and the MSD in numerous ways at several events.

Just some of these are highlighted below.



Lawrence Cabanilla,
USN

(Right) We can all remember some of the things Lawrence has participated in, such as volunteering for VFW 8397 at the annual Valero Open as a hole marshal for Hole No. 5 and serving as a standard bearer for a trio of professional golfers.



(Right) Helping distribute food to over 150 families through VFW Post 8397's Food Bank.



(Above) On November 11, Veterans Day, Friday Squad Member Johnny Sanchez and Tuesday Squad Members Lawrence Cabanilla, Mark Jordan, and Rogelio "Roger" Rodriguez performed at the San Antonio Spurs game. They had the amazing opportunity to meet former Spurs player David Robinson!



(Above) Outside the MSD Squad Headquarters, Lawrence Cabanilla built a new bench. Lawrence is highly competent in complex engineering, maintenance, and construction tasks thanks to his experience as a Navy Seabee. Go Tuesday Squad!

TUESDAY SQUAD

Major Patrick Robert Domonic is a Tuesday Squad Member and brings a wealth of experience as a former soldier in the U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Regiment ("The Old Guard").

Patrick "Tiny" Dominic joined the Tuesday Squad of MSD because he heard of some interesting, cool, and noteworthy members who performed their services weekly to provide military honors to eligible veterans and service retirees at the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

Tiny joined the Tuesday squad to keep a watchful eye on his brother pilot Robert "Griz" Grzywa.

"Fighting in the air is not a sport. It is scientific murder."-Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker, America's #1 ace in WWI, 26 victories.

The real story of Lt. Pat "Tiny" Dominic focuses on dog fighting, air-to-ground engagements, and the lighter side of pilot life. In the U.S. Air Force, he held the specialty title of "Pilot".

EDUCATION:

Master's Degree, AERONAUTICAL SCIENCE, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical Univ., 1998

Bachelor's Degree, APPLIED ARTS & SCIENCES, Southwest Texas State Univ., 1982

Associate's degree, LAW ENFORCEMENT, California National Open Univ., 1978



His awards include: Air Force Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Air Medal with 3 devices, Meritorious Service Medal with 2 devices, National Defense Service Medal with 1 device, Air Force Longevity Service Award with 3 devices, Army Good Conduct Medal, Air Force Training Ribbon, Southwest Asia Service Medal with 2 devices, Air Force Overseas Long Tour Ribbon, Small Army Expert Marksmanship Ribbon with device,, Combat Readiness Medal with 1 device, Kuwait Liberation Medal (Kuwait), Kuwait Liberation Medal Saudi Arabia, and Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with 6 devices.

EXPERIENCE:

11/21 – 04/23: Deputy Sheriff, Comal County Sheriff's Office

03/21 – 10/21: Weatherford College Police Academy (Distinguished Graduate)

10/20 – 03/21: Corrections Officer - Wise County Sheriff's Department

12/98 – 09/21: American Airlines - Captain, B-737, Experienced in B-777, B-727, F-100 and S-80. Type ratings in B-737 and B-777. Airline Transport Pilot,

Commercial Privileges, Multi-Engine Instrument, Single-Engine Land

10/82 – 09/98: USAF. Operations Officer/Program Manager, Air-To-Ground Weapons Systems Evaluation Program, Fighter Weapons School (Top Gun)

Graduate, F-15E Check Airman, Instructor, Operational Test Pilot, RF-4C

(Distinguished Graduate), Instructor, Weapons and Tactics Officer, Combat Mission Commander, Combat Flight Leader, Operation Desert Storm with 43 combat sorties

01/81 – 05/82: Student, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, TX.

06/78 – 12/80: Police Officer, Houston Police Department, TX and Spring Valley Police Departments, TCOLE PID #202780

Major Patrick Robert Domonic, better known as "Tiny," entered the service in San Antonio, Texas, on March 10, 1983, and retired from the United States Air Force on October 31, 1998. His combined total service in the Army and Air Force totaled 22 years.

TUESDAY SQUAD

Major Patrick Robert Domic



05/74 – 05/78: U.S. Army Infantryman. 101st Airborne Div. (Air Assault), Ft. Campbell, KY, and U.S. Army Honor Guard, Ft. Meyer, VA. In the Army, he served with The Honor Guard at Arlington National Cemetery which primarily refers to the elite soldiers of the U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Regiment ("The Old Guard") who stand vigil at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, performing meticulous ceremonial duties, including the famous 24/7 watch and changing of the guard, and providing military funeral honors, representing the highest standards of the U.S. Army and Nation.

You've got to ask yourself one question: 'Do I feel lucky?' Well, do you, punk?

Tiny has held many jobs throughout his career, such as this one as a Houston Police Officer.



TRUE HAPPINESS Ask me.... If I'm happy, I would show you in my smile if I could.



Do Pilots Really Know What Every Cockpit Button Does? Pilots train rigorously and frequently to learn and remember every system on the aircraft and what buttons, dials, knobs, and levers in the cockpit do. This allows for the correct use of each system and how it operates during normal and emergency procedures.

Let's see what this switch does.

1993 San Antonio Airshow with my Dad in the cockpit. Note the pilot's name on the side.

MAJ "Tiny" Dominic

Transitioning to his last career, Tiny was a commercial pilot.

His dates of service were:

12/98 – 09/21: American Airlines - Captain, B-737, Experienced in B-777, B-727, F-100 and S-80. Type ratings in B-737 and B-777. Airline Transport Pilot, Commercial Privileges, Multi-Engine Instrument, Single-Engine Land



Remember the phrase - "You Are Why We Fly!"

Come fly with Tuesday Squad for your next great Adventure!

TUESDAY SQUAD

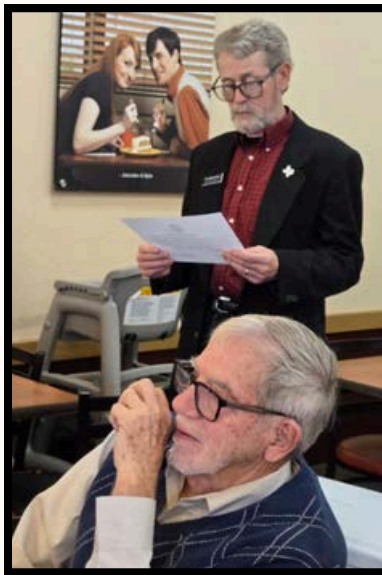
Annual Christmas Celebration, 17 December 2025

On Wednesday, December 17, 2025, the annual Tuesday Squad Christmas party took place, a night of delicious food, infectious laughter, and activities that strengthened company culture. The team's year-long achievements were honored on the occasion.



With the holiday lights fading and the happy memories still resonating, the Tuesday Squad of the Fort Sam Houston MSD is overwhelmed with thankfulness. Laughter, smiles, and cherished memories abound at our most recent MSD Christmas party, which was more than just a gathering. Thanks to everyone who came out to celebrate the holidays with us. Tuesday Squad was able to pull off a spectacular event.

The Tuesday Squad is more than just a group of veterans coming together to commemorate veterans; we are a family, as the head of the squad put it. Our firm bond from today serves as further evidence of this.



The Tuesday Squad wishes an unforgettable experience to all who made it. It warmed my heart to see the team pull together to celebrate the season and the significant ties we've formed. The uniqueness of our MSD community is borne forth by these times of oneness.

We commemorated a plethora of anniversaries and accomplishments this year, making it extra memorable. It was a culmination of all our perseverance, hard work, and commitment over the past year. Our MSD family is special and consequential because of these times of collective triumph.

Your unfaltering resolve, remarkable work ethic, and devotion to fully embracing our principles serve as a source of inspiration for everyone here. You never fail to impress by always giving it your all.

Have a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year to everyone! Keith Wall, Squad Leader

WEDNESDAY SQUAD

Greetings from the Wednesday Squad. From September through December, the Wednesday Squad proudly rendered military honors for 110 veterans, contributing a total of 1,770 combined volunteer hours at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery. During Calendar Year 2025, our squad provided military honors to **304** Veterans.

We remain humbled and honored to serve. Every ceremony is more than a duty—it is a tribute to the sacrifice and legacy of those who wore the uniform. We are deeply grateful to all who have served our nation. Your courage, dedication, and selfless service continue to inspire us.



Veterans Honoring Veterans. Always Ready to Honor.

A Superman Among Us: Alex Estrada's Unbreakable Service

In early November, Alex suffered a serious fall, hitting his head hard enough to lose consciousness. Unaware that he had a brain hemorrhage and broken ribs, he still volunteered a full day with the Wednesday Squad. Days later, after severe headaches, doctors at Brooke Army Medical Center discovered his life-threatening injuries and immediately placed him in the ICU. Thanks to their care, Alex was stabilized and, after three weeks of recovery, has now returned to duty.

Alex's resilience and sense of duty are truly remarkable. That said, we always encourage our Veterans to seek medical attention immediately when something isn't right. We are grateful that Alex is doing well today—even if we wish he had gone to the hospital sooner.

Welcome back, Alex. You are a true example of service and sacrifice. 🦹‍♂️ 🇺🇸 🦺 🦺 #Superman #SuperAlex



WEDNESDAY SQUAD



14 Sep - *Randolph Air Force Base, Military Retiree Appreciation Day*

We proudly supported the MSD recruiting efforts and promoted our mission at the Randolph Air Force Base Military Retiree Appreciation Day.

The Memorial Services Detachment (MSD) is dedicated to honoring our veterans with dignity, respect, and the military honors they earned through their service. Sharing our mission gave us the opportunity to connect with fellow retirees, families, and potential volunteers who share the same commitment. Honor. Respect. Remembrance.



L-R USA Vet CSM Luis Gonzalez, USN Vet PO3 Jennifer McGregor, and USA Vet SGM Bill Neuiszer



L-R USAF Vet SMSgt Richard Tuley, USMC Vet MSG Raul Marroquin, and USMC Vet GySgt Johnny Sanchez.

WEDNESDAY SQUAD

Team Building Event

19 Sep 2025 - Thank You, NCOA .

A big thank you to the Non-Commissioned Officers Association (NCOA) and President SGM Joe Terry (Ret.) for inviting our Squad to their 65th Anniversary Golf Tournament at Fort Sam Houston Golf Course.

The event was a great success and helped raise funds for the NCOA Scholarship Fund, supporting military families. We were honored to be part of this special milestone.



USAF Vet MSgt Porfirio “Monty” Montellano and USAF Vet MSgt Mike Arrellano’s team took 3rd place in the NCOA Golf Tournament! Congratulations to Team Captain Monty!



16 Oct - Proud Moment for the Wednesday Squad! We’re proud to unveil our new Wednesday Squad flag – a symbol of our dedication and service at the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

This flag represents our ongoing mission to honor every veteran with dignity and respect.

Wednesday Squad – Always Ready to Honor. 🙏

WEDNESDAY SQUAD

Weapons and Safety Training



1 Oct 2025 - Our Squad completed a block of instruction emphasizing safety in all we do. The training covered the M1 Garand, including assembly and disassembly, loading and unloading procedures, proper maintenance and lubrication, and essential measures to prevent negligent discharges and avoid injuries while carrying out our mission.

WEDNESDAY SQUAD

Unaccompanied Veterans Ceremony

15 Oct 2025 Honoring Our Unaccompanied Veterans. On this morning, nine unaccompanied veterans were honored with dignity and love. The Wednesday Squad, led by USAF Veteran SMSgt John Francis, rendered a precise rifle salute, while USAF Veteran MSgt Porfirio “Monty” Montellano performed a heartfelt “Taps.” Though they had no relatives present, their military family stood united to ensure they were honored, remembered, and never alone. (Photo Credit USAF Vet CMSgt Deb Parsons)

San Antonio Express-News

EXPRESSNEWS.COM • THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2025 • VOL. 161, NO. 20 \$3.00

A DIGNIFIED ENDING



Mike Barnett, left, and Gene Carter, members of the Fort Sam Houston Memorial Services Detachment Honor Guard, fold the American flag during a burial ceremony Wednesday at the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery. The event was organized in partnership between the Cemetery and the Bexar County Military and Veterans Services to provide dignified burials for eight unaccompanied Veterans from the Air Force, Army, and Navy. (Sam Owens, San Antonio Express News)

WEDNESDAY SQUAD

Unaccompanied Veterans Ceremony

This event is sponsored by Bexar County Department of Military and Veterans Services, and the guest speaker was Retired Major General Juan G. Ayala, who reminded us that each of the veterans had raised their right hand in service to their country. Nicholas Aidan of Honoring Veterans-Serving Legacies accepted the ceremonial U.S. Flag, and presented it to Patriots' Hall of Dripping Springs founder Kathryn Chandler.



The flag will be placed in the Patriots' Hall Of Dripping Springs, where members and guests can view it and learn more about Texas's unaccompanied veteran burial program, which honors more than 500 veterans each year to ensure no veteran is ever buried alone.



Members of Wednesday Squad provided the rifle volleys, playing of Taps, and folding and presentation of the colors.



Wednesday Squad Member Porfirio "Monty" Montellano played Taps for the ceremony.



Doves were released by Amazing Grace Doves, as a symbol of peace, love, hope, and purity.

WEDNESDAY SQUAD

In loving memory

17 Oct - *In Loving Memory of Eugene W. "Gino" Toifl*

We honor the life and legacy of Eugene W. "Gino" Toifl — a proud U.S. Army Veteran, San Antonio Police Officer, and longtime Shriner. Gino joyfully played the bagpipes during ceremonies and burials, bringing honor and dignity to every service.

He joined the Wednesday Squad Memorial Services Detachment (MSD) on April 1, 2003, and faithfully served as a Rifleman for nearly 14 years, until January 18, 2017. Gino was deeply devoted to volunteering with the MSD and supporting our veteran community.

In addition to his military and volunteer service, Gino served the San Antonio Police Department with distinction for 36 years, earning promotions to Detective and Sergeant. His dedication to both his country and his community will never be forgotten.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who served alongside him — thank you for your service, dedication, and friendship. May Gino rest in eternal peace. 🇺🇸

[Eugene W. Toifl Obituary](#)



(Right) The Memorial Services Detachment held an Honor Guard Vigil at Angelus Funeral Home on October 16, 2025. In this picture USMC Vets CPL Manuel Valdez and GySgt Johnny Sanchez stand watch.



Gino received recognition from Cdr Abel Arraiza for his contributions to the San Antonio Military Community and the Wednesday Squad.



WEDNESDAY SQUAD

3rd Annual GI Flores Memorial Luncheon

5 Nov 2025 - ❤️ Thank You to the Flores Family

G.I. Flores (1937–2022) was a proud member of the Wednesday Squad for over 20 years. For the past three years, his family has sponsored our squad during the week of his birthday (Nov 7) to honor his life and legacy.

We thank the Flores Family for sponsoring the 3rd Annual G.I. Flores Memorial Luncheon, and extend special thanks to Margie, Rachel, Regina, Brad, and Aiden for preparing and sharing a delicious meal with us.

G.I. loved the Wednesday Squad, and we remember him with respect, gratitude, and appreciation for his selfless service. Your kindness keeps his memory alive in our hearts.



USA Vet CSM Luis Gonzalez, present Mrs. Margie Flores and his Family a beautiful portrait of GI Flores. It contains over 1,500 beads and took approximately 40 hours to complete.



Artwork created by Diana Estrada, Wednesday Squad.

This beautiful piece, titled "In Loving Memory of Gregorio Isidro 'G.I.' Flores," contains approximately 15,000 beads and took about 40 hours to complete. A heartfelt thank-you to Diana and Alex Estrada for their time, talent, and dedication in completing this meaningful tribute.

WEDNESDAY SQUAD

Buffalo Soldier Ceremony 🐾

Nov 11, 2025 - The Wednesday Squad (MSD) proudly participated in the Buffalo Soldier Ceremony at the San Antonio National Cemetery – honoring the legacy of the brave soldiers who paved the way for generations to come. 🙏 **Honoring the past, serving the present.**



Picture with San Antonio Mayor, Hon. Gina Ortiz Jones and MSD Cdr Jackie Jones

WEDNESDAY SQUAD

Veterans Day Ceremony

Nov 10 - The Inn at Los Patios (Senior Living) organized a beautiful Veterans Day celebration to recognize and honor their resident Veterans. Representatives from the Wednesday Squad were proud to support this event. Our Veterans presented the Colors, and our talented bugler, Monty Montellano, performed all the Service Songs and concluded with Taps to honor our fallen.

The staff of the Inn at Los Patios also presented their resident Veterans with certificates of appreciation, adding a heartfelt and meaningful touch to the ceremony. Thank you to Colonel Lola Olsmith for the invitation, and special thanks to Jon Brown, Bob Bersabe, Manny Ibera, and Monty for proudly representing the Wednesday Squad during this memorable event.



WEDNESDAY SQUAD

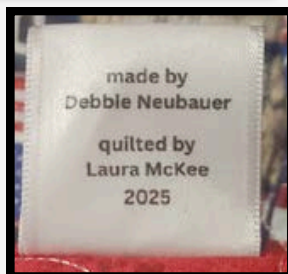
Quilts of Honor

Thank You, Mrs. Deb Neubauer

Nov 12 - Today, Mrs. Deb Neubauer surprised our Squad with a beautiful hand-crafted quilt to thank us for our volunteer work honoring veterans.

Her kindness and the time she put into making this quilt mean a great deal to all of us. We truly appreciate her thoughtfulness and support.

Thank you, Mrs. Neubauer, for recognizing our mission and for honoring the work we do for our veterans. 🙏😊



Each quilt was personalized with a label

THURSDAY SQUAD

Thursday Squad Member Jose Jones Retires

Jose Jones retired from MSD after 6 years of dedicated service. A retirement luncheon was held at Los Papalapas on November 1, 2025. Thank you Jose for your service. Your service and devotion to duty will not be forgotten!

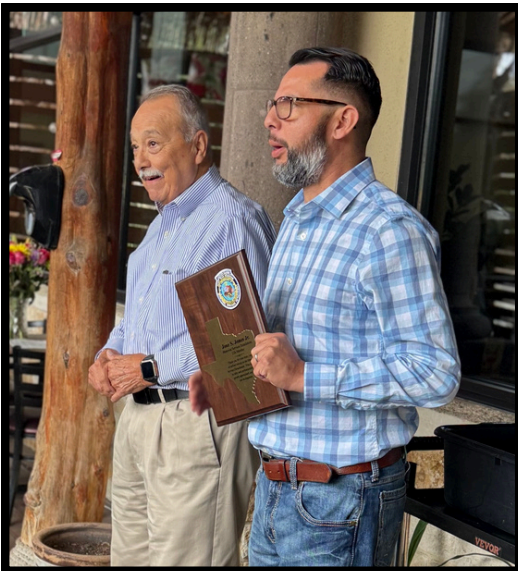
(Upper left) Jose Jones

(Left) Assistant Thursday Squad Leader Richard Mendoza presented a plaque to Jose.



(Upper Right) Thursday Squad Leader Frank Kebelman (left) presented a certificate to Jose.

(Right) Former MSD Commander Manny Mendoza also made a presentation to Jose



Mike Giglio (second from the right) with the Sons of the American Revolution at a naturalization ceremony. These ceremonies formalize citizenship for up to 400 citizens a month.



Members of MSD gathered to attend the funeral service of Eugene W. "Gino" Toifl.

THURSDAY SQUAD

DEBRA EATON

On September 5, Thursday Squad Member Debra Eaton was laid to rest at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery. Debra was a 28 year military veteran who served in the Navy, Army Reserves and Army. She joined MSD in 2021 and was also very active in the community, to include serving as a trustee on the Judson ISD School Board. Debra was very beloved and missed by all of her MSD teammates!

<https://lewisfuneralhome.com/obits/debra-eaton/>



The Army Honor Guard provided the rifle volleys and folding/presentation of the U.S. flag.



The San Antonio Patriot Guard Riders escorted Debra to the cemetery, as well as stood watch to provide respects.



The MSD chaplain Mike Giglio provided words of comfort. Mike served on Thursday Squad with Debra.



Members of MSD rendered final salutes and condolences to Debra's loved ones.



Debra's gravestone can be found at SECTION AD, SITE 197, near the MSD building. Thursday Squad attended the installation of Debra's headstone.

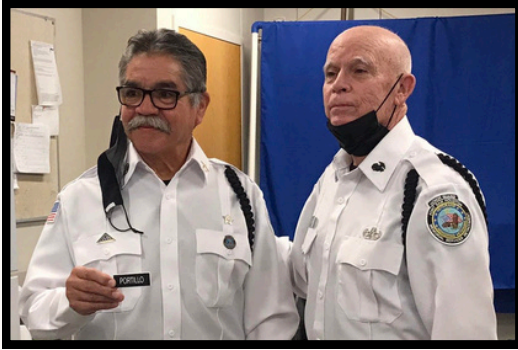


Members from all MSD squads were in attendance to pay their respects to a beloved teammate.

THURSDAY SQUAD

LEON PORTILLO

On 1 October, Thursday Squad Member Leon Portillo sadly passed away. Leon joined the squad in 2022, and juggled MSD duties with serving as President of his Lion's Club. He served in the Air Force as a Law Enforcement Specialist from 1973-1977, then went on to retire from the Chicago Police Department after 30 years of law enforcement duties. He will be missed by many, to include his family and fellow MSD members. [Leon Portillo Obituary](#)



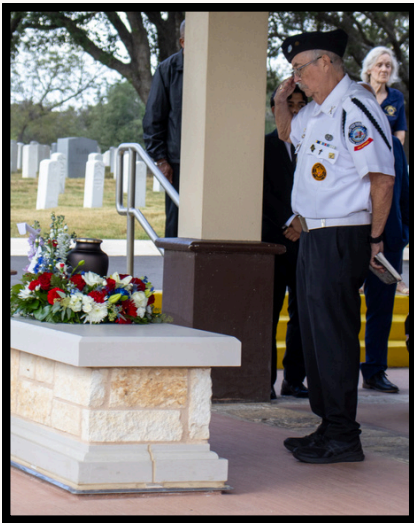
(Left) Thursdays Squad Leader Frank Kebelman presented Leon with his nametag after joining in 2022.

(Middle Left) MSD Chaplain and Thursdays Squad Member Mike Giglio saluted before providing prayers.



(Above) Thursdays Squad provided honors. (Left) Thursdays Squad Bugler Nick Garcia played Taps.

(Below) A member of the San Antonio Patriot Guard provided a certificate and words of condolence..



(Left) The San Antonio Patriot Guard stood watch to honor Leon.



THURSDAY SQUAD

MARTIN "MARTY" ROBLES

On Christmas Eve, we attended the funeral service for one of our own, former Thursday Squad Leader Martin "Marty" Robles. It was a beautiful and well attended service, with honors provided by the JBSA Air Force Honor Guard. Escort was provided by BLOXSTARZ San Antonio. RIP to Marty, and our deepest condolences to all who loved him.

[Marty Robles Obituary](#)



(Left) Marty Robles
(Right) Marty's ashes escorted by [BLOXSTARZ SA](#).
(Below left) Members of all squads with a photo tribute.
(Below right) Randy Brown (Friday Squad) and Luis Gonzalez (Wednesday Squad) carry in Marty's ashes.



Mike Giglio, MSD Chaplain, offered prayers of comfort.



MSD members representing all 5 squads rendered a final salute to Marty.

FRIDAY SQUAD

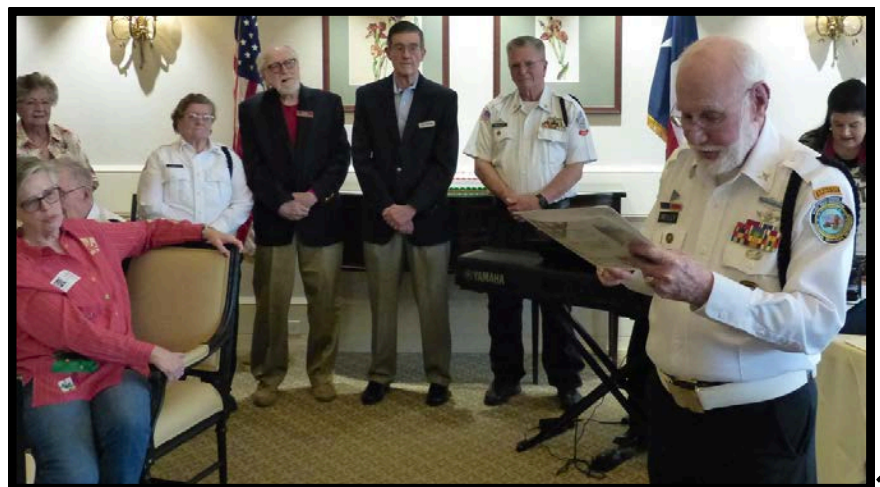
Friday Squad Christmas Luncheon

As the cemetery shut down for the delivery of Wreaths Across America, Friday Squad gathered at the Towers for our Christmas luncheon hosted by Billie Reilly and his lovely wife Suzie. This has become an annual tradition that we eagerly look forward to every year.

The staff at the Towers always go above and beyond to welcome Friday Squad with a great lunch buffet and a wonderful Christmas cake. Because we had an extra funeral service thrown in at 1300, they even made special arrangements to serve us after the dining room had closed for the afternoon.



(Right) In addition to our Christmas luncheon Mike Mills and Sean Habina received their Vietnam Era Service pins from Suzie Warnock, with the citation read by Friday Squad Member Billie Reilly (bottom right). (Below) Joining Mike and Sean in receiving the Vietnam Era Service pins were Towers residents USAF Retiree Tom Arbaugh and USN Retiree Bob Hunzeker.



FRIDAY SQUAD

Friday Squad Honor Guard of the Year Deb Parsons

Deb Parsons was chosen as the Friday Squad Honor Guard of the year by her teammates. Deb's contributions to MSD are immeasurable. In addition to her squad duties, she has been the MSD publicist/photographer for over four years and recently led the effort to completely revamp the MSD website and social media platforms. Congratulations and a very heartfelt thank you to Deb for all that she does.



Previous MSD Commander Manny Mendoza reads the inscription on the award (Above) as he presents the Honor Guard Member of the Year to Deb Parsons (Right)



Former Friday Squad Leader Gene Kuwik paid a visit to the squad recently, and had Assistant Squad Leader Mike Hoffman sign a book that he wrote on the history of Randolph Air Force Base. Mike Hoffman authored the book, titled "Randolph Field" in 2014, after spending 2 tours totaling 7 years at the base, calling it the "West Point of the Air" and highlighting its unique architecture and role as a premier training base. The book was produced by Arcadia Publishing and is still sold on their website: [Images of America-Randolph Field](https://www.arcadiapublishing.com/Books/9781469900000)

FRIDAY SQUAD

Piper's Pennies

On December 12th, as we were observing the Wreaths Across America volunteers unloading wreaths, we were approached by a young lady named Piper Springer and her mother Jess inquiring about making a donation. Piper is 12 years old and attends Laurel Springs school in addition to training in gymnastics at Pearland Elite Training Center in the Houston area. They had come over to FSHNC to participate in Wreaths Across America.

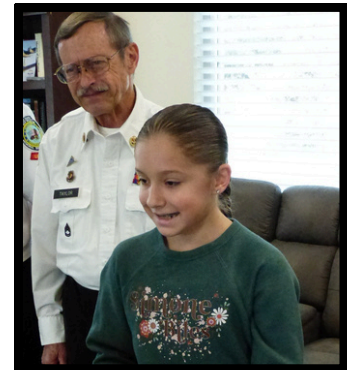
As the conversation progressed Piper told us she came up with the idea of collecting pennies from all of her friends, teachers, coaches and just about everyone she came into contact with to be used to honor Veterans. She had been collecting pennies for approximately a year with the objective to place the pennies on Veteran's headstones at FSHNC. We talked about the enormity of FSHNC and how long that would take. We asked her if she would consider making a donation to MSD and let us place some of the coins for her. We agreed that we would help her out so that she could fulfill at least part of her objective.

The squad members helped carry the pennies into the office and as you can see in the photos there was quite a lot of pennies.

We are still in the process of counting all of the pennies. Friday Squad is going to track the placement of headstones for every Veteran Friday's Squad honors in 2026 and once the headstone is set, we will personally place a penny from Piper on the headstone to honor the Veteran's service.

It is very humbling to meet a young person like Piper who has the fortitude to take on a task like this to honor Veteran's she never met.

Piper, thank you from Friday Squad for your support of our departed Veterans.



FRIDAY SQUAD



Gene, Mando, and Mav celebrated their birthdays with cherry cheesecake!



Ron and Mike celebrated their birthdays with a favorite, cherry cheesecake!



Wayne & Deb off to play Santa & Mrs Claus for daughter Robin & her classmates.



Max, service dog for Martin Urrutia, received a much deserved certificate of appreciation!



Freddie celebrated his birthday with cake.

FRIDAY SQUAD

Veterans Day 2025

Veterans Day was very special for Friday Squad as we were invited to share a very unique experience with the residents of the Towers.

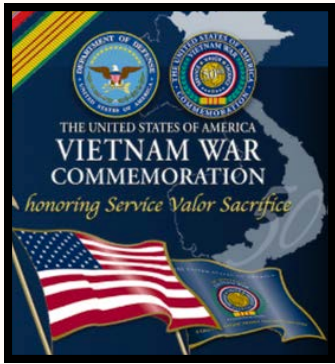
2025 is the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam conflict.

This Veterans Day also marked the end of the distribution of the DoD Vietnam Era Service Pins. The military ladies of the Towers conducted an awards ceremony to honor the Vietnam era Veterans who had not received their memorial pins. The recipients included Veterans who reside at the Towers along with members of Friday Squad.



(Above) Friday Squad Member Billie Reilly receives his Vietnam Era Service Pin. from Suzie Warnock, who also pinned Ron Larson (Left).

(Far Left) The Atrium at the towers was packed with residents and members of Friday Squad for the Veterans Day Ceremony and distribution of the Vietnam Era Service pins.



The program included the presentation of the service flags by Friday Squad members, testimonials from Veterans and a musical tribute honoring the Vietnam era Veterans. A very fitting backdrop for the ceremony was a collage of Veteran photos from earlier service years. Needless to say, some were very recognizable and some a little more difficult to place a name to the face. After the award ceremony we enjoyed the Towers hospitality, sharing lunch and the opportunity to visit with the residents. Over the years we have formed many special friendships with some of the residents and being able to spend time catching up was the perfect ending for this very special day.



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



Well, another year is coming to an end, time just seems to fly by when you're with MSD. We are so busy at the cemetery. What we do out there, just cannot be explained to the general public. We are all volunteers who have previously served our country, be it with the US Army, Marines, Air Force, Navy and Coast Guard. I'm not aware of any members of the Space Force, but I'm sure we will have some members of the SF someday.

As I write this report, Christmas is just two days away, and I'm sure it's an excitement for all—especially our grandchildren, that they can hardly wait. Oh to have the joy of children!

Unfortunately, not all children will get to enjoy Christmas because of circumstances beyond their control, so if you're able at some other time, please if you can, donate coats, jeans and any other clothing to the Christian Assistance Ministries (CAM), John Francis on Wednesday Squad and myself on Thursday Squad. We will transport any donations to CAM. My wife Rosy is a Volunteer there and sees how much is needed for so many people. You can also donate on their website:

<https://christianassistanceministry.org/donate/> body text

This has been a rough year for Thursday Squad; we lost a long-time member to a terrible accident. Debra Eaton was a beloved member, many of you attended her service and it was much appreciated by her family. Debra was such a fine person to know and we all miss her. Rest in Peace Debra. We also lost another long-time member of Thursday Squad, Marty Robles. Marty was a retired member of the Air Force. Marty started as a rifleman with MSD and left as Thursday Squad Leader. He was quite ill these last three years, he was awaiting a heart and kidney transplant, but it was not to be as he suffered a fatal heart attack on December 3. We saw a large attendance at his service on Christmas Eve. We sadly also lost Leon Portillo, Retired Chicago Police Officer, and earlier this year we lost long time Thursday Squad Member Nolan Martin, recipient of a Silver Star for action in Vietnam.

This year MSD also lost long time members Fred Balderrama
James Ogilvie, and Eugene Toifl. Rest in Peace Brothers.

On a lighter subject, Thursday Squad bid farewell to two members due to retirement—Jose Jones and Kenneth Null. Enjoy your well deserved retirements, friends.

I'm sure there are people I have missed, let me know and I'll try and mention them in the next
Chaplain's Report

As the Chaplain for MSD, I am available to offer prayers and condolences for any member of MSD, so please just contact me any time. I remain your servant in Our Lord's Name. God Bless every one of you and your family.

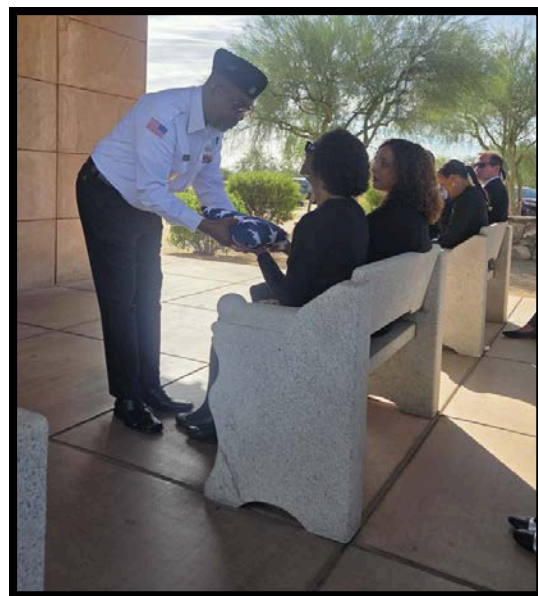
MSD HAPPENINGS

Thank You, MSD Honor Guard

Nov 14 - A big thank-you to the MSD Honor Guard for presenting the Colors at the Bexar County Republican Women's November Veterans Luncheon with special speaker Senator Donna Campbell. The team, led by MSD Vice Commander Mark Jordan, did an outstanding job and made us all proud. Thank you for your service and dedication to honoring our Veterans. 🇺🇸



The Bexar County Republican Women President and USA VET MSG Yvonne Clouser recognized our team for their support.



Wednesday Squad Assistant Squad Leader, USAF VET SMSgt John Francis participating with the Luke AFB Honor Guard for his battle buddy and best friend, MSgt Robert D. Phifer, Retired. Phoenix, Arizona.

DONALD W. BURTON

SSG. Donald Burton, U.S. Army (Ret), age 66, of Boerne, Texas passed away peacefully at his home on September 11, 2025. He was born on December 4, 1958, in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the son of Sarah and Thomas Burton, his father was a U.S. Army retired Master Sergeant. Donald grew up in Kansas City, Missouri and graduated from Oak Park High School in 1977. He attended Missouri Western State College.

Donald served his country with distinction in the U.S. Army. Although his military career was brief, he demonstrated a high order of professional ability, sound judgment and a mature outlook. Donald's distinctive service as Senior Weapons SGT Sep 91 -July 93 Combat Diver, Airborne A co 3/7th Special Forces, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Other areas of operation Camp Stanton Korea, Mobile Chaparral Missile launching Station, 7th Air Defense Artillery Fort Ord, California, United States Army Garrison Fort Sam Houston, Texas, 1st of the 39th Field artillery Gun Chief Fort Bragg, North Carolina and the 82nd Airborne Division Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

His citation read "demonstrated initiative, resourcefulness and superlative commitment to the 7th Special Forces Group and its mission. His tireless effort and deep devotion to duty reflects great credit on him, the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and the United States Army."



While on a mission with the 7th Special Forces Group in Peru, South America, Donald sustained a C4/C5 injury that left him a quadriplegic and medically retired from the U.S. Army. It is during this time of new beginnings, Donald found his purpose in life and for over 32 years has volunteered to advocate for the needs of others. He participated with the Audie L. Murphy Veterans Hospital Volunteer Services for over 17 years and has volunteered with various organizations to include: President of the Texas Disabled Veterans Association (TDVA), Paralyzed Veterans of American (PVA), a member of the Disabled Veterans (DAV), American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and the Special Forces Association Chapter XV. Realizing the need for more representation for veterans with spinal cord injuries, Donald was part of the original three that started monthly meetings with the hospital director at that time, the late Mr. Jose Coronado Director of Audie L. Murphy Veterans Hospital.

DONALD W. BURTON

He was the driving force in raising funding from 2012 – Feb 2020 working alongside then Director, Marie Weldon, to install and provide WI-FI service to include SCI inpatient, outpatient, recreation center, Main Hospital recreation center, GLA and PTRP. Donald was the contributing force for the multiple computer set-ups and configurations in software that are in place today at SCI, including the ECU's bedside for patients in recovery and therapy.

Donald worked tirelessly to ensure patients had access to the Internet, email communication, and “Dragon-speak” software. He was also involved with the Polytrauma Transitional Rehabilitation Program (PTRP).

In early January of 2016, Donald made a phone call to Mr. Dorman Vick of the Boerne-Samuel V. Champion High School welding department with a request for help with designing a hunting blind that would allow him to continue a lifelong passion for hunting. This simple phone call began a journey of love, service, and transformation for both Donald and the students.

At first it seemed a straightforward request to build a hunting blind on the back of a bumper-pull trailer soon became a labor of love for all involved. The students poured their talent and love into the project and built Donald a fully customized mobile hunting blind trailer from the ground up that would give him a renewed sense of freedom. Donald would regularly return to speak to the students, sharing his story, his struggles and his strength. He never stopped fighting, never gave up, never stopped giving. Donald leaves us with love, purpose and service.

‘If you’re going to serve, do it all the way and with your heart.’

Donald is survived by his wife of 23 years, Patricia, his brother Steve, and sisters, Janice and Lucy, their two adult children and four grandchildren, and his faithful service dog, BamBam.



Donald and Patricia Burton infused MSD with the energy to believe MSD could raise funds to purchase a much needed bus with his DAV generous donation in July 2023. Here is a picture of Donald presenting the donation to MSD at its Quarterly Meeting. Donald additionally provided MSD with WIFI capabilities. MSD purchased the bus in December 2024 and today is used by the MSD Honor Guard at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

