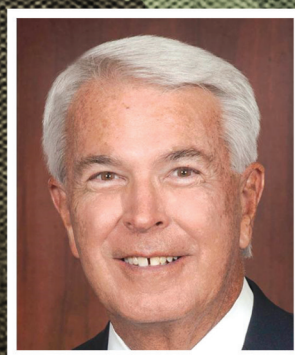
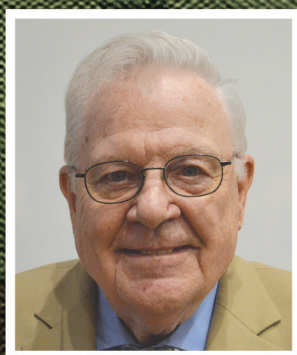




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**2021 Veterans Day is a Killeen Daily Herald publication.**

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# Honoring those who have served on this Veterans Day

Each year, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, we celebrate when the guns went silent in 1918, officially ending World War I — the “war to end all wars.”

Originally known as Armistice Day, it was first celebrated Nov. 11, 1919, to commemorate the first anniversary of the end of the war and to celebrate those who fought in it. It wouldn't be until 1926, however, that Congress would pass a resolution that officially made the day a national holiday — even though it didn't go into effect until 1938.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower officially changed the name of the holiday from Armistice Day to Veterans Day. Unlike Memorial Day, Veterans Day is a time for us to honor all who served, whether in peacetime or war, with an emphasis on thanking our living veterans for the sacrifices they make for the good of the Republic. And as we've learned through 20 years of conflict since Sept. 11, 2001, it's also important to remember those family members who have stood by their veteran both during and after their time of service — especially during the difficult adjustment time between military and civilian life.

Serving in the military, regardless of branch of service, isn't easy.



**SARGE'S CORNER**  
David A. Bryant

Whether it's training, deployments to a combat zone or nine-month rotations across the globe, service members spend a lot of time away from home. They sacrifice their personal and family time to train or fight for this great nation.

This year, COVID-19 has continued to throw a whole new monkey wrench into operations. Those coming back from deployment, such as the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, who recently returned from a rotation in Europe, are stuck in a two-week quarantine before they can even go see their families. Quite obviously, things have changed in the way we train and fight due to the coronavirus.

However, no virus can change our mission and our ability to carry that mission out. Our military is strong and our will is even stronger. And our veteran community stands strong and proud, ready to not only support our active troops, but put back on our uniforms if needed to back them up. This Veterans Day, despite the turmoil rocking our nation due

to political divides, it is more important than ever to stand up for those who have at one time written that blank check to the nation for “up to and including their life.”

That includes our troops currently serving. Because of everything that has blown up in the news this year about Fort Hood, from Congressional probes due to possible issues concerning sexual assault/sexual harassment to commissions to rename Fort Hood, our troops on Fort Hood need our support more than ever.

Are there bad apples in the Army? Yes, there

always has been. But the vast majority of our troops are not. They are hard-working, patriotic soldiers willing to give their lives for us, our nation and each other. That was fully evident earlier this year when that unexpected ice storm knocked out the entire state, and our soldiers went above and beyond to ensure our local communities had food, water and whatever electricity could be provided.

There is still a huge movement out there to “shut down Fort Hood.” That is not the answer to

PLEASE SEE **SERVED, 6**

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# SERVED

FROM PAGE 5

any perceived injustice. It is like saying that anyone who currently serves on Fort Hood, and everyone who once served there, is guilty of some sort of crime simply for having been stationed there.

Fortunately, the communities surrounding Fort Hood are filled with veterans, many of whom ensure the great things that happen in this area are done to honor our active-duty service members, veterans and their families. Many serving in positions of leadership in the local governments, nonprofit and business communities are veterans, too.

Here at the Herald, it's our job to tell the stories of those veterans and soldiers to highlight the great things we can accomplish together



COURTESY PHOTO

Retired Army Sgt. David A. Bryant covering an assignment with the Iraqi's 4th Region Department of Border Enforcement on Dec. 23, 2010, near Basra, Iraq.

as a community.

Some of those stories you may have heard before: Others are still waiting to be told. What is important is that they are told, and not just on Veterans Day but every day.

Quite a few who work for the Herald are veterans. As a retired soldier myself, I love interviewing my fellow veterans and service members. I love learning about

where they're from, what they've gone through and how they became the outstanding individuals who continue to serve long after they take off their uniforms. It keeps me connected, and the sense of camaraderie within the veteran community keeps alive the one thing we all miss when leaving active service — the military family we always know will have our backs.

On this Veterans Day, we'll be telling the stories of some great veterans from the central Texas area, each with stories to tell of their times in service. But there are still plenty of stories out there to tell. If you know a veteran or service member with a good story, shoot me an email. I'd love to tell that story.

**DAVID A. BRYANT** is an Army retiree and a military journalist for the Killeen Daily Herald. You can reach him at [dbryant@kdhnews.com](mailto:dbryant@kdhnews.com) or 254-501-7554.



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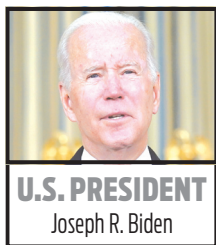
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# A proclamation from the President on National Veterans and Military Families Month

America has the greatest Armed Forces in the history of the world. To those who serve and those that serve alongside them — their families and caregivers — we owe a debt we can never fully repay. During National Veterans and Military Families Month, we recognize and thank them for their indispensable contributions and immeasurable sacrifices in support of our national security. As we approach this season of thanksgiving, we send our gratitude to millions of service members, veterans, military families, caregivers, and survivors who have served and continue to serve our Nation. I have said many times, and it comes from my heart — we as a Nation have a sacred obligation to properly equip and prepare our troops when we send them in to harm's way and to support them and their families, both while they are deployed and when they return home.

The First Lady and I know that it is not only the person who wears the uniform serving our country but also their families who make enormous sacrifices for our Nation. As the poet John Milton wrote, "They also serve who only stand and wait." We understand the feelings of pride, uncertainty, and fear when a



loved one is deployed. Every morning, you wake up and say that extra prayer for them.

Our veteran and military families do so much and ask for little. They are strong and adaptable, changing course to accommodate the needs of our country, often foregoing personal wishes. They are capable and proud, holding down the home front during their loved one's deployments, coping through their absence and the risk of danger, and helping them readjust when they come home.

These families and their Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, and Coast Guardsmen, are simply the best America has to offer: When they do not have what they need to thrive, it is not only individuals who suffer. If service members are worried that their spouse is struggling to keep food on the table or that their child is having a hard time at school, it is harder to focus on their mission. That is why supporting military families is a national security impera-

tive.

Since the earliest days of my Administration, we have been committed to a whole-of-government approach to responding to the real-time needs of our military and veteran families. Through Joining Forces, the White House initiative to support veteran and military families, caregivers, and survivors, my Administration is addressing military spouse employment and entrepreneurship, military child education, and family health and well-being. The First Lady has met with our Nation's military and veteran families, caregivers, survivors, and advocates to learn how we can better support and prioritize their needs. Those discussions help inform the efforts across the Government to share data, create innovative solutions, and implement evidence-based programs and policies. In September, Joining Forces and the National Security Council released a report outlining the first round of Administration-wide commitments and proposals for supporting military and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors. We are committed to continuing these efforts because we must, and we will, honor our sacred obligation

to support our military and veteran families and ensure they receive the resources they need to thrive.

Throughout November, we show our appreciation to the spouses, partners, children, caregivers, and survivors of our service members and veterans for their selfless sacrifice on behalf of the Nation. We honor them and their invaluable contributions; we share their pride in our Armed Forces; and we will never forget what they and their loved ones do for us.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR., President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 2021 as National Veterans and Military Families Month. I call upon the people of the United States to honor veterans and military families with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-sixth.

**JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.**

# Statement by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III observing National Veterans and Military Families Month

Our families serve every bit as much as we do. That's one reason why it's so important during this National Veterans and Military Families Month that we take time to recognize them for the sacrifices they make and for the support they continue to give all those who have worn — and who still wear — the uniform.

I remember my own days in uniform, and I can't begin to imagine how much more difficult my Army career would have been were it not for my spouse, Charlene, and my incredible family.

The frequent moves, the multiple deployments, the strain and the stress over the last twenty years of war — my family and all of yours have borne it with grace and resilience. But it goes beyond that, of course. They don't just bear the hardships; our families make us a stronger force, a healthier force. They make sacrifices themselves, to be sure, but they also make possible the sacrifices our men and women sustain.

Put simply, our families make us more ready every day for the task of defending this nation.

And they do the very same for our veterans,



United States Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III speaks during a media conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Oct. 22.

VIRGINIA MAYO | AP

from helping with the transition to civilian life to care-giving and emotional support. They are there for us, and so we must be there for them.

Arm-in-arm with our colleagues at the Department of Veterans Affairs, we will continue to meet the challenges our military families face: mental health and well-being, childcare and schooling, food and economic security and spouse employment, to name but a few. And we know that the COVID-19 pandemic has only made these challenges, and many others, more difficult.

We have much work to do. And I want each and every military family to know we will stay committed to that work, the same way they have stayed committed to their loved ones and to this nation they help defend.

As I said, our families serve every bit as much as we do. The month of

November provides us a terrific opportunity to say thank you for that, but we need to treat the effort of improving their lives as the critical task it must be.

To all our veteran and military families

... thank you! We honor your sacrifice. We recognize your resilience. We hold dear to our hearts your ceaseless love and support. We owe that and so much more.

**LLOYD J. AUSTIN III**



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# Letter in recognition of Veterans Day from Texas Veterans Commission Chairwoman Laura Koerner

Veterans are an important part of all our lives because they protected the freedoms we enjoy. After their service in the U.S. military, veterans go on to be valuable members of our communities. With that in mind, let us honor them this Veterans Day, Thursday, Nov. 11, thank them for their service and celebrate them.

Veterans inspire us with their commitment, sacrifice and contributions.

Just like anyone else, veterans can at times use some assistance. Help with VA processes, education benefits, employment and veteran owned businesses is available from the Texas Veterans Commission. Additionally, we provide grants to local veteran service organizations and mental health support to providers.

On Nov. 11 of each year, Americans have honored the men and

women who have served in the U.S. Armed Services since the armistice which ended World War I was declared on Nov. 11, 1918. And that tradition continues to this day.

To all our Texas veterans, please know that you have our gratitude and our unwavering support on Veterans Day and every day of the year.

**LAURA KOERNER**



Jimmy Douglas, commander of VFW Post 1820 in Temple, speaks during the veterans day program Nov. 11, 2020. Douglas said, "every day is Veterans Day to me."

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# Veterans Day special events, meals and retail deals

BY BRITTANY SODIC  
HERALD CORRESPONDENT

Veterans Day is an important annual event to honor and celebrate those that have served in the U.S. armed forces, and with such a large population of veterans, retirees, and active-duty military personnel, it certainly strikes close to home for the Killeen area. For those that have served and their families, make sure to check out these events, free meals and deals at area restaurants, and discounts and offers at retail stores.

## EVENTS

The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce will host a Veterans Day Celebration and Sign Dedication Ceremony for the Patriot Way and Brick Walk Project at 8:30 a.m. Nov. 11 at 412 E. Central Ave., Belton. This event is open to the public.

The annual Central Texas Community Veterans Day Parade will be in downtown Killeen starting at 11 a.m. Nov. 11, with the float line up at 10 a.m. There will be a short ceremony in front of City Hall at 10:30 a.m. The 2-mile route will go from College Street, to Avenue D, Eighth Street, Sprott Street, Gray Street, and ending at Avenue C. Visitors are encouraged to arrive

early to fine parking and spots along the route to watch. To register for the parade, go to [centex-avac.org](http://centex-avac.org).

The City of Kempner will host a Veterans Day Ceremony at 11 a.m. Nov. 11 at Sylvia Tucker Memorial Park, 12641 E. U.S. Highway 190. Fort Hood Garrison Commander Col. Chad Foster will be the featured guest speaker.

The Warrior Angels in Boots 5K will be from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Nov. 13 at Salado Middle School, 1169 Williams Road, Salado. This event will recognize and celebrate military service members, as well as local police, fire, and EMS personnel. Registration is \$25 per person. Proceeds will benefit the non-profit, Boot Campaign. Go to <https://bit.ly/31fHehn> to sign up in advance and for more information.

## RESTAURANTS

Before visiting any of the restaurants listed below, it's a good idea to call ahead to ensure that the location is participating in the special offers. Remember to also bring an ID card or other form of documentation to verify current or past military service.

Chili's Grill and Bar will offer a free meal from a select menu for active-duty service members and veterans Nov. 11. This deal is available



FILE PHOTO

John Potts, commander of American Legion Post No. 133 in Temple, plants flags around the perimeter of the building while John Kiemele holds flags for him Nov. 11, 2020.

for dine-in only.

Denny's will serve a free Build Your Own Grand Slam breakfast to

veterans and active-duty military from 5 a.m. to

PLEASE SEE **EVENTS, 12**

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# EVENTS

FROM PAGE 11

noon Nov. 11. Offer available for dine-in only.

At California Pizza Kitchen, veterans and active-duty military will get a complimentary entree and beverage when they dine-in Nov. 11.

Additionally, all veterans who visit that day will receive a buy-one-get-one coupon, redeemable from Nov. 12-20.

Freddy's Frozen Custard and Steaksburgers will welcome veterans and military personnel to stop by on Nov. 11 to receive a card for a free Freddy's Original Double combo meal that is redeemable until Nov. 30.

Golden Corral is hosting its Military Appreciation Night from 5 p.m. to close Nov. 11. This includes a free meal for veterans and current military personnel when dining in.

Red Lobster will offer veterans, active-duty military and reservists a free appetizer or dessert from a limited menu Nov. 11. Offer available for dine-in only.

Red Robin is offering veterans and active-duty military who are Red Robin Royalty members a chance to redeem a free Red's Tavern Double Burger with Bottomless Steak Fries Nov. 1-14 for dine-in or to-go. Participants must already be registered for Red Robin's Royalty Program



THADDEUS IMERMAN | HERALD

The color guard approaches as it marches down North Main Street in Copperas Cove on Saturday, leading the annual Veterans Day parade, which is held on the Saturday before Veterans Day.

with military designation prior to Nov. 1 to be eligible.

Starbucks will welcome veterans, active military service members, and military spouses to receive a free, brewed coffee at participating stores on Nov. 11.

Texas Roadhouse will give away dinner vouchers from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nov. 11 in participating restaurants' parking lots. Veterans and active-duty military can redeem their dinner vouchers through May 30, 2022.

Bombshells Restaurant & Bar will provide free meals for veterans Nov. 11. Active-duty service

members and accompanying family members will receive a 20% discount.

Participating Applebee's Grill & Bar locations will offer a free meal from a select menu for veterans Nov. 11.

Buffalo Wild Wings will offer its Wings for Heroes event, allowing veterans and active-duty military to receive a free meal of 10 boneless wings and fries Nov. 11 for dine-in or takeout.

Chipotle will offer a buy-one-get-one meal for veterans and military personnel Nov. 11 for dine-in only.

Olive Garden is offer-

ing a free meal for all active-duty military and veterans on Nov. 11. This offer is available for dine-in only and must be a selection from a limited menu.

Outback Steakhouse will offer a free Bloomin' Onion appetizer and Coca-Cola product to veterans and active-duty military Nov. 11. Outback also offers a 10% discount to select healthcare workers, first responders, and military members every day of the year.

BJ's Restaurant and Brewhouse will offer free meals to current and former military members Nov. 11 with choices available from a select menu for dine-in only.

Participating Wendy's locations will provide veterans and active-duty military with a free breakfast combo from 6:30 to 10:30 a.m. Nov. 11.

Cotton Patch Café is giving out free meals to veterans and active-duty military Nov. 11 with a choice of either a Chicken Fried Steak or Chicken Fried Chicken

PLEASE SEE **EVENTS, 13**

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# EVENTS

FROM PAGE 12

entrée.

Krispy Kreme will provide veterans and active-duty military with a free breakfast that includes a doughnut of choice and a small coffee Nov. 11.

LongHorn Steakhouse is giving away a free appetizer or dessert, as well as a 10% discount, to veterans and active-duty service members Nov. 11.

Little Caesars will give veterans and active-duty military members a free Hot-n-Ready Lunch Combo from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nov. 11. The combo includes four slices of Little Caesars Detroit-style pizza and a beverage.

Twin Peaks will offer active and retired military members a complimentary meal Nov. 11 with options from a limited menu.

Participating Coffee Beanery locations will give veterans and active-duty military a free tall cup of coffee all day Nov. 11.

Smoothie King is offering veterans and active-duty military a free, 20-ounce smoothie of their choice at any participating location Nov. 11.

Cracker Barrel is offering veterans a complimentary slice of Double Chocolate Fudge Coca-Cola Cake in-store and online (using promo code, VETSDAY21) with any purchase.

Chuck E. Cheese will

offer a free personal cheese pizza to veterans Nov. 11. This offer will be available in-store only.

TGI Fridays is offering a free lunch from a limited menu for veterans and active-duty military from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nov. 11. This offer is available for dine-in only at participating locations.

Bubba's 33, 3701 E. Central Texas Expressway in Killeen, is offering a free meal for all veterans — including active, retired or former U.S. military — Nov. 11 between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Veterans can choose one of six entrees, including a Classic Cheeseburger, Bubba's Bacon Burger, Bacon Chicken Mac-n-Cheese, Grilled Chicken Salad, Chicken Tender Salad or any 12-inch pizza plus a choice of any Coca-Cola product, sweet tea/ice tea or coffee during lunch. Proof of service includes military or VA card, or discharge papers.

## RETAIL

Most retail locations will require proof of military service to utilize deals and discounts. It's also recommended to call ahead to the location you plan to visit to confirm its participation.

Academy Sports + Outdoors will offer veterans, active-duty, and reserve service members and their immediate family members 10% off their entire purchase both in-store and online from Oct. 24 through Nov. 15.

Great Clips will offer veterans and active-duty

military members either a free haircut on Nov. 11 or a free haircut voucher to be redeemed from Nov. 12 to Dec. 10. Additionally, non-military customers who get a haircut on Veterans Day can receive a free haircut voucher to give to an active service member or veteran as a way of saying thank you.

Sports Clips will give free haircuts to veterans and active-duty military Nov. 11 at participating locations.


Target is offering a 10% discount from Oct. 31 through Nov. 13 to active-duty military, veterans, and their families. The discount can be used on two separate transactions and applies to online and in-store purchases.

Rack Room Shoes will give military personnel and their dependents a 20% discount off their entire purchase in-store Nov. 11.


Bed Bath and Beyond will offer former and current military personnel and their spouses 25% off an in-store purchase made between Nov. 11-14.

Office Depot and Office Max are offering 25% off qualifying in-store purchases for all current and former military personnel and their dependents from Nov. 11-13.

Walgreen's will give active military members, veterans, and dependents 20% off regularly-priced items with a Balance Rewards card or myWalgreens card from Nov. 11-14.



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# Harker Heights man served 27 years in the military

BY JOHN CLARK  
HERALD CORRESPONDENT

**HARKER HEIGHTS** — Ken Cates was looking to parlay his 27 years of military service into a high-paying second career, but he wound up finding a job that gave him much more than a paycheck.

“I hunted for a job for about six months,” said Cates, 51, a retired U.S. Army sergeant first class who was stationed twice at Fort Hood and served two combat deployments in Iraq with the 1st Cavalry Division’s 4th Brigade. “Me and the family were actually at that final point where we had to decide, and I was about to take a job opportunity out in Arizona.

“My two youngest daughters were just getting started in high school (Harker Heights) and we were really hoping to stay here so they finish out with their friends and not do that bouncing around. Then, one of my deacons (at church) asked me if I’d ever considered working in the nonprofit sector. Jokingly, I said, nonprofit? There’s no money there. But I applied, they interviewed me two days later, and they called me at midnight that night and said, ‘It’s not official yet, but we’re going to offer you the job.’

“I accepted, and we initially thought we’d give it a few years, get the girls finished with high school and then leave, but that first year was just so satisfying. Being able to see the impact we were accomplishing right here in central Texas.

“You can’t put a price tag on that. So I decided I didn’t need to go hunting down the six-figure jobs anymore. The satisfaction and the community need being fulfilled has been such a blessing.”

A self-described military brat, Cates was born in New Mexico,



Ken Cates

moved around a lot as his father completed a 20-year career in the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard, then graduated from high school back in Las Cruces, N.M. He always planned to enter the military himself, but was not sure which branch he wanted to join.

“For me, one of the opportunities was to go through a pilot’s program but they shut the door on that after I went through the entire process at MEPS (Military Entrance Processing Stations),” said Cates, a Harker Heights resident for the past seven years. “So instead of going active duty for something they no longer had available, I opted to go with the Reserve for a bit. Then, I got an early release and ended up going Coast Guard for four years.”

After that, he returned to civilian life but wound up re-enlisting after six or seven months.

“It was just dismal,” he said. “I was back in New Mexico and there were no jobs.”

This time, he trained as a multiple-launch rocket specialist for the U.S. Army at Fort Sill, Okla. Cates served three years in Bamberg, Germany, then on to Fort Hood. He left the military for a while

due to family concerns, then transferred to the New Mexico National Guard where he worked with a RAID (reconnaissance air interdiction detachment) counter drug unit. He later spent time as a National Guard recruiter in Vermont, moved to air defense artillery and another tour at Fort Hood, finally retiring in 2015.

For the past six years, he has served as CEO for Fort Hood Area Habitat for Humanity, part of the worldwide volunteer-based organization that provides affordable housing for needy families. In that time, the local group has built 32 houses, Cates said, compared to four houses built in the six years prior to his arrival.

In 2019, the married father of seven daughters and grandfather of five was named a “Hometown Hero” by the Harker Heights Chamber of Commerce, and last month he was honored along with nine other area veterans with a Congressional Veteran Commendation presented by U.S. Rep. John Carter, R-Round Rock, for service to the community following their military careers.

The recognition was humbling and unexpected, Cates said.

“I personally know three of the other folks who were up there with me, and what they’ve accomplished over the years, and to be among that group of other veterans was quite an honor.

“One of the other better experiences of the day was when Congressman Carter was first introduced after the Pledge of Allegiance, he mentioned two children that were there who stood upright and had their hands over their hearts, reciting the Pledge.

“He said, ‘Our nation is not going to hell as fast as I thought it is.’

“Those two boys are my grandsons.”

# Temple veteran has dedicated his life to community service

BY JOHN CLARK

HERALD CORRESPONDENT

TEMPLE — Richard Archer served a total of 11 years in the military after graduating from Central Michigan University and has spent much of the rest of his life trying to follow his parents' example of giving back to the community.

A resident of Temple for the past 56 years, the 78-year-old father of four and grandfather of nine apparently has done a pretty good job, as he was honored last month along with nine other area veterans with a Congressional Veteran Commendation presented by U.S. Rep. John Carter, R-Round Rock, in honor of his years of service following his military career:

"I couldn't believe it," Archer said. "I thought it was mostly for combat veterans. It's quite an honor."

Born and raised in Mount Pleasant, Mich., the son of a longtime postal service worker, Archer went to college right after high school on an ROTC scholarship and was commissioned after graduation as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. He served two years' active duty, followed by nine years in the Army Reserve.

He was stationed with the 2nd Armored Divi-



Richard Archer

sion at Fort Hood from 1966-68, at the height of the Vietnam War, but never received orders to report for combat duty. Instead, he worked behind the scenes to support the war effort as a member of division maintenance supply. In short, he sent repair parts to the troops in Southeast Asia.

"I was single then and lived in McCully Hall, right by the officer's club," Archer said. "It was wartime, so we worked pretty much seven days a week. I was in a maintenance outfit, and then they quickly moved me to division maintenance supply. We did all our logistics on this NCR 500 (computer) and I wasn't sharp enough to know a lot of it, but I learned quickly."

"I was hoping to go (to Vietnam), but I was locked in at Fort Hood. For many, many years — up until just five or six years ago — I'd go to all

these veterans' events and when they asked all the Vietnam veterans to stand, I never stood. I was never in combat, so I never stood.

"Then, (President) Obama came out with this deal (about) Vietnam-era, and I got some kind of a certificate and all this ... those of us that served during Vietnam were then recognized as being part of Vietnam. So now, I stand up.

"The sad story is, the last officer killed in Vietnam — Col. William B. Nolde Jr. — he pinned my (lieutenant) bars on at Central Michigan University. His name is on the Vietnam (Veterans Memorial) wall in Washington, D.C., and there

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# SERVICE

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are six enlisted men after him. I've been there two or three times. He was an artillery officer outside of Saigon, and they lobbed some rounds in and he was killed. It was sad because he was a history major and had two sons and a daughter. He was a real gentleman. When I saw his name, I got down on my knees. I didn't think it would hit me like that, but it sure did."

After leaving the military to spend more time with his growing family, the former ordnance officer went to work teaching school for a year at Temple High School — business class in the morning and art in the afternoon. He then worked in banking for 16 years, followed by 15 years at Temple College, where he used his

background in finance to serve as executive director of the Temple College Foundation, raising money for such things as scholarships and building construction.

He also worked for the Veterans Land Board, where he was involved in planning and marketing for construction of the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery in Killeen, along with four nursing homes, including the William R. Courtney Texas State Veterans Home in Temple.

Now fully retired (semi-retired may be more accurate), Archer works with the Military Officers Association of America and its scholarship program for eight area high schools and two universities. He and his wife, Kay, are active at their church and donate to various causes. They especially enjoy contributing to nursing scholarships at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton.

He is a former trustee at Temple College, board member for the Salvation Army and MHMR, and has helped raise money for Scott and White Memorial Hospital. He started a local animal adoption group in Temple called APAC (Association for a Pet Adoption Center).

Archer says his life has been all about serving others, and he is proud of everything he has accomplished.

"I give full credit to my parents and friends that always encouraged me," he said. "My parents were very giving people, and my scholarship helped me finish ROTC. I saw my parents give and I have been blessed by giving. It's all about scholarships and encouraging kids.

"Giving is a culture. I saw this with my parents and have always been blessed with seeing good results from giving."

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# Georgetown veteran working to provide affordable housing for disabled military veterans

BY JOHN CLARK  
HERALD CORRESPONDENT

GEORGETOWN — Michigan native Theodore Acheson was a U.S. Army videographer who saw plenty of haunting images through his camera lens as he filmed combat scenes during the Vietnam War from 1968-69.

Then came the day when Acheson became one of the walking wounded.

“We were filming a battle north of Hue,” the 75-year-old father of three said. “We were the guys who had to stand up for 12 seconds and expose part of our body to film a scene — and you couldn’t shake. If you shook, the footage was no good.

“Then you had to pop up again and change your camera focal length or angle a little bit and get another 12 seconds, until you had about five or six minutes of footage. We’d get back to Saigon and everything would be put on a jet going directly back to the states.

“That day, I was with the 101st Airborne (Division), and we were told that we were going to go into this village where there were a lot of VC (Viet Cong)



Theodore Acheson

stragglers. When we got there, I was talking to a guy, just shooting the breeze — nothing really was happening — and all of a sudden about four feet in front of me, man, they (enemy) just started blasting away.

“We had two other companies that were on the flank of this village, but we were right in the middle of it. We ran into a regiment of North Vietnamese regulars. We killed 54 of them in the first five minutes of the battle. We fought until two o’clock in the morning ... just kept pushing forward, forward. They had these little spider holes they would pop up out of after we walked by and hit us from the

backside.

“It was pretty nasty. “A guy threw a grenade into a (enemy) bunker and he didn’t give it enough time to arm, so they threw it back. It came back out partway, and so it did its job on the bunker — but it also did a job on some of us, as well. There were parts of that grenade going everywhere.

“I didn’t even know I’d gotten hit. I knew I’d gotten hit with something, but I thought it was a piece of dirt or something. It finally got daylight the next morning and we got to where we needed to be, and one of the medics said, ‘You’ve been bleeding all night.’”

Acheson recovered from his injury and after three years as an Army combat cameraman — he was named Department of Defense cinematographer of the year in 1969 — left the service, returned to school and earned a bachelor’s and master’s degree. He went to work as a production assistant for a television production company and within two years was directing and produc-

PLEASE SEE **HOUSING, 19**

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# HOUSING

FROM PAGE 18

ing commercials.

In 1981, he started his own company, Adam Productions, and spent the next 28 years traveling the world filming commercials for such clients as Buick, Chevrolet, Cadillac, Honda and Acura.

After relocating to central Texas at the behest of family members who live in the Dallas area, Acheson now is involved with Military Order of the Purple Heart chapter 1919 and its Purple Heart Integration Project, a volunteer effort to provide modular housing for disabled veterans and their families from the Killeen-Fort Hood and San Antonio areas.

The veterans community is to

include as many as 72 manufactured homes in a 20-acre village complete with swimming pool and a large community center with full kitchen for vets interested in culinary arts training.

“This is for soldiers that are coming out of Fort Hood and out of San Antonio who were wounded during Afghanistan and Iraq time or are (seriously) hurt on the job where they have to be retrained. It happens every day in the military,” Acheson said.

“We want to give them an opportunity to come back into society again and feel like they’re a part of it. We will build the interior of the house to accommodate whatever medical problem they have.”

Because of that work and many other volunteer efforts he has been involved in over the years, Acheson was one of 10 veterans recognized last month by

U.S. Rep. John Carter, R-Round Rock, whose district includes Williamson County and most of Bell County, with a Congressional Veteran Commendation for high achievement in community service following their military careers.

Acheson says he was surprised and honored by the award.

“I really was taken aback,” he said. “Everybody in there was just as deserving of that award, if not more. I just felt overwhelmed. I didn’t realize what was going on with it until we actually got in the building and they started the award process and talking about what people did.

“I just like being busy. I’ve been very fortunate in my life and I just enjoy giving back. I don’t know what I would do if I didn’t. It’s such a joyous feeling to see people get help and move on.”



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# CTC chancellor has lived a life of community service since leaving the Air Force

BY JOHN CLARK

HERALD CORRESPONDENT

**KILLEEN** — Since he left military service in 1972, longtime Killeen area resident Jim Yeonopolus has dedicated much of his life to serving his community — and especially fellow veterans.

A 1963 graduate of Killeen High School, Yeonopolus went to college at Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) in San Marcos and thought for a while he had escaped the military draft during the turbulent Vietnam era.

That all changed his senior year:

“The Temple draft board notified me to come in and I went down and visited with this lady,” Yeonopolus said. “She wasn’t very friendly — just doing her job — and she said, ‘Son, you’re getting drafted; you need to get ready.’”

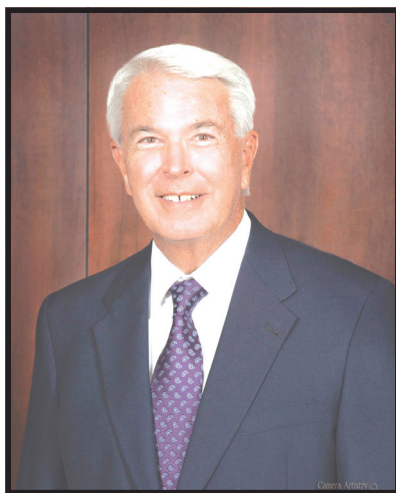
“I said, ‘Ma’am, I’m going to college.’”

“She said, ‘You’ve had four years — actually four-and-a-half years.’”

“I said, ‘Well, I’m in the middle of the semester and I’m going to stay down there. I’m going to graduate.’”

“She said, ‘I tell you what. I’ll let you finish this semester (and) then I’ll send you for your physical. You’re going to get drafted.’”

After heading back down to San Marcos and talking with his buddies about his options, Yeonopolus at first considered joining the Coast Guard, but there was a long waiting list to get in. He did not particularly want to join the Navy, so he opted for the Air Force.



Jim Yeonopolus

The rest, as they say, is history. He went on to serve four years, including a year in Vietnam as a ground radio operator; advisor for the elite Vietnamese Airborne Division and member of Team 162, known as the largest U.S. advisory effort of the Vietnam War:

“The division at that time was built by the 2nd (Foreign) Parachute Regiment of the French Foreign Legion,” Yeonopolus said. “So our uniforms consisted of their beret and the first generation of the old green camouflage that we know today.”

“The Vietnamese people really respected us. Like when we’d go downtown in Saigon, the kids would all come up around a soldier and try to steal their watch. Or take a straight razor and cut their back pocket and slip out their wallet. But with that uniform, they didn’t get within 10 feet of us. No matter where we went, we could walk directly into a crowd and it would just part.”

“They respected those guys so

much. In TET of ’68, that was one of the very few Vietnamese units that actually stood and fought, instead of giving up their weapons and running away.”

He enjoyed his time in the service and considered staying for the long-haul, but after four years, Sgt. Yeonopolus got out and came back to Killeen. He went back to school, earned a degree in counseling and guidance, and went to work for Central Texas College, established here in 1965.

In the years since, CTC has grown into a worldwide institution, and Yeonopolus has gone from working as a counselor for student services to serving as a dean, assistant deputy chancellor; deputy chancellor; and interim chancellor. On Nov. 19, 2015, he was named the fourth chancellor in school history.

Yeonopolus has also been active in a slew of trade and civic organizations, including campaign chairman for the United Way of the Greater Fort Hood Area; past president of the Council of Colleges and Military Educators (CCME); board member of the Central Texas Workforce Commission, Association of the United States Army (AUSA), National Association of Institutions for Military Education Institutions (NAIMES) and Killeen Rodeo Association; Vietnamese Airborne Society board member; Rotary Club; Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce and Military Affairs Committee; Texas Association of Community Colleges; Boy Scouts of America; and Southern Asso-

PLEASE SEE **AIR FORCE**, 21

# AIR FORCE

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ciation of Colleges and Schools.

Last month, Yeonopolus was one of 10 area military veterans recognized for his years of community service with a Congressional Veteran Commendation from U.S. Rep. John Carter, R-Round Rock. He was both honored and surprised by the recognition.

“I was shocked, first of all. I had no idea that was going on,” he said. “It’s quite an honor and I certainly didn’t expect it.”

Now 76 years old, Yeonopolus has been married to wife, Nancy, for 20 years. They have three children and one grandchild. They enjoy going to football and baseball games to root for their grandson, and grandpa likes to play golf when he gets a chance.

As for how long he will continue at the helm of CTC, Yeonopolus

said that is yet to be determined.

“I don’t know,” he said. “Realistically, I’m still making a difference, I think. I give my three deputies more and more responsibility every day, and they’re able to handle it. They’re doing a great job.

“Any one of them could take over for me in a minute. All three of them could go and get a college presidency job anywhere. They’re tremendous people. I’ve been very fortunate.”

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## Cove couple fell in love after joining the U.S. Army

BY JOHN CLARK

HERALD CORRESPONDENT

### COPPERAS COVE

—Retired U.S. Army Master Sgt. Wayne Knutson had big plans for a romantic outing to the park where he would surprise fellow soldier and girlfriend, Pam Swartz, with an engagement ring and a marriage proposal.

Those plans fizzled not once but twice before he was finally able to slip the ring on her finger:

“I tried to do something special,” said Knutson, who spent 21 years in the military, including two overseas deployments. “I don’t remember all the specific details, but I was trying to get her out of her house for us to walk down to the park.”

Pam remembers:

“I ended up babysitting for a friend who had an emergency, and so I ruined his plans,” she said. “Apparently, that was the second time he

had tried the romantic thing and I ruined them both.”

Wayne was born at Fort Bliss in El Paso, where his father was stationed with the Army. A few months later, dad was killed in combat in Vietnam. The family moved for a while to Colorado Springs, mom got re-married, and Knutson graduated from high school in Lebanon, Pa., in 1987.

Growing up, he had ideas of following in his father’s footsteps to join the service, but he also wanted to go to college. He wound up at boot camp shortly after high school graduation after a friend suggested they enlist together.

“To be honest, I guess it was always in the back of my mind,” Wayne said. “I think going to school, I planned the typical route of graduating and going off to college.

“I took the ASVAB, did well on it, and got

harassed by recruiters. My friend was like, ‘Let’s join together.’ It turned out that I was the only one who went into the military, but I’m glad everything turned out the way it did because I’ve had a great life.

“One of the reasons, too, is that I knew when my father passed, there were certain educational benefits that I was entitled to, but I didn’t feel right using those. I wanted to make my own way.”

Pam, meanwhile, was born and raised in Seguin, Texas, about 30 miles northeast of San Antonio. She graduated from high school in 1987 and enrolled at Texas A&M University in College Station. She had plans to pursue a career in agriculture, changed majors several times, and then got some bad news from administration after about a year-and-a-half.

“I was a good student until I got to college,

where I proceeded to flunk out,” she said.

After heading north to Wyoming for a while to live with a cousin, Pam then came back to College Station, worked for a cleaning company, attended classes at Blinn Junior College, worked at a John Deere dealership, then moved back home.

“I moved back to Seguin and was working at the John Deere dealership there, where I had worked in high school. I met my first husband, who was in the Air Force, (and) we married, had a kid, and then we split up. That’s when I joined the Army.

“Chalk it up to a midlife crisis and a dead-end job. A friend who was a mechanic in the Air Force talked me into it. He re-upped, but into the Army instead of the Air Force. When he came back from AIT, he said, ‘You should do

PLEASE SEE **LOVE, 22**

# LOVE

FROM PAGE 21

this. It'll be great. You'll travel and see the world."

"So I talked to the recruiter and the next thing I knew, I was signed up. My parents thought I was crazy. They thought my son was going to be a serial killer because he wouldn't have roots after moving all around the world, but it was probably the best thing that ever happened to me."

Basic training was at Fort Jackson, S.C., followed by AIT (advanced individual training) where she became a personnel specialist. Her first duty station was at Wiesbaden, Germany, an assignment that eventually led to an introduction to a handsome G.I. who would later become her husband.

"We had several friends in common," Pam said, "who had told us each individually, 'There's this woman you need to meet,' and 'There's a guy you need to meet.'"

"We had actually already met but we didn't know that they were talking about that person, if that makes sense. When they told me his name, I was working in enlisted records so I kind of looked up his records. It didn't tell me anything other than what awards he got or what his rank was.

"The first time we met



COURTESY PHOTO

Wayne and Pam Knutson first met while stationed with the U.S. Army in Germany and now work as school teachers in Copperas Cove.

was when he came in to update some records. I was the one who helped him, and then we'd run into each other at the shoppette or whatever. I'm thinking, 'This guy needs to hurry up and ask me out,' but he never did. I think he was about to, then my ex-husband came over one Christmas to visit our son and we had gone to the PX or something, and Wayne saw us together and thought I was seeing someone. He found out later that was not the case."

Wayne recalls:

"I think I finally called her on the telephone. I was nervous as all get-out. If I remember correctly, when I first called there was a little bit of a pause. I think she was surprised but she agreed to go out."

A first date at a Greek restaurant was soon fol-

lowed by a second date at an Italian restaurant, where there was nearly an unfortunate incident.

"The first gift he gave me was a little Swarovski pin that was a clown — and clowns freak me out," Pam said. "I didn't tell him that until about a year later."

Added Wayne: "She said, 'Oh, thank you,' and all that, you know."

"I faked it," Pam chimed in. "It was our second date — what was I supposed to do?"

With plans now to get married and their time in Germany coming to an end, the couple started trying to get stationed again at the same installation. The only place where they could both find a slot was Fort Hood. They got married in 2002, and then Wayne got deployed to the Middle East, leaving Pam to take care of what

by then had become a combined family of three kids.

"By then, I was an E-5 (sergeant), with the 15th Personnel Battalion," she said. "I loved it here, but Wayne got deployed and I was here by myself with three kids, pulling staff duty three times a week sometimes. You have to stay there all night and it was difficult finding babysitters.

"I think one night I paid \$300 for people to watch my kids while I had staff duty. It just wasn't worth it, and then just the toll it took on the family, so in June 2004, I got out."

And the rest is history.

Wayne left the military in 2008 and went to work as a defense contractor. Pam went back to school and earned a degree in 2014 from Texas A&M University-Central Texas. Wayne has a bachelor's degree and two master's degrees.

Both work now as school teachers in Copperas Cove, and say they look back at their military service with great pride and satisfaction. Oh, and finding each other was a definite bonus.

"Absolutely," Wayne said.

"Definitely," said Pam. "I actually wish I could have stayed in. Yes, I got married and got a good husband out of it, but for me, having had a bunch of horrible jobs, I think I found my place ... helping people. Which led me to the career I have now."

# Vietnam veteran flew more than 300 combat missions during 1967 tour

BY JOHN CLARK  
HERALD CORRESPONDENT

KILLEEN — Retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Floyd Smith arrived for duty in Vietnam in 1967 and flew the first of more than 300 combat missions the very next day.

“I got there on the 23rd of March,” said Smith, now 82 years old and a resident of Killeen since 1984. His team was the first operational unit to fly the McDonnell RF-4C aircraft, with the task of providing photographic reconnaissance of the growing conflict.

“I didn’t know that much about Vietnam at the time. I knew that the war was kickin’ up over there and a lot of people were starting to go. I thought, ‘Well, OK, I’m trained for it,’ so I went and got an RF-4 assignment (tactical reconnaissance plane). My first mission was up north (enemy territory) — not too far north, but up north.

“When I first got over there, when you got 60 missions north, they would curtail your assignment to nine months. Right after I got there, they said, ‘No, you’re going to have to get 100 missions.’



Floyd Smith

“We started flying and we had some problems during April and May. Lost several airplanes, crews ... flying pretty heavy. I wound up with 100 missions north and 203 missions south, over roughly 260 days. Sometimes, I’d fly three missions a day.

“We lived in an old French villa in downtown Saigon — the squadron did — and a lot of times, I wouldn’t even get back down there to change clothes or anything. We had cots in a back room, and we’d fall onto those cots and get four or five hours of sleep and be back at it.

“Our squadron was kind of a test squadron, and most of it was for (testing) cameras, but we did shoot some rockets. There were some pretty close shaves, but I always managed to get back (to

base).”

Smith was born and raised on a cotton farm in Arkansas, near the tiny town of Nashville, where he and his two younger brothers picked and chopped plenty of cotton. He graduated from Mineral Springs High School in 1956 and went on to the University of Arkansas, where he earned a degree in secondary education in the fall of 1961.

“At the time, I was

thinking about becoming a school teacher, and I did teach for a semester before I entered the Air Force,” he said. “I taught at Mineral Springs High School, and they paid me sixteen dollars a day.

“I got a draft notice my last semester in college. I had to get a letter from the dean of the college of education to send to the draft board, and they said they would leave me

PLEASE SEE **TOUR, 24**

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# TOUR

FROM PAGE 23

alone. But then I just went ahead and joined the Air Force, anyway.

“I could not get into OTS (officer training school) at Lackland Air Force Base until May. My parents owned a few businesses there in Mineral Springs — a grocery store, a plumbing store, butane business, feed store — so I worked with them until I came into the service.”

In 1962, Smith went to OTS at Lackland, but his military career nearly never got off the ground. He explained:

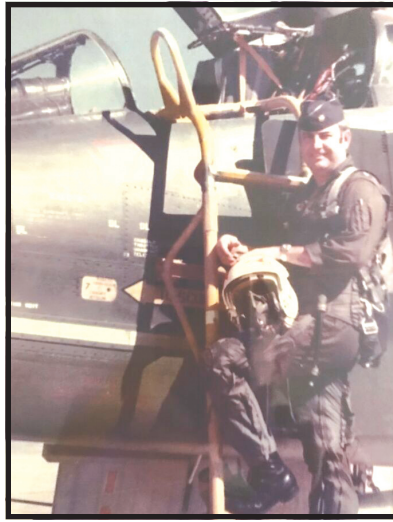
“I was supposed to go to pilot training after I went to OTS, and about two weeks before I graduated, they called us all into a big hall down there and said, ‘Guys, there’s nothing going on right now.’ They said the Air Force has no requirement for (new) pilots, so they offered us the opportunity to quit or get a commission and do something else.

“I said, ‘Well, I’m two weeks from being a second lieutenant — I’m not going to quit now.’”

After OTS, Smith was sent to weapons school in Biloxi, Miss., then on to Battle Creek, Mich., and the Detroit Air Defense Sector. In 1964, he was assigned to the Philippines, where he re-applied for flight school and this time was accepted. Thirteen months later, he was training as a pilot at Vance Air Force Base in Enid, Okla.

“I always wanted to fly, ever since I was a little boy,” he said. “That’s all I thought about. I don’t know how many model airplanes I built when I was a kid. They were all these balsa wood things — no plastic back in those days.

“I thoroughly enjoyed flight school. It was great. We started in May 1965. I went through basic,



COURTESY PHOTO

Floyd Smith flew more than 300 combat missions in Vietnam in 1967; sometimes three missions a day.

which was the (Cessna) T-37; then to advanced, which was the (Northrop) T-38. We graduated in June 1966, and that’s when I got an assignment to go to Vietnam.”

After his Southeast Asia tour was completed, Smith came home to Sherman, Texas, and Perrin Air Force Base, which was closing down and so he soon headed over to Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City, Fla., to attend McDonnell F-101 supersonic jet fighter school. After that, he was stationed at K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, another interesting but challenging assignment.

“I’ve never in my life seen so

much snow,” Smith said.

He spent three years in Michigan, becoming a squadron training officer, and worked as part of a program to help the Duluth Air National Guard convert from F-102 aircraft to F-101s. He went on to become a Northrop T-38 (two-seat supersonic jet trainer) instructor at Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, was promoted to major and selected to attend Air Command and Staff College in Montgomery, Ala.

“I went to nine months of Air Command and Staff College, and while I was there, I went to Troy State University at night and got my master’s degree in education. After that, I came to Bergstrom Air Force Base (Austin) and I went back to RF-4s again.

“The squadron commander there was a nice fellow but he ... kind of did his own thing. One day, he called me into his office and said, ‘I understand you just graduated from school. You’re going to be my new executive officer.’

“So I moved in there and he called me in his office one day and wrote his name on a piece of paper and said, ‘Here, learn to sign my name. Anything that comes in here that you think I don’t need to be bothered with, you sign it.’”

Smith was promoted to lieutenant colonel after being assigned

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# TOUR

FROM PAGE 24

to Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii, where he spent four years and traveled the world on various assignments. He was then offered a squadron commander slot at Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, a position that would have led to a promotion to colonel.

“That place was not good to take families,” Smith said, “and you had to take your family if you were going to be a squadron commander. I knew guys that got stationed there who after a couple, three months sent their families back home.

“I told my wife, ‘I’m not going to put you and the kids through that.’

“She said, ‘Well, whatever you want to do — it’s up to you.’

“So, I left there and went to Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I was out there four years and traveled extensively throughout Europe. I added it up and I spent about two years of that assignment in Germany.”

After his time was up in Albuquerque, Smith came to Fort Hood and spent two years as deputy detachment commander in the Air Force liaison office. He retired from the military in September 1990 with a total service time of 28 years, three months, and 20 days.

After a stint as a teacher at Pine Bluff High School in Arkansas, Smith returned

to central Texas and went to work for the next 20 years at West Fort Hood’s TEXCOM and Operational Test Command, including a couple years as division chief for the advanced systems test division.

Now fully retired since October 2011, Smith — who was married to wife, Delores, for 57 years before she died three years ago — stays busy around his house near the golf course in Killeen, and also polishing his beloved 2001 Corvette that shows 19,000 original miles on the odometer. He is a member of two Corvette clubs, one in Temple and another in Killeen.

Looking back on his military career, Smith says he “absolutely loved it.”

“I would have stayed longer, but it was time to retire,” said the father of two, grandfather of three, and great-grandfather of two.

“I was born in ’38 so I kind of grew up during the Second World War; and I loved to watch the old war movies with airplanes in them.

“Like I said, I built model airplanes when I was a kid. Every time we’d go to town, I’d go to the 10-cent store and buy a couple of airplanes. Even after I got in college, I still built model airplanes and gave them away.”

## Retired U.S. Army soldier was born and raised in Israel, now a school teacher

BY JOHN CLARK  
HERALD CORRESPONDENT

COPPERAS COVE — Retired U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Nabeel Sakhnini came to the United States from Israel when he was 17 with plans to attend college, then go to medical school and become a doctor:

He graduated from Gardner-Webb University in North Carolina with a degree in science and a minor in math in 1978, when he was 20 years old. Unfortunately, going to medical school proved out of his reach financially, and three years later, Sakhnini decided to join the military.

PLEASE SEE **TEACHER, 26**

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# TEACHER

FROM PAGE 25

“It was too expensive. I just did not have the money to pursue my dream, if you will,” the 63-year-old Copperas Cove resident said. “I’ve always been fond of the military, since I was a child. I heard about the benefits for those who enlist, so I decided to give it a try. I worked for a couple of years after college, then I enlisted in 1981 and fell in love with it.”

Born and raised in Nazareth, birthplace of Jesus Christ, Sakhnini grew up with two brothers in a Baptist family. Most Israelis are Jewish, but he is a devout Christian who holds dual citizenship for the U.S. and his home country.

“The current population of Israel is approximately seven million, and you have probably 10 percent of the population that is Arabic,” he explained. “Of course, 90 percent of the Arabic population is Muslim. About 10 percent of those profess Christianity as their faith.

“First, I’m a Christian, and I’m an Israeli-Arab. I am not Jewish. This is where a lot of people get confused, because once you tell somebody you’re from Israel, they automatically assume that you’re Jewish.”

After graduating from high school in Nazareth, Sakhnini came to the U.S., earned his degree



Nabeel Sakhnini

from Gardner-Webb, and wound up in the U.S. Army.

He attended boot camp and AIT (advanced individual training) at Fort

McClellan, Ala. His strict upbringing back in Israel prepared him somewhat for the rigors of his new Army life, but it still took some getting used to.

“Of course,” Sakhnini said, laughing. “I had a head full of hair and a beard ... all that was gone in a split-second.

“I was already structured because my parents raised me in a godly way. They raised my siblings and I to have good manners (and) respect for authority, so basic was tough, but it wasn’t too bad.”

Trained as an NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) specialist, Sakhnini served four years with Fort Hood’s 1st Cavalry Division in the late 1980s. He spent time in Germany and Korea, as well, and finished his 20-year career at Fort Dix, N.J.

“My job dealt with different kinds of chemical agents (and) protection against those agents,” Sakhnini said. “Dealing with radiation and how to use equipment that detected radiation and chemical agents.

“I had 17 years’ active-duty and three years’ inactive. My last duty assignment was Fort Dix, N.J. I transitioned out

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# TEACHER

FROM PAGE 26

of Fort Hood, but I retired out of Fort Dix. Most of my paperwork was completed at Fort Hood, even though I wasn't assigned there at the time. I was able to transition from Fort Hood because I lived in Copperas Cove."

His four years in Germany were probably the best of the time he spent in uniform, Sakhnini said, because it allowed him to get home more often to visit his family.

"Since I was close to Israel, I could fly there and see my parents and my relatives. Spend some quality time with them.

"My parents were very proud. One trip — it had to be in the mid-80s — I took my Class As and they were just beyond themselves when they saw me in the uniform. Some of my relatives started saluting me and all that ... we had a good time."

After retiring from the service, Sakhnini worked for a while with a brother who owned Bill's Muffler Shop in Copperas Cove. The job was enjoyable and paid fairly well, but was not satisfying, so he wound up deciding to get his teaching credentials and become a math teacher.

"I was making pretty decent money, but I knew that was not what God called me to do. This is where I began to pray, and the Lord revealed to me that he wanted me to become an educator, so that's what I did."

Sakhnini, whose friends call him "Bill," spent 22 years as a math teacher in Copperas Cove before retiring last school year. Now, he is able to spend a lot more time with his church and his family. He recently returned from a trip back home to Israel to visit his aging parents and hopes to spend more time with them in the coming years, as well.

He looks back on his military



COURTESY PHOTO

Sakhnini at a rappelling station while training in South Korea.

service with pride and satisfaction. He used to think about how his life might be different had his plans to become a doctor panned out, but firmly believes it was just not meant to be.

"Years ago, it would cross my mind, but then I learned to close that chapter for good and just deal with what God has blessed me with," said the father of five who has been married to wife, Angela, for 29 years. One of his daughters served eight years in the Army, including a tour in Iraq, and a son is a master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force.

"I really enjoyed the military, and I continue to enjoy the benefits that I reaped from being a soldier. I still miss it sometimes, but God had other plans for me. I miss the exercising on a daily basis, and certain other aspects of it. The

deployments and being overseas — not so much.

"Of course, today's Army is nothing like the old Army, but I encourage everyone who is considering it to give it a try. It turns kids into men. The military will teach a person so many things about life. It will help them become more resilient; relentless. Teaches a person to become a hard worker; not to take any shortcuts and so on.

"So I highly encourage anyone who is thinking about making that decision to go for it. You won't regret it.

"One thing I'd like to mention is that when I started teaching in 1999 ... the state of Texas is really good to its veterans, so I was able to buy five years of military service credit. At that time, I think I paid maybe \$8,500 — now, of course, it's much more than that — so I retired with 22 years of teaching, but towards my (teacher) retirement and pension, I have credit for 27 years of teaching.

"Sadly, a lot of veterans don't know about this, so every chance I get when I'm talking to a veteran teacher, I ask that question. A lot of them, if not all of them, are pretty surprised when I tell them about it.

"I enjoyed teaching. I believe that is something God intended for me to do. Now, I want to be more involved in my church; more with my family. I want to be able to travel more and get some projects done around the house. That's my plan."

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# Retired U.S. Army sergeant first class served two Middle East deployments

BY JOHN CLARK  
HERALD CORRESPONDENT

**COPPERAS COVE** — After retiring from the U.S. Army, Sgt. 1st Class Johnnie Banks tried his hand at selling cars, but soon found that while his years as a recruiter helped refine his salesmanship skills, the life of a used car peddler did not suit him.

“I retired in 2019,” the 42-year-old Copperas Cove resident said. “I kind of hung out for two weeks, then got bored. I applied for numerous

jobs (and) the first one that called me was (a dealership), so I was a car salesman for two months. It was pretty easy. If you can sell the Army, you can sell a car. But Army values were instilled in me (and) Fort Hood is right there.

“I couldn’t get behind the fact that they were pushing people to try to take privates — who don’t have much money in their pockets — for a ride just so you can line your pockets, and then brag about it first thing in the morning.

Their values weren’t in line with mine. I’m an honest person. I can’t lie because my conscience won’t allow it.

“So that didn’t work out. My little brother owns a distribution service provider for Amazon. We have 40 Amazon Prime vans in our fleet. We are based out of the Amazon warehouse in Round Rock and I’m an operations manager for that.

“Instead of leading

soldiers, I’m leading my employees. Making sure their routes are squared away. Make sure their routes are delivered.

Health and welfare, things of that nature.”

Banks, a self-described Army brat, was born at Fort Bliss in El Paso, moved to Germany for five years, then to Missouri, on to Kansas and Virginia. When his father was sent to Korea,

PLEASE SEE **DEPLOY, 29**



Johnnie Banks

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# DEPLOY

FROM PAGE 28

the family stayed behind, alternating between Virginia and New York. There was another four years in Germany, then a stint in California and over to Texas, where Banks graduated from Killeen's Ellison High School in 1997.

He enlisted in the military between his junior and senior years of high school, with big plans to see the world.

"I joined the Army to never return to the Fort Hood area again, and I spent nine years of my military career here. I was stationed here twice," Banks said.

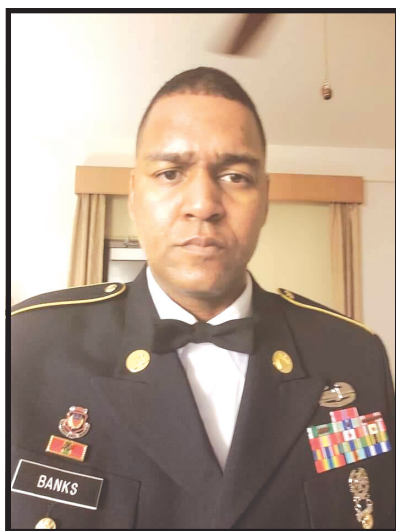
"I grew up with two brothers and we all fell in love with Germany. Since I enjoyed it so much, I thought, 'If I enlist, I get to experience Germany as an adult.' As it turned out, I was stationed everywhere but (Germany)."

After basic training and AIT (advanced individual training) at Fort McClellan, Ala., he was assigned to his first duty station in Korea as a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear specialist. It was not his dream destination, but he wound up thoroughly enjoying it.

"I was an 18-year-old chemical soldier, living in a foreign country, getting paid on the first and the 15th. I had a blast. From there, I came to Fort Hood, where I was in 2nd Chemical Battalion.

"Then, I kinda got sick. I was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease (a chronic inflammation of the digestive tract) and was not worldwide deployable."

His next set of orders was for Fort Wainwright, Ala., and the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team. The unit was set for a deployment to Iraq and despite his non-deployable status, he wanted



COURTESY PHOTO

Johnnie Banks retired to Copperas Cove following a 22-year military career.

to go.

"Imagine training for a sport and then you sit on the bench watching other people do it — that's what it kind of feels like," Banks said. "I was trying to act as if I was not not-worldwide-deployable, because we were set to go to Iraq, but they stopped me.

"I went to a gastroenterologist on post, got my profile changed and off I went to Iraq for 16 months. Literally days before we got on the bird to come home, we got extended for another four months and then put in another battle space.

"I loved it.

"Of course, I had my fears. I'm a non-combat guy and I was in an

infantry unit. I'm thinking, 'Well, damn, it's time for me to kick in doors, shoot, throw grenades,' but no. I volunteered for that, but I was not allowed to do so because I was the only chemical guy there.

"There's only one slot for a staff sergeant/sergeant first class chemical soldier in an infantry unit at battalion or brigade level. If that guy is taken out, you're going to have to get somebody maybe at a lower rank who does not have the same experience.

"I was S3 plans NCOIC (non-commissioned officer in charge), so it was my job to make sure I put out the fragmentary order for the day. I did MDMP (military decision-making process) with all the officers putting plans into place for different missions we were doing out there.

"I had my soldiers that worked within the TOC (tactical operations center). I worked right outside the TOC in the S3 plans office, basically making sure the officers did what they had to do and didn't f— off all day."

Back home after his deployment, Banks eventually wound up being assigned as a recruiter. A lifelong introvert, he was not crazy about the idea, but soon discovered a knack for talking with young men and women about military careers.

"It was probably the best thing

PLEASE SEE **DEPLOY, 30**



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# DEPLOY

FROM PAGE 29

that could have happened to me,” he said. “It brought me out of my shell.

“I did have to learn a different approach in recruiting. I had to cut some of the tone off of my tone, so I didn’t come off as so aggressive.

“The Army was different by that time — a totally different culture. When I went in, you were kind of allowed to be (more) aggressive. Nowadays, soldiers can get away with pretty much anything, which is kind of unfortunate.

“A lot of discipline and the way we enforced standards is now considered not the way things are done. You really can’t hold soldiers accountable for their actions without them trying to ... get you in trouble, let’s say. It’s definitely a different Army.

“I couldn’t be who I was then in the Army today. I would be in a world of trouble.”

He worked as a recruiter for four years at Pembroke Pines/Hollywood recruiting station in Florida. When he was

transferred to the tri-cities area in Washington State — Pasco, Richland and Kennewick — things changed.

“I was absolutely a fish out of water. I was the only person that looked like me over there. I did OK, but it was pretty rough ... (due to) the color of my skin. I finished my 22 years over there. I always told myself I was going to stay in the Army until they kicked me out, but at the conclusion of that tour, it was time.”

He retired in December 2019 with 22 years’ service and two Middle East deployments, returning to Copperas Cove and the house he bought here in 2010.

Looking back, Banks says he has no regrets whatsoever over joining the military straight out of high school, and he would gladly do it all over again.

The married father of one says, however, that it is “heartbreaking” to see what is occurring now in Afghanistan following the U.S. troop pullout.

“When I was in Afghanistan, we were an NCO-led TOC (tactical operations center). Instead of the traditional captain in the battle

captain’s slot, I was in that slot because I went to what is called battle staff (course).

“I’m pretty sure you’ve seen war movies, where you have the tent with all the maps, people on the radio ... I was that guy.

“As a non-combat MOS, I was in a cav scout unit in the Big Red One (1st Infantry Division). My battle NCO was an E-5. Radio operators were privates. I had intel guys; artillery guys. I was intrinsically involved in every (enemy) contact that took place from 8 in the morning until 8 at night. So when anything happened on the ground over there, I was the first one to get that call. I’ve

heard friends screaming for medivacs; artillery support ...

“To hear that Afghanistan fell, it doesn’t feel good. I lost friends while I was there. There’s no way around the emotion that’s tied to that. I think that emotion is tied to any soldier who spent any amount of time there.

“When I was in Iraq, I played basketball one day and made plans with a young man to play some basketball when we got back (home) because he was a pretty cool dude — the next day he was gone.

“It’s never easy. Some people can get through it easier than others. Some just can’t get past it.”



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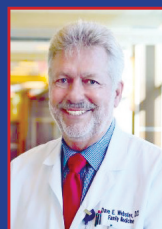
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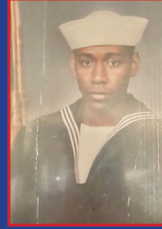
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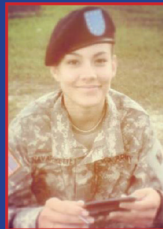
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