



# OKLAHOMA'S *Military Heritage*

A Publication of the Oklahoma Military Heritage Foundation

*Honoring the men and women of Oklahoma who served in the Uniformed Services of the United States, demonstrating extraordinary acts of courage, heroism and gallantry, and who continue to serve our country and communities today, as well as educating the public, especially the State's youth, about military service to our nation.*

## President's Message

As you know, this year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Oklahoma Military Heritage Foundation. Each of you have supported this great organization and I commend you for your contributions.

For an organization to remain strong requires the support, both personally and financially, of its members. Many of you have served as Ambassadors-in-Charge or assisted in other ways. I have one last request of you. If you haven't paid your membership dues, please do so by August 15<sup>th</sup>. This is critical. When we apply for grants or other financial contributions, the number of paid memberships can figure into that equation. If you have not paid, you cannot be counted no matter how much you have given in other ways. If you haven't already received it, those who have not paid for the current year will be receiving a letter from me. When you do, I encourage you to submit your payment and keep our organization strong and growing. If you aren't sure of the amount of the dues or to whom they should be remitted, additional information is available on our website. Also, please let us know if you would like to become more active. We have several opportunities available.

The 25th Anniversary event will be Saturday, October 26 at the Embassy Suites in Norman. We encourage you to attend and assist us at this event. An anniversary such as this only comes once, so let's make it everything it can be! Only a team can make this the superlative event we envision.

Our board of dedicated volunteers values every one of you and commends you for your commitment, your caring, your dedication, and your efforts in furthering our mission. Thank you.

*Jerry Shiles*

Colonel, USA (Ret.), OKMHF President

CELEBRATING  
**25**  
YEARS  
SILVER ANNIVERSARY

## 2024 Hall of Fame Honorees Announced

### **Master Sergeant Earl Plumlee**

Master Sergeant Earl D. Plumlee, US Army, was born in 1980 in Clinton, Oklahoma, growing up on a farm in Merritt, near Elk City. Plumlee joined the Oklahoma National Guard in 1998. He joined the Marines in 2000 serving as a Force Reconnaissance Marine with a tour in Iraq. In 2009 he inter-service transferred to the Army, qualifying as a Special Forces soldier. For actions in Afghanistan on 28 August 2013, Plumlee was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry, and in 2021 that award was upgraded to the Medal of Honor. MSG Plumlee retired in 2023.



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### **1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Joe Van Abernathy**

1st Lieutenant Joe Van Abernathy, US Army, was born in 1946 in Clinton, Oklahoma, and raised in Sweetwater. He was an athlete and student leader, graduating from Sweetwater High School in 1964. In 1966 Abernathy enlisted in the US Army, graduated from Officer Candidate School, commissioned as an Infantry Lieutenant, and completed Airborne and Ranger School. During 1968 and 1969, Abernathy served in South Vietnam with the 1st/61st Infantry as a platoon leader. For his selflessness, outstanding leadership, courage, and valorous actions during two desperate battles, he was awarded both the Distinguished Service Cross and the Silver Star.



### **Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth A. Brower**

Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth A. Brower, US Army Air Force, was born in 1919 in Greenfield, Oklahoma. He enlisted in the Oklahoma Guard in 1938. In 1941 he was accepted into the Army Air Corps, trained as a navigator, and in 1943 was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant. As a navigator on the Martin B-26 Marauder medium bomber, Brower completed 46 combat missions. On his last mission, 8 July 1944, his aircraft was shot down near Amiens, France, and for the next three months French citizens helped him evade the enemy. LtCol Brower returned home in October 1945. His awards include the Distinguished Flying Cross and Purple Heart.



### **Sergeant Patrick Keith Bryan**

Sergeant Patrick Keith Bryan, US Army, was born in Pittsburg, Kansas, in 1949. He graduated from Daniel Webster High School in 1967. In March 1969 Bryan was drafted, and in July the newly trained 11B infantryman arrived in Vietnam assigned to B Company, 4th/23rd Infantry, 25th Infantry Division. In November 1969 he would earn his first Purple Heart and the Bronze Star Medal. For combat action on 9 January 1970, he was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry. On his return to Oklahoma, he became a Letter Carrier with the US Postal Service and the driver of their charitable programs for less fortunate Oklahomans.



### **Lieutenant Colonel Robert Frank Creson**

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Frank Creson, US Army, was born in Fayetteville, Tennessee, in 1927, graduating from high school in 1945. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps in July, near the end of World War II, but after basic training he was selected for the first post-war OCS class. At age 19 he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Infantry. During the Korean War he volunteered for Ranger training, and on 28 May 1951, as XO with Company L, 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment, he single-handedly attacked and destroyed an enemy machinegun emplacement for which he was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry.



### **1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Tom Emerson**

1st Lieutenant Tom Emerson, US Army, was born in Missouri in 1944, and moved to Oklahoma when he was ten. Known as a dependable, intelligent, and outgoing student, his German teacher, retired Col Virgil Caldwell, influenced his interest in the Army. Emerson graduated from Northwest Classen High School in 1962, attended The University of Oklahoma, and in 1963 was accepted to the United States Military Academy, graduating in 1967. In 1969, after Ranger School and Officer Basic, he joined 3rd/5th Cavalry in Vietnam. On 24 March 1969, Emerson displayed extraordinary heroism as he led his platoon against a determined enemy. He was awarded the Silver Star (posthumously) for his gallantry.



### **Major General William P.T. Hill**

Major General William P.T. Hill, US Marine Corps, was born in 1895, raised in Vineta, Indian Territory/Oklahoma, and is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. Seeming destined for a military career, he attended two military schools. In 1917 he graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a degree in geology. In World War I Hill was one of the first USMC Naval Aviators. In the 1920s and 1930s his geology expertise was employed in Alaska and China. Assigned to the Marine Quartermaster Department in 1929, he would later be pivotal in establishing Camp LeJeune. In February 1944 Hill became the USMC Quartermaster General, a post he held until 1955.



### **1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Dan Elkins Jones**

1st Lieutenant Dan Elkins Jones, US Army, was born in California in 1947 and raised in Oklahoma City. He was an example of intelligence, athleticism, leadership, and in 1965 graduated from Putnam City High School. In August 1968 he was commissioned as a Field Artillery 2nd Lieutenant. In Vietnam he served as an advisor to Vietnamese units. From March through June in 1969 he displayed gallantry and leadership in combat, being awarded the Silver Star, Bronze Star with Valor, and Air Medal with Valor. Jones' future PTSD counseling career was influenced by his military experience.



### **Oklahoma WWII Army Rangers**

The World War II Rangers - In January 1942, the first American units began moving to Northern Ireland. In May 1942, Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall sent Oklahoman, BG Lucian Truscott, to investigate ways to get combat experience for American soldiers. The War Department approved his proposal for a special unit of 473 all-volunteer soldiers. Truscott chose the historically cherished name "Rangers." Major William Darby from Arkansas was its first commander. During WWII, 7,000 volunteered in seven Battalions to be Rangers, including 71 Oklahomans. The Congressional Gold Medal was awarded in 2022, honoring their courage and motto: "Rangers Led the Way!"

A list of the 71 Oklahomans who volunteered to be World War II Rangers may be found at: <https://okmhf.org/oklahoma-wwii-rangers>

### **Admiral Marc Andrew Mitscher**

Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, US Navy, was born in Wisconsin in 1887 and in 1889 arrived with his parents in Oklahoma Territory in time for the Land Run. His father was the fifth Mayor of Oklahoma City (1892-1894). Young Mitscher loved the excitement of growing up in Oklahoma Territory for half the year, as he attended preparatory school in Washington, DC. Mitscher received an appointment to the US Naval Academy, graduating in 1910. In June 1916 Mitscher qualified as one of the first Naval Aviators (#33) and was a principal developer of the Fast Carrier Task Force successfully used in the Pacific victories of WWII.



### **Captain Frederick P. Smith**

Captain Frederick P. Smith, US Army, was born in 1946 in Oklahoma City. He graduated from Northeastern High School in 1964, planning on becoming a physician; however, the draft intervened. He enlisted in 1965, became an artilleryman, was selected for Officer Candidate School, and commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant Chemical Corps with an EOD specialty. In March 1970 he arrived in Vietnam assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division. On 13 February 1971 Smith was on a helicopter "People Sniffer" mission. Upon the premature detonation of CS cluster munitions, Smith's heroic action saved the lives of the passengers except his own. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action.





## 25th Annual Banquet & Induction Ceremony

### 26 October 2024

**EMBASSY SUITES NORMAN, 2501 CONFERENCE DRIVE  
NORMAN, OKLAHOMA**

REGISTRATION STARTS 5 PM  
RECEPTION/CASH BAR 5:30 PM  
SEATING BEGINS 6 PM  
WELCOME 6:30 PM

**DRESS CODE:**  
Black tie or business suit for men, "after 5" wear for ladies,  
Sunday best, service dress, mess dress or business suit for  
military personnel.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
For banquet reservations (\$95/seat), please make check payable  
to 'OKMHF' and send to OKMHF, PO Box 30658, Edmond,  
OK 73003, with names, food allergies, and handicapped needs,  
or go online to our website [OKMHF.org](http://OKMHF.org). Invitations will be  
sent out in early September. The cutoff date for  
reservations is Oct. 18.

# MG Doug Dollar Distinguished Public Service Award

## Sergeant Major Lanny Asepermy

Sergeant Major Lanny G. Asepermy, US Army, was born in 1946 and raised west of Apache, Oklahoma, by his grandparents. His grandfather was a full-blood Comanche Indian and his grandmother a full-blood Kiowa Indian. He served in the US Army from 1966-1990, including a combat tour, 1969-1970 in Vietnam, earning the Combat Infantry Badge. After his retirement, Asepermy dedicated his life to the military, veterans, his American Indian heritage, and family. One can count over 5,000 instances when he impacted the remembrance of his Tribal veterans. SGM Asepermy truly exhibits the Spirit of a Warrior and Heart of a Patriot.



## Ms. Elaine D. Johns

Ms. Elaine D. Johns was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1957, adopted by an American family, and at age 5 moved to the States. She graduated from Hennessy High School in 1975 and soon after married and became a naturalized American citizen. With their three children, community involvement became second nature leading to 12 years on the school board. In 1990, Johns worked at Enid Airport's Northwest Aero Services, a company she eventually purchased. In 1999 the Woodring Military Wall of Honor and Veterans Park was conceived, an 80% replica of the Vietnam Memorial Wall, now recognized as Oklahoma's official Vietnam War Memorial.



## To Perform October 26

Maggie Bond and Dennis Hoch are a dynamic duo! Local to the Tulsa area, they have been performing together at multiple venues for almost 5 years -- a majority being for the Oklahoma Military History Center in Broken Arrow. Maggie graduated from Oklahoma City University with dual degrees in Vocal Performance and Economics. Navy Gunners Mate Dennis served as an explosives technician in Vietnam and graduated with a degree in Classical Guitar. They have performed in multiple settings over the years and are excited for the opportunity to perform for the upcoming Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame Award Ceremony!

## Friends' Donations

The OKMHF is an all-volunteer, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that relies solely upon donations. Thank you for your support!

### MAC CRANK MEMORIAL FOUNDER (\$25,000+)

In observance of our 25th Anniversary, we are introducing a new donation level in honor of a long-time OKMHF volunteer. It was Mac Crank who created through his artwork the inspiring Hall of Fame emblem, as well as our motto "Spirit of a Warrior, Heart of a Patriot." A member of the Oklahoma Cherokee Nation, Mac devoted his life to our cause of honoring Oklahoma veterans. Mac is no longer with us, but his memory will be always. Read more about Mac at <https://okmhf.org/a-tribute-to-mac-crank>



### PERPETUAL GIFTS (\$10,000-\$24,999)

Chickasaw Nation, Ada  
MG Douglas & Gayla Dollar, Stillwater  
Robert Ford, Okeene  
William Ford & Family, Shawnee  
Mike & Pam Kloiber, Oklahoma City

Naval Enlisted Reserve Association, OK Chapter, Edmond  
Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City  
Tinker Federal Credit Union, Oklahoma City

### SUSTAINING GIFTS (\$5000 - \$9999)

Shawnee Brittan, Oklahoma City  
Marilyn & Rodney Hall, Grapevine, TX  
David Hudiburg & Auto Group, Midwest City

### FOUNDER GIFTS (\$1000 - \$4999)

Gary Wayne Banz, Oklahoma City  
Gary Baumwart, Yukon  
Merrill Burruss, Geary  
Choctaw Nation, Durant  
Comanche Nation, Lawton  
Bonnie & Mack Easley, Texarkana, TX  
Dr. Ronald Hall, Stillwater  
RADM Thomas Hall, Jacksonville, FL  
Frank D. Hill Family Fund, Oklahoma City  
James Horn, Stillwater  
Helen Hubbell, Rockville, MD  
Beverly Kelley, Roswell, GA  
Kirkpatrick Foundation, Oklahoma City  
James Locke, Langley  
William C. Miller, Windsor, CO  
Oren Lee Peters, Edmond  
William Talley, Edmond  
Sybil White, Lawton

# Our Silver Anniversary - 25 Years Honoring Veterans

The Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame was established in 1999 as the first program of its kind in the United States focused solely upon honoring veterans and educating the state's youth about service to our country. Some key facts about us:

- In 2003 the effort was incorporated as the Oklahoma Military Heritage Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit statewide military organization that receives no public funds and relies solely upon donations, volunteer leadership and service.
- Our Oklahoma Military Heritage Foundation is the only such organization in the country that establishes community chapters statewide to recognize more veterans with the Hall of Honor Award.
- Our Hall of Fame banquet is the largest veteran recognition event in Oklahoma every year.
- Our Oklahoma Honors Campaign is the only program in Oklahoma that encourages the state's youth to interview veterans and record their stories.
- We partner with the Oklahoma CareerTech System to produce the Oklahoma Veterans Film Competition. The OVFC annually produces quality film productions honoring individual veterans.

## Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame

**476,000** - Since statehood, more than 476,000 Oklahomans have served in America's armed forces in combat with more than 9,890 killed or missing in action, 1,500 POWs, and 21,100 wounded. **305,000** - There are more than 305,000 living veterans who call Oklahoma home (Veterans Administration).

- **243** - From 1999-2023, 243 individual Oklahoma

heroes, and 8 units and organizations, have been inducted into our Hall of Fame. There are 163 individual officers, 70 enlisted men, and 2 civilians. Honorees from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and US Public Health Service are represented. They also include 2 NASA pilots, a Frontiersman, and 2 Army Nurse Corps veterans. Our Hall of Honor began in late 2023 and is honoring individual veterans monthly.

- **35** - Hall of Fame honorees are recipients of the Medal of Honor; 28 men received 30 Distinguished Service Crosses and 20 are recipients of the Major General Douglas O. Dollar Distinguished Public Service Award.
- **8** - Units that have been recognized including the 10th US Cavalry Regiment "Buffalo Soldiers" (2002); the Oklahoma Military Academy in Claremore (2005); ROTC Centennial (2016); the Oklahoma National Guard (2017); the USS Oklahoma BB-37 (2019) and the tribes listed below.
- **3** - Groups include 14 Comanche Code Talkers (2011); 23 Choctaw Code Talkers (2012); and 9 Pawnee Code Talkers (2015) for their service during World Wars I and II. Several American Indian Tribes have been recognized as individual service members.

## Oklahoma Military Hall of Honor

The Hall of Honor was established in May 2023.

- **11** - the number of community chapters approved.
- **20** - the state-wide goal for community chapters.
- **51** - to-date (January 2024) inductees into the Hall of Honor.



Oklahoma Military Heritage Foundation Board members were present at the 2019 Force 50 Foundation ceremonies on the University of Central Oklahoma campus to receive the small nonprofit organization award for service to the state's veterans.



Emblem for the newly-introduced Hall of Honor Award that allows the Oklahoma Military Heritage Foundation to involve communities across the state in honoring more veterans.

# Statewide Chapters Plus Hall of Honor Award Introduced

Over the past 25 years, the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame has honored almost 250 Oklahomans. Looking forward to the next 25 years, we have developed a plan to broaden our impact and enable local community chapters to honor more veterans, and do so in their home communities throughout the

year. We created a Hall of Honor to supplement and complement our Hall of Fame. The Hall of Honor pilot programs began on Memorial Day 2023.

To date we have developed eleven community chapters. They are in Broken Arrow, Edmond, Enid, Mannford, Moore, Shawnee, Tahlequah, Tulsa, University of Tulsa, Stillwater, and West OKC. Our first chapter was developed in Enid under the leadership of Ambassador Elaine Johns. Elaine will be inducted into our Hall of Fame this October as a Dollar Award recipient for distinguished public service.

To date we have honored 51 veterans with an additional ten in process. Our first honoree was Bill Parker, a WWII soldier in the first wave of troops in the D-Day invasion at Normandy. Our second honoree was Dan Jones, a decorated Vietnam veteran who will also be inducted into the Hall of Fame this October. A most interesting honoree was Waddy Young, the first All-American football player from the state. Waddy was a WWII hero bomber pilot who fought in both the European and Pacific theaters. He was honored by our Mannford chapter.

We will announce the success and permanence of our Hall of Honor concept at our October 26 Silver Anniversary Banquet. We will now aim for at least 20 community chapters and at least 100 honorees per year. See our website (<https://okmhf.org>) to learn more about our Hall of Honor.



The American Legion Post #12 (Bethany-Warr Acres) voted recently to host the OKMHF Veterans of West OKC Metro Chapter. Shown with the Chapter Charter are Brett Martin, Oklahoma Veterans Commission and State commander (left) and OKMHF Ambassador Peter Plank.

