# The Sentinel

**The Newsletter of the Florida Medal of Honor Memorial, Inc.**
**Issue 31 – October 2026**

## Chairman's Message

Someone recently asked me how things were going at the Memorial. My response was that if things had gone half as well as they have to this point, I would be happy. Simply put, the response from the community has been fantastic. We are nearly two months ahead of where we were last year with our visitor count. Folks come from far and wide to see the Memorial and Visitors Center. Folks love our beautiful Florida-Native gardens. Qualifiers such as serene, dignified, and honorable are used to describe the Memorial. Some shed tears when they consider what our heroes endured and sacrificed to save their buddies and preserve our freedoms. For those of us who serve on the board and as docents, this is an affair of the heart. We love what we do to honor the twenty-four Florida Medal of Honor recipients. As our old friend Buddy Hopson said: "this is a noble cause."

As we near the end of this month, we have seen 1,440+ visitors for year two (we had 1,425 in year one), and are on a path to some 1,500+. We have had great visits by the Mason Smoak Foundation, the Florida Department Commander of the American Legion, Bob Matheson, the 823rd RED HORSE Squadron from Hurlburt Field, and many more. Not to mention our 2nd Annual Gala Dinner where we were honored by our guest speaker retired Army Special Forces Brigadier General Hector Pagan.

A very busy quarter with plenty more coming up, such as the Wreaths Across America ceremony on 19 December as well as the National Medal of Honor Day ceremony this coming 25 March. As a member, you are automatically invited—see below for more details.

Thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely, Mike Borders, Chairman

**This newsletter is published quarterly: Jan/Apr/Jul/Oct**

## Calendar of Events

**On-going:**
Open 10:00 AM — 4:00 PM
Tuesday—Saturday

**19 December 2026**
10:00 AM
Wreaths Across America Ceremony

**25 March 2027**
11:00 AM
National Medal of Honor Day Ceremony

## Funding Status

Please support us with your donation. See the "How You Can Help" section on pages 6-7 for more info. As a non-profit, we rely on your donations to keep the doors open, and they are greatly appreciated.







Members of the USAF's 823rd RED HORSE Squadron from Hurlburt Field took in the Memorial during an MWR (Morale, Welfare, and Recreation) day on 23 August, 2026. It was a delight to meet these fine young men and women serving our nation on active duty.





Florida Department Commander of the American Legion Bob McPherson and members of American Legion Posts 74 of Sebring and 69 of Avon Park and their Riders groups honored us with a visit on 26 September.






High school students from all three local schools—Sebring, Lake Placid, and Avon Park of the Mason Smoak Foundation's *Youth Leadership Highlands* visited on 21 September. These are great youngsters!!









Some of the scenes from our 2nd Annual Gala Dinner. We were honored to have a big crowd on hand to hear Brigadier General Hector Pagan (U.S. Army, Ret.). NOTE: We will have a special section on the gala in the next edition of the Sentinel.









The American Legion Riders from Avon Park Post 69 organized a "Poker Run" with groups from Sebring, Lake Placid, and their own post on the 24th of October. Some 85 riders helped raise $4,000 for our Memorial. We are eternally grateful.



## Our Mission

To honor and preserve the legacy of Florida Medal of Honor recipients through education, leadership, and inspiring displays, ensuring their courage and sacrifice are never forgotten.

## Our Vision

To inspire all generations to embody the six character traits of Medal of Honor recipients, fostering a deeper appreciation and commitment to the values of courage, sacrifice, and patriotism.

## Our Goals

- Maintain the Memorial and Visitors Center
- Provide educational outreach to K-12 school systems

## What We Do

**Honor Florida's Heroes**
Preserve the memories of the 24 Floridians who have been awarded the MOH and inspire others to build on their legacies.



**Inspire Our Community**
Encourage our community, young and old, to embody the ideals of the MOH (sacrifice, commitment, courage, integrity, citizenship, and patriotism).

**Educate and Inform**
Work with K-12 schools to promote the virtues, behaviors, and choices of everyday heroes as exemplified by the MOH awardees through thought-provoking curriculum and active learning activities.

## How You Can Help

Additional funds and help are needed for, operating costs and maintenance of this unique and special facility.

## Volunteer

- Be a museum docent
- Assist with the K-12 educational outreach program.

## Donations

Tax-deductible donations accepted:

- Online – https://tinyurl.com/233kmcfe
- Phone – text "FLMOHM" to 44321
- Mail – See page 11

## Sponsorship Levels

- **Platinum** $50,000 and up
- **Gold** $25,000 – $49,999.99
- **Silver** $10,000 – $24,999.99
- **Bronze** $5,000 – $9,999.99
- **Brass** $1,000 – $4,999.99
- **Founding Member** $100 – $999.99

## Our Newest Members:

- Karen Jensen
- Joseph Murphy
- Hal Graves
- Philip Carlin
- Paul Blackman
- Sarah Carter
- Karen Jensen

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## Sponsor News

- Down N' Dirty Janitorial: Brass
- Scott Oakley: Brass
- Terry Mendel: Brass
- Moddie Desselle: Bronze
- Selvin Walker: Brass
- America Legion Post 69: Brass

# Thank You!

## How To Become a Member

Please consider becoming a member of the Florida Medal of Honor Memorial. Members are invited to special previews and member-only activities and are kept informed of special events via a newsletter, social media, and the website. There are three different membership levels: Annual, Five-Year, and Life. An application form is provided on the next-to-last page.

## How to Become a Sponsor

As a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit/ non-profit, we rely on donations and fundraising. Our staff is all volunteer. We have a full range of expenses. Donations may be tax-deductible. Go to the "How You Can Help" section on the previous page to see how to donate or sponsor our organization and use the contact information on the last page.

## Board of Directors & Other Volunteers

**Chairman**: Michael R. Borders
**Vice Chairman**: C. Raymond McIntyre
**Junior Vice Chairman**: Byron Oakley
**Treasurer**: Richard Karkowski
**Education**: Erik Christensen
**Construction Project Mgr.**: Donald Laycock
**Secretary/Asst. Const. Project Mgr.**: Judy Laycock
**Marketing**: Moddie Desselle & Heather Oakley
**IT**: Shawn Nickell
**Chaplain**: Denise Williams
**Master Gardeners**: Mark and Marie Milia
**Legal Advisor**: John McClure
**CPA**: Mark Cox

The Florida Medal of Honor Memorial, Inc. is an incorporated Florida non-profit organization. We are non-partisan, apolitical, and a 501(c)(3), charitable, non-profit, tax-exempt organization. The FLMOHM is a 501(c)(3) / IRS EIN# 45-3798922 / State of Florida Corporation N16000001848 / My Florida Market Place 85-8017597686C-0 / vendor # F45398922001/ D-U-N-S Number 05-868-9165 / FL Tax Exempt #Registration #: CH56194 "A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling 1.800.435.7352. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the State.

# Florida Medal of Honor Memorial, Inc.

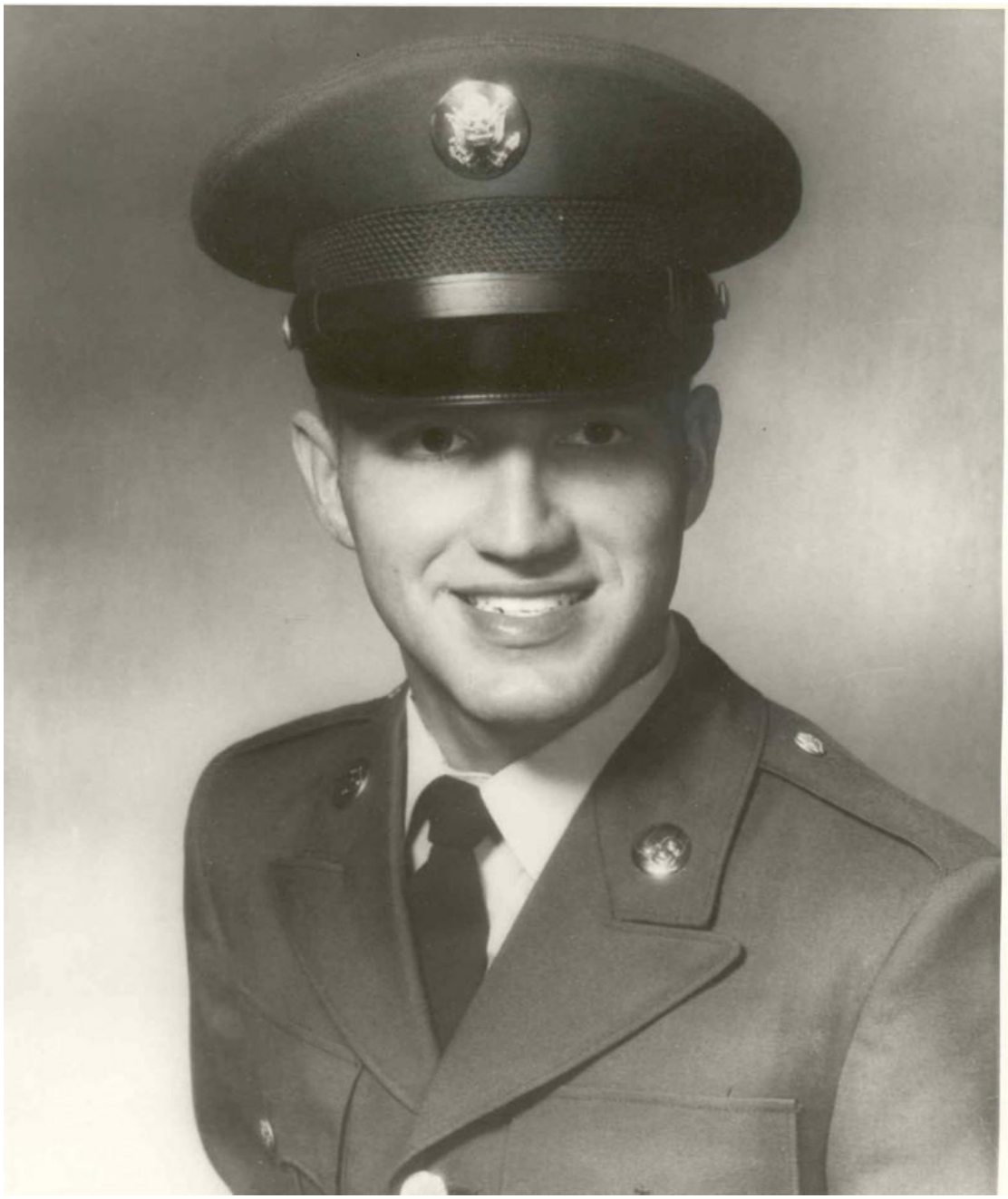

**Website:** www.flmohm.org
**Mail:** 442 S. Eucalyptus St., Sebring, Florida 33870
**Telephone:** 863.451.5862
**Email:** FLMOHM@gmail.org
**Facebook:** FLMOHMemorial
**X:** FLMOHM

*Hero of the Quarter*

# Hammett Lee Bowen, Jr.

Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army

Jacksonville, FL



# Citation

SSgt. Bowen distinguished himself while serving as a platoon sergeant during combat operations in Binh Duong Province, Republic of Vietnam. SSgt. Bowen's platoon was advancing on a reconnaissance mission into enemy-controlled terrain when it came under the withering crossfire of small arms and grenades from an enemy ambush force. SSgt. Bowen placed heavy suppressive fire on the enemy positions and ordered his men to fall back. As the platoon was moving back, an enemy grenade was thrown amid SSgt. Bowen and three of his men. Sensing the danger to his comrades, SSgt. Bowen shouted a warning to his men and hurled himself on the grenade, absorbing the explosion with his body while saving the lives of his fellow soldiers. SSgt. Bowen's extraordinary courage and concern for his men at the cost of his life served as an inspiration to his comrades and are in the highest traditions of the military service and the U.S. Army.

*Conflict:* ***Vietnam War***

*Location of Action:* ***Binh Duong Province, Republic of Vietnam***

*Date of Action:* ***June 27, 1969***

*MOH Awarded Posthumously:* ***July 17, 1974***




PRESENTATION DATE & DETAILS: **July 17, 1974 at the Blair House (Courtyard) by Vice President Gerald R. Ford to his family**

BORN: **November 30, 1947, LaGrange, GA**

DIED: **June 27, 1969, Binh Duong Province, Republic of Vietnam**

BURIED: **Restlawn Memorial Garden Cemetery (MH) (512-B-4), LaGrange, GA**

Florida Medal of Honor Memorial (FLMOHM)

# Membership Application

Members are invited to special previews, member-only activities, and are kept informed of special events via a newsletter, social media, and the website.

Name: _____ Date: _____
(Last, First, MI) (dd-mm-yyyy)

Address: _____
Street

_____ _____ _____
City State Zip Code

Telephone No.: _____

E-Mail: _____

Military Branch (If applicable) _____

Spouse's Name: _____

Present/Former Occupation: _____

Types of membership:

- Annual ($25)
- Five-Year ($100)
- Life ($250)

Return this completed form with enclosed dues to any docent at the FLMOHM Visitors Center or mail it to: Florida Medal of Honor Memorial, 442 S. Eucalyptus St., Sebring, FL 33870. Questions: call 863.451.5862 or email FLMOHM@gmail.org.

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(FLMOHM Use Only): Member No.: _____ Expiration Date: _____




# National Wreaths Across America Day

## December 19th, 2026

REMEMBER HONOR TEACH
WREATHS across AMERICA

**Sponsor a wreath today to be placed on a hero's marker this December at the Florida Medal of Honor Memorial. Scan this QR code or visit www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/FL1340P**