

**PRESS RELEASE
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McKinney, Texas, October 31, 2024 - The North Texas Fallen Warrior Portrait Project will present five portraits of Collin County fallen warriors, all from the local community of Princeton, who died while in the service of our country in a ceremony Monday, November 11th at 11:00 am at the Russell A. Steindam Courts Building, 2100 Bloomdale Road, McKinney. This is the 11th anniversary of this project, and the new portraits added to the "Hall of Heroes" bring the total number of portraits installed to one hundred and five.

This project would not have been possible without the unwavering support and generous contributions of many individuals and organizations. We extend our heartfelt thanks to former Bill Bryan Post 110 American Legion, Veteran of Foreign Wars Lone Star Post 2150, the Honorable Stacey Kemp, and the Collin County Clerk's Office, the Honorable Jim Skinner, Sheriff of Collin County, Honorable Allen Clark, Captain US Army Retired, Nina D Ringley, the Collin County Historical Society, Celina Area Heritage Association, Jacob Hayes Chapter of the Marine Corps League, The North Texas Military Heritage Collection, Siedel Chapter of the Air Force Association, Dallas Council of the Navy League, The Military Order of World Wars, Audie Murphy Chapter of the Army Association, local chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Sons of the American Revolution, and many other patriots of Collin County. Their contributions have helped preserve the legacies of our local heroes and will educate and inspire our community for generations to come.

The North Texas Fallen Warrior Portrait Project was founded in 2013 by the late USMC and Vietnam Veteran Ronnie "RD" Foster and USAF Veteran Colin Kimball to honor the 435 known fallen warriors from Collin County. Both Foster and Kimball donated their time and talents to this historic project. The five heroes came from Princeton, a community of Collin County that suffered the highest loss in the two Great Wars relative to its population.

NIMROD S. SHIPP – 23, Cook First Class, United States Merchant Marines. Served on the *SS Gulfbelle* transporting fuel from a refinery on the eastern seaboard toward the Panama Canal, ultimately for a destination in the Pacific Theater. Traveling at night without navigation lights as a precaution due to the Nazi U-boats that operated in those waters, the *Gulfbelle* collided with the *SS Gulfland* off the coast of Palm Beach, Florida. Civilians on shore heard the cries for help as each ship carrying fuel erupted into flames. Shipp was one of 44 sailors to perish on the *Gulfbelle*. His remains have never been recovered.

LOUIS F. BASS – 23, 2nd Lieutenant 577th Squadron of the 392nd Bomb Group, Eighth Army Air Force. His bomb group took off from Wendling Airfield in Norfolk, England, on 21 April 1944. They encountered severe icing conditions at altitude; the entire Bomb Group of more than 40 aircraft were forced to abandon the mission and return to base. His B-24, nicknamed "Kentucky Girl," suffered a catastrophic condition that resulted in an explosion. Bass was unable to bail out and is one of the eight crewmen from Kentucky Girl memorialized in a memorial at the site of the crash near the village of North Tottenham near Norwich, England. He is buried in Altoga Cemetery.

RAY W. HENSLEE – 23, 1st Lieutenant 439th Bomb Squadron of the 319th Bomb Group of the 12th US Army Air Force. He was a navigator on the B-26 Maurader who had recently arrived in England. On 12 November 1942, his B-26 41-17777, christened as "Boogie Woogie," was shot down by a Nazi ME-109 near Cherbourg, France, as his bomb group was transitioning to Algeria to participate in Operation Torch. The commander of the Bomb Group was aboard Henslee's aircraft. A memorial was erected to honor

Henslee and his crewmen in Les Pieuz, France. He is buried in the Cambridge American Cemetery in Cambridge, England.

MAURICE JOHNSON – 30, Major 61st Troop Carrier Squadron, 314th Troop Carrier Group, United States Air Force. He was a Veteran of WWII and earned a Distinguished Flying Cross. During the Korean War, while flying a mission on 29 March 1951, the right engine of the C-119 tail number 8345 fell off in flight. He ordered his crew to bail out, and he stayed with the plane. He was killed when the plane crash-landed near Hongchon, Korea. He is buried in Restland Cemetery in Dallas.

VERNON W. WOODY – 20, Corporal 2nd Battalion 34th Armored Regiment, known as the “Dreadnoughts” of the 25th Infantry Division United States Army. While on a mission as part of Operation Cliff Dweller, on the rugged, steep Black Virgin Mountain in Tay Ninh Province of South Vietnam on 30 January 1970, Woody was run over by an armored vehicle. He was married and became a father of a daughter who never knew him. He is buried in Ridgeview Memorial Park in Allen.



Clockwise: Cook First Class Nimrod S Shipp, Merchant Marines, 2nd LT Louis Bass, US Army Air Force, 1st Lt Ray Henslee, US Army Air Force, Cpl Vernon W. Woody, US Army and Major Maurice Johnson, US Air Force.



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