

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Colin Kimball
colinkimball@live.com

McKinney, Texas, November 3, 2024 - The North Texas Fallen Warrior Portrait Project will present five portraits of Collin County fallen warriors who died while in the service of our country in a ceremony on Monday, November 10, 2025, at 11:00 am at the Russell A. Steindam Courts Building, 2100 Bloomsdale Road, McKinney. This is the 12th anniversary of this project, and the new portraits added to the "Hall of Heroes" bring the total number of portraits installed to 110.

The portraits installed in this presentation were made possible by the generous support and contributions of The Veterans of Foreign Wars Lone Star Post 1250 of McKinney, the Celina Area Heritage Association, McKinney High School Marine JROTC Program, The North Texas Military Heritage Collection in Nevada, and the family of Russell Steindam, Charles and Jane Skinner. 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 by the late USMC and Vietnam Veteran Ronnie "RD" Foster and USAF Veteran Colin Kimball to honor the over 400 known fallen warriors from Collin County. Both Foster, who completed the foundational historic research, and Kimball have donated their time and talents to this historic project, which began in 2013. The five heroes to be introduced in this installation include.

Billy F. Commons – 21 of McKinney, Lieutenant Junior Grade, 3rd Carrier Air Group, United States Navy. Star football player at McKinney High School and East Texas State University. A fighter attack pilot, he flew off the USS Yorktown (CV-10) and was killed in action on 14 December 1944 over Luzon, Philippines. Commons was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross and remains missing in action. He is listed on the Tablets of the Missing in the Manila American Cemetery as well as on the WWII Memorial at the Texas A&M Commerce Football Stadium.

Dana T. Mudd – 24, McKinney, Flight Officer, 91st Squadron of the 439th Troop Carrier Group of the 9th Army Air Force. Originally from Edwardsville, Illinois, Mudd was married to the former Mary Snyder of McKinney before taking his oath of Enlistment in the United States Army in 1939 in McKinney. He served in various aircraft maintenance roles before earning his glider pilot wings at Dalhart, Texas, and was then promoted to Flight Officer. He piloted and landed a fully laden CG-4A Waco glider into an active combat zone near Groesbeck, Holland, during Operation Market Garden on 17 September 1944. He was killed in action when ambushed by German Soldiers a few days later. He is buried in Ardennes American Cemetery in Neupre, Belgium.

Floyd Earl White, Jr. – 29, Plano, 1st Lieutenant, Company G 2nd Battalion 442nd Regimental Combat Team, United States Army. White entered the Army after graduating from Texas Christian University. He served as a Company Commander for an all-Japanese American, known as the Nisei, Regiment sent to Europe. After recovering from wounds received while fighting in Italy in June 1944, he was killed in action in October 1944 while leading his men to rescue 211 Texans from the 141st Infantry Regiment of the Texas National Guard who were surrounded by Nazi forces in the Vosges Mountains in France. White, a Texan, was one of over 800 casualties from the Neise troops who were fighting for the right to be Americans, who liberated 211 Texans from the Texas National Guard. He is buried in Restland Cemetery in Dallas. *E Pluribus Unum*

Thomas E. McKnight - 35 Anna, Captain Chaplain Corps, 7th Cavalry Division, United States Army. A minister at the Methodist Church in Anna, and finishing his Divinity Degree at Southern Methodist University, McKnight was called to serve his country after the attack on Pearl Harbor and received a Commission as a Captain to serve as a Chaplain in May 1942, where he was assigned to the 7th Cavalry Division. He accompanied the Division as it deployed to Australia in mid-1943 and participated in three Amphibious Landings. McKnight was killed in action in February 1944 in the Battle of Manila in the Philippines while trying to give aid to a wounded soldier trapped in an open, exposed position. He was awarded the Silver Star for Gallantry in Action and was laid to rest at the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines.

Gary J. Lester- 25 Plano, Staff Sergeant, United States Marine Corps. Based at the former Naval Air Station Dallas, Lester was a Crew Chief with the 777th Marine Heavy Lift Helicopter Squadron flying on the CH-53 Sea Stallion. A veteran who deployed to the Persian Gulf during the fall of Tehran in 1978, Lester was deployed to the USS Guadalcanal LPH-7 to participate in a NATO exercise "Northern Wedding." On 14 September 1982, the Aircraft he was flying on, known as "Starship 402," suffered a catastrophic mechanical failure and crashed into the North Sea off the coast of Denmark after delivering its cargo on shore. The entire crew was lost and never recovered.



LT JG Billy F. Commons



FO Dana T. Mudd



1st Lt Floyd Earl White, Jr.



Capt Thomas E McKnight



SSGT Gary J. Lester