



IN THIS ISSUE

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 4
MAY 27, 2021

Legendary Ranger Receives Medal of Honor

3

First Woman Confirmed to be Army Secretary

4

Book Program

A History of Memorial Day

7



Chapter Highlights

Braxton Bragg
Eagle Chapters

8



Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville speaks with defense industry representatives on the exhibit floor during the 2019 AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition. (AUSA PHOTO)

In-person Annual Meeting takes shape

Relaxation of District of Columbia social distancing restrictions has allowed the Association of the U.S. Army to plan for a big, in-person Annual Meeting and Exposition this fall.

District officials lifted many restrictions on May 21, with plans for a full reopening in June.

"We are thrilled by this news, as it means AUSA can host our in-person Annual Meeting," the association said in a statement. "It's time to get back to business, and we can't wait to see you there."

The Annual Meeting is scheduled for Oct. 11–13 in the Walter E. Washington Convention Center.

Registration and housing will

open in July, with more details coming soon. Exhibit space and sponsorships are available.

For more information or updates, [click here](#). To reserve exhibit space, [click here](#).

The safety of attendees and exhibitors remains AUSA's top priority.

"Though some of the precautions we implement may no longer be required by local authorities, we will continue to evaluate our guidelines and create safety measures to make sure that everyone is comfortable attending this year's Annual Meeting," AUSA said in its statement.

The association also will monitor recommendations from local health authorities, the World Health Orga-

nization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

At this time, precautions include masks inside the convention center, enhanced sanitizing stations and cleaning protocols throughout the event, and signs on safety and health guidelines across the venue.

"We're thrilled to host our industry-leading event that will, at long last, reunite the community that allows us to achieve our mission of providing a voice for the Army, support for the soldier, and honoring those who have served, in order to advance the security of the nation," AUSA said. "We've missed you, and we look forward to welcoming you back to D.C. this October."



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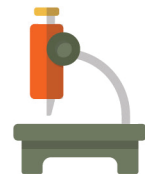
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Army Ranger receives ‘long overdue’ Medal of Honor

Retired Col. Ralph Puckett, a legendary and revered Army Ranger who fought in Korea and Vietnam, received the Medal of Honor May 21 during a ceremony at the White House.

President Joe Biden presented the 94-year-old Puckett with the nation's highest award for valor during a ceremony attended by South Korean President Moon Jae-in and other dignitaries.

Honored for his heroic actions more than 70 years ago during a vicious battle in the Korean War, Puckett is now one of the most highly decorated soldiers in U.S. history.

“Today we are hosting a true American hero and awarding an honor that is long overdue,” President Joe Biden said. “Today, after more than a decade of effort, I’m incredibly proud to give Col. Ralph Puckett’s acts of valor the full recognition they have always deserved.”

When Puckett heard the White House planned to host the Medal of Honor ceremony, his first response was, “Why all the fuss? Can’t they just mail it to me?” Biden said.

“Col. Puckett, after 70 years, rather than mail it to you, I would’ve walked it to you,” the president added. “Your lifetime of service to our nation I think deserves a little bit of fuss.”

Speaking with reporters, Puckett said he’s “certainly honored” to receive the Medal of Honor, but he insisted on giving credit to his soldiers.

They “did more than I asked, to do the best that they could in order to maintain our freedom,” Puckett said.

“It’s important for all of them to know that they’re the ones who did the job, they took the risk, they did the fighting, they suffered the worst,” Puckett said. “They’re the ones who deserve the credit, and I hope that they can get that.”

On Nov. 25–26, 1950, Puckett, then a first lieutenant and commander of the 8th Army Ranger Company, received orders to secure Hill 205, near



President Joe Biden presents the Medal of Honor to retired Col. Ralph Puckett for his actions more than 70 years ago during a vicious Korean War battle. (U.S. ARMY/SPC. XAVIERA MASLINE)

Unsan, Korea, and defend the critical position overlooking the Chongchon River, according to the Army.

When the soldiers approached Hill 205, they came under heavy enemy mortar, machine-gun and small-arms fire, according to the White House.

“To obtain supporting fire, First Lieutenant Puckett mounted the closest tank, exposing himself to the deadly enemy fire,” the White House said. “Leaping from the tank, he shouted words of encouragement to his men and began to lead the Rangers in the attack.”

Almost immediately, one platoon of Rangers was pinned down by enemy fire.

Puckett ran across an open area three times to draw enemy fire, allowing his fellow soldiers to find and destroy the enemy positions and seize Hill 205, according to the White House.

As the Rangers held the hill, enemy fighters launched a counterattack that lasted four hours.

Puckett continued to motivate his soldiers, and as a result, “five human wave attacks by a battalion strength enemy element were repulsed,” the White House said.

Puckett, wounded by grenade fragments, refused to be evacuated and continued to direct artillery support and repeatedly abandoned positions of relative safety to check on his troops, according to the White House.

When the enemy launched its sixth attack, two mortar rounds landed in Puckett’s foxhole, inflicting serious wounds that limited his mobility.

At the same time, Puckett realized the soldiers’ position was “untenable” because supporting artillery fire was unavailable.

“Knowing his men were in a precarious situation, First Lieutenant Puckett commanded the Rangers to leave him behind and evacuate the area,” according to the White House.

His Rangers refused. They instead moved to evacuate Puckett, while still under harassing fire from the enemy.

After 21 years of service, Puckett retired from active duty in 1971.

He remained active within the Army community and was an inaugural inductee into the U.S. Army Ranger Hall of Fame in 1992.

Puckett’s book, *Ranger: A Soldier’s Life*, part of the Association of the U.S. Army’s Book Program, tells the story of his service.

Wormuth confirmed as Army secretary



Christine Wormuth, front left, then the undersecretary of defense for policy, greets Command Sgt. Maj. Roger Parker in Kandahar, Afghanistan. (DOD/LT. KRISTINE VOLK)

The Senate on Thursday confirmed Christine Wormuth to be the next Army secretary, making her the first woman to lead the service.

Wormuth, a former undersecretary of defense for policy, had been endorsed for the job on Tuesday by the Senate Armed Services Committee.

“It has been the privilege of my career to work alongside and see firsthand the sacrifices soldiers and their families make, as well as everything they have achieved in answering the nation’s call, time and again,” Wormuth said during her confirmation hearing May 13.

“I could not be more humbled and proud to have the opportunity to serve as secretary of the Army and to ensure that we continue to provide the Army what it needs to succeed.”

A national security expert who most recently was director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at Rand Corp., Wormuth promised to be a “hands-on” leader who, if confirmed, would focus on taking care of people while making sure the Army has what it needs to fulfill its mission.

“I will be the strongest possible advocate for the Army inside the Pentagon and out,” she said.

During her testimony, Wormuth said the U.S. is at a “strategic inflection point,” more than at any time in her professional life.

“We have a window to make needed changes to ensure that the Army continues to be the best fighting force in the world, but that window will not be open indefinitely,” she said.

This is why the Army’s transformation must continue as it gears up for great-power competition, she said.

“Seeing these modernization programs through successfully, while also maintaining readiness to meet the demands of current operations will be a top priority for me, if confirmed,” she said.

Another priority is people, Wormuth said, from recruiting and retaining the best talent to taking care of soldiers and their families.

She pledged to make sure there is a “healthy command climate at every Army installation that fosters Army values and ensures the wellbeing of all our people.”

Also on Tuesday, the Senate Armed Services Committee advanced Gen. Paul LaCamera’s nomination to be the commanding general of U.S. Forces Korea. LaCamera, the current commander of U.S. Army Pacific, was confirmed by the Senate on Wednesday.

AUSAExtra

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Gen. Carter F. Ham, USA, Ret.
President and CEO, AUSA

Lt. Gen. Guy C. Swan III, USA, Ret.
Vice President, Education, AUSA

Luc Dunn
Editor

Desiree Hurlocker
Advertising Manager

Advertising Information Contact:
Fox Associates Inc.
116 W. Kinzie St. • Chicago, IL 60654
Phone: 800-440-0231
Email: adinfo.rmy@foxrep.com

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Retired Maj. Gen. Hemphill ‘got things done’ for soldiers

Retired Maj. Gen. John Hemphill, recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in Korea and a longtime volunteer leader with the Association of the U.S. Army, died May 21 at the age of 93.

Hemphill, who also served two combat tours in Vietnam, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for leading a counterattack against enemy forces near Chorwon, Korea, on April 17, 1953.

Despite being injured in both legs, then-1st Lt. Hemphill led the charge from Company I, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, until it was pinned down under heavy machine-gun fire.

“Realizing the consequences of a stalemate at that point in the action, Lieutenant Hemphill picked up a 3.5 rocket launcher and, disregarding all thoughts of personal safety, charged the machine gun bunker,” his citation



Maj. Gen. John Hemphill. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

says.

He fired the rocket from just 20 yards away, “scoring a direct hit” and destroying the enemy, the citation says. After he was wounded again, Hemphill refused evacuation and continued to direct the attack, moving from “bunker to bunker” to motivate his soldiers, the citation reads.

Hemphill’s other awards include two

Silver Stars, three Bronze Stars with V device and three Purple Hearts.

Within AUSA, his many leadership roles included president of the association’s Sixth Region, which covers northern California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington.

“General Hemphill got things done. The Captain Meriwether Lewis Memorial Park outside the main entrance to Joint Base Lewis-McChord stands because of his work,” AUSA said in a statement. “General Hemphill never slowed down, he was always looking for ways to get the word out on the value of AUSA membership.”

Hemphill, a 1951 West Point graduate and an AUSA member since 1956, was awarded the association’s Gen. Creighton W. Abrams Medal in 2008 for exceptional service to the Army.

“My motivation is the American soldier and their families,” Hemphill said in a 2013 article on www.northwestmilitary.com.

Army medic who earned Medal of Honor in Vietnam dies

Medal of Honor recipient retired Lt. Col. Charles Hagemeister, a combat medic credited with saving wounded soldiers during a fierce firefight in Vietnam, died May 19 in Leavenworth, Kansas.

He was 74.

Hagemeister, who at the time was a specialist fourth class after being drafted in 1966, was awarded the nation’s highest military honor for his actions on March 20, 1967, when his platoon was sent to secure the village of Tan An and prevent the escape of North Vietnamese regulars, according to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

The unit, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division, “suddenly came under heavy attack from three sides by an enemy force occupying well-concealed, fortified positions and supported by machine guns and mortars,” his award citation reads.

Seeing two of his comrades wounded, Hagemeister “unhesitatingly and with total disregard for his safety” ran through enemy fire to provide medical care. He continued to crawl onward after hearing that his platoon leader and other soldiers had been injured.

While providing treatment, a Vietnamese sniper targeted Hagemeister and the wounded soldiers.

“Hagemeister seized a rifle from a fallen comrade, killed the sniper, three other enemy soldiers who were attempting to encircle his position, and silenced an enemy machine gun that covered the area with deadly fire,” the citation says.

He then dashed back through more enemy fire to secure help from a nearby unit to evacuate the wounded men.

Hagemeister, who was an honorary life member of the Association of the U.S. Army, was presented the Medal of Honor by President Lyndon John-



Charles Hagemeister. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO)

son in May 1968. He retired from the Army as a lieutenant colonel in June 1990, according to the Medal of Honor society.

In a July 1968 interview with *Army Digest*, Hagemeister said, “The pressure of a crisis situation makes you realize what you’re made of. If you do your job and a little bit for somebody else, you’ll usually come through,” according to the Medal of Honor society.

Remembering and honoring the fallen on Memorial Day

By Joseph Craig

Along with millions of Americans, the Association of the U.S. Army's Book Program is preparing to observe Memorial Day on Monday.

The holiday was originally known as Decoration Day, which honored soldiers who died in the Civil War by decorating their graves with flowers. Local communities started this springtime tradition in the latter part of the 1860s.

Maj. Gen. John Logan, leader of the Grand Army of the Republic, a large and influential organization of former Union Army soldiers, formalized it when he called for a national day of remembrance on May 30, 1868.

Logan reportedly selected the date because it did not coincide with the anniversary of any Civil War battles.

That first Decoration Day featured a ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, where volunteers laid flowers upon the graves of Civil War soldiers—a tradition expanded and continued to the present day.

Book Program

The event was marked by a speech from Maj. Gen. James Garfield, who went on to become the 20th president of the U.S.

Logan also had a successful political career after the war, eventually becoming a senator and then the Republican candidate for vice president in 1884. His legacy of military service continued through his son John Alexander Logan Jr., an Army officer who received the Medal of Honor.

Over the years, the name "Memorial Day" gradually began to replace "Decoration Day," especially in the years after World War II, but the date remained May 30.

That changed with the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, which in 1971 moved Memorial Day—now a federal holiday—to the last Monday of May in order to create a three-day weekend.



The U.S. cemetery in Cambridge, England, is one of 24 American cemeteries overseas administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission. (COURTESY PHOTO)

Some have pushed for Memorial Day to return to the May 30 date, concerned that the day's status as the unofficial kickoff to summer detracts from the solemn nature of the holiday.

Sen. Daniel Inouye, a World War II

veteran and Medal of Honor recipient, introduced legislation for this change every year until his death in 2012.

One organization that keeps the focus rightly on the fallen is the American Battle Monuments Commission, created in 1923 to remember and honor American soldiers who fought and died in foreign wars by creating overseas monuments and cemeteries.

War and Remembrance: The Story of the American Battle Monuments Commission by Thomas Conner, part of the AUSA Book Program, tells the history of the agency that helps us remember those who died in combat across the world.

Back here in the U.S., please take some time this Memorial Day—whether at a parade, a cemetery, or at home—to reflect on the day's true meaning. The National Moment of Remembrance is at 3 p.m. local time.

Please visit www.ausa.org/books for more information on *War and Remembrance*.



An 1870 photograph by Charles Alfred Zimmerman shows a Decoration Day parade in St. Paul, Minnesota. (COMMONS PHOTO)

Joseph Craig is AUSA's Book Program Director.

Chapter supports donations to Fort Bragg military kids

In honor of the Month of the Military Child, which is celebrated every April, the Association of the U.S. Army's Braxton Bragg chapter recently partnered with the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the City of Fayetteville to deliver thousands of books, Gatorade and snacks to kids in the local community.

Cumberland County Schools and the Morale, Welfare and Recreation office at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, received the donations. The chapter paid for the transportation costs of the items.

Sixteen pallets were delivered—10 pallets of books to Fort Bragg and six pallets of books, Gatorade and snacks to the county schools.

During the deliveries, Fayetteville Mayor Mitch Colvin; Marvin Connelly Jr., superintendent of Cumberland County Schools; Braxton Bragg chapter president Ariel Aponte; and re-



Sixteen pallets were delivered—10 pallets of books to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and six pallets of books, Gatorade and snacks to Cumberland County. (AUSA PHOTO)

tired Maj. Gen. Rodney Anderson of the North Carolina Military Affairs Commission acknowledged the importance of the military child within the community, according to the chapter.

"Thanks to the many leaders, organizations and most importantly, the

children who were in attendance to receive the schoolbooks," the chapter said in a Facebook post.

Walter Gaskin, North Carolina DMVA secretary, delivered a proclamation from Gov. Roy Cooper at the Cumberland County Schools site.

Eagle Chapters

The following chapters attained Eagle status for April by showing positive membership growth. The number of consecutive months of growth since July 1, 2020, is shown in parentheses.

Fires (8)

Chattahoochee Valley-Fort Benning (7)

Alamo (6)

GEN John W. Vessey, Jr (6)

Mid-Palatinate (6)

Western New York (6)

Braxton Bragg (5)

Fort Leonard Wood-Mid Missouri (5)

Fort Rucker-Wiregrass (5)

MG Harry Greene, Aberdeen (5)

Arizona Territorial (4)

Catoctin (4)

Joshua Chamberlain (4)

Picatinny Arsenal-Middle Forge (4)

Dix (2)

Leonidas Polk (2)

GEN Creighton W. Abrams (1)

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