

Researcher says Hispanic-Americans usually ignored

Search for forgotten heroes

LAREDO — Homer Gallegos has spent the past three years in search of heroes, and he's found plenty among Hispanic-Americans.

Gallegos, 34, a Vietnam veteran working for the veterans outreach center in the border city, said he's just completed a study to compile the names and stories of Hispanic Medal of Honor winners. "History has a way of forgetting some of the people who have made it," Gallegos said.

So with some help from the American GI Forum, a Mexican-American veterans organization of which he's a member, Gallegos started his own quest to see that Hispanic heroes were not forgotten.

"I was reading Spanish publications and I noticed a lot of discrepancies," he said. "There was Miguel Hernandez Keith, who was never counted among Hispanic heroes. His last name comes from his stepfather, but nevertheless he's Mexican-American and he's excluded from a lot of Hispanic publications."

With that start, Gallegos went to the national archives in Washington, got leads from local congressmen, and started working up his list.

"I compared lists, started gathering my own, and little by little I built up a file," he said. "One list had 31 names. Then I compared it with another list that had 35 and put it together."

He found two Hispanic Medal of Honor winners in the Civil War — when the medal was first struck — one in the Boxer Rebellion, nine in Korea, 12 in World War II and 13 in Vietnam.

Notably missing from the list were Medal of Honor winners from World War I. Gallegos set about to find out why.

He said there was a mistrust of Mexico during World War I when relations were strained by the Pancho Villa raid in Columbus, N.M., and the Zimmerman Note from Germany proposing an alliance with Mexico.

"I found one report where the officer says, 'I can't

recommend this man for the Medal of Honor because he can't even speak English,'" Gallegos said.

Gallegos said he finished the study this year, when former Green Beret sergeant Roy Benavides of El Campo was awarded the Medal of Honor 12 years after the fact.

"I liked doing this because I love history," said Gallegos. "And I thought this would create an educational awareness. America is made up of a lot of immigrants who have contributed to the defense of democracy."

Gallegos said Hispanics traditionally have tended to approach military service with gusto.

"In our culture there's a tendency to go for the Marines, the airborne, the special forces," he said. "Some of us even catch a little of 'Oh, him, he went Air Force' or 'He went Navy.' There's a machismo instinct, I guess, and sometimes I think it's detrimental to us, because we did take heavy casualties."

He said he hoped his study would be as enlightening to Hispanics as it could be to others.

Officials plead for equipment

SAN ANTONIO — Bexar County Jail officials are pleading for updated medical equipment, but they acknowledge that their resuscitation equipment would not have helped a woman who committed suicide.

The woman, jailed since June 17 on a theft charge, tried to commit suicide early Saturday by hanging herself with a bed sheet. Resuscitation equipment failed when authorities tried to revive her. She has been in a coma since then.

Bexar County Jail Medical Director Dr. John Sparks appeared early Monday before the Bexar County Commissioners Court pleading for money for new jail medical equipment, said a woman apparently suffered permanent brain damage from a lack of oxygen.

During an interview after the commissioners court hearing, Sparks said having state-of-the-art resuscitation equipment "would have made no difference" for the woman because she had been without oxygen for at least five minutes prior to being discovered by the jail nurse.

"Apparently, she was without oxygen long enough to cause brain damage," Sparks said.

Texas Briefs

Fruit flies

AUSTIN — The governor has issued a proclamation calling for inspection of all California produce entering Texas in order to check for the Mediterranean Fruit Fly.

Gov. Bill Clements said Monday he issued the proclamation because California leaders failed to act forcefully to halt any spread of pesky insect.

Although the proclamation does not call for a quarantine, it would allow state officials to inspect California produce entering the state to see if it had been approved under federal quarantine procedures.

Escapee caught

MCKINNEY — A man who escaped from the Collin County Jail during the weekend, and his girlfriend who is believed to have aided the escape of four inmates, has been arrested in Springfield, Ill.

Springfield authorities notified Collin County Sheriff Joe Steenberg they had arrested Thomas William Bell, 23, and his girlfriend, Peggy Mooney. Both are being held on \$100,000 bond pending extradition to Texas.

Steenberg said Mooney helped in the escape Friday of the four inmates, one of whom was recaptured Sunday in Louisiana. Steenberg also said another escapee, Phillip James Followell, 22, is from Springfield and authorities believe he is in the area.

Pilot injured

HOUSTON — Authorities report a helicopter pilot suffered head injuries in the crash of his chopper into a parking lot between a motel and a nine-story office building.

Doctors said Kenneth Riebling, 33, an employee of Power Air Helicopters Inc., was the only person aboard the Bell Jet Ranger helicopter early Monday when it crashed on takeoff. He was in stable condition Monday.

A witness said the helicopter pilot tried twice to safely land the chopper between the buildings but it went into several spins and hit both structures.

Redistricting

AUSTIN — The vice president sees nothing wrong with proposed congressional redistricting plans that would increase the number of Republicans representing Texas in Washington.

Vice President George Bush, in the state Monday to campaign for passage of President Reagan's tax cut proposals, was asked at a news conference about Republican strategy pushed by Gov. Bill Clements to create a black congressional district in Dallas that also would have the effect of giving Republicans a majority in at least one previously Democratic district.

Trip planned

SAN ANTONIO — Phil Hardberger plans to cross the Atlantic in four days in honor of the Canary Islanders who founded San Antonio.

He said it took the Canary Islanders about 365 days to complete the rugged trip. He said his trip is a "gesture of friendship" to the people of Spain.

The attorney will pilot a single-engine Beechcraft plane on a solo 7,000-mile trek in honor of the Canary Islanders who eventually founded San Antonio. He plans to take off early Wednesday.



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