

# Museum News

Sep 2014



## Kent State Shooting Current Special Exhibit

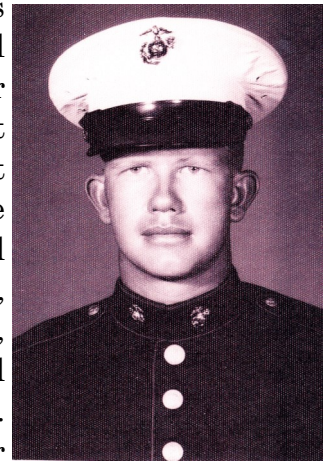
The Visitor Center is hosting a special exhibit on the Kent State shooting. It will be on display until June 6, 2015.

The exhibit was created by Charles Thompson a museum volunteer. Charles Graduated from Gordon, Texas High School in 1962; BS from Weatherford College and West Texas A&M, BS from Tarleton State, MBA from Midwestern State. Like thousands of college students of the time when Charles Thompson graduated from college he lost his 2S deferment and was drafted. He completed Basic Training at Fort Polk Louisiana, and Advance Infantry Training at Fort Ord California. Mr. Thompson had applied for Office Candidate School (OCS) in Basic Training, but when he declined the Infantry Branch, the Army sent him to Vietnam. Charles landed in Vietnam on July 4, 1968 and was assigned to a Big Red One unit, Company, A 2nd Battalion 16th Infantry. After Vietnam he received a Compassion Reassignment to 3rd Officer Student Company Fort Wolters Texas. General George Patton Jr. was a student in 3rd OSC while Charles Thompson was assigned to the company as permanent party. Charles Retired from active Duty on 31 December 1983 with 26 years of

## Christmas at the Wall December 20

Our next major event is Christmas at the wall. It is planned for December 20 at 5:00 pm and will honor Homer Lee Hodges, Jr. and his family.

Homer was born in Mineral Wells, Tx October 11, 1945. He went to Vietnam August 8, 1968 as a Lance Corporal assigned to K Company, 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines, 3rd Marine Division. On 9 September



1968, while directing his men in an assault on a large enemy force in Quang Tri Province, Lance Corporal Hodges observed that his platoon sergeant was wounded and pinned down in a bomb crater by a heavy volume of enemy fire. Completely disregarding his own safety, he unhesitatingly exposed himself to the accurate hostile fire as he maneuvered across the fire-swept terrain to aid his comrade. After administering first aid to his Platoon Sergeant and observing nearby marines attempting to gain an advantageous position on the slope of the hill, Lance

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## Founders Association

New Founders this issue are **Bill McCurry and James & Pat Johnson**. There's still time for you to join. Send a check or credit card info to PO Box 146, Mineral Wells, TX 76068. \$1,000 or more gets you on the list. The Founders are people who share our vision for building The National Vietnam War Museum.

## Christmas at the Wall Concluded

Corporal Hodges boldly left the bomb crater to resume leading his men in the assault. Undaunted by the intense enemy fire, he fearlessly moved throughout the hazardous area, shouting words of encouragement to his men and leading them forward, until he was mortally wounded. By his courage, bold initiative and unwavering devotion to duty, Lance Corporal Hodges inspired all who observed him and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life in the service of his country. Action Date: September 9, 1968. He was awarded the Silver Star posthumously for this action. He can be found on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall at Panel 44, Line 10.

## Volunteer Banquet

Next years volunteer banquet is planned for January 24, 2015 at Tucker Red's in Willow Park. Final details will be in the January newsletter, but if you are a volunteer, get it on your calendar. If you want to be a volunteer and be eligible for the luncheon, now is the time to come in and volunteer. The "Top Ten" will be recognized (based on total hours)

## Kent State Exhibit

combined Active/ Reserve Duty.

Like thousands of other Vietnam soldiers, sailors and Marine he was affected by Agent Orange and draws a disability. Charles' future wife, Billie Jean Whitaker, was a secretary at 3rd OSC, Fort Wolters Texas.

Charles and Billie have a son and a daughter.

Charles spend his retirement time operating a hobby internet radio station, [www.RADIOKVMW.com](http://www.RADIOKVMW.com), and volunteers at Palo Pinto General Hospital in addition to the museum.

The exhibit consists of 30 framed photographs depicting the Kent State Shooting, also known as "The Kent State Massacre" that occurred on May 4, 1970 at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. It involved the killing of four and wounding of nine Kent State students by the Ohio National Guard during a campus anti-war demonstration.

## Coming Events

**September 27** The Billie Y Clark Memorial 8-hour Run From the Ducks Sponsored and hosted by Clark Gardens in conjunction with M-PAK, Inc. See <http://www.clarkgardens.org/events/run-from-the-ducks.html>

**October 11** Crazy Water Festival, Mineral Wells Texas.

**December 20** Christmas at the Wall, 5:00 pm at the museum

## Southern Airways Memorial Dedicated August 30

At 3:00 pm Saturday, August 30, the Southern Airways Association was scheduled to dedicate a memorial to Southern Airways. This newsletter went to print before the event, so I can only tell you what was planned. Look for the results in the January issue.

There is a copy of the artists concept of part of the memorial on the back page. In addition to that stone, there is a large rock with crossed rotor blades and two plaques reproduced on this page.

### History of Southern Airways of Texas

In the mid-1950's, the U.S. Army awarded a training contract for the establishment of the Army Primary Helicopter School to Southern Airways Company of Birmingham, Alabama. The contract itself was very broad-based and included primary helicopter flight training, pilot ground school, aircraft maintenance, simulator training, transportation, cafeteria and food services. After winning the contract, Southern Airways Company moved into Camp Wolters, Texas in August 1956, under Raymond L. Thomas, President. The first class began in November and it graduated in April 1957.

In February 1964, Southern Airways Company was incorporated into Southern Airways of Texas and by August 1965, more than 1,000,000 flight training hours had been accumulated. The second 1,000,000 flight hours was accomplished by July 1967 at which time the company had grown to more than 3200 employees. At its peak, more than 500 flight instructors and maintenance test pilots were employed to fly approximately 1200 various helicopter makes & models including the Hiller OH-23, Hughes TH-55, Bell OH-13 and OH-58. Prior to Fort Wolters closing in February 1973, more than 5,600,000 flight hours had been flown with more than 40,000 student pilots.

**"Above the Finest"** was the motto for U.S. Army Aviation and Southern Airways was instrumental in the enormous effort to fulfill that goal. Southern had a huge effect on Army Aviation for many years to come.

The local area offered superior terrain and weather for such a monumental undertaking and the support of not only the city of Mineral Wells, but the entire population from Palo Pinto and Parker Counties, Texas made this achievement possible.

### The mission of the museum is:

To promote an understanding  
of the Vietnam era  
while honoring those who served.

## Happenings at the Museum

**Final Report on Eagle Scout McNay's Project** - August 30 at 10:00 the marker for Andrew's project will be dedicated. The bridge was completed weeks ago, but the marker had to be ordered, and Andrew wanted to plan a ceremony honoring those who helped him. Sorry we couldn't get this out in time for you to attend.

**New irrigation system** - A new drip irrigation system is scheduled for completion this month that will serve the Semper Fi Garden and Navy Garden as they are completed. Additional portions were prepared for development of the other three service gardens (Air Force, Army, and Coast Guard which are awaiting members of those services to begin.

**Semper Fi Garden** - Plans for completing this garden are being put into place this month. Funds have been located, volunteers are waiting for some cooler days to do the planting and the basic irrigation system is ready.

**Navy Garden** - The marker for the 74 sailors lost in the sinking of the Frank E. Evans is out of the print shop and should be installed soon (this year). Then plans can be developed for plantings and other items.

### Dedication

Men and women gather in reunion because they yearn to be with those who gave their very best. We did not pick these co-workers, they were delivered by fate.

This site is dedicated September 2014 to the employees of Southern Airways of Texas who did give their very best to train U.S. Army aviators. 1956-1973 Fort Wolters, Texas

#### DONATED BY:

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# *Southern Airways Memorial Artists Concept*

