

Afghanistan - Iraq Memorial Wall for Texas

The first Wall was completed in four and one-half months. Researching the internet for the names and pictures required three and one-half months and then another month to create the Wall. There were 602 names and pictures on the Wall at this time. Since then another fourteen fallen heroes have to be added for a total of 616 from the State of Texas. In research, I read all the write-ups that went with the names for the 602. I have since then, built a database on my computer for all 7,015 Fallen Heroes and have read all the write-ups for them. With the database, I am able to print out a list by state, city, age, rank, or gender. Yes, this country has 7,015 Fallen Heroes since September 11, 2001, but millions more that are still alive that also should be honored. The Wall is only the beginning. These are the Ones that paid the Ultimate Sacrifice. There is a saying: "ALL GAVE SOME; SOME GAVE ALL." The Wall displays the "SOME GAVE ALL". It is up to each one of us who make up the "ALL GAVE SOME" and not to forget what they have done for us.

I heard about a similar Wall that was being displayed while traveling for The American Legion. I drove about 800 miles that weekend and all I thought about was how important that Wall must be to the families of the Fallen Heroes. Before I got home that weekend, I had decided to build my own Wall and travel around the State of Texas to display our Fallen Heroes so they would not be forgotten. The news will provide a number of Fallen Heroes but when you can see their names and pictures it makes an impression on those that they do not forget.

I have now built four Walls for the State of Texas and one for the State of Arkansas. The Texas's Wall has been displayed all over the State of Texas at colleges, city events, and on holidays. I have met several of the Fallen Heroes' families while displaying the Wall. They ask, "Why did you do this?" My reply is, "So they are not forgotten." This is the main reason. The second reason is so our youth understand who the real heroes are today. It is not that \$8 million quarterback that only plays for the money. The real heroes are on the Wall and the ones that are still alive that protects us.

I served in the United States Coast Guard for 20 years. During those 20 years, I was stationed all over the country and was required to perform many different jobs. Being on flood relief in St. Louis, MO, was probably the most rewarding job. Going out in a small boat at night and rescuing people from the flood waters. It is difficult to explain your feelings when you save the lives of a complete family at 2 am but that is the same feeling that I have when displaying the Wall. It is an honor and a privilege to be able to present Our Fallen Heroes to the public. I have received many "thanks" not only from the families of Our Fallen Heroes; but from all the other visitors to the Wall.

The Wall is a reminder of the price of Our Freedom as a nation and as individuals.

Jeff Perkins
Past Commander
Department of Texas