

# 2006 Hall of Heroes Inductees

## Short Bios

**HARVEY E. STEWART**  
**DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS**  
**SOLDIERS MEDAL**  
**BRONZE STAR MEDAL WITH VALOR**  
**AIR MEDAL WITH VALOR (3 AWARDS)**

Harvey Stewart is a native Alabamian who enlisted in the U.S. Army in December 1945. After being discharged he attended Jacksonville State University and was commissioned in the United States Army in 1951. That same year he served in the Korean War.

Major Stewart distinguished himself on June 10th 1965 while serving in the Republic of Vietnam. On that date a Vietnamese hamlet was over-ran by a regimental size force of Viet Cong and a nearby military compound came under intense enemy fire. Several attempts to reinforce the compound failed and a decision was made to evacuate the troops holding the position. Major Stewart volunteered to lead a rescue group through a heavy volume of hostile fire and once on the ground established defensive firing positions and began loading the besieged troops into his evacuation aircraft. One of the rescue helicopters received direct hits, which caused damage so severe the craft had to be abandoned. Major Stewart then piloted his overloaded and battle damaged helicopter back through the murderous barrage and successfully effected the safe evacuation of the compound defenders.

For his extraordinary heroism Major Stewart was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, our nations second highest award for heroism.

While serving in Vietnam in 1965, Major Stewart was alerted to the cries of five Vietnamese civilians, who were swimming, being washed out to sea. Without regard for his own safety he rushed into the rough waters and despite an extreme undercurrent he personally rescued two of the victims. He then administered artificial respiration to one of the victims restoring the stricken individuals breathing.

For his unselfish act of bravery Major Stewart was awarded the Soldiers Medal.

On June 12th 1965, Major Stewart distinguished himself by heroic action with the 118th Aviation Battalion while serving in Vietnam. On that date Major Stewart was advised of an Air Force pilot who had bailed out of his aircraft in enemy held territory. With complete disregard for his personal safety Major Stewart landed his helicopter in the vicinity of the crash site. Spotting the pilot, who appeared to be deceased, Major Stewart moved closer but was wounded by enemy small arms fire. Major Stewart returned to his aircraft and despite his injuries, insisted on returning to the co-pilots seat and led his company in an assault into the area. Only after the mission was complete did Major Stewart allow his wounds to be treated.

For his heroic action on that date Major Stewart was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with valor.

On June 10th, 1965 Major Stewart distinguished himself while commanding a battalion lift force airlifting relief forces into a besieged hamlet in the Republic of Vietnam. On that date, with complete disregard for his personal safety, he attempted to affect the rescue of a helicopter that had crashed in the landing zone after receiving enemy fire. His own aircraft was heavily damaged yet he continued the rescue attempt until the stricken aircraft on the ground exploded. Major Stewart then made numerous firing passes over the area to assist the besieged ground force until his fuel situation became so critical he had to depart the area.

For his heroism while participating in aerial flight Major Stewart was awarded the Air Medal with Valor.

In July of 1970 Lieutenant Colonel Stewart distinguished himself on two occasions while serving as a Senior Advisor with the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. Colonel Stewart directed the capture of an enemy weapons cache and the insertion of troops into the area. One of the insertion aircraft crashed into the jungle and Colonel Stewart, with total disregard for his personal safety, directed his aircraft over the treetops to establish effective command and control of the ground situation. His decisive actions saved the lives of many South Vietnamese soldiers.

For his heroism while participating in aerial flight Colonel Stewart was awarded his second and third Air Medals with Valor.

Harvey Stewart was also decorated with two Purple Heart Medals... for being twice wounded during his service in Vietnam. He retired with the rank of Colonel in 1975 after serving for more than twenty-eight years.

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**THOMAS A. KAHLERT  
DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS  
AIR MEDAL WITH VALOR**

Thomas A. Kahlert has lived in Huntsville since 1986. He attended Gordon Military College then completed his college work in 1968 at the University of Georgia where he was selected as the ROTC Distinguished Military Graduate.

On January 7th of 1971 First Lieutenant Kahlert was serving as a crewmember of a reconnaissance aircraft in the Republic of Vietnam when another aircraft on the same mission came under heavy fire. With complete disregard for his own safety, he engaged the enemy with smoke rockets, which drew the enemy fire away from the embattled aircraft. He continued the dangerous mission by making low passes and pinpointing the enemy position while under heavy enemy fire. This action allowed US fighter aircraft to engage and destroy the enemy forces on the ground.

For his heroism while participating in aerial flight Thomas Kahlert was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

On the 14th of January 1971 Thomas Kahlert was piloting a reconnaissance aircraft in support of operations in Vietnam. Alerted to an emergency distress signal sent by a US Army Ranger team, Lieutenant Kahlert responded. Some two hours after locating the stricken Ranger team Lieutenant Kahlert observed enemy forces attempting to surround the team who were waiting for rescue helicopters to arrive. He skillfully attacked the enemy force and his accurate fire caused the enemy to withdraw. Upon arrival of the rescue helicopters lieutenant Kahlert directed the extraction and the team was saved.

For heroism while engaged in aerial flight Thomas Kahlert was awarded the Air Medal with Valor.

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**WILLIAM E. PEDIGO**  
**DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS**  
**BRONZE STAR MEDAL WITH VALOR**

William E. Pedigo has lived in Huntsville since 1994. He graduated high school from the Kentucky Military Institute in 1956 and enlisted in the army in 1957. While serving as a sergeant in the reserve components he entered the ROTC program at Western Kentucky University and received his commission in 1963.

From September through December of 1969 Captain Pedigo was assigned to the 184th Reconnaissance Airplane Company as pilot of an Army O1 Birdog in support of classified operations of the MAGVSOG in Vietnam. These missions frequently required slow flight at tree top level in an attempt to locate enemy units on the Ho Chi Minh trail. On more than one occasion, Captain Pedigo's aircraft was hit by enemy fire. These out-of-country flights were conducted in areas where no support from allied forces was readily available and any downed pilot would be left to his own survival skills.

For his heroism while participating in aerial flight Captain Pedigo was awarded the

Distinguished Flying Cross.

In December of 1967, Captain Pedigo was commander of A-334 of the 5th Special Forces Group, Republic of Vietnam. While leading a patrol on a search and destroy mission the patrol located and destroyed a large quantity of enemy supplies and shortly thereafter was attacked by a large North Vietnamese force. Organizing a defensive perimeter, he repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire while directing the fire of his patrol and calling in artillery support. As a result of his actions, the patrol survived the attack and casualties were minimized.

For his heroic actions Captain Pedigo was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor.

He retired from the army in 1989 after 32 years of service with the rank of Colonel.

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### **THOMAS W. DUNN**

#### **BRONZE STAR MEDAL WITH VALOR**

Thomas W. Dunn is a native Alabamian and was raised in Huntsville. Living in Huntsville, his family moved to Colbert County for a temporary job of three months and during their stay Tom was born prematurely and only weighed 1 pound 4 ounces at birth. In 1963 he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps at age 17.

On January 20th 1970, while serving with the First Marine Division in the Republic of Vietnam, Staff Sergeant Thomas W. Dunn coordinated a joint unit operation of US Marines and South Koreans in the search of a tunnel complex that was reported to be occupied by Viet Cong cadre. Upon locating the enemy tunnel site he observed an enemy soldier entering a cave. He fearlessly approached the cave entrance and demanded the soldier's surrender. Three enemy soldiers emerged from the cave and were captured by Staff Sergeant Dunn. Unwilling to risk the lives of his comrades, Staff Sergeant Dunn then entered the cave alone to search for additional enemy forces. In his search he located vast quantities of enemy grenades and ammunition, all of which were destroyed by allied forces. SSGT Dunn, 3rd CIT, continued to distinguish himself by his exemplary performance of duty which was instrumental in the apprehension of several important members of the Viet Cong Infrastructure, the destruction of two major Viet Cong headquarters, and the neutralization of enemy attempts to control the local populace.

For his heroic actions Thomas W. Dunn was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor.

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### **VERNON L. FORSBURG**

#### **BRONZE STAR MEDAL WITH VALOR**

Vernon L. Forsberg enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1944 at age 17. He is a veteran of World War II, having participated in the battle for Okinawa and the occupation of China. Re-called to duty at the start of the Korean War, Vern served with the 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division.

On December 8th, 1950 PFC Forsburg was acting as a fire team leader when his squad came under intense hostile fire and suffered heavy casualties. Seeing one his men laying severely wounded in an exposed position, and noting that all corpsmen had been wounded, PFC Forsburg moved forward from cover and administered life saving aid to his fallen comrade. Heedless of the hostile fire directed at him, he exposed his hands in the sub-zero cold to more effectively treat the wounds of his fellow Marine.

For his heroic actions on that date he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor.

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### **JUDSON WALKER BRONZE STAR MEDAL WITH VALOR**

Retired Chief Warrant Officer 4 Judson Walker was born in Brownsville, Tennessee and entered service from Brooklyn, New York in 1965. He retired in 1993 after serving 26 years on active duty.

On February 7th 1967 Judson Walker distinguished himself by heroic action in the Republic of Vietnam. On that date his unit was attacked by Viet Cong forces causing several casualties. Specialist 4 Walker, a machine gunner in the third platoon, was seriously wounded by enemy fire. Despite his wounds, for which he refused treatment and with complete disregard for his own personal safety, he crawled to his machine gun and returned fire so effectively the Viet Cong attack was broken.

For his heroic actions he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor.

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### **MICHAEL J. ROGERS AIR MEDAL WITH VALOR**

Michael Rogers was born at Fort Clayton, Panama Canal Zone and enlisted in the U. S. Army in 1965 at Yuma, Arizona.

Specialist Five Rogers distinguished himself by heroic actions on January 5, 1968 in the Republic of Vietnam while serving with the 1st Aviation Brigade.

Specialist Rogers volunteered to fly on a mission to provide coverage for the crew of an aircraft downed by enemy fire. As his aircraft arrived over the position of the disabled helicopter, his helicopter began receiving automatic weapons and rocket fire from numerous enemy positions. During the course of the mission, Specialist Rogers maintained accurate machinegun fire on the enemy. Through his courage and determination, he greatly aided in the defeat of the North Vietnamese forces.

For his heroism while participating in aerial flight Specialist Rogers was awarded the Air Medal with Valor.

Specialist Rogers was also awarded a Purple Heart Medal for wounds received during his service in Vietnam.

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## **MARK V. BURNS**

### **ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL WITH VALOR**

Mark V. Burns is a native of Huntsville and is currently serving with the Alabama Army National Guard.

On April 18th 2004 Specialist Mark V. Burns was assigned to a .50 caliber machine gun position overlooking a four-lane road at the front gate of Camp Golf in Najaf, Iraq. Just after midnight his team observed small arms fire coming from a rooftop 400 meters away. Friendly coalition forces occupied the building being fired upon. Specialist Burns and his team engaged the enemy with their M-16 rifles and the .50 caliber machine gun. This caused the enemy to shift their fire away from the original target and against Specialist Burns position. After directing a barrage of heavy fire against the enemy rooftop position, Specialist Burns team began receiving fire from another element of enemy forces on the ground. Again, Specialist Burns and his team returned fire and after several minutes both enemy positions were neutralized.

For his heroic action Mark V. Burns was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with Valor.

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