



*Members of the East Texas Arboretum's board of directors gather along with volunteers and staff at the veterans memorial, which is to be dedicated at the arboretum in Athens beginning at 11:30 a.m. Nov. 11. The public is encouraged to attend.*

Story & photos by  
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# WITH ETERNAL GRATITUDE

**WHEN DOUG TANNER WENT** into the service in February of 1943, he and his friends “didn’t know a silly thing,” he said. “But we all loved our country. That we knew.” And so they went; they fought, and many did not return.

It’s that kind of patriotism and service — not only in wartime but in peacetime as well — that is being honored at the remarkable Henderson County Veterans Memorial. Well over 9,000 names, both men and women, have been painstakingly collected and engraved on stone slabs that stretch out like open arms. The 7-foot granite rectangles are set into 12-foot-high red brick walls gently curving out from an elevated, solid bronze eagle at the center. The memorial is a thing of austere beauty at the East Texas Arboretum & Botanical Society in Athens.

Tanner (shown above in plaid shirt on far right) is now 90 years old. From 1943 until 1946 he served as a member of the Army’s 740th Tank Battalion, seeing combat at Cologne, Germany; in the Ardennes Forest; and at the Battle of the Bulge. The 740th, known as the Daredevil Tankers, assisted with the liberation of Belgium. Among his many post-war accomplish-

ments, Tanner acted as the Arboretum’s first president and remains today a board member. His name is among the thousands engraved on the memorial’s walls.

“I’m so honored to be a part of this project,” said Arboretum Executive Director Teresa Glasgow (shown front, right). “It makes me emotional to think about. It’s been worth all the work.”

Glasgow is hard at work organizing the dedication ceremony for the memorial wall that will take place on Veterans Day, Monday, November 11 beginning at 11:30 a.m. A number of dignitaries are expected along with events throughout the day. A strong public turnout is encouraged.

“The memorial is an accumulation of all the effort we’ve put into this place,” said Bob McDonald, another founding member of the arboretum and a board member. “We take a lot of pride in it and feel like it’s something the county needed.”

McDonald, who was stationed in Germany with the Army’s 2nd Armored Division during the





*Over 9,000 names of men and women dating from the Civil War to present day have been engraved on granite slabs.*

Korean War, said he and others hope the memorial will stand as a testament to patriotism and love of country. Perhaps less obvious but just as significant, the memorial is a testament to what a relatively small group of volunteers and a limited staff can accomplish.

“The volunteer effort put into researching and accumulating all the names on the wall was supreme,” said McDonald (shown second from left, back row). “We searched through books, all the archives in the Athens Review and publicized the search for two months.”

The idea was conceived in June 2012, and just four months later construction began. As of July 4 this year, more than 9,000 names had been collected of veterans who served from the Civil War to the present day. (“The Civil War was the easiest to get names for,” noted McDonald.) The names appear under the headings: Civil War, Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Iraq/Afghanistan Wars and Also Served. Names are listed alphabetically, except for those added after the initial engraving.

“If someone belongs on the wall, we’ll get them there eventually,” said McDonald. “It’ll just take a while.” Those who are eligible are veterans who went to

school in, registered in or were born in Henderson County. Before submitting a name for consideration, first visit the wall itself or the arboretum’s website to see if the name is already listed. If not, names can be submitted online at [easttexasarboretum.org](http://easttexasarboretum.org) or by sending the pertinent information to Veterans Memorial, PO Box 2231, Athens, TX 75751.

Not only has the memorial’s creation required a great deal of energy, it has also required a great deal of funding. “The Cain Foundation was a major donor, but many members of the public helped make it happen,” said Glasgow. “We’ve had a lot of financial support from the community. Every 5-, 10- and 15-dollar donation is greatly appreciated.”

Glasgow points out that the cost of upkeep, insurance premiums and future name engravings is significant and ongoing. “It cost over \$1,000 to add 30 names recently,” she said. “We’ll be doing that forever. So donations toward this project are always welcome.”

“It warms my heart to see something like this,” said Tanner after visiting the memorial. “I think it’s one of the greatest things in the arboretum.”

Or, we might add, anywhere in Henderson County.

*To learn more about the arboretum, the memorial or the Nov. 11 dedication ceremony, call 903-675-5630 or visit [easttexasarboretum.org](http://easttexasarboretum.org).*

