



WEDNESDAY
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VET HONORS

Photos of PVVH alumni who have served or are currently in the armed forces are sought. Donated photos may be dropped off at the PVVH school office or mailed to Pauls Valley High School, attention: Mike Moore, 642 South 2nd, Pauls Valley, OK 74363.

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Col. Burks shares war experiences

By Ezra Mann
Staff Writer

Honor and glory may accompany the tales of war, but it is only the shine placed upon the truth of blood, death and perseverance.

No one in Garvin County may realize this more than Pauls Valley resident Col. John R. Burks (Ret.), a man who saw more than most in three of America's biggest wars. He relates these experiences in his autobiographical book, "A Fair Share of War" released at the beginning of the month with memories of World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Though he was born in Tulsa, Burks, 87, said he considers himself a native of Wynnewood where he graduated high school in 1940. Throughout a little over 33 years from 1942



Pauls Valley Resident Col. John R. Burks (Ret.) takes a moment to reflect on medals received during 33 & 1/2 years of service to the army with the release of his book "A Fair Share of War." (PVDD photo by Ezra Mann)

to 1976 he filled various assignments from the army air core, a position at the Pentagon to army field artillery.

"I'm the only surviving member of my B-24 crew, the 'Lucky Dog,'" said Burks. "I'm grateful for the opportunity to

have served with them and grateful to be back home amongst old Garvin County friends."

Burks said his book

not only serves as a testament of his experience in battle, but of his career which included

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Experiences

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plenty of education and advancement. He decided to publish the book, which will most likely be the only one he writes, after friends from the area encouraged him and much of what became the book was what he wrote as far back as the 1980s on legal pads.

"The book as it appears today is the result of the efforts of many offering encouragement and pointing out the necessity of letting others know what took place during that 33 years," said Burks. "The majority of my experiences in the military are positive... I have to attribute my successes to their friendship and their influence on my life."

After serving in the military and being stationed in at posts including Ft. Leavenworth, processing refugees along the western-European border during the Cold War to Hawaii, Burks said he decided on Pauls Valley as his retirement home. After retiring from the army, he spent a year managing the Pauls Valley Chamber of Commerce and then several years as a bank loan officer at the First National Bank of Pauls Valley.

Burks said he even



Pauls Valley Resident Col. John R. Burks (Ret.) proudly shows his first book "A Fair Share of War," which came out at the beginning of the month. Burks book follows years of service that include WWII, Korea and Vietnam. (PVDD photo by Ezra Mann)

had a chance to see some of the great battlefields of the past like Iwo Jima in 2002, now almost 65 years since the invasion in 1945.

Having served in WWII, Brooks is a part of a dwindling group of surviving veterans and according to the Department of Veteran Affairs out of the estimated 16.1 million service members during that period, only 2.3 million were still alive at the end of 2009 with that number expected to decrease to

1.5 million by 2012. The numbers are even more somber when one considers that Burks is only one of six from Garvin County who served in all three conflicts and one of 645 in WWII.

"There aren't many families that don't have experience and some understanding of why these things took place... I want my own children and grandchildren to understand why the burdens were placed the way they were," said Burks.

"It comes down to the adventure of aerial combat in WWII, coldness of Korea in the 1950s and the desolation of Vietnam in the 1960s."

For those who wish to buy a copy of the book they can do so at online retailers like Amazon or at a book signing that will be held Saturday from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at the Nora Sparks Warren Memorial Library in town. Copies, published by Outskirts Press Inc. will be available there for \$20.