

*The
Kerr County Historical Commission
presents*

An ORAL HISTORY

of

RAUL "ROCKY" HERNANDEZ JR.

Kerrville, Texas 2017

Kerr County Historical Commission

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: RAUL "ROCKY" HERNANDEZ JR.

Interviewers: Francelle Robison Collins
Bonnie Pipes Flory

Date: November 14, 2017

Place: Kerr County Courthouse
Kerrville, Texas

*The Oral History Project is a project of
The Kerr County Historical Commission,
a volunteer organization. Oral History
Committee chair is Francelle Robison Collins.*

Transcribed and Edited by Kelli K. Collins

Kerr County Historical Commission

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Name: RAUL RAFAEL (ROCKY) HERNANDEZ JR.

Date of Birth: December 22, 1941

Place of Birth: Mission, Texas

Education: Tivy High School, Kerrville
University of Houston

Father: Raul Rafael Hernandez
Mother: Otila Zamora

Spouse: Alexis Hernandez

Children: Nick Hernandez
Gena Hernandez Courtney

SUMMARY

Rocky was born in Mission, Texas and moved to Kerrville with his family when he was in the sixth grade. After high school graduation he went to the University of Houston on a full football scholarship where he joined ROTC and upon graduation he fulfilled his obligation in the Army. While in the Army he was sent to Vietnam where he was an Officer in the elite Rangers and led his battalion on a few missions. During one of the missions someone stepped on a landmine and Rocky was severely injured and ended up getting out of the Army. While in the Army he received numerous awards and medals including the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. He then went to work for Exxon until he got the chance to take over his parents Mexican Food Restaurant with his brother Joe. After working there for several years, he moved to Austin with his wife Alexis and opened another restaurant there. Rocky and Alexis are now retired and still living in Austin and enjoying their three grandsons.

An Oral History of

RAUL RAFAEL (ROCKY) HERNANDEZ JR.

My name is Francelle Robison Collins and I am with the Kerr County Historical Commission, Oral History Project. Today is November 14, 2017, and I am here at the Kerr County Courthouse in Kerrville, Texas, with Bonnie Pipes Floury. We are talking with Rocky Hernandez, who understands that we are making audio and video recordings of this interview and that a typewritten transcript of this interview will be provided so that changes can be made. The audio and video tapes, however, cannot be edited. This information along with copies of any family pictures and documents provided by you will then be turned over to the Kerr Regional History Center, Schreiner University, and the University of North Texas' Portals to Texas History, where they will be available to the public unless specific restrictions are placed on them by you. These restrictions will be noted in the Release form after you have had a chance to review your manuscript. Are you clear on what we are doing today?

FRANCELLE: What is your given name, please?

ROCKY: My given name is Raul Rafael Hernandez Jr.

FRANCELLE: We all know you by Rocky. How did you get that nickname?

ROCKY: It was here in Kerrville during my first year playing Little League. My coach was a guy by the name of Ken Liljedahl and I was on first base and he had me steal second and as I slid into second the catcher threw the ball and it hit me in the head. So he comes running out and he rubs my head and he says, "Don't you worry, your heads as hard as a rock," and from that point on, everybody starting calling me Rocky, and it just picked up from there and I still go by Rocky.

FRANCELLE: I remember him, he was a nice man. When and where were you born?

ROCKY: I was born in Mission, Texas on December 22, 1941. We lived there until 1954 when we moved to Kerrville.

FRANCELLE: Where you born at home or in a hospital?

ROCKY: I was born in a doctor's office, I believe.

FRANCELLE: What was your father's name?

ROCKY: Raul Rafael Hernandez. Both my father and my mother worked for the State Hospital at Moore Field which was an Air Force base that they used to train pilots but what happened was after WWII it was left there and the Federal

Government allowed the state to go ahead and use it to bring in TB patients. After that the Korean Conflict kicked in and the Federal Government needed it back so that they could start training their pilots again. I think the VA allowed part of their annex to be used, so they agreed to let the state to use that annex, and that's how they transferred those and they told my parents, your jobs in Kerrville or you don't have a job and that's how we traveled up here.

FRANCELLE: So that's in Mission where they were working?

ROCKY: Yes.

FRANCELLE: So y'all came here in 1954?

ROCKY: Yes.

FRANCELLE: What is your mother's name?

ROCKY: Otila Zamora. She was a homemaker and what I remember about living in Mission was on one block lived her family and there was an alleyway and the next block was all of my father's side. So we all kind of grew up in that same one block area. My grandmother on my mother's side had a restaurant up on the very front corner of her big lot. She was well known by the border patrol and a lot of the officers. My uncle, her son, was a local policeman there and her other son, once he left the military, he came in and he was elected Constable. They were really involved in that side of city government in Mission.

FRANCELLE: Do you still have a lot of relatives in Mission?

ROCKY: Probably, but I have lost touch. We start our own families and traditions. Eventually, if I ever go back and start asking around they will pop up.

FRANCELLE: Did you know your grandparents?

ROCKY: I didn't know either of my grandfathers, they both died before I was born. I did know both of my grandmothers. My grandmother on my mother's side, kind of ran the whole show. She had a restaurant in her big house. All law enforcement would come in there to eat because both of her sons were in law enforcement. My other grandmother was quieter, and I loved both of them to death, in their own right they took good care of us.

FRANCELLE: Did either of the grandmothers move here with y'all?

ROCKY: No. It was just us.

FRANCELLE: Your grandmother obviously was a good cook, what about your mother?

ROCKY: She was a great cook. They learn early how to cook. Back then, restaurants were few and far between. She was a great cook.

FRANCELLE: What were your grandparent's occupations?

ROCKY: Neither one of my grandparents worked. As far as a source of revenue, my grandmother owned this whole block, and she had like six rental houses. I guess that was one source of revenue that she had, then the restaurant on the big house. Then my other grandmother was unemployed but she owned the other block and there were three sons and two daughters and they all lived on that block and so she was always taken care of. I knew if I ever got in trouble with my dad that's where I would run for shelter.

FRANCELLE: I know you are from a big family, how many children are in your family?

ROCKY: There are eight, five boys and three girls. The three girls are still living and four of the boys, one of the boys died quite young. He went into the military and went overseas and the next thing we knew, he was back here and pretty sick and eventually died.

FRANCELLE: Where did you start school?

ROCKY: I went to elementary school in Mission first through fifth grade. My uncle would do the harvest during the latter part of the year. We wouldn't finish school, we would come up to Corpus Christi and we would work the fields there. We would pick cotton and then when that was done at the Chapman Ranch, we would go up to Temple and pick cotton in that area but once school was ready to start again in September, there was always somebody going back to the Valley, so all the kids would hop in their truck and go back to the Valley and we would go back to school. We would be a little late, so we would leave school early and start school late. Not that late, maybe a couple of weeks.

FRANCELLE: Who was the cotton for?

ROCKY: My uncle would contract with the cotton field owners and every year they would communicate and he would tell him when he would be out and he would bring all of his hands to pick the cotton. It was kind of the same year after year. It would be like three or four families that would depend on my uncle to bring them and that was a source of work for a lot of those families. If you remember this was right after the depression and things were pretty bad back then. So that was a good source of work. A lot of people in the valley there were what they called "truqueros" or truckers that would come up and bring families and just keep working in the different farms and pick the cotton and keep moving all the way up. My uncle would continue to go all the way up to Michigan because after the cotton there were other things that they would pick: tomatoes, corn or whatever

and when that was done they would come back. I do remember that Corpus Christi was the farthest point we would go. Then there would be a trucker going back that would take all of the kids so we could start school. Like I said, we would always start the school year late and leave early.

FRANCELLE: Was it hard picking cotton or do you remember?

ROCKY: It was fun, because you had all the kids your age and that's kind of all you need.

FRANCELLE: Did you have contests to see who could finish the fastest

ROCKY: You kinda work hard but that's all you knew. It was a lot of fun and it was an adventure too in that on Saturdays we would go into town and coming from the valley into Corpus Christi they would take you over to the beach on the weekends. We enjoyed that.

FRANCELLE: Where did you start school when you came to Kerrville?

ROCKY: It was Tom Daniels Elementary in the sixth grade and then the next two years, 7th and 8th grade I went to Notre Dame.

FRANCELLE: Why did you make the change?

ROCKY: I didn't make that decision, my parents did. I suppose once we got here, they got to know the community and got involved with the church, rather than pull us out in the middle of year, they waited until the first year was over and then we started the seventh and eighth grade. My dad was involved with the church also. I guess the priest put a little pressure on my parents and told them he wanted us there.

FRANCELLE: Your family was Catholic?

ROCKY: Yes we were.

FRANCELLE: What grade did you start Tivy?

ROCKY: I went to Notre Dame for seventh and eighth and then to the old Tivy for ninth through twelfth. I remember living on Lemos Street and we would hit the railroad tracks and everybody that was going to school that lived down Schreiner Street would all walk to the railroad tracks and we would meet and we would have a big social until we got to school. It was a lot of fun.

FRANCELLE: What all were you involved in at Tivy?

ROCKY: Basically nothing. My older brother and I had a part time job after school. I was working at a bakery after school and it was a really good job, that was a source of bringing in income to the family which helped a lot. So my older brother and I worked at Huber's Bakery and my brother approached my dad and said he wanted to play sports. My dad said he would allow that but both of us couldn't participate just one of us. So, Joe went out for football, and he was good friends with Fritz Gutierrez and think it was the start of early camp and I didn't know whether they had two a day workouts or whatever and he didn't like that, so he and Fritz didn't go to one of the practices and they went to the movies. So the next day when they went back Coach Daniels kicked them off the football team. So that's when I went to my dad and said, "He's no longer playing football, he can go back to work, can I give it a try?" My dad said I could, but only one of you, so that's how I got involved in sports. I just picked it up from there.

FRANCELLE: What did you do at the bakery? Did you learn to bake?

ROCKY: Absolutely. One of the things that Huber Bakery had is that during the summer they took all of the baked goods and bread and what have you, to all the camps, so that would have to be done really early. So at 4 o'clock in the morning, Mr. and Mrs. Huber and I, with Joe washing the pots and pans in the sink, we actually kneaded the dough and made the bread and pastries so they would be good and fresh and loaded up the truck and Mr. Huber would deliver to all of the camps. Then during that time there were a few other things that I did to supply the bakery up front and then make sure everything was cleaned up. Then I was finished by noon.

FRANCELLE: So you played football and you played for Coach Daniels?

ROCKY: Yes, all four years.

FRANCELLE: And you also ran track?

ROCKY: Yes I did and I ran track for Coach Fred Johnson and his assistant Jody Johnson. From the front of the school we would hit the railroad tracks and run to Schreiner Institute and we would use their track field as our field. I really enjoyed that.

FRANCELLE: There wasn't a track at Tivy?

ROCKY: No.

FRANCELLE: Was there one at the stadium?

ROCKY: No, the stadium was a rodeo arena. The track that we used for practice was the Schreiner field track.

FRANCELLE: What was your specialty in track?

ROCKY: I was mostly involved in sprints. My specialty would be the 100 and 220 yard Dash. I was part of the 440 relay team, which is four members that would each run part of the 440 yards.

FRANCELLE: Who was part of that?

ROCKY: Kenny Sinclair was one of them, Robert Fairchild, and maybe Jimmy Holton. It was a good sprint relay team, because we went to state for that.

FRANCELLE: Was that your senior year?

ROCKY: Yes.

FRANCELLE: How did y'all do at state?

ROCKY: There was a sprint relay team out of Andrews, Texas that set the National Records coming in there, so we knew we had a fight on our hands, but it was good because that sort of forced us to try and stay up with them, which we had our all-time best time ever, and we set our own record and we came in second behind Andrews on the sprint relay.

FRANCELLE: What position did you play in football?

ROCKY: In football, I was a fullback and linebacker. In football today you either play offense or defense, back then you played both.

FRANCELLE: Tell us a little bit about Coach Daniel. I know he was a wonderful coach and all the guys liked him. What did you like about him?

ROCKY: He was a no nonsense type of coach, he brought in discipline to the team, which was good. That really helped me because I had discipline in my house, so I had no problem, so I enjoyed being one of his players. He was just strict and he was a good judge of talent and he didn't play favorites and you just wanted to play for the man. He also had some good assistant coaches. He was a serious coach but he was a really good person.

FRANCELLE: Coach Johnson was the same way?

ROCKY: All of them were. There was two Coach Johnsons, one was Fred Johnson and the other was Jody Johnson. They were just as well liked. Fred Johnson was also my track coach. They were very fair to everybody. They helped out wherever they could, they were good mentors, and they gave good advice.

FRANCELLE: What about teachers at Tivy? Did you have some good teachers?

ROCKY: I probably had great teachers but I don't remember their names.

FRANCELLE: Mrs. Wilson?

ROCKY: I do remember Mrs. Wilson. I do remember Preston Phillips doing his shenanigans in Mrs. Wilson's class.

FRANCELLE: With her hearing aids?

ROCKY: Yes.

FRANCELLE: I think that was done for about 20 years, don't you think? I think we started interviewing those that graduated in '48 and all of them said the same thing, "Poor Mrs. Wilson and her hearing aids."

ROCKY: There was Mrs. Adams, that was from Medina and she was a great teacher. Coach Burton was a great teacher, he was the tennis coach but he was also the math teacher. Coach Fred Johnson was a great teacher. I think he taught Algebra. Mr. Seidensticker was really good.

FRANCELLE: Did you aspire to go to college on a football scholarship? Or did you just feel blessed that you were able to?

ROCKY: I was really surprised. I had no intentions of even finishing high school, but the fact that in my household my dad was pretty strict. He always insisted that if we were going to live under his roof, we were going to go to school and get our high school diploma. That was his goal and beyond that, if you wanted to go into the military, go ahead, but you don't come and ask him to sign paperwork, because you wanted to go into the military. If you were under age, he would have to sign paperwork for you to go. He told me to not even bring it up, that I had to finish high school and that was the requirement for all of the kids. The biggest surprise came when I started receiving letters from different colleges. Even though they were form letters that they send out, it kind of showed me that there must have been some interest outside and so eventually I would get some visits, not at the house but at the school. Coach Daniel would say that there was a coach from Colorado and they pulled me out of class and I went to talk to. There were coaches from Colorado State and Houston.

FRANCELLE: Were the high school coaches instrumental in getting the college coaches to come see you? Or is it that the college coaches watch film and then come see you?

ROCKY: I'm guessing that a lot of the college coaches, particularly those that are assigned a certain area, have a relationship with these high school coaches, that they would ask them that if they see a kid with a certain talent to let them know and we'll follow through. There is some follow through, I know, because Fred Johnson was very instrumental and he helped me a lot in making a decision as to where to go. I did get some visits from some of these schools. For example, the University of Houston, you are allowed one or two visits a year, Kington Oil Company is one of their sponsors, so they are able to use one of their airplane. I remember that they flew in and picked me up and we went to the Moody Airport and flew to Houston for a visit. It was my first time ever to fly, but we got into Houston and I was assigned three of the varsity players so that they could show me around the University and the community. They took me down to Galveston and we had a good time and then they flew me back home. I made a trip to University of Texas in Austin by Mr. Stacy, I believe he had owned one of the camps. You don't get an offer until after you have a visit and they talk to you, but I never got an offer from them. My offers came from North Texas State, Houston, both Colorado schools and I believe the rest of them were Jr. Colleges, Del Mar, Kingsville A&I.

FRANCELLE: What did you base your decision on to go to Houston?

ROCKY: There was another athlete from Uvalde that happened to be visiting at the same time. So we started talking, and I made my decision to go to Houston. This is kind of funny and maybe I shouldn't mention it, but they introduce me to a pretty famous lawyer, John J. Herrera, that had fought some cases in the U.S. Supreme Court and he was President of LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), he was my sponsor. He was a well known lawyer and my sponsor and had a surname like mine, and he took me out into the community and introduced me to other U of H graduates. So that was a big factor in why I chose to go there. Not that I had been sheltered but I didn't know anything about the outside world. I was 18 years old and all of that was new, and so I thought, "Well, there's somebody there that I know and cares, so that's when I made the decision to go there. A friend of mine Clem Beard, was recruited out of Uvalde, so I got a call from Coach Yeoman telling me that there was going to be this guy coming in from Uvalde to pick you up on the way to school, so we can get started. Fall practice started even before school starts, so Clem Beard came by and picked me up and we went to Houston. We got there and were assigned our dorm and got our books and got registered and started practice. Our coach was Bill Yeoman and he is now in the Texas Hall of Fame as well as the Coaches Hall of Fame in New York City. He was a great coach and that's who I played under.

FRANCELLE: Where Coach Daniel and Coach Yeoman similar to play for?

ROCKY: Yes. They were both outstanding men. I've been very fortunate, to be picked up and guided by great people. I know I would have never finished school and gone into the military without those wonderful influential men.

FRANCELLE: And it all started with your dad.

ROCKY: Yes and he was very strict and there was nobody ahead of me in the family that was an example, that knew the road ahead and could guide me.

FRANCELLE: And your brother Joe went to U of H also.

ROCKY: Yes. I was able to talk to Coach Yeoman and they made him Hall Counselor in the dorm. He also handed out the books because the Athletic Department had their own books that they buy, knowing that they can be reused. So he was in charge of all of that. I left out a big chunk of one of the major influences in growing up while I was going to high school. One day I was coming down the railroad tracks and started to cut across to go into the school building, there was a big bully beating up on this kid, and as I was coming across I threw him away and told him to get off this kid and just kept on walking. Well, he was beating up on Preston Phillips. Preston was a new kid in school, he had transferred from Alamo Heights, so after that I got to know Preston because he just kept going to my locker. One day my mother made my lunch and it was always tacos, and I would put them in my locker. I would go to my locker and pull out my brown bag and start eating my lunch. When I got home, I asked my mom if she had made sandwiches instead of tacos. She told me no. So one day I was standing across the hall just kind of watching who would go into my locker. It was Preston and that's how we got to be friends and we were friends for life. His parents were also very influential in helping me and guiding me. His father was partners with Phillips Schreiner Ford. They were a very much needed second family that helped guide me. Even when Preston's parents moved to New Orleans to be close to Preston, and I would visit, it was like nothing had changed. They were just great people.

FRANCELLE: There were three of you? You want to name your other friend that three of you were amigos.

ROCKY: Sydney Kokes was a friend and we were both captains of the football team and he was just a super guy. I admired Sydney because he was little in stature but he was really good at what he did. He was a good guard, he excelled at what he did and he was the nicest guy. We are still friends today.

FRANCELLE: And you lost Preston a couple of years ago? That was a hard, I know. What were you involved in at U of H?

ROCKY: When I went to U of H there was a ROTC there and I just kind of walked up and asked them what ROTC was all about? They told me what it was all about Reserve Officer Training Corps and you would train here for four years but after your second year, the government pays you to participate but before that you have to sign a contract going into your junior and senior year that after

you graduate you have to commit to six years with the military, two being active, two being active reserve and two being inactive reserve and then you have completed your obligation. Your junior and senior year we get paid so much money, I can't remember how much it was but when he said money, I thought that sounded pretty good to me, because from the football scholarship we were getting \$15 a month, \$5 in laundry coupons and \$10 cash every month and I think ROTC was \$25 a month so that was a lot of money a month for a student. So I signed up.

FRANCELLE: Was that your senior year?

ROCKY: No, I signed up my sophomore year and then my junior and senior year I was getting paid. At that time I had signed a contract, so I knew upon signing the contract what my obligations were, so I had to meet them. Shortly after I received my degree I had to go in. They gave you 30, 60 or 90 days. I told them why wait 90, 30 days after graduation I was ready to go. So that's when I went to Alexis and said, "Look, this is what I have committed to, I don't know if I will be back or not, so why don't we get married." We were going to mass in the classroom until they built the Religious Center and then once they built that on campus then we started going to mass there. I went up to the Catholic Priest and once Alexis said yes, we had our ceremony and we got married there on campus at the Religious Center and then shortly thereafter we headed to Fort Benning Georgia, which was my assignment.

FRANCELLE: You got married your senior year?

ROCKY: Yes, at the end of my senior year. I got married after I got my degree. I could have waited either 30, 60 or 90 days before I went to Alexis and told her I was about to leave so she could either go with me as my wife or I had to leave. So that's when we got married at the Religious Center and then left.

FRANCELLE: Had the Vietnam War started?

ROCKY: No. At the time you commit to a specialty in your junior and senior year of ROTC and my specialty was Signal Corp.

FRANCELLE: Can you tell us what Signal Corp is?

ROCKY: The radio, telephone, all the equipment for communications, wire communications, and so when I received orders shortly before graduation, I was going to Fort Eustis, Virginia. I had an opportunity to try out for the Houston Oilers because Coach Lou Rymkus, one of the Oiler coaches knew me from the Athletic dorm where the Oilers stayed in one wing and the Cougars the other. We all ate together. We played our games at Jeppesen Stadium and the Oilers did also. The coaches got to know the players from U of H, so I was approached by one of the

them to try out for the Oilers once I would finish. That's when I went to my Professor of Military Sciences and I asked if I could go to Infantry rather than Signal Corp because I wanted to stay in shape. I told him I had the opportunity to try out for the Oilers. He said, "Well, your orders are in now, but go ahead and report to Fort Benning. You will be AWOL at Fort Eustis but the orders will change and they'll cross and they will know why you are at Fort Benning and so that is how that happened. I reported to Fort Benning to get my obligation over with. I had 12 weeks of Basic Officer Training and after that there were 250 lined up across the command field with the Infantry School up on the stairs. All of the Officers in charge of the Infantry School gave us a spiel about, "Congratulations you just finished 12 weeks of training and you have graduated from the Infantry School, but there has been a change," almost everybody in class had received orders to go to Germany. "All of that has been canceled, because de Gaulle had expelled all of the soldiers out of France." So instead of bringing them all back stateside, they were sent to Germany and that's where most of this class was going. We didn't have any orders, so he said, "I need officers as trainers here at the Infantry School." So some of us went to Signal Corp to help over there and they would be trained to be an instructor and then another group went to artillery and then another group went to Ranger School and I was in that group and I had no idea what that was or where it was. Once I found out we went out in the boonies in South Carolina. We reported in and the Commandant of the Ranger School was wondering what we were doing there. We told them we were sent up here from the Infantry School and he asked, "Are you Ranger qualified?" We told him no and he said, "Well I don't need you." So we turned around and he said, "Just a minute, Ranger School starts in two days at six in the morning. Be here, we will make you Ranger qualified." So that's how we got started. We started with a class of 225 and graduated 60 from Ranger school.

FRANCELLE: So they cut you or you cut yourself.

ROCKY: Exactly, it's a nine week course; three of it is patrolling in the Fort Benning area, and then the other three weeks is in Dahlenega, Georgia which is mountains and you train to fight in the mountains and repel. The last three weeks are in Florida in the swamps; jungle training because back then Panama was a very serious situation. If you are able to get through all of that then you were given the Ranger patch and were Ranger qualified. I then reported back to Infantry School and they told us Airborne School is right over there, so we went there. There we got our first orders. My order was to go to the Ranger Department as an instructor. I was an instructor there for a year then I received my orders. Vietnam had just started and I had one year left and they said, "We are going to send you to Vietnam." It was a jungle type warfare and being that we were jungle qualified they sent almost our whole class.

FRANCELLE: Did you feel ready for that when you got there?

ROCKY: I can tell you two stories, one in retrospect now by looking back and one from the point when I was assigned. I was ready to go not knowing too much about that type of warfare, other than we were told that it was jungle warfare and we were prepared for that. I was assigned to the 193rd Airborne Brigade that had just gotten there. When I arrived at Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base, they loaded everybody in a bus and then one of the officers came up on the bus and said, "Look guys forget about where you are supposed to go, whatever unit you were assigned to, we just had a battalion of the 25th Infantry Division get wiped out and we need all the replacements coming in. Once we get the original replacements from the 25th Infantry Division, then we'll assign you back to your orders." Which in my case it would have been the 183rd Airborne Brigade and that's how I got to the 25th Infantry Division on 3rd Corp which is outside of Saigon and I was assigned as platoon leader. A normal platoon size is 44 soldiers and I usually worked with about 20 because you either got them hurt or killed or some rotated out.

FRANCELLE: Where you dropped in the area by planes?

ROCKY: No, they took us there by bus. You are in hostile country; you have trucks in front and behind with machine guns and in between the different busses. You don't slow down, you go fast. You're not in friendly territory. Once we got into base camp and got our orientation. I was able to meet my platoon, my platoon sergeant and my squad leaders. Once I got orientated we got our mission and we went to a certain area. You didn't have to go too far because the enemy was everywhere. So we were constantly fighting.

FRANCELLE: You don't even have time to think about what you are doing.

ROCKY: You are just worrying about staying alive. There was a time when you know you are going to die, you just don't know when.

FRANCELLE: How old were you?

ROCKY: I was 23.

FRANCELLE: Can you tell us a little bit about the accident? I know it was a hard time in your life. You can tell us as much as you feel like.

ROCKY: We went out a lot on ambushes at night from the perimeter of the main base. We would go out about 3000 feet and set up our ambushes, because the enemy is always trying to come in and attack you. During the day we would go out on different patrols in different areas and have a map to get all the information about where the friendlies were and their areas of operation. Where is the artillery, do we have artillery support, is the Air Force going to be having

anything flying above in case we get into trouble and are given all these call signs. We did a lot of practicing on the call signs in case we got into trouble we would know what to do. We were out on a mission and we got word from our Battalion Commander that there was a battalion pinned down and we were to come in and help. Whenever you are going from one area to another particularly to relieve pressure the mode of transportation is the helicopter and it would come in and pick us up and deliver you close by so you could assist. We heard that this battalion was pinned down pretty bad and they needed some relief and so they came in with eight helicopters and we would run and jump in the sides and off you go.

FRANCELLE: How many did each helicopter hold?

ROCKY: They would hold about six because you are in full gear. We were told that this unit was pinned down and we are going to be relieving the pressure. My platoon was the lead platoon going in. You go in and suppress the enemy's fire so that they can go back and start picking everybody else up, drop them off until everybody is on the ground. The mission of the first unit going is to suppress the enemy's fire.

FRANCELLE: Isn't there a lot of vegetation? Is it hard to see?

ROCKY: Where you come in is an open area and of course the enemy knows that this is a possible helicopter landing area. On the tree lines you are sitting ducks to be shot at. We come in and we land at night and we are given a short order to where your mission is and what you need to do. We were told that the American unit that was pinned down is going to be north of where we were going in and what we needed to do is go in, secure the area and land everybody. The enemy on this particular mission, was going to be caught between us and the unit that was pinned down. We try and call it a victory by wiping out the enemy from both sides, so that that unit won't be pinned down anymore. They would be coming in and attacking from one side and we would be attacking from the other. That was the initial order. Coming in, we landed and most of the protection we had was rice patties and we had little dikes that served as a kind of stay low area. We moved forward, so that the next group landing would have room to put pressure on the enemy. In jungle warfare you are in their country, and they know the area and they know what to do, so they set out what we call booby traps. In WWII it was called land mines, so they would booby trap all that area and we didn't know that at the time. They are shooting at us, we come in and land, we attack so that we are able to suppress their fire and get some more units in, so we can really attack. We want to relieve pressure from the other battalion that's on the other side and pinned down. As my unit came in and we started this fire fight headed towards the dike, I don't know who hit the land mine, but when it was over I was down and three of my men were down and we were all hurt. So then, medivac came in and pulled us out and I was in a field hospital, probably a week or so. Once I

was stabilized I was helicoptered to the hospital in Saigon and I was there for a week. They don't repair you, they just stabilize you because it is such a filthy country. It is just unbelievable just how primitive that country was. You are covered with mud, you are fighting in the rice patties and you are filthy yourself. The hospital sort of cleans you up a little bit and then I was evacuated to the Philippines, and then from there I was evacuated to the hospital in San Francisco and then to Colorado, because you have these C130 airplanes that could take a ton of patients. So one of them would fly to the West Coast one day and the next day the other one would fly to the East Coast. I ended up at Brooke Army Hospital and I was there nine months total but once I was able to move and got therapy, I would go home on convalescent leave and then I would come back. Brooke is in San Antonio near my hometown Kerrville.

FRANCELLE: It was your leg, correct?

ROCKY: Yes. I got hit all on the left side. I had shrapnel come in on the tibia and it was a compound fracture there and the fibula was all shattered and they couldn't fix that, so I don't have it anymore.

FRANCELLE: Each one of those hospitals just kind of cleaned you up and everything else was done at Brooke?

ROCKY: Yes and I had shrapnel on my side and on my ribs so when the explosion went off it hit all on my left side and that was the end for me in the military.

FRANCELLE: Where was Alexis all of this time?

ROCKY: She was in La Marque but worked in Galveston. She was with her family and then she came up to Brooke. I was there nine months and then believe it or not, they came back and said, "Look, we have a package here we would like to offer you, \$5000 cash and we would promote you to Captain. I was a 1st Lieutenant, and something else if you will re-up in regular Army." I asked them one question, "Does that mean I would get my tour to Germany before I have to go back to Vietnam?" He said, "No, as a matter of fact, we would probable send you back to Vietnam." I told them, "No thank you," and that was it.

FRANCELLE: Tell us a little bit about all the awards and medals you were awarded. I know you probably don't want to tell us, but I think it is important.

ROCKY: I suppose your leadership has a lot to do with how your Commanders see you so I received a couple of medals for that. There was a particular fire fight that we were involved in that I was in charge of and we were pinned down pretty bad. I was able to maneuver my men and myself and suppress the fire enough to finally get superiority over the enemy but apparently it was above and beyond and I was awarded the Bronze Star.

FRANCELLE: Is that for Valor.

ROCKY: Yes and that's about it.

FRANCELLE: And you got the Purple Heart.

ROCKY: Yes I got the Purple Heart for wounds received and I forgot the name of some of them.

FRANCELLE: (To Alexis) Do you remember the names?

ALEXIS: The Distinguished Service Award, two Accommodation Medals and he was the Airborne Top Graduate in Airborne School and in Ranger School also.

FRANCELLE: Ok. Was the Acapulco restaurant already opened here in Kerrville?

ROCKY: No, once I finished my obligation to the military I went by the U of H Athletic Department because I wanted to see Coach Yeoman but he was out recruiting so I started talking to another coach and they knew what I had gone through. We went out to eat and we were sitting there and the phone rang and the assistant coach picked up the phone and it was the employee relations office from the Exxon Building asking if they had any soon to be graduates that they thought would be good employees. They were looking for employees for different departments. The coach said, "As a matter of fact, there's a young man right here." So I eventually went and interviewed with them. They said, "Well our Regional Office is in Dallas and I think they could use you, but you would have to go there for an interview." They flew me to Dallas and I interviewed and was offered the job while I was interviewing and I started working for them in the Marketing Department in Houston. It just so happened that they were changing their name at the time, it was Humble. So that's what I helped do was change the name on all of the promotions and all of the giveaways and let all the talk shows know that it is no longer Humble but Exxon. The second change was turning the traditional service stations into self service stations doing car washes and having car care centers. I got involved with promoting those and started building them in Houston and promoting them with grand openings and giveaways and then they said, "Ok, now go to San Antonio and do the same thing. So we built the car care center on Nacogdoches and 410, did three or four self serves, two car washes, hired the managers, because they are all company operated, hired the people to run them and then I got a call to that Corpus Christi was next and that is how I ended up in Corpus Christi. We did two self serves and two car washes and two car care centers and since I was in Corpus I went out to the boat store and as a giveaway for each one of the grand openings, I did a little Sunfish Sailboat, which was neat. I told the guy at the store I wanted to buy one but I wanted the same price they were giving Exxon. So I got one for Nick

FRANCELLE: When did you come to Kerrville?

ROCKY: I got a call from Joe, he was a CPA for Magellan Engineers out of Houston, and they sent him all over the world because he was the auditor and he was tired of it. He called me and said, "I got a call from dad and they want to get out of the restaurant business, but they don't want to sell it, they want to pass it on and I don't know if I want to do it by myself. I would do it if you agree to form a partnership and we'll do it." So I talked to Alexis for a while and told him I would. We formed a partnership. We put our money together and bought our parents out. He said he knew of a place where we could move it that would be a better location and that's how we moved it over to Goat Creek Road. Mexican Food was just getting popular at that time, so it really took off.

FRANCELLE: How many years were y'all in the restaurant business?

ROCKY: A total of 25 years. What happened is that, I don't know why I came to Austin, but there was an opportunity in Oak Hill. A Mexican Food Restaurant closed down and they had it up for lease, so I went back to Joe and said, "Hey, look there's a chance I can open up" because I had opened up Rocky's Texas Grill in Austin," and he said, "No I don't want to do that." We would get in each other's way, so we had an agreement that he would work it one week and I would work it the next week. So I got with Alexis and I said, "I'm going to open it. I'll go work the week and then come back and do the finish out," and that's how we eventually did it. Alexis finally said that is too much, so I went to Joe and sold him my part of the restaurant and concentrated on the one in Austin.

FRANCELLE: We mentioned Nick but you have a daughter. What is her name?

ROCKY: Gena. She graduated from Tivy like Nick did. Nick was going to SMU and Gena was finishing Tivy. I wanted Gena to go to A & M, so applied and was accepted and the 51% in the family said, "No, I want her to be where Nick is, because he can take care of her, especially her first year as a freshman." So the 51% ruled and that's how she got to SMU also and both of them got their degrees there. Nick was in Business Administration and he is now a Commercial Real Estate Broker and Developer and works out of Houston but does it all over the country. Gena went to work for a drug company and then she got married and is a housewife. She is also in school getting her masters and we have a grandson Cooper who is 12. Nick has two sons Jack who is a freshman at Highpoint University in North Carolina and Hunter is a junior at Episcopal High School in Houston.

FRANCELLE: Thank you very much for your time.

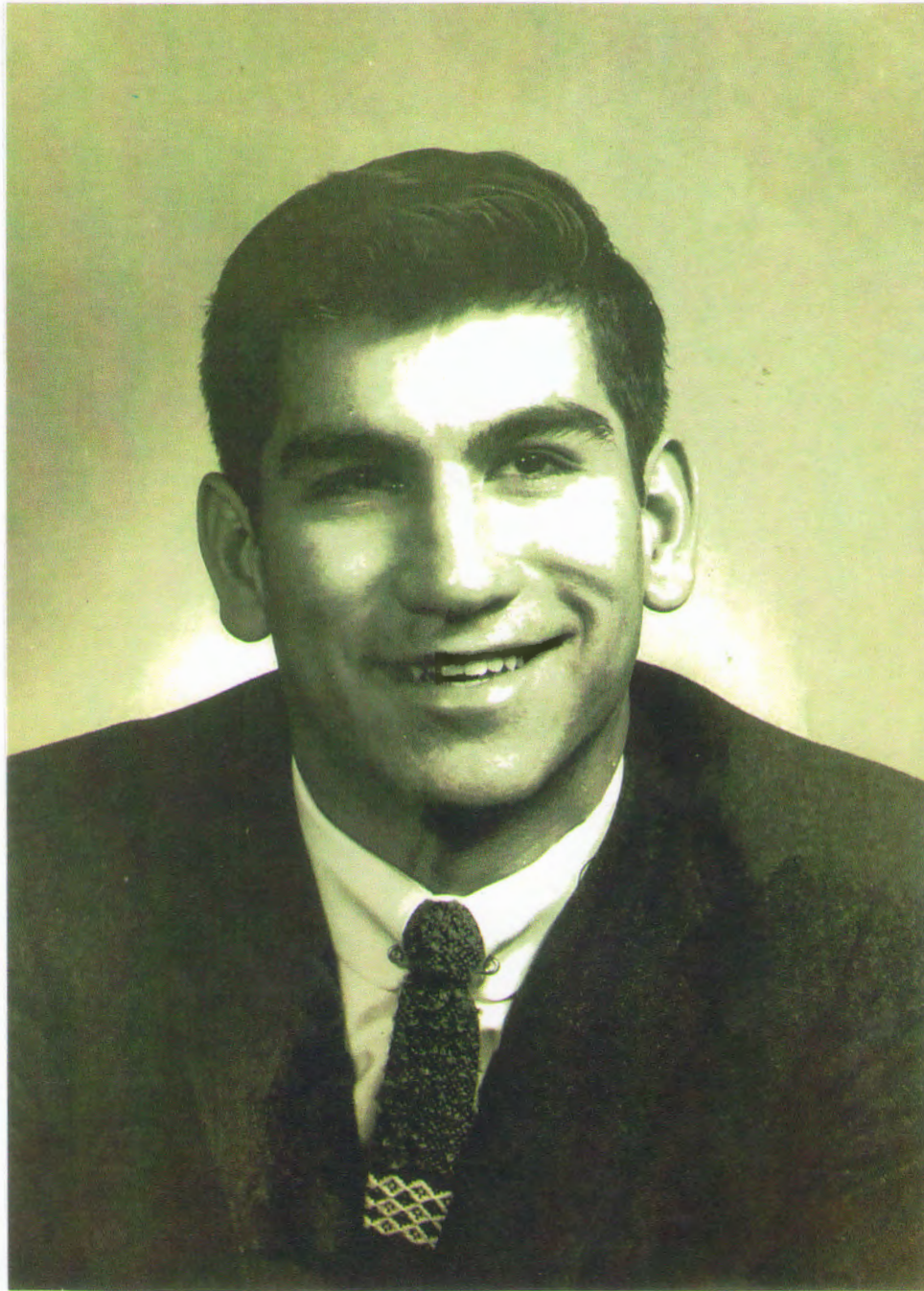
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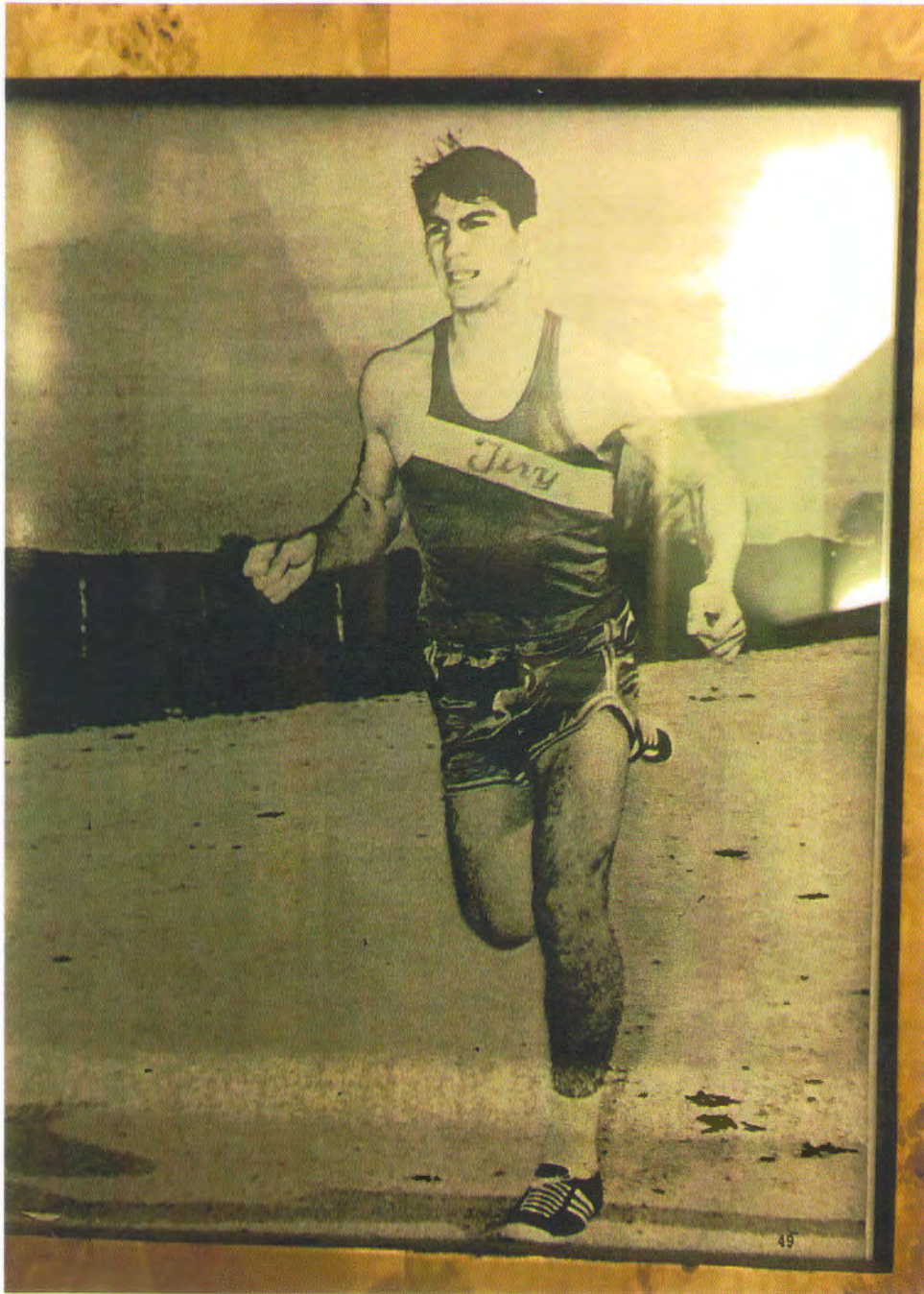
ROCKY'S PARENTS RAUL AND OTILA HERNANDEZ 1995



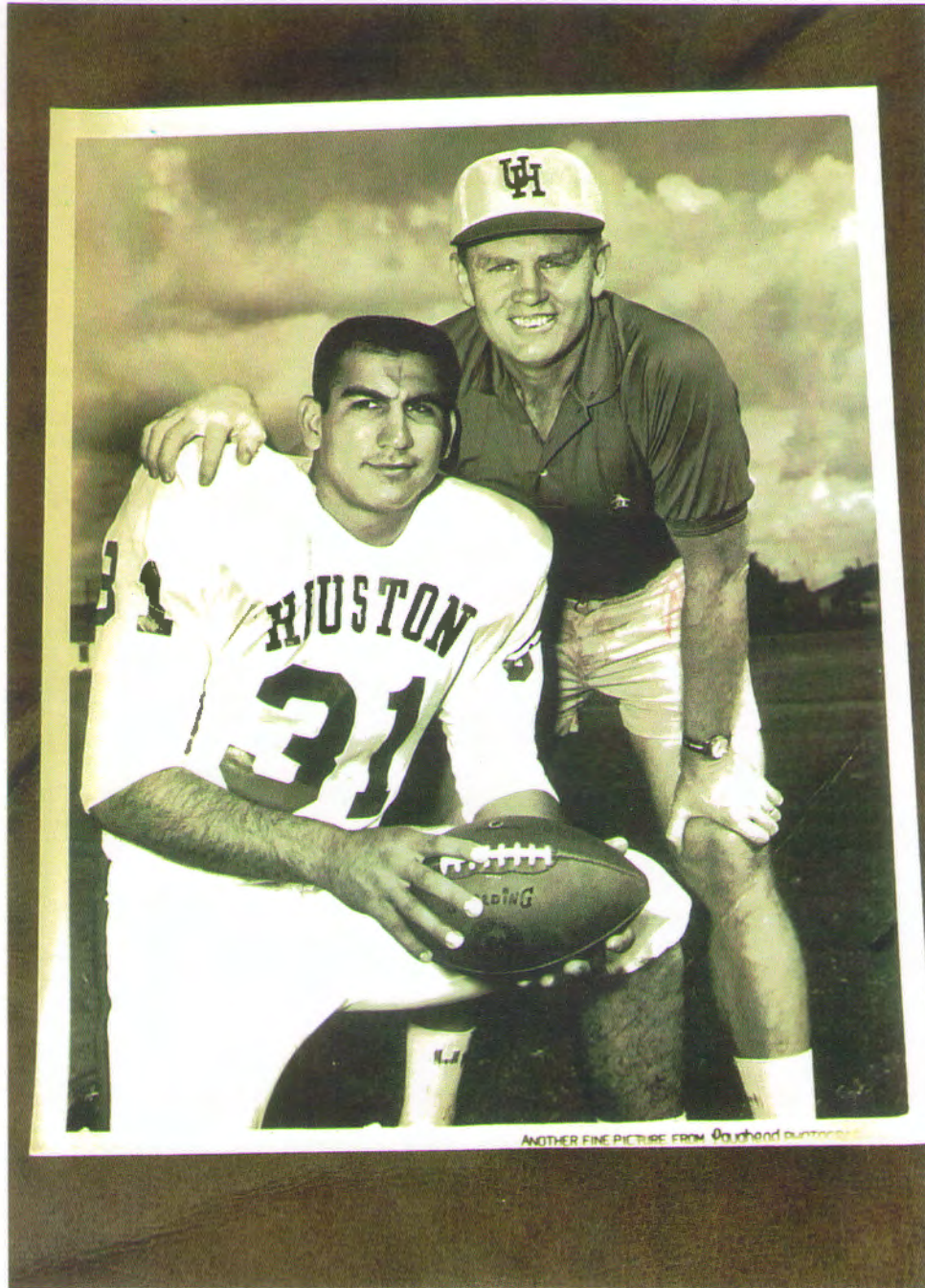
ROCKY HERNANDEZ IN TIVY HIGH SCHOOL PICTURE 1960



TIVY HIGH SCHOOL TRACK 1960



UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON HEAD COACH BILL YEOMAN AND ROCKY 1963



ROCKY AND ALEXIS WEDDING MARCH 5, 1965, UOF H RELIGIOUS CENTER





1952

ROCKY ON THE LEFT IN VIETNAM

ROCKY RECEIVING ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL 1967



HEADQUARTERS
12TH EVACUATION HOSPITAL (SMBL)
APO US Forces 96353

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 108

25 May 1967

AWARD OF THE PURPLE HEART

1. TC 320. The fol AWARDS are announced.

SIMS, JERRY G. RA18904890 SP4 E4 A/1/27th Inf, 25th Inf Div
POTTS, WILLIE F. RA11820473 PFC E3 A/1/27th Inf, 25th Inf Div
COLE, DONALD RA14721505 SP5 E5 A Trp, 3/4 Cav, 25th Inf Div
-HERNANDEZ, RAUL R. JR. 05421442 1LT O2 A/1/27th Inf, 25th Inf Div
CASSIDY, JOHN J. 076974 ITC O5 Adv Team, 43, APO 96314

Date of Action: 24 May 1967

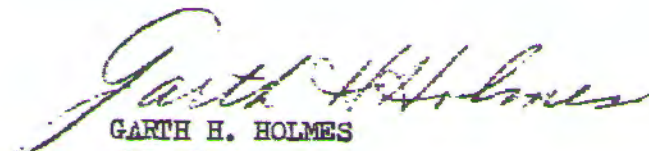
Awarded: Purple Heart

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Reason: For wounds received in connection with military operations
against a hostile force.

Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of
AR 672-5-1 and USARV Message 16695, 1 July 1966.

FOR THE COMMANDER:


GARTH H. HOLMES
CPT, MSC
Adjutant

DISTRIBUTION:

1-Rec Set
1-Ref Set
1-Rec Br ea indiv
10-PSD ea indiv
10-CG, USARV, ATTN: AVHAG-PD
1-CG, USARV, ATTN: AGA
1-CG, 1st Log Comd, ATTN: AG-A

HEADQUARTERS
25TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO San Francisco 96225

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 2452

20 June 1967

AWARD OF THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL FOR HEROISM

1. TC 320. The following AWARD is announced.

HERNANDEZ, RAUL R. JR. 05421442 1LT INF USA
Co A, 1st Bn, 27th Inf, 25th Inf Div

Awarded: Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device

Date action: 16 May 1967

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

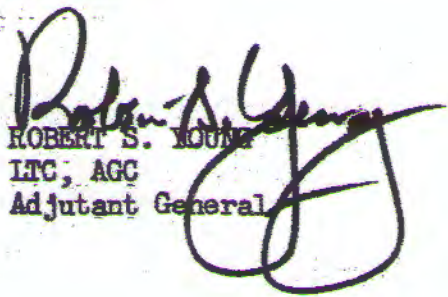
Reason: For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force: First Lieutenant Hernandez distinguished himself by heroic actions on 16 May 1967, while serving as a platoon leader on a combat operation in the vicinity of Duc Hue, Republic of Vietnam. Immediately upon departing the landing zone, Lieutenant Hernandez's company was hit from three sides by intense enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire. Lieutenant Hernandez immediately ordered his platoon to place a heavy volume of fire on the enemy positions. With disregard for his own safety, Lieutenant Hernandez repeatedly exposed himself to hostile fire as he moved across the battlefield to direct fire and encourage his men. After achieving fire superiority he maneuvered his platoon forward again, forcing the enemy to retreat. As a result of his aggressiveness, the platoon was able to repel the enemy attack. Through his courage and outstanding leadership, he contributed immeasurably to the success of the mission. Lieutenant Hernandez's personal bravery and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, the 25th Infantry Division, and the United States Army.

Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of Executive Order 11046, dated 24 August 1962, and USARV message 16695, 1 July 1966.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:

JASPER J. WILSON
Colonel, GS
Chief of Staff


ROBERT S. YOUNG
LTC, AGC
Adjutant General

PLAQUE HONORING ROCKY IN TIVY ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME 2017



HERNANDEZ FAMILY PICTURE TAKEN IN 2017



ROCKY AND ALEXIS DECEMBER 2017

