



## MEDAL OF HONOR: Retired Col. Ralph Puckett Jr.



### Media Advisory

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Army will host two media opportunities on Thursday, May 20, 2021, at the Sheraton Pentagon City from 9:00–11:30 a.m. and 4:00–4:30 p.m. EDT in honor of retired Col. Ralph Puckett Jr., who will receive the Medal of Honor from President Joseph R. Biden Jr. at a White House ceremony on Friday, May 21.

Puckett will be awarded the Medal of Honor for his selfless and heroic combat actions with the Eighth Army Ranger Company at Hill 205 in the vicinity of Unsan, Korea, on Nov. 25-26, 1950. For his actions, Puckett was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross on March 5, 1951. Seventy years later, that award is being upgraded to the Medal of Honor.

The first media opportunity will occur from 9:00–11:30 a.m. and will consist of one-on-one interviews with retired Col. John Lock, family spokesperson; retired Master Sgt. Merle Simpson, former member of the Eighth Army Ranger Company; retired Col. Robert Choppa, president of the National Infantry Association; and Col. Puckett's son, Thomas Puckett.

The second opportunity will occur from 4:00–4:30 p.m. and will consist of a **call-in-only** media roundtable. Col. Puckett plans to join the panel for the call, along with the aforementioned individuals.

To request the teleconference number or a one-on-one interview, RSVP and contact one of the following:

Ms. Heather J. Hagan at [heather.j.hagan.civ@mail.mil](mailto:heather.j.hagan.civ@mail.mil)

**Requests should be made no later than 6:30 p.m. EDT on Wednesday, May 19.**

Television cameras for one-on-one interviews must be in place no later than 8:30 a.m.

A phone number will be provided for those who wish to participate, monitor or record audio of the media roundtable.

To learn more about Puckett's actions and the Medal of Honor, please visit the following sites:

MOH Recipient Ralph Puckett – <https://go.usa.gov/xH6xn>

The United States Medal of Honor – <http://www.army.mil/medalofhonor>

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I WILL ALWAYS PLACE THE MISSION FIRST ★ I WILL NEVER ACCEPT DEFEAT ★ I WILL NEVER QUIT ★ I WILL NEVER LEAVE A FALLEN COMRADE



# MEDAL OF HONOR:

## Retired Col. Ralph Puckett Jr.



### Biography



**Hometown:** Tifton, Georgia  
**Unit:** Eighth Army Ranger Company  
**Born:** December 8, 1926  
**Military Occupation (MOS):** Infantryman (11A)  
**Commissioned:** West Point, 1949  
**Deployments:** Korea 1950, Vietnam 1967



Born in Tifton, Georgia, Ralph Puckett Jr. graduated from and the United States Military Academy, West Point and received his commission as an Infantry Officer in 1949. Assigned to occupation duty in Okinawa, he volunteered for the Eighth Army Ranger Company, which was formed shortly after the Korean Conflict began in 1950.

Selected as the company's commander, 1st Lt. Puckett had five-and-a-half weeks to train his Rangers before being committed to combat operations. While attached to Task Force Dolvin and leading the advance of the 25th Infantry Division on Nov. 25, 1950, Puckett and his Rangers attacked and secured Hill 205 in the vicinity of Unsan, Korea. Though outnumbered ten to one, Puckett and his Rangers defeated five successive Chinese counterattacks over four hours that night and into the early morning hours of Nov. 26. Finally, on the sixth assault, with supporting artillery fires unavailable, the Ranger company was overrun in hand-to-hand combat. Having suffered multiple serious wounds, Puckett was unable to move. Despite orders to abandon him, fellow Rangers fought their way to his side and evacuated him to safety. For his actions, Puckett was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Though offered a medical discharge for his wounds, Puckett refused and continued to serve on active duty at assignments that included the U.S. Army Ranger School and West Point. As a Ranger advisor to the Columbian Army, Puckett established the prestigious Escuela de Lanceros program. Later, after completing Special Forces training in 1960, Puckett commanded B and C teams in the 10th Special Forces Group in Bad Tolz, Germany.

Retiring in 1971, he became the national programs coordinator of Outward Bound, Inc., and subsequently established Discovery, Inc., a leadership and teamwork development program that focused on "Personal Growth through Safe Adventure." In 1992, he was an inaugural inductee into the U.S. Army Ranger Hall of Fame and, from 1996 to 2006, he served as the first honorary colonel of the 75th Ranger Regiment. Other honors followed, including an appointment as an ambassador of goodwill by the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, selection as a 2004 distinguished graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, and being chosen as a 2007 recipient of the Infantry's Doughboy Award.

Still very active in military affairs and his local community, Puckett lives in Columbus, Georgia, with his wife of 68 years. They have two daughters, one of whom is deceased, a son and six grandchildren. His awards include two Distinguished Service Crosses (one to be upgraded to the Medal of Honor); two Silver Stars; two Legions of Merit; two Bronze Stars with V device for valor; five Purple Hearts; ten Air Medals; the Army Commendation Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal, among others. In addition, he earned the Combat Infantryman's Badge with star, Special Forces Tab, Ranger Tab, Master Parachutist Wings, Glider Badge and Columbian Lancero Ranger Badge.



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### Battle Narrative



1st Lt. Ralph Puckett, United States Army, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty on 25-26 November 1950 while serving as Commander, Eighth Army Ranger Company, Task Force Dolvin. As the Rangers commenced the daylight attack of Hill 205, the enemy directed mortar, machinegun and small arms fire against the advancing force. To obtain supporting fire, 1st Lt. Puckett mounted the closest tank exposing himself to the deadly enemy fire. Leaping from the tank, he yelled, "Let's go!" and began to lead his Rangers in the attack.

Almost immediately, enemy machinegun fire threatened the success of the attack by pinning down one platoon. Leaving the safety of his position with full knowledge of the danger; 1st Lt. Puckett intentionally ran across an open area three times to draw enemy fire thereby allowing his Rangers to locate and destroy the enemy machinegun and enabling the company to seize Hill 205. Later that night, the enemy counter-attacked in the near zero degree weather. During the next four hours the 57-man company, inspired and motivated by the extraordinary leadership and courageous example exhibited by Lt. Puckett, repulsed five human wave attacks by a 500-man battalion assaulting behind intense mortar barrages. Continually directing 'danger close' artillery support that decimated attacking enemy formations, repeatedly abandoning positions of relative safety to make his way from foxhole to foxhole to check the perimeter, interceding at each point of decision in the battle, redistributing ammunition and keeping only one eight-round clip for his own rifle, 1st Lt. Puckett's encouragement and dauntless will instilled in his men an unfailing desire and perseverance to resist.

Although wounded in the thigh by a grenade fragment during the first assault, 1st Lt. Puckett refused evacuation. During the course of battle, 1st Lt. Puckett once again intentionally exposed himself three more times to an enemy sniper before the sniper was killed. Unable to obtain artillery support to repel the sixth enemy assault, 1st Lt. Puckett and his command were overrun by the fanatical enemy. Two mortar rounds detonated in 1st Lt. Puckett's foxhole inflicting severe wounds to his feet, buttocks, and left arm. Though the wounds to his right foot were so severe the doctors considered amputation for several months, 1st Lt. Puckett maintained the presence of mind to report that his command was being overrun by the enemy. Grievously wounded and unable to move on his own, 1st Lt. Puckett ordered his men to leave him behind.

Later two of his Rangers fought their way to his position killing three enemy who were only 10 yards from where 1st Lt. Puckett lay defenseless. Although 1st Lt. Puckett ordered his Rangers to leave him behind, they refused. Later as the enemy fired at the rescuers Puckett again ordered his men to leave him to ensure their safety. Finally secure at the bottom of Hill 205 and despite the seriousness and pain of his wounds, 1st Lt. Puckett maintained the presence of mind to direct a heavy concentration of artillery fire on the enemy now on top of the hill. 1st Lt. Puckett's extraordinary courage and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.







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### Members of the Media Round Table



#### Retired Col. Ralph Puckett Jr.



##### Col. Puckett will be receiving the Medal of Honor

- Served as a Ranger Advisor to the Colombian Army, where he helped establish the prestigious Escuela de Lanceros program.
- Inducted into the U.S. Ranger Hall of Fame, he served as the Honorary Colonel of the 75th Ranger Regiment from 1996 to 2006.
- Established Discovery, Inc., a leadership and teamwork development program that focused on "Personal Growth through Safe Adventure."



#### Retired Master Sgt. Merle Simpson



##### Master Sgt. Simpson is a lifelong friend of Col. Puckett

- Squad leader, Tech Sergeant, in charge of heavy weapons under Puckett on Hill 205.
- Earned a Korean Service Medal with five Bronze campaign stars as well as a Combat Infantry Badge.
- Employed by General Electric Aircraft Division for 37 years and retired as a value engineer in 1990. Resides in Greensburg, Indiana.

#### Retired Col. Robert Choppa



##### Col. Choppa was mentored by Col. Puckett and has been a longtime friend of the family.

- He commissioned as an Infantry Officer in June 1984 and served 31 years in the Army.
- President of the National Infantry Association, a 501C (19) non-profit organization at the National Infantry Museum.
- Family friend for over 20 years and currently a spokesperson for the Puckett's.

#### Retired Col. John Lock



##### Col. Lock spent the last 19 years advocating for Col. Puckett to receive the Medal of Honor

- Enlisted in the Army in 1974. served as a Noncommissioned Officer until 1978. Commissioned as an Engineer in 1982. Retired in 2002.
- Author of four published books.
- Has known the Puckett family for over 30 years.

#### Thomas Puckett



##### Thomas is Col. Puckett's only son, and youngest of three children

- Father raised him as an Eagle Scout, teaching him essential workshop skills, basic home repair knowledge, how to shake a hand, awakening a deep and lasting love of the outdoors that borders on the spiritual, and most importantly nurturing a fully functioning moral compass and a deep respect for all people great and small.
- Works for Facebook, as director of creative development of the digital expression of brand communications and experiences.
- Currently resides in New York City.

