



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE

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PRESS RELEASE

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Texas State Veterans Cemetery at Abilene dedicated *Abilene veterans community comes together to celebrate success*

AUSTIN — Veterans from across West Texas honored the true meaning of Memorial Day as hundreds gathered to dedicate the Texas State Veterans Cemetery at Abilene. Jerry Patterson, Chairman of the Texas Veterans Land Board, hosted the event.

“Today is not about a sale at the mall or a day off from work. Today is about honoring the soldiers who served our country with dignity and courage,” Patterson said. “I am proud to stand among so many fellow Texans who share my commitment to never forget their sacrifice.”

Congressman Randy Neugebauer, Taylor County Judge George Newman, Jones County Judge Dale Spurgin, Abilene Mayor Norm Archibald, Colonel Robert F. Gass, Commander, 7th Bomb Wing, Dyess Air Force Base and Texas Veterans Commissioner John B. McKinney all spoke at today’s dedication.

“There are more than 31,000 veterans in the Abilene area glad to see this Texas State Veterans Cemetery at Abilene finally open,” Patterson said. “When federal, state and local government can join together and give back to the veterans who have given so much for our nation’s freedom, it is truly a worthwhile accomplishment.”

Patriot Guard Riders, holding flags and standing at attention, flanked the hundreds of veterans who joined for the dedication as the Abilene Community Band played patriotic music. An honor guard from Dyess Air Force Base posted the colors.

A lone B-1 bomber from the 7th Bomb Wing at Dyess Air Force Base made a fast, low pass over the dedication to the thrill of the crowd.

The new 63-acre cemetery has the capacity for up to 20,000 burials. Located four miles north of Interstate 20, just east of Farm-to-Market Road 600, it includes a covered, open-air structure for committal services; a visitors center; a computer system for locating specific graves or interments; an assembly area for special occasions, such as Memorial Day observances; an avenue of flags; and a memorial walkway for future monuments.

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“This is just a great cemetery,” said Paul Ruska, a World War II veteran who served in Europe in the Army Air Corps and resides in Abilene. “It couldn’t be in a better location, facing the lake on high ground. It is exactly what a cemetery should be.”

Construction on the cemetery began in November 2007. The first interments are expected to take place in June.

“It’s so important for family members to have a place close to home to honor our veterans for their service,” said Natalie Matthews, daughter of the late Colonel Walter P. Morton, Jr. of the U.S. Air Force. “Daddy wanted to be buried in a military cemetery, and now we don’t have to travel far to be with him.”

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs donated \$8.1 million to build the facility, which the Texas Veterans Land Board will oversee. Texas has two other state veterans cemeteries, in Killeen and Mission, and four national veterans cemeteries in Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, San Antonio and El Paso.

More information on the dedication can be found at www.glo.state.tx.us/abilene.

For information on Texas State Veterans Cemeteries and other veterans programs offered by the Texas Veterans Land Board, call 1800-252-VETS (1-800-252-8387), or visit the Veterans Land Board Web site at www.texasveterans.com.

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