



## Eugene (Gene) Gutierrez

August 25, 2022

Eugene (Gene) Gutierrez was born on September 14, 1921 and grew up in South Texas. He attended Harlingen High School and, after graduation, enlisted in the United States Army to pursue a career in engineering. Gutierrez joined the Army in 1941 after his family was devastated during the Great Depression. “I had seven siblings and my dad lost his grocery business,” Gutierrez said. “My family needed me to help financially and the Army paid \$40 a month.”

Mr. Gutierrez joined an airborne unit as a paratrooper. After that, he then began rigorous training with the First Special Service Force, an elite group of 1,800 troops from both American and Canadian armies. The men were trained in commando tactics that included mountain climbing, skiing, demolition, amphibious training, and hand-to-hand combat, using the historic V42 knife for close-quarters fighting. Gene served with the First Special Service Force fighting the Japanese on the Aleutian Islands, storming the beaches in Anzio, Italy, liberating southern France, and re-claiming Rome from the Nazis. They were dubbed “the Devil’s Brigade” by the Germans. Their exploits were so renowned Hollywood made a movie about them called *The Devil's Brigade* starring William Holden

During his time fighting in World War II, Mr. Gutierrez was honored with numerous awards, including: two Bronze Stars, one for valor and the other for infantry combat, a Liberation of France medal, a Good Conduct medal, a World War Two Victory Medal, a First Special Service Force medal, and the

Congressional Gold Medal.

Gene was willing to sacrifice himself to help his brothers in arms. In one instance he volunteered to cross into the German lines to rescue an injured soldier, when they were held at bay and repeatedly shot at by a German tank. This lasted for hours until US planes arrived allowing them to return to base. Upon returning home from the war, Mr. Gutierrez went on to pursue a degree from Oklahoma State University, graduating in 1950.

In 1951, Gene married Emma Pena known as Penny. They settled in McAllen where Penny worked as a nurse and Gene served as an educator, becoming the first Hispanic principal in McAllen. He worked at the McAllen Independent School District for 30 years until he retired in 1980.

In 1962, Gene and Penny opened a uniform store in downtown McAllen called the Uniform Center. They kept it open for 60 years.

Mr. Gutierrez served as an active member of the McAllen community through his work in the Sierra Club and as a parishioner at Our Lady of Sorrows Church.

He continued to bond with his fellow Special Forces brothers and routinely attended reunions all over the world, here in the US, in Europe and Canada. In 2008, U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, presented Gene an overdue Bronze Star Medal for his honorable service as an infantryman in World War II.

In 2015, the entire Devils Brigade unit were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in a special ceremony in Wash DC.

In September 2021 upon his 100th Birthday, Hidalgo County Commissioners Court issued a Resolution honoring Eugene "Gene" Gutierrez.

In November 2021, he was featured on "Salute to Service" special that aired on History Channel in which he was treated to a brief flight in a vintage WWII plane.

On November 19, 2021, The South Texas Museum of History interviewed Gene for two hours for their program called Museum Pláticas.

Gene was instrumental in helping to get the McAllen War Memorial built.

Gene was in great mental and physical shape up until the last few months of his life.

He attributed his well being, to exercising every morning, including 100 pushups, his faith in God, and eating natural food, many of which he grew in his backyard. He spent much time in his yard growing all types of fruit trees and eventually harvesting the fruit for meals. On the day he died, one of the large trees in his yard fell down.

At age 100, he still drove and attended to business affairs.

Gene died just a few shorts weeks of his 101st Birthday. He leaves behind his wife, Penny, three children, Tommy, Margaret and Elizabeth and four grandchildren, Ivan, Eden, Jules and Tory.

Let us acknowledge the countless achievements of Eugene Gutierrez. He dedicated his life to the protection of Democracy, and to the betterment of his community and family. We wish him, and may God grant him, many happy reunions with his brethren, friends and family that have already passed.

# Cemetery Details

## Rio Grande Valley State Veterans Cemetery

2520 South Inspiration Road  
Mission, TX 78572

# Previous Events

## Visitation and Rosary

SEP 7. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Kreidler Funeral Home, Inc.  
314 N 10th St.  
McAllen, TX 78501  
(956) 686-0234  
kreidler@sbcglobal.net  
<http://www.kreidlerfuneralhome.com/index.html>

## Funeral Mass

SEP 8. 10:00 AM (CT)

Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church

## Burial

SEP 8. 1:00 PM.

RGV state Veteran's Cemetery  
Mission, TX



# Tribute Wall



“ Eugene (Gene) Gutierrez

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October 08, 2023 at 09:43 PM



“ Eugene (Gene) Gutierrez

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November 29, 2022 at 06:40 AM

JH

“ I first met Eugene at the Halifax FSSF reunion in 2009. I was the chauffer who picked him up at the airport. He was accompanied by 4 lovely ladies. He introduced himself and his harem to me and the sense of humor that he always carried became a part of my life that day. I said you are outnumbered and his reply I am in good hands.



Throughout the years Eugene shared his life with us through the annual reunions, overseas Battlefield tours and the many phone calls.

His sense of duty to his family, First Special Service Force and to his lost buddies was front and center.

Meeting Eugene was lifechanging for so many of us.

During the tours of the foreign battlefields and cemeteries Eugene would share his commitment to his lost buddies with his wise words that he would often share with us. It helped us to feel in a small way what he felt.

During these trips there were many places where he would speak on behalf of the FSSF. Eugene was the hero that the liberated families could put a face to and his humility for the civilians years later is evident in these villages today.

Thank you Eugene for your compassion, strong faith and true friendship.

RIP

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John Hart - September 06, 2022 at 05:09 PM

EE

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



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Elsa Elizondo - August 31, 2022 at 09:11 AM

LO

“ *During the few opportunities I was able to spend time with Eugene I knew I was in the presence of someone special. His incredible health and strength at his age was immediately impressive but it was his humor, thoughtfulness, patience and love for his fellow man that affected those around him. His positive outlook and charm caused people to gravitate to him and want to know what he knew. In that way he was deeply influential to those of us who loved and respected him and even strove to live up to his example. Even though he is gone my heart can only be glad when I think of him, and I always smile thinking of his laugh and ready humor. He was my Force Dad and I believe I am a better person because we were friends.*

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**Les Owen** - August 30, 2022 at 09:01 AM

Loïc  
Jankowiak

“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



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**Loïc Jankowiak** - August 30, 2022 at 08:43 AM

MB

“ *thank you for your service. RIP*



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**M. Beeching** - August 30, 2022 at 07:40 AM



“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



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**Kreidler Funeral Home, Inc.** - August 29, 2022 at 03:31 PM