



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
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PRESS RELEASE

**Voices of Veterans: Sergeant Francisco Barrientes
Shares His Story of Service with the U.S. Army**

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AUSTIN — Today, Texas Land Commissioner and Veterans Land Board (VLB) Chairwoman Dawn Buckingham, M.D., is proud to introduce the next installment of the series highlighting the VLB's Voices of Veterans oral history program. Today, we hear the story of U.S. Army Veteran Sergeant Francisco Barrientes, who served during the Vietnam War and received two Purple Hearts and the Bronze Star.

Barrientes is a Native Texan from Edinburg. He was drafted into the military in 1968, but said he was ready to serve his country and was supported by his family. After basic training and advanced infantry training with the U.S. Army, he was sent to Vietnam where he faced guerilla fighting and unfamiliar terrain.

VOICES OF VETERAN



name

Barrientes, Francisco

military branch

Army

rank

SGT

date interviewed

4/27/2020

Francisco Barrientes, a native Texan from [redacted] drafted into the U.S. Army in 1968. In 1969 [redacted] over to Vietnam and on May 5, 1969, he received [redacted] when a hand grenade struck his leg. A few weeks later [redacted] June 20, 1969, he sustained a gunshot wound [redacted] Sgt. Barrientes spent the next seven years [redacted] Fort Sam Houston and has undergone over [redacted] He returned home to Edinburg, where he [redacted] volunteered at his children's school, and [redacted] Barrientes was named a Hero for Children [redacted] State Board of Education. In 2006 The Ed [redacted] district named a middle school in Barrientes [redacted]

Even though he was told that the Northern Vietnamese purposely targeted machine gunners and radio operators, Barrientes volunteered to replace the machine gunner in his unit. His leg was injured by a hand grenade in 1969, but he returned to service. However, Barrientes was injured a second time as a machine gunner and much more grievously.

"There was a bunker with two Vietnamese inside. And they were waiting for me, waiting for me to turn around all the way... so they could hit me in the face. So when I turned all the way around when I saw the bunker, and I saw the two Vietnamese... I saw them at the same time I got hit... they fired the AK-47 weapon and hit me right on the front of my face on my nose, and the bullet went down to my stomach; I swallowed it... and it stopped just a fraction of an inch before it hit my spine... I was there wounded, and of course, I was scared."



VOICES OF VETERANS

He would have perished were he fell if it weren't for the quick and brave work of the 19-year-old field medic, who Barrientes said he has called and thanked for saving his life many years after they left the service.

He underwent over 40 surgeries to save his life and reconstruct his face at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. After his service, he became an invaluable part of his community. Barrientes was named a Hero for Children by the Texas State Board of Education, and the Edinburg School District named a middle school in his honor.



VOICES OF VETERANS

VLS CHAIRWOMAN, DAWN BUCKINGHAM, M.D.

When asked what message he would like to give future generations, he said, "Serving our country is an honor...to give back to our communities, to our nation for all the wonderful things we've enjoyed, all the freedoms we have enjoyed. We need to remember, and now especially... we need to remember not to take that for granted. We need to enjoy it every day, one day at a time."

To listen to Sergeant Francisco Barrientes tell his story, click the button below:

[Sergeant Francisco Barrientes' Story](#)

Veterans can email VoicesofVeterans@glo.texas.gov to tell their stories. Please note that the Veteran must be a resident of Texas at the time of their interview.

Voices of Veterans is a state agency's first Veteran oral history program. It records the stories of Texas Veterans through their time in service and after returning home from combat.

The VLB records interviews with veterans over the phone or in person. Their interviews are then permanently archived in the Office of Veterans Records at the GLO, where they join the historical documents of other Texas heroes such as Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and William Barret Travis.

Veterans' interviews are also available to researchers, historians, genealogists, and the public. These precious records inspire future generations and remind us of our Veterans' sacrifices.

To listen to the over 500 archived stories of Veterans documented through the GLO's Voices of Veterans oral history program, click the button below:

[Voices of Veterans](#)