

Saluting Veterans

By **DAVE RALPH** Special to the Star | Posted: Tuesday, November 11, 2014 10:30 pm

HARLINGEN — Geronimo T. Cruz's memories traveled to a special part of his place in history Tuesday during Veterans Day at Pendleton Park.

The Harlingen resident, who served in combat with the U.S. Army, 25th Infantry Division, 27th Infantry Regiment from 1950-1951 in the Korean War, saw his brick paver for the first time at the Veterans' Memorial. He stepped around a set of pavers bearing the names of other veterans and he occasionally stopped to refocus on his paver. His daughter, Nora Ocanas of Harlingen, took his photo as he stood next to the paver with his name near the Korean War portion of the memorial.

Cruz said he was glad to see the paver because it reminded him of "the good old days" of his youth, but the paver also stirred some battle memories. "We had a rough time with the Chinese," he said. "They kept on coming and coming because there were so many of them."

Attorney Gustavo Ruiz of Harlingen, keynote speaker for Harlingen's Veterans Day ceremony, was a sergeant in the U.S. Marine Corps in Iraq. He said many veterans returning to the U.S. experience difficulties such as unemployment, addiction and depression. Ruiz is a defense counsel for the Cameron County Veterans Treatment Court Program, and he said the program is proud of its achievements in improving the lives of those it serves. The program is scheduled to produce its first graduates in January.

He said too many people forget that family members of veterans endured pain and hardships during the veterans' tours of military duty.

"Our mission is not over," Ruiz told veterans. "... I challenge you to answer the question, 'What else can you do to improve the quality of life for our veterans?'"



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The Lyford school district hosted its Veterans Day ceremony at Bulldog Field Tuesday morning with more than 1,000 people in attendance. The event included recognition of veterans, a dove release, a canon salute and sky divers.