

Congratulations to our March 2021

VFW Dist 1 Chapter;

Texoma Hero

Assistant Chief of the Choctaw Nation, Jack Austin, Jr., Specialist (SP4/E-4) United States Army (1987-1991) is the Texoma Hero for March 2021. MARCH 2021 TEXOMA HERO NOMINATION "Founded by Billy Teague and HOT 107.3 FM in January 2015, the Texoma Hero Program was developed to not only recognize a local Veteran's military service, but continued service to our community after leaving the military. It is also a small way to say Thank You and pay tribute to all who have and are still serving in OUR armed forces."

Teague said, "We are Honored to have this opportunity to recognize Asst. Chief Austin, not only for his Honorable Military Service, but also for his service to the community and Veterans since leaving the military. We would also like to extend our appreciation to Chief of the Choctaw Nation, Gary Batton for making this nomination."

Due to the current Covid restrictions, attendance to this ceremony was by invitation only, as only limited seating was available.

In addition to Teague and Batton, presenters and special congratulations came from Judy Teller, American Legion Post 29, VVA Chapter 973, VFW Post 2772; Joi J Biddle, Sherman Lions Club; Phillip Daniel, Modern Woodmen; Bill IBrown, Woodmen Life Chapter 11, Red River Valley MVP, Faith Church of Sherman; Martha Mell Neyman; Emil North and Amanda North.

Darrell Hartley, PO2, United States Navy Combat Veteran, VFW District 1 Chaplain, VFW Post 2772 Chaplain, American Legion District 13 Chaplain and Texoma Hero, offered the invocation prior to posting of the colors by the Choctaw honor guard. The Army hymn was played by Rob Ballew and the Sherman Police Regional Pipe Band.

Chantelle Standefer sang the National Anthem in Choctaw. Autstin was presented a flag, and service appreciation certificate by Teague and Major James R. Manis. A special coin representing the American Legion Commander was given by Duane Compton

Chief Batton read the nomination to the group. "Jack Austin Jr. entered the United States Army in October 1987 and served with honor until August 1991. After completing Basic Military Training and Advanced Individual Training, Jack was Stationed in Germany where he served as Field Artilleryman.

During his distinguished service, Jack was awarded the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal and Army Meritorious Unit Commendation Ribbon. Jack was also awarded the Expert Marksmanship Badge for rifle, grenade, machine gun and field artillery as well as an Expert Driver Badge and Air Assault Badge.

He has served with honor and integrity and still does that today in his role as Asst. Chief. Since becoming Assistant Chief in April 2014, he has continued to lead and advocate for our Veterans by establishing designated parking spaces at all of our facilities and established the laying of wreaths with our youth at our Veteran's cemetery during Memorial Day weekend.

He has continued to support our Veteran's Airlift Command, our Veteran's Day ceremony by providing gifts in honor of our military men and women, providing paid leave for our associates who are soldiers while on active duty, as well as the Veteran's Advocacy program to help our veterans receive their benefits.

I hereby request your honoring of Assistant Chief Jack Austin as the Texoma Hero of the Month."

Teague said, "People we talk to say were not a hero. Not to take anything away from those who have died in combat, but the heroes we recognize are Men and women who do things that young people would like to emulate – live a life of character and honesty. Since our first ceremony on the last Friday of each month. To date we have recognized 76 vet and 7 honorary veterans.

"ur Texoma heroes are a group of veterans and patriots who come together to say to fellow veteran to say to them how much we respect them how much we love them and how much we appreciate their service."

Assistant Chief Austin had an emotional response, showing his humble heart and servant attitude toward others. "I have never considered myself a hero," he said, obviously moved. He thanked all involved, and when he got past the lump in his throat, he thanked the Chief for the kind words and nomination, he recognized his wife of 31 years and his youngest son, Sam, who was present.

Assistant Chief Austin said, "So many of our people didn't come back, those were the real heroes. For me, serving my country was neve to gain any ribbons, award or accomplishments. My goal was simply to serve. I had a lot of great examples to lead by. My dad served in the Korean War in the Army. My uncle served in WWII in the Navy and my grandfather served in WWI in the Army. AS a young kid from a little town in SE OK entering into the army I couldn't imagine where Uncle Sam would take me, what I world learn or what I would see, and I wouldn't take anything for it. After all, I got to travel the world, I got to be part of historic events, I got to make lifelong friends , and I know our Veterans will appreciate this and I got to enjoy some of the finest meals that there is – and that is a joke, I promise you. I was thinking about this last night, I am glad I survived those c-rations! I learned to cook over engine blocks. I became quite the cook with MREs and a warm engine!

"I was blessed to serve with some really great people. Today I continue to be blessed serving with great folds. My mission has changed. We are serving the Choctaw people. But I continue to be able to serve alongside some really great people with a really great mission. I want to say 'Thanks' to the Color Guard and the Choctaw employees and leadership team. I am deeply humbled and honored," said Austin.