

By: Kitzman

H.C.R. No. 115

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, The Texas Legislative Medal of Honor was established
2 to recognize gallant and intrepid service by a member of the state
3 or federal military forces, and U.S. Army Master Sergeant Mike C.
4 Peña of Newgulf, who gave his life to save his fellow soldiers
5 during the Korean War, proved himself a deserving recipient of this
6 prestigious commendation; and

7 WHEREAS, Born on November 6, 1924, Mike Peña was the son of
8 Mexican immigrants Miguel and Maria Peña; in 1940, two months shy of
9 his 16th birthday, he enlisted in the army in Houston after
10 misrepresenting his age to recruiters; he was assigned to the 5th
11 Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, and received training at
12 Fort Clark in Brackettville and Fort Bliss in El Paso; just a year
13 after his induction into the service, the Japanese surprise attack
14 on Pearl Harbor precipitated the United States' entry into World
15 War II; and

16 WHEREAS, Deployed to the Pacific theater in 1943, Sergeant
17 Peña fought to liberate the Philippines from Japanese forces and
18 later took part in the occupation of Japan; he received an honorable
19 discharge on October 3, 1945, and reenlisted the same day; a month
20 earlier, on September 5, he had married his sweetheart, the former
21 Aurora Lola Urenda, and their life together would be enriched by the
22 birth of two sons, Michael David and Frederick William; for a time,
23 the family resided at Camp McGill in occupied Japan before moving to
24 Camp Carson in Colorado; and

1 WHEREAS, In late June 1950, the U.S. military was again
2 called upon when soldiers from communist North Korea invaded South
3 Korea; Sergeant Peña volunteered to return to action, rejoining the
4 5th Cavalry Regiment, and he participated in an amphibious landing
5 at P'ohang-dong, Korea, in July 1950; the 1st Cavalry Division was
6 ordered to defend a 35-mile sector along the Nakdong River, which
7 became the scene of intense fighting as enemy combatants pushed in
8 from the north; and

9 WHEREAS, On September 4, 1950, Sergeant Peña and his platoon
10 were posted near Waegwan, when a North Korean Army battalion
11 emerged only yards away, having advanced under the shroud of
12 darkness and mist; the platoon opened fire but was caught off guard
13 by the attack and was forced to withdraw; Sergeant Peña swiftly
14 rallied his troops and led them in a counterattack that succeeded in
15 regaining their lost ground; and

16 WHEREAS, Sergeant Peña and his men then established a
17 defensive perimeter and attempted to repel the North Koreans'
18 repeated assaults, but the enemy enjoyed an overwhelming numerical
19 advantage; when the platoon's ammunition supply began to dwindle,
20 Sergeant Peña commanded his men to fall back and seized a machine
21 gun to provide cover for the retreating troops; making a heroic
22 stand, he held back the enemy singlehandedly until the early
23 morning hours, when his position was overrun and he was fatally
24 wounded; he died at the age of 25, on the date of his fifth wedding
25 anniversary, and he was buried with full military honors at
26 Cedarvale Cemetery in Bay City; and

27 WHEREAS, The outstanding service that Sergeant Peña rendered

1 over the course of his military career brought him more than 30
2 decorations and awards, including the Distinguished Service Cross,
3 the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart with two oak leaf clusters, and
4 the Army Good Conduct Medal with bronze clasp and two loops;
5 moreover, his heroism in Korea was posthumously recognized with the
6 bestowal of the Congressional Medal of Honor at a White House
7 ceremony on March 18, 2014; in his hometown, he has been honored
8 with a memorial plaque at Newgulf Elementary School; moreover, a
9 Texas state highway, a gate at Fort Bliss, and a training center at
10 Fort Cavazos bear his name; and

11 WHEREAS, The extraordinary gallantry and immeasurable
12 sacrifice of Master Sergeant Mike C. Peña exemplify the proudest
13 tradition of service to country, and he is indeed deserving of this
14 state's supreme military commendation; now, therefore, be it

15 RESOLVED, That the 88th Legislature of the State of Texas
16 hereby direct the governor of the State of Texas to posthumously
17 award the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor to Mike C. Peña in
18 recognition of his valiant service during the Korean War.