

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.C.R. 44
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Texas Legislative Medal of Honor was established to recognize gallant and intrepid service by a member of the state or federal military forces. Master Sergeant Cleto L. Rodriguez has proven himself a deserving recipient. Contingent upon the passage of S.B. 1824 as instructed by the committee on the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor, S.C.R. 44 instructs the governor to grant this award to Master Sergeant Rodriguez.

The Texas Legislative Medal of Honor was established to recognize gallant and intrepid service by a member of the state or federal military forces, and Cleto L. Rodriguez proved himself a deserving recipient of this prestigious award.

Born in San Marcos on April 26, 1923, Cleto Rodriguez lost both his parents when he was nine, and he moved to San Antonio to live with relatives; he joined the United States Army in 1944, becoming a private in Company B of the 148th Infantry.

On February 9, 1945, during the battle for Manila in the Philippines, Private Rodriguez and his unit were advancing on the heavily defended Paco Railroad Station when they were pinned down by intense enemy fire; at that point, Private Rodriguez and Private First Class John Reese took the initiative to charge the enemy position; the two men reached a house 60 yards from the Japanese emplacements, and from that location, under the gaze of enemy gunners, they killed 35 combatants.

On moving closer to their objective, the pair spotted Japanese reinforcements moving toward the station; Privates Rodriguez and Reese killed more than 40 of the group, which discouraged further attempts to reinforce the Japanese defenses; Private Reese then provided covering fire as Private Rodriguez ran forward and lobbed five grenades into the station doorway, destroying a 20mm gun and a heavy machine gun and eliminating their crews; as the pair withdrew to their own lines, Private Reese was mortally wounded.

The bold actions of Privates Rodriguez and Reese threw Japanese defenses at the station into disarray and made possible the subsequent seizure of the stronghold; two days later, Private Rodriguez again enabled his comrades to move forward when he singlehandedly killed six more enemy soldiers and took out another 20mm gun; for having materially aided the advance of U.S. troops in Manila, he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Upon his return to San Antonio, Cleto Rodriguez was presented with the key to the city; he worked as a representative for the Veterans Administration and then served in the U.S. Air Force from 1952 to 1954 and in the army from 1955 to 1970, rising to the rank of master sergeant before his retirement; over the years, he also served his community as a member of the League of United Latin American Citizens; his boyhood elementary school was renamed in his honor in 1975.

Married to Flora Muniz in November 1945, Cleto Rodriguez became the proud father of four children; he passed away on December 7, 1990, and was buried at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery; the following year, a section of U.S. Route 90 in San Antonio was named after him; the city has two murals featuring his likeness, at the Cassiano Homes housing project and at the San Antonio Central Library.

Cleto Rodriguez repeatedly risked his life to complete his mission and save the lives of his fellow soldiers, and for his remarkable heroism, he is most assuredly deserving of this state's supreme military award.

RESOLVED

That the 84th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby direct the governor of the State of Texas to posthumously award the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor to Cleto L. Rodriguez in recognition of his valiant service during World War II.