

Valley High School Veterans Memorial and Scholarship Fund

By Elijo Padilla (with editing assistance from Gordene MacKenzie, Los Ranchos Historical Society)

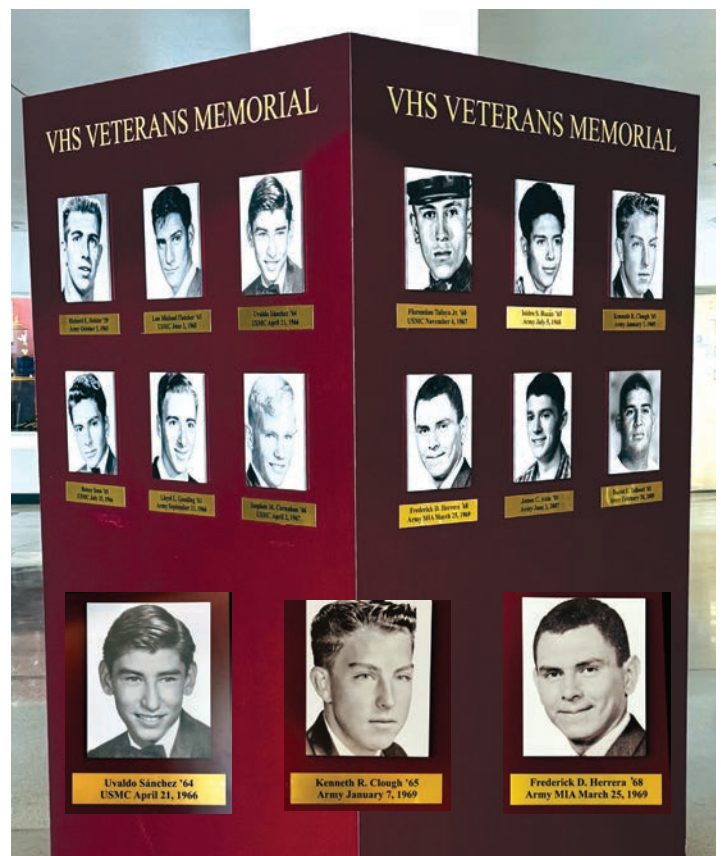
I met Uvaldo Sanchez (Wally) in 1958 when we were Little League teammates at Taft Junior High School in Los Ranchos. Forty years later at a fruit market on 2nd Street one of the employees asked: "Are you Eli?" I said yes. He informed me that he was Wally's brother. I said I had not seen Wally since he graduated in 1964 and asked how he was doing. He told me Wally had been killed in Vietnam in April 1966. Those words were like a punch to the gut. This may have been the moment that spurred the creation of the Valley High School Veterans Memorial.

Valley High School (VHS) opened in the fall of 1954, as the third public high school in Albuquerque. For families and students in Los Ranchos, Alameda, Corrales and the greater North Valley, it was a godsend. Most families lacked the means to transport students "all the way to Albuquerque." Many students, like my father, completed their formal education (eight years) at the Bernalillo County "grammar school" on north Fourth Street."

VHS graduates born in the early 1940s, and the "boomers" born after WWII had more opportunities than our parents regarding employment, serving in the military or going to college. At VHS we had teachers who saw our potential and inspired us to succeed. Not surprisingly, many of my peers became teachers. Others became attorneys, physicians, architects, entrepreneurs, and well-known athletes, writers, artists, actors and community activists.

Ten Valley High School graduates lost their lives in Vietnam. Two others perished in the war in Iraq. They are listed by name, VHS class year, branch of the military and the date of their demise.

At least three of these men were residents of Los Ranchos: Uvaldo, Freddy, and Ken. In fact, Freddy grew up at the corner of Río Grande and Chavez, a stones-throw from Village Hall.



Richard Heister – '59, USMC, June 2, 1965
Michael Fletcher – '65, Army, October 5, 1965
Uvaldo Sánchez – '64, USMC, April 21, 1966
Benny Sena – '65, USMC, July 25, 1966
Lloyd Gooding – '63, Army, September 23, 1966
Stephen Carnahan – '66, USMC, April 2, 1967
Florentino Tafoya – '60, USMC, November 4, 1967
Isidro Bazán – '65, Army, July 5, 1968
Kenneth Clough – '65, Army, January 7, 1969
Freddy Herrera – '68, Army, MIA March 25, 1969
James Akin – '01, Army, June 3, 2007
Daniel Tallouzi – '02, Army, February 28, 2009

To make certain that these 12 young men are never forgotten, the VHS Veterans' Memorial, located in the gym lobby was dedicated on November 11, 2022. Learn more about Uvaldo, Freddy, Ken and the other nine young men by visiting www.vhsveteransmemorial.com.

Each Spring, a VHS Veterans' Memorial Scholarship is awarded to a student in the helping professions at an Honors Assembly where the 12 young men who sacrificed their lives in service to our country are individually recognized. In May, the fourth VHS Veterans Memorial Scholarship in the amount of \$3,000 will be awarded.

Consider making a tax-deductible donation to the VHS Veterans Memorial and Scholarship Fund, Inc. (VHS VM&SF, Inc.) and mail it to: VHS VM&SF, Inc., c/o E. R. Padilla, 315 Nuevo Hacienda Ln., NW, Los Ranchos, NM 87107. Every dollar raised goes to the scholarship fund. Please call or e-mail if you have any questions: Eligio R. (Eli) Padilla, Ph.D., VHS 1965; (505) 440-4706, eligiop@swcp.com