

## Colonel Dewey D. Wheat, Jr. Pampa High School Class of 1969



Colonel Dewey D. Wheat, Jr. was born October 6, 1950 in McAllen, Texas. In June 1960 his family relocated to Pampa and since then has considered it his home. His parents owned and operated "Wheat's Jewelry". Beginning his music experience playing the trombone in the 4th grade at Woodrow Wilson Elementary Band, he later spent three great and memorable years in the "Pride of Pampa" Harvester Band and the "Swing Kings" stage band. He also attended Sam Houston Elementary and Pampa Junior High School. It was in his sophomore year that he first dated his future wife, Gayle Leith Miller (Class of '69). Her parents owned and operated "Miller's Food".

He attended West Texas State University (now West Texas A&M) where, in 1973, as a Distinguished Military Graduate from the Reserve Officers Training Corps with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Field Artillery. He later graduated from Campbell University (North Carolina) with a Masters of Science Degree in Government. He is also a graduate of the Field Artillery Officers Basic and Advanced Courses, the Foreign Area Officer Course (Middle East), the Defense Language Institute (French), the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the Armed Forces Staff College, and the United States Army War College (where he also served on the faculty of the Distance Education Department).

Colonel Wheat's career has taken him all over the world from Europe, the Middle East, South America, Asia, and the Pacific Islands. He has served in all capacities commensurate of his rank from platoon leader to battalion commander in both peacetime and war. In 1994-1996, he commanded the largest battalion in the U.S. Army (1,587 soldiers)

He is a highly decorated veteran of three combat deployments. In 1984, while serving as a Military Observer with the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization in Tyre, South Lebanon he survived three intense firefights and an incident where he was held hostage for eight hours. Upon his return home he was decorated for his actions with the Defense Meritorious Medal. In 1990, during Operation DESERT SHIELD, he was solely responsible for acquiring all chemical protection equipment and rolling stock (trucks) for the Arab Coalition. Due to his selfless devotion to completing this mission Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney decorated him personally. At the onset of Operation DESERT STORM, he volunteered to join U.S. forces already deployed in Southwest Asia and was assigned as the Deputy G-3 (Plans and Operations) for XVIII Airborne Corps Artillery. During the ground battle, he served as the XVIII

Airborne Corps Artillery Commanding General's personal liaison to the 18th Field Artillery Airborne Brigade, which was supporting the French attack into Iraq on the left flank (General Norman Schwarzkopf referred to this operation as the "Hail Mary"). He was decorated with the Bronze Star Medal for his actions in combat. One week after September 11, 2001, Colonel Wheat began to deploy his unit, the 1st Battlefield Coordination Detachment, to the theater of war in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. Colonel Wheat's unit was instrumental in ensuring all ground operations were coordinated with the providers of all air support and the identification and targeting of "high payoff targets. He personally observed the demise or capture of many high-ranking Taliban and Al-Qaida leaders. He received his second Bronze Star and the U.S. Air Force presented him with their Commendation Medal for his participation in Operation ANACONDA in Shal-e-kot Valley, Afghanistan.

In 1999, Colonel Wheat was designated a Distinguished Alumnus of West Texas A&M University in recognition of his career as a military officer.

Colonel Wheat feels that through his service to our country, his greatest contribution to life has been the opportunity to lead and mentor the youth of America. Throughout his career he has provided his subordinates with not only the skills necessary to be successful and survive in war, but has provided wise counsel to young men and women whether the subject be education, career choices, or parenting. Today, there are countless Americans, military and civilian, who have benefited from his example of patriotism, dedication to the profession of arms and mission accomplishment, and sincere concern for his fellow man. His creed has always been "Duty and Honor to His God, His Country, and to His Family".

Throughout his career and no matter where he served, Colonel Wheat has always insisted that it be known that he is from Pampa in the Texas Panhandle. He has never forgotten, nor will he ever forget, where he comes from, the people who provided him with the necessary tools for his journey in life, and the immense sense of pride he has from being a Texan from that great little city of Pampa at the "Top o' Texas".

Though he and Gayle, his wife of 31 years and his best soldier, ended their military career on January 1, 2003, he will always be a soldier at heart and approach any task with dedication and professionalism.

NOTE: After retirement, Colonel Wheat attended Gettysburg Theological Seminary and was ordained in 2007 by the Presbyterian Church (USA) as a Minister of Word and Sacrament. He was called to minister two small, rural churches in Juniata County, Pennsylvania where he and Gayle now reside – and, of course, under a Texas flag.