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## War veterans remembered

By STEPHEN THOMAS

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Van Middleton cranks Old Glory into the sky as Willie Estes snaps a salute during the opening of the May 25 rededication of the newly landscaped Liberty County Veterans War Memorial Monument in Liberty. They are members of the Liberty-based Nolan D. Pickett Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5621 Honor Guard.

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The chiseled names of Cpl. William W. Partlow and 1st Lt. Nolan D. Pickett are separated by four inches on the Liberty County Veterans War Memorial Monument. They are nevertheless inseparable in their honor.

The theme of the May 25 rededication of the monument, which stands to the south of Liberty High School's War Memorial Stadium, was the indissoluble union of the Supreme Sacrifice of all 126 service members inscribed on that wall and the cause of freedom for which they gave their lives.

Those 126 honored dead, and their fallen comrades, bequeathed liberty to generations, retired Army Lt. Col. Anthony Landry said in his rededication speech.

"We are Americans," Landry said, "and we do possess the priceless heritage of freedom."

A grateful community embraces those who shed blood for the endurance of that heritage.

"My desire is that this monument stand, in a small way, as a symbol of the honor and gratitude that we owe to these fallen warriors," Liberty Mayor Carl Pickett said, before he read stirring letters from the uncle whose name is on that wall.

Dozier Partlow, whose uncle's name appears above that of 1st Lt. Pickett, read the history of the memorial, which was built, along with the stadium, by the Liberty Lions Club. Liberty Lions Club President Brett Steed spoke of the monument as a part of a proud Lions' tradition. The monument was dedicated in 1947.

A successful fundraising drive that was started in February paid for the beautifying landscaping, the completion of which inspired the monument's rededication.

The trees were removed from behind the monument, giving game-day spectators a clear view of the newly installed flag poles from which Old Glory, the Texas Flag and the POW/MIA Flag fly. Surrounding plants separate the monument grounds from the grassy open space. Ground lighting has been installed.

When the "Star-Spangled Banner" is played at football games, everyone has a place to turn and to reflect.

"We're hopeful that with this new line of sight that has been created, from the stadium over here to the monument," Liberty Independent School District Superintendent Cynthia Lusignolo said, "that our young men and our young women will be reminded weekly of the price that has been paid, and continues to be paid, in order for them to enjoy the freedom of a Friday night battle, fought under the lights to the cheers of a large crowd, after which everyone goes home safely."

The monument area has changed, but the meaning of the monument has not.

The immutability of freedom as the natural condition of humankind shall endure as long as there are people such as those the county and the nation honor on Memorial Day - people such as those 126 memorialized souls - who are willing to die for a cause more valuable than treasures and more fundamental than property.

As master of ceremonies retired Air Force Col. Mark B. McClelland put it, "As much as anything, these men loved freedom."

And that's the reason a grateful community embraces them.

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