



## COL (Ret) Edgar Keltner



Colonel Keltner is honored for his dedication and service to the Corps of Cadets during his tenures with the Military Science Department of North Texas Agricultural College. Colonel Keltner was born on 7 March 1893 in Manor, Texas. He graduated from Allen Academy, Bryan, Texas in 1912. He attended the University of Texas at Austin where he lettered in varsity baseball in 1916 and 1917. He left the university in 1917 to enroll in the first Officer Training camp at Leon Springs, Texas. In August of 1917, upon completion of training, he was

commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Infantry as a Reserve Officer and entered on active duty.

During his long and illustrious military career, he served in a multitude of assignments around the world. Noteworthy though are the assignments as Professor of Military Science and Tactics with the Fort Worth High School System from 1926-1928; Professor of Military Science and Tactics at North Texas Agricultural College from 1928-1932; and with the ROTC program at The University of Dayton, Dayton Ohio, from 1935-1939.

In 1941, Colonel Keltner was serving as the Chief of Staff of the 91st Philippine Army Division when Japan entered World War II. Colonel Keltner was captured along the other survivors of Bataan and Corrigador. He **survived the infamous Bataan Death March** and for the duration of World War II was a prisoner of the war of the Japanese. His fellow prisoner and close friend was General Jonathan Wainwright.

Following the end of the war and his release as a POW, Colonel Keltner requested and was granted assignment as the Professor of Military Science and Tactics at North Texas Agricultural College. He proudly served in the position from 1946-1952. Colonel Keltner retired from active duty on 28 February 1953 after over 35 years of service.

Colonel Keltner's career was marked by many worthwhile achievements and devotion to serving his country. During his tours with the Military Science Department at North Texas Agricultural College and under his leadership he did much to enhance the ROTC program and bring credit and recognition to the Corps of Cadets.

Colonel Keltner's awards include the **Distinguished Service Cross**, this nation's second highest award for valor; the **Silver Star**; Legion of Merit; **Purple Heart**, Presidential Citation with two clusters; and the Republic of Philippines Presidential Citation.

Colonel Keltner's performance while assigned to North Texas Agricultural College and his achievements during his long and colorful military career brought great credit and recognition upon himself, the Corps of Cadets, and the University of Texas at Arlington.

## **Distinguished Service Cross Citation**

Service: United States Army

Rank: Colonel (Infantry)

Division: 91st Division, Philippine Army

Action Date: December 29 & 30, 1941

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Headquarters, U.S. Forces-Pacific, General Orders No. 234 (October 6, 1945)

(Citation Needed) – SYNOPSIS: The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918, takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross to Colonel (Infantry) Edgar Harland Keltner (ASN: 0-8241), United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy while serving as Chief of Staff, Headquarters, 91st Division, Philippine Army, in action against enemy forces at Luzon, Philippine Islands on 29 and 30 December 1941. Colonel Keltner's inspiring leadership, personal bravery and zealous devotion to duty exemplify the highest traditions of the military forces of the United States and reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Army.

## Obituary

Services were held Friday for Col. Edgar Harland Keltner, believed to have been the oldest survivor of the Bataan Death March of World War II.

Colonel Keltner died in a hospital in Arlington, Tex., on Thursday, a month before his 89th birthday.

He served in both World Wars and spent a total of 35 years before retiring in 1953. Colonel Keltner was the 48-year-old chief of staff of the 91st Army Division in the Philippines when he was captured along with his troops when the islands fell to the Japanese. Many younger men died in the Bataan march in April 1942, in which 70,000 prisoners of war were forced to walk 120 miles.

The colonel once said of the march: "It was not the length of the march that took the toll of lives, but it was the conditions. We were forced to get up early and stand all morning in the broiling sun, then begin our march in the afternoon. All of this without water. We were forced to build bridges, remove the land mines.

Colonel Keltner was freed Aug. 17, 1945, after 42 months as a prisoner of war, when Soviet troops stormed a prison in Manchuria. He later taught at Arlington State College, which eventually became the University of Texas at Arlington.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1982/02/08/obituaries/col-edgar-kelner-dies-at-88-bataan-death-march-survivor.html>