



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **National Guard Armory will be Dedicated to Unicoi Countians**

**NASHVILLE** – Nine World War II veterans and a Tennessee Army National Guard soldier who died while deployed with his Erwin, Tenn., unit will be honored October 18 when the armory in Erwin is dedicated in their names.

Ceremonies will begin Saturday promptly at 9 a.m. at the armory located at 615 South Main Avenue.

Sgt. 1st Class Mark Edwards, National Guardsman from Erwin's then H Company, 2nd Squadron of the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, died on June 9, 2005, near Tuz, Iraq. The 40-year-old soldier made his home in the Unicoi community and was a 22-year veteran of the military.

"The Erwin Nine," as they came to be known, were all Unicoi County residents who volunteered for the Air Force during World War II and were shot down over enemy territory. None actually served together and all were shot down at different times in different places.

Remarkably, with more than 50 prison camps scattered across Nazi Germany, the Unicoi Countians wound up in the same Prisoner of War camp, Stalag Luft IV, and survived to tell the story. In 2006 their story was recounted in a book, "The Erwin Nine."

The new sign to be unveiled on the armory will read, "Erwin Nine/SFC Mark Edwards Armory." Members of the Edwards family and at least two of the three surviving Erwin Nine are expected to be in attendance.

Dedicatory remarks will be given by Maj. Gen. Gus L. Hargett, Tennessee Adjutant General.

The public is invited and encouraged to attend.

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