



**MHC
FACULTY
SPOTLIGHT
ALEX MENDOZA**

EIGHT QUESTIONS FOR DR. MENDOZA:

1. How did you get interested in Military History?

I first became interested in military history reading the comic books that were available to me in my childhood. Simple little comic books such as Sgt. Rock, The Unknown Soldier, and G.I. Combat all focused on World War II and even included some marginal references to the Civil War. Consequently, I began to read up on the European Theater or the Pacific Theater to see if these comics were correct. Later, in my teenage years, I moved to building military scale models of World War II planes and tanks. Naturally, I had to read a little bit on the campaigns I was trying to depict. Progression into military history thus was easy by college.

2. What interests you most about being a professional military historian?

I am genuinely fascinated by the notion that I can earn a living talking and writing about something I thoroughly enjoy.

3. What place does Military History have in academia?

I firmly believe that Military History should have a strong role in studying the nation's past. Though there are many concerns about the smaller number of history majors pursuing undergraduate degrees, I believe it is not that students do not want to learn about the country's past conflicts; rather, it is a reluctance to face them head on in a college classroom setting.

4. How do you integrate Military History in your curriculum?

At the undergraduate level, I integrate military history in every single class I teach. I believe you cannot adequately teach the history of the United States without delving into the various wars and conflicts that have marked the nation. From the colonial Indian wars to the current war on Terror, the impact that wars have had on American society are inseparable from other aspects of history. Wars do not occur in a vacuum. Instead, they could be seen as being a part of the nation's political, social, and diplomatic framework.

5. What are your current and future projects?

My current and future project (which feels overwhelming, at times) is finishing my manuscript on Mexican Texans and the American wars that they have participated in since the Texas Revolution. I have already written a few articles and presented papers on the subject. Yet I need to complete the entire manuscript.

6. What was the hardest aspect of writing your most recent book?

The most difficult aspect of writing my last book on the Battle of Chickamauga (1863) was the quick time frame I had to complete the work. When I finished the manuscript I inadvertently exceeded the word count limits of my publisher and it took some additional time to whittle it into shape.

7. Any advice to students aspiring to be military historians?

Go with your gut! Over twenty years ago I was told to be wary of studying fields of history that could pigeon hole me and limit the possibility to find a job in academia. Luckily for me I did not listen to those people. I would thus urge any student who wants to aspire to be a military historian to pursue what they love.

8. If you could have any career in the world, what would it be and why?

I am already doing what I love. Even some of the hobbies I enjoy, such as photography, are made easier because of my profession.