



Veterans Day Parade Thanks and Remembers

Thanking and remembering.

Those were the twin themes that reverberated throughout the City of Perris' annual Veterans Parade on November 9, an event that drew more than 2,000 participants and spectators.

Thanks for your willingness to enlist and spend long periods away from home and family. Thanks for your commitment to put yourself in harm's way to defend American freedoms and liberty. Remember those veterans suffering from mental and physical wounds as a result of their service. Remember those who never came home.

The 2013 Veteran's Parade featured 48 military vehicles and classic cars, marching bands, equestrian riders, motorcycle contingents, honor details, precision-drill units, dance groups and dignitaries attracted to a City that traces its military ties to the Civil War.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, who as a teen-ager served as a Navy shipboard radar operator, said residents must never forget "the service of our veterans and what that service offers us: freedom."

"As a veteran, this parade is very special," Busch said.

Parade Grand Marshal Shawn Haughney wore his Army dress uniform. Haughney, who served in Germany during the Cold War, snapped off a series of crisp salutes to pedestrians along the route. One of the volunteers along the route was Gene Rasmussen, a City Public Safety Commissioner and Vietnam Veteran.

Rasmussen served in the Navy in Vietnam in 1968-69, providing port security at Da Nang and the Perfume River at Hue. He returned home to an America that proved indifferent or outright hostile to the war in Vietnam and those who fought it.

"When I came back I was not very popular," Rasmussen said. "This parade makes us feel better. It's important for the country to honor its veterans and this is a way everybody can honor them."

Rasmussen said he was exposed to Agent Orange during his time in Vietnam and was recently diagnosed with prostate cancer, which has been linked to the defoliant.

The dangers of military service do not discourage California Military Institute cadet Salvador Fierros, 15, who plans to enlist in the Marines when he's old enough. Salvador serves as the first sergeant of the school's armed rifle platoon, giving orders to the cadets under his direction and watching them flawlessly execute those movements.

"It's a great feeling of accomplishment," he said. "It's great to show off the discipline that our cadets display."

Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough attached pictures of his 21-year-old twin son and daughter to the back of a classic car he drove during the parade. Son Schyler serves as a lance corporal in the Marines; daughter Andrea is an Army sergeant stationed in Germany. An older son, Garrett, served in the Air Force.

"Service is service, whether it involves combat or peeling potatoes," Yarbrough said. "Everyone takes the same oath. Events like this are the least we can do to show our appreciation and love for the men and women who stand ready to give their lives for this great country."

City Councilman Al Landers, as he has for the last 12 years, served as emcee and parade announcer. Landers said Veterans Day reminds him of his brother, Richard, who was killed in Vietnam in 1965. Although nearly half a century has passed, the pain and sense of loss remain fresh.

"God bless our veterans," Landers said. "We need to honor our veterans who have fought for this marvelous country and the freedoms we have. Let's remember what this day is all about."

City Councilman Julio Rodriguez said he attended the Veterans Day Parade as a spectator when he was a kid. This year marked the first time he got to ride as a VIP.

"It's an honor to be able to support our veterans not only in Perris but everywhere," he said. "I am immensely grateful for what they have done for us and what they continue to do."

City Councilwoman Rita Rogers said she was pleased and proud to take part in the Veterans Day Parade.

"How can you not honor the men and women who have sacrificed their lives and the veterans who are fighting for us today?" she said.



California Military Institute Cadet Valle Guillermo, 15, marches with the school's color guard during the Nov. 9 City of Perris Veterans Day Parade.



Army veteran and parade Grand Marshal Shawn Haughney snaps a salute to the crowd gathered along D Street during the City of Perris Veterans Day Parade, which drew more than 2,000 participants and spectators.



Parade Grand Marshal Shawn Haughney receives a gift basket from Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough as Mayor Daryl Busch, City Councilwoman Rita Rogers and City Councilman Julio Rodriguez look on.



City Records Clerk Judy Haughney assists City Councilman and parade emcee Al Landers during the 2013 City of Perris Veterans Parade.