



Perris Press Release

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Sacrifices Remembered at Memorial Day Services

Former Perris mayor Jesse Washington was one of the coldest of the Cold War's warriors.

Washington, who delivered the keynote address at Perris' annual Memorial Day ceremony, spent a hitch in the Air Force in Greenland, where the sun didn't rise for three months in the winter, temperatures reached 70-below zero and winds blew so strong they could damage skin from unprotected areas in less than a minute.

Washington was assigned to a radar station on the Distant Early Warning line, where the mission was to stand guard against a Soviet attack on North America and the United States. The job was unglamorous and often tedious, Washington said, but it "made me a better man."

"I knew I was making a difference," Washington told the crowd. "We have a Constitution that allows freedom of speech, religion, the press and the right to assemble. But there are no guarantees that those rights and freedoms will be adhered to. Soldiers are there to insure those freedoms will be adhered to. Freedom is not free. It is paid for those who lie in this cemetery and those who are dying in Afghanistan today. They assure us that we can gather in peaceful assembly."

Washington served in the Air Force from 1958 to 1962. He served as Perris mayor in 1986 and has attended every Memorial Day ceremony in the City for the last 20 years.

About 100 people turned out at the Memorial Day ceremony at the Perris Valley Cemetery, which is the final resting place for more than 800 veterans dating back to the Civil War. The City of Perris has celebrated Memorial Day for nearly a century.

"We are so proud to be able to carry on this service," said Joanne Evans, a Perris City Councilwoman and former Marine who served as master of ceremonies. "It's something we all have to do. We have to remember the dead and show the survivors who continue to suffer that we care."

Evans read the names of 13 Perris veterans who have died in the last year and the names of 13 others on active duty. As she read, Bernie Foley, commander of American Legion Post 595 in Perris, rang a bell once for every name. The ceremony also included a three-volley rifle salute and the playing of taps. Cadets from the California Military Institute served as the Color Guard and Honor Guard.

Retired Navy Capt. Quinn Hawley urged the crowd to "remember those who died fighting to protect the dignity of mankind" and to celebrate all who wore or wear the uniform of the U.S. military as "courageous protectors and true guardians of freedom."

John Wolfe, past State Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, said Memorial Day ceremonies remind veterans of their own time in uniform and focus visitors on the sacrifice of the military. Wolfe served as an advisor in Vietnam in 1960-61, at a time when few Americans had ever heard of the country. He was a gunner on Mekong River patrol boat.

"We need to keep in mind the service veterans have rendered to their country," Wolfe said.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, who served in the Navy, said he was pleased with the turnout.

"It's nice to see patriotism on display," Busch said. "The freedoms we enjoy are not free. They are paid for in blood and lives. We need to protect those freedoms everywhere."

Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough remembered three of his children who are in uniform or who have served. Son Garrett served in the Air Force in Alaska; daughter Andrea is in the Army in Korea and her twin, Schuyler, is in the Marine Corps Reserves.

"I always look forward to this event," Yarbrough said. "We are all here because of the sacrifices our military has made."



Perris City Councilwoman Joanne Evans, master of ceremonies at the City's annual Memorial Day remembrance, reads a list of veterans who have died in the last year while American Legion Post 595 Commander Bernie Foley rings a bell in their honor.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch (right) chats with keynote speaker Jesse Washington at the conclusion of Monday's Memorial Day ceremony.



Vietnam veteran Gary Oliver, who was wounded twice while serving with the 1st Air Cavalry, salutes the flag during the playing of the National Anthem.



Member of Memorial Honor Detail 47 fire a rifle volley as part of the City of Perris' annual Memorial Day ceremony.



Marine Corps Reservist Schuyler Yarbrough chats with his dad, Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough.