



Perris News

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Perris Pays Tribute to Veterans on Memorial Day

Perris officials and military veterans paid tribute to the nation's fighting men and women—particularly those who died defending the nation's freedom and values—in a moving Memorial Day ceremony at the Perris Valley Cemetery.

"They gave up all their tomorrows for your today," said City

Councilman Al Landers, who attended the ceremony along with about 100 other people. "Our fallen soldiers are the true American idols. They give years of their lives, sometimes their lives, to make sure our freedom survives. I am honored to pay tribute to those who have given so much."

Landers' brother, Richard Landers, was killed while serving with the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam in 1965. He was only 19 years old.

City Councilwoman Joanne Evans served as Master of Ceremonies. Evans served in the Marines, is active in Perris American Legion Post 575 in Perris and is nationally known for her public affairs work with the Legion. Evans said the Perris cemetery contains the remains of hundreds of veterans, including several Civil War soldiers. Many of the City's pioneers are buried there as well, she said. Evans said the first Memorial Day service in Perris took place in 1882, at the site of the original cemetery at 7th and G streets. Services have been held annually at the current cemetery on Perris Boulevard since 1927. Years ago, veterans marched from the American Legion post on D Street to the cemetery, a hike of two miles.

As is a Perris custom, Evans and Post 575 Commander Bernie Foley read a list of names of veterans who have moved on to "Post Everlasting" in the past year, ringing a bell one time in each one's honor. Members of a memorial honor detail fired a three-volley rifle salute to all deceased veterans. A bugler played taps.

The ceremony paid special tribute to Perris World War II veteran Ray Balboa, who served with the vaunted 1st Infantry Division in Italy, Belgium and Czechoslovakia, taking part in the Battle of the Bulge and other major campaigns. Balboa returned to the U.S. after the war, become active in Perris as a volunteer firefighter and served 65 years with American Legion Post 575. He died earlier this year at the age of 90.

"He is missed," Evans said. "He has left a hole in our ranks."

Post 575 presented a proclamation honoring Balboa to his two daughters, Gloria Ehandi and Patricia O'Brien. Dignitaries included Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, former Mayor Jesse Washington, City Council members Landers and Mark Yarbrough and Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley.

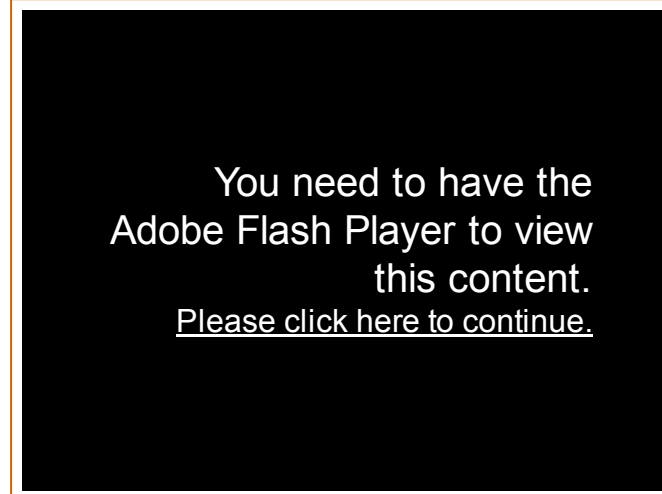
Mayor Busch, a Navy veteran, noted that this year's ceremony was attended by many more people than in previous years. Memorial Day organizers also recited the names of Perris residents currently on active military duty.

"This is a somber day of reflection," Busch said. "I am pleased so many residents are remembering the costs of freedom."

Councilman Yarbrough said he just recently learned his grand-father, Frank Macias, fought in the Battle of the Bulge and was wounded in action. Macias spent two years away from home before returning from military service.

"We owe it to honor those who have given us so much," he said. "I am sure this ceremony has touched the emotions of everyone who attended."

Vietnam veteran Tony Espinoza, a navy corpsman and commander of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 888 in Perris, said of Memorial Day: "Today is the day we hug each other and remember the people we left behind."



Students from Perris High School served as the color guard during the annual Memorial Day services at Perris Valley Cemetery.



Perris City Councilman Al Landers greets the daughter of Perris veteran Ray Balboa.



Perris City Councilwoman Joanne Evans and City Councilman Mark Yarbrough exchange a word after the Memorial Day ceremony.