



Perris News

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Perris Provides the Muscle for March Air Museum Freedom Float

The March Field Air Museum had a great float, plenty of volunteers to represent the non-profit organization and an invitation to participate in an Independence Day parade. But the group lacked a vehicle to haul their float on the big day.

Enter the City of Perris.

City officials donated the use of one of their Public Works vehicles to carry the float—a giant globe symbolizing America’s worldwide commitment to supporting freedom and democracy—in Moreno Valley’s July 4 weekend parade. Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough drove the float truck in the parade.

The vehicle, a sporty-looking Chevrolet crew cab hauler complete with green flames on the sides, usually hauls the City’s entertainment stage to community events.

It was another example, he said, of the City stepping up to help a neighboring community look its best. The float, entitled “Americans Defending Freedom,” won the Chamber of Commerce prize for best entry.

“We are always ready to lend a hand,” Yarbrough said. “Our strength is our ability to partner with other communities to make life better for everybody in this region. We are the ultimate team player. There is nothing more important than remembering July 4. It is why we are Americans. Members of the military make the ultimate commitment and ultimate sacrifice defending our freedoms and values. They must be remembered and celebrated.”

Museum officials were elated Perris stepped up to make sure their float made it into the parade. Without the City’s commitment, the float would not have made the show.

“The City of Perris has been great to work with,” said Patricia Korzec, the March museum’s director. “We are most appreciative of their efforts.”

The City flatbed led a contingent of vehicles from the museum, which also included a World War II era Jeep. Veterans from World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam and current members of the military also comprised the museum’s contingent.

World War II bomber pilot Vern Grim, who lives south of Perris, came dressed in an Eighth Air Force uniform. Grim, 87, flew 32 combat missions in a B-17 Flying Fortress as part of the 407th Bomb Squadron, including five raids against Berlin. Several times, anti-aircraft fire riddled his plane with bullets. Grim received a Distinguished Flying Cross.

Grim said that three days after completing his tour of duty, the airplane he flew was shot down in combat. He left the service as a captain.

“July 4 is the most important day in our nation’s history,” he said. “It created liberty for all Americans.”

Bob Mauger served as part of mobile missile launch team in Germany during the chilliest period of the Cold War. Each missile carried a nuclear warhead capable of creating a three-mile wide crater.

“It was tense times,” Mauger said. “If we launched, it was the end of the world. We were apprehensive but not scared. We talked about it a lot.”

Mauger called American freedom “a very precious, very fragile.”

“A lot of people died defending it,” he said.

Crowds lined the parade route as the City vehicle made its way, drawing cheers and waves from many in the audience. Parade judges said the float will receive its Chamber of Commerce award Tuesday.

“This was a great day,” Yarbrough said. “I am pleased that Perris was able to contribute to this parade and make it an outstanding success.”



Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough with World War II veteran Vern Grim, a bomber pilot based in England in 1944.



Docents from the March Field Air Museum carry a banner in the parade.



The tow vehicle for the March Air Museum’s float came courtesy of the City of Perris.



Parade volunteers with the March Field Air Museum float.