



## Perris Parade Honors Veterans



A high school ROTC marching unit steps smartly during the annual Veterans Day Parade in Perris. The event drew more than 3,000 people.

Old-timers like Gary Pearson and Richard Wallis represented the former generation of servicemen who attended the annual Veterans Day Parade in Perris on Saturday.

Teen-agers like Thomas Ziska, who enlisted in the Army while still in high school, represent the next generation.

Veterans young and old and active-duty soldiers came to Perris to take part in the yearly tribute to America's armed forces, a gathering that featured marching bands, honor and color guards, classic car enthusiasts, civic groups, equestrian units and the release of white doves as a sign of peace.

About 3,000 people gathered along the mile-long parade route from Perris High School to the City Hall Campus.

Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley, who led a contingent of elected officials on the parade, noted that more than 46 million Americans have served in uniform since the country's founding. Half are alive today. More than 1 million have been killed in service to their country and millions more wounded.

"They have laid down their lives so that we may have a free country to live in," Ashley said.

Pearson and Wallis served in the Marines and now work at the California Military Institute (CMI) in Perris, a charter school with 540 students from grades 7-12. About 100 students from the Institute marched in the parade.

Pearson spent 21 years in the Marines from 1970 to 1991, serving in tank units that deployed to Okinawa, Korea, Africa and Singapore. His time in uniform included service during the unpopular Vietnam War. Despite the frustration felt by many Vietnam veterans about their treatment after the war, Pearson said he enjoyed his time in service. Part of the program at CMI includes teaching respect for the military and the people who serve in it.

"If you love your freedom, thank a veteran," said Pearson, who retired as a master sergeant. "I've been in parts of the world where lawlessness is the rule of thumb. We owe our veterans a great debt. They are the ones who put themselves at risk to defend us."

Wallis served as the parade Grand Marshal.

His time in the Marines included a stint as a drill instructor. He spoke about CMI students and their commitment to the community. Last year, students donated 6,000 volunteer hours on a myriad of community-improvement project.

This year, that total will be 8,000 to 10,000, Wallis said.

He said he was "surprised and honored" to be chosen Grand Marshal.

"This is a great event for the City," he said. "It's a chance for the public to come out and take notice of our cadets." One of those cadets is Ziska, 17, who enlisted in the Army and will be sent to Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri after graduating in June. He will serve in a field artillery unit. He said he is proud of his decision and proud to wear an Army uniform.

"These are the people who have answered a call not many people will answer," Ziska said.

Members of the Perris City Council took an active part in the parade. Councilman Al Landers announced the parade, continuing a tradition that he began years ago. Councilwoman Joanne Evans, a former Marine, carried a flag as part of Perris' American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars color guard. Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough rode a horse, named "Horse," in the parade. Mayor Daryl Busch, a Navy veteran, addressed the crowd, thanking them for supporting the parade and the U.S. military.

"What a wonderful day to honor our veterans," he said. "Thank you for being out here to support them." The parade also included a flyover of F-16 jets from March Air Reserve Base. The Perris Valley Women's Club released doves as a symbol of peace.

Afterwards, Yarbrough called the parade an unqualified success. He said Perris has remained staunch supporters of the military since the City was founded in 1911 and will continue that support into the distant future.

"It's a privilege to honor the military and showcase them at every opportunity we get," he said.

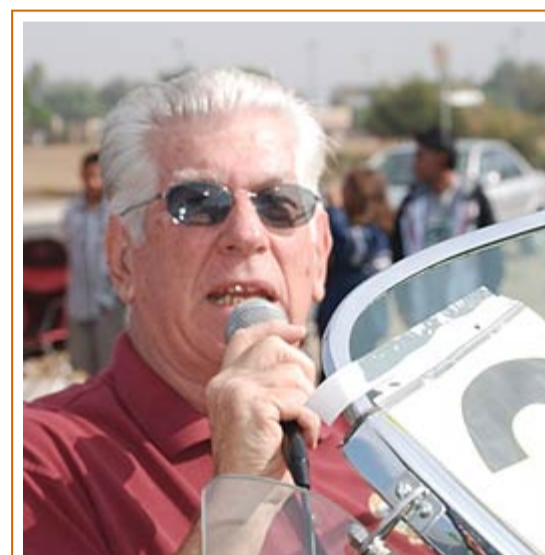
[Veteran's Day Parade Winners List](#)



City Councilman Al Landers and City Clerk Judy Haughney announced the parade.



Grand Marshal Richard Wallis inspects the uniform of a California Military Institute cadet prior to the parade.



Mayor Daryl Busch addresses the crowd, thanking them for supporting veterans.



A member of a precision rifle team tosses his weapon in the air.

**See a short video of the parade**

