



## Perris News

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer  
Phone: 951-956-2120  
[jvargo@cityofperris.org](mailto:jvargo@cityofperris.org)

### Veterans Day Parade

Perris remembered Veteran's Day with its annual parade that included marching bands, antique cars, high-school precision drill teams, equestrian units and plenty of flag-waving of the red, white and blue.

Hundreds of spectators lined D Street and San Jacinto Avenue as the procession made its way through the Downtown area. The guests of honor included elected officials, an honor guard from March Air Reserve Base and about 50 veterans—many gray-haired and stooped—who rode along the parade route, some wearing their decorations and medals.

Grand marshal Phil Rizzo, a retired Air Force colonel and former commander of March Air Force Base, rode in the back seat of a convertible, waving to the crowds and exchanging salutes to his fellow veterans.



Mayor Pro-Tem Al Landers presents parade Grand Marshal Phil Rizzo with a plaque honoring his service.

Rizzo, 63, spent almost 25 years in the military, many as a missile specialist. His career included working with Titan, Atlas and Minuteman missiles and he witnessed the launchings of weather satellites as well. Titan launches were spectacular. The missile took about 10 seconds to lift off its launch pad and as it ascended, the ground shook underneath.

Rizzo served at missile site in the chilliest part of the Cold War but he said the missileers locked behind tons of steel and concrete in their protective bunkers were well-suited to handle the job. They underwent extensive mental and physical tests to make sure they could handle the job pressures.

"We were more afraid of making a mistake than anything else," he said.

Rizzo's career took him to North and South Dakota, Nebraska and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California before he was assigned to March.

After retiring, Rizzo worked for the Riverside County Office of Education, served as director of the March Joint Powers Authority (an agency charged with bringing civilian jobs and businesses to the former base) and today works as a community liaison for Premiere Services Bank.

Rizzo said Perris has always been a strong supporter of the military, so it's not surprising that in a time when many cities no longer host Veteran's Day Parades, Perris continues the tradition.

"Perris still remembers," Rizzo said. "I'm so proud the City asked me to be the grand marshal. I'm sure there were many other people more deserving."

Rizzo said Perris' ties to the military run deep.

Twenty years ago, the City worked with the Air Force to make 200 units in an apartment complex available for young enlisted personnel and their spouses and families. More recently, the city ponied up money to keep March Air Reserve Base from large-scale downsizing in the 2005 round of the Base Realignment and Closure process. Hundreds of military families live in the Perris Valley.

Rizzo was joined Saturday by fellow veterans and City officials at American Legion Post 595 for breakfast and conversation. Rizzo received a plaque from the American Legion for taking part in the parade.

Legion member Joanne Evans said the Veteran's Day Parade was revived in Perris following the Sept. 11 attacks. Evans served in the Marines. Her husband, Iral, served in the Navy as an aviation machinist's mate about the carrier Princeton.

"Our veterans protect our freedoms," Iral Evans said.

Mayor Pro-tem Al Landers served as parade announcer. Councilmembers Mark Yarbrough, John Motte and Rita Rogers also took part.

Mayor Daryl Busch said the City's parade gets larger every year. This year, more than 50 different schools, community groups and veterans organizations took part.

"Veteran's Day is an important part of American life," Busch said. "A parade is the least we can do for them."

Fewer and fewer cities stage Veteran's Day parades anymore.

Many veterans from World War II and Korea are too infirmed now to march in a parade. More than a few Vietnam veterans remain bitter about the way they were treated after that unpopular war.

For whatever reason, Rizzo said he's saddened by the paucity of Veteran's Day parades and remembrances.

"We have the ability to walk down Main Street every day without being afraid," he said. "We owe that to somebody, to the people who help us live the way we do."



The local Boy Scout Troop shows off its patriotism.

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