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City Reflects on Fallen Servicemembers



Veterans on motorcycles added to the pageantry of the Memorial Day service May 30 in Perris.

The City of Perris commemorated Memorial Day during a solemn ceremony honoring the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice while performing their duties in uniform.

Perris elected officials, members of American Legion Post 595 and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 888 joined veterans and former veterans on motorcycles and an Honor Guard from Riverside National Cemetery during the May 30 ceremony.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, a Navy veteran, said the City maintains a robust relationship and history with the military community. One need look no further than the weathered grave markers at Perris Valley Cemetery. Thirteen bear the names of Civil War veterans.

"The history of the City of Perris is reflected in the veterans who are interred here," Busch said. "They served country and community. They, and the men and women serving today, speak to the pride we have in our country. We can't say enough about they've done for our country so we can do what we do."



Perris elected officials and former representatives turned out May 30 to remember Memorial Day in Perris. Those included Perris City Councilman David Starr Rabb, City Councilwoman Tonya Burke, former Mayor Jesse Washington, Mayor Daryl Busch, Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers and City Councilman Mark Yarbrough.

Memorial Day is set aside to remember those killed in service to America. More than one million Americans have died defending the U.S. since the Revolutionary War.

It was in the wake of the Civil War, the bloodiest conflict in American history, that the origins of Memorial Day can be traced. In 1868, Gen. John Logan designated May 30 as a day to remember the Civil War dead by placing "flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land."

The May 30 date was selected because it was not the anniversary of any particular battle. Originally known as Decoration Day, the somber day of reflection over the years gradually became known as Memorial Day.



Air Force veteran and Perris resident Brady McCarron delivered an emotional keynote address, urging people to always remember the nation's veterans who fell in battle: "Never allow their sacrifice to be for naught."

Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Rita Rogers said Memorial Day reminds Americans to keep in mind the sacrifice of the nation's war dead "so we can exercise our freedoms."

"We must remember those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice," Rogers said. "It's our legacy."

City Councilwoman Tonya Burke said she was proud to "recognize the men and women who sacrificed to make sure our lives on the home front are safe."

"Without their sacrifice, we would not enjoy a lot of the freedoms we do," Burke said.

City Councilman David Starr Rabb, a Navy veteran who served in the ongoing Global War on Terror, said he knows many people look forward to Memorial Day for a long weekend with holiday sales and backyard barbecues. But the reason behind those events is lives lost, partners left alone, children devastated.

"It's important that we honor the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice," Rabb said. "It's good to reflect on why we have a long weekend."

City Councilman Mark Yarbrough, the father of three current and former veterans, said the Memorial Day remembrance is a "small token of our appreciation of those who fought and made the supreme sacrifice for freedom." Yarbrough's daughter, Andrea, an Army sergeant, returned a week ago from a deployment in Iraq.

"This is the least we can do," Yarbrough said. "We must honor the people who fight for our freedom."



Master of Ceremonies Joanne Evans reads the names of Perris veterans and Auxiliary members who died in the last year while Chaplain Bill Bauer strikes a bell in their honor.

Emotional remarks

Keynote speaker Brady McCarron learned first-hand about the commitment and sacrifice of the men and women in uniform when he was deployed to Iraq and embedded with groups from all service branches.

As a journalist with the Air Force, McCarron's job was to interview servicemen and women and provide their hometown radio stations, television channels and newspapers with accounts of their duties. It was a job he loved—until the names of people he interviewed began appearing on the rosters of those killed in action.

Every Friday, the Pentagon distributed the names of the fallen.

McCarron said he dreaded reading through what became known simply as "the list." Finding a familiar name meant McCarron had to remove the individual's story from the files so it would not appear in print or on air again. He said the loss of every one of the people he chronicled left a wound on his soul and several times during his remarks he stopped to gather his composure.

McCarron said he and his colleagues contacted the families of those on "the list," sending them copies of their stories along with letters of sympathy and gratitude.

"It is not easy to talk about this day," McCarron said. "Today is not about us, not about the living veterans who made it home. Today is about those who never made it home, who lie on distant battlefields or are lost at sea. Today is about remembering those who lost their lives. It's about honoring those who answered America's call to service and paid the ultimate price."

McCarron urged the audience to honor the fallen by attending annual Memorial Day services.

"Never forget them," he said. "Never allow their sacrifice to be for naught."



Military Honors Detail 52 members complete a three-rifle volley as part of the Memorial Day program in Perris.

Marine Corps veteran Joanne Evans, master of ceremonies at the Perris Memorial Day service, read the names of 18 local veterans and Auxiliary members of Posts 595 and 888 who died in the last year and now reside in "Post Everlasting." As she read each name, Chaplain Bill Bauer rang a bell one time in their honor.

The day's ceremonies also included the laying of wreaths at veterans' memorials, a three-rifle volley and the playing of Taps.



Army paratrooper David Bravo, a Vietnam veteran, stands at attention during the playing of Taps at the May 30 Memorial Day service in Perris.

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