

**FEATURING CELEBRITY  
GRAND MARSHAL  
SUPERMODEL  
KIM ALEXIS**

# **HONORING AMERICA'S VETERANS**



*Photo Courtesy of Phyllis Lane*

## **Phoenix Veterans Day Parade**



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# ORIGINS OF VETERANS DAY


**W**orld War I, also known as “The Great War,” was fought from 1914 to 1918. During this conflict, Great Britain, France, Russia, Belgium, Italy, Japan, the United States and other countries, which formed the “Allies,” defeated the so-called “Central Powers,” which included Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria. On the “eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month” of 1918, German leaders signed an armistice, or a temporary ending to hostilities, with the Allied powers. On that date, November 11, celebrations were held in New York City, Paris, London and in other cities around the globe. The following year, President Woodrow Wilson declared November 11 as “Armistice Day,” a day to observe the ending of World War I.

On June 4, 1926, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution asking President Calvin Coolidge to call upon officials to “display the flag of the United States on all Government buildings on November 11 and inviting the people of the United States to observe the day in schools and churches, or other suitable places, with appropriate ceremonies of friendly relations with all other peoples.” Twelve years later, on May 13, 1938, Congress passed an Act making the 11th of November Armistice Day, a federal holiday.


Initially, Armistice Day was to be a day to honor veterans of World War I. But following the tremendous calls to arms and human sacrifice during World War II and the Korean conflict, veterans groups urged Congress to consider a day to celebrate U.S. veterans of all wars. On June 1, 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower signed a bill changing Armistice Day to Veterans Day.

## **Difference between Veterans Day and Memorial Day**

Veterans Day in the United States is a day to honor all Americans who have served in the U.S. military, both during wartime and in peacetime. Memorial Day is a day for remembering and honoring Americans who have died serving the nation, especially those who died in battle or from wounds received during armed conflicts. On Veterans Day, Americans thank the living veterans for their service to the country and recognize that all who have served the country, not just those who have died, have made sacrifices and done their duty.



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- Calvin Coolidge

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We commemorate our veterans and their families at this year's Veteran's Parade. The blue star on our **Stars for Our Veterans** float honors those who have deployed and returned. The gold star honors those who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

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- **Sponsorship Outreach and Engagement**

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# CELEBRITY GRAND MARSHAL

## Supermodel Kim Alexis

Scottsdale, Arizona

Kim Alexis is part of an elite group of fashion models who rose to supermodel status in the 1980s. She was discovered at 17 at a Buffalo, NY, modeling agency. After moving to New York City, she had a cover on Italian Bazaar within four days. Although she walked the runway and shot fashion editorials, Alexis quickly became known for her beauty. She had over 500 worldwide magazine covers, including Vogue, Bazaar, and Cosmopolitan, and set the record for Glamour. In 1983, Kim Alexis became the face of Revlon's Ultima II, becoming one of the most recognizable faces in America. She rounded out her supermodel status by appearing in six Sports Illustrated Swimsuit issues.



"Superbook," "Slick Tips" and "Skin Within."

Her athletic abilities also shine, including eight marathons, triathlons, car racing, downhill skiing, playing in charity ice hockey games, and numerous charitable golf and tennis tournaments. She was a spokesperson for the New York City Marathon and MORE magazine, promoting several health products and causes.

She is passionate about speaking to women about self-esteem, maintaining health naturally as well as healthy boundaries. She is developing a program for women coming out of the jail system to get them back on their feet.

She continues to work towards her goal in life, which is to encourage others to be their best in all areas of life, believing that true beauty comes from within.

Her husband's grandfather served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War and then retired and re-enlisted as an officer in the Air Force. His father also served in the US Air Force and was stationed at Strategic Air Command. Kim Alexis embraces a patriotic spirit.

As Celebrity Grand Marshal for the Phoenix Veterans Day Parade, she hopes to encourage veterans to be their best in all areas of life, understanding that true beauty and health comes from within. ■

Kim transitioned into broadcasting, where she was the fashion editor for "Good Morning America" from 1987 to 1990. She went on to host TV shows such as "Your Mind and Body" (syndicated), "Healthy Kids" on the Family Channel, "Ticket to Adventure" on the Travel Channel, "She's Got the Look" on TV Land and "Food Quest" on the Food Network. She also appeared in the film "Holy Man" alongside Eddie Murphy. She had the guest spot in the last episode of "Cheers" and appeared in numerous soap operas. She was in the documentary "About Face" on HBO and "Casablanacas; The Man Who Loved Women on Netflix.

Kim Alexis is the author of several books, including "A Model for a Better Future," "With a Little Luck," and "Beauty to Die For." She has written and published eBooks: "Modeling: How to be Discovered," "Dieting Lessons," "My Thyroid Journey," "Cheat Eat," "Nap Zap," "Lean Clean," and





# WORLD WAR II VETERAN GRAND MARSHAL

## Thomas Begay

Navajo Code Talker, United States Marine Corps

Honoring America's Veterans is proud to recognize Thomas H. Begay as a Veteran Grand Marshal for World War II in the 2023 Phoenix Veterans Day Parade. In a nation shaped by countless brave souls, Mr. Begay stands out as an embodiment of valor and resilience. Born in a remote area south of Gallup, New Mexico, in 1926, his journey from a young Navajo-speaking boy to a distinguished veteran is remarkable.



At 16, Begay enlisted in the United States Marine Corps during World War II, embarking on a path that would forever alter the course of history. His service as a Navajo Code Talker within the renowned 5th Marine Division Signal Company during the Battle of Iwo Jima proved to be a turning point in the war. Using their secret coded Navajo language, Begay and his fellow Code Talkers transmitted hundreds of messages without error, baffling Japanese cryptographers and contributing significantly to the Allied victory.

Begay has shared his story many times throughout the years, explaining that he signed up to be an aerial gunner but was chosen instead to be in the elite group of Code Talkers.

"I went through boot camp, then they sent me to a line camp," Begay said in an interview with the Library of Congress. "All the orders were 'report to Building So-and-so,' so I did. And there was a whole bunch of Navajos in there. I didn't know any of them; they were from another location on the reservation. And a sergeant says, 'You will be a Code Talker.' I said, 'I didn't sign up to be a Code Talker, I don't want to be a Code Talker! I want to be an aerial gunner.'" "Too bad!" he said."

Begay's heroism didn't stop there. He continued his service in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, where he was part of the 7th Infantry Division and survived the grueling Chosin Reservoir battle. His military awards include the Presidential Unit Citation with three Bronze Stars and the Meritorious Unit Citation with the Korean Service Medal with five Bronze Stars.

Upon discharge, Begay dedicated himself to public service, working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs for 40 years. His dedication and contributions extended beyond the battlefield, impacting the Navajo Nation and its tribal trust programs.

In 2001, Begay received the Congressional Silver Medal, recognizing his exceptional service as a Navajo Code Talker. But his legacy extends beyond awards and accolades. He was a community leader, a family man, and a symbol of resilience and patriotism.

"Everybody in the United States, no matter what nationality, no matter what tribe, I think we know there's one flag, one nation, one of us – all," adds Begay.

Thomas Begay's journey to national heroism is a testament to the spirit of our veterans, and his legacy will continue to inspire generations to come. ■



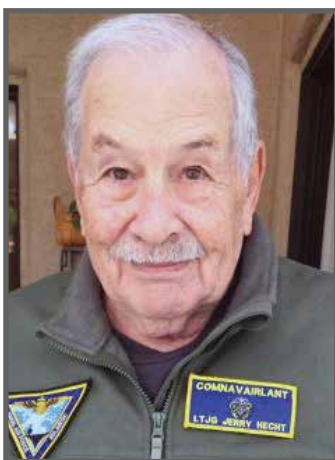


# KOREAN WAR VETERAN GRAND MARSHAL

## Gerald "Jerry" Hecht

U.S. Navy

Jerry Hecht's service journey began shortly after graduating from the University of Cincinnati Pharmacy College in 1952. Eager to contribute to the defense of our great nation, he enlisted in the United States Navy. His dedication and commitment quickly propelled him through the ranks, and he completed Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island, followed by Main Propulsion School in Long Beach, California.



"It is my privilege to call remembrance to their virtuous devotion to God and country and, in many cases, the ultimate sacrifice," Hecht said. "May the memories of those so young, bright, and loved not become a relic of the past and the last vestige of a dying democracy. Some historians call the Korean Conflict "the forgotten war," but it is nothing to mock for those who served and the 36,000 who died. The patriots, Americans who responded to the bugle's call, are the envy and luxury that few nations possess."

Hecht's pivotal assignment came aboard the USS Duncan (DDR874) in San Diego. He assumed the destroyer's Engineering Officer role from 1953 to 1956. His service was marked by three deployments to the western Pacific, where he faced the harrowing reality of operating off the coast of the Korean Peninsula during the height of the Korean War. On one unforgettable occasion, his ship came under fire from Communist forces in North Korea, a testament to his bravery.

Following his honorable discharge from the Navy, Hecht returned to his beloved hometown of Cincinnati, where he spent the next five decades as a dedicated pharmacist, serving his community with the same selflessness he displayed in uniform.

Hecht received numerous accolades for his exemplary service, including the National Defense Service Medal, the United Nations Service Medal, the Korean Service Medal with one star, and the China Service Medal. But Hecht says the honors also belong with his fellow servicemen – those who came home and those who didn't.

Hecht's journey is not only defined by his service but also by his enduring love and commitment to his family. He and his wife Beverly have shared 70 years of marriage, and together, they have raised eight children. Notably, two of their children, LTC Robert Hecht, United States Air Force (Retired), and CAPT Richard Hecht, United States Navy, have followed in their father's footsteps, serving in the U.S. military. ■



# VIETNAM WAR VETERAN GRAND MARSHAL

## vice Colonel Herbert E. Pierpan (ret)

U.S. Marine Corps

In his military career, Colonel Herbert E. Pierpan served in the Marine Corps and in retirement, became a respected community figure in Scottsdale.

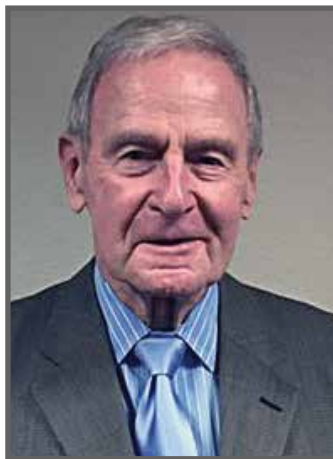
In an interview saved in the Library of Congress, he shared that his desire to serve in the military started early in his life.

"I was a young boy during the second World War, and I was always enthralled with soldiers and Marines and sailors and Airmen," he says, "I just made up my mind at that time that I was going to go into the service whether I made a career of it or not. I wanted to do a tour and do my part."

And do his part, he did. Colonel Pierpan's dedication to serving his country began when he graduated from Springfield College in 1961 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps. His early years in the Marine Corps saw him assume various roles, from Platoon Commander to Battalion Assistant S-3 Officer, and he was promoted to First Lieutenant in December 1962. Colonel Pierpan's commitment to duty led him to Vietnam not once but twice. In 1963, he deployed to Okinawa and later to the Republic of Vietnam, where he served with honor and distinction. His contributions were vital to the Corps, and he was promoted to Captain in October 1965.

He served as the Aide-de-Camp to the Commandant, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, and later became a Company Commander in the First Battalion, Fourth Marines, Third Marine Division. His promotion to Major in November 1968 marked another milestone in his military journey.

Education was also an essential aspect of Colonel Pierpan's career. After graduate studies at the University of Virginia, he served as an Assistant Professor at the US Naval Academy, teaching Military Law and Leadership.



His journey continued with assignments at various prestigious institutions, including the Command and Staff College at Marine Corps Development and Education Command, where he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in November 1977. In August 1979, Colonel Pierpan attended the Army War College. Upon graduation, he assumed critical roles in national defense, including Senior Emergency Action Officer at the National Military Command Center J-3, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Colonel Pierpan's distinguished service culminated with his role as the Special Assistant and Marine Corps Aide to the Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable James H. Webb, Jr. His retirement from active duty in June 1988 marked the end of a remarkable military career.

However, Colonel Pierpan's dedication to service didn't stop there. He continued contributing to his community, working with defense contractors, and receiving awards like the Department of Virginia American Legion, Legionnaire of the Year Award, and the Fauquier County Citizen of the Year Award.

In 1999, Colonel Pierpan and his family relocated to Scottsdale, where he continued to make a significant impact. In August 2000, he became a Hearing Officer Judge in the Scottsdale City Court, demonstrating his commitment to upholding justice.

Furthermore, Colonel Pierpan's passion for scouting and community involvement shines brightly. His achievements in the Boy Scouts of America, including the Silver Beaver and the National Distinguished Eagle Scout Award, showcase his dedication to youth and community service. ■

# COLD WAR VETERAN GRAND MARSHAL

## Hugues Byrne

U.S. Marine Corps

Hugues Byrne, a retired Marine Corps and Army National Guard veteran, Byrne is a noteworthy individual whose commitment to service inspires the entire Arizona veteran community.

Hugues Byrne's service journey began in 1976 when he joined the United States Marine Corps. He embarked on a path to accumulate over 1600 flight hours in helicopter models and participate in numerous humanitarian missions worldwide. His military career was punctuated with acts of bravery, from delivering aid to the leprosy colony on Molokai Island to being part of the Malaysian straits blockade during the Iranian hostage crisis.

His experiences shaped his life after leaving the military and fostered a need to provide help for those in our communities who need it most.

"During the next 16 years, I raised two boys with my wife," Byrne explains. "I started a transportation bus business for handicapped persons and a limousine and taxi business."

But his dedication to service was far from over. In 2002, Hugues again answered the call and joined the Army National Guard. He was deployed to Bosnia and later Iraq, serving as a UH-60 Crew Chief for a medevac company. During these deployments, he displayed extraordinary courage and was awarded several honors for his actions.

After retiring from the Army National Guard in 2017, Hugues again transitioned to civilian life, but his spirit of



service remained undiminished. He became an active Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) member, breathing new life into a failing post and becoming a thriving hub for veterans and their families.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Hugues initiated the "Beat Covid" program, raising funds and delivering care packages to those in need in his community. He volunteered over 600 hours and managed a team of 15 volunteers, showcasing his tireless dedication.

Hugues has held various leadership roles within the VFW and is now serving as their Surgeon, an administrative function that interfaces with the veterans for their members who obtain medical support from the VA. He supports veterans' hospitals and homes, ensuring their needs are met. Moreover, Hugues is involved in numerous veteran organizations, including the American Legion and the Marine Corps League. He's volunteered for various projects like escort rides for fallen veterans and the Toys for Tots program, significantly impacting his community.

Hugues Byrne has been awarded the prestigious Gil La Montoya award for his extraordinary commitment to service and outstanding contributions to the veteran community. His dedication and selflessness inspire us all, reminding us that true heroes are among us, making the world a better place through their service and compassion. ■



# DESERT STORM GRAND MARSHAL

## Col. Patricia Little-Upah (ret)

U.S. Army

Patricia Little-Upah's journey through the ranks of the U.S. Army and her steadfast dedication to supporting fellow veterans are commendable.

Born in Oakland, California, in 1945, Little-Upah's life would soon be intertwined with the call of duty. She embarked on her military career in 1966 as US Army Nurse Patricia Thomson, serving both on Active and Reserve Duty until her retirement in 2005. Her service spanned pivotal moments in history, including her deployment to Vietnam 1968 during the Vietnam War. Her hospital would receive a unit citation for its role during the TET offensive.

Little-Upah's service extended beyond Vietnam, as she was called to duty once again during Desert Storm in 1991, where she served with the 403rd Combat Support Hospital. She oversaw the Prisoner of War units. After the war, she would serve as the Chief Nurse and the Detachment Commander for the 6253rd U.S. Army Hospital. Her dedication to duty led her to achieve the rank of Colonel, a testament to her commitment to the armed forces.

Little-Upah credits her mother as her mentor for her life and her career.

"My mom was my mentor," she said in an interview recorded in the Library of Congress. "She was an Army



Nurse in World War II, and as I was growing up, I think because of my admiration for her, I always knew that I wanted to follow in her footsteps."

In recognition of her outstanding contributions, Little-Upah was awarded the prestigious Legion of Merit in 2008, a well-deserved honor for her exceptional service. In retirement, she continued to serve the military community in various capacities. She is the past Commander of The Military Order of World Wars Phoenix Chapter. She also chaired the Board of Directors for Honor House, an organization dedicated to serving transitioning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. She serves on the Board of Veterans First Ltd, overseeing their program for male veterans and their Instruments4Success program. The Veterans and Family Advisory Council to the Phoenix VA and The Friends of Fisher House committee.

Patricia Little-Upah was inducted into the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame in 2014 and is currently serving as the President of The Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame Society. Her involvement in various organizations underscores her dedication to supporting Veterans and our Community. ■

# OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM VETERAN GRAND MARSHAL

## Col. Jeff DeVore (ret)

U.S. Air Force

Jeff DeVore's service journey began in 1992 when he joined the United States Air Force. For his career, he piloted C-130 cargo aircraft across the globe, accumulating over 4,400 flight hours, including more than 850 in combat. His leadership roles included commanding the 30th Airlift Squadron in Wyoming, the 746th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron at a forward-deployed location, the 386th Expeditionary Operations Group at another forward-deployed location, and Joint Base Charleston in South Carolina. DeVore's service took him to numerous countries, where he played pivotal roles in missions supporting the United States Department of Defense and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). His deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bosnia, Kosovo, South Africa, Morocco, Kenya, and Panama were marked by courage and dedication.

However, DeVore's valor truly shone in combat, where he flew missions supporting critical battles, including the Battle of Fallujah, the Battle of Ramadi, and the Battle of Basra. In Afghanistan, he contributed to the effort during the Battle of Shewan and the counterinsurgency in the northern provinces. His combat airdrops under enemy fire in Iraq and Afghanistan, which inserted Coalition Special Forces and equipment into challenging areas, were instrumental in the fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda.



He said in an interview that one key to his success was to find purpose in his service.

"In the military, we need to know our purpose, why we're doing what we're doing, and how that affects people. It gives us a focus and a mission," said DeVore, "If we don't have a purpose for the things we do, then we shouldn't be doing them."

For his exceptional bravery, he received numerous accolades, including the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, the Air Medal, and the Air Force Combat Action Medal, among many others. He was also recognized with the Colonel Joe W. Jackson Award and the General Robert "Dutch" Huyser Award for outstanding contributions during combat operations.

After retiring from active duty in 2017 with the rank of Colonel, DeVore continued his dedication to service by working with Amazon Logistics. He and his wife Michele have been married for 30 years, reside in the West Valley, and have two children. DeVore remains an active community member, supporting veterans and representing Amazon Warriors in the 2021 and 2022 Phoenix Veterans Day Parades. ■



# OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM VETERAN GRAND MARSHAL

## 1st Lt. Amanda Tallman (ret)

U.S. Army

Amanda Tallman's story began in 2007 when she enlisted in the Army Military Police Corps. This was when women were barred from combat roles, and she was attached to an infantry unit. Undeterred by the limitations placed upon her, she served as an MK19 gunner and demonstrated exceptional compassion during her deployment by coordinating efforts to provide resources to Afghan children. Her dedication to both her duties and the well-being of those she encountered was nothing short of remarkable.



However, life had its challenges in store for Tallman. Shortly after returning from Afghanistan, she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. Facing this formidable enemy, Tallman's resilience shone even brighter. She battled and conquered cancer, proving that her determination knew no bounds.

Tallman's pursuit of excellence did not stop there. She attended Personal Security Detail school and earned an Army Hip-Pocket Scholarship for her undergraduate degree at Chadron State College. Her unwavering commitment to self-improvement and education was truly inspiring.

Her dedication led her to commission as a Military Intelligence Officer in the Army Reserves in Arizona, despite significant medical issues resulting from deployment injuries, including an ostomy. Eventually, those injuries led to her medical retirement. Tallman continued her educational journey, earning a master's degree in social work from Arizona State University. Her focus on trauma-responsive care

and personalized approaches demonstrated her deep understanding of the diverse needs of veterans and the importance of mental health support.

Tallman's passion for service and education extends beyond her achievements. She founded the nonprofit organization First Page in honor of her team leader, who died by suicide in 2019. First Page connects nonprofits and groups that work with veterans, first responders, and kids to each other and horses to promote personal growth and resiliency by enhancing existing programs.

"First Page is dedicated to empowering veterans and first responders after service and giving kids a positive role model and listening ear while partnering with horses," Tallman shares.

Tallman's advocacy for veteran policy as the Arizona Strategic Director for Concerned Veterans for America further solidifies her commitment to making a difference in the lives of those who have served.

Amanda Tallman is not just a veteran but a symbol of resilience, compassion, and dedication to her country and community. As the Operation Enduring Freedom Veteran Grand Marshal for the 2023 Phoenix Veterans Day Parade, her presence will undoubtedly inspire all who attend, reminding us that the spirit of service lives on long after the uniform is retired. ■

# TRIBUTE TO MILITARY WORKING DOGS

## Honoring the Military Police Sentry Dog Alumni Association.

After attending the Phoenix Veterans Day Parade one year, U.S. Army and Vietnam War veteran Jim Frost saw something was missing. There was no parade entry to honor the military working dogs that played a huge part in our history. To change this oversight, he sought the help of dog clubs, law enforcement agencies, and Luke Air Force Base to create a Salute to the Military Working Dog entry. It became one of the most beloved entries each year.



With that win under his belt, Frost turned his sites on, ensuring that the Military Working Dogs would eventually serve as one of the grand marshals in the parade. In 2008, that dream came true when Lex the Military Working Dog became one of the grand marshals. Lex was there when his handler, Marine Corporal Dustin Jerome Lee, was mortally wounded in a mortar attack in Fallujah, Iraq, in March 2007. Lee was a few weeks shy of his 21st birthday. Both Lee and Lex were injured that day, and Lex stayed at Lee's side to comfort him. Medics had to drag the 7-year-old German Shepherd Dog away so they could attend to Cpl. Lee, who died a short time later.

Two years ago, I spoke to Frost as he was diligently working on getting the 2023 Vietnam Military Police Sentry Dog Alumni Reunion in Phoenix. Of course, he wanted the event to occur over Veterans Day weekend so they could be a highlight in the Phoenix Veterans Day parade. He closed his note by saying, "Thank you so much for organizing this parade for veterans. As I've told you several times, it meant a lot to me and chased away many ghosts that used to haunt me."

Jim Frost died before the reunion was finalized but Gary Smith picked up the effort and made it happen. As such, this year, the Parade will have a special entry Salute to the Military Working



Gary Smith

Dogs, that includes members of the Vietnam Military Police Sentry Dog Alumni.

Smith says, "Working with the Military Working Dogs was the best duty I ever had. Having them as a friend and a confidant cannot be beaten. It is also the hardest. When I left Vietnam, I knew my dog Rolf would not be alive much longer. In Vietnam our dogs were military equipment, not living breathing friends."

Some interesting facts about Military Working Dogs alumni members:

- Our members served in Vietnam from 1965-73 usually serving a one-year tour. Some of our members went on to higher callings. One of our members ended up being Police Chief for Boston, Los Angeles and New York City Police Departments.
- One of our members went on to be a general officer.
- Several other members became police chiefs, military officers, and Sergeants Major.
- One of our current alumni is a cardiologist. He is bringing his children and grandchildren.

Jim Frost was Gary Smith's Platoon Leader in Vietnam. "I don't remember him from then. Which is typical for officers and enlisted. We got to be friends through the alumni which describes why we do the reunions."

Members of their alumni consist of three Sentry Dog units including the 212th MP CO, 595th MP CO, and 981st MP CO.

You can cheer them on this year at entry number 12. ■



# WE'RE GROWING!

**Honoring America's Veterans now presents the Commemorating Pearl Harbor Day Event and the VA National Memorial Cemetery's Memorial Day Program.**

**Commemorating Pearl Harbor Day Event**

**Time:** Noon

**Date:** Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023

**Place:** Bowl Stadium at Wesley Bolin Plaza  
1700 W. Washington, Phoenix, AZ 85007

**VA National Memorial Cemetery's Memorial Day Program**

**Time:** 8 a.m.

**Date:** Monday, May 27, 2024

**Place:** VA National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona  
23029 N. Cave Creek Road, Phoenix, AZ 85024

Our growth means we need additional team members to support our programs. If you can help, we'd love to hear from you!

**Paula Pedene**, Executive Director, 480-772-2934  
[paula.pedene@honoringamericaveterans.org](mailto:paula.pedene@honoringamericaveterans.org)

**Dale Villani**, Ret. Col, USAF, Vice President, 860-462-7619  
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[www.honoringamericaveterans.org](http://www.honoringamericaveterans.org)



# PARADE ENTRIES

## Phoenix Veterans Day Parade

- 0 The Scouts of America hand out Parade Programs with support from U-Haul.
- 1 Heroes Flag Carried by Team Red, White and Blue Volunteers.
- 2 108th Army National Guard Band.
- 3 University of Phoenix, Veterans Employee Resource Group.
- 4 TriWest Healthcare Alliance – Never Forgetting & Forever Honoring Our Veterans Through Connecting Veterans to Health Care.
- 5 USAA is showcasing one of its Catastrophe Response Vehicles that can respond around the clock to weather-related disaster.
- 6 Celebrity Grand Marshal 2023, Supermodel Kim Alexis and her husband Jeff Schwartz.
- 7 Arizona Governor, Katie Hobbs, Arizona Department of Veterans' Services Director, Dana Allmond, City of Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego and Council Woman, Laura Pastor, followed by the city of Phoenix Military Veterans Commission and veterans who served in Afghanistan.
- 8 The 82nd Airborne Division.
- 9 Arizona Military Historical Society, Salutes Our Greatest Generation.
- 10 Veterans Grand Marshals including: World War II, Navajo Code Talker, Thomas Begay; Korean War Veteran, Jerry Hecht; Vietnam Veteran Herbert Pierpan; Cold War Veteran Hugue Byrne; Desert Storm Veteran Pat Little-Upah; Operation Enduring Freedom Veteran Jeffrey DeVore and Operation Iraqi Freedom Veteran Amanda Tallman. They are riding in antique vehicles provided by the Sun Country Model T. Car Club.
- 11 KTAR Radio with radio personalities Mike Broomhead, Dan Beach, Becky Lynn and Chad Benson.
- 12 Special Canine Grand Marshals are Gary Smith and the Vietnam Military Police Sentry Dog Alumni Association.
- 13 Grand Canyon German Shepherd Dog Club.
- 14 95.1 and 94.9, The WOW Factor Radio Station with host Danny Davis.
- 15 The 2023 Parade Essay winners riding on the Hall of Flame Firetruck are: 9th Grade – Clairet Riesgraf, Arizona College Prep, Chandler, and teacher Cody Bratz; 10th Grade – Shandiin, Harrison Mesquite HS, Gilbert, and teacher, Greg Krahn; 11th Grade – Diego Lenzi, Seton Catholic Prep, Chandler, and teacher Jessica Breen; 12th Grade – Brueklyn Curley, Maryvale High School, and teacher – Michelle Wagner; College Bound 12th Grade – Eduardo Rios Fierro, Coronado High School, Scottsdale, and teacher Dr. Jo Markette.
- 16 Bank of America Salutes Our Veterans.
- 17 Maricopa County Attorney's Office.
- 18 Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.
- 19 Valley Firefighters Veteran Society.
- 20 Phoenix Police Department.
- 21 US Air Force Auxiliary - Civil Air Patrol Squadron 302.
- 22 Banner Plans and Networks presents the Stars for Our Veterans float.
- 23 U-Haul and their Hero themed super graphic trucks.
- 24 Arizona Public Service and Palo Verde Generating Station Honor Guard and Senior Leaders including APS/ Palo Verde Jeff Guldner, Chief Executive Officer Arizona Public Service served as a U.S. Navy Captain on surface warships, Adam Heflin, Executive Vice President, Chief Nuclear Officer began his nuclear career in the United States Navy on nuclear powered submarines, odd Horton, Senior Vice President, Site Operations started his nuclear energy career serving in the U.S. Navy for eight years. and John Hernandez, Vice President, Site Services is the executive sponsor of Palo Verde's efforts to support veterans on-site and in our communities.
- 25 Humana, a Health Partner in Serving Veterans.
- 26 Catholic Charities' MANA House.
- 27 The United States Naval Sea Cadet Corp, Phoenix Division.
- 28 United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Arizona Division 10 and the Coast Guard Auxiliary Band.
- 29 Veterans Heritage Project.





- 30 Arizona Silent Wings, representing the Gliders of World War II.
- 31 Sun Country Corvette Club.
- 32 Tony F. Soza-Ray Martinez American Legion Thunderbird Post 41.
- 33 Sons, Daughters, and Children of the American Revolution are Proud to Honor All Veterans.
- 34 Perch Base of the United States Submarines and their model of the USS Phoenix.
- 35 Filipino American National Historical Society / Military Support Foundation with their I Have Returned float.
- 36 American Gold Star Mothers.
- 37 Soldier's Best Friend.
- 38 Family of Jimmie Muñoz - member of the 101st Airborne Division.
- 39 United States Marshals Posse rides on horseback to support our Veterans.
- 40 The Arizona Rangers ride on horseback to support our veterans.
- 41 Disruptor Group Parade Team, Jeremy McIvive, Parade Pooper Scooper.
- 42 Society of the Third Infantry Division, U.S. Army, Renegade Outpost #15.
- 43 World War 1 fighting ace, Lt. Frank Luke Jr. Museum display.
- 44 The Department of Veterans Affairs: The Phoenix VA Healthcare System, Veterans Benefits Administration Phoenix VA Regional Office, and the VA National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona.
- 45 Arizona Twirling Athletes Show Corps and Royalty.
- 46 Tender Little Hearts Equine Assisted Therapy and Services.
- 47 Free and Accepted Masons of Arizona.
- 48 American Veterans of Intel, Arizona.
- 49 Infinity Hospice Care, We Serve Veterans Program.
- 50 Honoring America's Veterans, today's proud presenter of the Phoenix Veterans Day Parade. With them is this large, helium filled, beautiful balloon of a red, white, and blue eagle. We rise to say Welcome Home and Thank you, Veterans!
- 51 SERVE, PetSmart's Veteran Associate Resource Group from Pet's Smart, Anything for Pets & Vets.
- 52 Warriors at Amazon.
- 53 US VETS, High Flying.
- 54 Sun City Poms.
- 55 Magical Marketing Promotions Company with Operation Restore Veteran's Hope.
- 56 Carl's Jr. of Arizona.
- 57 POW/MIA/KIA Honor Guard and International Pageants.
- 58 The Law Tigers, America's Motorcycle Lawyers.
- 59 GoDaddy Veterans in Technology.
- 60 Southwest Carpenters Union 1912.
- 61 Santander Consumer USA, Veterans Business Resource Group.
- 62 JPMorgan Chase & Co.
- 63 U.S. Customs and Border Protection Honor Guard.
- 64 United Volunteers Joint Services Command.
- 65 African American 761st Tank Battalion, "Black Panthers".
- 66 Thunderbird High School Navy Junior Reserve Training Corps (NJROTC).
- 67 Phoeniquera Bomb Club and Classics.
- 68 Elks 335 Honoring our Veterans.
- 69 NARFE salutes our federal employees.
- 70 Marine Corps League Ira Hayes Detachment, Honoring American Veterans for our Country, and our Freedom!
- 71 Luke Greenway American Legion Post 1.
- 72 Glam Squad Pageantry Supporting and Honoring our Veterans.
- 73 Arizona Employer Support for the Guard and Reserves.
- 74 Basha High School Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps.
- 75 Franklin Police and Fire High School Sergeant Rock Club
- 76 ASU Navy Reserve Officer Training Command, Color Guard.
- 77 Arizona Nurse Honor Guard of Maricopa.
- 78 American Legion Post 5: Past, Present, and Future, Honoring Veterans from Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow
- 79 American Legion Pat Tillman Post 117 Family.
- 80 Arizona Early Day Gas Engine and Tractor Association.
- 81 White Mountain Marching Band under the direction of Marshall Pratt.
- 82 Drivetime Family of Brands
- 83 Sierrah Broadcasting with 101.1 the Bounce and Mega 104.3



# ESSAY WINNER

## Clairet Riesgraf

9th Grade Winner, Arizona College Prep, Chandler

Teacher: Cody Bratz



In the dimly lit trench, as the distant thunder of artillery rumbled, James and David found themselves together. They were more than comrades; they were friends who had shared stories, dreams, and a bond forged in the darkness of war.

James gazed at a tattered photograph in his trembling hand. It was a picture of his daughter, Emily, taken on her first birthday. Her laughter echoed in his memory, a stark

contrast to the grim reality.

David noticed the tears welling up in James's eyes. Without a word, he reached into his own pocket and pulled out a small drawing. It was a colorful sketch of a peaceful countryside.

James met David's eyes, understanding the unspoken message. It was a reminder of the promise they had made - that if one of them didn't make it out of this hellish battlefield, the other would carry their memories forward.

At that moment, they both knew what had to be done. As the enemy advanced, James clutched David's drawing tightly and nodded. With a shared look of determination, they faced the oncoming threat, resolute in their commitment to honor the sacrifices made by soldiers like them.

In the tapestry of our nation's history, American veterans stand as the truest embodiments of bravery, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the principles upon which

this great nation was founded. Their sacrifices, valor, and unyielding dedication have not only defended our freedom but have also etched an indelible mark on the collective soul of America. "Never Forget, Forever Honor" is more than a phrase; it is a solemn promise to commemorate the selflessness and valor of our veterans.

American veterans, spanning generations from the Revolutionary War to the present day, have upheld the torch of liberty, ensuring that the flame of freedom never wavers. In times of peril, they have answered the call to duty, facing the hardship of circumstances with an unshakable stance. Their stories serve as a testament to the enduring spirit of our nation.

It is critical to keep in mind that the freedom we take for granted today was not obtained without significant sacrifice. American veterans have carried the weight of defending our way of life whether it was in the icy winters at Valley Forge, the trenches of World War I, the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, the jungles of Vietnam, or the deserts of the Middle East. In the worst of times, they have survived the unthinkable, seen the unfathomable, and emerged as rays of hope.

"Never Forget, Forever Honor" reminds us that our debt to these heroes can never be fully repaid. It is a commitment to ensure that their sacrifices are not relegated to mere history lessons but are embraced as a living legacy. Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and countless local tributes stand as monuments to their valor. It is a call to action for all.

Americans to express their gratitude, not just through words, but through deeds that uplift and support our veterans. ■





# ESSAY WINNER

## Shandiin Harrison

10th Grade Winner, Mesquite High School, Gilbert

Teacher: Greg Krahn



### **Grandpa Joe: A Hero's Journey Through the Korean War**

Throughout history, there have been stories of extraordinary individuals whose lives are remembered due to their unwavering courage and resilience. My grandpa Joe Begay, a Navajo man who served as a soldier in the Korean War, faced unimaginable trials as a prisoner of war not once but twice. His remarkable journey, along with his receipt of the

Purple Heart, exemplifies the honor and sacrifice of veterans like him.

Born and raised in the Navajo Nation, Grandpa Joe's life revolved around rich cultural traditions and the way of the Diné. His charming and funny persona made him loved by all who met him. The way of the Navajo would serve as the bedrock of his character as he embarked on a life-altering journey far from his beloved homeland. The outbreak of the war in the 1950s prompted Joe, like many of his generation, to answer the call of duty and enlist in the U.S. Army. Joe could have easily refused out of condolence for his ancestors' land being taken just 100 years earlier, but he insisted on serving his country he called home. Leaving behind his family on the Navajo reservation, he embarked on a voyage that would transform him into a soldier and symbol of resilience.

Korea, with its unforgiving terrain and brutal combat, became the battleground where Joe's spirit would be tested. As a frontline soldier, he witnessed the grim realities of war

that would change his perception of humanity forever. He learned camaraderie from his fellow soldiers and watched as others paid the ultimate sacrifice.

However, what sets his story apart are the two remarkable chapters of his life as a prisoner of war. Captured by enemy forces not once but twice, Grandpa Joe endured the harshest conditions imaginable, from physical abuse to mental struggles. Yet his determination and will to fight for his country provided him with the inner strength to find his way out. His actions were a testament to the enduring power of indigenous traditions to provide hope and resilience.

Following the cessation of hostilities and his eventual liberation, Grandpa Joe returned home to the Navajo Nation as a hero and symbol of hope. The scars of war, both visible and hidden, remained for a lifetime, but he carried forward a sense of purpose. The Purple Heart medal, which he was awarded for after being shot in combat, served as a tangible symbol of his sacrifice, determination, and courage. It was a testament to his bravery and an acknowledgement of the massive price he had paid for his country. Grandpa Joe's life embodies a spirit of a Navajo warrior who faced extraordinary challenges with unwavering courage and an unbreakable connection to his Cultural heritage. His story serves as a reminder of the sacrifices of veterans and active duty members of the Armed Forces and the power of cultural identity to provide strength and solace in the face of adversity. Grandpa Joe's legacy continues and will forever shine as a beacon of hope, determination, and resilience of a hero who overcame the darkest of trials. ■





# ESSAY WINNER

## Diego Lenzi

11th Grade Winner, Seton Catholic Prep, Chandler

Teacher: Jessica Breen



### No Greater Sacrifice

There was a day in 2017 where I had nothing on my mind, except being a child. My parents had taken my brother and I to Anaheim, California to see the greatest attraction there is Disneyland (greatest for a child anyways). But on the way, my parents told me that we would be going to my uncle's house in Chino Hills, California. This was greater news than Disneyland in some aspects. There were a few

things I had remembered when going to my uncle's house: food, a pool, and my cousin. Although all fun, my cousin was the thing that made my grin expand two sizes. He had let me play video games that my parents didn't, get ice cream when my parents said, "after dinner", and play soccer late at night. When I arrived at the house, I bolted out of the car, skipped past my uncle's arms, looking for my cousin. I searched, and searched, and searched, and nothing. I stared at my uncle's eyes and said, "Where's Tabo?" He looked back at me for so long that I began to see myself in the reflection of his moist eyes. "Tabo joined the navy, Mijo," was the response I was met with. I had thought the navy was a supermarket, so I asked, "When's he coming back?" My eyes took after my uncle's as he said, "he isn't."

When I look back at the life my cousin lived, I don't remember a whole lot. All I remember is the love he had for me and how he made me feel. Looking back on it now, the last time I saw my cousin he was just like me, a kid. I've always wondered why he wanted to go and basically give his life in a way that many others do. Staring at my uncle that day made me feel like he hadn't had much of an idea either. As long as I live, I may not ever know why my cousin made a decision that took his life. But if there is something I do know, it's this: by telling his story, I am honoring him. By writing these words, I have ingrained his image into the memory of its readers. By telling you that he was one of the most brilliant, well-spoken, and courageous people that I have met, I am not letting myself forget him, but instead honor him.

The day I learned of my cousin's death, I didn't have anything to feel except sadness, anger, and confusion. Not a lot has changed since and those feelings still resonate with me, but I have learned some extra things. The first one was to appreciate the ones you love before you can't. The second and most important thing is that I have learned my duty; I am my brother's keeper, and I cannot let his memory fade, but instead be honored. ■





# ESSAY WINNER

## Brueklyn Curley

12th Grade Winner, Maryvale High School, Phoenix

Teacher: Michelle Wagner



The phrase “Never Forget, Forever Honor” serves as a solemn reminder that the sacrifices made by veterans are not confined to a specific moment in history but are enduring testaments to the courage and dedication that have preserved the liberties we enjoy today. Veterans have faced unimaginable challenges, leaving behind the comfort of home to defend their nation’s principles in the face of adversity. By honoring their contributions, we ensure

that their stories and sacrifices remain etched in our collective memory, inspiring future generations to uphold the values that veterans fought to protect.

Honoring veterans is essential as it reinforces the value of patriotism, fostering a sense of national pride and unity. The sacrifices made by veterans transcend political affiliations and social differences, reminding us that the defense of freedom is a shared endeavor. Their commitment to a greater cause instills in us a deeper understanding of the sacrifices necessary for a just and equitable society. By acknowledging and honoring veterans, we encourage a renewed commitment to the ideals that underpin our nations and communities.

Furthermore, veterans’ sacrifices epitomize the essence of bravery and selflessness, offering invaluable life lessons for present and future generations. Through their actions, veterans demonstrate that courage is not solely manifest on the battlefield but also in the resilience to rebuild and contribute to society after the conflict ends. Their stories serve as a source of inspiration, motivating us to overcome obstacles and confront challenges with determination.

“Never Forget, Forever Honor” is not just a statement; it is a call to action. Honoring veterans is not confined to annual ceremonies but is a continuous duty that reflects our commitment to the values they defended. By preserving their stories, experiences, and the lessons they impart, we ensure that their sacrifices are never in vain. Our obligation to honor veterans underscores the importance of safeguarding the hard-fought freedoms they secured nurturing a culture of gratitude, empathy, and unity.

In conclusion, the theme “Never Forget, Forever Honor” encapsulates the unwavering duty we hold in honoring veterans. Their sacrifices transcend time, embodying patriotism, bravery, and selflessness. By remembering and honoring them, we reinforce the values they upheld, foster a sense of unity, and draw inspiration from their exemplary acts. In this perpetual honoring, we not only pay homage to veterans but also commit ourselves to safeguarding the principles they valiantly protected. ■



# ESSAY WINNER

## Eduardo Rios Fierro

12th Grade Winner, Coronado High School, Scottsdale

Teacher: Dr. Jo Markette



### Remembering the Legacy

Veterans Day, originally called Armistice Day, was created with the thought of preserving the legacy of those who fought for our country. We use this day to celebrate, honor, and remember the reasons why veterans fought for us: our freedom. Americans should never forget the sacrifice and forever honor the accomplishments of our veterans.

America mustn't forget the noble service of our veterans. They fought for us and protected our rights. They have kept the peace in our small towns; they have maintained the energy in big cities. Veterans give me and my peers the opportunity to be able to live in a safe space—a wartime-free environment. Unfortunately, in many other countries, kids my age can't even fathom my day-to-day lifestyle: the privilege to drive to school without having to constantly worry about being in the middle of a military shootout. Kids in those conditions only know war and poverty. Veterans gave us this freedom by fighting in wars like the Vietnam War, World War I, and the bloodiest war of all, World War II. All of those brave soldiers went into war, knowing many of them wouldn't come back alive. We might not know every single one of those soldiers, but we should honor and uphold their sacrifice; thankfully, we already do through parades like those on Veterans Day.

America should forever honor the accomplishments of our veterans. Even if most didn't receive the prestigious Purple Heart, it doesn't take away the fact that they consciously bet their life on our country. They gave up their lives for our flag, our people, our rights. Their noble actions have inspired me to look into the Armed Forces. I want to be part of something bigger than myself and protect those in need. That would be my way of honoring our veterans—I would fight the wars they couldn't. Landmarks like the Field of Honor and Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Keep the legacy of past veterans alive. They remind us and will continue to remind future generations of the ultimate sacrifice those brave soldiers gave—their lives. We will never forget their selflessness, and we will forever honor the achievements our veterans have made. ■





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## Celebrating 10 Years of Serving Those Who Served

TriWest extends a humble thank you to all Veterans for your honorable service to the nation. We are grateful for your dedication, commitment and sacrifice.

It is our honor to provide access to convenient, quality care for Veterans. Our Community Care Network has proudly enabled more than 4.3 million Veteran care appointments in Arizona this past decade, in support of VA's sacred mission. Together, TriWest and VA are making a difference in the lives of our nation's Veterans.

***We will never forget and will forever honor.  
It's who we are. It's what we do.***



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