

Special Memorial Day memories for veterans, families, and the folks of Gallup

Written by Story and photos by Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
Friday, 03 June 2016 06:26



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In the 10th Annual Memorial Day Celebration, hosted by the Gallup McKinley Veterans Committee on May 30 this year, the crowds were larger at both the Hillcrest Cemetery and the County Courthouse, the parade was longer, and enthusiasm was at a much higher level than had been witnessed in the previous nine years.

Memorial Day is especially significant for veterans and families, even as it is also shared by civilians who commemorate the lives of family members and friends who have passed. There is enough empathy to go around.

The Veterans Committee was proud to show the spectators the two new pillars erected for additional veterans – one for WWII vets and one for those who served in Vietnam.

One thing that made this day stand out for many in the Gallup community was the appointment of Hiroshi 'Hershey' Miyamura, Gallup's only Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, as the grand marshal of the parade and ceremony. Miyamura has fulfilled his other duties as a member of the very select club of living MOH recipients and had not been able to attend until this year.

Veterans Helping Veterans members posted the colors for the event, and David Cuellar, the leader of that group, led the Pledge of Allegiance. Kassandra Kleeberger sang the National Anthem and VHV spiritual warrior Tooley Brown gave the invocation.

As the heat from the noonday sun increased, it was finally Miyamura's turn at the podium, and he delivered a short, passionate speech about his service and that of others. He also introduced members of the Korean War Veteran's Association who had come to Gallup to hear him speak.

Cuellar then recognized Army veteran Benny C. Diaz from Gallup. The almost 22-year-old was killed during the last days of the Battle of the Bulge on Jan. 25, 1945.

Veterans Committee Chairman Joe Zecca, who also handled the roll call duties of those who

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are no longer walking on this earth, made further presentations, followed by the VHV's 21-gun salute and the playing of Taps, which preceded the closing of the program by Zecca.

VHV retired the colors, and the hot, sun-burned audience returned home for yet another year's worth of inspiration from those celebrated – some gave all, all gave some.

Story and photos by Tom Hartsock

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