

MOPH Pays Tribute to America's Fallen Heroes on Memorial Day 2017

By MOPH Public Relations

Memorial Day is a day set aside for all Americans to remember and pay tribute to the brave men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our country. It is their service and sacrifice that guarantees continuation of the freedoms all Americans are able to enjoy and is the basis of our American way of life. On this sacred day, let us never forget – Freedom is not free.

On Monday, March 29, 2017, National Senior Vice Commander Neil Van Ess, and LAMOPH President Terri Shattuck, assisted by National Sergeant at Arms Ken Swords, paid tribute to our nation's fallen heroes by laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. Reflecting on this somber ceremony, Van Ess said, "Standing on this hallowed ground, I am especially honored to represent all living Purple Heart recipients as we remember and pay tribute to the legacy of our fallen brothers and sisters. We were the lucky ones who were able to return home to our loved ones. On this day, I am reminded of a quote I first heard while in Vietnam, 'You have never lived until you have almost died. For those of us who fought for it, life has a flavor the protected will never know.' To the seventy-five percent of Purple Heart recipients from all wars who gave their all, we remember and salute you."



MOPH Wreath Ceremony



President & Official Party at Amphitheater

President Donald Trump, joined by Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis and GEN Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, each addressed the audience in the National Amphitheater. In his speech, the President paid tribute to America's fallen military heroes, saying, "Words cannot measure the depth of their devotion, the purity of their love or the totality of their courage -- We only hope that every day we can prove worthy, not only of their sacrifice and service, but of the sacrifice made by the families and loved ones they left behind."



President Trump



Austin Honor Flight

While the audience awaited the arrival of President Trump, a special group of veterans in wheelchairs were rolled into the amphitheater to the thunderous applause of a standing ovation -- this was a special Honor Flight from Austin, Texas, consisting solely of 25 WWII and Vietnam War Purple Heart recipients who were in Washington, DC to visit the War Memorials on the National Mall. Among the participants were current Commander John Augustine, former Region V Commander Ernie Banasau, and other Patriots of Texas Capital Chapter 1919.

During the day, PNC Clayton Jones, Junior Vice Commander Doug Middleton, Legislative Director Aleks Morosky, Service Director Frank Van Hoy, and Deputy Service Director Angelo Wider, also laid wreaths at the World War II Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, the Vietnam Memorial Wall, and the Women in Military Service for America Memorial.



WWII Memorial



Van Hoy, Middleton, Wider & Jones at Korean War Memorial

Following the wreath laying ceremonies, the MOPH Leadership was invited to view the National Memorial Day Parade in the VIP reviewing stands, as the guests of the Purple Heart Foundation. The National Memorial Day Parade, organized by the American Veterans Center, begins in front of the Smithsonian Museum of American History and follows Constitution Avenue past the Washington Monument, ending in front of the Lincoln Memorial gardens. As a major sponsor of the Parade, the Foundation was honored to host a beautiful float in the parade, with Board Director Clayton Jones and members of the Departments of Virginia and Maryland riding on the float and marching in the parade.



Also marching alongside the Purple Heart float were Patriot Brian Willette and a few other Patriots, Ladies, and kids who came all the way down from Western Massachusetts Chapter 875 to march on foot.



Chapter 875 Patriots Marching in the Parade



Patriots Carrasquillo and Ploszai on Terra Bikes

A highlight of the Purple Heart contingent were two Patriots, Michael Carrasquillo and Sebastian Ploszaj who rode on a novel form of transport – a recumbent tricycle called the “TerraTrike,, that led the float along the entire route of the parade. The inclusion of the recumbent trikes marked the beginning of a new partnership between TerraTrike, the largest producer of recumbent tricycles and tricycle accessories in North America, and the Purple Heart Foundation, the original organization to support combat-wounded veterans.

As it does each year, the Military Order of the Purple Heart is proud to observe this special day, set aside to reflect and remember the brave men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our Nation. Our fallen Purple Heart recipients represent the very character of a nation with a long history of patriotism and honor -- they, and you, are the ones who fought to keep our country free from threats of terror. For those of us who bear the scars of war, yet survived, Memorial Day has special meaning and sentiment as we honor those who fought at our side but did not return.