



CHAPTER 391
Tuolumne County, California

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
GUERRILLAS IN THE MIST

Vietnam Veterans - Chapter 391

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First WHVVD Parade is huge success



Photo by Rosemary Bliss

Jon Cavaiani (left) and Richard Pittman, Medal of Honor recipients are Grand Marshals of the Parade. State Senator David Cogdill rides with the two recipients. Ron Dodson is driving. More photos pages 6-7

Motorcycle Run set for Sat., April 17 at Jamestown H-D

The second annual Sgt Bobby Rapp Memorial Scholarship Motorcycle Run presented by the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 391 (VVA-391) Motorcycle Group is scheduled for Saturday, April 17 at the Jamestown Harley-Davidson on Highway 108.

According to Al Sickle, director of the group, "We're hoping to raise more than the \$20,000 we did last year to send even more of our bright students to college. The Group has already made an excellent start."

The event will have a picnic, a motorcycle tour of the Sierra Nevada which will be guided by one of the group, and there will be live music all afternoon from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. "You don't have to have a bike to join in on this event. The whole community is invited to participate. This is a family event and there's something for everybody," said Steve Cambra who is a vice-director of the group. "You can register at the event or on-line at www.VietnamVeterans391.org/mcgroup/shop and can pay the \$15

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"I spoke to a few people in our group afterward who said it overwhelmed them to tears," said Brian Dommies, vice-president of the American Legion Riders Chapter 108 of Amador. There were banners from sponsors welcoming home the more than 300 Vietnam Veterans in vehicles, walking, and riding motorcycles in front of thousands of spectators to the first and only parade in the nation for Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.

The high point in the parade was when a Grand Cherokee dressed out in a Navy theme and loaded with former Navy personnel jumped out and unfurled an American Flag that flew on the USS Constitution in front of the Union Democrat building and the 59th Army Band of Sacramento played the National Anthem as all the veterans hand-saluted. Following the National Anthem was a flyover down the parade route of two World War II Army planes by the Commemorative Air Force from Modesto. The planes are part of a museum in Modesto and they were flown by Terry Dunn, a Vietnam Veteran, and Bob Holloway.

George Eldridge, a retired Chief Petty Officer who served in Vietnam in 1965-1966, was the parade's coordinator and owner of the "Navy" vehicle said, "The main purpose of this parade was to finally welcome home our Vietnam veterans. I spoke with one veteran and asked him if he had ever realized how many Americans in Tuolumne County honored his service. 'I do now,' he said. That is what I was hoping the parade would achieve. I also wanted the citizens to finally see their 'invisible soldiers'." Eldridge added, "Chapter 391 was the host of the parade. I've heard some say we shouldn't be putting on our own parade. We didn't, we coordinated the parade. It was the many sponsors from the community who put on this parade. Without them, there wouldn't have been a parade. The many banners in the parade were evident that the community supports its veterans."

More evidence of the success of the parade included the fact that the Associates of Vietnam Veterans Chapter 391 sold almost 380 souvenir t-shirts. The chapter has them for sale on their web site along with posters for "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" (www.VietnamVeterans391.org).

Every unit that passed the audience received thunderous cheers from the spectators and the big, burly motorcyclists even had their eyes welling with tears which they reluctantly related to Eldridge. The parade was led by the Color Guard from the

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