

As the outgoing Chair of National City's Veterans and Military Advisory Committee I'd like to help answer and define the importance of Veterans Day and why I think it's pertinent that we honor ALL those who have served. First, let me tell you a little about myself. I am a veteran. I served in the U.S. Navy from 1954-1958. I went to boot camp in Bainbridge, Maryland, then TE school at NTC San Diego. TE stands for TELEMAN – as in teletype communications. I was stationed at NAVCOMSTA San Francisco following school. It was a communication relay center where messages were relayed via teletype tape between ships and shore. My service time was really quite calm, there wasn't much action going on and this was many year before women were allowed to serve on ships. So, I don't have any war stories. But, I know many my neighbors and fellow National City residents do.

WHAT IS VETERANS DAY?

WHY DO WE OBSERVE THIS HOLIDAY?

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

On November 11, 1918 an armistice, or temporary cease fire, was declared between allied nations and Germany. This was regarded as the end of the “war to end all wars.” Six months later on June 28, 1919 the Treaty of Versailles was signed officially ending WWI. In November 1919 President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the First Commemoration of “Armistice Day.”

On May 13, 1938 by act of Congress, the 11th of November was declared a legal holiday – known as Armistice Day – a day set aside to honor Veterans of WWI.

But, in 1954 after WWII and after American forces fought in Korea, the 83rd Congress, at the urging of Veteran service organizations, amended the act of 1938 using Veterans instead of Armistice. On June 1, 1954 November 11 became the day to honor all Veterans of all wars.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, a Veteran himself, issued the first Veterans Day Proclamation, which stated *“In order to insure proper and widespread observance of this anniversary all Veterans and all Veteran organization and all citizens will join together for common purpose.”*

Veterans Day continues to be on November 11, regardless of which day of the week it falls on.

In 1948 the National City War Memorial, at 12th and D Street, was originally dedicated to the memory of service men who died during WWII. Names of Korean and Vietnam War service members were added at a later date.

In March of 2014 the Memorial was vandalized and the bronze plaques stolen. Following the theft, there was an immediate outpouring of concern and support. Intense media coverage

brought the community together. Veteran groups including American Legion Post 255, elected officials, residents, and businesses all rallied to raise money to replace the stolen plaques. Days later, a Good Samaritan contacted National City Police stating he'd found the plaques in San Ysidro. With the plaques safely returned, the City Council immediately discussed how to safeguard them. A committee was established, whose purpose was to ensure safety of the plaques and incorporate the War Memorial into the \$1.5 million D Avenue community corridor project.

On December 7, 2015 the National City War Memorial and Veterans Wall of Honor was rededicated, ensuring that our military heroes will always be remembered not only for their service to our country but to our community. For generations to come, visitors to the War Memorial will be inspired by the heroism and devotion to duty, and will be filled with a sense of pride in their community.

National City has a long relationship with the military community, probably going back to the time there was a military housing project in National City. And, the Chamber of Commerce annual holds a Salute to the Navy Luncheon to recognize and honor the relationship National City has with the 32nd Street Naval Base San Diego. So, out of the committee working on the War Memorial refurbishing, came the working group to develop a plan for a Veterans' Advisory Committee. After many months of work, in February 2017 the National City, City Council adopted the resolution to establish a VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (VAMFAC). Committee members are appointed by City Council to serve on this committee. The first official meeting was held on February 28, 2019. Since then the committee has been through a reorganization but mostly have been meeting on a quarterly basis. Last May the VAMFAC sponsored a Memorial Service at the War Memorial site.

There are several ways you can honor and recognize Veterans in National City. You can purchase a tile for the Wall of Honor to add a name either in memory or in honor of; you can add a name to the National City "Armed Services Recognition Program" to have a name and picture added to the National City website; and to become a member of the VAMFAC you may fill out an application on line.

As the outgoing chair of the VAMFAC I invite you to stop by the War Memorial on this Veterans Day. And while there will not be a formal service, it is a time for personal reflection on what Veterans Day is really about and what it means to you and your family.

There are formal services being held in different locations around the County. I will be attending the one at the Chula Vista Bowl at 11 a.m. on Thursday, November 11. It is being sponsored this year by the VFW Post 2111. I will be a representative of the National City Veterans and Military Family Advisory Committee. Please plan to join me there, or attend one of the other services in the community.

Remember: Veterans Day honors ALL Veterans – living or dead. It is a time to honor all who have served – whether during a war or conflict or during times of peace. It is a great day to recognize Veterans and their families, say “thank you for your service” and pay it forward sometime if you can. Because, we must continue to remember so that we don’t forget!!

There are some special days each year that we honor and remember Veterans, in addition to today. Memorial Day the end of May is the official holiday set aside to remember those who have died while serving in the armed forces; Pearl Harbor Day on December 7, the day Japan attacked the United States Navy fleet in Hawaii. September 15 – designated as POW/MIA Day. And, we include September 11, Patriots Day, in remembrance of those who were killed in the terrorist attack on America. These are days we must all remember because we must never forget. We MUST not forget those who are buried at sea on the USS Arizona, victims of the Pearl Harbor attack; and we MUST not forget those who are missing in action, whose families still wait for closure; we MUST not forget those who are still serving, coming home with wounds both physical and mental that need our love and care. They are Veterans.

Shirley A. Ferrill

National City Veteran

Chair of the National City Veterans and Military Families Advisory Committee