

Bikers Escort New Enduring Freedom Memorial



Wow, what a ride! On Sunday Sept. 26th, I was able to ride with the Patriot Guard Riders, (PGR) and American Legion Riders from Phoenix to Prescott and back. What a great bunch of guys and gals. We met up with other veteran riders in Prescott, to escort the new Enduring Freedom Memorial to where it will be displayed at Wesley Bolin Plaza.

This memorial honors Arizona's men and women who have served in our armed forces and lost their lives fighting terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan and throughout the Southwest Asia Theatre of Operation.

It was made at a local foundry in Prescott, and paid for by Veterans Organizations, not tax-payers. Clyde "Ross" Morgan, a fellow Viet Nam Veteran, and the artist who made this Statue, has captured the essence of the "Fallen Heroes Tribute". He was there that day to introduce to the public his depiction of his idea of the last salute. The Memorial is an exquisite sculpture of a Soldier saluting a field cross for a fallen comrade; depicted by a pair of boots, an M-16 with bayonet stuck in the ground, topped by a helmet, and the dog tags of the fallen soldier hanging off the weapon. This is the traditional way in which fellow combat GIs salute their Fallen Brothers. The name, of each Arizonan who has fallen for the cause, is inscribed on the Memorial. It is a moving and inspiring tribute; dedicated to those who have given their all for this Country.

Once the dedication was announced and prayers said, the whole gang escorted the Statue back down the hill to Phoenix. A procession of over 400 bikers, Gold Star Families, dignitaries, police, and other escort vehicles, stretched out for over a mile. Tons of townsfolk came out to cheer us on as we passed; many standing with flags and saluting the whole procession as we thundered by.

I for one, and others I spoke with afterwards, were all very proud to be a part of this historical event; and proud to see the true American Patriotic Pride for this great nation, in response to this ride. If ever Glory from war was ever found, it was on this day.

The Dedication of Enduring Freedom Memorial at Wesley Bolin Plaza was held on Saturday, October 9. In attendance were Governor Jan Brewer, Congressman Harry Mitchell, the artist Ross Morgan, and Joan Sisco, who helped immensely to get this done. A lot of "Brass" from all branches of service and many fellow veterans attended. In addition, Terri Schall and the Blue and Gold Star Moms and Dads, and family members of the Fallen GIs were there - the reason for this Monument being made and dedicated this day.

The names of these fallen heroes were announced at the ceremony by the family members. Uqualla, a Native American Medicine Man, gave his Blessing to the Statue in an auspicious display of Native culture. This was followed by the Flag Raising, a 21-gun Salute, and Taps. At the very end of the ceremony, a Time Capsule was opened at the base of the statue, and all the family members got to leave some treasures for the future.

Names of the fallen shall be added to the Monument each year as the conflict continues, and the time capsule will be opened to add their mementos.

It does this old vet's heart a lot of good to be able to partake in these types of events, and I sincerely hope y'all enjoy hearing about them. You can catch up with me on the Forum page we have at azrider-southwest.com if you'd like to comment on this, or any of our stories.

Please remember those who have fallen thru ALL our conflicts, on Veterans Day and everyday, to preserve our Freedom, which isn't Free. Till the next time, ride hard, be safe, and Urah, for all those who know what it means to fight for Freedom.

Beaux