

Eight new names added to memorial

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40-minute event.

Jim Willis, director of the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs, read a national proclamation that honored the 50th anniversary of the start of the Vietnam War and the veterans who served and died in that conflict.

And Vietnam War-era veterans were asked to stand and be honored.

"We were always very proud of what we did," Leno said about the brotherhood of fellow Vietnam War-era veterans. "People can hate whatever they want about a war, but don't ever hate your veterans."

The Grand Ronde Memorial Day event was preceded by a lunch in the Tribal Community Center that attracted about 150 to 200 people. Tribal Food Services Coordinator Kristy DeLoe and her staff prepared a buffalo stew, salad and rolls and purchased cakes that featured American flag designs in the icing.

The meal was served by Tribal Elders Violet Folden, Gladys Hobbs, Claudia Leno, Richard Ray and Ellen Fischer and Senior Service Cook Kevin Campbell.

After the meal, attendees went outside for the ceremony. The weather cooperated with partly cloudy skies and a cool, but not uncomfortable, westerly breeze that kept the eight flags flying at the Veterans Memorial in constant flutter.

Leno, who served as master of ceremonies, became emotional when discussing cleaning off a grave on Friday, May 25, at the Tribal cemetery and finding a neglected grave marker of a Tribal member who died in 1943 during World War II.

"There was no flag on that grave and that really bothered me," Leno said. "So, today when I was down there I took a flag and put it there and I'll always watch that grave to

Senior Veterans Queen Kallie Provost hands a veterans memorial pin to Rand Rydell of Grand Ronde. Rydell is a Vietnam veteran who served in the U.S. Army.

make sure that flag is there because that is what this day is about ... remembering and acknowledging our veterans for what we do and what we did and what we trained for.

"... Like I've always said, veterans don't want a lot. All they ever want is a little respect for what they did."

Bobb, who also gave the invocation, recalled being sent to Vietnam in the 1960s.

"I can see the faces of the veterans of my era, the Vietnam era," Bobb said. "I can still remember the day that I first hit Vietnam. The two things that I remember are the heat and the smell. We were kids. We were 18, 19, 20 years old, and every day we said a little prayer, 'Just get me through this day, Lord.'"

"We were there with the belief that we were bringing a democracy like our own to a people. The Vietnam era was a tumultuous time. There was racial conflict, the start of the drug culture, free love and anti-war protests that infested this entire nation, but we answered a call to service like so many men and women throughout history have answered to put our lives on the line in a hot, humid, steamy little country half a world away for a cause and belief that we were bettering people's lives."

Tribal Council Secretary Jack Giffen Jr. encouraged audience members to take the Memorial Day celebration one step further



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Grand Ronde Honor Guard members, including from front, Tribal Elders Wink Soderberg, Gene LaBonte and Alton Butler and Tribal member Zach Bly post the colors at the beginning of the Tribe's Memorial Day observance at the West Valley Veterans Memorial in Grand Ronde on Monday, May 28.

and thank a veteran every day while Tribal Council member Toby McClary expressed his "deepest, sincerest appreciation" to veterans for what they have done to protect America's freedoms.

"As we observe the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, we reflect with solemn reverence upon the valor of a generation that served with honor," Willis said while reading the proclamation. "We pay tribute to the more than 3 million

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service men and women who left their families to serve bravely a world away from everything they knew and everyone they loved."

The eight new names added to the West Valley Veterans Memorial were Arnold E. Eldebrant, Army; Charlotte A. Brock and Robert B. Hollinger, Air Force; Ronnie L. Locke and Dennis L. Gleason, Marines; and Douglas A. Elerath, Daniel M. Burgess and Leonard A. Rydell, Navy, bringing the total number of names of West Valley veterans on the four black granite columns to 2,252. The names were read by Tribal Elders Alton Butler (Marine Corps), Eugene LaBonte (Army), Wink Soderberg (Navy) and Bobb (Air Force).

Bud Abbott of the Willamina Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4211 recited the poem "Remember Me, America" by John Dirusso during the event.

Tribal Elder Jolanda Catabay sang the national anthem and Tribal Royalty performed the Lord's Prayer as sung by Aaron Neville. This year's Tribal Royalty includes Senior Miss Grand Ronde Nakoosa Moreland, Junior Miss Princess Makenzie Aaron, Junior Miss Grand Ronde Iyana Holmes, Senior Veterans Queen Kallie Provost, Little Miss Princess Amaryssa Mooney, Little Miss Grand Ronde Amelia Mooney, Junior Veterans Queen Isabelle Grout and Junior Miss Princess Elizabeth Watson-Croy.

The posting of the colors was performed by Wayne Chulik, Soderberg, LaBonte, Butler, Zack Bly and Al Miller.

In addition, Tribal Public Affairs and Information Systems staff assisted with the event's technical aspects.

The ceremony closed with the solemn playing of taps and Leno announced that fundraising has started to add two more columns to the West Valley Veterans Memorial to accommodate the Army and Navy columns, which are nearing capacity. ■



Grand Ronde Royalty kneel at the end of the Lord's Prayer after performing it in sign language at the Tribe's Memorial Day observance at the West Valley Veterans Memorial in Grand Ronde on Monday, May 28.