

# Veterans remembered

REMEMBERS continued  
from page 1

Committee, as well as volunteering at the Grand Ronde Food Bank.

Their deaths were acknowledged after the Saturday afternoon grand entry by former Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno, a Vietnam War-era Marine Corps veteran.

"The past couple of weeks, we have lost two of our past Honor Guard people," Leno said, acknowledging first Merrill's selfless devotion to helping the community.

"He actually drove the van for our Food Bank back when they actually volunteered for things instead of getting paid for things," Leno said. "He worked on that van and put his own money in it."

Leno recalled how Soderberg would often joke about being the most handsome man to serve on Tribal Council.

"If you ever met him, he would tell you he was the best-looking guy in Grand Ronde, maybe the best-looking guy in Oregon and maybe the best-looking guy in the world," Leno said. "If you ever came to the powwows, you'd see him wearing a cedar hat. I was fortunate to call him a friend and fellow veteran. He served on our Honor Guard. We served on our council at the same time. We also served together down at our casino and he will be dearly missed."

Leno then requested a moment of silence to remember Soderberg and Merrill.

"With that said, I think both Wink and Norris would say, 'Let's powwow.'"

Soderberg's widow, Kathy, was in attendance, as was one of his sons, Steven.

The Saturday afternoon grand entry – traditionally the best attended of the weekend's four grand entries – featured 67 veterans walk in behind the flag bearers.

One of the eldest veterans in attendance was Corky Ambrose, 85, who served in the Air Force from 1952 to '60. "I was a flight mechanic technician stationed in Washington and South Carolina," he said after grand entry. "I visited 17 countries and flew over both oceans." He is the father of Grand Ronde Food Bank Manager Francene Ambrose.

Another veteran, Wes Weathers, who served in the Navy from 1958 to '62, said he participated in the failed invasion of Cuba known as the Bay of Pigs.

Most veterans, however, were from the Vietnam War era and there were five female veterans acknowledged.

Tribal Elder Jerry George, who served in the Air Force, summed up what many veterans were feeling. "It was an honor to serve," he said.

All veterans received a commemorative coin designed by Steve Bobb Sr., chair of the Tribe's Veterans Special Event Board and a Vietnam War-era Marine Corps veteran, too.

"My job is to welcome you to Grand Ronde and offer you our hospitality and generosity," Tribal

Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier said. "I know that some of you who go down to the casino might dispute the generosity part, but that comes with owning a casino."

Although not a veteran himself, Mercier acknowledged fellow Tribal Council members Soderberg, Leno and Brenda Tuomi for helping him understand what it means to have served in the military.

"I didn't know a whole lot about veterans and what you all have been through until I became a part of the Grand Ronde community and started residing here on a permanent basis," Mercier said. "I've had the good fortune to work with some notable veterans while I have been a Tribal Council member. ... I don't typically give out advice freely, but if there is any piece of advice I would offer to youth present or to anyone, if you get a chance to talk with a veteran, do it. ... They will have stories to tell you that will put your life and your problems into perspective."

Saturday afternoon's Honor Guard included Wayne Chulik (Tlingit), Tribal Elder and Marine Corps veterans Alton Butler and Marine Corps veteran Allen Truesdale (Cherokee) carrying in eagle staffs while Leno brought in the U.S. flag, Tribal Elder and Army veterans Raymond Petite handled the Grand Ronde flag, Tribal spouse Richard VanAtta carried the MIA/POW flag and Navy veterans Al Miller was assigned the state flag.

Tribal Council members Jon A. George, Jack Giffen Jr., Kathleen George and Mercier marched in behind the flags on Saturday. Tuomi, an Army veteran, participated in the Friday evening grand entry.

Cultural Resources Department Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier gave the bilingual invocation in English and Chinuk Wawa and drummed as part of The Woodsman.

Saturday afternoon's events also featured the honoring of Ken Kraft, an Army veteran who lost a leg



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Jesse "Peewee" Robertson, right, a Navy veteran, receives a coin from Veterans Warrior Nacoma Liebelt during the Marcellus Norwest Memorial Veterans Powwow held at Uyxat Powwow Grounds on Saturday, July 7. Also handing out gifts with Liebelt is Veterans Junior Queen Tasina Bluehorse, middle, and Veterans Senior Queen Mabel Brisbois.

Visit **Smoke Signals'**  
**facebook**  
page to see more photos

during a mortar attack in Baghdad in 2005. He received a Wounded Warrior Project blanket and pillow created by Tribal Elder Evelyn Seidel and her husband, Leo. It was awarded by Leno and Petite.

"It's an honor to be here and thank you very much," Kraft said.

Following that honoring, a coming out ceremony was held for Levi and Nichole Liebelt.

The powwow attracted a diverse audience that included a group of Taiwanese students from Kaohsiung High School.

Friday evening's powwow events started at 6:30 p.m. with a giveaway by outgoing Veterans Royalty Hailey Lewis-Little and Tasina Bluehorse, who were Senior and Junior Queen, respectively, during 2017-18.

New Veterans Royalty for 2018-19 also were crowned with Mabel Brisbois taking over as Senior

Queen, Bluehorse returning as Junior Queen and Nacoma Liebelt serving a Warrior.

Royalty crowns were woven by Cultural Resources Department Cultural Education Specialist Brian Krehbiel and beaded by Annette Ingram. Liebelt's headband was made by Dixie Schaafsma.

Approximately 25 veterans participated in the Friday evening grand entry, which included Bobb carrying in the U.S. flag and Weathers carrying in the Department of Defense flag. "I might be the only person in Oregon with a DOD flag," Weathers said. Bobb also delivered the Friday evening invocation.

Following grand entry on Friday, interTribal and social dances continued until about 10:15 p.m.

Tribal Elder Deitz Peters, who is moving to Hawaii in the near future, was the arena director throughout the three-day powwow. Master of ceremonies was Navy veteran Nick Sixkiller, a fixture at Tribal powwows.

Drums that performed during the Veterans Powwow included The Woodsman, Battling Mule, Johonnaai, Turquoise Pride, All Nations, 4 Directions, Squash Dome, Iron Mountain and Eagle Thunder.

Sixkiller said the smaller number of drums present was because of a concurrent competition powwow being held in the Pendleton area by the Umatilla Tribe.

Tribal Elders in attendance included former Tribal Council Chairwoman Kathryn Harrison, John Lillard, Ed Larsen and Cherie Butler, to name a few.

Vendors north of the powwow grounds offered a variety of merchandise for sale, including jewelry, pottery, paintings, beadwork and car decals. Attendees wore a variety of regalia and Native-themed T-shirts, which included one that read "Don't Worry, Be Hopi."

Food vendors included Slow Train Coffee from Willamina, Mom's Kitchen, Curly Fries, Island Star and Claudia Leno's Indian Taco



Nichole and Levi Liebelt perform an honor dance during a ceremony for their re-entry to the powwow arena during the Marcellus Norwest Memorial Veterans Powwow held at Uyxat Powwow Grounds on Saturday, July 7. Dancing in the background is their daughter Kalea.

See REMEMBERS  
continued on page 7