

Bartlett's News Briefs

May 30, 2022

Serving America

Pacifica American Legion Post 238 and Pacifica VFW Post 10245

BY JEAN BARTLETT



Jean Bartlett photo

Serving America, Pacifica's American Legion and VFW representatives Bob Biby and Allan Hale, Veterans Day 2021.

Fifteen minutes south of San Francisco, ribboning the San Mateo County coast, the beachfront city of Pacifica, California gave everything on Veterans Day, 2021, to wrap the crowd gathered in what can only be called "Nature's Perfect Day." The event that took place was the inaugural unveiling and dedication of a 2,000 pound, black granite stone monument that memorializes the names of Pacifica's Vietnam and Iraq fallen. While "Taps" played, Red-tailed hawks soared among the trees under a mantel of blue.

This physical tribute is located at the western end of the parking lot of Pacifica American Legion Post 238 and Pacifica VFW Post 10245. Korean War veteran Allan Hale, Commander of both posts, addressed the crowd. He thanked the four individuals from Pacifica's Terra Nova High School, Class of 1969, who banded together at their 50th high school reunion to make this monument a reality. Those individuals are: Rich Jasso, Major General Mike Jelinsky (US Army Ret), Barbara (Scopinich) Petersen and Patti (Topolinski) Hawker.



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Located at the western end of the parking lot of Pacifica American Legion Post 238 and Pacifica VFW Post 10245, this monument memorializes the names of Pacifica's Vietnam and Iraq fallen.

Hale thanked all those in attendance—family members, friends of the fallen, community members and representatives of the City of Pacifica—for providing unwavering financial support. He noted the unimaginable hurdle discovered near project end. The Legion did not own the small parcel of land where the monument was to be placed. He then thanked the local family who generously gifted that land to the Legion. He also thanked the attorney, a member of both posts, who handled all the paperwork of that deed transfer at no charge. Hale expressed his "heartfelt gratitude to a community who gives so much to its Legion and VFW members."

As he said this, officers and members of Pacifica's American Legion and VFW, stood at attention throughout the ceremony. This article is to salute Posts 238 and 10245.

While it is physically home to a great deal of California history, Pacifica is one of the San Francisco Bay Area's youngest cities. In 1957, nine small coastal communities incorporated to become the City of Pacifica. Prior to incorporation, local veterans met at Coastside American Legion Post 571 or Linda Mar American Legion Post 615. Following incorporation, the two posts merged and became Post 238. Current members of Pacifica's American Legion and VFW represent: WWII, the Korean War, Vietnam, Desert Storm and the War in Afghanistan.

Post 238 and its Auxiliary participate in Legion youth mentoring programs: Boys State, Girls State, the Oratorical Contest and the Americanism Essay Contest. Over the years they have also participated in baseball and marksmanship programs. In addition, the American Legion supports three scout troops and sponsors local Eagle Scout projects. As requested, the Legion's Color Guard will present at a veteran's gravesite. While Pacifica's Legion has always participated in the "Buddy Check" program, during the pandemic their outreach to veterans has been a constant.

"We call members to see how they are doing," Hale said. "Do they need anything? If they don't answer the phone, we knock on their door."

In their hometown, members of Posts 238 and 10245 are counted on for their support of Pacifica fundraisers, assistance to local nonprofits and for help with hospitalized and homebound veterans. They never disappoint.

Since 2003, Post 238 has hosted the Pacifica Resource Center's monthly Family Harvest Program at the Legion Hall. This particular program provides community members in need with fresh vegetables and fruits, as well as staples such as milk, eggs, chicken, beans and rice. Along with the use of their Hall for the event, Post 238 volunteers distribute, bag and carry groceries for their fellow Pacificans.

For Pacifica's annual American Cancer Society Relay for Life event, Pacifica's Legion and VFW provide a free lunch for all participants.

Several years back the American Legion, Legion Auxiliary and VFW asked local law enforcement, "What do you need?" As a result, the three groups coordinated the fundraising efforts to provide two, trained police dogs for the Pacifica Police Department. That was \$20,000 of fundraising, per canine.

Annually, with the VFW, the Legion provides an "April Pier Day" for hospitalized veterans. Participants and their health technicians are brought to the Pacifica Pier in a mobile medical van, supplied by the local VA hospital. Before the fishing begins, the veterans are greeted and supplied with coffee and donuts. Next step, fishing poles are handed out. After some dedicated angling, and quite frankly a lot of camaraderie, the participants head over to the Legion Hall where the Legion's Auxiliary serves up the perfect spring cuisine – hamburgers and hot dogs.

Should a veteran need a ride to the hospital or to a doctor's appointment, members of Posts 238 and 10245 are behind the wheel. Pre-pandemic, Pacifica's Legion and VFW held a Christmas Day Dinner, "with all the trimmings," for any local veteran who needed a place to go.

Members of both Pacifica posts make it a habit to visit fellow veterans at local VA hospitals. Then there's Bingo at the Menlo Park Veterans Hospital. Post 238 does that bi-monthly, alternating with American Legion Post 105 out of Redwood City. They bring prizes and call numbers.

When the four members of the Class of 1969 came to Post 238 seeking monument help, including a space to place the memorial, there was no hesitation from this veterans group – whatever was needed. Money raised for the monument, concrete work and miscellaneous landscaping came to \$20,000.

Cheered on by a grateful community, these veterans, these multi-decorated altruists, lead the annual "Discover Pacifica Parade."

Commander Hale, a former Chief Quartermaster who served eight years with the United States Coast Guard, explained that one of the guiding principles of the American Legion defines exactly what Post 238 and Post 10245 are all about.

"Veterans Still Serving America."

Pacifica American Legion Post 238 and Pacifica VFW Post 10245, 555 Buel Avenue, Pacifica, CA, 94044. Phone: 650-355-4346.



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Contra Costa County Times, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. She is also an award-winning children's book author, a former Hallmark Card writer, a produced playwright and the author of two historical biography books on some of the more than 370,000 interred at Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery in Colma. Visit her website at www.bartlettbiographies.com.