Rolling Thunder XXV

'Flags In' at Arlington National Cemetery {left}. USMC Sgt. Michael Vernon Lulush is the only son of Dave & Becky Lulush. He is buried in Section 60 where all of the Iraq, Afgan heroes are buried.

The 25th annual Rolling Thunder POW/MIA demonstration ride once again took place on Memorial Day in Washington DC. Sunday May 27 brought hundreds of thousands of motorcyclists and supporters to the streets of Washington DC to express their continued support of our nation's GIs who remain Prisoners of War and/or Missing in Action. People come from across our nation and around the world converge on DC for this gathering.

Official events take place all weekend. Remembrances start on Thursday at Arlington with "Flags In". The Old Guard troops from Ft. Myer place a flag at every grave site in Arlington National Cemetery. Friday evening, there is a candlelight vigil and walk among the various Memorials, including the Three Soldiers Statue, Viet Nam Veterans Memorial, the Viet Nam Women's Memorial, and the 'In Memory' plaque. This lesser-known, modest plaque honors those who died as a result of their Viet Nam service due to Agent Orange & other 'non-combat' causes. Their names are not allowed to be added to The Wall.

Saturday through Monday there are a host of tributes, remembrances, wreath-laying ceremonies, salutes to the Troops, visits to military hospitals, speakers, musical performances, and other presentations offered by numerous organizations.

Sunday's Rolling Thunder, Inc demonstration ride involved an estimated 250,000+ motorcycles traveling a route of approximately 7 miles; starting at the Pentagon parking lot & ending near the Lincoln Memorial. It reportedly took 2 ½ hours for all the bikes to cross the Arlington Memorial Bridge. The route was lined with spectators, many rows deep. The ride traditionally kicks off with

a flyover. This impressive gesture of support - normally approved, arranged, and presented by the US Air Force, inexplicably did not take place. Once again at his self-appointed post, Marine SSgt. Tim Chambers was joined by 2 of his brothers to salute all of the riders as they rolled by.

Normally a regular speaker at the Rolling Thunder Inc podium, Bill Bell was unable to attend this year due to health complications; another Agent Orange victim among so many. His credentials, dedication, and in-depth knowledge of the POW/MIA issue make him an extraordinary resource regarding this on-going struggle to bring ALL of our GIs, living or dead, home. Schedules and time constraints did not allow his remarks to be delivered by Rolling Thunder Inc Parliamentarian Michael DePaulo. You can read Bill's complete presentation at our blog,

http://azridersouthwest.com/blog/

Robert and Jani Bergdahl, parents of POW Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, from Hailey, Idaho

Gold Star parents, Dave and Becky Lulush

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It has been 30 years since the dedication of The Wall…and under normal circumstances a constant flow of people would be visiting and paying respects. BUT …

There was also a remembrance on Memorial Day at The Wall commemorating the 50th anniversary of the USA entering Viet Nam. Due to the need for politicians and their handlers to make the most of photo-ops in an election year, from approx. 7a until 2pm the area was restricted and under special-clearance-only access, in preparation for an appearance by President Obama as he delivered a proclamation to officially welcome Viet Nam Veterans home… the first of its kind. *Well now, them DC folk certainly don't want to rush these things, do they?*

So, while not nearly as many people were allowed to visit The Wall on Memorial Day as is the norm on this of all days, it is our understanding that Monday's restricted access was well publicized beforehand. That way, anyone who wanted to go could pay their respects earlier in the weekend.

POWs & MIAs are certainly not limited to Viet Nam… While 1660 still remain unaccounted for from Viet Nam, our Country continues to lose our youngest and bravest to the [mis]fortunes of war.

SGT Bowe Bergdahl, who was captured 6-3-2009 in Afghanistan, is one such pawn in a world-wide chess match; played out by political players with little consideration given toward the lives of GIs and their loved ones. Bowe is currently our only known living POW.

He, along with an estimated 93,316+ POW/MIAs, commencing with World War I, await repatriation since their service in the US military. WWII: 78,000+ (down from 80,000+), Korea: 8177, Viet Nam: 1660, Cold War: 120, Southwest Asia: 1 (this is Bowe). *They ALL need to be brought home.* "America's Veterans are the Purchasers of Peace and every Veteran has the Right, the Absolute Right to come home!" *Michael DePaulo, USMC*

It has been commented to us that there were other omissions and disses noted during the event. But since this gathering is supposed to be about our POWs & MIAs rather than politicians hoping to get some free press… we've chosen to focus on the true purpose of this day and keep their names out of it. Leave it to say that neither party has an impressive track record in regard to their actions on behalf of Veterans or GIs, either currently or historically. Things get said…. Other things get done [or not done]. 'Nuff said.

As usual, we are so very appreciative of the support we receive from our friends Michael DePaulo and Patrick Hughes when it comes to sharing this event with our readers. Michael & Patrick are both dedicated members of Rolling Thunder Inc. They are exceptional resources to us regarding Veterans issues and we thank them very much.

All of these photos and MANY more are available for viewing and purchase at http://patrickjhughes.org/galleries/6_rolling_thunder

While the Rolling Thunder Inc demonstration 'Ride For Freedom' takes place once a year, you can support the needs and causes of our Veterans, POWs, and MIAs all year 'round. Please visit the RT website at http://www.rollingthunder1.com/

Betsy

Photos by
Patrick J. Hughes U.S.M.C. ChuLai 67-68
Rolling Thunder Inc. National Photographer
www.patrickjhughes.org
YouTube channel: mag12chulai