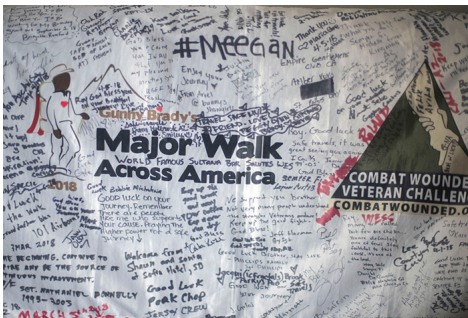


Marine vet walks across America to raise money, awareness for wounded warriors

Written by By Rick Abasta For the Sun
Friday, 27 April 2018 08:12



SKY CITY, N.M. — Retired Gunnery Sgt. Roy Wesley Brady Jr. is walking across America in solidarity with the Combat Wounded Veteran Challenge, a non-profit benefitting injured veterans.

His cross-country hike brought him outside Sky City April 25, as he made his way to Mesita.

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This is not Brady's first time taking steps to bolster his cause. In 2015, Brady, a retired U.S. Marine Corps veteran, walked more than 3,000 miles to raise money for wounded veterans, traveling from North Carolina to California.

His 2018 "Walk 4 Warriors" campaign, however, is significantly longer, as he will be traveling from San Diego to New Jersey to honor a fellow Marine who is buried there.

Brady served 22 years in the Marines and had two combat tours in Iraq with Fox Co., 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines stationed in Hawaii.

"I retired in 2013 and this walk is to stay in contact with (veterans), to show them that I support them," Brady said. "These guys and ladies might come back hurt or injured. Or they might be missing a limb or PTSD problems."

Brady said veterans do have support when they return home but that they must also reach out and seek help, so that they can make use of the programs available.

The funds raised from Brady's walk go towards the Combat Wounded Veterans Challenge in St. Petersburg, Florida, which works on enhancing prosthetics for added mobility and provides PTSD counseling for veterans.

"We take (veterans) on adventure hikes," Brady said of the organization. "We get them the right prosthetic to make sure they can still hike, run, swim...we take them on challenges to push themselves to make them as whole as they were before they got injured."

Throughout his travels, Brady said he has met people who have provided support, whether through monetary donations or in the form of food and water. Other times, it's the words of encouragement that give Brady the motivation to continue.

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There is a chance Brady will make it to Albuquerque in time for the Gathering of Nations, an annual meet-up that brings 565 tribes together each April, and he hopes to meet some Native American veterans in attendance.

Home and History

Brady's roots are planted in North Carolina and he said going home will provide him a respite from the road.

"(North Carolina) will be a good resting spot for me. It's where I grew up," he said.

Walking across America certainly provides plenty of time for reflection and throughout his journey, Brady has been thinking of his fellow Marine from New Jersey who committed suicide.

He has also been thinking of his brother, an Army veteran, who committed suicide due to issues stemming from PTSD.

Brady said this journey has been personal.

"I've done this walk before and (suicide) still happened in my own household," he said. "I just got to keep motivating and get this word out there because these veterans do have problems."

In 2015, when Brady first underwent the challenge, his walk from the east coast to the west coast took five-and-a-half months.

"This time, it will take much longer because I'm going north to New Jersey," he said. "It'll probably add an extra month."

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The first iteration of his “Walk 4 Warriors” campaign was a learning experience physically, as he encountered extreme temperatures on his way through the southwest during the summer months. Brady said the weather has been tolerable this time around, although the wind has provided challenges.

Traveling from Needles to Kingman, Brady encountered high winds, low visibility, and dirt in his mouth the whole way. Similar windy conditions in Gallup resulted in a car ride to the next town until the weather subsided.

“I double check the weather now, before I take off,” Brady said. “If I don’t like it, I won’t move. Sometimes, I wait until the next day.”

For veterans, Brady offers these words of encouragement: “Take care of your fellow brothers and sisters. Explain what you do so everybody else can understand so we’re not left in the dark. People do want to help, so express yourself.”

For more information on Brady’s cause, visit www.combatwounded.org

By Rick Abasta

For the Sun