

Memorial Day: Some Gave All

Written by Story and Photos by Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
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Memorial Day started with the laying of wreaths in the Veteran section of Hillcrest Cemetery on May 25 by VA nurse Consuela Smith, City Councilwoman Fran Palochak, and Mary Calderon, a recent widow of a veteran. With a multitude of American flags around the fenced off area, interspersed with those of the military branches of America as well as the MIA/POW banner, veterans representing one local group, Veterans Helping Veterans, and the Knights of

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Columbus stood quietly and respectfully during the short service.

Dey&Nite sang their rendition of the National Anthem and a 21-gun salute was offered as a remembrance to those who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty, or who have passed on since their term of service expired.

A parade was formed almost immediately after and members marched or rode down Aztec Avenue to the County Courthouse, where the main celebration was held.

Veterans Committee Chairman Joe Zecca opened with a brief message and Veterans Helping Veterans posted the colors, with Parade Grand Marshall Phillip Silva handling the red, white and blue flag. David Cuellar led the large audience in the Pledge of Allegiance and Dey&Nite repeated their effort with National Anthem, joined by more than a few of the crowd. Tooley Brown gave the invocation and then the speakers began.

Mayor Jackie McKinney read some heart-clutching letters his mother's family had received during World War II after his uncle had been reported missing in action, then confirmed as having been killed in action. State Rep. Patty Lundstrom, D-Gallup, and McKinley County Manager Bill Lee spoke as well.

Cuellar introduced Grand Marshall Silva to the collected crowd for a few words and Zecca recited a roll call for all the veterans that had given all for their country.

The high point, though, was another 21-gun salute and the playing of Taps, followed by a brief presentation of an American flag, tri-cornered during that almost-ending ceremony, that was presented to Esther Largo to remember her son, Calvin David Largo, who was killed in action in Vietnam.