

Fullerton salutes its war veterans

Memorial Day celebration draws 1,500.

By ED PAUL
FOR THE FULLERTON NEWS
TRIBUNE

A sunny Monday was the perfect setting for the 68th annual Memorial Day observance at Loma Vista Memorial Park in Fullerton. This year's program honored naval aviation with guest speaker Rear Adm. James A. Symonds.

"Although I participated in Memorial Day celebrations since I was a child in upstate New York, the true meaning of Memorial Day - honoring the men and women that have paid the ultimate sacrifice - really hit me after the Iraq War," Symonds told 1,500 people gath-

ered for the ceremony. "When you lose people you personally knew, it hits you hard.

"Therefore, I never pass up the opportunity to give thanks to the men and women that served in WW II, Korea and Vietnam."

As the first commanding officer of the USS Ronald Reagan, Symonds - who had made more than 1,000 carrier landings in his 31 years in the Navy - commanded the aircraft carrier on its initial combat assignment in support of the Iraq war.

Symonds also had the honor of presenting the flag to Nancy Reagan at President Reagan's funeral.

New to the ceremony this

year was the recognition of all the attending active and retired military personnel. As their service song was played, the men and women stood to the cheers of the crowd.

Master of ceremonies A. B. "Buck" Catlin coordinated all the activities.

There was also a special recognition of two Union Army Civil War Veterans who have been buried at Loma Vista for more than 80 years, Joseph Ramsey and Nathan Gillmore. In his obituary, it was reported that Gillmore was the first veteran interred at Loma Vista on February 21, 1920.

Catlin closed the program by thanking the 400 people who came Saturday morning to place the flags and crosses on more than 3,400 veterans' graves.



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VETERANS MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

SALUTING VETERANS: Bill Hessen, representing the 101st Airborne, is accompanied by Katie Harris and a Marine escort from Golf Company Infantry, 2nd Battalion, during Memorial Day ceremonies at Loma Vista Memorial Park on Monday.



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