

# Run To The Guns 10th Anniversary

It's been 10 years since all the effort that went into the creation of Arizona's World War II Memorial culminated at the dedication ceremony held at Wesley Bolin Plaza on December 7, 2013.

The 2023 gathering was 18 months in the making. Revisiting the Run to the Guns and organizing its 10-year anniversary was undertaken by many of the same players who were involved from the beginning. It was a Salute to our Nation's Fallen of all wars and an opportunity to Honor America's Veterans, Sailors, Soldiers & Airmen of all wars.

The ride, which took place on Saturday December 9, 2023, was organized & hosted by the American Legion Riders of Post 138 and Post 2. Some 158 Riders gathered at American Legion Post 2, located at 2125 S Industrial Park Ave. in Tempe to stage for the parade. It was a beautiful & clear day for the ride. There was no escort. Riders departed in groups or 'battalions'; staggering departure with about 2 minutes between waves. The parade of about 6 battalions went smoothly, with no mishaps and perfect arrival time for the ceremony's commencement.

WW2 war planes did a flyover at the beginning of the memorial service; generating loud cheers from the spectators. There were more than 500 additional visitors to the Remembrance. Mary Millben sang the National Anthem. Numerous organizations placed wreaths at the WWII Memorial.

A Young Marines Color Guard led the way through the Korean Memorial to the rear of the USS Arizona Gun for the Filthy 13 Riders of Post 138 Rose Ceremony. They laid 13 Red Roses at the base of the U.S.S. Arizona Gun Barrel in 2023 just as the original Filthy 13 Riders did in 2013. This was also done to honor the 13 Service members that lost their lives to Taliban attacks while trying to defend the Afghanistan Airport. Their names were

read aloud as part of this moving tribute. The "Filthy 13 Riders" and the \*Young Marines\* will not let their memory for their service be forgotten! Red Roses are a tradition started by Jim 'Boomer' Bourassa, leader of the Filthy 13 Riders, to commemorate the blood lost, the WW2 Screaming Eagles of the 101st Army Airborne Division, and the 13 American service members killed in Afghanistan.

The Honored Guest in attendance was WWII Survivor Ed Miklavcic Sr.; a Veteran of the US Army Air Forces. This 102-year old gentleman is one of the last living survivors of the 'Day That Will Live in Infamy'.

Among the organizers and attendees was Jim Baginski, Founding Commander of American Legion Post 138.

Among the speakers were Arizona's Secretary of State Adrian Fontes ~ a Marine Corp Veteran, KTAR Radio Talk Show Host Mike Broomhead, Brian Ismael - President of the HAV - Honoring American Veterans organization ; Lt. Col. Dana Allmond of AZ Dept. of Veterans' Services, and Keynote Speaker Army Veteran Ian Parkinson.

State Senator Ken Bennett was there and spoke as well. He was a key player, a driving force, in the creation of the WWII Memorial that was installed at Wesley Bolin Plaza 10 years ago. He was Boomer's wingman for the 2013 Run to the Guns parade. Unfortunately, this time obligations of his office prevented him from participating in the ride. The American Legion Riders of Post 138 made him an Honorary Member and had a cut made especially for him. Boomer presented it to him on stage. He was completely surprised and honored to be made a part of ALR Post 138.

Boomer sent along acknowledgement and thanks to the sponsors & supporters of this day. "The Sponsors helped a great deal as well as volunteers. 'Sponsors were D&D Discount Motorcycles, Netta Chetta's On

Mill, U.S. Egg Breakfast & Lunch, Honoring America's Veterans Organization, Guardian Production Services, A.B.A.T.E., Bass Pro Shops, Continental West, LP Sounds, Scott Media, Pinstripe Photography, Casey's Woodshed Bar, American Legion Post 2, American Legion District 12, plus American Legion Posts 26 and Post 91.

"Some key sponsoring Friends & Family include Jim & Mary Bourassa, Sue Landgraf, and Laura Turnage. Matt Roberts was my key wingman and liaison to our sister group with Paula Padine of HAV.org. Not to mention our Post 138 Commander John Boyle who filled in the voids as well as emceed the event at Post 2. Also, a big shout out goes to our long supporters Rembrandt, Nytro, Brooklyn, Cookie, and Ol'Skool of B.A.C.A. They were instrumental in their volunteering with security and assistance in many of the functions to help make it successful. And there are still too many more volunteers to mention." You are all appreciated.

This was a moving day for all who participated and a heartfelt tribute to all whose lives were taken in World War II. There are opportunities to learn more about Arizona's WWII Memorial; including a WW2 Museum at the Capitol Dome that has an information pamphlet; offering more details.

Thank you to Jim "Boomer" Bourassa of American Legion Post 138 for your help with this article.

PS: Boomer added that there will be an "RTTG Music Video" with everyone that was in the ride, as well as some shots of the volunteers that were at the "End Of The Run After Party". All the material is currently being organized and choreographed; with finalization anticipated this summer. Announcement of a date to show it is intended for some time in May or June 2024.

Betsy

