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RIVER VALLEY TIMES

42ND YEAR • ISSUE 7

Serving Rancho Murieta, Sloughouse, Wilton

APRIL 10, 2026

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RACE OR GAME
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Community Honors Vietnam Veterans



The local observance of National Vietnam War Veterans Day unfolds at the gazebo on March 29. The Rancho Murieta Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars presented the event. From left are Norma Dawdry, Gregory Verdon, David Walters, Bill McCarver, Michael Mineni, Jeni Lawton and Don Craig.

**Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars hosted a solemn observance of National Vietnam War Veterans Day at the community gazebo on March 29, honoring Vietnam veterans.

Established by Congress in 2017, the day recognizes the service and sacrifice of more than 3 million Americans who served in the Vietnam War, as well as

the families who shared in that sacrifice.

VFW Post Senior Commander Michael Mineni emceed the brief but solemn program, which included remarks on the meaning of the observance, heartfelt memories and reflections from several veterans, and the presentation of a flag to the widow of a local veteran.

The ceremony also featured a flag presentation by Scout Troop 233, two patriotic bugle performances by musician Tai Wieler, and opening and

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VFW Post Senior Commander Michael Mineni presents a flag to Elaine Fowler, recognizing the service of her husband, Lyle Fowler. He died in January.

No Kings Protests Draw Turnout in Rancho Murieta, Wilton



Rancho Murieta protesters gather near the Chevron station during the national No Kings protest on March 28. The number of protesters at that corner doubled later in the morning.

**Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - As part of a nationwide day of protest that drew an estimated 8 million participants, residents in Rancho Murieta and Wilton took to local intersections March 28 to make their voices heard. While the local crowds were

modest – about 60 people at each site – the turnout was notable for rural communities where public political expression is less common.

Demonstrators gathered at two high-traffic locations: Jackson Highway and Murieta Drive in Rancho Murieta, and Grant Line Road and Wilton Road in Sheldon. Participants held handmade signs, waved to passing cars and received

a mix of honks, thumbs-up gestures and occasional negative reactions. Both events remained peaceful.

Rancho Murieta Protest

About 62 people attended the March 28 protest in Rancho Murieta, a strong showing given the short notice, according to organizer Laura Loven.

Continued on page 2

CSD Reports Interrupted Burglary, Dangerous Prank



Two serious crimes are among the topics discussed at the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security Committee April 2 meeting. Courtesy photo

**By Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG)

- A patrol officer likely interrupted a burglary at a Rancho Murieta business last month, while a separate firecracker vandalism incident nearly caused a crash, according to Security Sgt. Brandon Arino.

Arino delivered the report during the April 2 meeting of the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security Committee, where he outlined significant incidents from March.

The Security Committee includes two board members – Director Linda Butler and Board President John Merchant – along with Security Sgt. Brandon Arino, Interim General Manager Amelia Wilder and other staff. The committee reviews security issues in depth and provides findings and recommendations to the full board.

Burglary Possibly Disrupted

The burglary was discovered around 5 a.m. March 22 at the Murieta Nail Lounge in the Murieta Plaza.

A patrol officer noticed a U-Haul truck parked outside the business and, upon closer inspection, found the front glass door shattered. Inside, there were clear signs of forced entry, including damage to an ATM machine near the entrance and tampering with the cash register.

The U-Haul showed signs of being stolen, with its driver-side door lock tampered with, and had been backed up toward the storefront, suggesting it may have been intended to haul away equipment or cash.

The business owner told security that his doorbell camera system showed the break-in occurring at approximately 4:48 a.m., capturing two suspects wearing dark hooded sweatshirts and masks using a crowbar to force

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No Kings Protests Draw Turnout in Rancho Murieta, Wilton

Continued from page 1

Loven said the demonstration was organized to provide a local opportunity for residents – particularly older adults – to participate without having to travel into Sacramento, and reflected a desire among some residents to speak out publicly and create a visible presence within the community.

“There are a lot of people here... and you have to drive so far to go anywhere,” Loven said. “Let’s do something locally... and let our friends and neighbors know what we’re thinking, too.”

“You start feeling more isolated out here,” she said. “It was so nice to see people who think the way I think.”

Loven said the March 28 gathering marked a sharp increase from earlier efforts. The first protest drew only one participant: Pamela Haines. The second brought Haines and Loven, but at separate times.

Loven organized the third event by signing up with Indivisible, a national grassroots network that helps local groups coordinate protests and civic action. Despite the lack of local advertising, more than 60 protesters showed up to wave signs at all four corners of the intersection.

Haines said her decision to participate is rooted in Martin Luther King Jr.’s message that “hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that,” and said she was encouraged by the growing turnout.

“I’m very, very happy about the evolution of



Wilton protesters Bob Chandler and Kelly Whitcomb engage with motorists at Wilton and Grant Line roads.



Rancho Murieta protesters gather on the northeast corner of Jackson Highway and Murieta Drive.

people that are speaking out publicly and feeling safe enough to do it,” she said. “We are pushing for the good.”

Loven said reactions from passing motorists were mixed but were overwhelmingly more positive than negative.

She plans to continue demonstrations as a regular vigil, scheduled Fridays

from 3 to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., allowing residents to participate for any length of time. Those interested can reach out at loven.laura@gmail.com or 916-494-9175, or they can just show up.

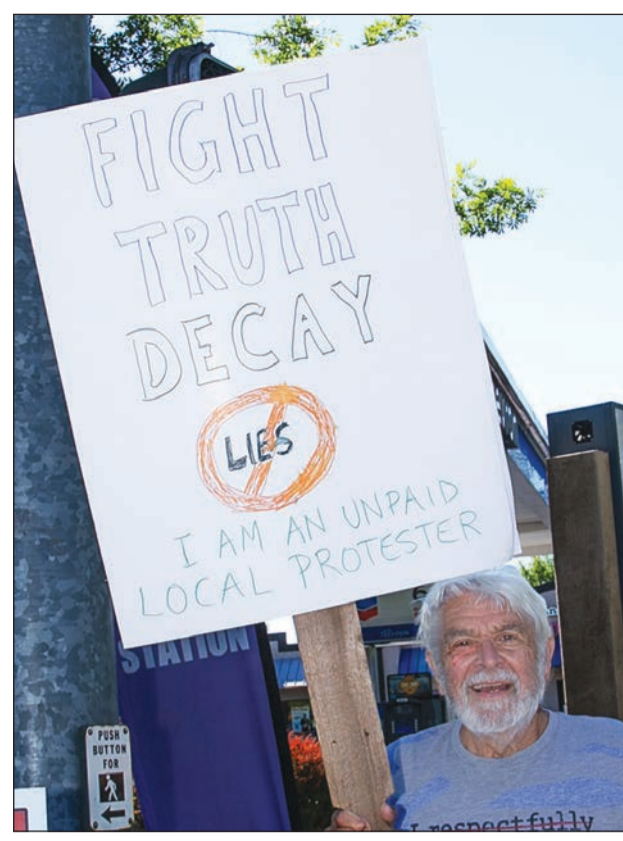
Wilton Protest

About 58 people participated in the March 28

Wilton protest, according to organizer Melanie Ernould.

Although organized as a Wilton event it was held in Sheldon to take advantage of a busier intersection, and nearly all participants were from Wilton, Ernould said.

“I think it’s really important that... in these rural areas that we show up



Rancho Murieta resident Fred Perkins waves a sign made by a friend.

and we’re seen,” Ernould said. “I wouldn’t want anyone out here to feel like they’re alone.”

“I think our rights are getting stripped away; nothing is more important than that.”

“For me, finding this group of people was a huge relief,” Ernould said. “Everybody was just so nice... warm.”

The effort grew from a much smaller start. The first gathering at Dillard and Wilton roads drew only a handful of participants. After that, the protest was moved to the busier Sheldon intersection. A second event in October drew roughly the same number of participants as the March 28 protest, including a few from Rancho Murieta.

Their interactions with motorists were mostly positive, though not without moments reflecting the region’s political divide.

“Of course, people flipped us off, but the

numbers have consistently been like 10 honks to maybe one negative reaction,” Ernould said.

On a lighter note, she recalled, “A couple drove by, and the husband was flipping us off, and the wife gave us a thumbs-up.”

Wilton protester Moira McCleary, a retired nurse, said she joined the protest out of concern over broader national issues.

“I believe in democracy, and it’s very disappointing what’s happening to our country,” McCleary said. “The old guards are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer. Absolutely, I’m a retired nurse, and it really bothers me that people’s health care is being taken away. That is a right for everyone.”

For many participants, the protests were as much about visibility as persuasion: Simply showing up was a way to signal they were not alone.

See additional photos at therivervalleytimes.com. ★



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Garden Club Dives into Vernal Pools

Story and photos by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times Reporter

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - From fairy shrimp to fishing poles, nature took center stage at the River Valley Garden Club's March 24 meeting, as members heard a vivid presentation on California's vernal pools and presented a \$500 grant to support the Kiwanis Club's annual Kids Fishing Day at Lake Clementia. About 30 people attended the evening gathering at the Rancho Murieta Association building.

Fishing Day Grant

The club presented a \$500 community grant to the Rancho Murieta Kiwanis Club in support of its long-running Kids Fishing Day. Community Grants Chair Karen Bengard made the presentation. The grant was part of the Garden Club's ongoing effort to support youth and outdoor programs.

Accepting the grant on behalf of Kiwanis, Pat Rooney thanked the club and described the Joe Mazzoni Kids Fishing Day, now in its 22nd year, as a popular event for children ages 5 to 12 that typically draws about 100 youngsters.

The day features fishing with volunteer helpers and a hot dog lunch, giving local families a memorable time at the lake.

"It's just a wonderful event," he said.

Vernal Pools

Guest speaker Professor Jamie Kneitel, chair of the Environmental Studies and Biological Services



Professor Jamie Kneitel of Sacramento State shares his enthusiasm for California's vernal pools during a presentation to the River Valley Garden Club on March 24.



A slide shows a vernal pool flooded in winter and then carpeted with wildflowers in spring.

Departments at Sacramento State, introduced members to the rich and often overlooked world of vernal pools: those shallow depressions that fill with water in winter and then dry into colorful rings of wildflowers in spring. He explained that the pools form over a buried hardpan layer that traps winter rain and said that more than 90% of California's original vernal pool habitat has already been lost to development and other land-use changes.

Kneitel showed a video taken just weeks earlier, revealing the microscopic community of aquatic

invertebrates that suddenly appears when the pools fill: fairy shrimp, copepods, water fleas, worms and other tiny crustaceans. These "passive dispersers," he said, survive the long dry season as tough resting eggs in the soil that can remain viable for decades until the water returns.

In contrast, "active dispersers" such as mosquitoes, diving beetles and other flying insects live in the pools only during the wet phase before emerging and flying off to other habitats. He also highlighted the pools' larger residents - the California tiger salamander and the Western

spadefoot toad - which spend the dry months safely underground.

On the floral side, Kneitel showed slides of the wildflowers that make vernal pools famous: golden goldfields, intricate calico flowers and his personal favorite, the tricolor monkeyflower, which he described as "just so cute." Many of these plants are found only in vernal pools, and some are listed as threatened or endangered. He also introduced the audience to the Boggs Lake Dodder, an orange, thread-like parasitic vine that wraps around host plants such as coyote



Club member Karen Bengard presents a \$500 check to Pat Rooney of the Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta. The club will use the grant money to buy rods and reels for the upcoming Kids Fishing Day.

thistle and siphons off water and nutrients.

While the parasite looks destructive, Kneitel described a field study by one of his students at Mather Field showing that plots where the dodder was left alone actually had higher plant species diversity than plots where it was removed.

"It suppresses the strongest competitors," he explained, "and that opens space for more species to coexist."

In closing, he emphasized that vernal pools are an iconic part of California's natural heritage but also among its most imperiled ecosystems, and that stronger conservation and careful management will be needed to protect their unique plants and animals for future generations.

May 9 Plant Sale

In other business, Plant Sale Chair Deb Rooney outlined plans for the club's annual plant sale, set for 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, May 9 in the

RMA parking lot. Calling it the Garden Club's major fundraiser of the year, she said proceeds help to support the club's grants, scholarships and community projects.

Rooney urged members to donate plants, pots, garden art and other garden-related items, and to volunteer for setup and sale-day duties. The event will feature plant tables, a raffle, a children's Mother's Day project, a Master Gardener information table and flower-arranging demonstrations, with finished arrangements available for purchase. Large shade tents provided by the Rancho Murieta Association will help to keep plants - and volunteers - comfortable as the club works to welcome the community and raise funds for its many activities.

More information about the club can be found at its website: rivervalleygardenclub.net.

See additional photos at therivervalleytimes.com. ★

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Get Ready for California's 2026 Primary

Your Questions About Voting, Answered

By CalMatters Staff
CalMatters.org

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Where do I vote? Am I registered to vote? Does everyone get a ballot in the mail? Get the answers to your election day questions ahead of California's June 2 primary election.

How do I vote? Does everyone get a ballot in the mail? Yes. Under state law, vote-by-mail ballots are sent to every active registered voter.

When will I receive my mail-in-ballot? Counties will begin mailing ballots May 4.

How do I return my mail-in ballot? Mail it to your county elections office; to be counted, ballots have to be postmarked on or before June 2 and received by election offices by June 9. Drop it off at a ballot drop box, vote center or polling location anywhere in the state. Ask someone you trust to do it for you, but that person can't receive payment for doing it.

Can I vote in person? Where is my polling place or vote center? Yes, although mailing your ballot as soon as possible is the best way to get your vote counted fast. You can find out where to vote in the following ways. Visit <https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/>, text "VOTE" to GOVOTE (468-8683), call the secretary of state's hotline at (800) 345-VOTE, check your county Voter Information Guide or contact your county elections office

If you live in one of 30 counties, you'll have increased options, including as many as 10 days of in-person early voting.

How do I register to vote? Am I registered to vote? You can check the secretary of state's website (<https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/>). You'll need to enter your name, date of birth and either your California driver license, identification card number or the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you don't have those available, contact your county elections office or the secretary of state via email or phone at 800-345-8683.

If you've changed your name since the last time you voted, or if you moved and didn't notify the Department of Motor Vehicles or U.S. Postal Service, you may have to register again. If you haven't voted in several consecutive general elections, your registration may have been canceled.

How do I register? Visit <https://registertovote.ca.gov/>. You'll need the same information as above.



Where do I vote? Am I registered to vote? Does everyone get a ballot in the mail? Get the answers to your election day questions ahead of California's June 2 primary election. Photo courtesy Freepik

If the DMV has your signature on file, you'll be able to complete the process online. If not, you'll need to print, sign and mail your completed application to your county elections office. You can also pick up a paper application at elections offices, any DMV office and at many post offices, public libraries and government offices. You'll be contacted when your application is approved, or if you need to provide more information.

What happens if I miss the voter registration deadline? The last day to register online for the primary election is May 18. If you are registering or re-registering less than 15 days before May 18, you must complete same-day voter registration and request your ballot in person at your county elections office or polling location.

How do I change my political party if I'm already registered? You'll need to re-register to vote.

What if I need help with voting? What if I need voter information in a language other than English? The secretary of state's office has voter instructions in the following languages: Spanish, Hindi, Chinese, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, Thai and Vietnamese. Your county elections office may offer additional languages.

When will I receive my voter guide? The statewide voter

information guide will be available online by April and will be mailed to voters later that month.

What am I voting on? The June primary election is the first opportunity for Californians to choose which candidates will appear on the general election ballot in November. Unlike some other states, California's primaries are nonpartisan, so the top two vote-getters in each race will advance to the November election, regardless of political party.

The ballot is packed with state and federal races, most notably the race to succeed Gov. Gavin Newsom, who is term-limited and cannot run for reelection. In addition to the governor's race, voters will be asked to choose candidates for Congress, the state Legislature and a slate of statewide offices including insurance commissioner and treasurer.

Can I leave work to vote? Yes. California requires time off for voting if employees don't have enough time outside work hours. You can take as much time as you need, but employers are only required to pay for a maximum of two hours. Employers may require advance notice. The time off must be at the beginning or the end of your shift. Employers are required to post a notice about this 10 days before a statewide election.

How can I track my ballot?

Visit california.ballottrax.net/voter/ to register for California's BallotTrax tool, where you can check your ballot status and opt in to receive email or text notifications.

Is my ballot safe? Yes, voting by mail or dropping your ballot in an approved drop box is a safe and efficient way to vote. Fraudulent voting is uncommon and incredibly difficult given California's strict voter verification procedures. Mail-in ballots will only be sent to voters whose address and identity have been verified by county election officials. Their vote will only be counted once those officials verify that the voter's signature on the envelope matches the one on file.

You can find more information about California's election and voting process on the secretary of state's website. The office takes any allegations of election fraud seriously. Anyone can submit a complaint using the following form sos.ca.gov/elections/publications-and-resources/voter-complaint.

What if I have special circumstances? What should I do if I marked my ballot wrong, or otherwise messed it up? If you haven't turned it in yet, you can exchange your mail ballot for a new one at an elections office, ask an election official at the polling place for a new ballot, or

vote using a provisional ballot. If you have mailed or turned in your ballot, there's no way to fix it. Contact your county elections office for a new ballot.

What if the signature on my ballot doesn't match the one on file? County election officials check the signatures on the return envelope against signatures on your voter registration card to make sure no one tries to improperly cast your ballot. It still remains confidential; the ballot is separated from the envelope before it is counted.

Voters with ballots with missing signatures or ones that don't match are notified and given an opportunity to correct the problem before the election is certified.

What happens if I don't receive my ballot? Contact your county elections office.

Help! I dropped off my ballot to a drop box in the wrong county. Don't worry – the county will pass it on to the correct elections office.

I forgot to detach the stub from my ballot. Can I open the sealed envelope and reseal it myself? You can, but the secretary of state's office recommends contacting your local county elections office. They'll ultimately be processing your ballot, and they can offer the best guidance on whether you should reopen it or just leave the stub attached. ★



Election Information

June 2, 2026, Statewide Direct Primary Election

Vote Early and Vote by Mail



May 4 Ballots begin to arrive by mail. Official Ballot Drop Boxes are now open.



May 18 Close of registration. Register today!



May 23 11-Day Vote Centers open through Election Day.



May 30 All Vote Centers open through Election Day.



June 2 Election Day! Last day to turn in your ballot.

Vote Early! Don't wait for Election Day.

Take advantage of early voting and avoid the lines! You can return your ballot in the mail, at any Official Ballot Drop Box, or at any Vote Center. No postage is necessary.

Track your Ballot!

Sign up for "Where's My Ballot?" with BallotTrax, a free ballot-tracking and alert system. It is available to all voters who wish to track the status of their Vote by Mail ballot from printed to accepted. Scan the QR code or visit www.wheresmyballot.com



Vote Early! Vote by Mail.

Spring Into Giving: Women's Club Combines Bingo, Charity



President Bonnie Kirschman calls the Bingo numbers when the Rancho Murieta Women's Club celebrates spring at its "Spring into Giving Bingo" luncheon on March 24.

**Story and photos
by Gail Bullen
River Valley Times
Reporter**

RANCHO MURIETA, CA (MPG) - The Rancho Murieta Women's Club hosted its second annual Spring into Giving Bingo on March 25 at the Rancho Murieta Country Club, blending bingo, lunch and charitable giving in support of the Sacramento-based Wellspring Women's Center.

Club President Bonnie Kirschman opened the luncheon with upbeat news, announcing that 15 new members have joined since October, signaling what she called "a great start to 2026." She encouraged members to continue inviting neighbors and friends as the club grows.

Kirschman also thanked Vicki Joyner and her committee for organizing the December Holiday Home Tour and for once again creating the luncheon's table centerpieces, this time featuring miniature roses.

Wellspring Women's Center

Event chair Toni Anania welcomed attendees to the "Spring into Giving" fundraiser and expressed appreciation for the strong turnout and donations.

"My heart is warmed to see all the donations.



Sharon McGowan helps Patti Lightfoot to select a prize after she wins the first Bingo.

Thank you, thank you, thank you," Anania said, noting the club is now in its second year supporting the organization.

She reminded members that Wellspring provides "a safe gathering place, healthy meals and other forms of assistance to vulnerable women and children," emphasizing that any woman and her children are welcome.

Founded in 1987 by the Sisters of Social Service, the center serves roughly 200 women and children each weekday, offering meals, counseling and basic necessities in a supportive environment.

Members were

encouraged to donate non-perishable food, hygiene items, baby supplies and other essentials.

Bingo

Following opening remarks, Anania outlined the bingo format, explaining that participants could play one or two cards and compete across a variety of themed patterns.

Winners selected prizes ranging from gift baskets to local gift cards, while Kirschman called numbers projected on a screen. Printed pattern sheets were provided at each table.

The lively rounds of bingo served as both entertainment and a centerpiece



From left, Patti Keating, Sheryl Bray and Erin Reid are intent on winning a Bingo.



Carole Cline adds her contributions to the donations collected for the Wellspring Women's Center as part of the luncheon.

fundraiser, with participants enjoying a mix of friendly competition and social interaction.

Blood Drive

The luncheon also included an update on the club's ongoing blood drive efforts.

Committee co-chair Patti Keating reported that the October drive collected 45 whole-blood donations and six Power Red donations, totaling 56 pints. Fifty-seven donors registered, including one first-time participant.

Kirschman noted the drives have earned a strong reputation with Vitalant staff, who appreciate the club's hospitality and home-baked goods.

Members who are unable to donate blood were encouraged to volunteer by baking or helping

to contact donors: efforts organizers say are essential to maintaining the program's success.

Other Business

In other updates, the luncheon itself featured a full meal of Caesar salad, breadsticks, a choice of meat or vegetarian gluten-free lasagna, and a vanilla ice cream sundae for dessert.

Looking ahead, the club announced its next luncheon will be held May 27 and will feature a "Music Through the Decades" program.

Anania said attendees will be entertained by the Blowbacks, a local band known for performing music from the 1940s through the 2000s, including big band, Motown, jazz and classic rock. She encouraged members to

"be here and wear your dancing shoes."

Wellspring Delivery

When Kirschman and Anania delivered the donations to Wellspring after the luncheon, they discovered their timing couldn't have been any better. Development and Communications Associate Jessica Mougharbel told them the center was running low on several essential items, making the club's contributions especially meaningful. Kirschman said one comment "certainly made us feel good."

"It takes a village" to serve the center's clients, Mougharbel told them, adding that the Rancho Murieta Women's Club is "part of our village."

See more photos at therivervalleytimes.com. ★

SECURITY LOGS

Following is a summary of activity for the Rancho Murieta Community Services District Security Department for the following dates. Note: these log entries are condensed. For full security log details, go to the CSD website at rncsd.com.

March 23

5:15 a.m., Patrol responded to a report of a suspicious subject at the Post Office. Upon arrival, Patrol contacted a male adult in his 50s, approximately 5'9", wearing a blue sweater and blue shoes, riding a bicycle. The subject stated he was a resident and was reviewing a job posting on the door. Dispatch later advised that an employee felt threatened and reported the subject was recording her. Patrol remained in the area until clearing at approximately 5:40 a.m.

3:40 p.m., Patrol contacted a non-resident fishing approximately 50 yards into Rancho Murieta property near the Yellow Bridge. Subject was advised of trespassing and complied with direction to leave.

9:10 p.m., Patrol contacted a resident in a Chevrolet pickup in the North back area near Lake Calero after hours. Subject was advised of RMA regulations and complied with direction to leave.

10:45 p.m., Stonehouse Park: Patrol observed significant damage to the drainage system near the women's restroom during routine lockup. Photos were taken and information forwarded to Dispatch and RMA.

11:43 p.m., Patrol located an

unoccupied black Volkswagen sedan at Lake Clementia after hours in violation of park hours. Citation issued. Vehicle was confirmed to belong to a guest of a resident.

March 24

12:45 a.m., Guadalupe Drive: Patrol responded to a speeding complaint. Subjects were gone on arrival. Patrol remained in the area and will conduct targeted traffic enforcement.

4 p.m., Camino Del Lago: Reporting party told of an earlier disturbance occurring at approximately 7 a.m. during a walk around Lake Chesbro, alleging she was shoved by a subject associated with a former walking group member. Patrol contacted involved party (Via Del Cerrito), who denied any physical altercation and stated there was no verbal or physical contact. No injuries reported; incident documented for record.

5:50 p.m., 10th Fairway, South Course, Patrol contacted three young adult males fishing on the golf course. Subjects were advised of trespassing and complied with direction to leave, relocating to the Cosumnes River.

6:20 p.m., Patrol responded to reports of glass debris in the roadway near Via Bernini. Debris was partially cleared, and RMA Maintenance was notified for further cleanup.

9:25 p.m., Patrol responded to a report of a loud verbal argument between a male and female. Upon arrival, reporting party

advised the disturbance originated near Pera Drive. Patrol remained in the area for observation and notified the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office. No units were immediately available.

March 25

3:37 p.m., Lago Drive, Patrol responded to a report involving a delivery driver requesting contact with a resident. Upon arrival, Patrol contacted a Spark/Walmart delivery driver who was deaf and experiencing issues with the delivery application. The resident contacted Walmart Customer Care, and the issue was resolved. Driver departed without incident.

March 26

1:10 p.m., Officer Passer responded to a report of a vehicle striking a gate arm. Upon arrival, involved vehicle had left the scene. Gate Officer Diaz advised the vehicle clipped the gate arm and continued without stopping. Gate was reset and functioning normally.

7:30 p.m., Puerto Drive, Patrol responded to a noise complaint involving a vehicle with a loud exhaust. Resident was contacted and advised. Resident stated they were preparing the vehicle for a trip and agreed to keep noise at a reasonable level.

12:50 p.m., Camino Del Lago, Officer Passer responded to a request for documentation from resident regarding ongoing issues with individuals previously associated with her walking group. Resident reported that two parties were congregating near the

rear gate of her property during her routine morning activity, causing her concern. Patrol advised the resident to contact the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office to file a report and request further guidance.

10:27 p.m., Welfare check, Linksman Court (Murieta South): Patrol responded to a welfare check request. Reporting party was concerned for her mother, who was not answering her phone. Residence appeared secure with lights off and no response at the door. No signs of distress observed.

10:40 p.m., Patrol observed a blue Club Car golf cart with four juvenile males and a black Audi in Riverview Park after hours in violation of Rule IX Section 3. Vehicles initially departed prior to identification; Patrol later located both vehicles near Greens Park and obtained identifying information. Citations issued.

March 28

12:15 a.m., Linksman Court (Murieta South): Patrol responded to a noise complaint related to a prior welfare check. Contact was made with the reporting party's daughter, who advised her mother (housesitting at the residence) was inside and sleeping. No further issues observed.

March 31

5:30 a.m., RMCSO responded to a report of water flow lifting a storm drain manhole on Via Sereno. No active water flow was observed upon arrival; however,

a slightly lifted manhole with asphalt displacement was noted in front of 2 Via Sereno. RMCSO Water Operations was notified and responded.

April 1

6:40 p.m., While conducting routine patrol, RMCSO observed a guest fishing at Lake Clementia without the resident present. Contact was made with the guest, who advised they were visiting Pera Drive. The guest was informed of RMA regulations and instructed to leave the area. The guest complied without incident. Area clear.


5 p.m., RMCSO received a report of reckless driving on Jackson Road. A white Kia was reported passing multiple vehicles in a no-passing zone over a double yellow line. A second report was received shortly after for following too closely on Celebrar Street involving the same vehicle. The vehicle was identified as belonging to a resident of Billar Court. RMCSO Patrol made contact with the parent of the driver and advised them of the complaints.

April 2

10:47 p.m., RMCSO Patrol observed a group of individuals skating in the parking lot of Laguna Joaquin after posted park hours. Two vehicles were associated with the group, one belonging to a resident and one to a guest. The group was advised of park hours and complied by leaving the area without further incident. ★

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Kiwanis Slates Kids Fishing Day April 25

The Kiwanis Club of Rancho Murieta has scheduled the Joe Mazzone, Sr. Memorial Kids Fishing Day, rain or shine, for Saturday, April 25 from 8 a.m. to noon at Lake Clementia in Rancho Murieta. Now in its 20th year, the event is open to children in kindergarten through 8th grade. The event can accommodate 100 children on a first-come, first-served basis. A free hot dog lunch will be served to participating children and their parents/guardians. Prizes will be awarded for the biggest fish by weight for both girls and boys.

Pre-registration is required. To pre-register, please call or visit the Rancho Murieta Association at (916) 354-3500 and leave your contact phone number and the names of children who will be participating. This event is only open to Rancho Murieta residents and their guests. Parents or guardians must sign Waiver of Liability forms available the day of the event to allow children to participate. Please bring your own fishing poles and tackle. We will have a limited number available to loan.

drawing for a \$50 credit for the Murieta Inn8 Cupola Spa donated by the Murieta Inn and \$50 card for the Local Bean Café donated by Carole Thames of Town and Country Real Estate.

Eat well and drink plenty of water before donating, and bring a photo ID. For eligibility questions, call 877-258-4825 or visit vitalant.org.

One donation can save more than one life; there's no substitute for volunteer blood donors.

Bookmobile to Host Family Story Time April 15

The Sacramento Public Library Bookmobile visits the Rancho Murieta Village Clubhouse every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to noon. Visitors can sign up for a library card and check out books, magazines, DVDs and audiobooks. Book clubs may also request a "Book Club in a Box," which includes 10 to 12 copies of a selected title.

On April 15, the bookmobile will offer a Family Story Time from 10:30 to 11 a.m. outside the clubhouse. The program features songs, rhymes, movement activities and stories designed to support early learning skills for children up to age 5. Older siblings are welcome.

Blood Drive Slated April 27

Vitalant will hold its next Rancho Murieta Community Blood Drive from noon to 6:15 p.m. Monday, April 27 at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 14673 Cantova Way. The event is sponsored by the Rancho Murieta Women's Club and the Knights of Columbus.

Appointments can be made online at donors.vitalant.org using blood drive code SMFM053 or by calling Vitalant at 877-258-4825. Walk-ins will be accepted as space permits. Donors will receive a coupon for a free donut from Local Bean Café. Donors also will be entered into a

Scouts Slate Shredding Event

Got a pile of paperwork ready to go? Scout Troop 633 invites the community to a secure paper-shredding event from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, May 2 at the Rancho Murieta Association Building parking lot. It's an easy way to declutter, safeguard your information and support local Scouts.

The suggested donation is \$15 per banker's box, reflecting increased truck and fuel costs this year. ★



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3. What is it about the Arts (dance, music, visual art, theater) that sets your heart and soul on fire?

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Keeping the Arts Alive in Our Community!

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



The Season is Almost Over

The time has come to reflect on the 2025-26 season for the Sacramento Kings, and without a doubt it was a season of ups and downs.

Injuries are a part of the game, and every team has their fair share, but the Kings were decimated like never before and never recovered from the ubiquitous effect it had on the entire team and its fan base.

After inexplicably trading away Jonas Valanciunas, the Kings decided to roll the dice with rookie Maxime Rayaud, and gamble that he could capably hold down the fort in the event of an injury to Domantas Sabonis; a gamble that was ill conceived and was nothing more than a cost-saving measure that invariably left the Kings shorthanded.

Yes, Maxime had his bright spots, and if nothing else the organization had the opportunity to allow this 7-foot rookie to get his feet wet in the NBA. Baptism by fire it was, and in my book, Maxime proved himself a capable back-up center. As for a starting NBA center, I don't believe that's what the Kings have in their second-round draft choice of a year ago.

Their first-round draft choice Nique Clifford has been praised by many and certainly was given all the playing time he wanted, but like his counterpart, Nique had some glaring holes in his NBA game.

Appearing in 68 games, Clifford averaged nearly 25 minutes per game while scoring just 7.7 points per game. His 31 percent from 3-point land was one of the reasons the Kings rank dead last in 3-point shooting this year, and although his 41 percent from the field is not impressive, it's his 68 percent from the free throw line that is truly glaring.

I expected more from Clifford, and although I'm not giving up on him, no starting point guard in the NBA can put up such numbers and expect to play on a winning team.

So, what does that say about the role of the point guard as it relates to the Sacramento Kings? Are they still looking? I would hope so, because there is no one talking about Russell Westbrook coming back next season, and without him, that leaves Devin Carter to split time with Nique Clifford.

The Kings find themselves in the same

position they were in a year ago, when they signed Dennis Schroder to be the starting point guard for the team. It wasn't long before he was replaced by Russell Westbrook in the starting lineup and eventually traded as he never seemed to find any rhythm with the team.

So, as the Kings find themselves in a quandary with regards to their point guard, the question begs, what will they go after in what has been lauded as one of the best draft classes in many years?

Both Dylan Cardwell and Precious Achiuwa have not only acquitted themselves well this season, they have opened eyes all over the NBA. Resigning these young big men will be a source of focus during the off-season, as well as drafting someone that can give the Kings more front court depth.

Domantas Sabonis remains the foundation piece that barring injury, is the one spot on the team that can be counted on day in and day out. Consistency is his middle name, and no team needs consistency more than the Sacramento Kings.

Daequon Plowden and Killian Hayes have been late season bright spots, but both represent solid bench players and not the starters that the Kings need.

Well, Scott Perry, time to put on that GM hat and show this fan base how you can build a team capable of making the playoffs every year.

Time to become the ossified GM that the Kings need. And that doesn't extend to just the players, as the coaching staff remains a mystery.

Free throw shooting remains a source of embarrassment, and that is a direct result of coaching.

It's time to form new habits and build a culture of winning. Easier said than done and staying away from injuries will be constantly on the watch list.

Three games to go Kings fans, but it's likely your hometown ballers will secure a high round draft choice in the upcoming NBA draft.

Keep the faith Sacramento because even just one player can tip the scales and bring light to a team in real need.

All the best! ★

This isn't a Race for California Governor; It's More Like a Game of Chicken



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

Political media habitually use "race" to describe contests for public office. However the word implies movement and therefore would be inaccurate if applied to this year's election of a new governor.

Sixty-one names will be on the June 2 primary ballot, including 10 leaders who profess to be serious about seeking the office.

However, they aren't racing. Rather, the eight top-polling Democrats seem to be in a children's game, sitting in a circle staring at each other, waiting for someone to blink. Meanwhile, the two top Republicans are taking potshots at each other, potentially undermining the GOP's only chance to elect a governor for the first time in two decades.

For weeks voter polls have found that three Democrats are locked in a tie, albeit at a puny level, around 10%, while the other five Democrats are buried in single digits.

California's top-two primary election system has all candidates listed on the same ballot, regardless of party, with the two top finishers then advancing to the November general election.

Given the size of the field, anyone garnering around 20% in June would probably earn a place in the runoff — or about twice what the three

Democrats at the top — Katie Porter, Eric Swalwell and Tom Steyer — currently have.

With mail voting set to begin in a month, the calendar is beginning to be a factor. Every ballot that's mailed removes that voter from having his or her mind changed. One should expect, therefore, that those with even semi-realistic chances of making the cut would be waging all-out campaigns by now.

However, the only highly visible campaign is that of billionaire Steyer, who's not only hopping around the state for personal appearances but shelling out millions of his own bucks for television and internet ads.

Much of Steyer's campaign is aimed at Swalwell, who has obtained substantial union support, most prominently from the California Teachers Association. Swalwell also benefits from the threats of Donald Trump's FBI to release files from its investigation of Swalwell's relationship with a supposed Chinese spy.

Steyer and Swalwell seem to be vying for the most left-leaning bloc of Democratic voters, while Porter is coasting on the name identification gained during her losing campaign for the U.S. Senate two years ago and hoping that being the only woman in the trio will lift her into one of the top two finishes.

Democratic Party leaders are openly worried, though, that the two Republicans — Steve Hilton and Chad Bianco — could finish 1-2, thereby ensuring the election of a GOP governor. They would like the five lower-tier Democratic candidates to

publicly surrender, thereby enhancing chances that a Democrat would make it to November.

However, members of that Democratic quintet show no signs of quitting, and if they continue to soldier on, despite scant support, the possibility of a 1-2 Republican primary finish continues.

The GOP's only chance of achieving such an upset would be for Hilton and Bianco to operate as a team, pushing their support — 16% and 14% respectively in the latest poll — to the magic 20% level. However, they are campaigning as opponents, even though if just one of them makes the November ballot he would almost certainly lose to whichever Democrat survives the primary.

This static, who-will-blink-first scenario does contain one surprising aspect — the failure of San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan to unleash the blitz he needs to climb into contention, despite having apparently unlimited support from wealthy Silicon Valley figures who want a tech- and business-friendly governor.

On Wednesday, Politico reported there was a shakeup in the Mahan campaign due to what were termed differences over strategy. Maybe that explains why his campaign has been so anemic after his much-ballyhooed late entry. He hasn't been racing much either.

Dan Walters is one of the most decorated and widely syndicated columnists in California history, authoring a column four times a week that offers his view and analysis of the state's political, economic, social and demographic trends. ★

Social Security Matters

I'll Be 65 Soon and am Working. Must I enroll in Medicare?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I will be 65 in October and I am working full-time. My goal is to work until age 67, which is my full retirement age, or until age 70. I heard I have to apply for Medicare Part A only. Is this true or will I be penalized? And do I have to go to the Social Security office to do this, or can I do it online? And then will they be still giving me my Medicare through the next five years of working, or do I have to pay for something? I will have my own healthcare insurance. Thank you for your help. **Signed: Confused**

Dear Confused: There are two things you should be aware of:

1. You do not need to claim Social Security benefits when you enroll in Medicare
2. You do not need to enroll in Medicare at age 65 if you have "creditable" healthcare coverage from your employer ("creditable" is a group plan with at least 20 participants)

Thus, it is perfectly okay for you to delay taking your Social Security benefits until age 67 (your SS full retirement age), or even until age 70 when you will get the maximum SS benefit you are entitled to. And if you now have "creditable" healthcare coverage from your employer,

you can delay enrolling in Medicare until such time as your employer's healthcare coverage ends. When you stop working, you will enter a Medicare Special Enrollment Period (SEP), during which you can enroll in Medicare without incurring a Late Enrollment Penalty.

Whenever you decide to enroll in Medicare (or Social Security), you will not need to visit your local SSA office to do so. You can enroll in Medicare either online at www.ssa.gov/medicare/ sign-up or you can call SSA at 1.800.772.1213 to make an appointment to enroll in Medicare on the telephone. Similarly, when you are ready to claim Social Security, you can do so online at www.ssa.gov/apply or you can call 1.800.772.1213 to make an appointment to apply for SS over the phone. To apply online, however, you should first create your personal "my Social Security" online account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. Creating your online SS account now (at age 65) will facilitate later online enrollment and will also provide you with an estimate of your SS benefit amounts at various ages — e.g., now at age 65, at your FRA of 67, or at age 70. And that should help you decide when it is best for you to claim Social Security.

A few final points:

- You should verify with your employer's health insurance provider that they don't require you to enroll in Medicare at age 65. Most employer plans don't, but some do.
- You don't need to enroll in Medicare Part A or Part B now as long as your employer's coverage is creditable. And it's

okay to enroll in Medicare a couple of months prior to your employer's creditable healthcare coverage ending (when you stop working), requesting that your Medicare coverage starts when your employer's healthcare ends. This will ensure that there is no gap in your healthcare coverage. If your employer coverage is creditable, you will not suffer a Medicare Late Enrollment Penalty for enrolling after age 65.

- If you claim Social Security benefits at any time prior to your full retirement age (FRA) and are still working, you will be subject to Social Security's Annual Earnings Test (AET), which limits how much you can earn before they take away some of your benefits. The AET lasts until you reach your FRA (67), after which you can earn as much as you like without your SS benefits being affected.

- Whenever you claim your Social Security benefits, you will be required to take Medicare Part A, which is coverage for inpatient hospitalization services. Medicare Part A is free because you are also eligible for Social Security. But you don't need to enroll in Part A at age 65 unless you also claim Social Security.

- Medicare Part B, which is coverage for outpatient healthcare services (doctors, medical tests, etc.), is optional if you have creditable employer coverage as explained above. You do not need to enroll in Medicare Part B (for which there is a monthly premium of \$202.90 in 2026) until your employer's creditable healthcare coverage ends, even if you claim Social Security earlier. ★



It's not just Israel.

One of the least convincing arguments of opponents of the Iran war is that it is a conflict initiated by the Jewish state for its own benefit -- the U.S. is just along for the ride.

This view not only discounts the U.S. interest in defanging Iran but also neglects that there are other countries in the region besides Israel and Iran and that they, too, have a stake in the outcome of this war.

If there's anything that Iran has succeeded in doing over the first month of battle, it is further demonstrating the intolerable threat that it represents to the region.

The so-called Gulf Cooperation Council states -- Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates -- have the misfortune of being located just across the Persian Gulf from Iran, putting them on the front line of the war.

A key element of Iran's strategy has been to impose economic pain on these states to force them to press the United States into staying its hand.

While the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz is indirectly harming the United States by driving up the global price of crude and other materials, it is a direct blow to the Gulf states, since the Saudis, Kuwaitis and Emiratis send the majority of their oil

through the waterway.

The Iranians have struck the Gulf states with missiles and drones by the thousands. The ongoing blitz is damaging energy infrastructure and destroying the reputation of the Gulf states as an oasis of calm and economic development in an otherwise turbulent region.

There's no insurance policy against having a fanatic millenarian state as a neighbor, while nothing quite concentrates the mind like an unprovoked drone attack on one of your luxury hotels -- or your airports, oil fields and data centers.

Iran likes to pretend that it is only striking at military infrastructure, but that's absurd.

As long as Iran is run on its current basis, it is a grave danger to these countries, which, prior to the war, tried to keep their heads down or even get closer to Iran as a way to mitigate the threat.

This is the approach that the Saudis tried after an Iran-backed attack hampered the country's oil production in 2019.

That experiment is now done. According to published reports, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, privately urged Trump to launch the war even as the Saudis talked up diplomacy in public, and now MBS has been telling Trump to go all the way and topple the Iranian government.

The New York Times relates that the Saudi

leader "is concerned that if Mr. Trump pulls back now, Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Middle East will be left to confront an emboldened and furious Iran on their own."

The UAE has been a particular Iranian target. Its ambassador to the U.S. wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* recently, "We need a conclusive outcome that addresses Iran's full range of threats: nuclear capabilities, missiles, drones, terror proxies and blockades of international sea lanes."

One is tempted to conclude that the Gulf states are "all neocons now." That would be overstating it, though. Despite getting hit by Iran, Oman is maintaining its traditional posture as a mediator and Qatar is always a bad actor.

Much depends on how the war ultimately turns out, but it is easy to see the Gulf states looking to the United States for greater security guarantees and warming up further to Israel, which is demonstrating the military might to confront an Iran that has no compunction about lashing out at states that are doing it no harm.

It may be easy for hostile U.S. observers to portray the Iran war as about Israel and only Israel, but the Gulf states unfortunately know better -- and have the battle damage to prove it.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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Iran's Other Enemies

Summerfest Donates \$10,000 to Pickleball Club

Pickleball players gather around as Sherry Carrillo, president of the Summerfest Committee, presents a \$10,000 check to Alan Chase, president of the Rancho Murieta Pickleball Club on April 3 at the courts at Stonehouse Park. "We are thrilled to receive a check for \$10,000 from Summerfest to pursue pickleball court improvements, such as shade structures to keep our players cool in the warm summer months," Chase said. "Any remaining funds will go toward building three additional courts at Stonehouse Park." Photo by Gail Bullen



CSD Reports Interrupted Burglary, Dangerous Prank

Continued from page 1

entry. However, the footage could not be retrieved.

Arino told the committee he believes the suspects fled when the patrol officer drove through the area.

"I think one of my guys was patrolling that area, and I think he might have actually scared those people away," Arino said. "They weren't in the business when he showed up... they didn't take the ATM, and they didn't take the cash register."

Arino also expressed concern about the delay in law enforcement response. Although the burglary was discovered around 5 a.m., the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office did not arrive until after 8 a.m.

"It's a shame that when you call somebody that they're not coming until after 8 a.m. when this thing happened at 5," he said, noting the incident was likely considered a "cold crime" by the time it was reported.

Firecracker Vandalism

Arino also discussed a vandalism incident reported by Rancho Murieta resident John Petersen, who first described the situation in a March 26 Nextdoor post and later shared it with the security

department, where it was reviewed along with other March incidents.

Petersen said his vehicle, which is normally kept in the garage, had been left outside for about a week during spring break.

During that time, someone placed firecrackers inside the braking system.

When he later drove to work on Dillard Road, the firecrackers detonated while the vehicle was in motion.

Because he was driving an electric vehicle, Petersen said his first thought was that something in the car itself had malfunctioned or exploded. A motorist behind him had a similar reaction, later telling Petersen he thought the vehicle had blown up. Petersen was able to maintain control and avoid a crash, but he said the situation could easily have ended differently.

A subsequent inspection found firecracker debris lodged in the braking system, requiring \$250 in repairs.

"If this was meant as a prank, I want to be very clear: This is extremely dangerous and not harmless fun," Petersen wrote. "This could have easily resulted in a serious crash or cost someone their life."

Arino echoed those concerns during the meeting.

"It's very possible that when this guy was driving... he could have lost control and lost his life, or somebody else," he said.

He also urged parents to pay closer attention to their children's activities.

"Know what your kids are doing at all times... be nosy every once in a while," he said. "Simple stuff like that would prevent this from happening."

Two Accidents

Arino's report also included two vehicle-related incidents on and near Jackson Highway.

On Feb. 27 at about 7:14 p.m., a Rancho Murieta resident driving a golf cart attempted to cross Jackson Highway at Murieta Drive toward nearby businesses. The golf cart entered the intersection and was struck by a van traveling westbound.

The driver sustained a head injury with visible bleeding. Security personnel immediately called 911, and emergency medical responders transported the injured resident to a hospital. Patrol remained on scene to assist with traffic and emergency response.

In a second incident shortly after midnight on March 20, security responded to a report of a possible crash near the

county bridge on Jackson Highway. Patrol located a heavily damaged silver Honda Accord on the golf course near Hole 18, beyond a broken fence line.

The driver, a 16-year-old resident, was found outside the vehicle and reported no injuries. He told patrol he lost control of the car, overcorrected and drove through the fence, sending the vehicle onto the golf course.

The incident did not appear on the March 20 log sheet. Details were not made public until Sgt. Brandon Arino included the crash in his March "Incidents of Note."

The California Highway Patrol responded, and the Rancho Murieta Association was notified of the property damage. Security remained on scene until the situation was stabilized.

Emphasis on Vigilance

Arino said the incidents demonstrate both the value of patrol visibility and the importance of community awareness.

In the burglary case, he said, a patrol officer's presence may have been enough to stop a crime in progress.

In the vandalism case, what may have been intended as a prank created a life-threatening situation. "Acts like that aren't harmless," Arino said. "They can cost someone their life."

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Community Honors Vietnam Veterans



Bugler Tai Wieler plays "Taps" from a distance to conclude the ceremony.



Tony Luza recalls that many who entered the Vietnam War as "kids" returned home as adults.

Continued from page 1

closing prayers. Vietnam War veterans and Purple Heart recipients were also recognized and asked to stand. The VFW Auxiliary also provided refreshments for a social hour held before the ceremony.

Meaning of Observance

Mineni welcomed veterans, families, friends and local first responders, explaining the purpose of National Vietnam War Veterans Day and what it means to those who served.

"Today, we gather to pay tribute to the bravery, sacrifice and unwavering spirit of our veterans who served in the Vietnam War," Mineni told the crowd. "Let us recommit ourselves to sharing the stories, memories and experiences of Vietnam veterans with future generations... Their courage and sacrifice have paved the way for the freedoms we share today."

He reminded attendees that more than 58,000 Americans died in the conflict and that many who returned home carried wounds that were not always visible.

"Let us not forget that this generation of warriors did not receive the welcome home that many in my generation have," he said. "So to all the Vietnam veterans: welcome home. Thank you for your service and sacrifice for our great nation: and that's long overdue."

Veterans Share Reflections

After Mineni's remarks, the ceremony shifted to personal reflections, as attendees were invited to share memories.

Vietnam veteran Dan Pennington said he grew up in a small coal-country town in Appalachia, where 20 of the 90 members of his high school graduating class immediately enlisted. He offered a solemn roll call, listing their names, branches, ranks, and roles, including nine who were killed in action.

Pennington also reflected on the impact of their loss.

"A lot of the folks I talked about today didn't make it. So it fell on me to live and be a better person, because they couldn't be here," he said.

Bill McCarver, who served as a dog handler in Vietnam, reminded the crowd

that not all heroes walked on two legs. Pausing to compose himself, he said, "I want to remember the four-legged warriors who got us all home; don't forget them as well."

Tony Luza, who grew up in Oakland, California, said his only goal in high school had been to escape a rough neighborhood: something he thought he could do by joining the Army, not fully realizing there was a war underway. He became a medic with the 27th Infantry "Wolfhounds," 25th Infantry Division, in 1968.

"The thing I want to express to people is not what we did, but who we were," Luza said. "Basically, we were just kids who became adults. The things we had to face and the things we had to carry were something we were never, ever prepared for."

His thoughts turned to those who did not return.

"What bothers me the most is all the young men who lost their lives: people who didn't have a chance to have a family, didn't have a chance to go to college, the things that I was able to do," he said. "So: welcome home."

Don Craig spoke about the "silent pillars" that shadow many veterans throughout their lives: burdens that may not be visible from the outside.

"Don't think that just because someone didn't come home with an amputation or a Purple Heart that they haven't been severely injured."

He urged the community to respond with enduring support.

"There isn't any way to escape those things other than through prayer, friendship, through love," he said. "So if you know anybody who served, just love them and help them."

Final Honor, Years Later

As the ceremony neared its end, the VFW carried out a flag presentation for Elaine Fowler, whose husband, Lyle Fowler, a Korean War veteran, had not received a formal service when he died. The post chose to honor him publicly during this observance.

Although his family had received a flag, they had not received the customary ceremony. The post carefully refolded the flag and placed it in a presentation case.

Before the assembled community, a visibly moved Mineni presented it to Fowler while delivering the traditional words normally spoken at a burial service:

"On behalf of the President of the United States, the United States Navy, we'd like you to accept this flag as a token for your loved one's honorable and faithful service."

Afterward, Mineni explained why presenting the flag mattered so much to the VFW post.

"When a loved one passes, that would normally happen at the service," Mineni said. "The family didn't do a service, and we wanted to honor him in front of everyone: recognize his service and her loss with this community that they're a part of. That's why we're here."

He acknowledged that such ceremonies are personally difficult because of the many comrades he has lost over the years during deployments to Panama, Iraq and Afghanistan.

"It's difficult, but you've got to do it," he said. "We're very happy to do it. That's why we exist in this community."

The ceremony concluded with the distant bugler playing "Taps," the clear notes bringing the gathering to a quiet, reverent close ... and a long-overdue welcome home.

See additional photos at therivervalleytimes.com. ★



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