



American Veterans Traveling Tribute Arrives in Van Nuys Free Event Honors Veterans and All Who Serve

Van Nuys, CA - October 14, 2009 - An 85 year old Veteran of Three Wars will be the guest of honor at the Operation Gratitude-American Veterans Traveling Tribute Event this week: October 14-18 at the corner of Victory and Louise in Van Nuys.

MSGT (ret.) J Edward Chema of Chatsworth, CA, served in World War II, the Korean War and Vietnam, where he was awarded the Bronze Star for valor. Fewer than 500 "Three-War American Veterans" are still alive today. MSGT. Chema will join Veteran and legendary Los Angeles TV Reporter, **Shan Chambers**, along with Veterans representing all conflicts from World War II through the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, in a Candlelighting Ceremony at 5:00 pm on Thursday October 15 at the Exhibit site. **Four-time Olympic Gold Medalist in Swimming, John Naber** will emcee the Ceremony, which will also include the laying of wreaths by Gold and Blue Star Mothers and by POW-MIA Son and Grandson, Bob and R.C Ramsay.

Major General John Harrell, Commander of the Los Alamitos Joint Forces Training Base will speak at the Memorial Service on Sunday at 11:00am. MSGT (ret.) Chema will lead the Pledge of Allegiance and the "**Ventura Giltz**" will perform the National Anthem, followed by a Condor Fly-Over and a Parade of Honor past The Wall.

Operation Gratitude (www.OperationGratitude.com) is partnering with The American Veterans Traveling Tribute (www.avtt.org) to present this free and unique opportunity for the Southern California community to pay respect to America's fallen heroes and at the same time express appreciation to our warriors currently serving in harm's way.

From October 14-18, the American Veterans Traveling Tribute will be on display in the large lot adjacent to the National Guard Armory at the corner of Victory and Louise in Van Nuys. The AVTT Exhibit includes a September/The Wall Photo 11 Tribute, a Cost of Freedom display of Gold Dog Tags (identifying each service member killed since Vietnam), and the centerpiece of the exhibit: An exact replica of the **Vietnam Memorial Wall** (80% scale), displaying all 58,253 names of the men and women killed in the Vietnam War.

The entire event will be **free to the public**. All ages are invited and encouraged to attend this first-ever display of the AVTT Exhibit in Southern California.



Operation Gratitude **volunteer activities** will occur simultaneously inside the Armory in preparation for the assembly and shipment of Holiday packages the following weekend. AVTT Exhibit attendees (ages 12 and older) are invited to participate in all Operation Gratitude Prep and Assembly activities in the Armory.

Operation Gratitude will provide **letter writing** materials for children and adults to express their appreciation to Service Members deployed overseas during the Holiday. Snacks, volunteer information and scarf-making lessons will also be available at the Operation Gratitude tables at The Exhibit site.

Girl Scouts will be offering Trophy Nuts for donation to our troops through the Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles Gift of Caring Program.

Donations for the Holiday Drive Care Packages are encouraged.

Suggested items to donate:
Beanie Babies
Beer Jerky (single-serve packages)
DVDs and CDs

WHAT:
American Veterans Traveling Tribute Exhibit Hosted by Operation Gratitude

WHEN:
Wednesday October 14: **RAIN OR SHINE: Motorcade Escort of The Traveling Wall**
4:00pm: Muster at AirTel Plaza Hotel at 7277 Valjean Avenue, Van Nuys
5:30pm: Color Guard and Greelings, Condor Fly-Over (weather permitting)
Guest: Mitchell Englander, Chief of Staff for Councilman Greg Smith
6:00pm: Motorcade Departs for Exhibit Site led by **Grand Marshal Stan Chambers**

Thursday October 15:
9am-Noon: Volunteers Set up Exhibit
Noon-5pm: Open viewing
5pm-7pm: **Opening Ceremony** with Candle Lighting, Laying of Wreaths
Hosted by **4-Time Olympic Gold Medalist in Swimming: John Naber**
Guests: City Councilmen Greg Smith, Tony Cardenas & Dennis P. Jma
Speaker: Shan Chambers

Friday October 16: Open 8am-8pm
9am-3pm: School Visits
11am-1pm: Share Your Lunchbreak w/ KKKO Country's Morning Co-Host Ashley Paige
3pm-8pm: **Open Viewing**

Saturday October 17: Family Day
8am-8pm: Musical Performances
12-3pm: Kogi BBQ Truck and Get Shaved Ice
1pm: Color Guard and Formal Greelings
Guests: City Controller Wendy Greuel & Gold Star Wives

Sunday October 18: Open 8am-6pm
11am: **Memorial Service** officiated by Rabbi Mordecai Finley of Ohr Hatarah Synagogue & Pastor Glen Kreun of Saddleback Church
Guests: Assemblyman Bob Blumenfeld, Stan Chambers
Speaker: Major General John Harrell & Condor Flyover

12 Noon: **Parade of Honor** Past The Wall
1pm-6pm: Open Viewing

WHERE:
17330 Victory Boulevard; Van Nuys, CA 91406
Corner of Victory and Louise

Parking next door at the Skate Park & Encino Farmer's Market from 12pm-8 pm daily
Additional parking available at Birmingham High School
Handicapped parking available in the National Guard Armory Parking Lot

For more information about the American Veterans Traveling Tribute:
www.avtt.org
For more information about Operation Gratitude:
www.OperationGratitude.com
For more information about the Operation Gratitude-AVTT Event:
OpGrat@gmail.com or ptmarty@aol.com

About Operation Gratitude
Operation Gratitude (www.OperationGratitude.com) is the California-based 501 (c) (3) non-profit, volunteer organization that annually sends 100,000+ care packages of snacks, entertainment items and personal letters of appreciation addressed to individually named U.S. Service Members deployed in hostile regions such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and on Naval ships at sea. Its mission is to lift morale, bring a smile to a service member's face and to express to all our Armed Forces the appreciation and support of the American people. Each package contains donated product valued at ~\$100 and costs the organization \$11 to assemble and ship. By the end of 2009, Operation Gratitude will have shipped more than 500,000 packages to American Military deployed overseas.

About American Veterans Traveling Tribute (AVTT)
AVTT (www.avtt.org) is a veteran-owned project that travels the USA to provide a forum for communities to HONOR-RESPECT-REMEMBER all who have sacrificed their lives for our country's freedom. In so doing, AVTT also honors all Veterans and those currently serving, by letting them know they will never be forgotten. AVTT is funded through sponsorship fees, donations, and sale of merchandise at events. Donations to support AVTT's mission are qualified charitable tax deductions through The Traveling Wall Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization.

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