



# AVAG News

Spring/Summer 2025 • Volume 12 Issue 2

## IN THIS ISSUE

### AVAG Celebrates its Heroes on Memorial Day

AVAG held its annual Memorial Day Luncheon at Cottonwood Church and at the Brookhurst Community Center. Included are stories about the awards and special presentations, and about some of the veterans that participated in the event.

### Vietnam Veterans Day

AVAG was in attendance at the Suavecito Headquarters in Santa Ana to assist in supporting their Operation Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans celebration.

### AVAG and Partners

AVAG and its partners continue to serve our Veteran community.

### 46th District's Women of the Year Ceremony

AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto honored as a Woman of the Year.

### Real ID. Really?

Douglas Zimmer discusses the Real ID and requirements that affect veterans.

### AVAG in Action

Veterans helping veterans, AVAG puts words into action.

### AVAG Veterans Connect

Building community together—veterans AND spouses welcome!

### AVAG Communities Celebrate Spring and Early Summer Holidays

AVAG Communities celebrated Easter, Mother's and Father's Day, and Flag Day with lots of fun, games, and delicious meals.

### In Memoriam

Our communities mourn the loss of three of its members.



A lively audience poses for a photo at the AVAG Memorial Day Luncheon on May 24, 2025, at Cottonwood Church in Los Alamitos, California.

## Honoring Our Heroes: AVAG Celebrates Service at its 8th Annual Memorial Day Luncheon

The Memorial Day Luncheon and Parade, held on Saturday, May 24 at Cottonwood Church in Los Alamitos, was a great success—drawing strong community support.

The parade began with a presentation by the respected 82nd Airborne Veterans from American Legion Post 295, Cypress, California. Patriotic songs were beautifully performed by Natalie Veiza, including *The Star-Spangled Banner*, *God Bless America*, and *Travelin' Soldier*.

AVAG was honored to welcome community partner Ralph Torres and Grand Marshal, combat Marine Corps Veteran Bernie Thurman, as well as Navy Veteran and City of Cypress Councilman Scott Minikus. Navy Veteran Carolyn Hernandez also attended, along with her models from Veteran Couture.

(Continued on page 2)



Vietnam Veteran Dennis Phelps, at left, pictured with Mary Cruz. Dennis was this year's recipient of the Charles Cruz Veterans Award.

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## Honoring Our Heroes: AVAG Celebrates Service with Memorial Day Ceremonies continued

Classic cars were featured in the parade, coordinated by Manny of Real Creations and Valerie from the Vintage Ladies and Classic Ladies car clubs. Veterans waved proudly from the vehicles as they passed. The Marine Corps Riders and Bikers for Christ also joined the procession, along with many community members.

Torres Mortuary generously provided 20 white doves for release in tribute to fallen veterans. The 82nd Airborne performed a flag-folding ceremony and presented the flag to Grand Marshal Bernie Thurman. A surprise appearance by Mickey Mouse added a lighthearted element to the celebration.

Following the outdoor festivities, guests gathered indoors for a luncheon program that featured three inspiring guest speakers: Army Veteran Ernest Alonso, Navy Veteran Carolina Hernandez, and Navy Veteran Sean Erdsieck.

A special presentation was made to Vietnam Veteran Dennis Phelps, in recognition of his ongoing service and dedication to fellow veterans. He received the 4th Annual Charles Cruz Veterans Award, represented by a set of custom 18-karat gold dog tags, presented by the Cruz family.

Attendees were excited to participate in the raffles organized by Mellissa Breunig and Marla Ogelvie.

AVAG extends sincere thanks to all the volunteers who helped make the event so memorable. Special appreciation goes to Natalie Favela and Ibeth Figueroa for their valuable support, and to Cottonwood Church, whose partnership with AVAG over the past eight years has been essential in making this annual event a continued success. ✈



## AVAG News



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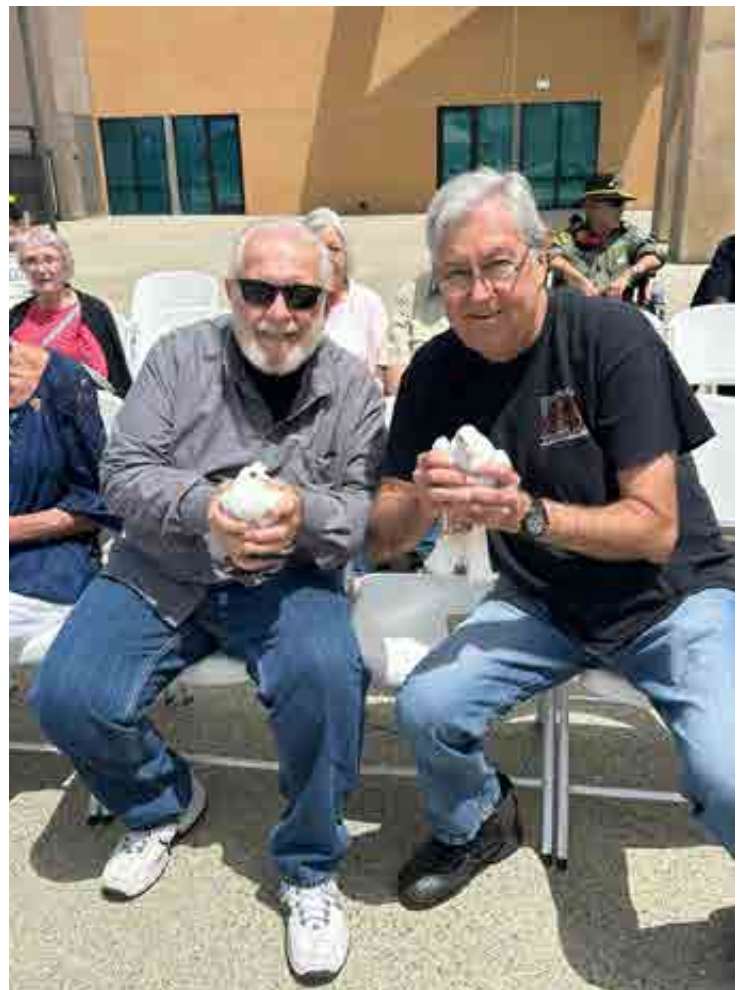




## Thank You to Our Volunteers



As we celebrate the success of our Memorial Day Luncheon, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of Doug, Mellissa, David, Amanda, Cheryl, Mary Cruz, and Bonnie in preparing over 300 bags filled with goodies for distribution at our event. We appreciate their continued support of our organization and our upcoming Memorial Day event. 🦋









## Focus on AVAG Memorial Day Luncheon Guest Speakers



At right, Ernest Alonso with Marine Corps veteran Michael Ducharme.

### Ernest Alonso, U.S. Army Veteran

Ernest Alonso began his service at 17, enlisting in the U.S. Army and serving overseas in Germany. His nine-year military career included leadership as a young squad leader and concluded with two Honorable Discharges. During his service, he completed the Green-to-Gold program, earning a degree in International Relations from USC and training as an Artillery Officer candidate at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma.

Today, Ernest is a Strategic Negotiator and Consultant, helping businesses navigate complex commercial real estate ventures. He forms teams in developing, selling, financing, merging, and acquisitioning commercial properties, enabled by his primary skills, expertise, and key connections, leading to collaboration partners and strategic success.

A committed veteran advocate, he volunteers with American Legion Post 291 in Newport Beach and speaks at veterans' groups and charities throughout the community.

His leadership includes:

- Host & Moderator, Veterans Coffee Talk (Post 291)
- Former Vice Commander, American Legion Post 291
- Past President, U.S. Veterans Business Alliance – OC
- Former VP & Membership Chair, USC Alumni Clubs – OC

Ernest continues to serve with purpose, driven by faith and a deep sense of camaraderie. 🦋

### Carolina Hernandez, U.S. Navy Veteran

At AVAG's Memorial Day Luncheon, we were honored to welcome Senior Chief Petty Officer Carolina Hernandez, a dedicated member of the U.S. Navy Reserve. With humility and grace, she shared reflections on the meaning of Memorial Day—a day, she reminded us, not of celebration, but of solemn remembrance.

Drawing on her own experience serving alongside some of the nation's finest men and women, Senior Chief Hernandez spoke of the shared sense of duty that binds those in uniform—individuals from all walks of life who answered the call to serve something greater than themselves.

She reminded us that Memorial Day is not about barbecues or long weekends, but about names etched in stone, flags folded with care, and families who carry both pride and sorrow. From the beaches of Normandy to the jungles of Vietnam, the deserts of the Middle East, and the open sea, American service members have stood in harm's way to defend the freedoms we hold dear—many making the ultimate sacrifice.

"We must remember those who stood watch and now rest in peace," she said, encouraging all present to carry forward their legacy with reverence and gratitude. 🦋



Carolina Hernandez speaks to the audience at the Memorial Day event.

**Sean Erdtsieck, U.S. Navy Veteran**

*Sean kindly has provided us with the speech that he delivered at the AVAG Memorial Day Luncheon.*

**Introduction**

Good morning, my name is Sean Erdtsieck. I served in the United States Navy from 1993 to 1997 as a Petty Officer 3rd Class, Aviation Boatswain's Mate Fuels (ABF3). I worked on the flight deck of the USS Nimitz, leading refueling operations during two deployments to the Persian Gulf. Thank you for the opportunity to share with you what Memorial Day means to me.

**What Memorial Day Meant Before Military Service**

Before I served, Memorial Day was just another long weekend, an extra day off, the unofficial start of summer—maybe a BBQ or a beach day. I didn't understand the weight of the day. But everything changed after I put on the uniform and witnessed firsthand the cost of defending freedom. For many of us, Memorial Day is not just another holiday—it's a sacred pause to remember those who gave their lives in service to our country. It carries a weight that's hard to describe.

**Why I Joined the Navy**

I joined the Navy as a young father of two, seeking stability. A close friend who had enlisted told me they paid more if you had dependents. So I signed up—motivated by benefits and the desire to provide for my family. I had no idea how deeply that decision would shape the rest of my life.

**Life on the Flight Deck – V-4 Division**

I served in V-4 Division,—responsible for refueling aircraft on the flight deck. We wore purple jerseys, known as “grapes”. We worked long, dangerous hours dragging heavy hoses across the flight deck with jets screaming around us.

It was tough and demanding work. In the Gulf, flight quarters could go on for days. I advanced to Petty Officer 3rd Class and became a Refueling Crew Leader, responsible for a crew of eight.

**April 18, 1996 – The Mass Casualty Event**

One early morning around 0400, my crew was sent to a fueling station near the “angle” of the flight deck, close to the aircraft recovery area. We were on standby. We laid down in the catwalk to stay clear of the deck, my crew was trying to rest while I stayed alert, listening to my radio for our next orders.

Suddenly, a jet slammed down hard, sparks flew. It looked like a touch-and-go, but something was off.

My radio went off: “Stretchers to the bow. Mass Casualty. Mass Casualty.”

The arresting gear had snapped. For context—those are the heavy steel cables that catch incoming aircraft.

We stood up in the catwalk, and, directly above us, on the flight deck, were Chief Robert Seeds and Petty Officer Paul Almanza, both violently struck by the recoiling cable. Petty Officer Almanza was killed instantly. I did everything I could for Chief Seeds, but we lost them both that morning.

That exact spot—where they died—I had stood there every day. It was directly above our fueling station. I stood there countless times to direct my crew.



Sean Erdtsieck and his wife, Vanessa

I'll never forget that night. For the first time, I cried out to God. I was thankful to be alive.

We returned to our crew shelter and sat in silence. Flight quarters were suspended. No one spoke.

Later, Flight Deck Control called my crew back up—to clean the deck. We gathered gear and went up. The sun was rising as we walked over to the “angle” of the flight deck. Scattered across the deck were pieces of our brothers—bone, flesh, and blood. It was overwhelming. No one moved. So I started. And the others followed. That was someone's son. Someone's husband. This is my brother.

We were ordered to dispose of what remained tossed overboard. That haunted me. I wished we could have gathered every piece, sent every part of them home to their families. We didn't talk. Not a word. Afterwards We just moved on.

**After the Navy – Struggles and Silence**

After leaving the Navy, I never spoke about that day. Not with my wife. Not with anyone. But graphic nightmares came. Horrific images haunted me. I drank every night to forget. I felt ashamed of my service—haunted by survivor's guilt.

Why did I live when they didn't?

I felt anxious. Broken. Weak. What's wrong with me. I should be able to handle this. So I learned to compartmentalize—put it in a mental box, bury it deep, and keep moving.

**Matt Fisher's Death – The Breaking Point**

I held it together through self-medication and denial. Until years later, I got word that Matt Fisher—one of my crew—had taken his life. His mother reached out to me. She asked what her son was like to serve with. She said Fisher never recovered from what he saw that morning.

I was his crew leader that night.

I spiraled. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. If that moment was the worst thing Matt had to live with—and I was the one who gave him the order—what did that make me? Was I a monster? I know it's irrational, but that's what raced through my mind.

Eventually, I had a full breakdown.

I sought help through the VA. The process was slow, and the wait times made me feel forgotten. I was diagnosed with PTSD and survivor's guilt. Group therapy helped. At first, I couldn't talk about the event without breaking down. I met other veterans fighting the same demons.

That community helped—but something was still missing. I lacked peace. I still felt broken.

### Encountering Jesus

I grew up in a religious home. We had a picture of Jesus on the wall. But to me, He was just a historical figure. I knew about Jesus, but never placed my complete trust in Him.

I was struggling. I needed peace. I needed healing.

In my brokenness, I cried out to Jesus.

Jesus, If you are real? I can't do this. I need you! I give it all to You!

Jesus met me in my brokenness. Jesus took my pain and gave me peace.

He reminded me:

I am not the sum of my past.

I am not defined by guilt or trauma.

I am His.

My value, my worth is in Him.

I experienced the grace of God.

God's love isn't earned—it's freely given through Jesus.

Not because of what I've done, but because of who He is, I am forgiven, accepted, made whole.

### Memorial Day and Jesus – The Connection

Memorial Day reminds us of the cost of freedom. We pause to honor the men and women who laid down their lives for our country. Their sacrifice is sacred, and we carry their memory with deep gratitude.

For those who carry the invisible wounds of war Memorial Day can also stir pain and sorrow.

What I've come to learn is this: in a world marked by loss and brokenness, there is only one place to find true peace and it's in Jesus Christ.

The cross is where the weight of guilt, shame, and sorrow meets the mercy of God.

I stand here today not as someone who has it all together—but as someone who was shattered, and found healing in Jesus.

He is my peace when the past haunts me.

He is my anchor when I feel unstable.

He is the reason I stand here today

He is my only hope.



So as we honor the fallen today, let us also lift our eyes to the One who conquered death.

Jesus is our hope.

Jesus is our healer.

Jesus is our peace.

If you've been searching for something real...

If you're tired of carrying your pain alone...

If your heart is heavy and you're longing for healing...

Turn to Jesus. Call out to Him. Put your faith in Him.

Because the same Jesus who met me in my darkest hour is here—and He's reaching for you, too.

Thank you. God bless you. And may the peace of Jesus Christ be with you always. ✕





## AVAG Memorial Luncheon Guest Speakers Honored

Ernest Alonso, Sean Erdtsieck, and Carolina Hernandez display their Certificates of Recognition during the AVAG Memorial Day Luncheon. Each veteran received two certificates—one from Councilwoman Amy Phan West and the City of Westminster, and another from Congressman Lou Correa on behalf of the United States Congress—honoring their service and sacrifice, and in remembrance of those who never made it home. Dennis Phelps, the 2025 Charles Cruz award recipient, was also presented with certificates. ✈



## Charles Cruz Award Presented to Veteran Dennis Phelps

Mary Cruz presented the Charles Cruz award to Dennis Phelps, a proud Vietnam-era veteran. During his service, he contributed to the mission with skill and dedication, and, long after his time in uniform, he continues to serve his community. By proudly displaying his Vietnam-era Huey helicopter at veterans events, Dennis brings history to life. Dennis honors his fellow veterans and their families, ensuring that the legacy of service endures forever.

As a symbol of gratitude and respect, the Cruz family proudly presented Dennis with the Charles Cruz Award, represented by a dog tag, a token of identity, sacrifice, and remembrance. These dog tags are 18 karat gold, and on the inscription it says, "John 15:12-13: This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

The entire Cruz family extends their deepest gratitude to Dennis Phelps for his service to our nation. ✈



Vietnam veteran Dennis Phelps stands in front of the Cruz family after being presented with the Charles Cruz Award.



# AVAG Memorial Day Luncheon: Meet Our Veterans

## Dennis Phelps

If you've ever seen the Vietnam-era Huey helicopter that is frequently displayed at veterans' events, you can thank Dennis Phelps.

Dennis was born in Ogden, Utah, where he grew up. When he was fifteen, he and his mother were called into the principal's office to discuss Dennis' low academic performance and his poor behavior. The meeting did not go well! The principal said some very disrespectful things to Dennis' mom. Dennis wasn't about to let the principal go unchallenged and was ready to throw a fist! This was a turning point in Dennis' life. It was decided that Dennis needed to be in a different environment.

He left Utah and moved to Orange, California, to live with his brother, who was ten years older. In this different environment, Dennis really excelled in school. He was especially proficient in the Industrial Arts where he learned much about welding and fabrication. He received several awards and honors for his expertise in this field, and it shaped his future career plans.

In 1969, like many young men in America at the time, Dennis received his draft notice. Amazingly, he was not sent to Vietnam after basic training at Fort Ord, CA, but went directly to Fort Campbell, KY, since he had experience in welding. While there he was named "Battalion Soldier of the Month" twice. He also was the runner-up for the "Post Soldier of the Month"! Things went along pretty well until he had a "run-in" with his First Sergeant about his moustache. The next thing Dennis knew, he was on his way to Vietnam, where he remained for the duration of his two-year enlistment.

While in Vietnam, Dennis was assigned as a welder with the Combat Engineering Company. He was called on for a variety of unusual welding jobs. One such assignment was replacing the rock guard bolts on a bulldozer. This process was very complicated and potentially dangerous since it involved precise drilling, the use of a blowtorch, and doing all of this without damaging the threads on the dozer track frame where the bolt was located.

Dennis had been on his way to the exchange to buy some things when he got the emergency repair notice, so he asked the bulldozer operator, a friend of his, to go get the items for him while he fixed the rock guard. Dennis gave his friend the money, but his friend never returned because he had been killed by a command-detonated mine that he encountered on the road on his trip to the store. Dennis was devastated and had survivor's guilt for many years after this event.

Years later, Dennis heard about "The Traveling Wall," a 25%-sized replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall that was going to be at Rose Hills. He decided to go see it with some of his co-workers from Flex Equipment, but he didn't want to look for the name of his friend.



At center, seated next to Chaplain Doreen, in front of Chapter 1024 of the Vietnam Veterans of America's UH-1 Iroquois helicopter (aka "Huey").

As fate would have it, his friends learned that the mother and sister of his fallen buddy had traveled from nearby Pico Rivera and were also at the wall that very day! Because of his guilt feelings, Dennis did not want to meet them, but he said that he heard a voice that told him, "You will be alright." He then agreed to meet the friend's family. The Army had given them a report about how their son/brother had died, and they asked Dennis if that was what had happened. He said, "No," and he proceeded to tell them what really had happened.

At that same moment, Dennis said it was as if a huge weight was lifted off of him, and though he still thinks about the incident, he is not troubled as deeply as before. The fallen buddy's mother wanted to adopt Dennis since she had lost her own son, and while the adoption never took place, it was another turning point in Dennis' life. He says that, thanks to Jesus, he is alive today, and he actively pursues following Jesus every day now.

In 1971 Dennis received an honorable discharge following his two-year enlistment in the Army. He had attained the rank of E-5. Following his active duty tour, Dennis had four more years of Reserve duty, but he continued work as a welder and fabricator. He used his G.I. Bill education benefits to take business classes at Santa Ana College to set up his own company, T.H.E. Trailers. He built it into the largest small trailer manufacturing company in California! Sadly, in May of 1979, on his birthday, all of his welding equipment was stolen, and he was not able to stay in business as a result. This led to losing his house.

He knew that God would provide for his needs and said, "God will give me a loaf of bread when I need it." Sure enough, he was given an opportunity to move to Arizona to build trailers there. In the three years that he was in Arizona, he also taught welding and industrial arts classes at the Parker High School in Parker, AZ. From 1979 until 1982, he also taught night classes in welding at Arizona Western College.

In the years following 1982, Dennis put his talents to good use in a variety of ways. First, he moved back to California and opened another business, his own fabrication/urethane business that produced unique parts

and items such as dust-collecting shrouds for grinders, F-15 parts, and a small trigger mechanism requested by the Raytheon Corporation. Dennis also patented his design for a socket holder. A Chinese company stole his design and began manufacturing the holder, but Dennis won in the ensuing legal battle to retain the right to manufacture the item. Then, Dennis was given an opportunity to build workout equipment for a company in St. Petersburg, Russia, where he remained for eight years. In his absence, Dennis' brother ran the fabrication business in California.

In recent years Dennis served as President of Chapter 1024 of the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) organization in Orange, California, but when he suffered from a stroke, he stepped down from his position so that the organization could continue to serve its members as it had done for so many years.

Prior to his stroke, when he was an active member of the VVA, he was instrumental in searching for, and finding, a UH-1 Iroquois helicopter (aka "Huey") that the VVA now displays. His search took him first to Texas, but the prices being asked were out of reach for VVA. Then he found one in Anaheim. Not only was the price within the budget, but the owner agreed to pay for painting the Huey (primer and finish) and to transport it to Dennis' fabrication shop!

Once the helicopter was at his shop, Dennis immediately put his welding skills to good use and fabricated a trailer on which the helicopter could be transported, displayed, and stored. Dennis owns the trailer, and the helicopter is owned by a trust. Various veterans' organizations request this "Huey" to be on display at their events. It is in high demand because every Vietnam veteran has either seen or been transported in a helicopter like it, so they have an immediate connection with it. Since Dennis loves serving others, especially veterans, he finds great satisfaction in being able to display the helicopter as often as possible.

Dennis currently has a 100% disability rating with the Veterans Administration and is this year's nominee for the Charles Cruz Award to be awarded at the American Veterans Assistance Group (AVAG) Memorial Day Veterans Appreciation Luncheon at Cottonwood Church on May 24, 2025. Dennis and his current wife, Elena, have been married twenty years and live in the city of Orange. He has four adult children. Dennis advises everyone, "Don't depend on money! True security is learning a trade and buying tools." When asked if he was retired, he said, "No, I consider myself as recapped!" 🦋

## Mo Jones

It's not every day that one gets to blend past experiences with present passions, but the Memorial Day parade and luncheon offered just such an opportunity. Thanks to the warm invitation from Wayne and Marla Ogelvie, I had the honor of participating in both last years and this year's celebrations. These events hold a special place in my heart, as they allow us to pay homage to the brave souls who sacrificed their lives for the freedoms we cherish yet often overlook.

My journey to the Memorial Day celebration was as unique as it was memorable. I had the distinct privilege of riding as a veteran in a stunning blue 1955 Chevy Pickup, a moment that I'll treasure forever. This experience was not just a nod to my past but a bridge to my present and future endeavors.

Before embarking on my current path, I dedicated 10 years of my life to serving in the United States Marine Corps as an air traffic control technician. My time in the service took me to places like Hawaii, Guam, the Philippines, 29 Palms, and Camp Pendleton, instilling in me a profound appreciation for the sacrifices made by my fellow servicemen and women.

Today, my mission has shifted from the skies to the digital realm and the Big Screen, where I leverage AI marketing tools to help businesses flourish, and I've also had the privilege of being a stand-in for none other than Eddie Murphy.

Attending last year's event, I was introduced to AVAG, and that experience increased my awareness of the power of community



Left to right, Mo Jones with Alex Gavidia and Steve Delgado, the owner of the classic car behind them which they traveled in during the parade.

and the importance of supporting one another, principles that my grandmother and the Marine Corps instilled in me and I now apply in my work with MO Jones Productions.

In sharing this story, I hope to not only honor the memory of those we've lost but also inspire others to find ways to blend their past experiences with their current passions. Whether it's through serving our country, participating in community events, or helping businesses grow, we all have the power to make a difference without expecting anything in return—my motto. 🦋





Vietnam Marine Corp veteran Bernie Thurman was the Grand Marshall at this year's AVAG Memorial Day Parade.

## Bernie Thurman

Bernie Thurman was born and raised in Kansas, the Sunflower State. He graduated from high school in 1959 and enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. During the twenty-one years of his enlistment, he was assigned to Camp Pendleton, CA; Camp Lejeune, NC; the Marine Corps Supply Center in Albany, GA; Kane'ohe, HI; Kansas City, MO; and Vietnam.

He had three separate tours in Vietnam.

Bernie shared about an event that happened during his 1970 tour in Vietnam. It was during monsoon (heavy rain) season, and the North Vietnamese had destroyed a pipeline bringing water to Bernie's camp. This prompted severe water restrictions in the camp since, without the pipeline, the only water that came into the camp then had to be brought in by truck.

Each unit assigned to the camp had a short window of time when they could take a shower, but Bernie was on duty at the Combat Center when it was his unit's time to use the shower, and he missed the opportunity. Since it was pouring down rain, many of the guys just went outside, shucked off their clothes, and soaped up in the great outdoors! Bernie wanted to get cleaned up, so he did the same! He recalls that he was singing, "Raindrops are falling on my head..." while he was lathering up with his bar of soap!

Just then the artillery unit received a "fire mission" notice, and they fired off a shell. In the brief moments after the alert, Bernie (and others) was running for cover. As he neared cover, Bernie experienced

what felt like a baseball bat hitting him in the back of the head! He was knocked unconscious and came to in the water-filled ditch next to his tent with a medic bandaging up his head. He had been hit by a piece of shrapnel. He notes, however, that he did not receive a Purple Heart for this incident, although he was awarded the Purple Heart for the three other times he was wounded during his three tours in Vietnam.

He was also awarded the Silver Star Medal for gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States. According to Wikipedia, it is the third-highest decoration for valor in combat. As you may understand, Bernie said that he preferred not to elaborate.

This year Bernie was selected as the Grand Marshall of the parade at the American Veterans Assistance Group (AVAG) Memorial Day Veterans Appreciation Luncheon at Cottonwood Church, which was held on Saturday, May 24th.

During Bernie's twenty-one years in the Marine Corps, he never married. While stationed in Hawaii, Bernie was single and did not have marital responsibilities, so he took advantage of the educational opportunities that were available at the University of Hawaii. He took classes to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. When he was transferred to Kansas City, MO, he continued to take classes at a nearby university. He earned his diploma just as he was approaching his retirement discharge from the Marine Corps. He retired in 1980 and relocated to California, where he found employment in Long Beach with the McDonald-Douglas corporation, an aerospace company. He was in their marketing communication department.

Bernie wanted to continue his education in a field that would enhance his employment advancement opportunities, so he enrolled in a Masters degree program at National University focusing on Business Management. He completed requirements for that degree while working at McDonald-Douglas.

At McDonald-Douglas Corporation, Bernie had a secretary in his office. His secretary, Elsa, captured his heart, and Bernie and Elsa got married! He retired from McDonald-Douglas after ten years but is still married to Elsa. They recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary! The happy couple have two daughters, seven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren!

Bernie enjoys bike riding, having dinner with friends, and loves the dog that he and his wife have. He said that they used to have bigger dogs (black labs) when they lived in a bigger home, but when they downsized and moved into a townhouse in Cypress, they also needed a downsized dog! Now they have a "fearsome" Pomeranian!

Bernie is an active member of American Legion Post 295 in Cypress. He is on that organization's executive board. He volunteers once a month to go to the Community Living Center at the VA Hospital in Long Beach to host BINGO for the residents.

At Post 295, Bernie's passion is to mentor young men, so he is the chairman of that post's "Boys State" program, sponsored by the American Legion nationwide. "Boys State" was founded in 1935 by the American Legion to counter socialism-inspired Young Pioneer Camps. It was birthed in Illinois but now has spread to all of the states, except Hawaii. The program gives selected high school juniors a hands-on opportunity to learn how the government operates. In



Above, Bernie Thurman with City of Cypress Councilman Scott Minikus at the AVAG Memorial Day Parade.

Above right, Bernie poses for a photo with Howard Koch at Howard's 100th birthday celebration last January.

Below right, Bernie with Mellissa Breunig, also at Howard Koch's birthday bash.

California, high school juniors who are selected go to Sacramento to learn about government by establishing a mock, or virtual, government and observing actual government in action. Bernie interviews applicants for the program and helps select the most qualified to go to Sacramento for the one-week program.

During that week, participants set up a mock government and assume positions within that government. The candidates are sponsored by the local American Legion post and/or by corporate sponsors. At the state level, two candidates from each state are selected to participate in the national program. It is a program that reaps long-range benefits for the community and the nation. Some noteworthy graduates of the Boys State program are Neil Armstrong, Beau Biden, Jon Bon Jovi, Tom Brokaw, Dick Cheney, Bill Clinton, Michael Jordan, Joseph Lieberman, and Rush Limbaugh. The American Legion Auxiliary has a "Girls State" program for females.

Bernie is very proud of his service with the U.S. Marine Corps and maintains a close relationship with the Corps. He attends the Annual Marine Corps Birthday Ball every year (on November 10th) and is an active member of the Marine Corps League and its programs.

Semper Fi, Bernie! 🦋





**Christopher Slack, Sr.**

I would like to first give a massive shout-out to Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto for her tireless work with AVAG.

This was my second event, and it was just as enjoyable as the first event I attended last year. My wife, Lisa, and I thoroughly enjoyed the car show, the food, the flag folding and presentation, the awards given out, the speakers sharing their stories, and, lastly, meeting other veterans at the event. The support staff did an excellent job serving us veterans. God bless them all.

I shared with Doreen that I just released a new song to honor our veterans and all those who paid the ultimate price of bravery and honor. I wrote the song in 1999 and later added the 9/11 verse in 2004. I just released the song in May 2025. The song was written to honor our military, 9/11 victims, firefighters, and all first responders during 9/11 who paid the ultimate price while trying to rescue others. The song also showcases my experiences in the Gulf War. I deployed from Fort Hood, TX, in October 1990. My job was with 13-Bravo field artillery, firing the 155 mm howitzer self-propelled. You can find this song on all my music platforms; just search for 'Creolein.' The military song is titled "I Left My Life for You, the Red, White & Blue." Please enjoy and share with others.

My full military service goes as follows. I enlisted in the National Guard in June 1980. I did my boot camp at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. I was stationed at Jackson Barracks in New Orleans, Louisiana. My MOS/job was 13 Bravo Field Artillery. I served for 5 years in the National Guard.

My wife, Lisa, became pregnant, so I decided in November 1986 to transfer to the regular Army to secure a stable job and good healthcare for our growing family. I was assigned to Fort Hood, TX. I trained at Fort Polk, Louisiana; Camp Shelby, Mississippi; and the Fort Irwin National Training Center in California. I deployed to the Gulf War on October 12th, 1990. This was on my dad's birthday, and I celebrated my birthday on October 13th in the air over the Red Sea, flying into Saudi Arabia before being sent into Iraq. I spent six months in Iraq. I finished my tour of duty in Iraq in April of 1991.

I returned to Fort Hood, Texas, and then later transferred to Fort Ord, California, where I completed my military career. In total, I served for 11 years, which includes 5 years in the reserves and 6 years of active duty. I want to thank my wife, Lisa, who has stood by me through all the hardships we have endured during my military career and in life in general. We will celebrate 39 years of marriage this June—glory to God.

The AVAG organization is first-class. They care and do a tremendous amount of work to serve us veterans. I will continue to support this organization's efforts to lift the spirits of all veterans. Thanks to all who support this organization. God bless! 🙏



U.S. Army Veteran Christopher Slack with AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto

**IT'S HERE!**

My new single "I Left My Life for You, the Red, White & Blue" is available on ALL major streaming platforms (such as Spotify, Apple Music, etc).



Scan the QR code above to listen to the song on YouTube or visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXEL0ekKrO0>.

**Let's honor our heroes and share the message!**



# AVAG and Brookhurst Community Center Honor Veterans on Memorial Day

On May 22, 2025, the American Veterans Assistance Group (AVAG) joined forces with the Brookhurst Community Center in Anaheim to host a special Memorial Day “Remember & Honor” event. The gathering brought together a vibrant crowd of patriotic seniors who celebrated the occasion with dancing, camaraderie, and heartfelt remembrance.

It was a moving sight to see so many veterans and community members come together in unity, proudly displaying their national pride. The spirit of service and sacrifice was felt throughout the day.

A special thank-you goes to Children Giving Gifts for providing thoughtful gift bags for everyone in attendance—even the band! Their generosity added a meaningful touch to an already memorable day. 🙏





# Honoring Our Vietnam Veterans

## Operation Welcome Home Honors Vietnam Veterans

On Saturday, March 22, American Veterans Assistance Group (AVAG) was in attendance at the Suavecito Headquarters in Santa Ana to assist in supporting their Operation Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans celebration. This was an exceptional event, featuring a parade and Dennis Phelps' Vietnam War-era helicopter. Classic cars were showcased, and numerous resource tables were available. Congressman Rep. Lou Correa presented certificates and pins to all Vietnam veterans. Strong support was demonstrated by Native American veterans through music and song. 🦋



## AVAG's Annual Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration

AVAG hosted their annual Vietnam Veterans Day celebration on March 28, 2025, at the Brookhurst Community Center in Anaheim, CA. The guest speaker, COL (ret.) Gary Macnamara, spoke about his experience serving in the Vietnam War.

Congressman Rep. Lou Correa thanked all the veterans for their service and presented Vietnam veterans with challenge coins, certificates of recognition, and Vietnam veteran pins.

The attendees enjoyed a lively raffle with many amazing prizes.

Special thanks to the organization that manned resource tables in support of our organization's effort to welcome home our Vietnam veterans.

Special thanks to the City of Anaheim, Heart of Compassion Distribution, Navy Federal Credit Union, Richard Breunig Foundation, Southern California Home Health, Scan Healthcare, SHARK LAW Motorcycle Attorneys, American Legion Anaheim Post 72, Pastor Cris and his church, Coach Nelson, Lydia Kamenwa with Lifetime Smiles, Sylvia Villafana, SGT. Rick Darnall and his team from the honor guard at the Riverside National Cemetery, Semper FI#1, and to our friends from Children Giving Gifts who presented all of our guests with gift bags. 🦋





# AVAG Partners: Working Together to Serve Our Veterans



## Wounded Heroes of America (WHOA)

AVAG presented a \$1000 donation to Mike Talleda, President of *Wounded Heroes of America (WHOA)*. Every other Friday, WHOA members convene at Fantastic Café in Long Beach for lunch, which is provided for all attending veterans. It is a wonderful opportunity for veterans to stay socially connected and enjoy each other's company. Those interested in attending the biweekly lunch or learning more about WHOA can visit their website at [www.woundedheroesofamerica.org](http://www.woundedheroesofamerica.org). 🦋



## Long Beach VA

In addition to our ongoing support of the *Long Beach VA* Blind Rehabilitation Center, in April, AVAG learned about this from DAV Chapter 23 in Orange County that Long Beach VA Volunteer Services were looking for items for the mental health ward and for an upcoming baby shower for veterans having babies. With support from our partners at Children Giving Gifts, we were able to provide wonderful items for the veterans—including blankets, baby clothes, T-shirts, socks, and even watches. 🦋



## Heart of Compassion Distribution

AVAG is proud to partner with *Heart of Compassion Distribution*. To express our appreciation, we delivered a donation to Pastor Eric and his team. We deeply admire Pastor Eric's selfless commitment to helping others—especially his tireless, day-in and day-out efforts to support those affected by the recent California fires. After we presented the donation, Pastor Eric surprised us with an offer we couldn't pass up: mystery boxes! We happily loaded up both the truck and Marla and Wayne's SUV. 🦋



## We Are Vets

A sincere thank-you to all the residents of Cherokee Mobile Home Park, located in Anaheim, for coming together to gather items for homeless veterans in Los Angeles. AVAG has been partnering with *We Are Vets*, who head out on the last Sunday of every month to distribute supplies. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to fill three boxes full of much-needed items for their next outreach. 🦋





### Stater Bros. Charities

*Stater Bros. Charities* has a long-standing commitment to supporting the communities they serve, and we're honored to be part of that story. In April, AVAG was selected to receive a generous \$5,000 donation, thanks to the nomination by Brian Williams—a proud veteran and Stater Bros. team member at the Orange store.

On Wednesday, April 30, 2025, the team at Stater Bros. Market #28 on Collins Avenue recognized AVAG's community work and presented the check during a small gathering at the store. Employees

came together to offer congratulations and take photos, making the day even more special.

We're especially grateful to Ivan Iloah and Anthony Rodriguez, district managers, along with Hector Tadeo, assistant store manager, who presented the check on behalf of Stater Bros. to AVAG founder Richard Simonian, a U.S. Army Green Beret.

It was a great moment to share with some of our AVAG veterans and their wives who were able to join us for the presentation. 🦋



### Special Forces Association (SFA) Chapter 78

The 2025 Valor Luncheon, hosted by *SFA Chapter 78*, featured guest speaker, retired USMC Chief Warrant Officer 4 Anthony L. Viggiani, a Navy Cross recipient. AVAG was proud to support the event, with many members attending.

Special thanks to volunteers Wayne and Marla Ogelvie for their generous help, and to event organizers James and Mel McLanahan. We also appreciate sponsors: Preisker Ranch, HomeXpress Mortgage Corp., AVAG, Expert Home Loans, Apex Service Partners, and James McLanahan. 🦋



### Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

In April, AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto was honored to install the newly elected officers of DAV Chapter 23, Orange County. The ceremony included the meaningful pledge, "Upon my word and honor... in the presence of Almighty God and my comrades and before the flag of my country."

The chapter generously donated \$500 in support of AVAG's upcoming Memorial Day luncheon and parade. Ed Sherlock received a special award recognizing his years of service, and a computer was raffled off to mark the occasion. 🦋

## Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto Honored as Woman of the Year



On Saturday, May 17, 2025, Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto was recognized as one of the 46th District's Women of the Year during a special ceremony hosted by Congressman Lou Correa at Chapman University's Sandhu Conference Center. The annual event celebrates exceptional women who have made a positive impact in their communities.

The afternoon was made even more meaningful by the presence of many friends and veterans who attended in support of Chaplain Doreen. The ceremony opened with a heartfelt presentation of the colors and the Pledge of Allegiance by Girl Scouts of Orange County Troop #2454, followed by a stirring rendition of the national anthem performed by Ximena Martinez.

AVAG congratulates Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto on this well-deserved honor and thanks all who joined in celebrating her dedication and service. 🦋



## Real ID. Really?

By Doug Zimmer, CMSgt/USAF (retired)

Perhaps you've heard about Real ID, especially if you have wanted to travel by air recently. As of May 7th, 2025, TSA (Transportation Security Administration) has required air travelers to present Real ID at the TSA checkpoints at airports across the country. This has caused a lot of confusion and has resulted in many veterans applying for new driver's licenses as their form of Real ID. This is not necessary, but since the agencies making announcements about Real ID requirements aren't targeting veterans, per se, veterans are overlooking the forms of Real ID that they already have in their possession, namely Retired Military ID cards or VA Healthcare ID cards. Some veterans may also possess U.S. passports, which are also accepted as Real ID but are not as convenient to carry.

According to the website [Passportinfo.com](https://Passportinfo.com), "... valid US military IDs also count as REAL ID."

Acceptable alternate forms of Real ID that are listed on the "tsa.gov" website under "Acceptable IDs" include:

- U.S. Department of Defense ID
- Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC)

So, while it may be convenient to turn your driver's license into a Real ID, it is NOT necessary if you have the other forms of Real ID mentioned above.

In November I had to renew my California Driver's License (CDL), so I opted to upgrade it to Real ID. On the CDL, veterans can also request that "VETERAN" appear on the license, but this requires a "Veteran Status Verification Form" to be completed by a County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) *PRIOR* to a trip to the DMV to get your driver's license updated. If you don't know where to find your closest CVSO, you can call 844-737-8838 to locate one and to set up an appointment. On a recent cross-country trip, after the May 7th deadline for Real ID, I decided to present my retired military ID card as Real ID. I had no problem using it.

So, if you have been led to believe that you MUST update your California Driver's License to Real ID, "it ain't necessarily so!" 🦋



# AVAG In Action



Daniel and Mila Kellogg of Diamond Bar Estates were so happy to have their home repair request filled. The home needed to be painted and skirting needed to be finished. But first, damaged sighting areas needed to be removed, and trim installed on all the windows. Awning required repair and paint. Fallen bricks around the home were repaired. Even their tool shed was rehabbed! 🦋



Mrs. Louise Douglas from Rancho Meridian received a write up to do repair on her home. She was excited that the job was finally getting done. When Chaplain Doreen dropped by to visit her, the rotted wood and siding had all been replaced, and the work crew was starting to paint. 🦋





AVAG was able to make a real difference in the life of Navy veteran Michael Goens, a long-time resident of Sequoia Mobile Home Park, by completing a home repair. He was overjoyed and thankful to have the subflooring fixed and new carpet installed in his house. The workers completed the job to perfection! When Chaplain Doreen checked in to view the work' progress, Mike was already enthusiastically putting his furniture back and trying to paint to make the house look even nicer. 🦋



Pam Van Goey from Sequoia Mobile Home Park was so thrilled to have her new ramp put in. She was told by her doctor that she could not have much-needed knee surgery until there was a ramp because she wouldn't be able to climb the stairs in and out of her home. She wanted to make sure we knew that she was very grateful and that Alex and his crew did a great job. 🦋



From Chaplain Doreen:

"I was deeply blessed to encounter a friend named Sylvia who introduced me to a courageous veteran, Dennis Moran, who was valiantly battling mobility issues, neuropathy, and vertigo. He was seeking guidance on finding an electric scooter or power chair. As a proud Captain in the 101 Airborne during the Vietnam War, his unwavering resilience inspired me to start searching, and our partners at DAV Chapter 23 Orange County, CA, had one ready for pick up. Special thanks to Commander Ron Counts for helping make this possible. Then, Dennis humbly asked if we could assist him in obtaining a portable 'Threshold Ramp' for his scooter, and I faithfully declared, 'God will provide.' Miraculously, I received a phone call that very day from Manuel Lopez of Creek Orange, generously offering to donate the exact ramp Dennis needed." 🦋



## New After-School Program Brings Joy and Growth to Diamond Bar Youth

A new after-school program—called the **Good Shepherd Program**—has launched at the Diamond Bar Mobile Home Park, bringing together children of all ages for faith-based learning, fun, and fellowship. Born out of the monthly adult Bible study, this initiative aims to share the love of Jesus with the next generation in a safe, joyful environment.

Each week, the children engage with scripture, learning about the selfless Shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine to find the one, and studying the Fruits of the Spirit. Even the youngest participants are making heartfelt efforts to memorize verses and pray together.

The program also includes plenty of fun and encouragement. Bingo games, bracelet-making, and thoughtful prize raffles—courtesy of resident teen leader **Sophia Baldini**—are always a hit. Sophia, who will attend Christian summer camp in July with the support of the group, has emerged as a strong example of faith and leadership among the kids.

Delicious snacks, provided with the help of volunteers like **Alice Shouse** and **Julie Saczawa**, add to the warmth of the gatherings. Whether praying over one another, singing praises, or simply enjoying each other's company, the children are growing in both faith and confidence.

Special thanks to the Bible Study team and all the volunteers who make this transformative program possible. 🙏



## AVAG and Bracken's Kitchen Bring Comfort Through Food

American Veterans Assistance Group AVAG is spreading hope and kindness through food distribution program in San Bernardino. Special thanks to our amazing partners at Bracken's Kitchen. There are still many resilient individuals out there who are working hard to make ends meet. And to have a delicious home-cooked meal really brightens their day. Christina, who was hospitalized for 14 days, and her husband showed up, and despite her struggles, she was overjoyed to receive the food. Our brave veterans come and get their meals, and this is a wonderful opportunity to give back to those who have given so much. 🙏





# Veterans Connect at Hope Chapel: Building Purposeful Connections and Community

Veterans Connect meetings at Hope Chapel Huntington Beach have become a vibrant gathering for veterans. Meetings are held every fourth Saturday of the month at 12 noon – 1:45 p.m. at Hope Chapel, located at 715 Lake St., Huntington Beach. Veterans Connect brings together veterans from all walks of life for a day of friendship, reflection, and community building.

Everyone is encouraged to participate, and it is inspiring to see veterans forge strong bonds and lasting friendships. Members pair off to discuss their readings and reflections, which leads to lively and meaningful discussion throughout the group.

Each gathering features opportunities to connect, our dedicated volunteers provide a diverse and delicious lunch with a variety of entrees and desserts, followed by a spirited raffle. We are indebted to Mellissa and David Breunig for their charitable donation of gift cards, which are used as prizes in our raffle.

These monthly gatherings are a source of blessing and encouragement as veterans enjoy each other's company and share experiences.

**Join the community!** AVAG's Veterans Connect is a great opportunity to meet fellow veterans and for spouses to connect with others, share stories, and be inspired. *We look forward to seeing you at the next meeting!* 🌟





# AVAG Communities Celebrate Easter

## Santiago Parkside Estates

Children at Santiago Parkside Estates in Rialto were all smiles as they chose from a colorful selection of Easter baskets. In addition to receiving their own treats, each child was also given a special Children Giving Gifts bag to present to their parents—encouraging the spirit of giving at a young age. With support from the new property manager, the event was a joyful success. 🐰



## Diamond Bar Estates

AVAG organized an Easter event at Diamond Bar Mobile Home Park, distributing Easter baskets courtesy of the Richard Breunig Foundation, David and Mellissa Breunig. Amanda Breunig participated, dressed as the Easter bunny, delighting the children. Chaplain Doreen shared the story of Jesus and his selfless act. The park manager provided snacks, and the kids really loved the large-scale Easter egg hunt, with Mellissa Breunig generously adding money to the golden eggs. 🐰



## AVAG Chaplaincy Team

AVAG's chaplaincy team joined local churches at the Huntington Beach Pier for the Easter Sunrise Service, hosting the prayer wall and assisting with setup. They were grateful for the opportunity to pray with members of the community. 🐰





# Honoring Mothers Across AVAG Communities



## Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park

It was a beautiful afternoon at Sequoia Plaza MHP as residents gathered to celebrate Mother's Day with a special luncheon. Each mother was treated to a delicious meal and received a scripture prayer card, which many shared and reflected on, finding encouragement in its message. The ladies were also invited to share personal stories about their mothers, and their stories were profoundly moving and wonderful to hear. Every mom in attendance received a thoughtful gift, thanks to the generosity of Mellissa Arriola Breunig and Heart of Compassion Distribution. 🦋



## Westmont of Cypress

In celebration of Mother's Day, special gifts were prepared for all the ladies attending the Monday morning Bible study at Westmont Senior Living. This thoughtful gesture added a meaningful touch to an already uplifting gathering. Each week, seniors come together with enthusiasm to sing praise songs and study Operation Timothy Book 3, led by AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto and Mellissa Breunig.

What makes this group especially unique is its diversity—believers from various faith backgrounds coming together in unity, all proclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord. 🦋

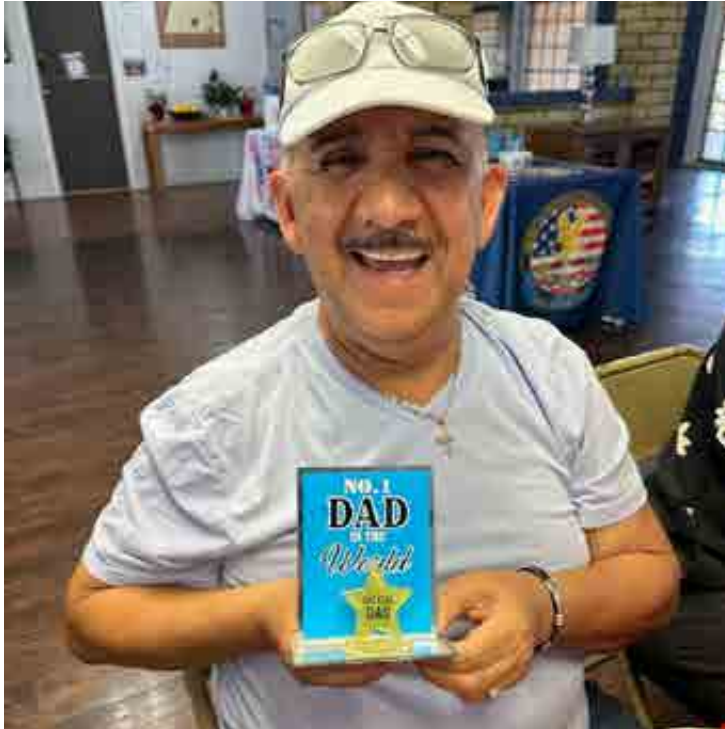


## Casitas La Verne Mobile Home Estates

The Casitas La Verne community gathered to celebrate Mother's Day with a delicious luncheon, including homemade dishes and sweet treats. Residents shared stories about their mothers, making it a memorable afternoon. Special thanks to manager Sheree, Mellissa Breunig, and Heart of Compassion Distribution for helping make the day special and for providing gifts for each lady in attendance. 🦋



# AVAG Communities Come Together for Father's Day



## Casitas La Verne Mobilehome Estates

Casitas La Verne dads were treated to a fun and festive luncheon. Each one received a special award and a great gift, thanks to our friends at Children Giving Gifts. Big thanks to everyone who helped make it a great day! 🦋

## Santiago Creek Orange Estates

Chaplain Roger Rustad of the Desmond Doss Foundation was the guest speaker at the June AVAG meeting at Creek Orange, sharing the legacy behind Hacksaw Ridge. Attendees enjoyed dinner, viewed Doss memorabilia, and celebrated Father's Day with awards and gifts from Children Giving Gifts. Special thanks to Glenn Williamson and Nancy for their support. 🦋



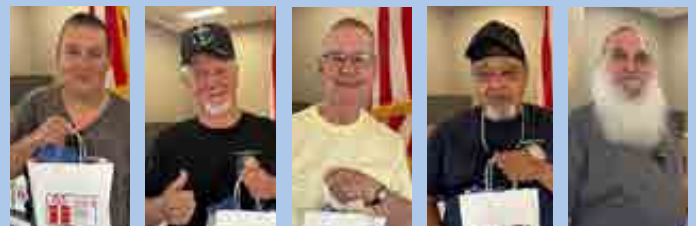
## Diamond Bar Estates

The Diamond Bar community marked Father's Day during their monthly veterans meeting with a special dinner generously provided by the Baldini family. Guest speakers shared helpful resources, and all the men received gifts, thanks to Children Giving Gifts. 🦋



## Sequoia Plaza MHP

At Sequoia Mobile Home Park, the monthly AVAG meeting included a Father's Day celebration with dinner, gifts from Children Giving Gifts, and birthday cheers for Paul, Margaret, and Roxann. The night ended on a fun note with a game of Left Right Center—Roxann took home a \$25 Stater Bros. gift card! 🦋





# Music in the Park: Celebrating Flag Day at Santiago Creek Estates

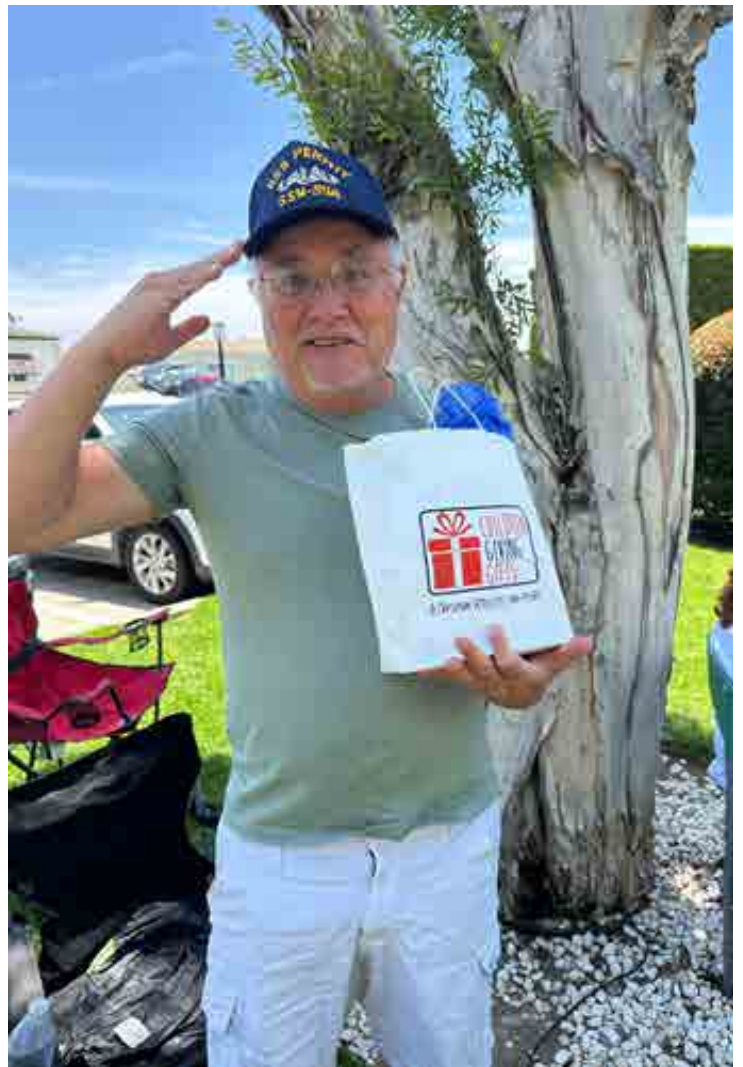
On June 16, 2025, American Veterans Assistance Group (AVAG) partnered with generous organizations, local businesses, and caring individuals to host a joyful Flag Day summer concert at Santiago Creek Estates. The afternoon featured live music by the Long Beach Blues Society band—known as Blues for Vets—who had everyone tapping their feet, dancing, and soaking up the spirit of the day.

Guests were treated to a fantastic barbecue luncheon, prepared by Pastor Crispin Tenorio and the men's Bible study group. A big thank-you to Michael Conrad Martinez and Pete for bringing their grills, and to Brian Williams for lending a hand on the grill. Together, they served up delicious hot dogs, hamburgers, chicken, and a variety of side dishes and desserts that everyone enjoyed.

We're especially grateful to the Santiago Creek Orange community for their partnership in making this event possible. A heartfelt thank-you to manager Angel for going above and beyond with your support.

In honor of Father's Day, we handed out Children Giving Gifts bags to all the men in attendance, adding another thoughtful touch to a very special afternoon.

The event ended with a deeply moving moment—five individuals were baptized, surrounded by cheers, support, and reverence. It was a powerful and beautiful reminder of faith, community, and transformation. 🦋









# In Memoriam



## Patricia Ruth Miller

In April, the community of Creek Orange held a celebration of life for Patricia “Pat” Ruth Miller.

Pat was a vibrant woman with an extraordinary heart. The community as a group honored her remarkable life. It was truly uplifting to see how many lives she touched and inspired. The group, many wearing purple—Pat’s favorite color, sang her favorite

hymnal songs and enjoyed a beautiful appetizer setup, and, in order to honor her favorite dessert that she would lovingly make for so many, little upside-down pineapple cakes. 🦋



## Linda Cooperider

AVAG lost a long-time member of the Santiago Creek Estates group in Orange, and extraordinary volunteer, Linda Cooperider. Linda was a shining star who consistently went above and beyond to support countless individuals. She was the wife of a Navy Veteran and daughter of a Navy Veteran. Linda’s son, Wayne, attended Creek Orange meeting in February and was deeply moved

by the heartfelt memories shared by her friends. Linda was loved by many and she will undoubtedly be missed. 🦋



## Anneliese Maben

From AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto: “Anneliese Maben was one of the most inspiring women I have ever met. Anneliese, who grew up in Germany, demonstrated extraordinary strength and courage after losing her mother at just 12-years-old. Alongside her three brothers, she supported her father, who endured immense hardship after being sent to a concentration camp for refusing to join the Nazi regime.

“This is just part of her remarkable life history. Her family asked me to officiate her service at the Riverside National Cemetery where she will finally rest with her husband. Indeed, she faced many trials and tribulations, but her unwavering faith in God was a shining beacon of hope.” 🦋

