

## **HISTORY OF VETERANS MEMORIAL**

**“IN HONOR OF THOSE WHO SERVED  
IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO DIED”**

**10:00 AM  
NOVEMBER 12, 2005  
BONITA, CALIFORNIA**

In October 2000 a Memorial for the Veterans was established at the original Eagle Rock library in the city of Los Angeles, now called the Eagle Rock Cultural Center. Tom Pocklington attended that because his bother Robert Pocklington, a Veteran from WWII, asked the City of Los Angeles and the American Legion to put a small plaque at the base of the Flag Pole to honor all Veterans. It was done without much trouble and the City councilman from that district dedicated the Memorial.

Tom then shared this information with the Sweetwater Valley Civic Association in November of 2000, and George Kost, along with other members, indicated that this was a good idea. They wanted Tom to look into how this could be done in Bonita. Two years later, Supervisor Cox indicated at a Sweetwater Civic Association meeting that they would be building a new library in the community and perhaps a new community room.

After the meeting at Bonita fire station, Tom approached Supervisor Cox about the Veterans Memorial. Supervisor Cox was very positive about it but indicated the San Diego County Library has a no flag policy. So the question was then, "how do we raise the money to build a memorial, including the flag, pole and landscape around the base of it?"

Several days later Tom saw Bob Sutherland at his place of business, McDonalds on Bonita Road. It was a very quick discussion about the Memorial and Bob gave a positive "yes," response, agreeing that he would provide a fifty-foot Flag Pole and an oversized Flag (12x18 feet), including the lighting for 24-hour display. Tom was overwhelmed with his offer and generosity. Tom later shared this information with Supervisor Cox. So the Memorial was off to a great start, and to raise money to pay for other costs.

New ideas came forth with the recommendation of building a new Museum near the Library. After many meetings with the county and members of the Board of Trustees, an agreement was reached requiring the Board of Trustees of the Museum to raise \$250,000 and to receive grant funds to match these so they could build a new building across from the new library. The two people who took on this responsibility were Scott & Barbara Scott.

Construction of the complex was started July 20, 2004 after the groundbreaking ceremony. The plan was for the entire project to be completed for Bonitafest 2005. The winter rains came, however, which turned out to be the worst in the last 50 years and the

3<sup>rd</sup> highest on record. The project was not completed. However, there was an open house on Saturday, September 28, 2005.

In July of 2004, LCDR Robert S. Hemperly, attached to the Dental Department on board the USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), was giving a tour to Earl and Kip Jentz, and Tom Pocklington was invited on the tour. At the completion of the tour, he handed Tom a small packet of sand from Iwo Jima, and added the following remarks, "You sound like a military man," and closed with, "This is for you."

Several months later, through Earl Jentz, he gave Tom a second bag of sand that would be used in the base of the Flag Pole. This would be a small opening designed by Rick Austin to hold the sand plus a copy of the written prayer given on September 1, 2005.

On September 1<sup>st</sup> 2005, Tom Pocklington met with Bob & Sue Sutherland, Colonel Carl Jennings and his wife, Maria, to have a pre-dedication of the Memorial and Bob, Sue and Kari to sprinkle the sand at the base of the Flag Pole. Tom put the remaining sand in a small container and it was placed into the base of the pole where concrete was used to seal it into the area where the plaque is now. Also, Chaplain Colonel Carl Jennings would place a copy his prayer into same area as the sand. This is memory of not only the five Marines and one Sailor who raised the flag on Mount Suribachi February 23, 1945, but for all veteran past, present and future.

The pre-dedication event took place at 10:00 AM, with Tom Pocklington, Bob and Sue Sutherland plus their daughter Kari. Other attendees included, Tom's son, Matt Pocklington and Corporal Larry Messersmith, San Diego deputy sheriff both who took photos of the event. Gary T. Yarbrough, Director of Operation Sutherland Management Company, and the Superintendent from Sol Tec, Rick Austin, also was attendees. These events were to Honor our men and women who served their country and made sacrifice's for the Freedom we enjoy in America today. The Flag was raised at 10:30 AM with Bob Sutherland doing the honors, a Veteran himself from the Vietnam War.

However, there was one thing missing and that was the 12" Gold Ball for the top of the flag Pole. Chief Scott Walker of the Bonita Fire Department contacted the Chief of Chula Vista Fire Department to ask if they could use their Ladder truck to put the ball on the 50-foot pole. They agreed and on September 17, 2005 (Constitution Day) the ball was put on. Bill Meza, a Sol Tec employee put on the tile for the walls around the base of the Flag Pole prior to the November 12, 2005 Dedication.

At 10:00 November 12, 2005 the Dedication was started. The seven Kiwanis put One hundred and fifty chairs into place, lead by Jim Thompson, and Bill Sears and five other members. Shawn Watson and Jim Thompson greeted the guest and handed out programs. Tom Pocklington was the Veteran Memorial Chairperson who started the program off with an introduction of elected officials and veterans from WWII, the POW's from the Korean War (1950-1953), and the USS Pueblo (1969) taken in international waters by the North Koreans, Bob Chicca. Also, Tom at the request of his wife Wanda had the wives of

Veterans stand to be recognized for the contributions made to their husbands and their country.

A complete list of attendees is attached. The Naval Medical Center from San Diego was the Color Guard and the Pledge of Allegiance was lead by Miss Bonita, Melinda Schuricht and Miss South County, Jennifer Evangelista. The Music Machine presented the National Anthem from Bonita Vista High School (BVHS) Roxanne Moncary Director. The Dedication Prayer was given by Colonel Carl Jennings, Chaplain, US Army, (ret). He gave the same prayer as he did on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September. Tom put the remaining sand in a small container in placed it into the base of the pole were concrete was used to seal it into the area were the plaque now is. A copy is attached.

Captain William (Bud) Pocklington, USN (ret) Key Note speaker, was introduced by Veteran Memorial Chairperson, Commander Tom Pocklington, USN (ret), and the younger brother of Captain Pocklington. A copy of his speech is attached.

At the completion of Captain Pocklington's talk, the Music Machine (BVHS) sang "America the Beautiful."

The Dedication unveiling of the plaque was completed by Richard Pina, and six other Pearl Harbor Survivors, and Donald Hinckle, a veteran from the Battle of Iwo Jima. As Donald removed the small American flag covering the plaque, Richard Pina, co-founder of the Bonita Museum, accepted the Veterans Memorial on behalf of all veterans. All WWII veterans were invited to the front where the Flag Pole and Plaque were to have pictures taken.

This concluded the official ceremony, and George Kost, a WWII veteran, asked to speak and thank all who worked so hard in setting up this Memorial and the Men and Women now serving in the US Military.

A reception was then held in the Museum with the "AIM 4 Faith" young people honoring our Military and all Veterans. A program with this information is attached. Over 200 Flag pins were given out to the guests. Alysa Brown, Tile Rep from Fidelity National Title, provided these in honor of our Veterans. Over 225 were in attendance on a beautiful 72 degree-day with bright sunshine. Channel 6 TV was there and the story and pictures of the dedication were on the 10:00 PM News.