



April 9, 2024
Volume 1, Issue 2

Rolling Thunder CA-1 Quarterly Newsletter

Our Mission

The major function of Rolling Thunder® Inc. is to publicize the POW-MIA issue: To educate the public that many American Prisoners of War were left behind after all previous wars and to help correct the past and to protect the future Veterans from being left behind should they become Prisoners Of War-Missing In Action. We are committed to helping American Veterans from all wars. Rolling Thunder® Inc. is a non-profit organization and everyone donates his or her time because they believe in the POW/MIA Issue that we are working on.

Rolling Thunder®, Inc. CA-1 is the first fully chartered west coast chapter of Rolling Thunder® Inc. We are dedicated to helping those who are serving, have served and the families left behind of those members in the armed forces who have been wounded, missing or killed in action.



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Meetings

Monthly Meetings

We meet the
3rd Wednesday of
every month at the
Elks Lodge at 6:30 PM.

Address:
The Elks Lodge #2477
158 Conejo School Rd
Thousand Oaks, CA.
91360

Become A Member

Whether you are a veteran or not, family member of a veteran or not, ride a motorcycle or not, YOU ARE WELCOME!

Rolling Thunder Story

Incorporated in 1995, [Rolling Thunder[®], Inc.](#) is a class 501(c)(4) non-profit organization with over 90 chartered chapters throughout the United States and members abroad. While many members of Rolling Thunder[®], Inc. are veterans and many ride motorcycles, neither qualification is a prerequisite. Rolling Thunder[®], Inc. members are old and young, men and women, veterans and non-veterans. All are united in the cause to bring full accountability for Prisoners Of War (POW) and Missing In Action (MIA) of all wars, reminding the government, the media and the public by our watchwords: "We Will Not Forget."

Annual Events

Rolling Thunder CA-1 attends numerous events through-out the year to support, honor, and/or assist local veterans. The following list are those events that are scheduled for 2024.

Ride for the Blue	5/04/2024
Conejv Valley Parade	5/05/2024
Pierce Brothers Memorial Day Event	5/27/2024
Camarillo Street Fair	7/13 & 7/14/2024
Camarillo Air Show	8/17 & 8/18/2024
Ride to the Flags	September
Thousand Oaks Street Fair	10/20/2024
West Valley Christian Church	November
Camarillo Christmas Parade & Santa's Village	December
Wreaths Across America	12/14/2024

If there is an event that you would like Rolling Thunder CA-1 to consider, please let us know. We are always looking for ways to support our veterans and raise awareness of the Prisoner of War (POW) and Missing in Action (MIA) issue.

Dates to Remember

APRIL

- 5 Gold Star Spouses Day
- 6 U.S. Enters WW1 (1917)
- 6 Rolling Thunder CA-1 Chapter Anniversary (2013)
- 11 Birthday of the Submarine Force (1900)
- 14 Air Force Reserve Birthday (1948)
- 23 Army Reserve Birthday (1920)
- 30 Vietnam War Ends (1975)

MAY

- 1 Silver Star Service Banner Day, Loyalty Day, May Day
- 4 National Explosive Ordnance Disposal Day, Int'l Firefighters Day
- 6 National Nurses Day
- 8 V E Day (Victory in Europe)
- 10 Military Spouse Appreciation Day
- 13 Children of Fallen Patriots Day
- 15 Peace Officers Memorial Day
- 17 National Defense Transportation Day
- 18 Armed Forces Day
- 22 National Maritime Day
- 27 Memorial Day

JUNE

- 4 Battle of Midway Begins (1942)
- 6 D Day (Allies Invade Normandy 1944)
- 12 Women Veterans Day
- 14 Army Birthday (1775) Flag Day
- 17 Navy Hospital Corps' Birthday
- 20 American Eagle Day
- 22 GI Bill Signed (1944)
- 23 USCG Auxiliary Birthday
- 25 Start of Korean War (1950)
- 27 National PTSD Awareness Day

Memorial Day versus Veterans Day

Memorial Day is meant for remembering and honoring military personnel who died in the service of their country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of a wound sustained in battle.

Veterans Day is intended to thank all those who have honorably served in the military – in wartime or peacetime.

The American Flag



The flag of the United States is a symbol of freedom before which Americans recite the pledge of allegiance.

The flag's 13 red and white stripes represent the 13 original colonies. Its 50 white stars on a blue background represent the 50 states.

Each of the colors on the flag has a meaning:

- Red: valor and bravery
- White: purity and innocence
- Blue: vigilance, perseverance, and justice

A star is added to the flag when a new state joins the United States. The flag was last modified on July 4, 1960, when Hawaii was incorporated as a state.

Important Things to Remember

Traditional guidelines call for displaying the flag in public only from sunrise to sunset. However, the flag may always be displayed if it's illuminated during darkness. The flag should not be subject to weather damage, so it should not be displayed during rain, snow and wind storms unless it is an all-weather flag. It should be displayed often, but especially on national and state holidays and special occasions. It should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.

Missing in Action (MIA) Update

Unaccounted for by War (as of 3/25/2024)

- World War II 72,105
- Korean War 7,481
- Vietnam War 1,577
- Cold War 126
- Gulf Wars 6
& Libya

Rolling Thunder CA-1 Officers & Board

Officers

- President—John Short III
(800) 606-1390
- Vice President—Allan Woods
(805)377-4492
- Secretary—Christina Woods
- Treasurer—Lisa Connolly

Board of Directors

- Chairman of the Board—Pat Connolly
- Gov't & Veteran Affairs/Board Member—Jerry Schmidt
- Membership/Board Member —Tom Cook
- Board Member—Jim Kirby
- Board Member—Bob Jones



Member Updates

Welcome to our newest board members; Tom Cook and Bob Jones.

Congratulations to the following members who recently received their back and/or boot patches: Annette Barboza, Becky Miller, Bob Jones, David Beaver, Erik Sterling, Mike Smith, Russ Miller, and Tom Cook.



Wreaths Across America—Local Event

Wreaths Across America is a program to honor those who sacrificed everything for our Country. It is also a chance to educate our youth about the cost of freedom and the valor of our young men and women who answered the call.

Each December, on the second or third weekend, a patriotic National program, Wreaths Across America (WAA), is held to honor deceased veterans at cemeteries across the country. It is a way of giving thanks and recognition for their service and sacrifice. In this way, we honor our own pledge to “Never Forget”. The program asks residents and volunteers to go to their local cemetery and place wreaths on the headstones of interred veterans. We will say the name of each veteran as we lay a wreath on the headstone. In that way they are brought back for that moment.

There is no cost to volunteers who participate in the placing of the wreaths. Participation is encouraged for all ages. The live wreaths are purchased through the national center by our Local Area Coordinator with support from the local Rolling Thunder CA-1 Chapter. Our local WAA site is Conejo Mountain Cemetery in Camarillo. Conejo Mountain has been very supportive and encouraging of this program. Wreaths are delivered free of charge. The wreaths are hauled from the East Coast by multiple truckers for free and are delivered to all 4,225 participating cemeteries along the way.

For 2024 the cost is \$17.00 for each wreath. Rolling Thunder CA-1 will order the wreaths after fundraising and accepting donations and sponsorships. 100% of the donations go directly to purchasing the wreaths. In 2022 there were 600 wreaths placed at Conejo Mountain and in 2023 there were 852 wreaths placed. However, there are over 3,200 veterans interred at Conejo Mountain Cemetery, and our goal is to ensure every veteran is shown our respect and receives a wreath.

If you can help us reach our goal of 3,200 wreaths, please click on the link, or go to www.wreathscrossamerica.org/CACMMP, which will direct your donation specifically to Conejo Mountain. Whether or not you are able to donate, please join us on December 14, 2024, to help us place the wreaths.

[How Rolling Thunder CA-1 became involved in Wreaths Across America](#)

In 2016, at the behest of his friend, Forrest Fields became the Local Area Coordinator for WAA. He worked to establish and build up our local program.

In 2021, Forrest asked Rolling Thunder CA-1 (RT CA-1) to assist in running the program. Joe Galante, President of RT CA-1 at the time, and other RT CA-1 members assisted with the presentation.

In 2023, Forrest asked John Short III, current RT CA-1 President, to take over as the Local Area Coordinator. As the Local Area Coordinator, John Short III has taken the lead to organize and MC the event, with support and assistance from other RT CA-1 members.

Veteran Spotlight—Forrest Fields (as reported by Tim Coates)

Forrest Fields is the former Wreaths Across America Local Area Coordinator.

Originally from Texas, he served six and a half years in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War and attained the rank of US Army Captain. Forrest was a helicopter pilot in 1968 and again in 1970. At the age of 25, Forrest received a B.S. degree in Chemistry prior to beginning his military service. After returning from service, he attended Moorpark Community College and afterwards opened his photography business.

Veteran Spotlight—Forrest Frields (continued)

Forrest later met and married his wife, Cathy, and they have been inseparable for 14 years. Cathy and Forrest live in Camarillo. Retired now, Forrest needed to find a way to honor our veterans. Through a mutual friend, Bob Pratt, he was introduced to the Wreaths Across America program, and his involvement continues today. Forrest became active with Rotary, spent 8 years on the Thousand Oaks Planning Commission and followed that with 12 years on the Thousand Oaks Housing Authority. He was also involved with POW/MIA issues at VFW Post 3866. Representing the VFW Post, he produced the annual celebrations for Veterans Day and Memorial Day at Westlake Valley Cemetery. It seems his sleeves are always rolled up.

During his service in Vietnam, he loved flying as a Scout helicopter pilot. The OH-6 helicopters were considered by many one of the most dangerous helicopter assignments. He was an artillery officer and became an aviator. Forrest flew H-13 (as seen on MASH) and later the OH-6 LOH, "LOACH" (Light Observation Helicopter), a two-seater with a rear jump seat and a big bubble wind screen and aluminum skin. Sometimes he was armed with a machine gun and 400 rounds of ammunition and sometimes a box of smoke and fragmentary hand grenades to drop out the window on the enemy. Some OH-6 helicopters had miniguns mounted on the skid, capable of up to a 4000 round per minute rate of fire. When the mini was being fired, the helicopter would try and crab to the left, with Forrest trying to keep on target. Young Forrest was there pointing out the enemy positions, pulling grenade pins, and laying down fire on the enemy. These aircraft flew reconnaissance and artillery observation missions to help confirm and direct the fire on enemy positions. Sometimes, they were teamed with AH-1 attack helicopters to work as hunt and kill. The LOACH would fly at tree-top level, low and slow, and visible to draw fire, then pull up hard and the AH-1 would basically roto-till the ground where the enemy stood. Bullets could easily penetrate the aluminum skin and plexiglass windows of the LOACH, but the airframe was strong, making a crash in the OH-6 often survivable. Forrest was shot down once, and crashed another time in a secure area where he was able to make it out.

The SCOUTS proved to be of immeasurable value during the war. Forrest occasionally flew bomb damage assessment after B-52 bombing runs. Highly dangerous missions that gained intel on enemy positions and movements and helped protect our soldiers on the ground.

Based on data from the Pentagon, it is estimated that over 40,000 helicopter pilots served in Vietnam, flying a variety of frames. Every pilot knew the dangers. Out of 1,422 OH-6As produced for the Army, 964 were destroyed in Vietnam alone. For OH-6A helicopters, 233 pilots and 251 crewmen/passengers were killed in action.

It has been said, what makes a hero is the ability to comprehend the level of risk and danger and go ahead anyway. Somehow, Forrest got back into the front seat again and again and went back out. He finished his first tour of duty in Vietnam and was sent home, but only for a while. He was sent back to Vietnam for another year-long tour.

Some of the recognition given to Forrest from the Army include: a Purple Heart, two times Distinguished Flying Cross, and Air Metal with V (for valor), an Army Commendation Metal, a Bronze Star, plus other metals, and ribbons that go with Vietnam service.

To me, Forrest is a hero. There are many that walk amongst us, some with steel legs and some with crutches, some with canes, and some with wheelchairs. Some heroes have no visible scars from that war. They are walking wounded. Some veterans are now forever silent.

Help us find and honor our silent Veterans by joining us at Wreaths Across America on December 14, 2024, at Conejo Mountain Cemetery, 2052 Howard Rd, Camarillo CA 93012.

Donations

Thanks to all who have contributed in any way to our chapter, organization and Veterans. We are 100% donation driven and 100% volunteer based. No one in the Rolling Thunder® Inc. organization draws a salary. All proceeds donated goes directly to help our Veterans and their families through projects we fund and manage.

How You Can Help

Without your help we would not be able to help our veterans. Rolling Thunder® Inc. CA-1 is a 501(c)(4) & Rolling Thunder® Inc. Charities is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.

You may send any donations to: P.O. Box 6672, Thousand Oaks, CA 91359.



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