



MESSAGE FROM THE VEEP



Armed Forces Day 2013

By Clarence M. Hatcherson

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ON AUGUST 31, 1949, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson announced the creation of an **Armed Forces Day** to replace separate Army, Navy and Air Force Days. The single-day celebration stemmed from the unification of the Armed Forces under one department -- the **Department of Defense**. Each of the military leagues and orders was asked to drop sponsorship of its specific service day in order to celebrate the newly announced Armed Forces Day. The Army, Navy and Air Force leagues adopted the newly formed day. The Marine Corps League declined to drop support for Marine Corps Day but supports Armed Forces Day, too.

In a speech announcing the formation of the day, **President Truman** "*praised the work of the military services at home and across the seas*" and said, "*it is vital to the security of the nation and to the establishment of a desirable peace.*" In an excerpt from the Presidential Proclamation of Feb. 27, 1950, Mr. Truman stated: "*Armed Forces Day, Saturday, May 20, 1950, marks the first combined demonstration by America's defense team of its progress, under the National Security Act, towards the goal of readiness for any eventuality. It is the first parade of preparedness by the unified forces of our land, sea, and air defense.*"

The first Armed Forces Day was celebrated by parades, open houses, receptions, and air shows. In Washington D.C., 10,000 troops of all branches of the military, cadets, and veterans marched past the President and his party. In New York City, an estimated 33,000 participants initiated Armed Forces Day "*under an air cover of 250 military planes of all types.*" In the harbors across the country were the famed mothballed "*battlewagons*" of **World War II**, the **Missouri**, the **New Jersey**, the **North Carolina**, and the **Iowa**, all open for public inspection. Precision flying teams

dominated the skies as tracking radar were exhibited on the ground. All across the country, the American people joined together to honor the Armed Forces.

The City of Torrance, CA is one of the few cities in the nation designated by the **U.S. Department of Defense** to host an Armed Forces Day celebration with the **Torrance Armed Forces Day Parade** as a highlight. The Parade has the distinction of being the nation's longest running military parade sponsored by any city.

2013 marks the **54th Annual City of Torrance Armed Forces Day Celebration**, a continuation of Torrance's longest-standing tradition of celebrating the legacy and sacrifices of the United States Armed Forces.

This rich tradition began in 1960; **Mayor Al Isen**, with the help of the **Torrance Chamber of Commerce**, organized the first parade as a tribute to friends and fellow Americans who had served in the Armed Forces. The parade has grown over the years to become one of America's most eagerly awaited demonstrations of patriotism. The



The 1st Marine Division Band from Camp Pendleton

Armed Forces Day Parade has drawn up to 100,000 spectators a year to watch as many as 8,000 parade participants march along the

parade route from downtown Torrance to City Hall.



Members of the Montford Point Marine Association-Los Angeles Chapter #8

In its early history, the celebration began on a Friday evening with a display of military exhibits coupled with a large fireworks show behind City Hall. On Saturday, a daylong display of military hardware and parade floats, all open for public viewing, follows the parade, which has a history of recognizing military war heroes, such as U.S. General Omar Bradley. A **Five Star General of the Army, Omar N. Bradley** served as **the Honorary Grand Marshal** in 1969, and was, at the time, the highest-ranking serviceman in the nation. General Bradley commanded the largest American military force ever to serve under one field commander; a force of more than 1,300,000 troops, during the European campaign in World War II.

THE TORRANCE ARMED FORCES DAY PARADE is led by a prologue, which includes the **Torrance Mounted Posse**. Following the Mounted Posse, **the Honorary Grand Marshal** travels the parade route in his marked vehicle then takes his place in front of the reviewing stand as the **Official Reviewing Officer** for the parade.



Honorary Grand Marshal Captain Edward Q. Hicks USMC-Ret., waves to the crowd.

The remainder of the prologue consists of senior commanders of major military installations, Congressional Medal of Honor recipients, State-elected officials, the Mayor and City Council of the City of Torrance and other city and county officials. Community leaders from the Torrance Chamber of Commerce and Torrance Jaycees and local high school marching bands complete the prologue section.



Original Montford Point Marine Parade Grand Marshal on parade review stand; r-l; Robert Reid, Eddie Q. Hicks, and Vaughn Whitworth

Following the prologue in the march are several Divisions, comprised mostly of military color guards, military marching bands, high school marching bands, uniformed troops, military drill teams, units from the National Guard, ROTC and military reserve, military. When weather permits, military aircraft conduct flyovers of the parade route.

For over 50 years, the City of Torrance has faithfully supported the Armed Forces Day Parade despite periodic anti-war sentiments and economic hard times.

Each year the City of Torrance parade honors a different branch of the military. This year the parade was significant to this author, first because the honoree was **the United States Marine Corps**, but of greater significance, the parade **Honorary Grand Marshal** was the **Montford Point Marines**.

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