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Levy County honors veterans



One of the most colorful floats featured a salute to veterans from all military branches.

Story and Photos By Terry Witt

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BRONSON -- Bronson's main highway was awash in Veterans Day (Friday, Nov. 11) in the colors of dozens of American Flags waving in the wind as they were carried in the Annual Levy County Veteran's Day Parade.

With a few municipalities able to host the parade each year, and in an effort to not force veterans' groups to have to select from among more than one parade in levy County on this day, the various mayors of the cities have previously agreed to rotate the parade.

This year, it was the Town of Bronson's turn to host the parade.



A rider-less horse is led by Vietnam veteran Bob Giles who served in 1968-69. The rider-less horse symbolizes those who never came home from battle.

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Levy County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Jones rides with her husband Jimmy, a 25-year Navy veteran, in one of the most colorful floats in the parade.



Williston municipal officials ride atop their giant airport fire engine along the parade route.

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After the parade, there was a ceremony at James H. Cobb Park in honor of veterans.

The American Flag is respected worldwide among nations that know of the enormous sacrifices made by American service men and women in defense of freedom abroad and at home.

Bronson Mayor Bruce Greenlee said he was honored to be in the presence of so many who gave so much to the nation. He recognized those who gave the ultimate sacrifice in defense of this country.

“A person can’t help but feel a sense of awe at the occasion,” Greenlee said. “To the service members and veterans who are here today we say thank you for answering the call of duty.”

Levy County Commissioner-elect Matt Brooks, a six-year United States Army veteran who served overseas, said service in the military was a rite of passage for him. His grandfather served in the Army Air Corps, his father in Vietnam and his brother in the Army Rangers.

Having served abroad, Brooks said he came to appreciate the greatness of the United States.

“My father told me if you go over and serve and you get a chance to come back to this country, you get on your hands and knees and kiss the ground,” Brooks said. “I didn’t know what he meant by that, but when I saw what other countries were and I saw that conditions that people lived in, I knew I lived in the greatest country on this earth and we shouldn’t ever forget that.”

Brooks said he didn’t spend a lot of years in the Army but he said his experience in the military taught him about the pride of the country. He said every time he says the Pledge of Allegiance and every time he sings the National Anthem, “I look at that flag and the hair stands up on the back of my neck.”

He encouraged those in attendance who have veterans in their families to talk to them, spend time with them and listen to their stories.

“They went away; they served you so you could have freedom and comfort,” Brooks said. “Some did not come back. They lost two lives, not just one. They lost the life they were living and they lost the life they would have lived and the memories they could have made with their families.”

Brooks looked out into the audience and saw one veteran wearing a shirt that said, “All gave some. Some gave all.”

“That means a lot to me and I am humbled by it,” Brooks said, his voice almost breaking.

Other speakers at the event were Dean Richardson, a 10-year military veteran, Bronson Town Councilwoman Katie Parks, a United States Air Force veteran and Jimmy Jones, a 25-year United States Navy veteran who was a Seabee. A Seabee is a member of the United States Naval Construction Forces (NCF).

Jones works as the maintenance and construction supervisor for the Levy County Commission.

Jones said he is proud of his military service, but he also commended Levy County Commissioners for keeping his job safe while he served overseas away from his home and family. He said the County Commission supports veterans and he appreciates what they did for him.

Levy County Court Judge J.T. “Tim” Browning spoke about the need to recognize the enormous sacrifices of the nation’s veterans throughout the course of history. He said one thing is certain, “The price for freedom has always been high.”

“There has always been one group of citizens who has been willing to fight and pay that price,” Browning said.

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P.J. Whitehead, son of Bronson Town Clerk Pamela Whitehead, reads a tribute poem honoring veterans after the parade.



Bronson Mayor Bruce Greenlee thanks veterans for their service. He said it was an awesome experience taking part in the ceremony.

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Levy County Commissioners Lilly Rooks and Mike Joyner ride the parade route with Yankeetown Mayor Debra Weiss and Inglis Mayor Drinda Merritt (out of view).

Two enthusiastic female veterans throw candy as they move along the parade route.



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U.S. Army veterans Corey Palmer and Jesse Baggett wave to the crowd. Palmer served in Iraq and Afghanistan in the United States Army's 2nd Cavalry and Baggett served in Desert Storm in the 81st Recon. He is a 26-year veteran. Baggett wore his uniform from Desert Storm.



Levy County Commissioner-elect Matt Brooks, a United States Army veteran, shares his thoughts with the crowd on how his military service gave him immense respect for this country and the veterans who serve defending it.

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Bronson Petite Blueberry Queen Julianne Lampton waves to the crowd.



Bronson Town Councilwoman Katie Parks, a United States Air Force veteran and organizer of the parade, rides the town fire engine along the parade route.