

# VFW Donned ‘Many Different Hats’ During Largest Memorial Ceremony in Arizona

May 18, 2009

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** — This past weekend, the VFW, along with many other veterans’ organizations, assisted with the Historical Soldiers Relocation Project, one of the largest memorial ceremonies in the nation to date.

The remains of more than 50 Cavalry, Infantry Soldiers, Indian Scouts and dependants from the 1860’s-1884 were interned at the Southern Arizona Veterans’ Memorial Cemetery’s new Historical Memorial section last Saturday. In 2006, Pima County archeologists recovered the remains under a parking lot in downtown Tucson, Ariz., from an abandoned military cemetery.

VFW riders, Sky Island Chapter of Arizona, coordinated the motorcycle escort the day before the ceremony. Traveling from Tucson to Sierra Vista, the escort of about 300 bikes stretched a mile and a half long led by the 35 star U.S. flag from the 1800’s.

Donald Nelson, VFW Post 9972 chaplain, coordinated with Ft. Huachuca, which provided the two-5 ton cargo vehicles used to transport the remains, two large canopies, 550 chairs, and 30 U.S. Army soldiers for the ceremony.

The VFW provided a trailer with food and coffee for overnight security which consisted of VFW members and Army service members. VFW also held a luncheon for all the security volunteers on Saturday following the ceremony.

Financial support was another one of the many ways in which VFW contributed to the ceremony. The VFW riders donated \$700, the Ladies Auxiliary donated \$100, and Post 9972 contributed \$2,500. The City of Sierra Vista graciously bestowed \$30,000 upon the VFW, which was in turn granted to the Historical Soldiers Relocation Project.

VFW members set a new flagpole flying the 35 star flag and helped construct a wall surrounding the new historical portion of the cemetery.

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Joe Larson, Post 9972 sr. vice commander, and project coordinator for the relocation project said, “VFW had a big impact and played a major role, wearing many different hats, throughout the entire planning and execution of the project.”