‘Team VFW’ Joins Record Crowd for VFW-Sponsored Memorial March

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More than 7,000 veterans, service members and supporters braved the desert heat on March 19, to participate in the annual Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, making it the most highly-attended event in its 28-year history.



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In addition to the VFW's role as presenting sponsor of this year's event, it was an active participant on the grueling 26.2 mile course, too. "Team VFW," was comprised of the VFW's National Commander Brian Duffy, his son Andrew, Director of Programs Lynn Rolf, Assistant Quartermaster General John Muckelbauer, his daughter Emily, and Paul Turner and Nate Anderson of VFW Post 5579.

April 9, 2017 marks the 75 year anniversary of the Bataan Death March, where the Japanese military forced more than 10,000 American and 58,000 Filipino service members to walk more than 65 miles in the brutal conditions of the Bataan Peninsula with harsh treatment from Japanese guards, no food, and no water. It's estimated more than 10,000 men died during this atrocity. 829 men hailed from New Mexico where the memorial march is held.

"Our participation in the memorial march was such a humbling way to pay tribute to those who survived in the harshest of conditions and under such brutality, as well as to all those who perished," said Duffy. "One of the founding tenets of the VFW is our promise to never forget America's heroes or the price they pay for our freedom. This event gave us that opportunity."

Among the thousands of participants who turned out this year, seven were survivors of the Bataan Death March. Less than 60 survivors are alive today. Sadly 26 have passed since last year's memorial march.

"I feel it's my duty to come out and represent the VFW, and to honor the memory of those that were put through the hell of the Bataan march," said Rolf. "In fact, I started participating in this memorial march a few years back and it's especially meaningful to me. Gathering with others who've served and imagining what the marchers experienced so many years ago, pulled me out of a bad spot in my life."

View photos from the event.