

# CITY OF TORRANCE ARMED FORCES DAY PARADE HONORING AMERICA'S ARMED SERVICES

Over the past 63 years, the City of Torrance has proudly honored the men and women of the United States military by hosting an Annual Armed Forces Day Parade and Celebration.

This rich tradition began in 1960 when former 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 since grown over the years to become one of America's most eagerly awaited demonstrations of patriotism and the love of our country. The City of Torrance is one of very few cities in the nation that has been designated by the U.S. Department of Defense to host an Armed Forces Day Celebration. Our parade has the distinction of being the longest-running military parade in the nation.

The 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 Torrance City Hall. In the early days, the celebration began on a Friday evening with a display of military exhibits and a large fireworks show behind City Hall. The parade stepped off on Saturday morning and was followed by a day-long display of military hardware and parade floats, all open for public view.

The Torrance Armed Forces Day Parade has a rich history of recognizing military war heroes, such as U.S. General of the Army Omar N. Bradley in 1969, as the Grand Marshal. General Bradley was, at the time, the highest-ranking service member in the nation. General Bradley commanded the largest American military body 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 Armed Forces Day Parade is led by a prologue, which includes the Grand Marshal and a senior ranking flag officer representing each branch of the military. The Grand Marshal travels the parade route in his marked vehicle and takes his place in front of the reviewing stand as the Official Reviewing Officer of the parade. The remainder of the prologue consists of military medal recipients, veteran's groups, prisoners of war, Pearl Harbor survivors, the City of Torrance Mayor and City Council, and other city, state, and county elected officials.

Following the prologue in the line of march are several Divisions comprised mostly of active duty, national guard, and reserve military units, including color guards, marching bands, troop battalions, rifle drill teams, military vehicles such as tanks and armored personnel carriers, and much more. Military aircraft thrill the crowd with flyovers of the parade route



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For 63 years, the City of Torrance has faithfully supported the Armed Forces Day Parade and Celebration despite periodic anti-war sentiments and economic hard times. In 1979, the parade was almost cancelled due to a lack of funds brought about by the passage of Proposition 13 in California. However, the public outcry over canceling the event brought the community together and the parade was saved through community support. The Torrance Exchange Club raised sufficient funds to ensure the celebration continued.

The heartfelt patriotism and love of country displayed by the loyal crowds who attend each year has not changed over the event's 63-year history. Many of the spectators who first viewed the parade as children in the 1960s and 1970s now bring their own children and grandchildren. They believe the celebration provides the perfect venue to instill respect for our country and military and to say “thank you” for the sacrifices the men and women of the armed services have made to secure our freedoms.

The Mayor and City Council of the City of Torrance are committed to maintaining the legacy of the Armed Forces Day Parade that was begun under the leadership of Mayor Al Isen. The parade has become an integral part of the fabric of this City. Mayor Isen once said that the objective of the parade was to “increase public respect and understanding for military service and promote civic-military relationships.” He would be proud to know that the Armed Forces Day Parade remains an honored tradition in the City of Torrance

