

LaSalle Parish Honors Veterans

Programs held in Jena and Olla

By Craig Franklin
Editor

LaSalle Parish residents took time Tuesday, November 11, to honor all veterans during two programs held in Jena and Olla.

The day began with the Veterans Day Parade that rolled through the streets of Jena at 10 a.m., with many parish veterans riding in vehicles and floats. Joining the honored guests were several parish school organizations, motorcyclists and cowboys and cowgirls on horseback.

At 11 a.m., the annual Veterans Day program began at the Jena Town Park amphitheater with retired US Navy LCDR Ralph McCrory serving as the master of ceremonies under the direction of the Whatley-Flaherty VFW Post 5002 of Jena.

Several schools allowed many of their students and teachers to attend the program at the park, which was led by the VFW Poast and the LaSalle Parish Veterans Honor Guard. The guard presented the Colors, conducted a 21 Gun Salute and led Taps during the event.

Troop 14 Scout Matthew Spears led the Pledge of Allegiance and Miss LSUA 2025 Madison Brown sang the National Anthem. Prayers were offered by retired US Army LTC Rodney Russell and US Army veteran Buddy Willis.

The keynote speaker for the Jena program was US Marine Corps veteran Charles Turnage. (See speech at the conclusion of this article.)

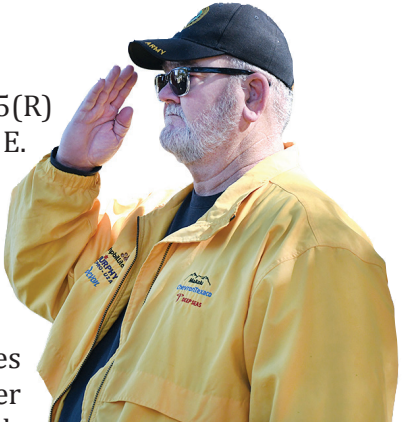
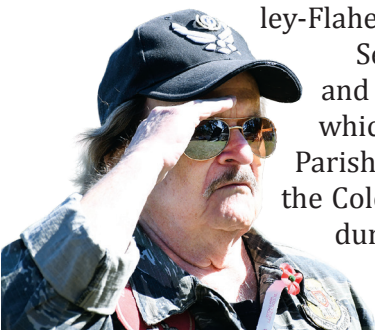
Also at the Jena program, Jena High School 11th grader Isabella Hodges shared with the crowd her grand prize-winning essay entitled, "What Does a Veteran Mean To Me?" (See essay in separate story.)

Later that same day, the annual Veterans Day program for Olla was held at the Centennial Cultural Center (CCC).

After a welcome by CCC President Ruben Couch, Troop 14 Scout Valcom Patten led in the Pledge of Allegiance. He would later also read a patriotic poem as part of the program.

Reagan Knight sang the National Anthem followed by Olla Mayor Rhonda Elliott sharing insights to Veterans Day and thanking all of those who have served the United States in the military. Her patriotic speech was thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated by all in attendance.

Honored at this year's Veterans Day program were two LaSalle Parish natives, Thomas E. Nowlin and Jake A. Long.



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Retired CW5(R) Thomas E. Nowlin Jr., son of Thomas E. Nowlin, Sr. and Patricia A. Nowlin, grew up in the LaSalle Parish area attending Olla-Standard Elementary, LaSalle Junior High and LaSalle High schools.

After attending Northeast Louisiana University, he enlisted in the United States Army in October of 1996 as a helicopter maintenance specialist on AH-64 Apache helicopters. He later attended Warrant Officer Candidate School and subsequently Rotary Wing Flight Training ultimately becoming an instructor pilot in the very same aircraft amassing just shy of 6000 flight hours with almost half being flown in combat operations supporting our nation's missions around the world.

During his more than 20-year career, CW5(R) Nowlin was stationed in a multitude of locations including Fort Jackson, SC, Fort Eustis, VA, South Korea, Fort Bragg NC, Fort Rucker AL, Hunter AAF GA, and Fort Hood TX with multiple combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His individual commendations include Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal (2nd Award), Meritorious Service Medal(3rd Award), Air Medal with Valor, Air Medal (6th Award),Army Commendation Medal(5th Award), Army Achievement Medal (3rd Award), Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Korea Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with 2 Campaign Stars, Iraq Campaign Medal with 6 Campaign Stars, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon(4th Award), NATO Medal(2nd Award), Combat Action Badge, and Master Aviator Badge. His unit commendations include the Presidential Unit Citation (2nd Award) and the Valorous Unit Award.

CW5(R) Nowlin retired from active duty in April of 2019 and continues supporting the community as an air ambulance pilot in the Houston, TX area.

Jake Alan Long also grew up in LaSalle Parish and served in the Louisiana Army National Guard from 2002-2008.

He was activated for duty in 2005 for Hurricane Katrina. During the devastating hurricane, he served in the New Orleans area during the storm and helped evacuate people during the flooding that took place in the aftermath.

In January 2009, Long was again placed on active duty for a tour in Iraq. While serving in Iraq, he sustained a knee injury which had him transferred to Fort Polk in Leesville, LA. The injury forced him to receive a medical retirement from the military, and he would leave active duty in 2011.

While serving with the National Guard, Long was a 21T (technical engineer), who mainly worked on construction projects such as surveying land and inspections.

During his time in the military, he served in Germany, Kuwait and Iraq.

Today, Long is employed with Homeland Bank in their Jena branch as a loan officer.

The two veterans were honored in a special way during the Olla program with the renowned Quilts of Valor present to present each of them their very own, unique, Quilt of Valor. The quilts were presented by Hilda Franklin.



Continued on next page

This special Veterans Day Section is sponsored by the following businesses and individuals:



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