

Vietnam vet honored in Branford's 'biggest' parade in decade

By Lisa Reisman

BRANFORD — At Sunday's crisp, sun-washed Veterans Day Parade in Branford, Pastor Steve Chamberlain shared the story of a Branford man's funeral he was asked to perform.

He worked in a kitchen at a local restaurant. "Most of us would not have recognized anything special about him," he said.

Then he came across his obituary. Anthony "Bud" Cudgma, who

died at 71 in June, was a Vietnam veteran. As part of an elite special services unit that sneaked behind enemy lines with virtually no support, he was awarded, among other medals, two Bronze Stars for heroic achievement in battle.

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"There are a lot more Anthony "Bud" Cudgmas walking among us," Chamberlain said to a bundled-up crowd that stretched across Branford Green and along Main Street, and featured, according to the parade's committee

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Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 12106 of Branford members Bill Savastano, left, Tim Lindblad center, both of Branford, and Jack Dougherty, also of Branford and a member of the Marine Corps League and American Legion Post 83, right, salute during the playing of Taps during the Branford's Veterans Day Ceremony and Veterans Day Parade on Sunday afternoon.

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Pastor Chamberlain

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chairman Bill O'Brien, "the biggest crowd in the last 10 years."

"There are heroes we pass by everyday. And I hope that when we find ourselves in their presence, whether we see the hat, or we see the pin, we take a moment to look them in the eye, take their hand, and thank them for their service, for what they've given us."

Chamberlain's words were just one of the highlights this past Sunday.

Led by parade marshals Donald Langlois, commander of American Legion Post 83, and Elliott Hastings, commander of VFW Post 12106 of Branford, the parade included marching groups from the Stony Creek Fife & Drum Corps and the all-female Totoket Ancient Fife & Drum Corps, to representatives for the Wreaths Across America convoy that will stop in Branford on Dec. 11, to members of VFW Post 12106 of Branford.

"We have to remember and keep remembering those who served and those who made the ultimate sacrifice," said VFW member Frank Stanowski, of the parade that, as recently as last year, was at risk of being permanently canceled.

Fellow VFW member Gary Tercyak, standing beside him, put it more succinctly.

"Let freedom ring," he shouted into the cold, clear air.



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The Branford Veterans Day Ceremony and Veterans Day Parade on Nov.11 in Branford.

