



CREEK
Travel Plaza



HONORING VETS

By Jen Peake | CIEDA Marketing Specialist

Creek Travel Plaza (CTP) was proud and honored to host the staging area for a motorcycle escort of The Wall That Heals to Battleship Memorial Park in Mobile in May.

The Patriot Guard Riders Alabama chapter handled the escort and was accompanied by various other motorcycle clubs, as well as the Atmore Police Department and Baldwin County Sheriff's Office on the trek to Mobile.

The Tribal Police Department and Atmore Fire Department also provided help and assistance.

The Wall That Heals is a traveling replica of the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. It was on display from May 18 to 22 at Battleship Park. The Blue Star Salute sponsored this event.

On behalf of the Tribe:

"We are honored that The Wall that Heals and the dedicated riders who are accompanying it stopped at one of our properties on this important journey. Like all the residents of our state, we have a deep respect for the men and women who serve in our military and honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

"We are mindful that of the 42,000 American Indians who went to Vietnam, 200 names on the Wall represent those

who did not return. We believe it is important for all of us to support the mission of The Wall that Heals, and we hope its presence brings comfort to many as it travels across our great country."

History of the traveling wall

On Veterans Day 1996, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund unveiled a half-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, designed to travel to communities throughout the United States. Since its dedication, The Wall That Heals has visited more than 400 cities and towns throughout the nation, spreading the memorial's healing legacy to millions.

It is about 250 feet in length, and like the original memorial, is erected in a chevron-shape. The replica is constructed of powder-coated aluminum, supported by an aluminum frame, and is made up of 24 individual panels.

Creek Travel Plaza's involvement

"The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund contacted us to see if we would be interested in being a staging area for the motorcycle escort," Retail Operations Manager Leo Hammons said. "With the big military communities we have around us, and being huge supporters of veterans ourselves, CTP General Manager Tammy Smith and I thought

it would be a great event to be a part of, and we were honored to be considered. We graciously extended our invitation to the organization, and they arranged everything else."

The day before the escort, the truck carrying the wall set up at CTP and opened its mobile education center displays, which showcased memorabilia that has been left at the wall by friends, family and visitors of those lost in the Vietnam War.

About 200 bikers arrived between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. at Creek Travel Plaza. After gassing up, bikers gathered in the back lot, then milled around the truck stop and diner, getting food, conversing with patrons, staff and law enforcement and just stretching their legs before the trip to Mobile.

And promptly at 1 p.m., kickstands were up and the bikers rolled out, riding under a large American flag hung from the top of the ladder of an Atmore Fire Department truck. Supporters gathered at the curb to salute and wave American flags, honoring all who serve and have served.

Police and fire vehicles ran lights and sirens, and a few truckers who were stopped on the road during the procession honked their horns as the motorcade drove by. It really was a sight to see.