



Memorial Day 2009

By Cadet Weston Cowden



As cadets arrived downtown the atmosphere of the event presented excitement. Those who were in attendance included but was not limited to bagpipers, the Air Force Academy's Saber drill team, cheerleaders, other youth military groups and Colorado's own PT Cruiser club who drove in front of CAP throughout the parade. The emphasis throughout the day was to celebrate, honor, and above all remember those who had bravely stood and fought for the protection of freedom for the United States of America. As the day began the cadets were split between those who marched in the parade and those who otherwise assisted and aided in the celebration. The parade ran smoothly as Mustang Cadet Squadron's own Cadet Captain Byron Gray overlooked the march. The parade was a success as every last one of the cadets finished the long and tiresome march. The spectators were, generally, agreeable and encouraging throughout the parade. Other duties of cadets included assisting veterans and flag duties, both of which ran smoothly. This event meant a great deal to the cadets and veterans. When asked what the experience meant to Cadet Chief Master Sergeant Ashburn he stated "This ceremony means a tribute to every single person who sacrificed themselves or served in the armed forces because without any of the wars we fought in or any of these people here then our country wouldn't be what it is today." Afterwards he enthusiastically proclaimed without provocation that it was absolutely worth getting out of bed early for the event. Through my interview with Army veteran Jess Katel he explained to me what this ceremony meant to him. "It means to me that the strength of 1776 is still alive today. And when people ask me why I'm wearing this I say 'was I supposed to stop?' this is a 9/11 ribbon that I've been wearing since 9/11." The presentation for the soldiers who fell in combat from Colorado was held soon after the parade. Each member of the armed services who were killed in the line of duty were honored with a gift and a speech written by their families. Each one was unique to the individual in a ritual that was deeply emotional while still honoring and remembering those who paid the ultimate price for their country. After this part ended there were purple hearts awarded to servicemen who were supposed to receive them a long time ago. Through whatever circumstances they hadn't been granted as Raymond S. Horton, John Pakiz, and Paul J. Rackl received the accolade posthumously. This event was inspiring to those cadets seeking to pursue the military as Chief Ashburn stated "this absolutely inspires me. I'd love to join the military when I turn 18." When asked for advice for anyone seeking to join the military Jess Katel advised "I would say it should be an option for a person who really stands up for what's right and the people who stand up for freedom and liberty at which we're constantly under assault..." (For full interview see *Interview with Army Veteran Jess Katel*). This outing was a humbling experience that allowed cadets to honor those who are owed so much. This outing took place in the downtown area despite the overcast weather conditions. Without a doubt it was an honor to attend and give the proper recognition to those who deserve it. Memorial Day 2009 was a success as a result of everyone's hard work and efforts as the veterans were credited for their honorable service and feats of valor in defense of the United States of America.