

# WNY HISPANIC AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL

*Monument Unveiling Ceremony*



**June 14, 2013  
1700 hr (5pm)  
Buffalo Erie County Naval &  
Military Park**





## **The Idea Resonates for a Hispanic American Veterans Memorial**

Over the years as he travelled through the city of Buffalo and the Erie County, Ventura Colon became concerned about the fact that there were many war monuments, but none that were dedicated to Hispanic vets. He was a Vietnam War veteran, but he also knew many who served during World War II one of them Marcos Lopez, known throughout Western New York in the veteran community for his commitment and dedication to veterans. Marcos was one of the instrumental veterans, along with others that organized the only Hispanic Veterans American Legion post, the Gabriel A. Rodriguez Post 1928. The Gabriel A. Rodriguez Post, although not currently active, was dedicated to a Western New Yorker who was both a Vietnam vet and a Hispanic. There were other Hispanics like Viet Nam vet Pete Herrera, and Richard Cruz who served in Iraq. These thoughts and observations led Ventura Colon to ask, "Why not a monument for us? What can be done about this?"

Then a childhood friend and fellow Vietnam vet, Louie Feliciano, passed away in 2004 after a battle with illnesses related to Agent Orange, a deadly chemical used during the war. The idea of a monument for Hispanic veterans was back at the forefront once again! Mr. Colon spent the next several years viewing and discussing ideas with his close friend Benny Rodriguez, the brother of Gabriel Rodriguez. Benny had served in the Navy during the Vietnam era. In the spring of 2008 Colon met with newly elected Niagara Councilman David Rivera to discuss the idea of a monument dedicated to Hispanic Veterans of Western New York. From this day forward Councilman Rivera was in full agreement with the need for recognition of the fact that Hispanics have served this nation with honor in all wars and conflicts and agreed that the entire country has not fully recognized this fact, and that Western New York was no different.

The idea of the monument took flight when the initial seed monies provided by Councilman Rivera was identified to design and build a monument that would be dedicated to Hispanic Veterans from Western New York. A site was discussed in the cities Niagara District, across from the Connecticut Street Armory, where the majority of Hispanics lived in the City of Buffalo. An alternative site was suggested by Casimiro Rodriguez at the Naval and Military Park at Buffalo's Waterfront.

The project began to develop interest, other fellow veterans such as Benny Rodriguez, Carlos Benitez, Rosemary Caicedo, Jose Rivera, Tino Mejia and Angelo Lamberty, Jose Pizarro, were approached and they too supported the concept, this group was later identified as the core group. Suggestions were made to contact Sergio Rodriguez of the Erie County Office of Veteran Affairs to discuss the concept and a core group was then formed. Francisco Guzman who is an architect with the city of Buffalo was willing to do the initial concept drawings pro bono. With the initial concept drawing a meeting was convened by the core group, Buffalo Arts Commission, and Mr. Rivera and the process began to take shape.

The core group saw that the project would take a lot of time, energy, and resources, so they decided to identify a fulltime architect in Brad Wales of the UB School of Architect and after lengthy discussions, Brad accepted. On November 11, 2011 history began to take shape when the groundbreaking ceremony took place and thru eighteen months of dedication and commitment by the committee we can see today and appreciate the Hispanic American Veterans Memorial of Western New York , being part of Buffalo's History and one of the most prestigious landmarks here and abroad.

## The Memorial Sculpture

Whenever a serviceman or woman dies in the line of duty, it is customary to arrange their Boots, Rifle, and Helmet as depicted in the picture of the monument.

This arrangement is called the Battlefield Cross, Battle Cross or the Fallen Soldier Cross. The Battlefield Cross symbolizes a fallen warrior. The rifle pointing downwards into the ground is a memorial of a soldier killed in action. The rifle is capped with a helmet and perhaps dog tags, and at the bottom, a pair of combat boots to represent the last march of the battle. These three items are essential gear for all service members, now the service member has no further need for them.

A life size lone infantryman accompanied by a female war comrade is reverently kneeling in front of the Fallen Soldier Cross paying his last tribute to a comrade. The 2 bronze sculptures sit atop of a black granite ellipse which symbolizes eternity. The top of the ellipse will also have a written inscription in tribute to the Gabriel A. Rodriguez American Legion Post No. 1928 and the 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment also known as “The Borinqueneers”. The ellipse rests on top of another black granite octagonal base with the inscription “In Gratitude to All Western New York Hispanic-American Veterans For Their Service ” the outer edge of the ellipse has 22 engraved flags; the United States of America (USA) flag and 21 Latin American flags from the Western Hemisphere where most Hispanic-American Veterans trace their Spanish Speaking ethnicity and races (roots). On the opposite side are the 5 engraved emblems of all the Armed Forces: Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard. Just opposite the monument between two benches will sit a marker displaying the listings of contributors, committee members and a brief narrative that will primarily serve as an educational display. The ground will be adorned with 330 personalized engraved brick pavers. This will allow public and private participation in the process of “leaving a legacy” while allowing time for respite and refectation.

### Specifications

The “Fallen Soldier” sculpture is life-size and life-like in every detail. It is cast in American bronze. In its standard form the sculpture measures 45” tall including the bronze base and the base measures 18’ wide x 22” from front to back x 7” tall. The weight is approximately 150 pounds.

The patina (coloration) is a traditional chocolate brown (also known as statuary brown). Four mounting nuts are welded in each corner under the base of the sculpture for secure and permanent installation on the granite base. This is a classic quality state and built to last for hundreds of years.

The infantry soldier sculpture is a life-like infantry female soldier accompanied by a bronze male comrade kneeling down reflecting and paying homage to a fellow soldier. The statue measures 35” tall x 33 long x 24 wide.

The granite selected for the two pedestal stone is “American Black” granite quarried in St. Peters, Pennsylvania by the Rock of Ages Corporation. These bases required custom, oversized quarry blocks; the blocks were specially quarried and shipped to the craftsmen center in Barre, Vermont for cutting, polishing, engraving, and etching of the USA and Hispanic national flags.

The area will be covered by pavers. Inscribed pavers are planned to memorialize the men and women who have served and or die for our country. The public will be able to pay tribute to our American spirit and immortalize their family or friends by sponsoring a memorial brick in the Walkway.



## **Gabriel A. Rodriguez American Legion Post 1928**

This tribute is dedicated to the Gabriel A. Rodriguez American Legion Post 1928. It was established in 1985 through the leadership of Marcos D. Lopez and other Hispanic veterans. Lopez himself a decorated WW II U.S. Coast Guard veteran was called home in 2007, and lays to rest in our nation's hallowed ground "Arlington National Cemetery".

The American Legion Post 1928 embraces veterans of all cultures but is recognized as the first Hispanic American Legion in Western New York. Post 1928 was dedicated to honor the memory of Specialist Gabriel A. Rodriguez as well as his service to his country. Specialist Rodriguez passed in 1981.

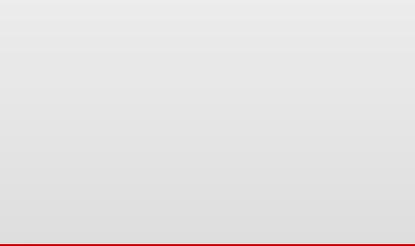
This inscription also serves as a reminder of the post war struggles with "Agent Orange" and "Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome" by Specialist Rodriguez, other veterans, and personnel associated with the Viet Nam conflict.



## **65th Infantry Regiment "The Borinqueneers"**

The 65th Infantry Regiment was created in 1899 by the U.S. Congress as an active unit composed primarily of Puerto Ricans. It went on to serve meritoriously in World War I, World War II and the Korean War. Nicknamed "The Borinqueneers", the men of the 65th performed valiantly during the Korean War participating in nine major campaigns and earning praise from General Douglas MacArthur.

The 65th Infantry is credited with the last recorded battalion-sized bayonet attack in U.S. Army history even while enduring the hardships of segregation and discrimination. Amongst its many decorations, the 65th earned over 10 Distinguished Service Crosses, 258 Silver Stars, 628 Bronze Stars, 2771 Purple Hearts, and 2 U.S. Presidential Unit Citation, 1 Meritorious Unit Commendation and 2 Republic of Korea Citations.



## Hispanic American Memorial Monument Committee

Through their tireless efforts and devotion these dedicated men and women ensured the completion of this special place to recognize all WNY Hispanic American Veterans, past, present, and future who serve to defend and protect our great nation.

José C. Pizarro (CPL. USMC)  
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Carlos M. Benitez (MAJNYARNG - Ret)

Felicia Cruz (US Marines)

Dinorah Santos (USAF Mom)

Dinorah E. Santos

## **Architect**

Brad Wales

## **Monument Construction**

Stone Art Memorial - Tom Koch

Rock of All Ages - Brian Koziar

## **Foundation & Monument Preparation**

Project Manager .....Joe Mascia

Sarafini Trucking .....Michael Sarafini

Iroquois Bar .....Tom Saia

Buffalo Ready Mix Concrete.....Steve Talty

Home Depot

Plywood Plastic

Atlas Steel .....Ed Hogle

Gernatt Material.....Rick Marzullo

Dewey Paving.....Bob Mastrandrea

Occhino Corp. ...Lee Occhino

Battaglia Corp.....Peter Battaglia

Cement Mason Local 111.....Jeff Cornman

Carpenter .....Grady Thompson

Restorff Landscape.....Roger Restorff

# **Order of Ceremonies**

Commence 1700 hrs. / 5:00 pm

## **Welcome / Introduction**

Jose C. Pizarro (CPL.USMC) : Committee Chair  
COL Patrick J. Cunningham (Ret)

## **Invocation**

Angelo M Otero (MSG US ARMY-(Ret)

## **Introduction of MC**

Jose C. Pizarro

## **Posting of Colors**

Western Region Cadets

## **Pledge Of Allegiance**

2012 Miss Borinquen: Alexia Guzman

## **National Anthem**

Susan Santiago (HUB) / Carlos Day

## **Intro of VIP's / Guest**

David Rodriguez

## **Intro of WNYHAVC**

Chairman Jose C Pizarro (CPL.USMC)

## **Remarks**

Jose C. Pizarro (CPL.USMC)

## **Vice Chairman Remarks**

Angelo M Otero (MSG US ARMY-(Ret)

## **Remarks**

Casimiro D. Rodriguez Sr.

## **Rodriguez Family Remarks**

Primitivo Rodriguez Jr.

**Gabriel A. Rodriguez American Legion Post # 1928**

Jose C Pizarro (CPL.USMC)

**65th Infantry Regiment (Borinqueneers) &  
Presentation to PFC Juan Negron**

Carlos Benitez (MAJ NYARNG-(Ret))

**Monument Unveiling**

Committee

**Toll Bell Memorium**

**21 Gun Salute**

**Taps (play)**

Carlos Day

**Benediction**

Rev. David Rivera

**Retirement of Colors**

**Press Interviews**

**Reception**

“Litte Rock”

Music by Grupo Variedad

We would like to thank the Buffalo Fire Department and  
Niagara Frontier Boy Scouts of America for their assistance.

## **DONORS CREDITS**

*We thank through their financial support made this memorial possible*

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Special Thanks to CARAMICI'S & PEPSI-COLA  
for their generous donation of beverages and delicacies.



# Pavers Tribute



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VIET-NAM VETERANS of AMERICA CHAP 77  
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**Hispanic American Veterans Memorial Invocation  
June 14, 2013**

**Heavenly father we call on you to say thank you, for this day you have given us. To thank you for the successful completion of our memorial mission. We thank you for this beautiful monument, made by human hands and paid for by brave men and women, who have served this nation in the past, who currently are serving, and those who will serve in the future to protect our freedoms, and our way of life.**

**We ask that you bless this beautiful monument, and we ask father, that you carry our message of thanks and gratitude, in an ever so soft whisper to those who have paid the ultimate price, and who lie in sleep until you awaken them again.**

**We ask father, that you provide your armor of protection to the loved ones of those who have fallen. As our devine physical we ask that you heal those who suffer from physical, or emotionally, as a result of war.**

**We ask father that you bless all the souls who have gathered here today to remember, and to share their words and memories. We ask you to continue to bless our great nation, as well as all those who have risen to lead her.**

**We thank you for the fruits of thy bounty, which you have provide for us today. We ask that you answer our individual prayers, according to your will. We ask things in the name of your son Jesus Christ our lord.**

**AMEN**

**Angelo M. Otero (MS US Army)**