

## Parents of Marine killed in Iraq hit the road in tribute

### Landakers join memorial motorcycle trip to D.C.

By Debbie Pfeiffer Trunnell, Staff Writer

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ONTARIO - During conversations with his dad, 1st Lt. Jared Landaker told him he wanted to buy a new Harley-Davidson Heritage motorcycle when he got home from Iraq and ride with his father in an annual cross-country pilgrimage to honor veterans.



Getting ready to ride his motorcycle in the Run For The Wall XIX on Wednesday, Joe Landaker of Big Bear City shows a photo of his son, Jared Landaker who was killed in Iraq on Feb. 7 while serving as a helicopter pilot in the Marine Corps. Hundreds of motorcycles left from Ontario on their way to Washington, D.C. as a memorial to those missing or killed in action in all wars. (Marc Campos/Staff Photographer)

**Photo Gallery: Run For The Wall XIX, 5/17/07**

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**New: Run For The Wall XIX, 5/17/07**

Jared never made it back for the run.

The 25-year-old University of La Verne graduate died in a helicopter crash on Feb. 7 outside Baghdad.

So instead of traveling with him, Joe Landaker, a Vietnam veteran from Big Bear City, is riding in memory of his fallen son in the Run For The Wall to Washington, D.C., that kicked off Wednesday

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"I'm riding for him, but I also envision him alongside me, looking over and saying, 'What's up pops?'" said Landaker.

Assigned to fly casualty evacuations in the heart of the fight, Jared was the pilot of a CH-46 helicopter that had picked up a wounded Marine in Karbala.

Landaker's copter was taking the Marine to a hospital when a support helicopter crew saw fire in the back.

The helicopter spun around twice and crashed on its left side. There were no survivors.

The young Marine Corps pilot died on his last scheduled flight. He was supposed to come home the following week to attend weapons and tactical instructor school in Yuma, Ariz.

On Wednesday, Landaker, 60, wore a T-shirt emblazoned with a picture of Jared in uniform on the front and his son's definition of what a hero is on the back.

The definition said: "Heroes: Anyone who has put their life on the line serving this country ... Jrod ... Feb. 7."

On the windshield of his Harley-Davidson Road King were the words: "In loving memory of Jared 'Jrod' Landaker, 1Lt-USMC, May 3, 1981 - Feb. 7, 2007."

Event organizers gave Landaker a place at the head of the pack making the journey, whose mission is to promote healing among all veterans, to call for an accounting of all prisoners of war and those missing in action, and to honor the memory of those killed in action from all wars.

Landaker, along with Brooke Wagner, his buddy from Big Bear City, and hundreds of others are riding the central route of the run with their first stop in Williams, Ariz.

Wagner said he was there to provide support to Landaker on the long journey.

"Jared was a real good kid, so I want to be there for Joe in every way," he said.

From Arizona, the bikers will travel on to Gallup, N.M., today and Angel Fire, N.M. on Friday.

There will be a ceremony for the veterans Friday night in Angel Fire, said Landaker.

Saturday, he and Wagner will split from the pack and meet up with their wives in Colorado Springs, Colo.

From there, they will head on to destinations including Wentzville Mo.; Corydon, Ind.; Hurricane, W. Va. and Arlington, Va., ending May 27 with participation in the Rolling Thunder Parade in Washington, D.C.

There, the motorcycles start from the Pentagon parking lots, parade through downtown Washington and end at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, a national war memorial that honors members of the U.S. Armed Forces who died in service or were unaccounted for during the Vietnam War.

Landaker, Wagner and their wives will stay on in Washington to attend the Marine Corps Band and Silent Drill Team ceremony at the Marine Corp Barracks.

They will also be honored, again in Jared's memory, by receiving a tour of the White House and the Pentagon.

"It's a result of Jared's passing, and it's so special," said Landaker. "People just don't get to walk into those places."

Laura Landaker said she is looking forward to sharing the last half of the emotional journey with her husband.

"In 36 years of marriage, I have never seen Joe cry as much as he has in the months since Jared died," she said. "I hope to see that anxiety leave him."

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