



# AIRPAC SQUADRON

United States Naval Sea Cadet Corps  
United States Navy League Cadet Corps

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## US Naval Sea Cadet Corps Visits Moving Wall Vietnam War Memorial and Honors One of its Shipmates Family Members

Santa Barbara, California –

When my daughter's Navy League and Sea Cadet group, Santa Barbara's "Airpac Squadron", traveled to Ivy Lawn Cemetery in Ventura to see the "moving wall" version of the Vietnam War Memorial, I went more as a curious spectator than as a mourner. I myself had not lost anyone in that conflict. Fortunately, all of my friends had returned home alive.

My husband's family was more impacted - a family member was killed early in the war. His name was inscribed somewhere on the Memorial and I felt that my daughter might like to see this tribute. Perhaps she'd like to make a rubbing of that portion of the Wall as a memento for the family.

The ceremony held before our visit to the Wall itself was the beginning of what turned out to be a very moving experience for my child and me. As is customary for events such as this, several local officials were present and many eloquently shared their thoughts regarding the Memorial. However, when the veterans themselves spoke about their experiences, whether their comments were rough or polished, every word was authentic, a facet of a shared history which touched the listeners deeply. During the service, aircraft staged a "fly-over" in honor of the people whose names are enshrined on the Wall and, in a gesture I found very moving. The event concluded with the release of a different sort of wings, those of white doves, symbolic of Peace.

Afterwards the crowd made its way to the Wall itself. We were helped by many volunteers, some whom were veterans, to find the place on the Memorial where names searched for might be found. They also offered comfort when it was needed.



My daughter and I went on our own journey. Then we found him. I didn't expect reading the inscription "William E. Cordero" to affect me like it did. I never knew him, but here was a man who shared my child's name. And now here was that child, being helped by volunteers and other Cadets, reaching up with chalk and paper to make the rubbing that she would carry home and share with others. A memory in stone of a distant cousin who died long before she was born, but whose name she carried now, not only on her Cadet ID card, but also to her home --on a fragile piece of paper. I tried, without much success, to hide tears from my daughter and her fellow Cadets when they came back to me to get flowers and sage to place at the foot of the Wall under Bill's name. She smiled up into my face and took the blossoms from my hands, giving some of them to her friends as they walked together slowly back to the Memorial. It was her way of sharing her relative with them and, in her tradition, inviting them into this very personal ceremony.



The Wall demands of us more than I imagined. I had not anticipated the impact those long slopes of shining black rock would have on the heart and mind. My husband's relative called to us from the other side of that stone. Each name represents not just an individual, but an entire community of family, friends, and, in these later days, relatives and descendants who may not have known them, but whose lives are still brushed by their passing. I think my daughter would say that it's better to go ahead and shed those tears - for the dead, and for all of us who love them.

-Charisse Matisz-Cordero



To learn more about the Santa Barbara AIRPAC Squadron and its' mission in our community visit: [www.airpacsquadron.org](http://www.airpacsquadron.org) or contact LT Dawn Rademacher: [airpacsb@cox.net](mailto:airpacsb@cox.net)

*The Naval Sea Cadet program is for young men and women between the ages of 11 and 17. Cadets are required to have at least a 'C' average in school. In addition, they must be crime free, drug free, physically fit and a US Citizen. For information about the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, please visit: [www.seacadets.org](http://www.seacadets.org)*

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