

'Those who died here gave their lives. There is no higher expression of love.'

— **BILL MORROW**, state senator, keynote speaker at memorial service



Eve Salazar touches the etched letters of 'my very best friend,' Victor Lopez, etched into a freshly unveiled memorial to veterans at San Dieguito Academy after Veterans Day ceremonies at the site Tuesday. Lopez died in Vietnam in 1969. (BILL WECHTER / NCT)

Region honors veterans

■ Area residents salute military on Veterans Day

STAFF REPORTS

NORTH COUNTY — From the coast to the mountains, the young and mostly the old gathered at schools, parks and lodges Tuesday to celebrate — remember, really — the men and women who served and sacrificed for their country.

At Veterans Day events across North County, hundreds of residents paid tribute to veterans of World War II, Korea, Viet-

nam, Afghanistan and Iraq with song, speeches, flags and gratitude.

A somber salute

In Solana Beach, at a program held at La Colonia Park, medals dangled from the garrison caps of two dozen veterans. Though some of their right hands trembled, each was pegged to the forehead in a somber salute.

Flanking the veterans were family and friends, city leaders and bright-



BILL WECHTER / NCT

Pearl Harbor survivors Earle Davis of Cardiff, left, Ted Roosvall of San Marcos and Ken Hill of Vista attend a Veterans Day observance at the Oceanside band shell.

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VETERANS

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eyed members of Boy Scouts of America, Cub Pack 782.

Renditions of the national anthem, a medley of military music and taps came courtesy of the Santa Fe Christian School band.

Councilman Joe Kellejian, the grandson of Armenian immigrants and an Army veteran, said he attends the event each year as a way to repay his country. His relatives came to America, he said, "wanting to see a ray of hope."

They found it, he said. "That's the reason I don't miss this occasion."

A widow remembers

In Rancho Bernardo, 88-year-old Ruth Medusky, leaning on her walker with the aid of her assistant, arrived after the official celebration and placed a pink plant at the memorial carrying the name of her husband, Col. John W. Medusky, a veteran of World War II and Korea who died four years ago.

Wearing a golden-hued scarf her husband bought her, Medusky said she was sad she missed the speeches but enjoyed meeting two young servicemen who were at the memorial.

"They asked about my husband and I was happy to talk with them," she said. "It was a very pleasant time to talk about my husband and our times together."

Taking time out

In Oceanside, at an event attended by nearly 300 people, two young surfers decided to join the proceedings. As they stood in their wetsuits, surf-

lunch at their post on East Vista Way. About 20 men and women sat at the tables, ate and drank while reminiscing about family and friends they had lost in war.

"With what's going on today, we hope we don't lose any more," VFW post Cmdr. Joe Patton said. "We've been there."

The Vista VFW, which has about 1,000 members, loses an increasing amount of members every year because of "the age factor," Patton said.

Five members are former prisoners of war, he said.

A young voice

In Escondido, tears, sing-alongs and a hefty dose of patriotism filled the Veterans Memorial Building on Park Avenue as the Allied Veterans Council sponsored its annual ceremony.

More than 150 veterans, their families and representatives from the Escondido Police Department and City Council took part in the hour-long program. Navy Lt. Matt Szoka, a Poway native, was the guest speaker. Szoka served in Operation Iraqi Freedom, returning home in April. He said it was the first time he had spoken to a group of veterans.

"I am very excited," said Szoka, 27. "Both of my grandpas were vets, and one was a

member of the American Legion and the other was a member of the Polish Catholic War Veterans Association. It's quite an honor to be here."

Szoka flew search-and-rescue missions off the USS Constellation from December through April. He spoke to the audience about rescuing two pilots who ejected from their aircraft during a faulty carrier landing.

"Man can do two things during war," Szoka said. "You can bring the war to a swift conclusion or save lives during the war. I was lucky enough to do the latter."

Annmarie Pina-Brown, a Navy nurse from 1950 until 1953, said she was proud to see so many people in the community turn out for the event.

"It's good to know vets have not been forgotten," Pina-Brown said. "To see so many young people and know that they are aware of veterans from previous wars is good. It's great to see the young people mingling with the older vets."

Memorial dedicated

Back on the coast in Encinitas, a crowd of about 150 veterans and their family members stood Tuesday in solemn silence at the entrance of San Dieguito Academy to dedicate a memorial to

those alumni of the high school who died in the wars from World War II to Vietnam.

The memorial was the fruit of more than three years of painstaking efforts by the San Dieguito High School Veterans Association, which first approached the San Dieguito Union High School District in 2001 with the idea.

As each family member or student recited the name of one of the 18 men memorialized on the black granite plaque, he or she released a dove into the sunny, breezy Encinitas sky.

"Those who died here gave their lives," said state Sen. Bill Morrow in his keynote address. "There is no higher expression of love."

Morrow was joined by San Dieguito Superintendent Peggy Lynch, the board of trustees and several district and school administrators.

Four Marines, fresh from Iraq, volunteered as color guard for the dedication ceremony.

Representing Navy Lt. j.g. Michael Zerbe was his son Sterling, who flew in from Atlanta

for the event. Zerbe was only 15 months old when his father was killed in battle in Vietnam.

"What he gave for our family, for our country," said Zerbe, "it was the least I could do to come and represent him."

Fallbrook falls in

With nearby Camp Pendleton a constant reminder of military readiness and sacrifice, Fallbrook residents turned out in force Tuesday to salute area veterans.

Some donned their old service uniforms for a march down Main Street, while others — such as 81-year-old World War II and Korean War Navy veteran Frank Cardiff — carried a piece of their service days with them.

"This is a wonderful day and it's a blessing to be here," said Cardiff, who carried a picture around his neck showing him as an 18-year-old seaman.

For Robert O. Tilley, keynote speaker and a retired Marine Corps colonel, the salute to veterans was a tribute to the millions of men and women who have or are now serving the nation.

"In every generation, there have been those who answered the call," he said. "We support and pray for them in these dangerous times."

More than two dozen Fallbrook-area veterans took part in Tuesday's march, cheered on by an estimated 400 people who lined Main Street between Major Market and Village Square.

Eileen Bailey was one of those at the square. She said she was there because of the long tradition of military service in her family. Her father and uncles served their country. Her husband was in the Navy, and her son is in the Army and about to be deployed to Iraq.

"This is very personal to me," she said. "I love anything that honors veterans. People who haven't served don't realize the sacrifices veterans make."

Staff writers Adam Kaye, Tanya Rodrigues, Erica Warren, Paul Sisson and David Fried and freelance writers Candice Reed and Erika Ayn Finch contributed to this report.

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