A Thunderous Salute
By Ken Kouba, 2Lt CAP, IL Wing

June 19, 2004, a day Tony Cutano and Jerry Kuczera along with hundreds of volunteers had planned two years for. Their vision, sparked by anti-war demonstrators dishonoring the flag, was about to come true. In Marseilles Illinois it was a day they dreamed for, a perfect sunny day, seventy-two degrees, slight wind, cloud trails broke up the blue sky, and an eagle circling above the site was seen. On the banks of the Illinois River near Main Street five six foot black marble stone tablets, three flags waving, and a marble plaque set in front read, “A tribute to the heroic servicemen and servicewomen who sacrificed their lives in the Middle East conflicts while keeping America free”. The Memorial organizers, The Illinois Motorcycle Community, showed their support in funding the memorial with more than 10,000 motorcycles thundering thirty miles long in route to the ceremony.

Downtown Marseilles, IL during dedication.

Prior to the ceremony the dedication plaque was placed in its permanent location.

Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine units were there to provide ceremonial support for the more than 15,000 people who attended. Lincoln Way Composite Squadron represented the USAF Civil Air Patrol, Illinois Wing. Six senior members and nine cadets provided Chaplin, flag raising and crowd control support. It was a bittersweet but
happy crowd that was very appreciative of the military participation by talking to the men and women that came out.

IL-337 Lincoln Way Cadets marching from flag ceremony

The Lincoln Way Squadrons’ Chaplin began with a dedication prayer. He honored the families attending whose loved one gave the ultimate sacrifice. The Marine unit posted the colors and passed the flags over to the Cadets who raised the colors. The Navy unit from Glenview unveiled the walls with thousands of honored names inscribed. A Marine Master Chief played Taps and the Army unit gave a 21-gun salute. The National anthem was played and representatives gave dedication speeches from the State of Illinois, the Illinois Army AG, family members, and the Illinois Motorcycle Freedom Run.

The names honored on the wall can be found at www.ilfreedomrun.org.