

**The First Annual 4th of July -
4S Ranch 5K Run/Walk**

How Many Flags?



Ethan, Lily, Eli and Andrea Hamilton

In Honor of Ethan Hamilton

Opinion By Ray Shay

I often pause when I see an American flag waving in the wind, affixed to a police or military uniform, or simply hanging outside someone's home. Just the sight of the flag connects me with my past and reminds me of America's promise. This year, on our nation's birthday, I am especially hopeful that I'll see hundreds of American flags during the 4S Ranch 4th of July 5K.

This event is dedicated to the memory of Ethan Hamilton, a 4S Ranch father who tragically passed away from acute leukemia last year on July 4th. Ethan was a father, community leader, and the Athletic Director of Point Loma Nazarene College.

In addition to honoring Ethan Hamilton, participants can honor heroes of all kinds, past and present, by sponsoring an American flag in honor of that person. These flags will be spread along the race course to help guide participants.

After the run, flag sponsors can remove and take their flag home. Military personnel and Boy Scouts will be available to assist and explain how to fold the flag and care for it.

When I first heard about the opportunity to sponsor American flags at a pre-race meeting, my mind drifted to my heroes and memories of the flag.

5k Race Committee



Tiffinie Harpster, Troy Shay, Brandy Hiel, Steve Harpster, Ray Shay, Alyson Coons, Andrea Hamilton, and Niki Lane

I knew I wanted to sponsor some flags, but the hard part was identifying how many. I have had the good fortune to have countless people I would consider heroes in my life.



USN - Richard M. and Lou Ann Shay

My father was a Naval Aviator who fought in two wars and our mom was a riveter at General Dynamics building war planes. Our mom raised all seven of us kids, and their love for each of us was undeniable.



US ARMY - Michael E. Shay

I will never forget wrestling with my brother Mike in his US Army uniform when he returned from his second tour in Vietnam. Mike, sorry, John and I would hide under your bed to scare you. You are a warrior who has served around the world, protecting America.



USN - Rick and Jennifer Shay

My brother Rick was an aviator like our father. He and his wife Jennifer served in countless locations around the planet, protecting America's interests worldwide.



Dan and Gretchen Barnett

Dan and Gretchen Barnett are trusted and loyal friends. The Barnetts, the Flores, and the Bowmans, along with countless other people, including the owners of MOR Furniture, have generously raised millions of dollars to provide equipment for the brave SDPD police officers who make up our SWAT Team.



USMC Sam and Pat Flores

Sam is a retired USMC veteran and a private business owner. He and Pat have given generously to many other causes, including SDPD SWAT. Sam also runs a worldwide company that ensures our warfighters are prepared to protect Americans anywhere in the world.



Barbara and Paul Bowman

They are close friends who are always there to help and have generously supported the SDPD SWAT Team and other causes. Barbara and Paul's kindness is palatable, and they have never given up trying to help me find my way back to religion.

As you can see from the above photographs, there has been no shortage of heroes in my life. I would like to highlight one more particular hero I will never forget. .



USMC - SDPD - Jerry Lee Hartless

Jerry Lee Hartless was a 23-year-old former marine who was my trainee at the San Diego Regional Police Academy.

Jerry was an incredible athlete with an infectious smile. It feels like yesterday when he excitedly introduced me to his wife, Shawn Dee, after he received his gold SDPD badge at the San Diego Police Academy graduation ceremony in May 1987.

Jerry's last comment was, "Officer Shay, I hope we can work in the same command someday! I recall responding, "That would be great, Jerry. I would like that!"

About seven months later, I was awakened by my ringing phone in the middle of the night, which is always a bad sign. A classmate and fellow police officer of Jerry's told me four words I will never forget, "Ray, Jerry's been shot."

As I drove to Mercy Hospital, I recalled how Jerry's police uniform was always pristine, his posture perfect, and his ability to snap a salute. He was a Marine, after all. More than that, he was funny and had an infectious smile that brought the other officers up around him.

As I walked through the emergency room door and into the trauma center, the looks on our fellow police officers' faces and that of the SDPD Command Staff told me all I needed to know. Jerry was dying. As I stepped into the ICU and saw Jerry being kept alive by machines, I met his young wife, Shawn Dee, for the second time.



She began sobbing as she told me how much jerry loved being a cop. "He has been so excited every day to go to work. Please, please, he has to make it." Saying I was so sorry sounded so hollow and inadequate.

Jerry was the eleventh San Diego Police Officer to be killed in the line of duty in the last eleven years. It was a different and violent time back then, but my love of our country, our flag, and what cops do has never faded.

I can still recall the feeling of wearing the white cotton gloves and holding the American flag taught above Jerry's casket as it was being ceremoniously folded before Chief of Police Bill Kolender knelt and handed it to Shawn Dee.

To this day, the "Jerry Lee Hartless Spirit Award" is presented to the recruit in every graduating police academy class who best exemplifies the professional attributes of a law enforcement officer.

Jerry and Ethan were taken way too early, but neither will ever be forgotten. I sincerely hope all the flags waving on America's birthday will inspire others to be more like Jerry, Ethan, and other heroes in and outside our military.

I never had the opportunity to meet Ethan Hamilton, but I wish I had. I suspect he and Jerry are similar types of men who would enjoy hanging around each other. I am not very religious anymore, but somewhere in the corner of my brain, I can imagine Ethan Hamilton and Jerry Lee Hartless meeting.



Ethan Hamilton

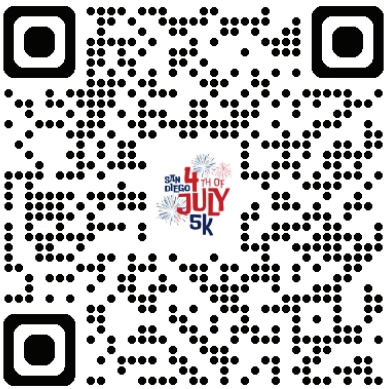
They would likely be sitting by a beautiful, crystal-clear lake near sunset surrounded by rolling green hills. Knowing Jerry, he would be drinking a tall, cold Karl Strauss amber ale, and I hear from Andrea that her husband Ethan was fond of Arnold Palmers.

I hope both of their feet are up and they are smiling as they wait patiently to be reunited with their loving families. After all, heroes like them put

their families, community, and country ahead of themselves and deserve nothing less.

Cheers,

RgSh



In the spirit of these heroes and many more whose stories go untold, please consider sponsoring a flag for this year's 4S Ranch 4th of July 5k.

Click on the link to the left for more information.

All proceeds from the 5K race and flag sponsorships will be used to provide sports scholarships to underprivileged kids through the not-for-profit Active Kids Alliance (See page 14).





★ In Honor of Ethan Hamilton ★

Friday, July 4th, 2025 @ 8am 5K
& Kids Fun Run @9:30am

4S RANCH SPORTS PARK
SUPPORTING ACTIVE KIDS ALLIANCE-GIVING KIDS
SCHOLARSHIPS TO PLAY SPORTS!





