

# Appreciation Certificate

TO THE FAMILY OF OUR HONORED WESTMINSTER HERO

**Martín De La Cruz, SSgt US Army AC WWII**

With Deepest Gratitude For the Sacrifice of SSgt De La Cruz. He enlisted on December 11, 1941. After many bombing missions, on Oct. 14, 1944, Martín's *B-24 Liberator* was shot down, and the crew of 10 was declared MIA, until Martín's body was recovered and brought to rest in Westminster. His easy-going style magnified his devotion to Country and to the Cause of Freedom. His Legacy and Spirit Lives on!

**SSgt De La Cruz's Distinguished Service is an Inspiration To All!**

***The United Mexican-American Veterans Association***

**Honoring the Past, Appreciating the Present and Inspiring the Future!**

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**Francisco J. Barragán CPA, CIA Commander**  
US Marines & CA Army National Guard

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**Antonio Méndez, WWII - US Army, Silver Star**

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**Frank Ramírez, Korea - US Army, Silver Star**

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**Ralph Colin, Vietnam - US Army, Bronze Star**

09/29/12



## SSgt DE LA CRUZ, MARTÍN P., U.S. Army Air Corps. WWII

Martín was the first of our six fallen heroes from Westminster to enter the armed forces -- four days after the attack on Pearl Harbor. On December 11<sup>th</sup> 1941, he raised his hand, took the oath and entered active military service in Los Angeles, California.

Martín was born in Buena Park, California on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1918. In time his family moved to Westminster, and he attended grammar schools there graduating from 17<sup>th</sup> Street School in 1932. After four years of study at Huntington Beach High School, he graduated in June, 1936. Martín had close knit family, six siblings and Mom, Marcelina and dad Pablo. His easy-going style, on the reserved and quiet side, he was nevertheless popular with his friends and enjoyed his youth in Westminster, first living on Main Street and later on Wyoming Street which is where he left from when he bid his family goodbye that December day.

Martín first joined the Army, but later requested and obtained Cadet status in the then Air Corps. His first training station in the AA Corps became the nearby SAA Base, a station he hoped would prepare him for eventual pilot training; that dream was not to materialize. The SAA Base is where his family visited on occasion; other stations ensued: Arizona, Hamilton, March, Fresno, among others, finally being assigned to the Aerial Gunnery School in Laredo, Texas where he qualified and graduated in December, 1943.

His overseas assignment was with the 22<sup>nd</sup> Bomber Group "The Red Raiders", 408<sup>th</sup> Squadron of the Fifth Air Force Command. After many bombing missions in the South Pacific Theatre as a tail gunner on a B-24 Liberator (more than 100 hrs.), in late 1943 or early 1944, Martín was promoted to SSgt. On 14 October, 1944 on a mission over Balikpapan, Borneo Martín's B-24 was shot down, and the entire crew of ten was declared Missing-in-Action and remained in that status until after the war when Martín's remains were recovered and brought back to Westminster, where he now rests at the Westminster memorial Park at the corner of Beach Blvd. and Hazard Street.