

South Shore residents take time to honor veterans

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Veterans on both sides of the South Shore were honored Friday for the time they spent serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Veterans Day tributes started at 11am Nov. 11 in South Lake Tahoe as the American Legion honored those who have served and those who continue to.

Patty Smith, whose son Tim died in 2008 fighting in Iraq, recited a moving poem – getting choked up reading the segment “some have fallen”.

In Stateline, the Tahoe-Douglas Rotary’s noon program was the annual recognition of vets.

Brian Williams, who emceed the event, said three words bind Rotary and the military – “service above self” –the Rotary mantra.



Ben Lehman and Frank Reynolds

Six World War II veterans were among the attendees. Most of the tables in the room at MontBleu had at least one vet – some guests, some Rotarians. They ranged from infantry to rear admiral.

Ben Lehman, the retired rear admiral, dressed in his Navy blues looked like he could command a ship today. He joined the military just after the invasion of Pearl Harbor.

As a 20-year-old with an engineering background, he was told by his bosses he would be well suited to design ships. They sent him to MIT, gave him a four-month apprenticeship and said if things didn't work out, there was always the South Pacific.

Some made the military a career. There were those who enlisted, and others who were drafted. Some saw combat, others did not.

But a certain pride emanated from each man who spoke – a selflessness, a commitment to those they served with, and to a country that didn't and still doesn't always understand the wars and conflicts they were involved in.

Bob Albertazzi, who works for South Lake Tahoe, was a guest Friday. Always one who speaks with a deference of respect to others, he didn't elaborate on his Army years (1968-93) that included stints in Vietnam and the Gulf War.

Frank Reynolds never thought he'd make a career out of the Marine Corps. He is still involved as a civilian as the commandant for the Marine Corps League in Carson City.

A recruiter in May 1969 told him he would be going to Paris for boot camp. He was giddy. Parris Island, South Carolina – is what the recruiter meant. Reynolds finagled his way to San Diego instead.

He put in 20 years. Thought he was done. Then he got a call that he been activated for Operation Desert Storm. Reynolds said he spent most of his time roping goats, having snared one camel, too.

One vet had been in the current conflict in the Mideast, but didn't say anymore.

Fittingly, bagpiper Sean Cummings broke up the event with various military songs – offering a bit of levity, while keeping with the solemn tone of the afternoon.