

No uniform necessary to be affected by military service

By Kathryn Reed

It was 1942 and Irene Morris was going to junior college in Southern California. With books in hand, a woman about her mom's age told her she should be helping her country. The woman talked to Morris about the plant where parachutes were being made. As someone who had been sewing since she was 10, Morris knew she would be qualified.

Her first day on the job was that next day.

Morris made \$1 an hour to look for errors in the stitching of those parachutes. By the time the war was over three years later, she was making \$1.25 and had \$800 in a savings account.



Scout Pack 592 members Zane Smith, from left, Noah Lyle and Jayden Degregory present the colors Nov. 8 at the start of the Soroptimist meeting. Photo/Kathryn Reed

From grandparents born in the United States who were sent to internment camps to a father-in-law being put on the front

line ahead of his Caucasian comrades because of his Mexican heritage to having a husband who jumped out of planes in Afghanistan to render aid to injured soldiers, the women of South Lake Tahoe are well aware of the meaning of Veterans Day.

The Nov. 8 Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra meeting was all about veterans.

Morris and Sue Jackson were the guest speakers. Jackson spoke of how she got interested in the military when she joined the Civil Air Patrol in high school in Woodland. Sitting on the tallest building – all two stories – they used binoculars to look for planes and logged all they saw by hand in a notebook.

While in nursing school at CSU Chico, she joined the Navy because the military would help with tuition. She was enlisted from 1958-62, spending two years in San Diego, but no time abroad.

Then everyone in the room decided to tell their stories about how they have a connection to the military – most are through a male relative. Reflections brought forth tears, quivering voices and a sense of camaraderie in this impromptu morning of sharing.

Laurie Brazil's brother wanted to be a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War. It requires going before a tribunal of sorts. Their father had been an officer in the military. He had to speak at the hearing – saying he didn't believe in what his son was doing, but believed it was the correct thing for his son.

"It was heart-wrenching for everyone," Brazil said.

One woman's husband was on an aircraft carrier during the Korean War. He was supposed to catch the planes as they landed. It was tough when the planes that took-off never returned.

A half-brother was in the Marines during World War II. No word for months. Then suddenly he showed up at the front door for a two-week stay before returning to places unknown.

Growing up in Elko, going to Vietnam was the norm. One woman dated a boy who went to war.

"I don't know what happened to him. I never heard from him again," she said with sorrow in her voice.

Trudy Mills was a Navy pilot's wife.

"I remember the Navy chaplain's car would come in. Everyone would hold their breath to see where it would go," she recalled.