

Women recount life in the military



Staff Sgt. Bethany Brown is administered the Army oath Nov. 13 by Capt. David Robinson. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

For those who say the military is no place for a woman, they have not met Bethany Brown, Poli Policarpio, Sheryll Valencia or Christina Frolich.

These women on Nov. 13 shared with Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra some of their experiences.

Brown is so dedicated that on Thursday she retook the Army oath, which is done each time a soldier signs up for another stint. Right now she is stationed in Carson City.

“She is the best non-commissioned officer I have in my company,” Capt. David Robinson said.

Brown, who like the other women honored on this Veterans Day week, has been deployed multiple times. This time around she will be a recruiter for the Army.

She spoke about how when she was in Afghanistan a bomb went off about 10 feet from her. Most of the impact was to her

midsection and hips.

"We walked away. That was huge because a lot didn't walk away," Brown said.

But the impact of war is often brought home.

"Twenty-two veterans commit suicide every day," Brown said. "No veteran should take their life because they have already given so much."

She spoke of a young woman at Fort Bragg who last weekend took her life. She was one of the best soldiers and no one saw it coming.

For Valencia, she got choked up when she spoke of the reasons to serve – of how it meant she was ultimately helping to protect her family and friends, as well as everyone else in the United States. In Iraq she worked 16 to 20 hour days. On occasion there would be a half or full day off.

Frolich joined when she was 20. Via a computer she was piloting unmanned aerial vehicles that were the size of a car. In Afghanistan they didn't work well because of the mountains. Several of the half million dollar UAVs crashed.

Then they were used in Iraq. They were flying so slow they were shot out of the air, she said.

On her third deployment to South Korea she was injured while jumping out of a C130 with the Airborne. They were 800 feet above ground – which is low – and she ran into someone in the air.

"A female officer found me. I didn't know where I was," Frolich said. It's rare for officers to have anything to do with enlistees. "There's a lot of amazing women in the military. We take care of each other."