Oregon Dignitaries grace NCOA’s Annual Christmas Event

Flo C. Blake

Approximately thirty Veterans and their family members arrived from towns in and surrounding the Rogue Valley. They ranged in age from “offspring of World War I Vets,” to “youthful descendants of currently active military personnel.”

Two familiar faces among those gracing the audience - Navy Vet/NCOA (Non-Commissioned Officer’s Association) member, Oregon St. Rep. Sal Esquivel, and wife Jan.

At 1:30 p.m. on December 10, Rogue Chapter Chairman Terry Haines welcomed the loyal crowd at Medford’s Black Bear Diner. Haines then provided a brief recap highlighting several impressive accomplishments for 2016. “We started the year with 138 members,” he said. “Through dedicated hard work and recruitment efforts, we now have 185.”

He mentioned numerous good deeds the Association has performed in and for the Community. Among these—the summer jet boat ride, and other outings for Gold Star Families. He spoke of generous care package donations from kind readers who responded to an appeal published months ago through the Press.

“We’ve also sent money-saving coupons overseas to extremely grateful service members’ families,” he added. “Bud Cordes and I staffed a booth at the Veterans Day Parade. I also got to ride in a 2016 Navy Blue Corvette that day.”

 “I had opportunity to see the largest flag in Oregon (40’ by 60’) being raised in Grants Pass,” Haines continued.

 “On our website www.ncoarogue.org you can view a video of raising that flag, plus an interesting background story of “The Star Spangled Banner,” added NCOA’s Webmaster, David Haines (Chairman Terry’s brother.)

Terry Haines praised NCOA members Al Mullis, Don Skinner, Bud Cordes, and Jack Schock who worked a dozen years building the Vet’s Park in Medford.

 One of many impending projects involves bringing a replica of the Vietnam War Memorial to US Cellular Park. “It’s 80% the size of the original one,” David Haines said.

Following lunch, a 50-50 fundraiser yielded $63 for the winner, Central Point resident Paula Vincent. She instantly donated half her prize money to NCOA’s treasury.

Rep. Esquivel expressed dismay over what occurred in Salem following successful passage of Measure 96 last month. “The voters approved setting aside 1.5% of Oregon Lottery revenues for Veterans’ needs. Then (a high-ranking Oregon politician) proposed cutting the State’s Veterans’ budget by a similar percent, so we don’t get any increased help at all.”

“This was reported in ‘The Oregonian,’” noted Jan Esquivel.

“Voters have rights to inform their elected officials about constituents’ thoughts (in regard to vetoing these injustices.) “Sal Esquivel then commented. “The person who suggested those Veterans’ cuts had first approved pay increases for State Administrators despite deep budget deficits.”

Toward meeting’s end, Alice Thomsen, Sr. Vice CDR, Service Officer of Jackson County Disabled Veterans #8, stated she seeks to establish a new DAV Auxiliary. “It’s to encourage Veterans’ help agencies to work together,” she said. Thomsen believes when like-minded persons join forces, with greater numbers they’ll more likely accomplish mutual goals.