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SLIDE SHOW ^

Archive photos from a presentation by Rich Herpers and Rod Oden. Event photos by Gayle Anderson.

WWII Veteran Leads the Charge at Metro SGV Traditional Veteran's Day Celebration

(Nov. 10, 2009) Metro employees, many veterans among them, along with families and friends, presented a spirited and patriotic gathering at the traditional Veteran's Day celebration, held Nov. 10 at Metro San Gabriel Valley.

The hour-long ceremony included special guest speakers and a birthday party for the United States Marine Corps, which celebrated its 234th birthday on Nov. 10.

Hailed by Metro San Gabriel Valley GM Jack Gabig as the "mover and shaker" behind the annual San Gabriel Valley Division's Veteran's Day event, Maintenance Manager John McBryan, a Marine Corps veteran who served in Viet Nam, welcomed all veterans in the spirit of the day.

The purpose of the event, said McBryan, is to "respect and honor all veterans, some of those who have lost their lives."

Ceremony highlights

McBryan handed out red poppy pins, traditionally used to honor veterans killed in war. The tradition became standard during World War I, said McBryan. Wearing the poppy, he said, symbolizes the fields of poppies that grew over the graves of Napoleon's soldiers.

Speakers included 86-year-old WWII veteran Robert Torres, Sr., a member of the U.S. Army Air Corps who served in the South Pacific. He was accompanied to the event by his two sons, who both work for Metro. Robert Torres, Corporate Safety, Safety systems manager, and Carl Torres, a transportation planning manager located at Metro San Gabriel Valley, stood side by side with their father.

Torres Sr. had many tales of the Pacific to share, remembering harrowing photographic missions in the bombardier's pit aiming his hefty camera, instead of a gun, at enemy territory.

One year at Christmas time, he recalls, he was getting comfortable in his tent, which he had fortified with a table that encircled the tent. The table had become a popular spot for soldiers to sit and write letters or read.

Toyko Rose had promised a surprise for the troops, he said, and sure enough, at midnight the camp was attacked by fighter planes. Everybody ducked into the fox holes except Torres, who'd rather die with his boots on than get in a hole with a bunch of spiders and other creepy crawlies. But as he dived into his tent, he cut his lip on the table. When the attack was over, he was the only one injured.

Metro SGV GM Jack Gabig and East Valley Maintenance Division Manager Sal Llamas, a veteran who served with the U.S. Marines in Iraq, also gave patriotic remarks. "I was at Division 7 when I was called up to service," said Llamas, "and the Metro family was so caring to my wife and family and me with support and letters. I can't thank you enough."

Invited and heartily encouraged by McBryan, U.S. Army and Army Reserve Command Sgt. Major Rivers Jacques and U.S. Army Capt. Jesus Rivera stepped up to the podium in fine form.

A highlight of the event was the singing of the National Anthem by Casey Faust, daughter of Metro SGV Administration and Financial Service Manager Paula Faust.

-- from Gayle Anderson