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Colton Leaders Honored as Veterans of the Year



Photo Courtesy of: Gary Grossich

Cheryl Brown's Veterans of the Year. From left: Colton City Councilman David Toro and Mayor Pro Tem Frank Navarro salute the audience.





2 Photos

By Kayla Sheldon Staff Writer 2015-06-15 ● 09:12:14

Colton's own Mayor Pro Tem Frank Navarro and Council Member David Toro were recently chosen by Assembly Member Cheryl

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Brown as Veterans of the Year. Both of these decorated veterans will be flown up to Sacramento on Wednesday, June 24, to be officially honored.

Retired Master Sergeant Frank Navarro was raised in Douglas, Ariz. After graduating high school in 1964, in the same year, he enlisted into the Army and has been dedicated to his career ever since.

After serving active duty, he served in the Army Reserves, accumulating a total 32 years of service, from 1964 to 1996.

Throughout his military career, Navarro held several duties in the Army, including assistant director of enlisted instructor and his instrumental role at the 6220th United States Army Reserve (USAR) School, which was the one school in charge of training throughout all of Southern California.

Navarro began his career with the Army Reserves in 1965, where he made California his home and where he currently serves the city of Colton as its mayor pro tem. His community involvement doesn't stop there, as he invested eight years into the American Legion and six years into the Sons of American Legion, as well.

Councilman David Toro has a story slightly different from his friend and fellow Veteran of the Year Navarro. Toro was born in Boston, Mass. but moved to Gary, Ind. when he was just 8 years old. As a teenager, he joined the early entry program and enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1978. Nearly two weeks after the 17-year-old's high school graduation, Toro was off to boot camp to start his four-year career with the Marine Corps.

Throughout his service, Toro was responsible for many duties, including maintenance administration, keeping records of pilot fighter airplanes, and much more.

He was also a part of the VMFA-323 air squadron, also known as the "Death Rattlers," which flew F-4 Phantoms. "Serving was just a part of my life. I came from a neighborhood that didn't have much to offer," Toro explained. "Joining the military was definitely the best future for me."

He added that his service taught him a myriad of skills he employs today, like discipline, responsibility, structure, teamwork,

and, especially at his young age at that time, to be independent.

After his service, Toro stayed in California, where he now serves as a councilman for the city of Colton.

"It's really a great honor to be recognized for something that you didn't intend to be recognized for," Toro explained. "It's a really good feeling."

When Navarro received the phone call that he was nominated to be Veteran of the Year, he chuckled as he explained he nearly fell out of his chair. "It was not something I expected," he said. "It's such an honor."

"[Serving] made me who I am today," explained Navarro. "I gained a lot of experience, knowledge, discipline, character, how to be an effective trainer," he said as the list of went on. "I learned a lot."

At a Memorial Day event in Colton on May 25, Assembly Member Cheryl Brown, without either veterans knowing, announced her chosen Veterans of the Year as they stood up and saluted the audience, who congratulated the honored veterans with a round of applause.

Navarro added, "I'm very grateful to Brown."















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