



Brig. General **Fred Lopez** and **Anne Lopez**



Doug Crawford, Area President of Navy League and **Karen Crawford**, National VP of Navy League



Anya Langlais; Capt. **Michael Argo**, retired Navy SEAL Commander; **Margaret Argo**; and **Jill Mac-Donald**

Pierre Claeysens Veterans Museum & Library:

Military Ball 2011

By **Jeanette Casillas** / CASA

SANTA BARBARANS REVELED in a weekend full of pomp and circumstance for Veterans Day last month. The festivities started with a Veterans parade and free concert on Friday and carried on to the weekend with the 16th annual Santa Barbara Military Ball where over 700 men and women of the armed forces gathered to honor another member of The Greatest Generation, Silvio Di Loreto.

"It is critical to carry out the legacy of Pierre Claeysens through the Military Ball in order to constantly remind people that our military deserve to be honored, assisted when

possible, and recognized," shared Hazel Blankenship of the Pierre Claeysens Veterans Museum & Library. "No one agrees with war, but we must support the men and women who are at will to answer the call of their country."

The Military Ball was initiated in 1997 by Pierre Claeysens who wanted to honor and remember

veterans in the Santa Barbara area. Both veterans and active duty personnel dressed in military uniform proudly represent their respective branch of the military at the annual ball held at Fess Parker's DoubleTree Resort.

The greatest honor of the night went to Silvio Di Loreto, who served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. After WWII, Di Loreto settled in Santa Barbara and ran Sunset Company Realtors for more than 40 years and served on the boards of more than 20 nonprofit organizations, receiving numerous community awards.

The evening's program included a presentation of colors, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the Star Spangled Banner. After a gourmet dinner, the Keynote Speaker, Captain Michael Argo, a retired Navy SEAL Commander, took the stage and challenged the audience to do 20 push-ups. Over 150 attendees hit the floor to do so.

"This year's event was unique because we've never used the Ball as a fundraiser but, rather, as a tribute to Veterans' and Active Duty personnel from all branches of the Services," shared Blankenship. "However, we did ask for contributions this year on behalf of Navy SEAL widow Anya Langlais and her two boys, Gabe and Jack."

Santa Barbara native, 44-year-old Master Chief Petty Officer Louis Langlais was a Navy SEAL who



Bill Brown, SB County Sheriff-Coroner and **Hazel Blankenship**, Pierre Claeysens Veterans Museum & Library



Salud Carbajal, First District Supervisor; Greatest Generation Award recipient and World War II veteran **Silvio Di Loreto**; and **John Blankenship**, Pierre Claeysens Veterans Museum & Library



Denny Sanford, Congresswoman **Lois Capps**, and **Malin Burham**



Chuck Slosser and **Stephanie Slosser**

was among the 30 Americans killed when their helicopter was shot down by a rocket-fired grenade on August 6th in Afghanistan.

The Pierre Claeysens Veterans Museum & Library Foundation was founded in 2003 by John Blankenship with a \$1 million gift from Pierre Claeysens. With his wife Hazel, John has assembled an Executive Board and an Advisory Board that will build a comprehensive museum and library here in Santa Barbara celebrating the "Greatest Generation."

For more information call 966-1660 or visit www.pierreclaeysensveteransmuseum.com.

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