



Reading Eagle: Tim Leedy | Heather Bittenbender, 74, whose late husband Hal served in the Air Force, displays the flag during a special ceremony honoring women whose late husbands served in the armed forces. Ten women who reside at The Heritage of Green Hills retirement village received encased American flags at a luncheon organized by The Heritage Veterans Association.



Courtesy: Paul Laincz | Ten women whose late husbands served in World War II and the Korean War released balloons in honor of service men and women at The Heritage of Green Hills retirement village, where they are residents. The Heritage Veterans Association honored the women with American flags at a luncheon.



Reading Eagle: Ron Devlin | Women whose departed husbands served in the military in World War II and Korea were honored at The Heritage of Green Hills retirement village, where they are residents. From left rear: Marji Clark, Shirley Baker, Heather Bittenbender, Shirley Gundrum, Ruth Ann Krug, Barbara Clayton, Edna Herb. Front from left: Ginny Voight (in red), LaVerne Wohlbruck and Dyla Morrissey.



Reading Eagle: Tim Leedy | Ginny Voight, whose late husband, David, served in the Army during World War II, is presented an encased American flag by Paul Laincz (holding flag) at a special ceremony at The Heritage of Green Hills, a Cumru Township retirement village. The Heritage Veterans Association honored ten women whose late husbands served in World War II or the Korean War. Each woman was presented with an encased American flag, the type given at military funerals.

Widows of veterans honored at Heritage of Green Hills

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By [Ron Devlin](#)

When Air Force veteran Hal Bittenbender died in 2012, his widow did not receive the customary American flag given at military funerals.

At a special ceremony Friday at The Heritage of Green Hills, 74-year-old Heather Bittenbender was presented with a triangular encased flag, its stars pointed toward the heavens.

"On behalf of the president of the United States, the Department of the Air Force and a grateful nation, we offer this flag for the faithful and dedicated service of Hal Bittenbender," David Morton, president of The Heritage Veterans Association, said in presenting the flag.

Heather Bittenbender explained that her husband's body had been donated to science, and there had been no traditional military funeral.

"Hal would have been so proud and happy," she said of her husband, former owner of a NAPA auto store in Shillington. "This has been such a beautiful day, I'm ecstatic."

In addition to Heather Bittenbender, the veterans association presented American flags to nine other women whose late husbands had served in the nation's armed forces.

The women are residents of The Heritage, and their husbands served in the Army or Navy during World War II or the Korean War.

The program, held during a luncheon, was steeped in patriotism and military ritual.

The 65 or so people present sang the song of the respective armed services as veterans presented the service flags, mounted on platforms in front of the room.

Bittenbender carried the American flag into the room, and the gathering sang

"Stars and Stripes Forever."

Veterans Rodney Focht, Harvey Griffith and Paul Laincz demonstrated how the flag is folded military style. Morton, 85, an Air Force veteran, explained the meaning of each of the 13 folds.

The ninth fold was particularly poignant, given the occasion.

"It's dedicated to women and mothers, for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great has been molded," Morton said.

Ruth Ann Krug, whose husband James served with the Army Security Agency during the Korean War, was touched by the solemnity of the service.

"James would have been so impressed and appreciative," said Krug, 85, a retired vocational technical school food service worker.

Cheryl Anderson, The Heritage activities director, said the camaraderie of the program was typical of the closeness of those in the Cumru Township retirement village.

"Our residents leave their neighborhoods and form a new community," she said. "They're close-knit, active and friendly."

Honored, in addition to those already mentioned, were: Barbara Clayton, wife of William, Navy; LaVerne Wohlbruck, wife of Martin, Navy; Ginny Voight, wife of David, Army; Marji Clark, wife of Robert, Navy; Shirley Gundrum, wife of Carl, Navy; Shirley Baker, wife of David, Navy; and Dyla Morrissey, wife of William, Army.

After lunch, the women released red, white and blue balloons in honor of service men and women past, present and future.

The Heritage Veterans Association, which has about 50 members, was formed in 2012 to honor servicemen and women.

Since its formation, Morton said, 22 members have died.

Former Kenhorst resident Griffith, 83, chaplain, struck a bell as Morton read the names of each departed serviceman.

In the tranquility of the moment, Edna Herb's thoughts were of her late husband.

During World War II, Otis Herb built airfields on Midway Island with the Navy Seabees. It left an indelible imprint, and for the rest of his life he was proud to have served his country.

Otis and Edna corresponded for 2 1/2 years while he was in the South Pacific. When he came home in his Navy blues, Edna, with her mother's permission, threw her arms around him and kissed her sailor sweetheart. They were married in June 1947 and had been together 65 years when he died in 2012.

Separation, Edna confided, is something you never get used to.

"Otis is looking down on us and smiling," she said, her voice tinged with emotion.