



JAY ALDRICH/SPECIAL TO THE R-C



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North American Basque Organization President Jean Flesher talks about a Basque monument on Friday in Heritage Park as Chairwoman Mayi Petracek listens. At left, loud trumpets and a drummer preceded the children in the Mendiko Euskaldun Cluba, then the ladies from the Reno Club, wearing black with grey dresses, came in behind on Saturday in the CVIC Hall.

Basque weekend opens with monument ceremony

by Kurt Hildebrand

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People were lined up in front of the JT Basque Bar & Dining Room for Basque breakfast on Sunday morning.

The breakfast was the culmination of the annual Mendiko Euskaldun Cluba's picnic weekend, celebrating all things Basque that opened on Friday in Heritage Park with a ceremony observing the effort to build a monument to Basque service in

World War II.

North American Basque Organization President Jean Flesher said the effort started out as a research project.

"One of the dreams was to build a monument somewhere to honor all these Basque Americans who fought for the U.S. armed forces in World War II," Flesher said. "We're lucky to be part of the Basque culture and very, very proud of that and also proud to be Americans."

He said Gardnerville is a

center of Basque population and a lot of Basque came here to work in the sheep industry and in the restaurants.

"My mother first came here and worked here in Gardnerville, so it has a special meaning to myself," he said.

Chairwoman Mayi Petracek thanked the town.

"Today, we dedicate more than a location," she said. "We dedicate ourselves to remembering a remarkable generation."

More than 2,160 Basque men

and women served in World War II.

"Every one of them deserves to be remembered and honored with this memorial," Petracek said.

Town Board Chairman Jim Park spoke on behalf of the town.

"The Basque community has long been a cornerstone of life in Carson Valley," he said. "Through hard work, perseverance and an unwavering commitment to family and community, Basque men and women helped build ranches,

tended sheep in the Sierra, strengthened the economy and character of this Valley."

A presentation of a plaque proclaiming Gardnerville a sister city with Ortaize in Euskal Herria, also known as Osses, France was conducted Friday night.

Fundraising is underway for the memorial, which is located in Heritage Park. Visit nabasque.eus/wwii_memorial.html to find out how to donate. The organization's tax ID number is 82-0489192.