

Rossmoor veteran interviewed for students' oral history project

By ASHER KLEIN

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SANTA ANA – Three-war veteran Jim Crismon, of Rossmoor sat across a table from three high school students at the Fantastic Cafe on Friday, spending an hour telling them about his time in the Pacific Theater, Korea and Vietnam and talking so much that he barely touched his bacon or hash.

The food was on the house, provided by [café owner Demetrius Harakas, which he's done for a veteran every Friday for the last six months](#). But the high schoolers were new to the early lunch, there to begin a project collecting veterans' stories to liven up the history they're learning in school.

"There's a huge need for first-hand stories to be taught in the schools because we find it's so much easier to connect to" than lectures, Fountain Valley High School senior Lindsey Roberts said.

Roberts and her classmates Erica Davis and Tue Duong are starting a blog about the veterans Harakas invites to lunch each week, which they learned about because Roberts and Harakas are neighbors. The blog, called Breakfast With Champions, fulfills an English project where they were assigned to fill a need in the community, Roberts said.

The team will conduct video interviews of up to seven veterans, they said, and include their experiences talking to them.

Davis said it's especially important that they speak with World War II veterans like Crismon, 90, because they're passing away quickly.

"We want to be able to hear their stories while they're around," Davis said.

Crismon was a good choice. The former Navy hospital corpsman has 21 medals from 24 years in the service, from 1942 to 1966, ending up as a Navy hospital administrator with a master chief hospital corpsman rank.

He was recently called "living history" by Brig. Gen. Keith Jones of California's 40th Infantry Division at a function in Los Alamitos for bandaging up legendary Marines commander Chesty Puller's fifth or sixth wound.

He also regularly speaks to classes about his experiences in the service "to tell them how important the flag is and, most important, patriotism is," Crismon said.

"Mostly the boys want to know how many people I killed," he added.

At the end of their lunch, Crismon pulled on his white cap and gloves for pictures, than thanked the bloggers “for making me look good.”

The students will begin updating their blog over the Thanksgiving break, they said. Visit it at breakfastwithchampions.wordpress.com/about

Contact the writer: 714-796-2390 or aklein@ocregister.com

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