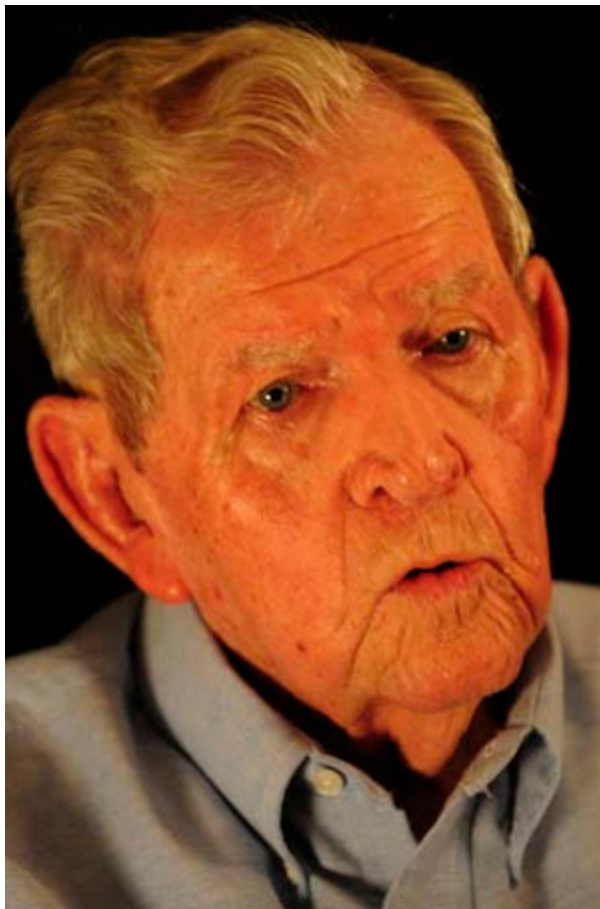


Recording effort saves war stories

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Harvey Greenhaw never talked much about his Navy experiences in the Pacific during World War II.



World War II veteran Harvey Greenhaw of Athens, who served on the USS Thatcher in the Pacific, is interviewed recently as part of the Witness to War project.

Few had ever heard Greenhaw describe his vivid memories about seeing his ship attacked by Japanese kamikaze pilots, about sleeping under a rack of torpedoes.

The years since the war grew into decades, and Greenhaw talked only a little about his experiences to family and friends, but now his memories are recorded for posterity, thanks to an Atlanta-based organization called Witness to War.

Greenhaw told a Witness to War interviewer that his wife wrote to him every single day during the war - and just how lucky he was to come back alive.

He lost his best friend, who just happened to be in the same communications room Greenhaw had run out of minutes before a Japanese kamikaze pilot crashed into their destroyer, the USS Thatcher.

Other times, the sailors searched for American pilots who had to ditch their planes at sea, said Greenhaw, a native of Athens, Ala., who retired to Athens, Ga., in 1987 with his wife of 69 years now.

"Going out to pick up aviators that were down was quite an experience," he said. "They were so glad to see you. They always tried to hug our necks when we picked them out of the water."

The group sent interviewer Emily Carley to Campus View Church of Christ in Athens last week to interview Greenhaw and five other World War II veterans, recording their battle accounts on video to add to the group's growing archive of veterans' stories.

"It's a good thing they're doing," Greenhaw said after the interview. "At least they'll know what war is like."

Witness to War Foundation founder Tom Beaty wants to get as many stories like Greenhaw's recorded as he can before it's too late, he said.

Even the youngest of the World War II veterans are now 84, and they're passing away quickly, said Beaty, an Atlanta entrepreneur who began recording veterans' stories nearly a decade ago.

He's spent \$140,000 of his own money on the effort, said Beaty, founder of the Insight Sourcing Group consulting firm in Norcross. But with the help of employees like Carley and volunteers, Beaty also has collected the stories of nearly 350 veterans over the past eight years.

In 2006, he began posting the video stories on a website he maintains, www.witness-to-war.org, along with veterans' memoirs and photographs submitted by the veterans and their families.

Now the foundation is trying to raise money to expand its efforts - to get as many veterans as possible on tape before it's too late.

Beaty hopes Witness for War can interview 1,000 veterans by the end of 2011 - more if they can get financial help to hire more editors and other full-time staff, Beaty said.

"There's a lot of veterans who have never told their stories, and if we don't record them, they're going to be lost," Carley said.

Another Navy veteran, Edward Sewell, also shared memories that remain vivid after more than six decades. Like Greenhaw, Sewell saw Japanese kamikaze attacks, when pilots would intentionally crash their planes into ships.

"We were scared to death of them," he said. "There was death everywhere. We lost a lot of people."

A Campus View member, Rod Davis, invited Witness to War to interview Athens veterans after he read a newspaper article about the group last January, he said.

"I knew there were still a good number around here who had a story that needed to be told," Davis said.

Beaty, a native of Charlotte, N.C., said listening to the stories has changed him.

"It makes me think about living well and living a healthy life," he said - the healthiest veterans he's interviewed are generally the most mentally engaged.

Most of the soldiers who've told their stories are World War II veterans, but Beaty also is recording the recollections of veterans of the Korean War, the Vietnam War and other wars, he said.

Anyone in Athens or surrounding counties who would like to tell his story, or knows of veterans who might be willing, can call Davis at (706) 549-2679.

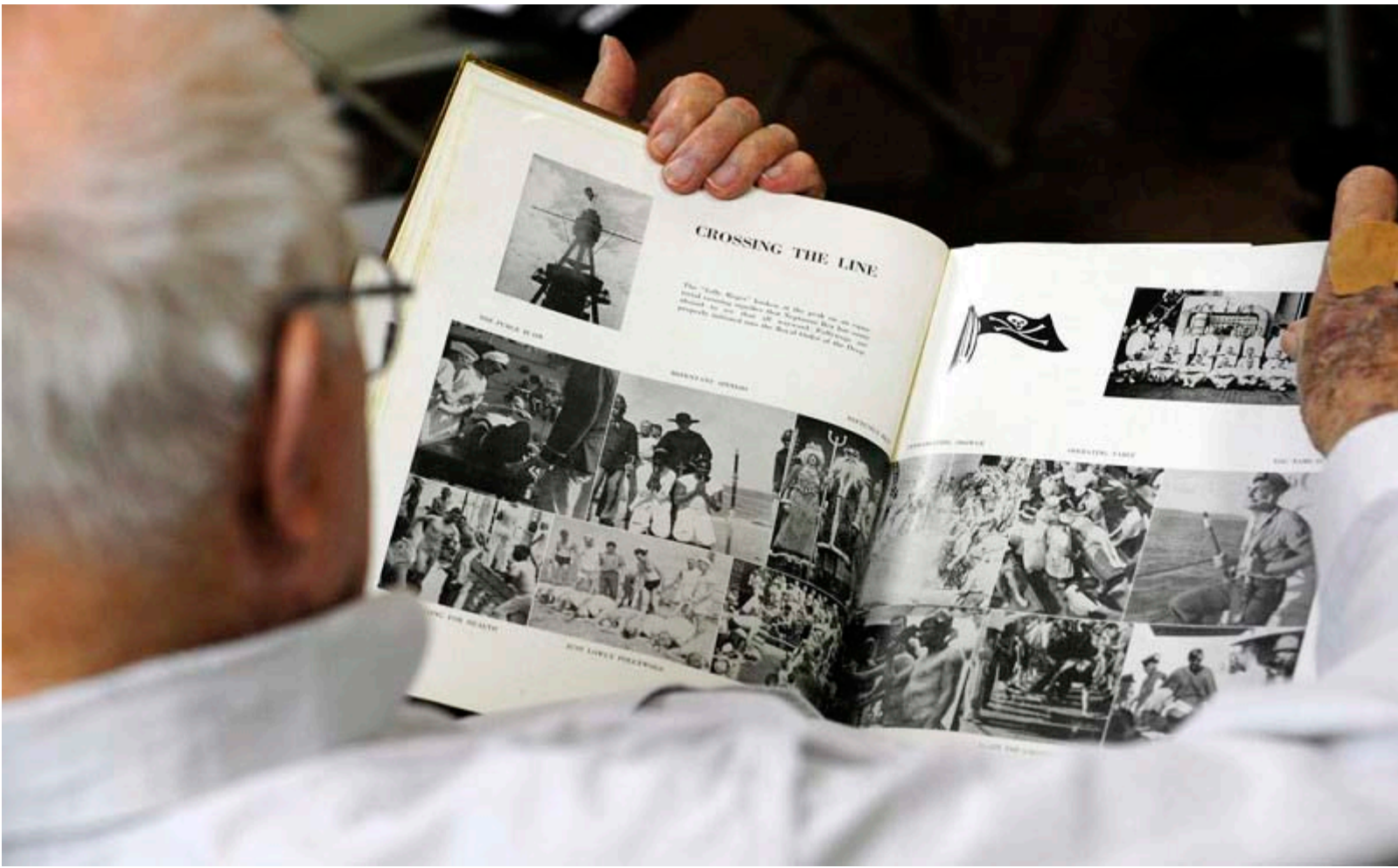
Veterans, families and friends, or anyone interested in helping financially or otherwise can also call Witness to War at (770) 481-3018.

"It really puts the stress I face of being an entrepreneur and starting a business from scratch in perspective," Beaty said. "It helped me learn what real stress was. No one was trying to kill me. It was really cathartic in that sense."

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World War II veteran Harvey Greenhaw, who served on the USS Thatcher in the Pacific, is interviewed recently as part of the Witness to War project





World War II veteran Edward Sewell looks through a scrapbook.