

# Veterans recording war stories for posterity

## RSVP coordinates big project

By Celia Green

THE LAND PARK NEWS

**T**he veterans pulled up in a bus, ready to tell their stories and make their place in history.

The eight men and one woman were from Vacaville and had traveled to Sacramento to participate in the Veteran's History Project, sponsored by RSVP, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

"I have a lot of military in my family. My grandson is an Iraqi vet who's been over there twice. This project is very close to my heart," says Gail Hoberman, a senior volunteer who is heading up this project.

"This project" is making videotaped records from veterans of all ages and all wars, from privates



*World War II veteran James O'Meara, 85, waits as interviewer John Nesbitt prepares video equipment.*

*Photo by Celia Green*

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# Vets

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to generals, which will be archived in the Library of Congress and made available to the public. Select interviews will be posted on the Internet, available to people worldwide.

Volunteers conduct all interviews – the only costs involved are for video cameras and tapes. The costs are covered by donations and a small grant from RSVP. RSVP began the Veteran's History Project in 2003. Others are being done throughout the country, but the Sacramento project is the only one in California.

James O'Meara was one of the veterans who came to Sacramento to tell of his experiences in the Navy. He served as a second-class electrician in Pearl Harbor from 1943 to 1946. Since then he has contributed to three books about World War II.

Now age 85, O'Meara is happy to share his stories. About the project he says, "It's wonderful. It's fun. I can't say enough about it. Old vets don't talk well to non-vets. It can be boring."

Each interview is one hour in length and the format is simply a camera aimed on the vets as they talk. The veterans are prompted by general questions by the interviewer, but are free to tell stories as they remember.

Frances Thorp is the one woman in this group who told her stories. She entered the military in 1937 and retired as a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force. Her first assignment, at age 21, was as a personal nurse to Gen. John ~~Bradley~~ *PERSHING* when he was hospitalized at Walter Reed Hospital.

"The Army was the only thing I could be in – even the WACs hadn't been established at that time," Thorp said.

The Sacramento RSVP was established 36 years ago, one of the first in the country, according to Director Laureen Anderson. The program is for adults age 55 and older who volunteer to spend between four and 40 hours a week on projects that benefit their communities.

Aside from the Veteran's History Project, RSVP runs a Foster Grandparent program, disaster readiness, environmental and education programs. The county sponsors RSVP, and its only paid employee is Anderson.

"It works well for us because of the volunteers and we have the space," Anderson said about the veteran history project. "That's how we're supporting the troops."

*Veterans from all wars and all branches of the military are encouraged to record their experiences. To be interviewed or if you have documents, diaries, maps or letters to share, please contact the RSVP Veterans History Project at 875-4460, or go to the website at <http://www.dhweb.saccounty.net/Veterans/veteranshistoryproject.htm>.*



A nighttime photograph of the U.S. Capitol dome, illuminated with warm yellow lights. To the left, the Statue of Liberty is also lit up. The sky is dark, filled with numerous bright, streaking fireworks exploding in various directions. The text is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

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w/ Ruth Anderson, interviewer



Harriet Papp & Merilys Brown



Rose Miller



Dorothy Errair  
President, WW II Flight Nurse Association




Agnes Flaherty



Frances Thorp



Gene Eisenhower



Fran Thorp  
10-6-2001

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