

World War II vets share their stories at Northridge Village

Autor Administrator

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At 100 and 95 years old, respectively, Ranney Leek and Richard "Dick" Munsen admit that their memories are a little fuzzy at times, but one would have never noticed Friday afternoon as both men spoke to a group of around 30 neighbors, friends and family at Northridge Village about their experiences during World War II.

Both men are among a dwindling number of World War II veterans still alive to tell their stories of the war that began in 1939 and ended in 1945. They were in the United States Army, are both lifelong Iowans and current residents of Northridge, where their stories of bravery, heroism, and tragedy seemed to strike a chord with everyone in attendance. As a motorcycle messenger tasked with delivering from Army headquarters to the front lines in France, Leek talked about the dangers he faced riding by himself, sometimes behind enemy lines. "I did anything they asked me to do, but my main job was delivering messages," Leek said. "That was the most dangerous job I could be in, and still, I lived through it." Originally from Kossuth County, Leek was drafted into the Army in 1941 when he was 24 years old. From there, the Army took him across the United States, Great Britain, North Africa, Italy and France. In addition to serving as a motorcycle messenger, as a member of the 36th Engineer Division, Leek's duties also consisted of aiding in the construction of bridges and roads for the Allied Forces. Leek said that his position allowed him to spend a fair amount of time alone, which he said had both pros and cons. Though he said he was able to collect more trinkets and pieces of clothing from the front lines, he also said he had numerous close calls with enemy forces. One instance in particular Leek referenced was having his motorcycle struck by German artillery after he stepped off to deliver a message. "That was the closest I ever came to being hit," Leek said. As a B-17 pilot, Munsen had a much different experience overseas. After two years of engineering at Iowa State University (then College), the lifelong Story City resident was accepted in the Army Aviation Cadet Program, advanced quickly through flight school and was commissioned as a B-17 pilot. Munsen was only 20 years old when he entered the Army in 1942, shortly thereafter, he was sent to Italy. On his 23rd flight, he and his crew were shot down by German fighters and crashed in Nazi-occupied (then) Yugoslavia. "We all regrouped and got together when we landed on the ground, except for this boy who was captured and went into this POW camp," Munsen said. He and his crew spent the next 45 days navigating their way back to Italy with the help of the Yugoslav Partisans, also known as the National Liberation Army or Tito's Partisans (named after Marshal Josip Broz Tito), a Communist-led resistance to the Axis powers. Munsen and his crew were able to make it back to safety thanks to the Partisans, and he was awarded the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Flying Cross. "The Distinguished Flying Cross at that time was quite a surprise," Munsen said. But for Munsen's wife Kay, him receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross was no surprise. By Grayson Schmidt, Staff Writer Ames Tribune 16.9.2017.

Yugoslav Partisans saved 795 Allied airmen in World War II

http://www.titomanija.com.ba/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1228&Itemid=28 Unfortunately Marshal Tito has never been awarded for that. Some Nazi supporters received medals from President Harry Truman. Only reason - Truman hated Communists. One question for US Government. Is it time for correction of injustice? Marshal Tito deserved medals because his Partisans saved almost 800 US airmen in II world war. Obviously some witnesses are still alive! Ask Mr. Munsen, for example, for his opinion! valterbranisarajevo

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