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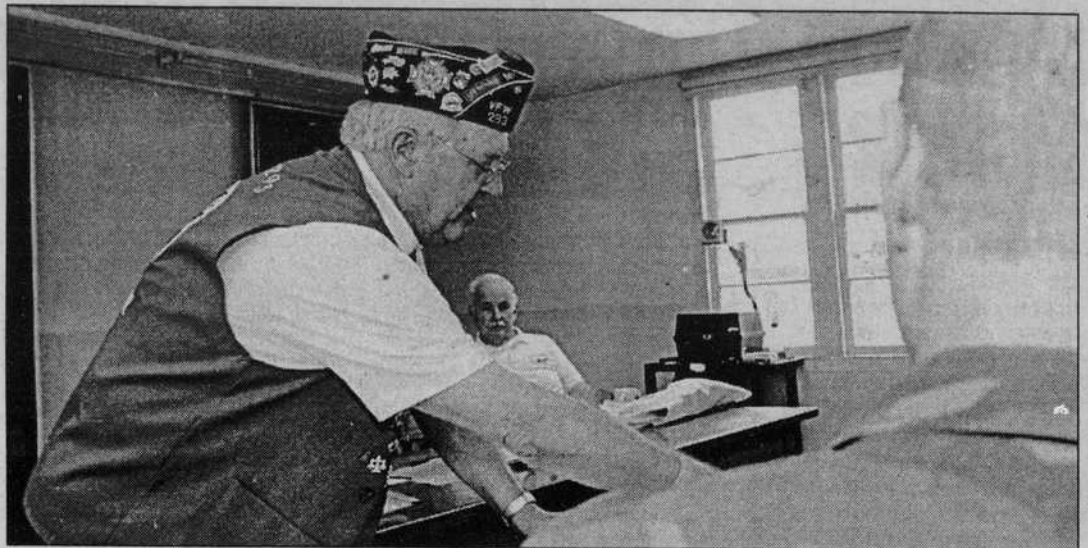
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World War II veteran Jim Czarnicki regales a University ROTC class with tales from his service in the Army. Jeffrey Stockton Emerald

WW II veterans return to campus

■ Al Rogers and Jim Czarnicki visits the ROTC class and shares anecdotes

By Adam Jude
for the Emerald

Students in the University's ROTC program got a glimpse of history Thursday when two World War II veterans visited their class.

In correlation with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Al Rogers, Jim Czarnicki and other veterans have been speaking to many students throughout the Eugene area for the past five years. Their goal is to not only shed light on the reality of wartime affairs, but to promote freedom as well.

Along with memorabilia and pictures they collected during their service, Rogers and Czarnicki presented some frightening details of events they encountered more than a half-century ago. As an Army soldier serving in Europe when he was just 17 years old,

Czarnicki viewed a Nazi concentration camp first hand.

"I had nightmares for years about that," he told the class. "More than anything [the camp] was an experimental place—they cut off every body part you could think of. I couldn't believe it. After that day, I grew up in a hurry."

Rogers, who served in the Navy, fought in the South Pacific on the USS Lexington during 1943 and 1944. The Lexington was the victim of a Japanese kamikaze hit that destroyed the control tower. In addition, Rogers survived several torpedo hits to the carrier.

"When you're first under fire, it gets your attention. All kinds of thoughts go through your mind," Rogers said.

VFW Eugene post Cmdr. Nick Urhausen said the presentations are to give students a better understanding of what they went through.

Sgt. Jonathan Dinsmore, the ROTC instructor and VFW member, said that once he heard of the

veterans' work in classrooms, he wanted his class to hear them.

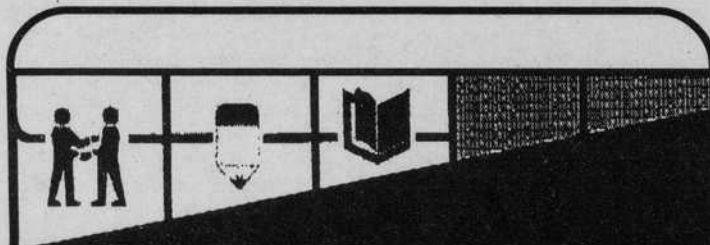
"They're a great asset. What they said will probably come to play in my class and in the military history class," he said.

Part of that asset comes from their fascinating stories. Czarnicki, a Polish orphan who immigrated to Chicago at a young age, joined the Army to support himself and his younger sister. At best, he made \$46 a month during the war. While in Europe, he handled the machine gun on a tank in the Hellcat squadron.

Rogers attended the University for two years following the war and recalls the extreme competition for a space in classrooms.

"It was tough," he said. "If you couldn't cut it, someone else was there to take your seat."

"A lot of people have heroes, like athletes and movie stars," ROTC student Matt Glem said. "But seeing these guys in the flesh and blood, they're the real heroes."



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