

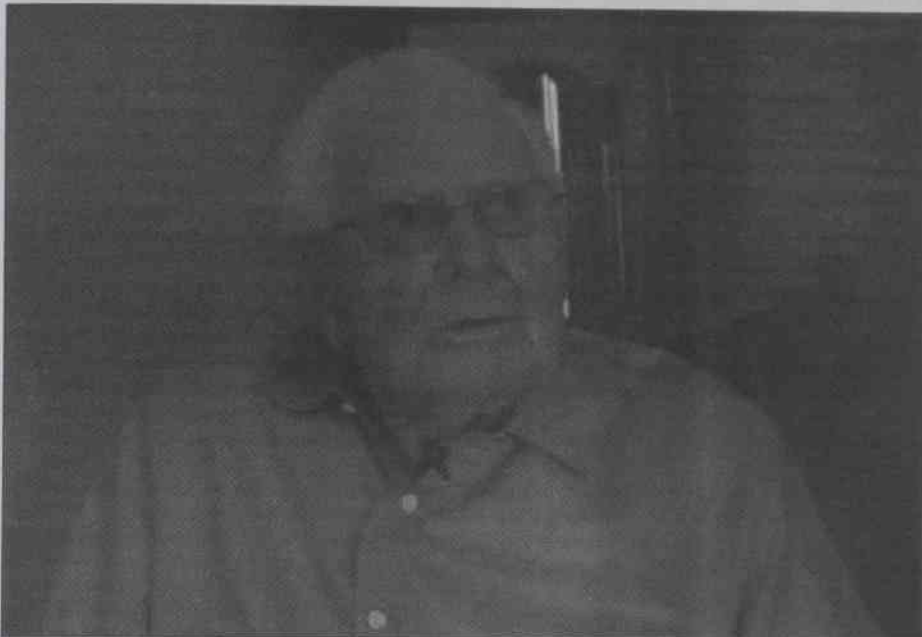
100 YEARS AND COUNTING

Local WWII vet recounts tales from years past



“I was the guy who could always get around and was always by himself. I didn't need anybody to go with me. I have always thought of myself as a loner.

- PAUL DAVIS
100-YEAR-OLD WAR VETERAN



Paul Davis, who recently celebrated his 100th birthday, never believed he would live through his experiences in World War II. Now, he is sharing these unique stories.

Melissa Kansky
Multimedia Intern

Celebrating a 100th birthday is rare and surviving war is an achievement. But Paul Davis, a resident of Elon's retirement home Blakey Hall, has done both.

Davis, sitting in front of his handmade grandfather clock, recalled his days as chief motor machinist mate during World War II. Although he witnessed the Battle of Normandy, a general discouraged him from fighting in the war.

“He said, ‘You done had all that training,’” Davis said. “I was in the National Guard and he was the head of that at that time, so he said, ‘I’m going to take you here to Coast Guard Admiral,’ and he gave me a chief rate right off the bat.”

Davis' duties as chief machinist motorist entailed operating the engine room on the Navy boats.

“After (the war started) I was always on a boat,” Davis said. “I was always in the engine room. Always by myself down there.”

Despite the lack of companionship in the engine room, the loneliness did not trouble Davis.

“I was the guy who could always get around and was always by himself,” he said. “I didn't need anybody to go with me. I have always thought of myself as a loner.”

His sense of independence benefitted him when faced with a sinking ship at the Battle of Normandy. Even though the boat had been prepared to attack since 6 a.m. that day, the troops never launched the planned raid.

“The guns on the shore were too much for a little ship like that,” Davis said. “(The enemy blew holes in the ship and set it on fire.”

Although Davis now speaks

knowledgably about the event, he said that day was full of uncertainty. Alone in the engine room, Davis was unsure of the events occurring above him until the skipper called to abandon ship.

“I took my time about getting out of there,” Davis said. “I wasn't in no hurry jumping in the water. No way.”

When Davis reached the deck, he could not see his shipmates.

“I don't know where they went,” he said. “I haven't seen them since.”

Still, on the sinking ship, Davis had little choice but to jump off the boat. He remembered retrieving a life vest before entering the water and debating whether to swim away from the shore or toward land — the origin of the shooting.

Ultimately he decided to swim ashore.

“(In the water) I tried to help those soldiers who couldn't help themselves get to shore,” Davis said. “But every man's for themselves when a thing like that happens. You better believe that.”

Once Davis reached land, he estimated he stayed there until 1 a.m. the next morning.

“I didn't have no time on me, no way,” Davis said. “My watch was in my locker with everything else I had. All I had on were a pair of coveralls.”

The loss of his personal possessions paled to the loss of soldiers.

“I don't know how many of the enemy was killed, but I know it was a lot of Americans,” he said.

On that day, he did not imagine he would celebrate his 100th birthday.

Although Davis doubted he would even survive, he is not the only remnant of that battle in Elon. Fifty-nine years later, his lost watch was found burnt in his locker on the boat and now hangs on a wall in his room at Blakey Hall.

University's first communications science major to graduate in May

Laura Wainman
Special Projects Editor

It is that time of year when lists are being made and checked twice as most seniors are frantically ensuring their degree audits are in order for graduation.

Yet in the midst of all the mayhem, senior Patrick Lane has been busy adding a second major to his degree.

In addition to completing a strategic communications major, Lane will graduate in May with a BA in communication science. Though the major has been available at Elon since 2008, Lane will be the first Elon graduate to receive this degree.

“I am really excited to be the first communication science major from Elon because it feels great to be a minor piece of history at Elon,” Lane said.

Within the communications field there are four specialties: strategic communications, broadcast new media, journalism and communication science.

Lane said he felt the communication science major differed from the others because it was not solely focused on one type of job, but rather aimed at making the student a communications scholar.

Students in the major learn the theory and philosophy of communications, as well as methods to enhance small group communications.

“It is really easy to not understand

the difference between the four specialties in communications if you aren't in the major, but I am hoping that people will take interest in this new specialty major as it progresses and get involved,” Lane said.

Lane said he just happened to check the requirements of the new communication science major and realized he only needed to take two more classes for the degree.

“It just seemed like a practical decision to double major when I was so close,” Lane said. “Even if there isn't a specific avenue to take the major, I know that it will benefit me to understand communication and how it works in whatever job I pursue. It is how we survive as humans.”

The only disadvantage Lane stumbled upon was that one of the classes he needed for the major was not available yet because the school was not expecting anyone to be ready to take the class with the major still being so new.

“It actually turned into a bit of an advantage though,” Lane said. “Instead I got to do an independent research study, which I think will be great to have on my resume.”

Lane said the support he received from the university was a huge benefit in completing the major because he might not have been able to get the same one-on-one attention if he had not been the first student to pursue the degree.

Currently Lane is open-minded about job possibilities after graduation, but said his ideal career would be in the music industry.

“I would enjoy being involved with marketing or advertising because they are very competitive industries, and if I could combine my love of music in there it would be perfect,” Lane said. “I think I could truly learn to like anything though.”



Patrick Lane
Senior Communication
Science and Strategic
Communications Major

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