

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

BHI Senior Living Residents' World War II Stories Preserved by National WWII Museum

Residents from numerous BHI Senior Living communities recently participated in official oral history interviews for the National World War II Museum. Senior Oral Historian Hannah Dailey traveled from New Orleans to conduct in-depth video interviews, ensuring these powerful firsthand accounts are preserved within the museum's permanent digital archives.

Residents representing BHI Senior Living communities across the Indiana region shared their personal experiences as World War II veterans and civilian survivors. These stories, marked by service, resilience, sacrifice, and perseverance, will now be accessible to historians, educators, researchers, and future generations seeking to understand the human impact of the war.

This initiative reflects BHI Senior Living's deep and ongoing commitment to honoring veterans and preserving their legacies. Across its communities, BHI actively recognizes and supports veterans through commemorative programming, educational initiatives, and innovative experiences such as Virtual Honor Flights, which allow residents to participate in meaningful remembrance regardless of physical or travel limitations.

"At BHI Senior Living, we believe honoring our veterans means more than remembering their service, it means listening to their stories and ensuring they are never lost," said John Dattilo, President and CEO of BHI Senior Living. "These men and women lived history. Preserving their voices is both a responsibility and a privilege."

These individuals include Ray McDonald, Max Kelley, Craig Kleinknight, and centenarian Edward Crook, Jr. from Hoosier Village, who served in the U.S. Army Air Forces and U.S. Navy in roles ranging from occupation forces in Japan to service aboard the USS Tarawa.

Jean Umemura of The Barrington of Carmel shared her experience as a Japanese American civilian interned at Camp Minidoka in Idaho during the war.

From Westminster Village North, Evelyn Bolling recounted her childhood imprisonment as a civilian at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, while Merle Ritter shared his service in the U.S. Navy, including amphibious training and deployment aboard the USS Ostara.

BHI's commitment to veterans also extends through unique life enrichment programming designed to support lifelong learning and connection. Later this year, residents will travel to New Orleans to visit the National World War II Museum as part of BHI's Ageless Explorers Travel Club, an organization-wide initiative that encourages residents to continue exploring, learning, and engaging with the world around them. For many veterans, the visit will offer a deeply personal opportunity to reflect, share, and connect their own experiences with the broader historical narrative.

"Our residents continue to teach us that purpose, curiosity, and contribution do not end with age," Dattilo added. "Through storytelling, travel, and recognition, we are committed to creating opportunities that honor their lives while enriching the communities they call home."

The recorded interviews will be preserved within the National World War II Museum's oral history collection, and each participating resident will receive a personal digital copy of their interview to share with family and loved ones.

BHI Senior Living proudly serves older adults through Life Plan Communities, assisted living, memory support, health care, and home- and community-based services throughout Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. As a not-for-profit organization, BHI is dedicated to honoring the experiences, contributions, and legacies of the individuals who call its communities home.

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