

*“It’s just a cool experience.”*

# VETS SHARE THEIR STORIES

Schrock’s students preserve reflections of American vets

Megan McCormack | Staff Writer

Mason Veterans are reliving the tales of war on camera through the Mason Veterans Project, according to American History and Law and Criminal Justice teacher Jerry Schrock. This project, Schrock said, allows students to interview veterans about their military experience.

“[Mason Veteran’s project] really is allowing veterans to tell their story,” Schrock said. “And that’s really what this Mason Veteran’s Project is: it’s where they get to answer questions that they want to have answered [about their military experience,] and [what they] want to be put out there for other people to see.

Schrock said the purpose of this project is to give students a firsthand account of history and what it was like to be in the military.

“I, as a history teacher, can try to give my students the opportunity to think about what that must have been like, but [veterans] can actually teach this firsthand,” Schrock said.

Schrock said the project got started because he was inspired by two ideas that allowed veterans to tell their stories.

“Historychannel.com actually had the idea,” Schrock said. “It’s called ‘Take a Vet to... School Day.’ They did a lot of different things where [teachers would] bring a vet to [their] class and let [their] kids ask them questions.

Along with the historychannel.com, Schrock heard from Commander of the American Legion Post 194, John Looker, who served in the Army from 1967-1969, when he talked to the Social Studies Department about a way to get veterans more involved with students.

“I actually listened to Mr. [John] Looker when he came to our Social Studies department meeting and [said he] really want[ed] a way to get our veterans more involved in



photo by Jami Bechard

Jerry Schrock overlooks Law and Criminal Justice students (senior Elise Rye, junior Austin Justice, senior Lauren Guarino) (from left to right) and shows them a video from the Veterans Project website.

what’s going on in school,” Schrock said. “I...put those two things together and...[we decided to] put [students] with the veterans, let them ask the questions and we’ll put this on the website.”

Senior Elise Rye, who took Schrock’s Law and Criminal Justice class last year, said that she interviewed a veteran she worked with, and if she got to do the project again, she would have asked more questions about his life.

“I would definitely have a lot more questions,” Rye said. “I would make the questions varied, not only about his service experience, but also about his life in general and what he’s been through in his life.”

Schrock said there are 21 veterans participating this trimester. Since the project began, he’s had 15 army, three air force and five navy veterans.

Schrock also said he finds his veterans through Looker, but is willing to accept any veteran who wants to tell his or her story.

“Some of the time, [the veterans] almost come in apologetic [because they] don’t have combat duty,” said Schrock. “[But,] we’re not really looking for combat duty. We’re looking for anyone who has military experience who has a story to tell.”

Rye said she is grateful to have participated

in this project because it was a good experience.

“If I had [never] been in [Schrock’s] class, I would have never actually seen veterans and been able to thank them,” Rye said. “By having all these people that you actually get to interview and talk to...it’s just a cool experience.

For the future, Schrock said that he would like to see other history teachers replicate this project and use these stories in class.

“I hope to see our history teachers using these interviews to help them further their studies and create new links with our local veterans as living pieces of American history,” Schrock said

Though the basics of historical wars are taught in history class, the veteran’s stories and heroic acts are often pushed to the side, Schrock said. Because of this, he said he wants to tell veteran’s stories so they are remembered serving their country.

“A lot of times we get so busy at school that we don’t have time to teach the stories of the veterans,” Schrock said. “We teach the politics of war, we teach the lessons we learn from war, but we don’t really get a chance to teach about the acts of heroism by the veterans, the bravery...[it] still needs to be remembered.”