



| (l to r) WWII veteran Marvin Veronee and Bryan Ganaway |

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN FOREVER

IT ALL STARTED WITH FILMMAKER
Ken Burns.

In September 2007, Burns released his award-winning World War II project entitled *The War*. The 15-hour documentary featured graphic footage of some of the great battles of WWII along with the personal reminiscences of veterans from various American towns.

One of the people tuned to PBS to watch the documentary was history professor and department chairman Bill Olejniczak. He was amazed by the program and was intrigued by the interviews of the vets. It got him thinking: What if our history department embarked on a research project that would record South Carolina veterans' recollections of the war?

"Sometimes," Olejniczak says, "you have to tackle history face to face."

Led by visiting professor **Bryan Ganaway**, the department trained 30 history majors in the art of interviewing. After taking a course on World War II, the students were then paired up with military veterans from Charleston, Beaufort and Jasper counties to record their memories surrounding the war. The students, using audio recorders, were able to obtain hours of personal accounts from the vets.

Olejniczak was happy with the results. "This research shows students that history has a personal side," he explains. "It makes history come alive."

Not only did the students get a personal account of *The War*, but they got a chance to connect with the vets and discover things that you just can't get from a textbook. "The students did a great job conducting these interviews," Ganaway

says. "I believe this was beneficial for both the students and the vets."

After interviewing more than 70 veterans, the project now turns to digitizing the taped interviews and housing the finished project in the College's Addlestone Library for future researchers. It will be a prized collection because the College is one of only a handful of locations nationwide that has collected World War II audio recordings.

So what's next for the archives and future history majors?

Ganaway hopes to have his students begin locating Korean War veterans and capturing their stories as well. 📍

For more information about the veterans oral history project, contact the history department at 843.953.5711 or go online at cofc.edu/~history.