



For immediate release

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Female military veterans to offer unique perspective in Veteran's Day event at Touchmark at Coffee Creek

EDMOND, Okla. — Edith Fletcher Gant and her family had just left church in the Chicago suburb of Elmhurst, Illinois, on Dec. 7, 1941, when a neighbor told them about the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

World War II had reached the United States, and there were thousands of casualties in the attack.

“We were shocked and went home to spend the rest of the day listening to the radio,” Gant recalls in a memoir entitled “A WAVE Remembers.” Gant participated in the war effort through conservation and volunteering with the USO, as she was just out of high school and still a teenager.

But volunteering wasn't enough for her.

As soon as she turned 21 in 1944, Gant enlisted in the Navy's unit known as the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES).

“We had to learn the same things as the men in basic training,” she said. “I still have “The Bluejacket's Manual, 1944” that we used for training.”

She went on to serve in Pensacola, Florida, and Washington, D.C, before the end of the war. Gant met her husband, Jim, also a WWII military veteran, while serving in Washington.

Gant is one of two female veterans — the other is Judith Harris — who will share their stories on Veterans Day this year. The ceremony, with a focus on women in the military, will start at 1:30, following a luncheon.

Harris enlisted in the Air Force in the 1960s, where she served as a nurse for two years and met her husband, Leaman, who was a flight navigator in the Air Force. She later earned a master's in nursing and doctorate in education and taught at both George Mason University and the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

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The lives of Harris and Gant intersected years later as residents of Touchmark when the Harrises were inspired by their respect for the military to write and compile the stories of the Greatest Generation residents at Touchmark at Coffee Creek.

Gant is one of dozens of heroes who shared their experiences in five volumes of books called "As We Lived It."

Gant and Harris are two featured speakers in a moving Veterans Day event to honor the nation's military heroes, beginning with a noon luncheon on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, at Touchmark, 2801 Shortgrass Road in Edmond. The ceremony and speakers will start at 1:30 p.m.

The Veterans Day program will also feature a keynote speech by Brig. Gen. Robbie Asher, director of Joint Staff, Oklahoma Joint Force Headquarters. Brig. Gen. Asher serves as the primary assistant to the adjunct general with overall responsibility of more than 1,000 full-time employees of the Oklahoma National Guard.

A Cub Scout troop will present the colors to open the luncheon. The 1:30 ceremony will conclude with the singing of patriotic songs. A display of veterans' memorabilia will be available for viewing 1-4 p.m.

There is no charge for this event. RSVP calling 405-340-1975.

A full-service retirement community, Touchmark at Coffee Creek offers a wide range of homes and lifestyle options and is located just off Covell. Touchmark is part of the Coffee Creek 638-acre planned residential development, which includes a golf course, recreational centers and walking and biking trails for Coffee Creek homeowners. For more information, visit TouchmarkEdmond.com.