



Rachel Stuart | Daily Sun

World War II veteran Irving Locker, a 99-year-old resident of Trinity Springs assisted living who served in the U.S. Army from 1943-45, drinks a cup of coffee as he is honored as the first veteran to be recognized in the cafe on bags of Honor Grounds Coffee, at Restoring Hope Clothing Boutique in Wildwood.

Clothing Boutique, Cafe Honors Local Veteran

The Honor Grounds Cafe at the Restoring Hope Clothing Boutique recently celebrated Irving Locker.

By MADDIE CUTLER
Daily Sun Senior Writer

Irving Locker stopped by the Honor Grounds Cafe in the Restoring Hope Clothing Boutique thinking he was meeting his friend David Booth.

Little did he know that Booth, the owner, was honoring Locker for his 99th birthday.

On Nov. 9, Booth surprised the World War II veteran by making him the first veteran showcased on the Honor Grounds coffee beans. Proceeds from the store and cafe benefit Combat Veterans to Careers, a Wildwood-based nonprofit that Booth founded to support veterans with health and wellness, housing, employment and more.

When Locker walked into the cafe and saw his own face on the

bags of coffee, his face lit up with a broad smile.

"Oh, David," Locker said. "This is just phenomenal."

Locker, and his wife, Bernice, of Trinity Springs senior living, said it was their first time seeing the new coffee shop attached to the clothing thrift store in Wildwood.

Booth opened the store this summer and the cafe in early fall.

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"We've been friends for a long time, and I love you and wanted to honor you," Booth said of Irving. "You're an inspiration to me, not just for your service, but everything."

Booth mentioned how the Lockers have been married for 75 years, and seeing them interact inspires him to be a better partner to his wife.

Irving also is one of the last survivors who fought in Battle of the Bulge. He said he can still picture the planes flying overhead and the size of the bullets he used.

"I'm 99 years old, but I still do whatever I can for veterans," he said. "Some veterans my age, they are

up and moving like me, but some are in bad shape."

Irving said he does not take for granted his overall good health, and he participates in speaking engagements and veteran-focused fundraisers whenever he can.

Being able to support local causes and local veterans is something he plans to do for as long as possible.

Irving is the first of many veterans who will be featured at Honor Grounds. A new veteran is chosen each month.

By a stroke of luck or faith, Booth said a veteran founded the coffee roaster where they get the beans from.

He went through several roasters before settling on Coffee Hound in Bar Harbor, Maine.

"They have the best taste and quality, and it's so great

that they support veterans as well," he said. "When I told the president about Irving and what I wanted to do, as soon as I sent the photo she had the labels ready."

Irving tasted the coffee made out of the "Irving Blend" as Booth likes to call it, and gave it his approval.

"It tastes great and it feels wonderful to be a part of this space in this way," Irving said. "I think it's really important for local businesses to recognize or give back in ways like this."

Inside the cafe is a wall of honor, where for \$50 or \$100 people can get a veteran's name put on a small or large brick. Booth's dream is to one day have a name on every brick in the cafe.

Sandee Richmond, operations manager for Combat

Veterans to Careers, said 90 cents of every dollar the store brings in goes to the nonprofit. The remaining 10% covers expenses for the store like bills and insurance.

"We want people to know just how much their business helps veterans," she said. "When you come here to shop or grab a bite to eat, you are giving back and changing lives."

Restoring Hope Clothing Boutique is at 104 E. Wonders St. in Wildwood. Call 352-461-0504 for more information.

Visit combatveteransto-careers.org to learn more about the nonprofit.

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