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Friendships flourish for Wounded Warriors

By JESSICA SIBLEY
jsibley@dailyjm.com

KEOWEE KEY — As the Wounded Warrior event continues this week, relationships between host families and their Marines began to flourish.

Out of the 25 Marines who came from Camp Pendleton in California and Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, six stayed in the homes of Keowee Key residents. Others stayed in the Tall Ships condominiums at Keowee Key.

Dean and Jane Rogers said they jumped at the opportunity to entertain a visiting soldier.

"We were happy to do it," Jane said. "It was a true privilege."

Nicholas "Nick" Gomez, who has completed two tours in Iraq, stayed with the Rogers family.

"I'll always remember Dean and Jane," Gomez said. "Their hospitality was immeasurable, and I'm very happy I got the chance to meet and stay with them."

And while many of the Marines opted not to talk about their time in war, Gomez and Dean shared a special bond.

Dean, who served in the Air Force during Vietnam and flew B-52 Bombers, wanted Gomez to know that he somewhat understood the impact battle can have on someone.

"I'd like to think I can relate, but compared to what these soldiers endure present day, it is on a whole separate level from what I went through. The violence in Iraq and Afghanistan is so bad that none of us can really imagine," Dean said.



Jessica Nelms/Staff

From left, Keowee Key host David Beam, Marine Andrew Negrete and Roger C. Peace Rehabilitation Hospital therapists Kisa Mason and Tracie Hawkins share some laughs after lunch, on Wednesday at the lake.

Gomez did appreciate being able to share some of his stories with Dean.

"It was just great to be able to talk with someone who does get it," Gomez said. "Dean and I have had a few great talks."

In Dean's study, Vietnam memorabilia line the walls, including a sketch of the exact plane he flew in battle.

"I wanted to show him some of the things I took away from being in the service," Dean said. "That was a cool moment."

And while the Rogers were excited to have a Marine stay with them, they weren't sure what to expect.

"Jane is a nurse, so I felt good knowing that if he needed medical assistance from any injuries we could help," Dean said.

And for Jane and Dean, Gomez was simply a respected guest in their home.

"He was so easy," Jane said. "He, along with every other Marine, deserves the best. His parents have raised a well-mannered young man. Our door is always open, and we hope to talk with him and have him back again in the future."



Jessica Sibley/Staff

Dean Rogers and Wounded Warrior Regiment Marine Nicholas Gomez enjoy a moment at Rogers' home at Keowee Key, on Wednesday.