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**Left:** Lim was 17 when he was captured by the Japanese. Today, his dementia means most of his memories are gone, but his photos and wartime diary, thankfully, remain.

**Below:** Lim's granddaughters (from left) Azelynna Lim, Francine, Kyra Yeap and Amber, pored over his diary to learn more about him. Francine and Amber also shared his story with their youth group to spark an interest in history.

— Photos: HAFRIZ IQBAL/R.AGE

“And it’s not just your family history, but also the history of your city and country, because it shapes who and how we are today.”

From her grandfather’s accounts and his wartime diary, Yeap realised the gravity of war and urged other young Malaysians not to take peace for granted.

“Just because we’re privileged to live in a time of peace doesn’t mean we should forget about the past and the struggles our grandparents lived through,” said Yeap.

Watch the second season of *The Last Survivors* at [rage.com.my/last-survivors](http://rage.com.my/last-survivors).



## Uncovering stories

AFTER the success of the first season of *The Last Survivors*, young people across Malaysia have been contributing stories of WWII survivors in their cities.

RAGE spoke about the project to a number of universities, where many of the students were inspired to take up the challenge of finding survivor stories, especially among their own family members.

The first to respond were the Applied Communication students of Multimedia University (MMU), who came up with eight videos on different survivors who come from all over the country, including Jerantut, Johor Baru, and Kampar.

Working in groups, they

filmed the survivors using whatever they had, whether it was a mobile phone or digital camera.

“I used to be uninterested in history, but after listening to my grandfather’s memories of WWII, I learnt so much more about what he’s been through,” said Yeo Yong Yaw, 18. “He was happy to help me with my assignment, but I knew it was difficult for him to talk about those bad times.”

Their lecturer, Elizabeth Marshall was highly supportive of the project and urged other young Malaysians to get involved in the project.

“It’s very important to actually allow people, not just stu-

dents, to know what really happened, apart from what’s in the textbooks,” she said.

The students not only learnt more about life during the war, but also had their perspectives broadened.

“We often hear about the Japanese’s cruelty, but after this project, I learnt that many were kind, too,” said MMU student Shazwan Razali.

Stories and videos from contributors are all available for public viewing at [rage.com.my/lastsurvivors](http://rage.com.my/lastsurvivors).

If your school or university would like to contribute to *The Last Survivors*, contact us at [fb.com/LastSurvivorsMalaysia](http://fb.com/LastSurvivorsMalaysia).

## The humanity in war

TUN Dr Siti Hasmah was a 15-year-old schoolgirl when World War II broke out in Malaya.

Her first clue that something was wrong came when her father picked her up from school, instead of relying on her to take the bus as usual.

“He told us the Japanese had bombed Singapore and Penang and had landed in Kelantan. We cried, because my elder brother Aziz was studying in Singapore,” she said.

Fortunately her brother survived, although one of his classmates died in the bombings in Bukit Timah.

However, despite the dark days of the Occupation, young Siti Hasmah still managed to find glimmers of humanity shining through.

Music, for instance, was a brief respite from the horrors surrounding them.

“There used to be a Japanese conductor, Watanabe, who set up an orchestra with other Japanese at the Pavilion Theatre in Bukit Bintang, which was torn down, and is now an MRT station.

“They played Latin American music. My mother used to take us there and everyone loved it,” she reminisced.

She was also relatively lucky. Despite the reported brutality displayed by the Japanese military, Japanese civilians and workers turned out to be more sympathetic towards the Malayan people.

Siti Hasmah and her family managed to find some friends among them, so much so that after [the Emperor] formally surrendered in 1945, they came to her house to say goodbye.

“They brought no weapons when they came to say farewell, and we were sad because they had been kind to us, and had respected my father, who worked in the courts as a legal officer,” she said.

Her granddaughter, filmmaker Ineza Roussille, 29, said that while she had heard many stories about the cruelty during the occupation, her grandmother’s story showed a different side to the Japanese invaders, and it gave the war a new sense of proximity to her.

“I used to think of war as a foreign conflict, but hearing her talk about having to hide and duck for cover during shootings really brings home the point that the conflict affected us too,” said Roussille.

## Take part in The Last Survivors

Since the start of the project, readers across the world have contributed WWII stories to our interactive map. If you’d like to see your story, video or photos on the map, contact us at [fb.com/LastSurvivorsMalaysia](http://fb.com/LastSurvivorsMalaysia).

