In response to the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, the Department of Defense established a commemoration committee to observe the 50-year anniversary of the Vietnam War. The program is designed to thank and honor our country’s veterans and families who sacrificed so much in the Vietnam War. The Veterans History Project at CCSU applied, and was accepted, to become a “commemorative partner.” As a commemorative partner the VHP will conduct many events and activities that fulfill the commemoration objectives in thanking and honoring Connecticut’s Vietnam veterans. The five objectives outlined in the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act are:

1. “To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war or listed as missing in action, for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans.

2. To highlight the service of the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of Federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the Armed Forces.

3. To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.

4. To highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War.

5. To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War” (www.vietnamwar50th.com).

In partnership with the Connecticut Department of Veterans’ Affairs, we have already sponsored two events, both held at the Governor William A. O’Neill Armory. The first was a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans USO celebration held on March 31, 2012 to give the Vietnam veterans the Welcome Home they never received.
This year on March 30, 2013, the official Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, we organized a “Remembrance of the Fallen.” After a welcome by Governor Dannel Malloy and Commissioner Linda Schwartz, there was a somber reading of the names of the 613 Connecticut men killed or missing in action. The names of the fallen were read by an impressive line-up of dignitaries and Vietnam veterans including Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman, Secretary of State Denise Merrill, Attorney General George Jepsen, Comptroller Kevin Lembo and many veterans who served “in country.” We were honored to have several Gold Star families in attendance as well as John Mohler and Mark Franklin, representatives from the Department of Defense. Members of the Patriot Guard Riders manned the perimeter throughout the ceremony displaying American flags. TAPS was played by Fred Miodowski and Reverend Michael Galasso delivered a prayer. (Please see photographs below.)

Many more activities to recognize and thank our Vietnam veterans and Gold Star families are in the planning stages. Several activities will focus on education and how the Vietnam War is taught in high schools and universities. Please visit our website at www.ccsu.edu/vhp or our Facebook page at CCSU Veterans History Project to stay updated on commemoration events in Connecticut. To follow the Commemoration on the national scene, access educational and historical information on the War, or sign up to receive the Vietnam War Commemoration newsletter, visit www.vietnamwar50th.com.
NEW ENGLAND AIR MUSEUM: AVIATE YOUR MIND

By Buckley W. Morgan II

I visited the New England Air Museum recently and was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to interview Michael P. Speciale, the New England Air Museum’s Executive Director. If you are interested in the history of flight especially with regard to Connecticut, I know of nobody more qualified to educate you than Mr. Speciale. After my talk with Mike I was handed over to Ken Roskin who gave me a personal tour of the Museum. My visit with Mike and my tour of the museum can best be described as information overload. The New England Air Museum offers too much for one article to cover in a single page. This will be the first in a series of articles that will cover in detail the different aspects of the Museum. To call the New England Air Museum, “a museum” is comparative to calling the Grand Canyon a hole in the ground. Mike’s limited full-time staff and his crew of about 200 volunteers offers so much more than just a place to walk through and look at historical aviation artifacts. They have created a place of history, hands-on education, science, restoration and more.

The New England Air Museum traces its roots to 1959 and the founding of the Connecticut Aeronautical Historical Society. It is a private nonprofit organization that really began to develop and expand as a museum in the 1960’s and 70’s. Originally the Museum was located in another area of the Airport near the entrance, a location shared by hotels on Route 75. This was an ideal location as most of the traffic that visited the airport would have to pass the museum’s large outdoor displays. This location brought a lot of visitors that the museum may not have experienced had they been in a location with less traffic. Unfortunately in 1979 a tornado destroyed many of the exhibits there. Two years later in 1981 the Connecticut Department of Transportation gave the New England Air Museum 58 acres of land located in a back corner of the airport. Unfortunately in its new location the museum could no longer count on drive-by visitors and had to increase its efforts to get the word out on who they are and what they had to offer. The museum and its displays show no evidence of these past issues as they are absolutely amazing.

The New England Air museum operates on a slim budget and with only six full-time staff. Mike will tell you it is his large volunteer staff that makes it possible for the museum to offer such a wide variety of events and activities for its visitors young and old alike. The Museum currently consists of three large exhibit buildings stuffed to the gills with aircraft of all sorts and static displays of everything aviation. One building is dedicated to civilian aviation history, one for military aviation history, and one dedicated to the 58th Bomb Wing. The museum also has two buildings for storage of items not currently on display. These two buildings are 10,000 and 12,000 square feet in size. So, yes you can visit multiple times and potentially see different displays with each visit. Finally they also have a large restoration hangar where volunteers are working on restoring, or what looked to me like completely rebuilding, future displays. Truly a full day’s visit is required to really absorb all that the museum has to offer; two days would be better. Watch for our future newsletters as we will discuss in more detail the educational opportunities and exhibits or projects on which the museum is working..
This past March, Hmong and Laotian veterans of the Special Guerilla Unit (S.G.U.) and the Royal Lao Army visited Connecticut in order to attend a reunion recognizing their service during the Vietnam War. Of these attendees, no less than 14 came to CCSU to provide their oral histories to the Veterans History Project.

Our interviewers heard stories of Lao and Hmong children being recruited to join the war effort in Laos, and of learning to relate to and interact with American instructors and officers. Some of those interviewed were captured by the communists after the United States pulled out of the War and were held in “re-education” camps as prisoners of war. Many later escaped to refugee camps in Thailand. Families were brought across rivers on make-shift rafts; a few individuals simply swam. Even after they arrived in the United States, aided by a sponsor or relative, acclimating to Western culture and the English language was a new challenge altogether.

While these interviews are not currently eligible for inclusion in the VHP collection at the Library of Congress, preserving these previously untold stories about the Secret War is part of CCSU’s initiative to honor all of those who served during the Vietnam era. What is more, these histories are a valuable educational resource raising the awareness of the struggles endured, and the sacrifices made, by the Hmong and Laotians in the Secret War.

As these oral histories are processed, most of them will become available on our website. You will find them among the other interviews collected from Vietnam veterans: http://www.ccsu.edu/vhp
Lawrence Carlton, M.D., 88, passed away on October 10, 2012. He joined the U.S. Army Air Corps to serve in WWII while he was a Freshman at Harvard College, and was trained to be a Morse Operator, High Speed. He travelled on the USS Mount Vernon to Bombay, India arriving just in time to witness the Bombay Docks Explosion. When he reached Dum Dum, India, Carlton became a cryptographer and decoded messages. He also used his training on directional equipment to guide lost planes. Next, he was sent to China and became a member of the Flying Tigers. It was here that he used his Morse Code training. The dire health needs of the people in India and China pushed Carlton toward becoming a doctor.

Robert Cerosky, 87, passed away on September 17, 2012. He was commissioned as an ensign to serve in the U.S. Navy during WWII, after joining the ROTC program at Brown University. He served aboard a weather ship, the USS Farmington, in the Pacific. His job was to collect weather data to be used for air, land, and sea military operations. During his time at sea, he survived three typhoons. Upon his return, Cerosky took advantage of the GI Bill and completed his education at Trinity College in Hartford, CT, attaining a bachelor's degree in engineering.

Wayne R. Franklyn, 70, passed away on March 6, 2013. He enlisted in the United States Air Force during the Vietnam War for patriotic reasons. He was trained as a ground radio repairman, using air traffic control devices. Next, Franklyn was sent to Taiwan with the 868th Tactical Missile Squadron, which had control of the “Matador,” a surface-launched cruise missile. His job was to repair teletype radio communication devices. Next, Franklyn went to the Philippines, and then on to a secret mission in Vietnam. For the duration of his deployment there, he repaired control tower radios as part of the 505th Tactical Control Squadron. He was sent back to the United States, to Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, where he stayed for two years. Franklyn then requested an assignment back in Vietnam and was sent to Saigon. His focus there was on repairing backpack radios. He stayed in Vietnam for ten years, during which time he fell in love, married, and had three daughters.
IN MEMORIAM

William Gresh, 88, passed away on May 7, 2012. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy to serve in WWII. After Signal School, he was sent to Fort Hase, HI on the SS Mexico. Gresh was assigned to Combat Transport Division 36. His first combat experience was in Guam. He travelled to Pearl Harbor, and fought at Eniwetok and in the battle of Leyte Gulf. He participated in the attack on Luzon, and traveled to Guadalcanal and Saipan before going home.

Edward G. Klepps, 98, passed away on January 8, 2013. A survivor of both Pearl Harbor and Kula Gulf, he initially enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1935. Throughout his enlistment, Klepps served on multiple ships including the USS Mississippi (BB-41) and most notably, the USS Helena (CL-50). On the morning of December 7, 1941, while the Helena was docked in Pearl Harbor, Klepps survived a surprise attack from the Japanese. The Helena was patched up after only twenty days in dry dock, and soon after sailed to missions in the South Pacific during WWII. The Helena again came under heavy enemy fire from the Imperial Japanese Navy while in the Kula Gulf. Unfortunately, the Helena sank after being hit with multiple torpedoes. All those onboard the Helena received the first Navy Unit Commendation ever issued. After the battle of Kula Gulf, Klepps continued to serve his Navy through Victory over Japan Day.

Philip Mongillo, Jr., 87, died on November 29, 2012. Philip served in the Medical Corps of the U.S. Navy during WWII. After training in Hilo, HI Mongillo was sent to Iwo Jima. He arrived at Green Beach on the first day of fighting. There, he treated the wounded and assisted with medical evacuations. Mongillo was wounded when a mortar struck behind him, driving shrapnel into his back, and was awarded the Purple Heart. The wound was judged to be superficial, so he continued fighting for the next 36 days. He returned to Iwo Jima on the fiftieth anniversary of the battle and met with both American and Japanese survivors.

Samuel Title, 87, died on October 14, 2012. He served in the U.S. Army as part of the occupation of Japan from 1946 to 1949. There, he was assigned to the 138th Artillery Anti-Aircraft. He even met the Empress of Japan. He travelled to the Philippines, Okinawa, Guam, Midway Island, and Hawaii. When the Korean War began, he was sent to Guided Missile School in White Sands, New Mexico. Title then taught radar school. He was eventually sent to Korea, and then to Pannunjom before retiring from the military. He was in the Army Reserves until 1966.

Thomas Spada, 83, died on November 26, 2012. Originally from Sicily, he was drafted when he came to the United States. He served in the U.S. Army as part of the Lightning Division, 25th Infantry during the Korean War. After arriving at Inchon he travelled around Korea, participating in the battle at Pork Chop Hill. For the duration, his unit endured cold conditions while camping in tents. When working at Headquarters, he made signs for different units and worked in the PX. He was in Korea for 14 months, during which time he helped to fire mortars. After the war, he worked at M. H. Rhodes for over twenty years. He maintained a lifelong friendship with James Ziegler, who served in his unit.
60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KOREAN ARMISTICE

On July 27, 1953 The Korean Armistice agreement was signed bringing an end to the hostilities in Korea. The armistice agreement was meant to be a temporary document until a peace agreement could be achieved. As of today’s date no such peace agreement exists. The Korean Conflict ran from June 25th, 1950 to July 27th, 1953 and is often called the forgotten war because of the lack of public attention it received. More than 36,000 Americans lost their lives; 206 of those were from Connecticut. The Korean Conflict was a result of communist North Korea invading South Korea after months of reunification negotiations continued to fail. For more information about the Korean Conflict and to learn about events planned to recognize the veterans of that conflict visit the Department of Defense’s 60th Anniversary of the Korean Conflict Commemoration Committee’s website at www.koreanwar60.com. There you can view the oral histories of Korean Conflict veterans and learn of the many events that are planned to recognize the forgotten war and the veterans of that conflict. In our own CCSU Veterans History Project collection at www.ccsu.edu/vhp you can listen to more than 50 interviews with some of Connecticut’s Korean War veterans.

GOVERNOR WILLIAM A. O’NEILL: KOREAN WAR VETERAN

On November 24, 2007, former Connecticut Governor William A. O’Neill passed away at age 77. The state’s 84th governor, O’Neill also served his country in an environment outside of public office; he enlisted in the United States Air Force on September 10, 1950. At the time, he aspired to attend the United States Air Force Academy to become a pilot. However, he did not meet the prerequisite 2 years of college. He opted instead to become an aerial gunner, knowing that this would still provide him a path into the sky. His training included stops in Texas, Colorado and Kansas before going overseas to Okinawa. It was from Kadena Air Force Base on Okinawa where O’Neill and his crew flew missions over North Korea. He flew a total of twelve missions, encountering enemy fire each time. “We were very lucky we [were] never hit,” O’Neill recalled, “very lucky.” After his service, O’Neill stayed active within the veteran community, becoming a member of both the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign War. He never gave up his love of airplanes, serving as Vice President of the New England Air Museum.
**Changes to the VHP Website**

Since its inception, the CCSU VHP has maintained a website dedicated to archiving our veterans’ interviews as well as their materials. This extensive collection includes photographs, letters, and discharge papers. But as times change, so must our website. Coming soon, the CCSU VHP website ([http://www.ccsu.edu/vhp](http://www.ccsu.edu/vhp)) will be making public its new database. Browsers will still be able to search through our collections, but instead of having to scroll through an entire page of names, the user will be able to enter keywords or letters and retrieve relevant results. Not only that, but our visitors will be able to search for more than just the standard topics. While you will still be able to search by name, branch and war, users can also search by battles and unit or ship name. So make sure to come back to our website and experience the new ways to search our collections.

**New Employee**

Buckley W. Morgan, II (Buck) is a senior at CCSU pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in History, Secondary Education, with intentions to teach high school history or social studies in Connecticut. In 2004, Morgan retired from the U.S. Army after 20 years of active duty and moved from Oregon to Connecticut in 2011. He began working with the Veterans History Project as an intern in the spring of 2013 and is now proud to call himself an employee. Upon his arrival, Morgan says he, “found the work extremely rewarding and, unbeknownst to me, it turned out to be a very effective history teaching environment as well.”

Despite his 20 years of service, he credits the project with teaching him something new about the personal history of American veterans in past wars. “I look forward to learning so much more and to being a part of the sharing and archiving of America’s war veterans’ experiences.”

**Remember Our Heroes this Memorial Day.**

Visit the Veterans History Project!

For more information or to participate please contact:

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