TEACHING THE VIETNAM WAR

On October 15, CCSU History Professor Dr. John Tully and Salem State History Professor Dr. Brad Austin presented a workshop to high school educators on “Teaching the Vietnam War.” Tully and Austin addressed the challenges of teaching the Vietnam War and demonstrated strategies to engage students using digital resources, primary sources, music, and literature. The Veterans History Project’s collection of first hand accounts of the war, photographs, and documents is an example of a valuable resource used in the classroom.

This was the first in a series of workshops sponsored by the Veterans History Project at CCSU to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War and to help educate a new generation of young Americans who did not experience the turbulent and controversial Vietnam era first hand. The Vietnam War had a deep and lasting impact on American culture, politics, and foreign policy. Drs. John Tully, Brad Austin and Matthew Masur recently authored the timely book, “Understanding and Teaching the Vietnam War” for use in high school and college classes. Their book will be a wonderful resource for teachers throughout the United States not only during the Commemoration period but into the future as well.

THE VHP HAS MOVED

After many years of calling DiLoreto Hall home, the Veterans History Project has moved to the CCSU Downtown Campus at 185 Main Street, New Britain, CT 06051. While many of our veterans and volunteers are familiar with our former tiny office, this new location offers all of us new opportunities. Although we were sad to leave our old office, we take many fond memories with us. Our dedication to and work with veterans will continue as usual. Please stop in and visit us at our new location!
This is the second article in a series on the New England Air Museum (NEAM) and its varied contributions to the community and the state of Connecticut in the area of the history and future of aviation. These contributions include expanding the minds of our youth with a strong emphasis on aviation and the physics of flight. The NEAM accomplishes this through an endless variety of programs and events aimed at youth of all ages. I visited the New England Air Museum for a second time recently and had the opportunity to meet Caroline d’Otreppe, pronounced “doetrepp”, the NEAM’s Director of Educational Programming. Caroline has been with the New England Air Museum for almost 14 years. Caroline and seven part-time educators work tirelessly to create educational programs that serve to not only educate but to keep students and visitors interested and excited about what they are seeing and learning. From simple “Build and Fly” activities that include rockets, hot air balloons, air trolleys, and blimp projects to a parachute drop, egg drop and bottle rockets. The focus this year has been to further develop the “Build and Fly” activities and make them activities for the whole family to work on together or to compete against each other. The NEAM, in cooperation with Lego and NASA recently asked young visitors to build something that they may find in space (currently or in the future) using the museum’s tremendous amount of Lego pieces. I was given the honor to help judge an event that just finished up. This event was sponsored by Sikorsky and the idea was to build a rotary winged craft out of Legos. The idea presented was to build a craft that was environmentally friendly and would be beneficial to what life in the future may be like, thus requiring the participants to use their imagination. Caroline is also deeply involved in developing programs with Connecticut’s schools. Between 100 to 150 classes from different schools come through the museum’s educational program each year. All education programs are funded by donations from a variety of sponsors. This program is entirely free to the schools.

The museum has truly become an integrated part of the learning process for each of the schools that participate. The students spend time in the classroom learning about the laws of motion. They then come to the museum for hands on training and experimentation to prove their hypothesis or ideas. After some time at the NEAM they are then able to go back to the school classroom and complete their lessons having the knowledge and conclusions that only hands on experiences can truly provide.

The NEAM is not just for kids. There are numerous events and activities in which adults participate and enjoy. Often times they will hold “Open Cockpit Day”, which is loved by the children and many adults. This is a time for you to get into the cockpit of some of the aircraft that are on display at the museum. Kids and adults alike are able to try their hand at flying, using one of the five flight simulators at the museum. You will receive your pre-flight training from one of the NEAMs’ educators. They will have you in the air and flying in no time. Anyone who tries out the flight simulator will tell you the real trick is in the landing. Connecticut is very fortunate to have a museum that is so dedicated to preserving the history of aviation in Connecticut and ensuring future generations understand the importance of aviation in our history and our future. Be sure to visit www.neam.org to learn more or to get directions to visit or volunteer.
The Ambassador of France to the United States, M. Francois Delattre, presented the Legion of Honor, France’s most prestigious award, in the degree of Chevalier to Colonel Morton N. Katz (ret) for services in the liberation of France in World War II. Katz is a prior recipient of the Medal of Liberated France.

Katz served as a Lieutenant in the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion in combat operations in Italy at Venafro and the Anzio amphibious invasion, in Southern France and in the Ardennes Campaign in Belgium. When the 509th was disbanded after heavy losses in the capture of St. Vith and Trois Ponts, Belgium he was transferred to the 505th Parachute Infantry, 82nd Airborne Division and served in operations on the Rhine River, the Elbe River crossing and the liberation of the Wobbelin concentration camp at Lubwigslust.

He retired out of The Pentagon where he served with the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G-2) and DIA, having reached the rank of Colonel. Colonel Katz has received the Combat Infantryman Badge and the Bronze Star Medal (V), along with nine campaign stars and invasion arrowhead.
James T. Andrini, 98, passed away on March 26, 2013. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, serving aboard the USS Chandeleur, the USS Dufilho and the USS St. Louis. He served as a damage control seaman, assigned to prevent the overflow of water from a flooding compartment. After WWII, Andrini went on to work 37 years for General Electric, while also spending his summers coaching little league baseball.

Thomas J. Casey, 89, passed away on April 26, 2012. He was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1941 and was assigned to the 6th Infantry Battalion, 1st Armored Division. During WWII, Casey was stationed in the European Theater, first going overseas to Italy where he experienced his first taste of combat. During a mission to take a mountain in the Marche region, Casey suffered a wound when he was hit with a piece of shrapnel. Although he was injured, Casey felt good knowing that now he would receive a decent meal and a bed in which to sleep as a result of his injury. Upon his recovery, Casey and his unit linked up with the historic 10th Mountain Division, fighting in and around Po Valley, Italy. For his service, Casey was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. After the war, he would go on to work for the Colt Manufacturing Company.

Stanley J. Buczacki, 94, passed away on February 11, 2013. Drafted into the U.S. Army during WWII, Buczacki was assigned to the 1884th Engineer Aviation Battalion. He was deployed to the Pacific, serving in the campaigns of Peleliu, Guam and Okinawa. During his service in the Pacific, Buczacki oversaw several construction projects, such as building airfields on the islands of Palau and Okinawa. Upon his return, Buczacki spent 35 years working for the New England Telephone & Telegraph Co. before retiring in 1981.

George G. Butenkoff, 80, passed away on April 27, 2013. He was drafted in 1953 and became a member of both the U.S. Army and the Merchant Marines. During the Korean War, Butenkoff arrived in Pusan, Korea to deliver Quonset huts but was forced to abandon the mission when Chinese troops crossed over the Yellow River. After the war, Butenkoff took advantage of the G.I. Bill, earning a degree in electrical engineering, as well as an MBA and a JD. He also stayed active in the veteran community, serving on the Veterans Commission in East Windsor.

Gerald Chamberland, 66, passed away on May 28, 2013. He enlisted in the United States Army in 1964, following in the footsteps of previous generations of his family who had served in the military. Upon completion of basic training, Chamberland was sent to Europe. While in Germany, he was assigned to a nuclear weapons outfit before being reassigned to the Military Police, a duty that included guarding the gates around the nuclear facilities. During his time in the service he was awarded the National Defense Service Medal and the Marksman Medal. Chamberland stayed active in the military community in his later life, serving as a member of the Connecticut National Guard Military Honors Unit in 2007. He was also the Vice-Chairman of the Bristol Veterans’ Council, a member of the Franco American Veterans’ Organization, and served as Adjutant, Chaplain and a Senior Vice Commander.
John W. Jones, 88, passed away surrounded by his family at his home in Killingworth on August 24, 2013. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy after graduation from high school and was stationed aboard the USS Hyman DD-732. During his time in the Pacific, Jones participated in the Battle of Iwo Jima, providing bombardment support for the troops who stormed the island. His ship took causalities during the Battle of Okinawa when a torpedo hit the ship. Jones received advanced training at MIT after the war and pursued his career as an electrician.

John Repp, 88, died August 8, 2012. In an attempt to pre-empt the draft, Repp enlisted in the Air Force in 1943. He was the co-pilot of a B-24 bomber based in Italy during WWII. After four successful bombing missions over Germany, Repp and his crew were shot down on their fifth mission. After being hit several times from ground fire, Repp lost control of the plane and was forced to parachute out. Captured as a prisoner of war, he was taken to Stalag Luft 1 and held captive until being liberated by the Russians. After the war, Repp took advantage of the G.I. Bill and graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He would go on to work for Pratt & Whitney.

Edwin M. Lavitt, 92, died on June 24, 2013. In 1943, Lavitt enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps and became a member of the 44th Bomb Group, 67th Squadron, 8th Air Force. Beginning as an instructor, Lavitt was promoted to Captain and was the lead pilot for 12 of his 29 missions over Germany. For his service, Lavitt was awarded 3 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 5 Air Medals and the French Legion of Honour. Following the war, he went on to graduate from Boston College and practice law.

Harry B. Mulliken, 85, died on September 19, 2013. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps at the age of 17 in 1945. Following WWII, Mulliken worked in the mines in Colorado before being activated for the Korean War. He was shipped to Korea, where he started off as a Squad Leader before being promoted to Platoon Sergeant. On a mission to knock out a Chinese bunker build up, Mulliken was shot in the hip but kept on fighting and was awarded the Purple Heart for his actions. After the war, he graduated from the University of Colorado and worked at Hamilton Standard before moving on to Combustion Engineering.

Walter Swokla, 89, passed away on May 16, 2013. Enlisting in 1942, Swokla became a member of the U.S. Merchant Marine Corps. During his service, Swokla would ship out of either New York or Boston, usually delivering goods or services to England. Swokla’s first encounter with German soldiers was when his vessel was ordered to transport German prisoners of war back to the United States. Some of Swokla’s fellow Merchant sailors informed the German POWs of Swokla’s Russian ancestry, which made them fearful of Walter. His ships also delivered supplies to the Soviet Union but did not have much interaction with Soviet soldiers because their government looked down upon interaction with Western Merchant Marines. Following the war, Swokla went on to work at Sealtest Foods, serving as a Pasteurizer and at Mercer and Dunbar Security as an armed guard.
NEW EMPLOYEE

Paul Mirabello is a junior at CCSU pursuing a BA degree in History with the goal of becoming a public historian. While growing up, his grandfathers and grand uncles told him stories from their time in WW II. It was because of these stories Paul became interested in the preservation of history. Paul’s appreciation for veterans continues to grow as Paul progresses with his history education. The Veterans History Project is a way for Paul to not only preserve and hear the stories of so many other veterans like his grandparents but to take part in archiving those stories. Mirabello commented, “The opportunity to preserve memories for generations to come is an incredible opportunity not only for future generations, but also as a way to honor our veterans”.

KOREAN WAR REMEMBRANCE

The Veterans History Project and the Connecticut Department of Veterans’ Affairs co-sponsored a day of recognition and remembrance for Korean War veterans to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the signing of the armistice. A large group of veterans and civilians gathered on July 26, 2013 at Camp Niantic to take part in the commemoration event. It was a day to recognize those in attendance as well as those who paid the ultimate price. After a few brief speeches there was a reading of the 316 names of Connecticut's own who did not return home. The event was a great success. Every Korean War veteran in attendance received a coin in recognition of his service. The event closed with a picnic, music by the Sin Sisters and time for everyone to visit. For more pictures of this event please visit www.ccsu.edu/vhp and click on “VHP News and Current Events”