



Center for Public Policy & Social Research
Governor William A. O'Neill Oral History Program at
Central Connecticut State University

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MEMORIAL DAY HISTORY
BY JANE NATOLI

General John Logan, National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1868, officially proclaimed Memorial Day on May 5, 1868. It was first observed on May 30, 1968 by placing flowers on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. After World War I, Memorial Day was changed to include all American soldiers who died fighting in any war, not just the Civil War.

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, had many beginnings. Its roots go back to the Civil War when women's groups in the South decorated graves of fallen soldiers. In 1915, Moina Michael had the idea to wear red poppies on Memorial Day to honor the fallen soldiers. Moina sold poppies to her friends to raise money for servicemen in need. The idea spread through out the United States and to other countries.



Vietnam Women's Memorial



Iwo Jima Memorial VisitingDC.com



World War II Memorial

VETERANS' NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Commissioner Schwartz Requests Needs Assessment



Commissioner Schwartz

Recognizing the great sacrifices made by the courageous young men and women returning from duty in Iraq and Afghanistan and the obligation of the state of Connecticut to assist OEF/OIF (Operation Enduring Freedom/ Operation Iraq Freedom) veterans in successfully reintegrating into civilian life, Commissioner Linda Schwartz asked CCSU's Center for Public Policy and Social Research to conduct a needs assessment study to: (1) identify the salient medical, psycho-social, higher education and economic needs of returning OEF/OIF veterans as well as barriers that are preventing the needs from being met, and (2) establish recommendations for changes in public policy and possible legislative initiatives to improve the chances for Connecticut veterans' optimal readjustment to civilian life.

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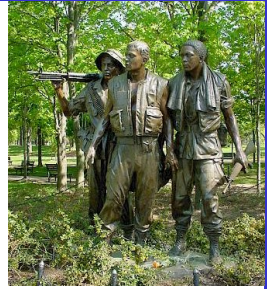
HISTORY OF MEMORIAL DAY

(CONTINUED FROM PG. 1)



Arlington National Cemetery

Recently, the observance of Memorial Day has dwindled. Some people no longer remember what the day is really about and do not properly observe it. To reeducate the country on the meaning and importance of Memorial Day, President Bill Clinton signed into law the “National Moment of Remembrance Act,” on December 29, 2000, and released this statement: “Today I am pleased to sign S. 3181, the “National Moment of Remembrance Act,” which designates 3:00 p.m. local time on Memorial Day each year as the national Moment of Remembrance, in honor of the men and women of the United States who died in the pursuit of freedom and peace....”



Right: Three Servicemen Statue wapheonix.org

This Law stems from a commemoration tradition that began in 1997. “Taps” was played at 3:00 on radio and television stations across the country and Americans paused during their day to remember their fallen brothers and sisters who selflessly gave their lives to our country to secure our freedom.

As President Clinton said, “The observance of a National Moment of Remembrance is a simple and unifying way to commemorate our history and honor the struggle to protect our freedoms.”



Ernie Pyle was a famous journalist during WWII who wrote from the front-lines. The wooden cross on IE Shima was replaced in 1949 with a granite memorial. He is now buried in Hawaii.



Above: IE Shima Cemetery left: Ernie Pyle's original grave in IE Shima (photos courtesy of Albert D'Amico)



Above, left: Tomb of the Unknown Soldier [Encarta -online](http://Encarta-online), Above, right: Korean War Memorial Left: Vietnam Wall



VHP PARTICIPANT CONNIE NAPIER, JR. HONORED

Connie Napier and approximately 300 of the surviving Tuskegee Airmen were recently awarded the Congressional Gold Medal by President George Bush at a ceremony at the Capitol Rotunda. Connie Napier is a life long Connecticut resident who has been honored by CCSU. Napier served as a flight officer in the famed 332nd Fighter Group, an elite group of African American airmen who flew escort for the American heavy bombers during WWII. What began as the “Tuskegee Experiment” evolved into the legendary “Red Tails” (because of the red tails that marked their aircraft) who amassed a distinguished combat record which proved the competency and courage of African Americans. Of the almost 1,000 Tuskegee Airmen who were trained, almost 450 were deployed overseas, and 150 died in in combat or training. Because the military was still segregated at that time, the Tuskegee Airmen were an all black unit of the U.S. Army Air Corps. They were so highly respected for their aviation skills that bomber pilots would request a “redtail” escort. Due to racism, these heroes were not recognized or rewarded for their valor at the time they earned it. It has only been recently that they have received some of their long overdue accolades. These pioneers helped to pave the way for desegregation of the U. S. Armed Forces.



Connie Napier Jr. (courtesy of Connie Napier Jr.)

JANE NATOLI (VHP STUDENT) & CHRIS NOBLE



Jane Natoli joined the team working on the Veteran's History project this past January. She works on the VHP by processing photos, documents and oral histories from the veterans involved in the VHP. Her favorite part of working on the VHP is talking to the veterans and hearing their stories. She says, "Everyone in America should take the time to get to know veterans. You can learn a lot from a veteran about the United States of America; they know what it takes to keep the United States what it is." A sophomore at CCSU, Jane is majoring in English and is planning on becoming a high school English teacher.

**"For love of
country, they
accepted
death..."**
~ James A.
Garfield

Christopher C. Noble became a part of the Veterans History Project in March 2007. Chris, a grad student in the department of Information and Library Science at SCSU, is pursuing an MLS as a career change after many years of law practice. He is presently involved as a Library Practice intern at Burritt Library. He prepares and catalogs narrative summaries of Veteran videos for ContentDM a digital library system. The digital system is designed to provide on-line access to the collection of interviews and related materials. Chris is a Vietnam Era Veteran with a life long interest in history and a newly acquired interest in the creation and preservation of oral history materials. He says, "Each Veteran provides a first person account of history. Collection and organization in digital form will provide access for everyone to the valuable service each individual provided."



We come, not to mourn our dead soldiers, but to praise them. ~ Francis A. Walker

VHP UPDATE

To date we have collected almost 100 veteran oral histories, many of which are accessible on the internet. Please visit our web site at www.ccsu.edu/vhp to see if your records are activated. We are presently digitizing all the video taped interviews, which eventually will be available and searchable by key word on the internet.

Professor John Mueller's History 497 class, "War and Oral History" had the rewarding opportunity to participate in the VHP during the spring semester. While learning about the value and techniques of collecting, preserving and interpreting oral history, each student interviewed a veteran and learned some fascinating U. S. history first hand. A recent student interviewer, Nathan Ferrance, of Mueller's class commented, "The interview with Adelard was a pleasure to do. I enjoyed every aspect of the interview and believe that one can gain valuable insights into the lives of these citizen soldiers and gain a better appreciation of the sacrifices that all men used to make for their country. With the conclusion of my first interview I look forward to more in the future." Nathan interviewed Adelard Dusseault, who was a weather observer for the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. Dusseault said of his interview, "I am thankful for the opportunity to be interviewed and thoroughly enjoyed the experience."

IN MEMORIAM OF JOSEPH J. MENDITTO



We have lost another veteran hero who shared his story with the Veterans History Project. **Joseph J. Menditto** of New

Britain died peacefully at Connecticut Hospice on January 29, 2007. Joe served in the U. S. Army with Hq. Co., 2nd Bn, 351st Infantry during World War II and fought in Europe, North Africa and Italy. He participated in many historic battles including Rome-Arno, the north Appennines, Po Valley, and Monte Cassino. One of Joe's memorable experiences occurred at the Gustav Line during the Battle of Santa Maria Infante. Joe had lost his helmet and ended up using Lt. Col. Kendall's helmet (with a bullet hole in it) for three days until he could get a replacement. Kendall had been killed in action when a bullet pierced his helmet. During his distinguished military service, Joe was wounded twice at Monte Capello and received numerous medals and citations, including the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. We were fortunate to have interviewed Joe for the VHP in 2005. His personal military experience and his place in history will now be preserved for generations to come. Thanks, Joe.



As an archive partner with the Library of Congress, it is our privilege to collect and preserve the personal accounts of the service and sacrifice of our Connecticut heroes.

In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

-John McCrae



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VETERANS' NEEDS ASSESSMENT

(CONTINUED FROM PG. 1)

The needs assessment study will proceed through three phases. Phase I is now completed and consisted of discussions with federal and state service providers whose principal responsibilities involve working with OEF/OIF veterans on a daily basis. Phase II entails a series of focus groups with returning OEF/OIF veterans from Connecticut, and Phase III will involve the administration of a survey to a larger sample of OEF/OIF veterans in Connecticut.

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

www.ccsu.edu/vhp