

Veterans Legacy Program Contract Awarded

The Center for the Study of War and Society and Department of History at UT received a contract totaling \$77,799 for the Veterans Legacy Program, a new program in the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

This program pairs local universities and local school systems to produce education materials and public outreach programs about local national cemeteries and tell the individual stories of veterans and their service. This is one of nine contracts awarded to universities across the nation to empower students at all levels to learn about veterans' military and civic service.



A team of four undergraduate researchers has already launched into investigating individual stories of veterans interred in the Knoxville National Cemetery. In partnership with the East Tennessee Historical Society and the Knoxville History Project, their research will be used for a book about the cemetery as well as lesson plans, digital resources, and teaching materials for K-12 students in Knox County Schools and cemetery guides for the public.

Knoxville's cemetery has special significance as one of the nation's earliest, established by Union Major General Ambrose Burnside during the Civil War following the siege of Knoxville and Battle of Fort Sanders. Veterans from every conflict the United States has been involved in have been laid to rest there, with honors.

UT's Center for the Study of War and Society is working with undergraduate and graduate students to compile research on veteran's biographies and develop the digital learning materials about veterans buried in Knoxville National Cemetery. The program will utilize the vast amount of primary sources located within the Center, its oral histories, and within the Special Collections of the University of Tennessee Libraries. It provides valuable experience for undergraduates, as they gain knowledge in historical research, analysis, and teaching the important stories of our collective past.

The undergraduate research team look forward to the opportunity to work on the project.

"I hope to gain a better understanding of historical research for future application," Alexis Lyden says.

"It is an opportunity to further explore the stories and the legacies of soldiers who gave their lives for this community," says Alex Heaton. "It is an opportunity unlike any other."

"I would like to gain a better understanding of the personal side of conflicts," Andrew Shorten says. "I find it important for our veterans' stories to live on through future generations that we may understand their sacrifices made in the name of our country."

Will Oaks recalls Tennessee's nickname "The Volunteer State" and has many family members who were veterans, which makes this project especially meaningful for him.

"As a long-time resident of Tennessee, working on this project would be a fantastic way to further the historical features of my home state," Oaks says. "The stories of individual veterans, while fascinating, often go under the radar when compared to those more famous figures of war. Theirs are stories that reveal the day-to-day realities of conflict and military life."

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



This spring marks a great advance for our work, because the Center has now truly moved to the next level! After more than 30 years of work on recording and transcribing veteran oral histories, collecting documentary materials, and building a research focus on war, we received a major contract as part of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' new Veterans Legacy Program. We are so excited to be part of this national effort! Thank you for supporting our shared vision of the Center. We are eager to share more good news with you in the near future, as the program grows!

- **Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius**
DIRECTOR



PROGRAMS COMMEMORATED WWI CENTENNIAL



As a recipient of the Libraries of America “World War I and America” grant, the Center for the Study of War and Society commemorated the war’s centennial with a series of exciting events over the course of the 2017-2018 academic year. We partnered with the East Tennessee Historical Society, which graciously agreed to act as host for the events at their headquarters in downtown Knoxville.

The first event on November 5, 2017, was a panel discussion on the latest historical research conducted by history graduate students at the University of Tennessee on topics related to the First World War and the United States. Ryan Gesme’s research focused on the role of President Woodrow Wilson and his ideas of national self-determination in redrawing the complex Danish-German border-region of Schleswig-Holstein after the Great War. Josh Jeffery discussed the religious ramifications of the First World War in America. They were joined by United States Navy veteran, Captain Rosemary Mariner, who presented insights on the free Library of America WWI Reader. Her talk emphasized military service and republican citizenship, including the nexus between citizen armies, professional armed forces, conscription, individual conscience, and militarism in the First World War.



Our second event took place February 11, 2018, and featured a guest lecture by **Michael Neiberg** of the United States Army War College. His lecture, “How the First World War Created Modern America” was well publicized and eagerly attended, with an overflow audience of more than 220, ranging from the public to UT. Professor Neiberg’s talk focused on how Americans viewed the First World War as it progressed and how events eventually pushed the United States into war in April 1917.



Professor Michael Neiberg, chair of War Studies and professor of history at the National War College and author of *Path to War* speaks to an overflow crowd at the Center’s “World War I and America” event, co-hosted by CSWS and the East Tennessee Historical Society.



The following week, we hosted our third event, which was a screening of the film *Sergeant York* and featured a lecture and commentary by **Michael Birdwell** of Tennessee Tech University, noted curator of the *York papers*. The event had a capacity crowd of 250 guests in attendance. Birdwell discussed the making of the film and its reception by both the public and the York family at the time of the film’s production.

Sergeant Alvin C. York, 328th Infantry, who with aid of 17 men, captured 132 German prisoners; shows hill on which raid took place [October 8, 1918]. Argonne Forest, near Cornay, France.



In Memoriam

FREDDIE J. OWENS

Combat veteran, U.S. Army; 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile), 3rd Brigade; Company A, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry; Battle of Ia Drang Valley, Pleiku Campaign, Vietnam, 1965; Battle of Bong Son, 1966.

Owens sat down with Mark Boulton and Adam Frye March 18, 2014, to share his story. From his childhood in Edison, Georgia, to the day he decided to enlist, Owens had a strong commitment to his family and the brotherhood he discovered in the Army. He will be missed.

Read the full two-part oral history interview with Owens at csws.utk.edu/oral-history-project/read-an-interview.



Center Intern **Kara Gilliam** Reflects on Learning from the Work at the Center



“During my time at the Center, my primary job is to listen to and transcribe interviews with veterans. While performing this task, I feel that I know these wonderful men and women, just from listening to their stories and putting proverbial

pen to paper. Beyond that, my favorite thing is to watch people light up when they talk about things they enjoy, and amazingly, I can experience this through transcribing the interviews. I can tell by their voice inflections when they are lighting up, and I can picture it in my head. Listening to these veterans’ interviews is touching, and I’m excited to do my part to help share them with the world.

One of the veteran’s stories regarding World War II was particularly endearing for me. It was from Retired Navy Captain Kenneth Beyer of Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Captain Beyer’s ship had docked in the Caribbean. By coincidence, his father’s ship was docked at the same location. He snuck onto his father’s ship to surprise him and they spent the evening together catching up. They had not seen each other in quite a while, considering both were deployed to serve in World War II. This story was touching for me because I am particularly close with my father, who is in the Air Force. I am thinking about following in his footsteps to join the armed services and the thought of crossing paths with him while we both are serving our country is heartwarming. I called my father that night to share this story with him. He enjoyed hearing it, too. I can only imagine how comforting this experience was for Captain Beyer and his father during all the turmoil of the Second World War.

I am profoundly grateful to CSWS for providing this opportunity for young students to engage with veterans. The Center provides a fabulous service for the veterans and society by providing a platform to share their valuable experiences, and I’m honored to be a part of it.”



Former Center Assistant **Jordan Kuck** Accepts Job at Brevard College

Jordan Kuck, who worked as a graduate assistant at the Center, has accepted a new tenure-track teaching post in history at Brevard College, a liberal arts college located in North Carolina founded in 1853.

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