

Local Hall of Honor honorees speak about their service

The Hall of Honor at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport honors over 500 veterans

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Editor's note: This enterprise story is the first in a series regarding the R.D. White Veterans Museum and Hall of Honor at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

MT. VERNON — For those who have visited the Hall of Honor at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport, they have no doubt seen the names and faces of those who have bravely served our country. Knowing the story behind these names is not as easily observed.

Don Davis, Vice Chairman of the R.D. White Veterans Museum and Hall of Honor said that there are veterans featured in the Hall of Honor who still live in Jefferson County.

Doug Smothers and Wayne Berry are two of those men. Both Smothers and Berry served their country and have a tribute with their service information on the walls amongst the rest of the local veterans in the Hall of Honor.

Smothers was in the 11th Airborne Division of the Army during the time of the Korean War. He said, "I got drafted the same year they overran South Korea: 1950."

According to his tribute, Smothers attained that rank of Private First Class and was stationed at Fort Benning, Ga., and Fort Campbell, Ky.

Smothers was an inspector for quality controls for McDonnell Douglas after his time in the service.

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According to Smothers, he got into the astronautic inspection industry in 1958. He said, "I inspected Mercuries, Geminis, Skylab, shuttles, cruise missiles, harpoon missiles, all that stuff."

Smothers said that he would inspect the installation of the parts. He indicated once the parts were installed, he would check for proper assembly and the astronautic equipment would be shipped off to Florida.

Though Smothers was based out of Lambert Field in St. Louis, he went to Florida several times to assist with inspection. Smothers said that the equipment was assembled at Lambert Field and then shipped to Florida.

Davis said that Berry had flown many different types of aircrafts during his career in the Army Air Core.

Berry said that many people nowadays probably wouldn't recognize a lot of the names of the aircrafts he flew in the service. He gave the PT-19 as an example and explained that it was a trainer aircraft from the 40s. He indicated that he also flew bi wing planes, as well as numerous others.

"I am licensed to fly any single-engine plan plane," stated Berry. He said that he never flew a multiple engine aircraft, though he has ridden as a passenger in his friend's twin-engine aircraft. Berry said that he is only licensed for single-engine planes.

According to Berry, he



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HALL OF HONOR — Doug Smothers points to his tribute in the Hall of Honor at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. Smothers served in the 11th Airborne Division of the Army from 1950 to 1952.

joined the service in February of 1943 and got out in February of 1946. He said, "The war was over in the summertime of '45, August of '45, I remember the day, and then I got out in February."

Berry said that the government wanted to send him to Korea, but he just wanted to go home. He was put on standby, but he never got called.

According to Berry, he didn't choose to be involved in aircrafts during his service, but the Army chose it for him. He did say that he used to build little models when he was younger. He stated, "I guess I've been interested in aircrafts all my life, I still am."

Davis said that Berry got to sit in a P-51 aircraft that visited the airport recently. Davis said that when the P-51 comes back to the airport, Berry will get to fly it.

Smothers said that it feels good to have the Hall of Honor and Veterans Museum in the

airport to recognize the service of so many individuals, but he indicated that many people don't know it is there.

Berry said that the people who do see the Hall of Honor and Veterans Museum often give compliments. He said that it is surprising how many people who see the exhibits comment that they did not know it was there until they saw it.

"This is a thing of honor," stated Davis, "All of the tributes to the veterans and the museum are simply tributes of honor to our honorably discharged vets."

Davis said there are over 500 tributes to veterans in the Hall of Honor. He added that there is still room for more tributes for local military veterans. Interested parties who are veterans or have family members who are veterans may pick up a form at the airport.

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