

Mt. Vernon honors Vietnam War veterans

Veterans salute held Saturday afternoon

BY JENNIFER SANDERS
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — The Balloons Over Mt. Vernon event held at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport this past weekend honored veterans of the U.S. armed forces during a special veterans salute Saturday afternoon with a speech from a retired colonel, a helicopter fly over, and a 21-gun salute.

Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Director Chris Collins led the crowd in a prayer and the pledge of allegiance before introducing the guest speaker, Retired Col. Ted Buck.

"This man has a very distinguished flying career in the United States Air Force," Collins said introducing Buck.

Buck first acknowledged Collins on his recent induction to the Illinois Aviation hall of Fame. "Chris has been nominated and inducted into the aviation hall of fame in the State of Illinois. Let's give him a hand."

Buck also recognized 95-year-old World War II veteran, Evertt Atkinson, who quickly stood, threw his arms in the air and exclaimed, "Yee-haw! I feel good!"

"I want to thank all the veterans who served this great country throughout our his-



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HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE — Retired U.S.A.F. Colonel Ted Buck, RIGHT, congratulated Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Director Chris Collins, LEFT, for being inducted into the Illinois Aviation Hall of Fame at the beginning of his speech honoring veterans during Balloons Over Mt. Vernon Saturday afternoon.

tory. On the 52nd anniversary of the Vietnam War, I want to give a very belated 'Welcome Home' to those who served in that controversial war from 1955 to 1975," said Buck.

Buck spoke of several difficulties Vietnam veterans had to overcome once coming home from war including disrespect from fellow citizens, long term effects of agent orange, and PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder).

"Welcome home, troops.

Hold your head high. Stand tall. You were called and you answered. You served. You saw the horrors of war and you came home. If I could live my time over in Vietnam I would want to serve with the troops present here today," said Buck. "Thank you for serving the greatest country in the world. I salute you."

Buck honored 16 men from Jefferson County who lost their lives in the Vietnam War and asked the crowd to stand at attention while listening their names.

Following Buck's speech, the Mt. Vernon American Legion Post 141 performed a 21-gun salute in honor of the soldiers lost in action. The post was present with one member carrying the flag, one bugler playing Taps, and seven men for the 21-gun salute.

As Taps was played, a Huey helicopter flew overhead with an enormous American flag.

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CHOPPER FLY BY — A Huey helicopter circled overhead prior to retired U.S.A.F. Colonel Ted Buck's speech honoring Vietnam War veterans Saturday afternoon at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.