

Veterans museum is renamed to honor R.D. White

R.D. White's legacy will live on through veterans memorials at Mt. Vernon airport

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MT. VERNON — Col. R.D. White's physical presence is no longer here, but his lasting legacy is still present through the Jefferson County Veterans Hall of Honor and the newly renamed Col. R.D. White Veterans Museum.

The hall and museum, both of

which are located at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport, serve as a tribute to over 300 area veterans who served in combat, some of whom gave their lives for the United States.

White, who was a veteran, Senior Saint and chairman of the Woodlawn Veterans Memorial Committee, came up with the idea after

the Little Egypt Fly-in in 2009, said Chris Collins, airport manager. The museum and hall dedication took place in June of 2010, after a several month-long planning stage.

"R.D. came before the airport board and said he wanted to do something to honor area veterans," Collins said. "We have the Little Egypt Fly-in and veterans reunion every year in October, and what he was wanting to do was make a lasting tribute to all the veterans of the area for every October when

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the airport does that event to have something to roll out that can be a visual to all the area veterans."

Collins said the airport board supported the idea but thought it'd be better to do something that would last longer than just one weekend a year.

"So the board asked R.D. to form a committee to report back to them about an idea that could be a long-standing memorial," Collins said. "That committee started putting out ideas on how to make it visual and something that's lasting."

The Hall of Honor contains many pictures of veterans and information on their service times, while in the main terminal a separate area is designated for veter-

ans who gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country. "Those veterans are separated out from the other ones. That's up to 20, 22 in that area and that area contains an American flag and a POW MIA flag and a small white table below it ... [that represents] a missing spot at a table for each service person that didn't return," Collins said.

The museum consists mainly of two rooms in the airport and holds many different items of memorabilia — many of which have been donated by families of local veterans. There are newspaper clippings, uniforms, helmets, hats, pictures, medals, a large motorcycle equipped with a gun, and other weapons, including two captured Japanese infantryman rifles with bayonets that White personally confiscated, according to Collins.

"It wasn't very far into making the tributes that area veterans' families started asking

us questions, like, 'Hey, I have a uniform of my dad's or grandfather's, would you like to put that on display?'" Collins said. "The museum grew out of that. So we started with just one small room and probably within 90 days we had filled that room and expanded it."

White served as chairman of the committee in charge of the hall and museum. Collins said the committee is still active and nothing has really changed since White's death.

Collins said White played an important role at the airport in general and not just with the veterans tribute. Collins said White carried good values and traits all the way through his life and was able to teach them to others while mentoring to people of all ages. "He was just a great individual, and I'm so blessed to have known him and have him in my life for those few years that I did have him," Collins said. "He was a great man."

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VETERANS MUSEUM — The R.D. White Veterans Museum at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport holds many different items, including uniforms, weapons and newspaper clippings from times of combat by U.S. soldiers. The museum and Hall of Honor pay special tribute to the many local veterans who served their country.

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