

# Collecting war stories

*Historical Society's Vietnam veterans Listening Station is open*



Paul Lee (left) and Skip Miller in Bien Hoa, Vietnam, on April 17, 1972. This photo was recently added to the archives because of the Listening Station project.



Photo by Carla Lucas

*Skip Miller participates in the Vietnam War 'History That is Not Past' project.*

**By Carla Lucas  
Correspondent**

The files on the Vietnam War at the Cecil County Historical Society include one small folder full of newspaper clippings about ten Cecil County men who lost their lives during the war, and a story about the traveling Vietnam Memorial that came to the area a few years ago.

That's it. But not for long.

The Vietnam Veterans Listening Station, part of the "History That is not Past" project, is now open. The Historical Society wants to capture the stories of Cecil residents involved in the Vietnam era and preserve the stories for future generations.

"We have community members who have historical experiences that have not been recognized or recorded," said Cecil County historian Mike Dixon. "Their stories

have not made it into the public record. Think about how much we are missing.”

According to Dixon, the citizens of Cecil County were largely supportive of the war in the early 1960s. They were proud of the men and women who served. The Bainbridge Naval Training Center, in Port Deposit, employed county residents. There was a draft board in Elkton, and as young men came of age, they would be sent for medical exams. Many young men were drafted or volunteered to serve.

Dixon said the Listening Station will record the experiences of a wide range of people, including those who were drafted or volunteered, who were on the front lines, families of those who were lost in the war, those who supported the war, and anyone who wants to share their thoughts.

Vietnam is the second oral history project done at Cecil County Historical Society. Last year, a program was focused on the 50th anniversary of the 1963 crash of a Pan-Am flight on a farm off Delancy Road in Elkton. Stories were collected from many family members of the 73 passengers

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Robert Preston training as a K-9 handler in Texas. He brought this photo to his Listening Station session.



Photo by Carla Lucas  
Robert Preston is an Air Force veteran of the Vietnam War. He trained in Texas as a K-9 Handler and was assigned to the K-9 Corps at Cam Rahn Bay. His story is now part of the Cecil County Historical Society's oral history project.

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## Vietnam project...

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and eight crew members who died, as well as from locals who witnessed the crash or responded in the aftermath. Part of the presentation is on YouTube and can be accessed by searching "Pan Am Flight 214" online.

The sister of George Robinson, one of the firemen at the scene of the Pan Am crash, contacted the Chester County Historical Society about the program and mentioned that her brother was drafted in 1966 and died in Vietnam on April 25, 1969 at the age of 22. For Mike Dixon, the conversation led to the decision to focus on the stories of the Vietnam war.

Upcoming Listening Station topics include: Cecil area women who worked in the area during World War II, school integration, and "Cecil Remembers 9/11" on the 15-year anniversary of the attacks.

Each listening session takes about an hour. The visitor is prompted by a Historical Society volunteer with a couple of basic questions to get the process started. At times, the volunteer may ask additional questions to keep the person moving through his or her story.

Modern technology is making this project possible. Digital recordings are easy to make and preserve. They are also easy to edit, access and share. Each of the recordings will be indexed and archived by University of Delaware graduate students. The students will listen to each tape and note various subjects. Future scholars will then be able to access the information easily by searching the index by topic.

To enhance the society's Vietnam era collection, it is also seeking letters, photographs and tapes from home to document how the war affected life in Cecil County. Ken Broomell, a research historian with the Historical Society, is combing through the Whig and Democrat for Vietnam articles.



Photo by Carla Lucas

Research historian Ken Broomell searches a Cecil Whig for stories about the Vietnam War.

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Currently, there is no single document counting how many people from Cecil County actually served in the military during the Vietnam War. The project may lead to an official count.

After all the stories are told and the research is complete, Dixon will present a public program about Cecil County and the Vietnam War. He also plans to produce a short video highlighting what was learned.

To share your stories, contact the Cecil County Historical Society at 410-398-1790.



Photo by Carla Lucas  
*A typical Listening Station session at Cecil County Historical Society.*

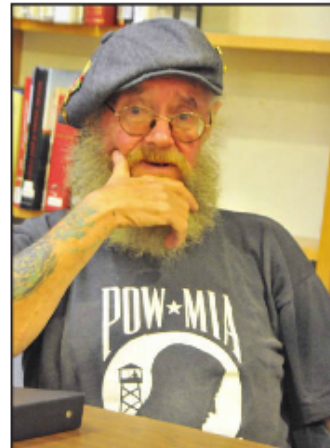


Photo by Carla Lucas  
*Vernon Ferguson tells his story about being in Vietnam during the Tet Offensive.*

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