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Center for the Study of War and Society

Spring 2013

War Stories Spring 2013

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THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE 
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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We have once again had a very productive year at the center. We hosted nationally and internationally known scholars. Professor Wilfred McClay of the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, lectured on post-war moral questions. Joachim Tauber, from Lüneburg, Germany, lectured on World War II and the Holocaust, and author Rob Simbeck spoke on women pilots during World War II.

The amazing record of graduate research fellowships won by doctoral students active in center programs continued when Brad Nichols won two fellowships—one to the UT Humanities Center and the other for later work at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. We also were proud to learn that our undergraduate interns won awards at UT's exhibition of undergraduate research (see page 3).

Recently, I was honored to give a featured talk at the National World War I Museum at the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City.

At the center, we continue work on our digital archive project. However, all of this activity wouldn't be possible without you, our friends and donors. We thank you most deeply!

—*Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, Director*

CSWS STAFF

VEJAS G. LIULEVICIUS, director

CYNTHIA L. TINKER, program coordinator

ROSEMARY B. MARINER, scholar-in-residence

JORDAN KUCK, graduate assistant

WILL RALL, graduate assistant



LEFT: CORNELIA FORT

ABOVE: CORNELIA FORT, SECOND FROM LEFT, AND FELLOW PILOTS BARBARA TOWNE, EVELYN SHARP (ALSO KILLED ON DUTY), BARBARA JANE ERICKSON AND BERNICE BATTEN, BESIDE VULTEE BASIC TRAINER PLANE, MARCH 7, 1943, TWO WEEKS BEFORE FORT'S CRASH.

Johnson Lecture Focuses on First Woman to Die on Active Duty

The center welcomed award-winning author and extraordinary speaker Rob Simbeck in March. Simbeck is the author of Daughter of the Air: The Brief Soaring Life of Cornelia Fort. It is a beautifully written book sprinkled with Fort's artful letters back home. Though Fort was portrayed in the film Tora, Tora, Tora and there was a small airport in Nashville named for her, she remains a largely unknown figure. We hope to rectify this injustice.

In the early 1920s, prominent Nashville doctor Rufus E. Fort made his three sons take an oath on the family Bible that they would never take up flying. What he didn't realize was that his young daughter Cornelia was listening to every word, and she wasn't made to take the oath.

Cornelia lived an idyllic and adventurous childhood at Fortland, the family estate, which was also a working farm. But as she matured, she became uncomfortable being part of Nashville high society as a debutante and member of the elite Cotillion Club. She begged her father to let her attend Sarah Lawrence College. She graduated in 1939 and returned home with new confidence and eager for excitement.

It was in Berry Field in Nashville, during her first flight, that Cornelia found her calling—even though she knew her father would disapprove. From the moment the plane lifted, Cornelia's life was transformed. Over the next few weeks

UT AT WAR

General Clifton B. Cates was one of the few officers of any service who commanded a platoon, company, battalion,

regiment, and division in combat. He was only the second Marine Corps commandant to continue serving following his commandancy.

He was born in 1893 at Cates Landing, Tennessee. He graduated

from UT with a bachelor of laws in 1916. In 1917, he accepted a Marine Corps commission.

During World War I, he earned the Navy Cross for heroism at Bouresches and Belleau Wood. At Soissons he received the Silver Star. The French government awarded him the Legion of Honor and the Croix de Guerre.

After WWI he participated in the occupation of Germany and served in Washington as an aide to the Marine Corps commandant and a military aide to President Woodrow Wilson.

When the United States entered WWII, Cates was director of the Marine Corps Basic School in Philadelphia. He left this post for the field, in command of the First Marines at the landing at Guadalcanal in August 1942, for which he received the Legion of Merit.

He was commandant of the Marine Corps School at Quantico, before receiving command of the Fourth Division in July 1944. Cates played a pivotal role in the Tinian campaign and the seizure of Iwo Jima.

In 1948, Cates was promoted to general and served as commandant of the Marine Corps until 1952. He again served as commandant of the Marine Corps Schools before his retirement in 1954. During his thirty-seven-years in the Marines, he was wounded several times and won almost thirty decorations. In 1970, Cates was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.



Johnson Lecture *(continued)*

she continued her lessons, soloed, and in June received her private pilot's license. She had earned it more quickly than any Nashville student before her. She received her commercial license in February 1941, becoming only the second Nashville woman ever to do so. By March 10, she had earned her instructor's rating and took a job teaching for a local flyer before moving to the blue skies of Fort Collins, Colorado.

In August 1941, she was offered a job as an instructor in Honolulu, Hawaii, and jumped at the chance to teach the many military personnel and defense workers on the island. On the morning of December 7, she was flying with her student when she saw a military airplane flying toward them. Cornelia grabbed the controls from her student to pull up over the aircraft. It was so close it rattled their windows, and she finally saw the painted red balls on the wings.

Looking toward Pearl Harbor, she saw billowing smoke, and above, formations of silver bombers. As Cornelia began her descent, she realized the plane was the target of machine-gun fire. She quickly dropped the plane to the runway. Bullets splattered all around as they jumped from the plane and ran for cover. The airport manager was killed, and two other civilian planes did not return.

Cornelia returned to the mainland in early 1942 and began making a short film to promote war bonds, which led to several speaking engagements. In September, she joined a select group in the newly established Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron—precursor to the Women Airforce Service Pilots (the WASPs). She was the second woman accepted into the service, which ferried military planes to bases within the United States.

In February, she was stationed at the 6th Ferrying Group base at Long Beach, California. They flew a steady stream of BT-13s to Love Field in Dallas, Texas. On Sunday, March 21, Cornelia took



ABOVE: YOUNG CORNELIA FORT FEARLESSLY RIDES ONE OF HER CHILDHOOD PONIES.

off on another routine flight to Dallas. The group of six planes (Cornelia and five male pilots) were flying in formation, which she had never done before, and breaking the 500-foot distance rule. The group was flying south of Sweetwater, Texas, at about 3:30 p.m. when Cornelia's wingtip struck another plane's landing gear.

The other pilots said that she never made an attempt to right the plane or release the emergency hatch as the plane spun to the ground. At the age of 24, Cornelia Clark Fort became the first woman in US history to die while on active duty.

We are extremely grateful to Mr. Simbeck for such a marvelous, moving presentation about this remarkable heroine as we remember her during the seventieth anniversary of her ultimate sacrifice. Copies of Daughter of the Air: The Brief Soaring Life of Cornelia Fort are still available. Please contact Rob Simbeck at 615-758-7393 or robsimbeck1@cs.com. We urge everyone to read this remarkable story about one of the most fascinating and courageous women of World War II.

Center Boasts Award-Winning Interns

The Center always boasts a talented crop of undergraduate interns. Whether interviewing veterans, transcribing interviews, or writing papers, our interns consistently produce top-notch work. Now, thanks to this semester's group, that work can officially be called award-winning.

Kendal Youngblood, Robert Prater, and Patrick Hollis were among the winners at the 2013 Exhibition of Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement, or EURECA, held on campus in March. This annual event, sponsored by the Office of Research & Engagement, showcased the academic research and creative activities of the university's undergraduate community. Students presented research

findings from a host of disciplines, including history, political science, business, civil engineering, and even theater and performing arts.

For the first-ever CSWS entry, our interns' project, "Oral History Projects of US Veterans of World War II," detailed their personal experiences in transforming a veteran's interview into a historical resource. These critical contributions to the Center's Veteran's Oral History Project represent unique opportunities for undergraduates to conduct research in the humanities—something rare in universities across the country. Center director Dr. Vejas Liulevicius supervised the project.



IN MEMORIAM

DR. JOHN E. KESTERSON, World War II, US Army, chief anesthetist; 114th and 84th Field Hospitals; European Theater

BRUCE MCCARTY, World War II, US Army Air Force, P-38 fighter pilot; 465th Army Air Force Base Unit; Stateside

ELDRED M. SWINGEN, World War II, US Army Captain, 905th Field Artillery Battalion, 80th Division; European Theater; Awarded the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster and four battle stars



RIGHT: KENDAL YOUNGBLOOD, PATRICK HOLLIS, AND ROBERT PRATER WERE AMONG THE WINNERS AT THE 2013 EXHIBITION OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACHIEVEMENT FOR THEIR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT FOCUSING ON VETERANS OF WWII.



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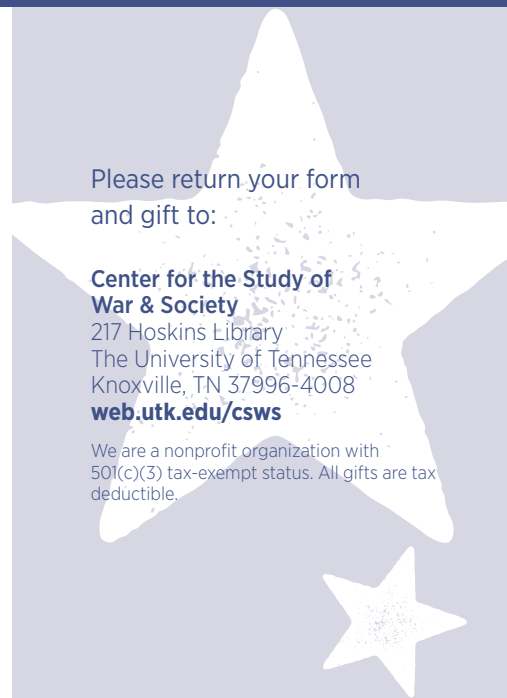
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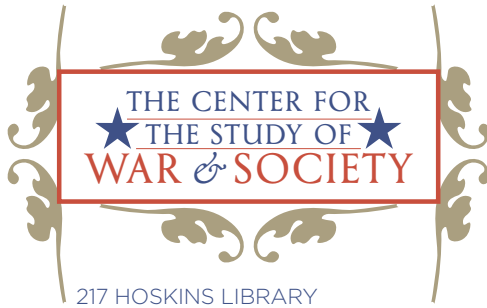
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