

CONNECTICUT VETERANS HALL OF FAME
Class of 2005

George Herbert Walker Bush (Greenwich)

He served as a Naval Aviator during World War II and flew 58 combat missions. He was the youngest pilot in the Navy when he received his wings. He was elected to Congress in 1967 from the State of Texas and continued to serve his country as Ambassador to the United Nations and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. In 1980, he was elected Vice-President under Ronald Reagan and was elected the 41st President of the United States in 1988.

Nathan George Agostinelli (Manchester)

His military service includes two years as a First Lieutenant in the United States Army during the Korean Conflict. He served six years in the U.S. Army Reserve and 23-years in the Connecticut National Guard advancing through the ranks from First Lieutenant to Brigadier General. He was elected Mayor of the Town of Manchester and then State Comptroller, becoming the first Manchester resident elected to state-wide office. He has been an Executive Vice President of New England Bank, Trustee of Eastern Connecticut Health Network, Member of the State Banking Commission, and Member of the Connecticut Commission on Hospitals and Health Care, He was very instrumental in establishing the WWII Museum during the 50th Anniversary Celebration and Co-Chaired Manchester's Town Commemoration Committee. Currently, Mr. Agostinelli is a director of the Selective Service System for the State of Connecticut, appointed to that position by President Clinton.

William Thomas Coffey Sr. (Plainville)

Colonel Coffey has an outstanding 43 year military career in the Connecticut National Guard. His unit was mobilized for the Korean Conflict and he volunteered for duty in Vietnam. After his military service, he continued serving his comrades and fellow veterans. For the past 8 years, he has been active with the Connecticut Committee for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves and currently serves as Vice-Chairman of that group. He is active in the important Pre and Post Mobilization Process for members of the Connecticut National Guard and Reserve units being mobilized for duty in Southwest Asia. In collaboration with this son, Major William Coffey Jr. has published two anthologies of American Patriotism. He has been an avid collector of the stories and "uncommon words from common patriots" that comprise the volumes of "Patriots Heart" and "More Patriots Heart" which are rich with text that reflect and celebrate the American spirit, honor, integrity and wisdom. **(NB: Today Col Coffey is accompanied by his grandson Samuel who is celebrating his 9th birthday)**

Randall Howard Collins (Waterford)

Dr. Collins served in the United States Army Military Intelligence Division during the Vietnam War. He received several medals and commendations during his tour of duty in that conflict. Returning to civilian life, he sought a career in education and in 1987 received his doctorate from Boston University. He has served as Superintendent of Schools in three different communities over the past 18 years, the last 14 of which have been in Waterford. He pioneered the development of the Learning Through Service Program which made Waterford the first public school in America to require a designated number of community service hours as a requirement for graduation, promoting good citizenship through community service. He has received the Connecticut Superintendent of the Year Award. One of his most important contributions to the veteran community was his leadership in urging the Board of Education to award high school diplomas to WWII veterans whose education was interrupted because of the war. This was adopted throughout Connecticut and became a tradition and custom which eventually was embraced by the Lt. Governor and the entire state. He also was effective in persuading the Board to adopt a policy of offering maximum financial support to all employees in the Reserves that are called to Active Duty and encouraged other school districts to do the same. As a member of the Military/Superintendents Liaison Commission, he examines various needs of the military community living in Southeast Connecticut. He continues to be a strong advocate for veterans and military personnel.

Lt. Col. Bruce Hults Ey (Wethersfield) (posthumously)

Mr. Ey attained the rank of Technical Sergeant in the United States Army Air Force during World War II. Although stricken with polio as a young man he enthusiastically sought to serve in the military. During his time in service he was a Radio Gunner on a B-17, did combat tours in Korea and Vietnam, was a Prisoner of War and received numerous medals and commendations including the Purple Heart. He served as the Commanding Officer for the Military Intelligence and Security Unit FRF Germany. He retired with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He continued to serve his former comrades after being appointed Director of Veteran's Home Life at the State Veterans Home and Hospital in 1973. In his desire to help his fellow veterans he spearheaded efforts to engage community support to improve the quality of life for the veterans at Rocky Hill. He was responsible for establishing the Home's Outreach Program and instituting many recreational activities which enriched the lives of the veterans at the Home then and for years to come. He shared his love of sports by coaching Little League in Wethersfield. He also ensured that veterans were honored twice a year by Major League Baseball at Shea Stadium, Yankee Stadium or Fenway Park.

Joseph G. Lombardo (Middlefield)

Mr. Lombardo served in the United States Army during World War II and held the rank of Second Lieutenant as a Navigator in the Army Air Force. He was elected to the Connecticut General Assembly in 1956 and served on the House Veterans and Military Affairs Committee. He strongly advocated for veterans and organized the Middlefield American Legion Post #92 and served as its first Commander. He is a life member of both the American Legion and VFW. He has lived a life of philanthropy and community leadership which has touched countless individuals. He is a member of the Connecticut Board of Football Officials having had the distinction of serving for 15 years as a Head Linesman. He has been cited by Citizen's Bank and Farmer's Mechanics Bank for 20 years of outstanding contributions to the banking community; He served on the Board of Trustees of Middlesex Community College for 10 years. He established an endowment fund to finance the tuition program for needy students. Included among his many philanthropic activities are his work with the Middlesex County Foundation, assistance to troubled children at the Cromwell Children's Home where he organized and secured funds that enabled them to build a new education building and as Treasurer of the Levi Coe Library.

Giacomo "Jack" Mordente III (Branford)

Mr. Mordente served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam era and was on active duty for three years. Upon discharge, he joined the Army Reserve to continue serving his country. For the past 30 years, Jack has served the needs of veterans as Director of Veterans Affairs at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven. As an Adjunct Faculty member, he initiated the Vietnam War Era Historical, Cultural, Social and Geopolitical Study Program. He has sponsored PTSD In-Service Training at the Connecticut Department of Corrections. He has energetically encouraged veterans' awareness at SCSU by sponsoring the Smithsonian Vietnam War Photo Exhibit and Connecticut Vietnam Veterans Art Shows. He is a dauntless advocate for veterans and has spoken and lectured about America and the Vietnam Experience, women veterans, minority veterans and Gulf War veterans. He is a member of the New Haven Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee, Connecticut Board of Higher Education Advisory Committee and Chair of the Connecticut Herbicides Information Commission. He is an active member of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. He has also advocated for veterans on the national level on such issues as healthcare, education and employment.

Dr. James Sedalia Peters II (Storrs)

Dr. Peters served in the United States Navy during World War II. In spite of being in a segregated camp at Great Lakes, his work and research helped to bring about integration in the United States Navy in 1945. The other military services did not integrate until 1948. Dr. Peters, a retired administrator, professor and licensed clinical/counseling psychologist, served as Associate Commissioner for the Connecticut Department of Education. His assistance to veterans includes 10 years working for the U.S Veterans Administration. Throughout his life, he has been a champion for the rights of physically, mentally disadvantaged and handicapped individuals. He has written numerous publications, including 25 books on a range of topics and interest areas. His works include: "Psychological Consequences of Being a Black American": a sourcebook of research by Black Psychologists; "Leadership and Career Development"; "The Saga of Black Navy Veterans of WWII: An American Triumph"; and "Social Justice for the Disabled".

Lt. Ernest Virgil Plantz (Gales Ferry)

Mr. Plantz served with the United States Navy in World War II and attained the rank of Lieutenant. In 1942 he survived the sinking of his submarine, the USS Perch, by Japanese forces and became a prisoner of war. He was liberated more than 3 years later in 1945. He was awarded several medals included the Purple Heart and Bronze Star. He overcame physical and emotional damages he suffered as a Prisoner of War to serve his community and fellow veterans. Although he is a disabled veteran his untiring energy and commitment to others is impressive. He is active in civic affairs in Ledyard, especially the Lions Club where he served as President. His effort to enrich the lives of others was recognized by his honor as the Melvin Jones Fellow which is the highest award for humanitarian service bestowed by Lions International. He also served as a member of the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, as Deacon in his church and is a member of many patriotic and fraternal organizations. He has also spent many hours teaching school children about the history of World War II and the sacrifices made by our veterans.

Norman Warren VanCor (Harwinton)

Served in the United States Marines during the Vietnam War where he attained the rank of Sergeant. He was awarded the Navy Cross for his heroic actions in saving the lives of two of his wounded comrades during a firefight in Vietnam in 1969. He has been active in advocating for veterans and has volunteered his time in serving on community and state boards and commissions. He is a master gardener and taught gardening to the inmates at the Cheshire Correctional Institute to help them with transitional employment upon their release. He was an original Corporator of Bradley Memorial Hospital in Southington. Other notable accomplishments include service as President of the Southing Water Commission, Alternate Member of the Connecticut Judicial Review Council and member of the Council on Environmental Quality. He was inducted into the American Diabetes Hall of Merit and selected as one of the 50 most influential people in Connecticut in the fight against diabetes.