



## Featured: Stories from Vietnam

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by Jenni Hodges

When Kenneth Quinn landed in Vietnam, he was sure someone would try to kill him immediately. Quinn, a civilian officer in 1967, remembers, “I was so pleased when that didn’t happen.”

Quinn, now president of [World Food Prize Foundation](#), is one of 15 veterans and civilians whose stories have been recorded by five Central College students for the Library of Congress. [Mark Barloon](#), senior lecturer of history, said most veterans’ stories aren’t glamorous, but every detail may be invaluable to future researchers.

“So much of service in the military is monotony and boredom,” Barloon said, “but you never know what questions future historians are going to ask.”

Quinn’s experience is an exception, Barloon said. His first days in Vietnam weren’t what he imagined, but he was later the first person to report the 1974 Cambodian genocide and the only civilian ever to receive the U.S. Army Air Medal.

Jordan Rouse ’16 of Ankeny, a political science and history major at Central, interviewed Quinn for the [Veterans History Project](#). Rouse said he was nervous because he wanted to show veterans the honor they deserve, but he was privileged to hear Quinn’s experiences, reflections and convictions.

“The information he knows could fill volumes of books,” Rouse said. “It’s fascinating to hear him talk.”



## Kenneth Quinn Found His Future In Vietnam



Another veteran told Kyle Pepper '17 of Overland Park, Kans., about the contrast between his service in Vietnam and, decades later, Iraq. Pepper's grandmother, who served as a civilian during the war, told the social science major about helping in burn wards, caring for victims' families and hosting holiday meals in Japan.

It's a big responsibility, Barloon said, for students to be involved in creating the record of history. "They've got to do the stories justice," he said.

Cheri Doane, director of community-based learning for Central College, helped students connect with veterans through alumni and community partners. Doane said the project offered an invaluable chance for students to learn from others' most meaningful experiences.

"We learn from history the importance of striving for peace," Doane said. "Plus, I love it that Central College can strengthen a project in the Library of Congress."

A national initiative, the [Veterans History Project](#) saves personal accounts of American war veterans (and civilians who supported war efforts) so future generations can better understand the realities of war. The Central students' recorded interviews will become part of the Library of Congress' permanent collection.

In January, Central was [recognized](#) by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching for proven community engagement. Doane said the interview project offers another way to strengthen Central's ties to central Iowa communities — and preserve the voices of Vietnam veterans for future citizens.

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