

# Saluting Veterans on YouTube

## Vets in central Florida have the spotlight on them thanks to the efforts of one VFW Life member

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1st Lt. Ashley White was serving as a member of a Cultural Support Team attached to a Joint Special Operations Task Force in Afghanistan when she was killed on Oct. 22, 2011. On Jan. 10, the Villagers for Veterans and Habitat for Humanity of Lake-Sumter in Eustis, Florida, broke ground for Ashley's House, a transition home for female veterans.

White is one of hundreds of veterans whose stories have been told by Bob Peters, a Vietnam veteran and host of the Central Florida Salute YouTube channel.

A Life member of VFW Post 201 in Waterbury, Connecticut, Peters retired to Leesburg, Florida, with his wife several years ago. In 2009, Lake Front TV in Leesburg approached local AMVETS members to see if they would be interested in doing programs on veterans and veterans issues.

Peters offered the names of some folks whom he thought would make good subjects for the station's reporters to interview.

Producers at Lake Front TV told Peters, however, they were interested in having him conduct the show. In 2010, Peters began the first of nearly 10 years on air profiling veterans throughout Florida. When the news station changed ownership, there also was a change in editorial direction.

Peters parted ways. Videographer Sue Cameron of Wild Zebra Media, who had worked with Peters on Lake Front TV, told him he needed to continue his work. She suggested a YouTube channel.

Students from Leesburg High School had built a set at the TV station for Peters, and he took it with him when he left. Eagles Aerie 4273 in Okahumpka, Florida, gave him studio space, which is where he airs the show unless he's taping on location in the community.

Peters said he receives no funding for the show, and any donations he does receive, he

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passes on to Cameron, who volunteers her professional expertise.

“Sue believes in this project and wants to help,” Peters said. “She is an absolute professional.”

Cameron said that while she did not serve in the military, she wants to support veterans in any way she can.

“I understand the importance of what they did for our country,” she said. “I am appalled by the fact our young people are not aware of the sacrifices and hardships our veterans endured. Recently, Bob was speaking with some high school students. They made a comment that Hitler wasn’t such a bad guy. They should watch Bob’s interview with holocaust survivor Gene Klein.”

### **‘I HAVE A GOOD TIME DOING THIS’**

On Central Florida Salute, Peters has interviewed everyone from Iraq War vet Jason White and Afghanistan veteran Sebastian Lajeunesse to WWII veteran Quentin Brelsford. He hosts veterans’ advocacy groups and talks about topics of concern to veterans.

White is seen on camera in other Central Florida Salute episodes. One such show took viewers on the road to the Marion County Veterans Exhibit and Education Center in Ocala.

“This is a place of solace and camaraderie,” White said on the show. “For me, it’s like my church.”

Peters hosts Vietnam and Korean War veterans. He has talked about Wreaths Across America and taken viewers on tours of places such as St. Johns Hops, a veteran farming community. Medal of Honor recipients and a former Olympian have appeared as well. He has had Gold Star parents such as Deborah White, mother of Ashley White, on his show.

“I really appreciate the men and women who serve our country and the things they have been through,” said Peters, who served four years in the Air Force. “I’d really like to see a Heroes Day established. It would be for the doctors, nurses, police, fireman, and of course, veterans. Just to offer our ‘thank you’ for what they do.”

A frequent sponsor of Central Florida Salute is Project SOS-Support Our Soldiers, established by Gary Kadow in 2009. Project SOS helps military personnel serving overseas as well as disabled and homeless veterans.

“I have a good time doing this,” Peters said. “It’s a lot of work, sure, but I have a great bunch of people to help me out.”

### **‘RAISED TO DO THIS TYPE OF WORK’**

Peters, who was born and raised in Connecticut, has a long history of volunteerism. He said it’s something his parents instilled. When he was just a teen, Peters and his brother, Bill, volunteered to coach Special Olympics. He continued on that path until he joined the Air Force.

In the Air Force, Peters served from 1967 to 1971, the majority of that time in U-Tapau, Thailand, with the 509th Field Maintenance Squadron. There, he worked on every aspect of the B-52s.

After the military, Peters became a lineman for Connecticut Light and Power but still found time for his volunteer endeavors, particularly when it came to veterans’ causes.

“I’ve really been involved with the veteran community for more than 35 years,” Peters said. “In my hometown of Oxford (Connecticut), I helped create a veterans park before moving to Florida. I was raised to do this type of work.”

Peters said he is proud of his family’s military service, which includes his uncle Ed who served in the Signal Corps during WWII, and another uncle, Ted, who received a Distinguished Service Cross for his actions on D-Day.

Ted had no children and wanted part of his estate donated to the greenhouse at the Rock Hill Connecticut veterans home. Peters made sure that happened.

“That’s my uncle’s legacy,” Peters said. “The vegetables grown in that greenhouse help feed the veterans in the home.”

Noting this is Peters’ 13th year interviewing veterans, Cameron said it’s “an honor” to assist him.

“He has never taken a dime for what he does, either,” she said. “His passion to educate and honor veterans is infectious.”

Peters also appears on WQBQ-1410 AM every Friday with radio station owner James Floyd and retired Col. Rick Baysinger. They discuss veterans’ issues and resources.

“It’s just a thrill for me to do all of this,” Peters said. “It’s not about me. It’s about the people who support me. After all, no one does anything alone.”

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