

FORT DEVENS MUSEUM NEWSLETTER



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Success of Museum's 10th Anniversary Open House

December
2010

By C. David Gordon

The Fort Devens Museum open house drew about 400 visitors in its six hours of operation on 6 November 2010 – something to be proud of.

The event received good advanced coverage in newspapers, topped by an article and photos in *Globe West* and another with photos also in Nashoba Publishing weekly newspapers. This open house observed the Museum's tenth anniversary in operation, complete with two birthday cakes. It also marked the upcoming Veterans Day.

What people saw is a full room of exhibits highlighting the various phases in the military installation's history and a pinpointing of some of the huge number of individuals bearing some association with Fort Devens. In the parking lot outside, visitors had a chance to see close up military vehicles sent by Fort Devens Garrison Commander Lieutenant Colonel Warren F. Bacote and placed under the direction of the garrison's Command Sergeant Major Frank MacRae.

Visitors also had an opportunity to hear one or more of five speakers talk about their connection with Devens or with the military. Speakers held forth in a lecture area set up in the Museum's newly acquired space across the corridor. Here the Museum has also now been able to hold office, research, and storage.

Opening speaker Christian W. deMarken talked about living with his family in Belgium as a young teen during the Nazis occupation in World War II, of how his home had a German soldier billeted there and yet how they were able to hide allied airmen and Jews on their way to freedom. Veterans of the World

War II Battle of the Bulge accompanying this speaker added, with deMarcken, new perspectives on this key engagement with the enemy.

Museum Board of Directors member Dr. Marcia Synnott told the story of how US Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers worked successfully to change the name and status of Camp Devens to the more permanent Fort Devens and how she focused continued interest on the Army base. Synnott also related Rogers's efforts for veterans' affairs and on building up the status of women in the military. She co-sponsored the GI Bill in 1944.

Marion Stoddart brought out the little-known story of Fort Devens Commander General John Cushman's assistance to the Nashua River Cleanup Committee in support of the effort to clean up the Nashua River. The General provided a headquarters for the committee, along with an office staff, telephones, and pickup trucks. When needed Army personnel with engineering, drafting, and legal background were

authorized to assist in developing a preliminary greenway plan with the Committee. Later soldiers from Devens would help with the river cleanup effort and also with establishing trails. Stoddart said the experience led her to understand that "help can come from the most unexpected places so you should always be alert for [the opportunity]."

Retired Command Sergeant Major Robert Delia summarized his significant

Continued on next page



Visitors at the FDM November Open House

Colin Powell Display at Museum

One of the new displays mounted since the Open House is a collection of photographs of Colin L. Powell, Four Star General (Ret.), US Army.

As a 1st Lieutenant he was Commanding Officer of Co A, 1BG, 4th Infantry while stationed at Fort Devens in the 1960s.

(Right) 1st Lieutenant Colin Powell, Fort Devens, 1960s. Donated to the museum by General Colin Powell.



Museum Briefs

Special Holiday Hours

Closed Christmas Eve,
Friday December 24th

Open Monday through Friday
December 27th through 31st
10 AM to 2 PM

Regular Hours

Tuesdays 10 AM to 2 PM
Fridays 10 AM to 2 PM

Many Thanks to the
Devens Grill
Andrews Parkway
Devens, MA 01434

Enjoy good food at a
local establishment

The Museum is funded by your
kind donations

The Fort Devens Museum continues to collect photographs, documents, artifacts, and ephemera related to the history of Camp and Fort Devens. If you have items you wish to donate please call the museum at 978-772-1286 or send an email to info@fortdevensmuseum.org

Open House continued from previous page

military career, which included three assignments to Fort Devens, serving under five commanders. Delia was wounded in the Korean War and also in the Vietnam War. During his career in the Army, he said, he “met a lot of great people.” He claimed that “the smartest thing I ever did” was marrying his late wife, Joan (He would come to consider the Army wife’s lot as “the toughest job in the Army.”) and “the second smartest thing I did was to stay in the Army.”

The final speaker, Pierce Browne of Concord, stayed just a few years in the service. He said he came to Devens as an Army officer some 40 years after his dad had been there. The dad had later spent

time in the field artillery in France during World War I, but the son had come to Devens in the late 1950s after serving a year and a half at the DMZ in Korea. Browne spoke of his assignment as club officer as “the best job I ever had in Army service.” He was in charge of the Officers’ Club at Devens, with a sizable staff under him. He oversaw all sorts of events happening at the Club. He even had a car and a chauffeur at his disposal. Little wonder that he finds it “always good to be here at Fort Devens.”

Thank You to everyone who helped, visited, and shared at this successful event!

FDM Director Fossey Talks about Devens in WWII

By C. David Gordon

Fort Devens Museum Director Kara Fossey presented an illustrated talk on the role Fort Devens played in the country’s total war effort during World War II. She spoke before about 35 members and guests of the Acton Historical Society, meeting at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Acton on Sunday afternoon, November 11, 2010. To add perspective she summarized Camp Devens’s beginnings in 1917, its development into Fort Devens before WWII, and the subsequent uses of the base since 1945.

Also speaking was Dr. Richard Wolf, historian assigned to the Electronics Center at Hanscom Air Force Base, pictured with Fossey in the photo above. He gave details of the US government’s construction of Bedford Airport (later to be



Dr. Richard Wolf and Director Kara Fossey named for reporter and pilot Lawrence Hanscom) for use in WWII as a fighter-pilot training base and of MIT’s involvement with British experts to study radar at the Cambridge Field Station labs with the air base used as a testing site.

New Photograph Acquisition

Since the museum’s November Open House, many people have come forward and generously donated photographs, uniforms, objects, and stories regarding life and training at Devens throughout the 20th century. One new acquisition is a series of photographs of Sgt. William Brouillette (Trucking Co. #38, Camp Devens).

Thanks to George R. Brouillette

