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## **NEW YORK STATE OBSERVES WOMEN VETERANS DAY**

### **New Items on Display at NYS Vietnam Memorial Gallery**

RoAnn M. Destito, Commissioner, New York State Office of General Services today announced the observance of Women Veterans Day at the New York State Vietnam Memorial Gallery in the Robert Abrams Building for Law and Justice. The observance, being held on the anniversary of the June 12 signing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 by President Truman, included the unveiling of new art and artifacts illustrating women veterans' contributions during the Vietnam War.

"I join Governor Cuomo and our partners at the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs in honoring the more than 75,000 women veterans who call New York State home and in celebrating both their achievements and their expanded role in the armed services," Commission Destito said. "The Vietnam Memorial Gallery and the other memorials honoring our World War II, Korean War, and women veterans, as well as Purple Heart recipients, are very special places at the Empire State Plaza, and I encourage all who come to New York's capital to visit them."

"Today we celebrate the enactment of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, which represented a great victory in our nation's efforts to extend key principles of our Democracy such as justice, equality, and opportunity to the women veterans who have defend those principles," said New York State Division of Veterans Affairs Director Colonel Eric J. Hesse, USA, Retired. "We are also taking this opportunity to recognize the vital contributions and sacrifices women from New York have made in defense of our nation and to reiterate New York State's commitment to them and their families."

"Each woman who has made the decision to wear our nation's uniform throughout history has blazed the path for the women currently serving, and those that will in the future. New York's women veterans have made enormous contributions to our military throughout history, and today, we honor them for their achievements and thank them for their sacrifice and courage," said Senator George Amedore.

"I commend and admire each of our women veterans and their commitment to our country. Their loyal service, dynamic leadership, and outstanding contributions to the security and prosperity of our country are a constant inspiration. I also commend

and appreciate Governor Cuomo and the State Division of Veteran's Affairs for honoring the many brave women in our armed forces for their continued sacrifices and achievements on behalf of our country," said Assemblymember Patricia A. Fahy (D-Albany).

Women Veterans Day is observed in recognition of the important contributions women make toward the security and freedom of the United States. The story of women in the U.S. military begins with the earliest conflicts in American history and is marked by gains toward their integration into combat operations, leadership roles, and the highest ranks in the armed services.

The guest speaker at Friday's commemoration was Joan Furey of Long Island who was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps in 1968. She volunteered for duty in Vietnam and served at the 71st Evacuation Hospital in Pleiku from January 1969 to January 1970. Upon completion of her tour of duty, she was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service for her work as a staff nurse in the Post-Op/ICU. Furey went on to a career in public service, working 30 years for the Department of Veterans Affairs in a variety of positions in nursing services and later became the founding Director of the Center for Women Veterans.

The Vietnam Memorial Gallery, which had been closed since 2009, was reopened in 2013 in conjunction with the state's partnership with the U.S. Department of Defense's 13-year commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the United States' military involvement in Vietnam. The gallery is open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays and is free to the public.

New items that will be on display in the Vietnam Memorial Gallery include:

- Print of a painting of the 12th Evac Hospital, Cú Chi, Vietnam by James Nelson from the Helen Vartigian Collection. (Loan courtesy of the Foundation of New York State Nurses, The Veronica M. Driscoll Center for Nursing, Guilderland, NY)
- A print of the painting "Nurse Caring for Soldier" by Mary Lou Sorrin. Sorrin served in Vietnam as a nurse in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps. Sorrin's art has been displayed in the Vietnam Veteran's Art Museum in Chicago and the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation in Washington, D.C. She resides in the Hudson Valley. (Courtesy of Joan Furey)
- U.S. Army Women's Dress Greens and Cover from the Helen Vartigian Collection. (Loan courtesy of the Foundation of New York State Nurses, The Veronica M. Driscoll Center for Nursing, Guilderland, NY)
- Photograph of Helen Vartigian being pinned as a Major, U.S. Army from the Helen Vartigian Collection. (Loan courtesy of the Foundation of New York State Nurses, The Veronica M. Driscoll Center for Nursing, Guilderland, NY)
- 12th Evac Hospital Plaque from the Helen Vartigian Collection. (Loan courtesy of the Foundation of New York State Nurses, The Veronica M. Driscoll Center for Nursing, Guilderland, NY)

- Photograph of nurses and patients aboard the USS Sanctuary hospital ship, assigned duty off South Vietnam during the Vietnam War, c. 1968. Department of the Navy. Silver gelatin print. (Courtesy of Robert Allyn)

The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration Partner Program to honor Vietnam veterans and their families will last for 13 years, recognizing the country's involvement in the conflict in Vietnam from 1962 when American forces first engaged in major combat to 1975 when the last American soldier left. Throughout the 13-year period New York State will pay tribute to its veterans by educating the public about the life of an American soldier serving in Vietnam through a display of Vietnam War era artifacts in the gallery.

An online link to information about the gallery can be found at <http://www.ogs.ny.gov/ESP/CT/Memorials/Vietnam.asp>.

To learn more about the commemoration, find events in your area or have your community, business or organization become a Commemorative Partner please visit <http://www.vietnamwar50th.com>.

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