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CONTACT: MARYANN MALONEY
949-375-0856

Oral History Project to Preserve Military Heritage for Great Park

IRVINE – Voices of former El Toro Marine Corps Air Station veterans will now be preserved through a unique project at California State University – Fullerton's Center for Oral and Public History. The Oral History Project, part of the Great Park History Program, aims to preserve the history of El Toro Marine Corps Air Station and its transition to the Orange County Great Park by conducting and recording a series of oral interviews. Phase one of the Oral History Project will be financed by the Orange County Great Park Corporation.

This first phase of the Oral History Project will capture seventy-five histories from veterans of World War II and the Korean War. Veterans from the Cold War, Vietnam War, and Desert Storm will be interviewed in subsequent phases of the project. Each interview will be digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. One quarter of all interviews will be videotaped. Interviews will be featured at the Orange County Great Park and the Center for Oral and Public History so that future generations can learn about El Toro's rich fifty-six year military history and the people who served there.

Under the direction of Dr. Natalie Fousekis, Associate Director of California State University – Fullerton's Center for Oral and Public History, eight students who have been through the University's oral history training program will conduct the oral interviews.

"The Oral History Project reflects one of the Great Park Board Corporation's core values – to honor the men and women who served at El Toro," said Larry Agran, Chair of the Great Park Corporation. "This program will bridge the past, present, and future of the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station as it transitions to the Great Park and will memorialize both the base and those who served there for generations to come."

In addition to capturing oral histories from those who served on the base during wartime, oral histories will be taken from people who lived or worked on the base as well as those who lived on the Irvine Ranch prior to the military base's construction, and those who have been involved in the transition of the military base to the Orange County Great Park.

The Orange County Great Park, which is almost twice the size of New York's Central Park, will be a major metropolitan park and the focal point of the redevelopment of the 4,700-acre former Marine Corps Air Station at El Toro. The Great Park will include extensive natural areas and open space in addition to recreational and cultural uses.

For more information about the Orange County Great Park, please go to www.ocgp.org. If you were stationed at or have memories of the El Toro Marine Air Station and would like to participate in the Oral History Project please call (714) 278-8415 or send your contact information to coph-eltono@fullerton.edu. Information is also available on the website at <http://coph.fullerton.edu/>.

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