



Photos contributed
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Virginia Reams joined the Army in March 1951 and retired from Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri after 21 years.

Carlsen honors Brunswick County World War I veterans

Veteran Frances Jean (Reams) Carlsen was one of the first to approach Norma Eckard to honor a World War I veteran from Brunswick County.

Eckard, president of the nonprofit Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range, is leading the project to raise funds for a memorial honoring Brunswick County World War I veterans at the site of the 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range in Caswell Beach.

"The 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range provided the troops with training in marksmanship before leaving for France and that itself is a reason to preserve the historical site," Carlsen said in a news release.

Carlsen and her siblings are veterans. Her sister, Virginia Reams, served for 21 years, while her brother, Ralph Lee Reams, served in Korea.

Carlsen joined the Women's Army Corp (WAC) March 27, 1957, for a three-year enlistment. After basic training and clerical school at Fort McClellan, Al., she was assigned to Fort Myers, Va., in April 1958. She worked in the Pentagon for deputy chief of staff for personnel and chief, research and development as an officers' records personnel specialist. While there her other duties were modeling the officers' white uniform, color guard at special ceremonies, and playing the part of a civilian in the TV show "Your Serviceman in the Nation's Capital."

"Eventually I attained a rank of SP5 (E-5) and once I served my three years I was hired as a civilian worker and remained at the Pentagon until retirement. It was a wonderful career," she said in the release.

Virginia Reams was born in Brookfield, Mo., to Clarence and Daisy (Foltz) Reams. She joined the Army in March 1951. After basic training at Fort Lee, Va., she was stationed with the Army Pentagon Motor Pool. During this time she saw many dignitar-

ies including Winston Churchill. During a second tour in Germany, she worked for one of the 10 largest newspapers under the Department of Defense. After returning to the states, she was trained in New York as an information specialist.

After 21 years, she retired from Fort Leonard Wood. She received many honors, including the Army Commendation Medal twice. After returning to Brookfield, she was involved in researching genealogy and was well known for this throughout the community.

Ralph Reams was inducted into the Army on Jan. 22, 1952. He went to Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., for basic training and engineer training. Assigned to Seoul, Korea, in July 1953 to the 453rd Engineer Battalion, working as the warehouse manager, he was discharged Dec. 15, 1954, having obtained the rank of corporal (E-4).

Since her retirement, Carlsen continues to serve with her involvement in Wreaths Across America and as chairwoman of the naturalization ceremony held at Southport each year around July 4. "By honoring the veterans I've chosen from Brunswick County, I'm honoring my brother, sister, and all of those who ever served," she said. She and her family are from the small town of Brookfield, Mo., where a close neighbor was Gen. Pershing, the leader of the American Expeditionary Forces in France during World War I.

A monument for World War I veterans not only raises awareness of World War I and the Centennial as well as the 1918 Fort Caswell Rifle Range, but also honors all veterans and their sacrifices.

Anyone who wants to honor a Brunswick County veteran from World War I can go to caswellriflerange.com or email ft-caswellriflerange@gmail.com.



Frances Carlsen and Norma Eckard, fellow DAR members, are shown reviewing certificates Carlsen received for honoring World War I veterans from Brunswick County.