



Mike Jackson, President

A decorated combat pilot and career Air Force officer, Mike Jackson, Lt Col USAF (Ret), is National Chairman and Founder of *Operation Welcome Home*, America's long overdue celebrations for her Vietnam veterans (and, now, for all veterans). In 2004, he founded the *American Veterans Institute*, a grassroots non-profit organization that honors and assists veterans and their families on a variety of levels. His efforts to support and honor his fellow GIs date back to the earliest days of his military career. In 1997, he was one of the youngest living individuals ever inducted into the *Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame*, for his volunteer work with unemployed veterans. He is currently working to establish the American Veterans Hall of Honor and American Veterans Research Library at the historic Dayton, Ohio VA campus.

Jackson published his upbeat and inspiring Vietnam memoir, *Naked In Da Nang*, in 2004. The book inspired the national *Operation Welcome Home* celebrations which have included numerous local and regional celebrations and three national events, in Las Vegas (2005), California (2006), and Indiana (2008).

A disabled veteran, courtesy of a 1972 Da Nang rocket attack, Jackson champions better care for America's GIs and works with elderly and disabled veterans to help them understand and access their VA benefits. He flew 210 combat missions over Southeast Asia as a Forward Air Controller, earning the Purple Heart, Distinguished Flying Cross, and numerous other awards and decorations. He also developed a Forward Air Controller training program that was implemented by the South Vietnamese.

In 2005, he was recognized by his Master's Degree alma mater, Webster University, as the school's *Distinguished Alumni* for his "service to humanity." Jackson received the *2007 Medal of Merit* from Ohio University, his undergraduate alma mater, for "service to America's veterans and their families". He was also recently named *2007 Humanitarian of the Year* by the Northern Miami Valley Red Cross of Ohio, once again for his efforts on behalf of veterans. In 1998, he was selected by the Red Cross as the first-ever *Miami Valley Hometown Military Hero* and was honored as a *Community Ambassador* by the Dayton Chamber of Commerce. Tipp City, OH named him its Outstanding Citizen of the Year in 2005 and the Third Masonic District of OH presented him with its *Community Service Award* in 2006. On Veterans Day 2008, Col. Jackson was the recipient of the Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation's prestigious *Legion of Honor Award*. This award has been given to Harry S. Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, Bob Hope and other veterans' advocates and leaders over the years. His award was accompanied by a congratulatory letter from Senator John McCain.

Jackson spent 13 years as Executive Director of the National Aviation Hall of Fame, before leaving that post to pursue his work on behalf of veterans. He was awarded the title Executive Director Emeritus of the NAHF, after presiding over a dynamic decade+ of growth and taking the facility from near-bankruptcy to a multi-million dollar permanent facility. In 2003 Jackson was named *Distinguished Museum Professional of the Year* by the Ohio Museums Association in tribute to his dynamic leadership at the Aviation Hall of Fame. He has also co-authored *The Wright Brothers: First In Flight* (Sterling Publishing, 2007), *Neil Armstrong: One Giant Leap* (Sterling Publishing, 2008), as well as *Welcome Home Grandpa*, *My Neighbor is a Caterpillar* and *My Mother Wears Combat Boots*, the first three books in the AVI "Embracing Freedom" series for grades K-3 and 4-7. Jackson has been interviewed extensively on a variety of issues, including veteran's issues, aviation history, and military affairs. He appears on seasons three and four of *Legends of Airpower* (PBS, Discovery and The Military Channel) and, recently, on a Smithsonian network documentary, *Unbelievable Flying Objects*.