

FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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American Folklife Center • The Library of Congress



The American Folklife Center was created in 1976 by the U.S. Congress to "preserve and present American folklife" through programs of research, documentation, archival preservation, reference service, live performance, exhibition, publication, and training. The Center incorporates the Archive of Folk Culture, which was established in the Music Division of the Library of Congress in 1928 and is now one of the largest collections of ethnographic material from the United States and around the world.

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The Web site for **The Veterans History Project** provides an overview of the project, an online "kit" for participants recording oral histories of veterans, and a brief presentation of some examples of video- and audio-recordings of veterans' stories. The address is <http://www.loc.gov/vets>

The Folklife Information Service is a cooperative announcement program of the American Folklore Society and the American Folklife Center. It is available only on the American Folklore Society's server: www.afsnet.org. The service provides timely information on the field of folklore and folklife, including training and professional opportunities, and news items of national interest.

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Cover: Bruce Donald Fenchel (far left) with crew members in Czechoslovakia, summer 1945. (VHP/Fenchel/Coll. 2978)

The Veterans History Project: From Concept to Reality



Bruce Donald Fenchel's unit, the Fourth Armored Division, crossing the Rhine on a pontoon bridge under cover of smoke, March 20, 1945. While Fenchel was driving the tank across the river, the bridge was hit by German 88 guns taking out an entire pontoon section. Engineers under fire and in swift river current moved a new section in. (VHP/Fenchel/Coll. 2978) Drawings and photographs in this issue are from the Veterans History Project Collection, American Folklife Center.

Edited by Virginia Sorkin, with contributions by Peter Bartis, Anneliesa Clump Behrend, Rachel Mears, Judy Ng, JoAnne Rasi, Sarah Rouse, Eileen Simon, Taru Spiegel, and Lee Woodman.

The idea for the Veterans History Project was conceived during a family holiday gathering. U.S. Representative Ron Kind of Wisconsin's Third District listened as his uncle told stories about his service in World War II, while Kind's father countered with his own tales about his Korean War experiences. When Kind realized that he was hearing stories told by his uncle and his father that he had never heard before, he retrieved his video recorder. Wondering whether his young sons would be able to hear these stories

when they were older, Representative Kind concluded that millions of U.S. veterans' families had never heard the stories that their relatives and friends had to tell. Thus was born the concept for the Veterans History Project.

Authored by Representative Kind, the Veterans' Oral History Project Act (PL 106-380) was sponsored by Kind and cosponsored by Representatives Amo Houghton and Steny Hoyer and 235 members of the House of Representatives; in the U.S. Senate, it was sponsored by Sen. Max Cleland and cosponsored by Sen. Chuck Hagel. The act passed the House and Senate unanimously and was signed into law on October 27, 2000, by President Bill Clinton. The legislation calls upon the American

Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to collect and preserve oral histories along with letters, diaries, and other firsthand materials from veterans of World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars, as well as from civilians who served in support of these wars.

The first priority of the Veterans History Project is to focus on the most senior war veterans and those who served in support of them, especially those from World Wars I and II, and the Korean War. The project is open to all men and women, those who served in war and those who served in support of combat operations. This includes all ranks in all branches of service: the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and



World War I portrait postcard of Vincent Cornelius Reed in France, about 1918–1919. Corporal Reed was a member of the Army of Occupation in France, fighting against the Germans in the St. Mihiel Offensive. Reed later was assigned administrative duties in Gerolstein, Germany. (VHP/Reed/Coll. 2431)

the Merchant Marine. Also included are those involved in home-front activities and citizens who supported the armed services.

The mission of the Veterans History Project (VHP) is to collect the memories, accounts, and documents of veterans of these wars and to preserve and present these stories for future generations. Its goals are to honor the nation's veterans; to stimulate learning about the nation's history; to engage veterans, civilian supporters, and the public to collect material about the twentieth-century wars; to preserve and present the collected materials to the public through the Library of Congress's Web

Strike photo, 867th Sqdn., 494th Group, Arakabesan Island, Palau Islands, April 1945. (VHP/Snyder/Coll. 2353)

site, exhibitions, publications, and public programs; to identify, recognize, and work with other oral history projects and archives that have already undertaken such projects; and to create a comprehensive, searchable, national catalog of all oral histories and material collected for the project.

To accomplish its mission and to fulfill the spirit of the legislation that created it, the VHP reaches out to the citizens of the nation and encourages war veterans, their families, veterans' groups, communities, and students to tape the recollections of veterans' time in service. It also calls for the donation of original written materials (such as letters and diaries), maps, photographs, and written memoirs relevant to the personal histories of veterans and civilian supporters. Copies are accepted, but originals are preferred. These tapes and materials are then forwarded to the Library of Congress or other associated, regional archives, where they are registered, preserved, and made accessible for future generations.

The wars of the last century were unique in the way conflicts were conducted: they were large scale and on foreign soil; technology and logistics were created as the need arose to

support the war efforts; and there were profound domestic consequences stimulated by the conflicts, including the GI bill, housing loans, and racial integration. There are an estimated 19 million veterans still living who served in these wars, but more than 1,700 of them die each day. Many military histories and official reports have been written, but the unique accounts of individual participants will be lost forever if not captured now. The nation has much to learn from those veterans willing to tell their wartime stories.

After the Veterans History Project act was signed into law, the American Folklife Center immediately began plans to implement the project. Key participants were identified and asked to participate as planners as well as partners. Veterans service organizations were called to early planning meetings. Among these were representatives from the Association of the U.S. Army, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, the Retired Officers Association, the Enlisted Association of the National Guard, the Reserve Officers Association, and Non Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Historians from the Army Military History Insti-





James Walsh, of the 25th Infantry during the Korean War, is the author of a memoir “From the Seminary to Korea’s Front Line: 1951–1952” that includes horrifying descriptions of the battlefield. Of this photo he wrote: “This is the Punch Bowl about the 22nd of February. The next day we moved on line—it was 36 [degrees] below. The two guys are Truscott and Warren, our medic.” (VHP/Walsh/Coll. 10080)

tute, U.S. Marine Corps Historical Center, the United States Air Force, the Marine Corps, the Navy Historical Center, the Coast Guard, and the American Historical Association were also asked to participate. The American Association of Museums, the Oral History Association, and the American Folklore Society were also consulted.

Quickly identified were needs for funding, for documentation to guide participants that included a Web site, and for a massive public relations effort to educate the nation and to attract both interviewees and interviewers. The Veterans History Project organization was set up and staffed at the Library of Congress, but there was also the need for broad-based, high-profile external leadership which eventually resulted in the Five Star Council. The Librarian of Congress invited a group of twenty-six prominent leaders to advise the Veterans History Project and bring it increased visibility nationwide. Members of the project’s Five Star Council include veterans, elected officials, historians, and journalists—each with a relevant personal connection to this endeavor. They are: the Hon.

Everett Alvarez, former deputy administrator of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; Stephen E. Ambrose, historian, since deceased; Lt. Col. Lee A. Archer, USAF (Ret.), also CEO of Archer Assets Management; Lt. Gen. Julius W. Becton, USA (Ret.); Tom Brokaw, NBC news anchor; Gail Buckley, author and historian; the Hon. Max Cleland, former U.S. senator; Walter Cronkite, former CBS anchorman; the Hon. Robert J. Dole, former U.S. senator; the Hon. Sam Gibbons, former U.S. representative; the Hon. Chuck Hagel, U.S. senator; Maj. Gen. Jeanne Holm, USAF (Ret.); Tony Hope, USO tours; the Hon. Amo Houghton, U.S. representative; the Hon. Steny H. Hoyer, U.S. representative; the Hon. Daniel K. Inouye, U.S. senator; former National Commander Francisco F. Ivarra of the American GI Forum; the Hon. John F. Kerry, U.S. senator; James V. Kimsey, chairman emeritus of AOL; the Hon. Ron Kind, U.S. representative; the Hon. Robert H. Michel, former U.S. representative; the Hon. Norman Y. Mineta, secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation; Marie Smith, president, AARP; the Hon. Anthony J. Principi, secretary of

Veterans Affairs; Francis Y. Sogi, deputy chairman, vice chairman of the National Japanese American Veterans Council; the Hon. Ted Stevens, U.S. senator; the Hon. John Warner, U.S. senator and former secretary of the Navy; the Hon. Sheila Widnall, former secretary of the Air Force.

Instructed by Congress to engage broad public participation, the project encourages veterans, family members, teachers and students, librarians and archivists, historians, oral historians, and organizations and institutions at all levels to participate as part of the VHP’s volunteer corps. Members of the Library of Congress staff have conducted interviews with many war veterans, but it was always understood that the staggering numbers required greater resources than the Library possessed. The project invites individuals and organizations nationwide to participate in organized veterans’ oral history projects, taking individual interviews, or managing projects within veterans’ organizations, schools, libraries, or civic groups. The interviews and related materials may then be donated to the Library or retained locally in an official partner archive with a representative sample sent to the Library of Congress.

In response to Congress’s mandate to interview as many veterans as possible, the project depends on a national network of volunteers, some independent and others organized around official partner organizations. In 2001 there were more than a hundred partners; today there are close to a thousand. Partner organizations enlist volunteers to interview and identify interviewees, and to provide equipment and space for conducting and recording interviews. They may agree to commit for a semester (as in the case of a school) or for as long as there are individuals to interview.

More than one-third of the members of Congress have VHP projects underway in their states and districts. Senator

Richard Lugar promised to deliver more than a thousand from his home state of Indiana; he has greatly exceeded that number by delivering an estimated three thousand so far. Interviewers may do one interview or several, as did Library of Congress staffer Martha Hopkins, who went to her father's World War II reunion during the first year of the project. The reunion was of the 411th AAA Gun Battalion, Third Army, which reported directly to Third Army Headquarters commanded by Gen. George S. Patton. One of the eleven veterans she interviewed described his critical role in discovering that radar could be used to track the movements of German ground troops as well as aircraft. Had Hopkins not recorded this story, it would have been lost, as this radar man died two months later. Bill Brough of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has conducted nearly one hundred interviews during his travels to VA-sponsored events. His interviews are particularly notable as many have been collected at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, presented by the VA and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA).

Embraced with enthusiasm by the nation, the VHP currently has partner organizations located in all fifty states, the U.S. territory Guam, the Nez Perce tribal government, and one foreign government, Greece, which is host to an American school. The



Vietnam veteran Max Cleland in the 1960s. A former U.S. senator from Georgia and an American war hero, Cleland lost both his legs and his right arm when a grenade exploded during his service in Vietnam. Cleland was only thirty-four years old when President Jimmy Carter appointed him head of the Veterans Administration. (VHP/Cleland/Coll. 3512)

project's popularity is growing constantly, with national partners that include military service organizations; AARP; presidential, public, and school libraries; high school and college classes; museums; oral history organizations; and communities that have organized local civic and commercial organizations to work together to gather materials.

The project's Instruction Kit, created by the American Folklife Center's Veterans History Project with the advice of historians and oral historians, was published in 2001. It was made available in its entirety as the first content for the VHP Web site (<http://www.loc.gov/vets>). Thanks to a grant from the Dis-

abled American Veterans (DAV) Charitable Trust, a version of the kit is available in large type or as an audio tape recording for use by the physically disabled. The kit is an extensive guide to conducting oral histories and collecting material. It includes preparation tips, guidelines for the site of the interview, an extensive set of possible questions, and the forms that are necessary to make the materials collected available to researchers.

In 2001 the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs endorsed the VHP, and AARP agreed to pledge \$3 million to sponsor the project for three years. With the Five Star Council in place to advise the project, an Instruction Kit and a Web site that offered instructions on how to participate and how to conduct an oral history, and a funding sponsor, the project officially launched on November 8, 2001, in connection with Veterans Day. The launch was attended by more

than 150 partners, Five Star Council members, and Library of Congress senior managers. The first Five Star Council meeting preceded the launch event. Attendees included the Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, Secretary Anthony Principi, Sen. John Warner, Rep. Ron Kind, Lt. Col. Lee Archer, the Hon. Sheila Widnall, Maj. Gen. Jeanne Holm, the Hon. Sam Gibbons, Tony Hope, and Gen. Julius W. Becton.

That month a press release from the Library of Congress requested all World War I veterans or those with knowledge of a World War I veteran to call or email information to the project so that the veteran could be con-

tacted and interviewed. More than 250 telephone calls were fielded and the first interview of a WWI veteran, Stanley Lane, was conducted by VHP staff at Leisure World in Silver Spring, Maryland. Mr. Lane told his remarkable story of service in World War I, World War II, and Korea. To date, material relating to more than 120 World War I veterans has been received, including more than 30 taped interviews.

Late in 2001 one of the project's largest acquisitions was hand-carried to the Veterans History Project by Jerry Brenner. Brenner had saved all 1,261 letters he and his wife exchanged during World War II. Brenner and his now-deceased wife had written more than once a day at times and, as difficult as it was to part with such an important portion of his past, he and his adult children wanted to be sure that the letters were preserved. Since then, many veterans and families of veterans have concluded that the Library of Congress offers a way to preserve important personal papers related to their own or their families' wartime experiences and to serve posterity.

The Veterans History Project has actively sought media attention to raise public awareness of its mission. The year 2002 was one of a notable increase in the project's public relations efforts. On June 6, 2002, a D-Day event aboard the *USS Intrepid*, at which New York City mayor Michael R. Bloomberg issued a proclamation declaring that day Veterans History Project Day, was covered by ABC on its morning national radio news show. NBC-TV's *Today* show mentioned the event; Black Entertainment Television and CNN Headline News carried the story that night; and 35 local television and radio stations from New York City to San Francisco mentioned the story. The Associated Press carried the story on its wire, and the event was reported in at least fourteen print and Web publications, including the June 10, 2002,

issue of *US News & World Report*. Members of the Five Star Council who gave print, radio, and television interviews were Lt. Col. Lee Archer, Lt. Gen. Julius W. Becton, Ms. Gail Buckley, Maj. Gen. Jeanne Holm, Commander Francisco Ivarra, and U.S. Rep. Ron Kind. It was estimated that the media coverage of the June 6 event potentially reached 73 million people.

By December 2002 public awareness and participation had grown rapidly. In that month receipts of individual collections passed the 4,000 mark, and by the end of September 2003, reached 10,000. In April 2004 that number passed 15,000. With newly donated Veterans History Project collections reaching a rate of 125 per week, many rich collections accumulated. Among the outstanding interviewer/documenters making contributions to the project are Judith Kent (Flagler County Library, Palm Coast, Florida), Don Byers and Scotty Springston (Virginia Air and Space Center, Hampton, Virginia), Mary Adams Martin (Rochester, Minnesota), and Fred Wallace (AARP, Atlanta, Georgia). Tom Swope (Mentor, Ohio) and Gary Swanson (Leawood, Kansas) have each conducted more than 300 interviews. One individual collection of note, the Tracy Sugarman Collection, was acquired in cooperation with the Library's Prints and Photographs Division (P&P) in June 2003. Mr. Sugarman, a U.S. naval officer in England and Europe during World War II, donated to the Veterans History Project the 300-plus wartime letters he had written to his wife June and his



Max Cleland's father, World War II veteran Hugh Cleland, served in the Navy and was stationed at Pearl Harbor from 1945 to 1946. (VHP/Cleland/Coll. 3512)

93 drawings and watercolor and oil paintings to P&P.

Public relations outreach continued and 2003 was a pivotal growth year. In March VHP staff met congressional staff members to update the progress of the project and its needs. VHP Partner and Five Star Council meetings were held in May. Council members met with the VHP Director and staff to discuss the scope of the project, outreach, preservation, and the difficult issue of the identification of what is "war time" and how to handle those who serve in the ongoing conflicts in which the United States is constantly involved. More than 99 representatives from 73 official partner organizations in 24 states came to the Library for the second annual VHP partner meeting. In connection with the Bob Hope 100th Birthday Tribute in



Guardian City, Saudi Arabia, 1990. Persian Gulf War veteran Patricia M. Seawalt reenlisted in the military to join the Persian Gulf effort after having completed thirteen years of service. (VHP/Seawalt/Coll. 949)

May, the VHP conducted demonstration interviews with USO performers Tony Hope (Bob Hope's son), Patty Thomas, and Fayard Nicholas, as part of the Library's evening performance to celebrate Hope's 100th birthday. VHP staffed a table at the reception at the National D-Day Museum Program following the premier viewing of "The Burma Bridge Busters," a television documentary by Executive Producer Steven Spielberg. Premiered at the Library of Congress, the documentary was sponsored by the National D-Day Museum, a VHP partner.

In July attendees at the 50th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice at Washington, D.C.'s MCI Center were greeted by VHP staff members. In September the VHP and AARP staffed a large booth featuring the project at AARP's annual member event "Life @50+" in Chicago. VHP staff made stage presentations in the exhibition hall and conducted on-site interviews. That same month the project hosted a meeting of representatives of veterans' service organizations

at the Library of Congress.

In honor of the 50th anniversary of Veterans Day 2003, the VHP presented a series of special initiatives. Among them was a one-hour radio program that aired on eighty-three Public Radio International (PRI) stations. Entitled "Coming Home," it is the first in a series, *Experiencing War*, that will recount America's stories of sacrifice, triumph, great expectations, and crushing disappointments. The program, drawn from the oral histories gathered by the Veterans History Project, was hosted by Max Cleland, American war hero, director of the Veterans Administration under President Carter, and former U.S. senator. "Coming Home," won a 2004 Gracie Allen Award from American Women in Radio and Television. The award cited the show as outstanding in the Public Affairs Category for "superior quality in writing and production." The second program of the *Experiencing War* series, "Lest We Forget," is supported by AARP and will air over Memorial Day weekend 2004. It will be available to all

PRI affiliate stations nationwide and will coincide with the dedication of the World War II Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Focusing on World War II veterans and those who served on the home front, "Lest We Forget" presents memoirs of Americans who sacrificed their youth, lost their innocence, saw a larger world, and survived unimaginable hardships to tell their stories.

The VHP Web site has continued to evolve. On Memorial Day 2003, twenty-four veterans' collections featuring the themes courage, patriotism, and community were shown for the first time on the Experiencing War exhibit site on VHP's main Web page. On Veterans Day 2003 and to mark Presidents Day in February 2004, additional stories were made available on the Web site, providing full online access to interviews and written materials as well. To date, sixty-two collections are featured on the site, and on May 20, 2004, the next group of collections added will reflect experiences surrounding the Normandy Invasion. June 6 marks the 60th



Portrait of Robert Lee Olen in 1945 with camera: a sergeant with the Tenth Mountain Division of the U.S. Army serving in Italy during World War II, Olen took pictures that frequently belie the dangerous circumstances of life during wartime. (VHP/Olen/Coll. 2008)

anniversary of D-Day, the most important single day in World War II, and the project will showcase a diverse set of stories that shed new light on this well-documented event. Quarterly additions will continue to be made to the site and many more collections are regularly being digitized and will be accessible through the project's soon-to-be available public database. In 2003 more than 1.5 million hits on the Web site were recorded, and in January 2004 alone the number of hits reached 325,000.

In April 2004 the number of submissions exceeds 15,000. More than 93 percent of the collections are about men; more than 60 percent are about World War II men and women. Another 13 percent are from Vietnam War veterans; 12 percent, Korean War; 2 percent, Persian Gulf; 1 percent, WWI, and another 1 percent represent civilians and veterans of other conflicts. There are more than 7,000 recordings, over 17,000 photographs in 2,700 collections, in excess of 1,200 memoirs, as well as 150 diaries and journals.

Spring 2004

The year 2004 began with a flurry of activities for the staff of the project. In January VHP staff members attended the Winter American Library Association meeting. In March staff addressed the Oral History Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR) conference; traveled to Nashville to discuss how the Country Music Association can help promote awareness of VHP; spoke to the "Learn and Serve America" audience in Ohio ("Learn and Serve America" supports service-learning programs in schools and community organizations that help students meet community needs and improve academic skills while learning the habits of good citizenship); and attended the Society for History in the Federal Government panel held at the Library of Congress to discuss the VHP.

Also in 2004 the VHP prepared and presented two new easy-to-use kits for participants wishing to record their own stories: a Memoir Kit provides guidance to veteran and civilian supporters who wish to document their personal stories in writing; a new Field Kit equips third-party interviewers with forms and basic techniques necessary for successful interviews. The Field Kit will be distributed throughout the VHP's volunteer network, including to classrooms and youth partner organizations.

The rest of 2004 is expected to exceed the pace set during the first four months. There is the Memorial Day release of the radio program; a major presence on Washington, D.C.'s National Mall, with a pavilion to celebrate the National World War II Reunion; the D-Day Web release; a VHP panel at Summer ALA in June in Orlando, Florida; participation in June's Country Music Association Summer Music Festival in Nashville; and participation in the AARP member event in October in Las Vegas.

To be published in November 2004 to coincide with Veterans Day is *Voices of War: Stories From the Veterans History Project*, a

322-page illustrated book that will highlight some of the project's most dramatic and moving stories. National Geographic Books, in conjunction with the Library of Congress, is publishing this volume, which will also include photographs, art work, and reproductions of letters and diaries from the collection. Max Cleland will write the introduction.

The project also faces challenges in 2004. The urgency to get interviews increases. World War II and Korean War veterans are aging; the urgency to capture their personal histories is pressing. Among the most serious issues faced by the project are the massive inflow of material and the pressure to make it quickly accessible to researchers and the public. There is an increased need for vigilance in processing and storage and an increased demand for staff time to share the collections with the public. A partial answer is through the creation of public exhibitions, additional radio and television programs, and more publications, perhaps more books, as well as print media articles. If the success of the Veterans History Project and demand for its materials are its major challenges, then the future of the project is assured.



Red Cross woman feeding a serviceman, Italy, 1944. (VHP/Olen/Coll. 2008)

Stories from the Veterans History Project Collection

Selected and edited by the staff of the Veterans History Project

• Tracy Sugarman

The eloquence of Tracy Sugarman's letters home to his bride, June, is complemented by the creativity of his art work, sketches and paintings done while he was serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II. A fine arts student at Syracuse University when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Sugarman enlisted in the Navy days afterwards. "I think I was intrigued with the Navy," he told Peter Bartis of the Veterans History Project, "simply because I had seen so little of it. I'd really never seen a ship up close. But it just seemed like exciting and adventurous duty. And sounded a hell of a lot better than walking."

Sugarman wasn't called into active duty until after he graduated from Syracuse, in June 1943. He and his sweetheart, June, were married that fall, while he was in training on the campus of Notre Dame in land-locked South Bend, Indiana. Sugarman got his sea legs training in Maryland's Chesapeake

Bay and shipped out to England that fall.

The next six months were spent readying for the Normandy Invasion. Sugarman was in charge of a small group of support craft that would ferry supplies to and from larger landing boats. The night before the invasion,

he and other naval officers were briefed about the final plans, which included an offshore area dubbed the Mason Dixon Line. Back in their quarters, the men tuned their radios to catch the nightly broadcast of "Axis Sally," the Nazi propagandist. As Sugarman recalled, "Axis Sally is talking to the Americans and she's saying, 'We know you're coming and we'll be waiting for you at the Mason Dixon Line.' And I thought, Oh my God, if they know that, what else do they know?"

Whatever knowledge the Germans had of D-Day, it wasn't enough to stop the combined might and will of the Allies. Sugarman managed to put his feet on the beach late in the day, and a few days later decided to climb the cliffs that U.S. rangers had assaulted under incredible duress. "I was twenty-two," he said during his interview. "I was in good shape, I was carrying nothing, and nobody was shoot-



Tracy and June Sugarman. (VHP/Sugarman/Coll. 5440)

ing at me, and I think it took me over twenty-five minutes to get up that cliff to the airstrip up on top. To this day I will never understand how we took that beach."

Sugarman's letters and art work were collected in a book, *One Man's War*, published in 2000, two years after his beloved June had passed away. Now three hundred of his letters and ninety-three of his drawings and paintings are at the Library of Congress, in the American Folklife Center's Veterans History Project Collection.

On June 1, 1944, anticipating the most intense day of combat during all of World War II, Tracy Sugarman summed up the emotions of many GIs when he wrote to his wife, "Believe me, darling, I'm feeling wonderfully well and absolutely squared away for anything that may come my way. For this wonderful peace of mind I have you to thank, Junie."



"Army guard." Drawing by Tracy Sugarman, 1944. (Prints and Photographs Division, unprocessed item)



“The Goofein Journal,” created by Marion Reh Gurfein, November 1951. (VHP/Gurfein/Coll. 799)

• Marion Gurfein

Like millions of other wartime wives, Marion Gurfein kept in frequent touch with her husband, Joe, who served in the U.S. Army in Africa and Europe during World War II. But unlike her fellow correspondents, Marion Gurfein was the publisher of a newspaper. “The Goofein Journal” was a limited-edition monthly with the modest circulation of one copy.

Marion was a scholarship student at New York’s Cooper-Union Art School, where she met Joe, who was in the engineering school on scholarship. They were married in June 1941, six months before Pearl Harbor—“six very glamorous months,” as Marion told Veterans History Project interviewer Sarah Rouse. Joe was attached to the First Cavalry Division, and they were stationed at Fort Lewis, Texas, on the Mexican border. Army life there was of another era; the men still rode horses, and the women wore evening gowns every Saturday night.

Once Joe shipped out, Marion retreated to New York, pregnant with the couple’s first child. She moved into an apartment with her mother and two sisters (one of whom had a husband in the service as well). The ladies of the neighborhood would meet daily in Joyce Kilmer Park, where they would trade stories of letters received and console one another when the dreaded telegrams, announc-

ing a man missing or killed in action, would arrive.

To keep up her own and her husband’s spirits, Marion decided to write and design a mini-newspaper on two sides of a small piece of artist’s board. She wrote all the stories herself—tales of family events and wide-eyed accounts of Joe’s exploits—and included a photograph or two to remind Joe of how quickly their daughter, Marjorie, was growing up, or how his sisters and mother-in-law were doing.

In her interview Marion recalled, “I remember someone saying to my mother-in-law, ‘Oh my daughter is crying, and your daughter-in-law is laughing.’ They didn’t see me crying in private; in public, I just carried on. I felt that was part of the war effort. That’s how you kept yourself going.”

At the end of the war, Marion was astonished to learn that Joe had saved all the copies of her “Goofein Journals.” She resumed publication several years later when he was called to duty during the Korean War. Joe returned safely from Korea, but a dozen years later, when war was escalating in a Southeast Asian country called Vietnam, Marion put her foot down. “I said to him, ‘Honey I can’t sit out a third war.’ And Joe said, ‘Don’t worry. I’m getting out.’” He did and became a professor of engineering at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.

Although Joe Gurfein is now deceased, Marion still lives in suburban Washington, as effervescent as ever, though

she is long retired from the newspaper publishing business.

• Ben Snyder

Ben Snyder served as a bombardier in the Army Air Corps’ 494th Bomb Group. His 111-page compilation of letters written to his family from 1943 to 1945 begins with his training in the United States and encompasses his service overseas in the Pacific theater. The letters include many topics: interaction with other servicemen; aspects of his service experience; ways he kept busy during his down time; dogs; and humorous anecdotes and jokes. Snyder’s running commentary and descriptions of life in the military demonstrate the way in which ordinary and extraordinary events and activities figured in the experiences of World War II servicemen.

There is magic in Snyder’s letters home, as exemplified in the excerpt that follows, which is characterized by wit, warmth, and humor: “Do you remember my writing about... that rabid Republican Dutchman from Illinois who upholsters his chairs with pictures of FDR? He has been an expectant father for several weeks and finally the anticipated cable arrived. Its message: ‘Happy anniversary, both doing well!’ Now the poor devil doesn’t know whether he is the father of a boy, a girl, twins or the Borax twenty mule team. No clue as to gender or any of the other vital details.”



Crew of the Short Run, taken on Angaur Island, Palau Group, 867th Sqdn., 494th Group, about 1943–45. Bombardier Ben M. Snyder is in the top row, right. (VHP/Snyder/Coll. 2353)

• Rafael Hirtz

The son of a wealthy international businessman, Rafael Hirtz was born in Buenos Aires, spent his younger days in France and England, and grew up as a teenager in Southern California. It was a good life; private tutors



Rafael Hirtz (far right), before his jump into Brittany, France, for "Mission Donald," 1944. (VHP/Hirtz/Coll. 94)

educated him and his brother until the family finally settled in America. At the age of fifteen, Rafael sailed to France, where he spent every summer with his grandmother, and on board the ship was the U.S. Olympic team, headed for Berlin.

It was 1936, and even as a teenager Rafael could tell something big was brewing in Europe. He sneaked away from his grandmother's care to attend some of the Berlin Olympiad, where he caught an even stronger whiff of trouble. A few years later, back in the United States, young Rafael was moved to enlist in the Canadian Army when Germany invaded Poland, only to be told he would lose his U.S. citizenship if he did.

So he waited, and after Pearl Harbor he quit college and joined the U.S. Army. Originally assigned to a communications unit, Hirtz was singled out for his fluency with French and asked to join a fledgling intelli-

gence unit called the Office of Strategic Services. At the initial meeting for volunteers, when the speaker told the crowd of several hundred that their chances for survival in this unit were fifty-fifty, Hirtz was one of four men who decided to stick around for more information.

Hirtz was sent to Washington, D.C., where the recruits were put through their paces at a posh suburban country club. His first assignment was to be dropped behind enemy lines in post-D-Day France, where he would enlist the aid of the Resistance in protecting bridges that Gen. George S. Patton's tanks would need to pursue the German Army. "We were always very careful," he recalled to an interviewer. "We always tried to let the French know if we were going to do something, about blowing something up, so that the civilians would get out of the territory."

Hirtz performed one other mission in France, and then he was sent to China to train Chinese soldiers to fight off their Japanese occupiers. He was especially pleased to find himself working with such dedicated men. But the OSS wanted their agents to be as self-sufficient as possible, and China was an impoverished country. Even his considerable fortune in supplied cash couldn't help him get a decent meal, let alone reasonable sanitation, and, as Hirtz recalled, "I had just about every disease known to man—yellow fever, jaundice, amoebic dysentery. I came back on a hospital ship, and I think I was 128 pounds."

But he did survive, to marry an OSS cryptographer, and live a long life, which ended in July 2003 in Baltimore, Maryland. Hirtz's daughter donated his interview and evocative family photographs to the Veterans History Project.

• Walter Morris

Walter Morris faced many challenges in serving his country. He pushed the envelope beyond the limited service activities considered acceptable at the time for African-American servicemen.

After spending two years as a classification clerk, Walter Morris applied and was accepted into Officer Candidate School. After week twelve of the thirteen-week course, he was told that while he didn't have enough experience he could select another unit and then reapply for the course again in three months. He selected Parachute School. Morris's decision to empower his men by teaching them the same maneuvers taught to their white counterparts landed him in a discussion with a general about the Army's goal of forming an all African-American parachute company and unit. Morris became the first African-American assigned to the 555th Parachute Company, the first all-black parachute infantry test platoon, company, and battalion.



Walter Morris played an important role in the integration of American troops during World War II. By submitting ideas on how to run an all-black guard unit attached to the parachute school, Morris was instrumental in establishing the 555th Parachute Infantry Company, "The Triple Nickels." (VHP/Morris/Coll. 2946)



555th Airborne waiting for a routine equipment check. These men were trained by the U.S. Forest Service Smokejumpers to jump to forest fires. Photo Missoula Smokejumper Visitor Center. (VHP/Morris/ Coll. 2946)

“We as colored soldiers in Ft. Benning, Georgia, in 1941 and '42, could not go into the main Post Exchange or the main theater in Ft. Benning, Georgia. When we passed the main Post Exchange and looked in we could see the German and Italian prisoners of war sitting down at the same table with white soldiers, drinking cokes and smoking and having a good time. So it is understandable how colored soldiers would have an inferiority complex. [We thought] there must be something wrong with us. We are in uniform . . . but we are not good enough to sit at the table with the prisoners of war.”

“Anyway, once we finished our course we jumped for four days and the fifth jump was at night. Once you jumped that night jump the following morning you would graduate because now you were a paratrooper. Once that was done, and the officers finished their course, the Army opened the gates for all colored soldiers who wanted to volunteer to have a colored parachute company. They came by the hundreds.”

Too late to participate in the war in Europe, the 555th Parachute Infantry Company, dubbed the “Triple Nickels,” became smoke-jumpers in the Pacific Northwest, fighting fires caused by Japanese incendiary balloons floating over from Japan across the Pacific.

• Irving Oblas

Irving Oblas, a yeoman first class with the 19th Fleet, was a



USO postcard, postmarked July 7, 1945. Irving Oblas never left the United States during World War II, but his voluminous correspondence with his wife offers descriptions of daily life in the Navy. On his way to California to be shipped to Japan, Oblas mailed a postcard to his wife from every place his train stopped. He arrived in San Francisco just in time for V-J Day, Aug. 6, 1945. (VHP/Oblas/Coll. 2354)

prolific writer. The 492 letters written between him and his wife Lilyan provide descriptions of his duties in the state-side Navy during WWII, while also giving a look at home-front activities and worries. The Oblas letters cover a multitude of issues: how to observe religion (fasting during Yom Kippur while in boot camp); feelings regarding becoming a court reporter; desire for daily letters; mishaps involving Lilyan and daughter Rema; questioning of

finances at home; reaction to the D-Day invasion; and accounts of life in an administrative office.

On New Year's Eve 1943, he wrote a description of the ship's service cafeteria: “And thru it all, like the backdrops of a [dramatic] effect, the voice of the long distance telephone operator can be heard intermittently booming thru the loudspeaker: ‘Mr. Jones, N.Y. Calling’ or ‘Anyone Calling [Hank Humkus], Kansas,’ etc. And add to this the stench of beer, the smell of fried hot dogs and hamburgers (Sampson style), the fragrance of ice cream—and the dirt and noise of a vast throng it's all a sight to see. And most of us over-look it until once in a while—as I did—we stare at the surroundings and watch everything as if it all were in a movie remote from us all, and wonder

how we ourselves became a part of it.” (December 31, 1943)

• Frederick, Malcolm, and Warren Stilson

Frederick Stilson put it very simply. Working in 1917 as an engineer who was supervising survey and repair work on a railroad in Indiana, he heard about America's entry into World War I. “I had to go,” he wrote in his memoir, *That Other War*. For Stilson, “that other



Frederick Clarence Stilson, about 1917–1919. (VHP/Stilson/Coll. 2054)

war” was an adventure, but he was spared first-hand knowledge of much of its horrors. He was able to secure an officer’s commission in the Army Corps of Engineers and spent much of his time in France repairing and rebuilding rail lines.

After the Armistice, Stilson wasn’t finished with his duties. The Army of the Occupation had many tasks, but Stilson was resourceful enough to wrangle leave and tour some of France’s most beautiful regions. His memoir is as much a travelogue as a war story.

Twenty-some years later, Stilson and his family were living in southern California. His oldest son, Malcolm “Mac” Stilson, tried to enlist in the armed services in the wake of Pearl Harbor, but his 20/400 eyesight proved to be a serious obstacle to his first choices: the Navy and the Engineer Corps. Mac eventually found himself in the Army and spent the first two years of his service bouncing from base to base and specialty to specialty. His letters home to his parents and his younger brother, Warren, are filled with frustration over not being able to contribute more actively to the war effort.

When Warren enlisted and went into the infantry, Mac’s let-

ters began looking forward, to a time after the war was over, when the two of them might join forces. In an April 1944 letter, he wrote, “As I am writing this, I have beside me a map of the U.S. and am pouring [sic] over it. Brother mine, when we get back together again, I think we will be a lot closer than we ever have before. When we get out of the army I suggest that we go to school together. Rocket engineering will be our goal. What the Wright Brothers did to the airplane, so shall the Stilson Brothers do to the Rocketship. After all, why not?”

Like so many wartime dreams, Mac’s were unfulfilled. Warren was shipped to Europe and, in December 1944, during action preceding the Battle of



Malcolm Harvey Stilson, 1943. (VHP/Stilson/Coll. 2056)

the Bulge, he was killed by enemy fire. The Army would not confirm his death for almost nine months, although a buddy wrote an eyewitness account in a heartbreaking letter to Frederick and his wife.

One month after his brother was declared missing in action, Mac himself finally shipped out to India, where he found himself playing piano with a troupe of traveling performers in the Entertainment Production Unit of the Army’s Special Services. Two of its members, Andrew

Duggan and Peter Gennaro, went on to successful Hollywood careers.

Malcolm Stilson donated his father’s memoirs, his own set of two memoirs, and correspondence relating to his brother’s death to the Veterans History Project.

• **Meda Brendall and Paul Steppe**

She was a single mother working in Baltimore’s Bethlehem Fairfield Shipyards, raising a young son far from her family in North Carolina. But it was wartime, and Meda Brendall was determined to make her own contribution to help the Allied cause in World War II. She had learned welding in her hometown of Morgantown, N.C., but there were few opportunities to practice her craft that didn’t include a big move.

Wartime required sacrifices from many on the home front, and Meda Brendall understood



Lula Barber, Meta Kres, and Meda Brendall outside the welding shop at the Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipyards, Baltimore, Maryland, 1942. (VHP/Brendall/Coll. 4951)

that, so she and her son Paul moved north to Baltimore. The shipyards weren't accustomed to having female employees, but Meda made her rules known right away. "I made one or two understand I wasn't there to fool around. I was there for the war effort," she recalled in an interview. She made friends with her female colleagues and became a favorite of several of the long-time male workers, who dubbed her "Peanut."

Brendall was lucky to have rented an apartment from a woman who was willing to watch young Paul after school. Her hours at the shipyards were long—6 a.m. to 4 p.m., seven days a week—but she took advantage of the occasional day off to take Paul to the movies. "He was a good boy; I didn't worry about him," Meda recalled years later in an interview.

That good boy grew up to be a young man with his own patriotic impulses. Paul Steppe (he had kept his birth father's name; Meda's own name changed with a second marriage some year after the war) enlisted in the Marines to fight in Korea. He wrote of his experiences in a memoir, *An Everlasting Watch*, which describes in detail the long hours spent in foxholes watching for signs of enemy movements.

"It's a buddy system," Paul Steppe wrote. "You have a bond and brotherhood when you're overseas. Watch the man on the left, you watch the man on the right, and they do the same for you."

On Christmas Eve 1951, even Steppe's foxhole buddies couldn't protect him when a grenade was tossed into his foxhole. He was badly wounded in the foot and hip and had to be evacuated from the front. Stretcher bearers dropped him in the snow, a bus carrying him to a hospital in downtown Tokyo was in an accident, a hospital ship he was on collided with a destroyer, and a plane he was on nearly went off the runway trying to take off from the Tokyo airport.

By the time he reached Walter Reed Hospital in Washington,

D.C., Paul Steppe must have felt either amazingly lucky or just relieved. Many years later, when his health was in serious decline, his mother took him into her home in Baltimore. Paul Steppe died in March 2004, but at the age of 92 Meda Brendall is still going strong.

• Warren Tsuneishi

During wartime many soldiers find comfort in communicating with their families back home, who are enjoying a life of relative ease, far from the battlefields. But for Warren Tsuneishi, a second-generation Japanese American serving during World War II, communications were to a family suffering their own hardships.

Tsuneishi's parents and siblings had been uprooted from their California home under the federal government's edict mandating the evacuation of Japanese Americans living in the three West Coast states. The Tsuneishis wound up in Heart Mountain Relocation Center, near Cody, Wyoming. Warren, a student at the University of California at Berkeley when the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred, briefly joined them. But he was allowed to finish his college education at Syracuse University.

With the urging of his older brother, Hughes, Tsuneishi enlisted in a special program started by the Army before the Pearl Harbor attack. The Military Intelligence Service Language School was training young Japanese Americans like Hughes Tsuneishi to

translate captured Japanese military documents. As Warren would find out when he was shipped out to the Pacific Theater, "The Japanese military apparently thought that it didn't matter whether the documents fell into our hands because no Americans could read Japanese in any case—or very few."

In March 1945, when Americans were preparing to launch an assault on Okinawa, in what proved to be the bloodiest battle of the war in the Pacific, captured documents revealed a unique plan of defense by the Japanese. As Warren Tsuneishi would tell Sarah Rouse of the Veterans History Project, "It goes without saying that knowing enemy intentions is half the battle."

Warren admitted that he was not a very good correspondent. In fact, his mother got in touch with a Red Cross worker to determine if her second son was still alive, and a shamed Warren responded with a Christmas card to his family.

Warren Tsuneishi went on to a career as a renowned scholar,



Warren Tsuneishi (right) with Lt. Gen. Hodge, Seoul, Korea, October 1945. (VHP/Tsuneishi/Coll. 2153)



The 306th HQ Intelligence Detachment, XXIV Corps, Leyte, Philippines, November 1, 1945. Front row (left to right): George Shimotori, Saburo Okamura, Thomas Sasaki, Francis Yamamoto, Herbert Nishihara, Warren Tsuneishi. Back row (left to right): Hiroshi Itow, Joe Nishihara, Lt. Richard Kleeman, T/Sgt George Takabayashi, Lloyd Shinsato. (VHP/Tsuneishi/Coll. 2153)

eventually becoming chief of the Asian Division at the Library of Congress, a post from which he retired in 1993.

“In my heart,” Warren Tsuneishi told the Veterans History Project, “I always thought of myself as American,” as well he should. Tsuneishi was born on the 4th of July in 1921 and named after the president of the United States, Warren G. Harding. But he admits that his “emotional makeup” was Japanese; “instead of resisting unconstitutional acts of the government against me, I took it without fighting, and to that extent I guess I was more Japanese than American—if that stereotype is true.”

• **Chuck Hagel**

As a young man, Chuck Hagel couldn’t quite get his act together. He attended three colleges without earning a diploma, worked odd jobs at a radio station, and then decided to enlist in the Army. It’s a familiar story, and in this case one with a decidedly happy ending. But there were times when it could have gone the other way.

Chuck Hagel grew up in small Nebraska town. His father

patrolled the beaches in Hawaii, in December 1941, as a member of the U.S. Navy during World War II, and a sense of service was ingrained in the Hagel boys. So it could not have come as a surprise in 1967 when Chuck enlisted in the Army and insisted, in spite of a relatively cushy initial assignment to Europe, that he be sent to Vietnam, where the action was.

Not long after he arrived “in country,” his younger brother, Tom, was sent to Vietnam as well. The two men made a pact to try to get transferred to each other’s platoons, and the older brother won. Soon, Chuck and Tom Hagel were walking lead, or “the point,” on jungle patrols. “I always felt a little better when I was more up front than somebody else,” Hagel told an interviewer for the Veterans History Project. “You have the front position; you also have the responsibility of not walking your company into an ambush or a trap.”

The attitude was typical of the Hagel brothers’ fearlessness, but it didn’t grant them immunity from danger. Twice during his twelve months in country Chuck was wounded, and Tom suffered wounds on three occasions. The second time Chuck was wound-

ed, he found himself waiting for a helicopter to evacuate him and Tom, and he began thinking, “If I ever get out of all this, I’m going to do everything I can to assure that war is the last resort that we, a nation, a people calls upon to settle a dispute. The horror of it, the pain of it, the suffering of it, people just don’t understand unless they’ve been through it. There’s no glory, only suffering in war.”

The Hagel brothers survived their wounds and the war. Chuck became a successful businessman and was elected in 1996 to the first of two terms in the U.S. Senate. He was one of the original Senate sponsors, along with Max Cleland, of the Veterans History Project, and serves on its Five Star Council.



Chuck Hagel in Vietnam, 1968. Currently the U.S. senator from Nebraska, Chuck Hagel served with his brother in Vietnam, where they walked side by side as infantry squad leaders with the U.S. Army’s 9th Infantry Division. (VHP/Hagel/Coll. 2230)

The National World War II Memorial Dedication and Reunion



The National World War II Memorial on the National Mall, view from 17th Street. Artist's rendering by Joonan Lee.

By Tom Wiener

The National World War II (WWII) Memorial is the first national memorial dedicated to all those who served during World War II. Established by the American Battle Monuments Commission, the memorial honors veterans, home-front supporters, and the nation's dedication to the ideal of freedom that inspired and sustained its participation in the war. Dedication will take place Saturday, May 29, during the Memorial Day weekend and will coincide with the World War II four-day reunion, *Tribute to a Generation: National World War II*, which starts Thurs-

day, May 27, and ends Sunday, May 30.

The reunion is expected to be the largest-ever gathering of World War II participants, with more than 800,000 veterans, civilian supporters, and citizens from across the United States expected to attend. It is being produced by the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in partnership with the American Battle Monuments Commission, and many organizations, notably the American Folklife Center's Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress, are invited to participate. Consisting of a series of tented pavilions and stages, the

reunion includes events scheduled for all four days. Reunion events include the Homecoming Stage & Capitol Canteen Stage, with sights and sounds of dance and music from the WWII era; *Wartime Stories: Voices of a Generation*, which will include narrative sessions and interviews on a variety of topics with WWII veterans and war workers; the Veterans History Project Pavilion, which will present interviews, speakers, and exhibits that showcase firsthand accounts collected from men and women, civilian and military, who served during the war; *Preserving Memories*, which will present experts from

military and other museums and archives to advise veterans and their families on how best to preserve the documents and material that record the culture of the WWII period; a presentation titled “Building the World War II Memorial,” during which architectural, engineering, landscape, and construction teams will discuss their roles in the creation of the National WWII Memorial; a Reunion Hall that will provide a place to socialize, relax, and reconnect with service colleagues; and a Military Equipment Display, with World War II military artifacts and equipment.

The Veterans History Project (VHP) will participate in this commemorative event with its own tent pavilion, located near the Smithsonian’s Air and Space Museum on the Mall. The VHP encourages all veterans and civilian war supporters attending the reunion to bring written memoirs, photos, and letters from World War II to the pavilion, but VHP staff and volunteers will also conduct interviews in the pavilion as well as train new volunteers on how to conduct an interview. This effort reflects and supports the project’s grassroots approach to expanding its collections.

The VHP pavilion will also host more than thirty hours of panel discussions during the four days. POWs, Tuskegee Airmen, Code Talkers, Women in Wartime, and D-Day vets will offer their first-hand accounts,

and other panels will document the experiences of Hispanic, Japanese, and African Americans during World War II. Panel subjects and participants will include: Former Prisoners of War, with panelists Richard Francies, Enso Bighinatti, Jimmie Kanaya, and Marty Higgins; a Reunion of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 1st Battalion (“Lost Battalion”) of the 141st Regiment of the 36th (Texas) Division; the Hispanic Experience in WWII, with Fred Medina, Miguel Encinias, and Evelio Grillo; the Japanese American Experience in WWII, with Warren Tsuneishi, Jimmie Kanaya, and Marty Higgins; Navajo Code Talkers Sam Billison, Sam Smith, and Keith Little; the Tuskegee Airmen, with Lee Archer and Charles McGee; D-Day veterans, with Sam Gibbons, Tracy Sugarman, and Bob “Punchy” Powell; Women in the Military, featuring Jeanne Holm, Miriam Ownby, Martha Putney, Elizabeth Splaine, and Ruth Earn; the Red Cross in WWII, with panelists Ruth Belew, Helen Colony, and Mary O’Driscoll; Women in Military Medicine, with Jennifer Peterson, Anna Busby, Marian Elcano, and Martha Leierer; WWII Women—Memories From the Home Front, featuring Marion Gurfein, Helen Sudyk, Roy Popkin, and Venus Ramey (“Miss America 1944”). Other WWII veterans participating in panel discussions will include John Warner, J. L. Holloway,

Richard Bloxsom, Jerry Brenner, and Joseph DeLuca.

In addition to activities within the pavilion, a volunteer corps of Library of Congress staff will conduct “man on the Mall” interviews with World War II veterans and civilians who served in support of them. In teams of two, Library staff will roam the National Mall during the four days of the reunion, recording mini-interviews and raising awareness of the VHP’s wish to document more fully the memories of World War II veterans. The project plans to follow up on these leads to add many more stories to its collections.

Members of the World War II generation who are unable to attend the reunion are invited to visit Washington, D.C., and the memorial throughout the summer to take part in *America Celebrates the Greatest Generation*. The celebration, produced by the American Experience Foundation, in partnership with the Washington, D.C., Convention & Tourism Corporation and Cultural Tourism D.C., will begin Memorial Day weekend and end following the Labor Day weekend. All visitors are invited to honor members of the WWII generation by enrolling them in the World War II Registry, which will be a permanent commemoration of Americans who participated in the war effort.

Tom Wiener is the editor for the Veterans History Project.



How to Participate in the Veterans History Project

The Veterans History Project wants you! The work is urgent, the time is now. Participate as an Official Partner, an interviewer, or a veteran with a wartime experience story to tell.

Becoming an Official Partner is easy. Simply fill out a form that says your organization agrees to participate in some or

all of the following ways: collecting and preserving oral histories and materials, a minimum of twenty each year; recruiting volunteers; training volunteers to conduct interviews; identifying veterans to be interviewed; lending equipment; and creating veterans history projects close to home. The partner

organization can donate its recorded interviews to the Library of Congress’s Veterans History Project archives or retain the histories locally, notifying the Library of Congress of their existence in order to become part of the Library’s National Registry of twentieth-century veterans’ personal histories.



VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

To assist partners, the Veterans History Project has brochures for distribution or duplication, a printed “how-to” kit, also available on the Web site, <http://www.loc.gov/vets>, as well as VHP staff support. There is also a Field Kit, which is a brief version of the master project kit and is especially helpful for teachers and project leaders. The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress sponsors events such as screenings of outstanding interviews and lectures by famous historians to highlight the project and to bring attention to partners’ activities.

Through its partners, the VHP greatly expands its ability to reach out to individuals and capture their interviews for the collection. VHP partners are civic and military organizations, libraries, veterans’ associations, archives, historical societies, humanities’ councils, museums, oral history programs, and universities. Some of the VHP’s national partners are the American Historical Association, the American Legion, and the Disabled American Veterans. Partners in the District of Columbia include the Marine Corps Historical Center, the U.S. Army Center of Military History, and the World War II Veterans Committee. The Library of Congress and its American Folklife Center invite you and your organization to join the VHP as an Official Partner in this urgent and important effort.

To become a volunteer interviewer you can request a Project Kit or join with one of the organizations already a partner in your area. The Project Kit includes all the information and forms you need to participate as a volunteer interviewer in the Veterans History Project. While audio- or video-recordings are preferred, transcriptions of an interview are allowed. Original documents such as letters, diaries, photographs, and maps are also accepted. Quality copies of original documents are acceptable if they enhance the story told.

If you are the veteran of a war, either military or civilian, please contact one of the partner organizations near you or the Veterans History Project via email (vohp@loc.gov) or by telephone at 202 707-4916 to receive guidance on finding someone to interview you. All forms and information are available at the project’s Web site <http://www.loc.gov/vets>. A Memoir Kit is also available for those who wish to write their personal story. You should consider asking a relative or next of kin to act as interviewer.

Interviews and other documentation you collect will be added to the permanent collections of the Library of Congress; therefore, we ask that you carefully follow the instructions in these kits. Please pay special attention to all project forms. Materials without release forms will be returned. Signed release

forms allow the materials to be used by researchers in reading rooms and included in exhibitions and presentations on the Library of Congress’s educational Web site. In addition, a Biographical Data Form must be completed for each veteran or civilian who is interviewed. By completing this form, you provide us with the information we need to include interview subjects in the VHP National Registry of Service. The Audio and Video Recording Log, Photograph Log, and Manuscript Data Sheet should also be completed as appropriate. In some locations, the project has partnered with archives that maintain collections locally. Please see our Web page on Finding or Creating a Home for Your Interviews and Documents, or call or e-mail the project for more information. If you have any questions, would like to discuss your ideas and plans with staff, or would like paper copies of the kits, please contact the VHP.

The VHP invites your ideas, your enthusiasm, and your ability to reach the many Americans who would like to participate in this national project to record our veterans’ memories while they are still here to remind us of the sacrifices they made for us.

A reminder that the current focus is on first-hand accounts of U.S. veterans who served in World War I (1914–1920), World War II (1939–1946), or the Korean War (1950–1955), Vietnam War (1961–1975), or Persian Gulf War (1990–1995). Those U.S. citizen civilians who were actively involved in supporting war efforts (such as war industry workers, USO workers, flight instructors, medical volunteers, etc.) are also invited to share their valuable stories.



"Ships! Ships! Where Are the Ships?" Watercolor drawing on envelope by Sgt. Samuel Boylston, about 1945. When Gerald Duquette wrote to his wife from the Pacific Theater during World War II, he would ask his buddy, Samuel Boylston, to decorate the envelope with humorous scenes of GI life. (VHP/Boylston/Coll. 1848) Stories from the American Folklife Center's Veterans History Project Collection are recounted in this special issue of *Folklife Center News*.

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