

The Library of Congress



VETERANS
HISTORY
PROJECT



FIELD KIT

Conducting and Preserving Interviews

Library of Congress
American Folklife Center

The Veterans History Project collects and preserves personal stories and other documents from America's war veterans.

The United States Congress created the Veterans History Project (VHP) in 2000 as part of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, one of the world's most respected research and cultural institutions.

VHP's mission is to collect, preserve and make accessible the personal accounts of American wartime veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war.

Who – Veterans who served in the United States military, in any capacity, from World War I through the present and are no longer serving are eligible to participate, regardless of branch or rank. Civilians who served in support of a United States war effort in a professional capacity also are welcome to participate. As contributors to this national preservation effort, volunteers from around the country interview veterans and collect first person narratives. Any individual or organization may participate, including family members and friends of veterans, students in grades 10 or higher, high school and university educators, authors, veteran service organizations, places of worship, retirement communities, Scout troops, local businesses and professional associations.

What – VHP accepts veterans' personal narratives in the forms of original, unedited audio- and video-recorded interviews, photographs, letters, diaries, journals, military documents, two-dimensional artwork, maps and unpublished memoirs that meet minimum requirements.

When – Any day is a good day to share, record or submit a veteran's story. Begin today.

Where – VHP participation is occurring all over the United States, in every Congressional district and U.S. territory. Conduct VHP interviews in any quiet, indoor location such as a home, private office or conference room.

Why – As a primary source, researchers, scholars and educators rely upon VHP collections. These oral histories, photographs, manuscripts and other original materials are a rich supplement to historical texts and a valued cultural resource. Veterans' family members treasure the memories that are permanently preserved at the Library of Congress for future generations. Please contact VHP at least one week in advance to schedule an appointment to research or view collections on-site. Call (202) 707-4916.

How – Sit down with a veteran and conduct a video- or audio-recorded interview about his or her military service. Or, submit a collection of original photographs or documents that tell the veteran's story from his or her perspective, even if the veteran is deceased or unable to share an oral history. Remember to submit originals only and to follow the 30-20-10 Rule (p. 1).

Continue reading this Field Kit for details on how to prepare (p. 1), how to participate (p. 1), what to ask during an interview (p. 2), how to submit collections (p. 3), which forms are required for submission (pp. 5-12) and which media and recording formats are acceptable (p. 13).

If you have questions, contact the toll-free message line at 1-888-371-5848 or email vohp@loc.gov.

Visit VHP online at www.loc.gov/vets.



Thank you for helping to preserve history for the Library of Congress Veterans History Project!

PREPARE



- ▶ Visit the Veterans History Project website, www.loc.gov/vets.
 - View the 15-minute Field Kit Companion Video.
 - Search the collections database, and view online collections.
 - Print additional forms and Field Kits.
 - Register for the VHP RSS feed.
- ▶ **Read** this entire Field Kit to become familiar with the process and requirements.
- ▶ **Veterans:**
 - Complete the Biographical Data Form (p. 5) and Veteran's Release Form (p. 7).
 - Search your home for photographs that may help share your story (p. 11).
 - Search your home for documents to help you write and submit an unpublished memoir (p. 12).
- ▶ **Volunteers / Interviewers:**
 - Complete the Interviewer's Release Form (p. 8) and all other required forms (pp. 9-12).
 - Secure a quiet location for the interview.
 - Carefully review the Accepted Media and Format Standards list (p. 13).
 - Test recording equipment for sound and lighting before each interview.
 - If possible, meet with the veteran in advance to review forms and help formulate interview questions that are personalized to the veteran's experience (p. 2).

PARTICIPATE

- ▶ **Share your story** if you are a veteran. Simply sit down with a friend, peer or loved one and record a conversation about your military experiences for **30 minutes or longer**. Or, you may contribute your unpublished, original memoir (p. 12).
- ▶ **Interview a veteran** in your family or community. The interview process requires the forms from this Field Kit, an interviewer, an interviewee and a recording device. See p. 2 for a list of interview questions. See p. 13 for a list of acceptable media and recording formats.
- ▶ **Collect** a veteran's original photographs, letters and other historical documents. Be sure to submit the corresponding forms with each (pp. 11-12).
- ▶ **Remember** to submit originals only, and to follow the 30-20-10 Rule. Materials that fail to meet at least one of the following minimum requirements will be returned to the contributor:
 - 30 minutes is the minimum length required for recorded interviews.
 - 20 pages is the minimum number of pages required for memoirs, diaries or journals.
 - 10 is the minimum number of photographs, letters, maps or pieces of artwork and the minimum number of pages required for military documents.
- ▶ **Collaborate** with other individuals or organizations. VHP's official Founding Partner Program closed in 2009; however, you are encouraged to combine resources with others to collect these priceless stories for posterity.
- ▶ **Allow** eight to 10 weeks for VHP to acknowledge receipt of your materials, and allow four to six months for VHP to create the veteran's online record at www.loc.gov/vets.

INTERVIEW

It is the interviewer's job to make the veteran feel comfortable and to be a good listener. Each interview session will be unique. The following is an outline (not a script) to help the interviewer guide the veteran through the conversation. Tailor the questions as you and the veteran see fit.

1 Introduction

The interviewer must begin the recording by stating his or her name and organizational affiliation (if any), the veteran's full name, the date and the general location in which the interview is being conducted. Please do not disclose private information such as home addresses, military serial numbers or Social Security numbers.

2 Biographical Details

- a) Where and when were you born?
- b) Who are/were your parents and what are/were their occupations?
- c) Who are/were your siblings? Names and genders? Which, if any, serve/served in the military?
- d) What were you doing before you entered the service?

3 Early Days of Service

- a) In which branch of the military did you serve?
- b) Did you enlist or were you drafted?
- c) If you enlisted, why did you choose that specific branch of the military?
- d) What happened when you departed for training camp and during your early days of training?
- e) Do you recall your instructors? If so, what were they like?
- f) Did you receive any specialized training? If so, what?
- g) How did you adapt to military life, including the physical regimen, barracks, food and social life?

4 Wartime Service

- a) Where did you serve?
- b) If you served abroad, what are some memories you have of that experience?
- c) If you were on the front lines, what combat action did you witness?
- d) If you were not on the front lines, what were your duties?
- e) If you saw combat, how did you feel when witnessing casualties and destruction?
- f) What kinds of friendships and camaraderie did you form while serving, and with whom?
- g) How did you stay in touch with family and friends back home?
- h) What did you do for recreation or when you were off-duty?

5 War's End/Coming Home

- a) Where were you when the war ended?
- b) How did you return home?
- c) How were you received by your family and community?
- d) How did you readjust to civilian life?
- e) Have you remained in contact with or reunited with fellow veterans? If so, who?
- f) Are you a member of any veterans' organizations? If so, which?
- g) What have you done since separating from the military?

6 Reflections

- a) How did your wartime experiences affect your life?
- b) What are some life lessons you learned from military service?
- c) How has your military service impacted your feelings about war and the military in general?
- d) What message would you like to leave for future generations who will view/hear this interview?
- e) Is there anything you feel like we haven't discussed, or should be added to this interview? If so, what?

SUBMIT

Prior to submitting a collection, make two copies of the interview and other materials. Keep one copy for yourself and give one to the veteran. To avoid damages caused by the Library of Congress' special security screening process, **do not use the U.S. Postal Service**. Place your items in a box, enclose a cover letter (p. 4) and use one of the following submission options.

► Option 1

Use a commercial carrier* (e.g., FedEx, UPS, etc.), and deliver to:

Veterans History Project
The Library of Congress
101 Independence Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20540-4615

**Do not pay extra for expedited service. Use "ground" or the least expensive delivery option.*

► Option 2

Hand-deliver:

Stop by the address above, Room LM-109 of the Madison Building, weekdays between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, and a VHP representative will assist you. Call (202) 707-4916 in advance.

PROCESS

Once your materials are received, they will go through a process that may take up to four to six months.

1. **Review** – VHP staff will review your materials to ensure they meet minimum requirements. Materials that do not meet VHP's minimum requirements will be dispositioned (returned to the contributor) within eight to 10 weeks.
2. **Acknowledgement** – VHP staff will acknowledge receipt of your materials via postcard within eight to 10 weeks.
3. **Data Entry** – VHP staff will enter details about the veteran and the materials into an internal collections database, which is used for research purposes.
4. **Archiving** – VHP staff will carefully label, preserve and store your materials in a temperature- and moisture-controlled environment to ensure they will not degrade.
5. **Creation of Online Record** – VHP staff will create an online record for the veteran, accessible through a search of the online database at www.loc.gov/vets. In addition to details about the veteran's military service, the online record also will include the contributor's name and affiliation. Every veteran receives an online record; however, some collections are digitized and made fully-available online and identified by a "VIEW DIGITAL COLLECTION" button.

COVER LETTER

Date ____/____/____
mm dd yyyy

Contributor's Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

Phone (____) _____

Email _____

Dear Veterans History Project Staff:

Enclosed, please find a total of _____ Veterans History Project collections for the following veterans.

Veteran's Name

Materials Enclosed

I have reviewed the following checklist to ensure that each of my collections meets VHP's minimum requirements.

SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Original, unedited interview/materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran's Release Form (p. 7) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recordings last at least 30 minutes | <input type="checkbox"/> Interviewer's Release Form (p. 8) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One recording per media format (CD, DVD etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Audio and Video Recording Log (p. 9) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Materials meet minimum quantities (p. 1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Photograph Log (p. 11) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biographical Data Form (p. 5) | <input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript Data Sheet (p. 12) |

Signed,

REQUIRED



To ensure inclusion in the Veterans History Project, this form must accompany each submission. Please use reverse or additional sheet if service was in more than one war or conflict.

Veteran Civilian

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____

Telephone (_____) _____ Email _____

Place of Birth _____ Birth Date ___/___/___ Death Date ___/___/___

Next of Kin: Name and Address: _____

Race/Ethnicity (optional) _____ Male Female

Though you are not required to do so, providing this information will help researchers and ensure our collections accurately reflect the races and ethnicities of all who served.

Branch of Service or Wartime Activity _____

Commissioned Enlisted Drafted Service dates ___/___/___ to ___/___/___

Highest Rank _____

Unit, Division, Battalion, Group, Ship, etc. (Do not abbreviate.) _____

War, operation or conflict _____

Locations of military service _____

Battles/campaigns (Names) _____

Medals or service awards (Please list as specifically as possible.) _____

Special duties/highlights/achievements _____

Was the veteran a prisoner of war? Yes No

Did the veteran sustain combat or service-related injuries? Yes No

Interviewer (if applicable) _____

(Please use next page for any additional biographical information.)



REQUIRED

VETERAN'S RELEASE FORM
(See reverse for Interviewer's Release Form)

TO BE COMPLETED BY VETERAN OR CIVILIAN
(In cases of deceased veterans, to be completed by the donor of the material.)

I, _____, am a participant in the Veterans History Project (hereinafter "VHP") of the Library of Congress American Folklife Center. I understand that the purpose of the VHP is to collect audio- and video-recorded oral histories of America's war veterans and of those who served in support of them, as well as selected related documentary materials such as photographs and manuscripts, for inclusion in the permanent collections of the Library of Congress. These oral histories and related materials serve as a record of American veterans' wartime experiences and as a scholarly and educational resource for Congress and the general public.

I understand that the American Folklife Center plans to retain the product of my participation in the VHP, including but not limited to my interview, presentation, video, photographs, statements, name, images or likeness, voice, and written materials ("My Collection") as part of its permanent collections.

I hereby grant to the Library of Congress ownership of the physical property comprising My Collection. Additionally, I hereby grant to the Library of Congress, at no cost, the perpetual, nonexclusive, transferable, worldwide right to use, reproduce, transmit, display, perform, prepare derivative works from, distribute, and authorize the redistribution of the materials in My Collection in any medium. By giving this permission, I understand that I retain any copyright and related rights that I may hold.

I hereby release the Library of Congress, and its assignees and designees, from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of My Collection, including but not limited to any claims for copyright infringement, defamation, invasion of privacy, or right of publicity.

Should any part of My Collection be found to include materials that the Library of Congress deems inappropriate for retention with the collection or for transfer to other collections in the Library, the Library may dispose of such materials in accordance with its procedures for disposition of materials not needed for the Library's collections.

ACCEPTED AND AGREED

Signature _____ Date _____
month/day/year

Printed Name _____

Veteran's Address _____

Veteran's Next of Kin: Name & Address _____

Name of Interviewer (if applicable) _____

Relationship to Interviewer _____

Library of Congress American Folklife Center VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT



REQUIRED

INTERVIEWER'S RELEASE FORM

(See reverse for Veteran's Release Form)

TO BE COMPLETED BY INTERVIEWERS, RECORDING OPERATORS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS
 (Please circle appropriate category.)

I, _____, am a participant in the Veterans History Project (hereinafter "VHP") of the Library of Congress American Folklife Center. I understand that the purpose of the VHP is to collect audio- and video-recorded oral histories of America's war veterans and of those who served in support of them, as well as selected related documentary materials such as photographs and manuscripts, for inclusion in the permanent collections of the Library of Congress. These oral histories and related materials serve as a record of American veterans' wartime experiences and as a scholarly and educational resource for Congress and the general public.

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I hereby grant to the Library of Congress ownership of the physical property comprising My Collection. Additionally, I hereby grant to the Library of Congress, at no cost, the perpetual, nonexclusive, transferable, worldwide right to use, reproduce, transmit, display, perform, prepare derivative works from, distribute, and authorize the redistribution of the materials in My Collection in any medium. By giving this permission, I understand that I retain any copyright and related rights that I may hold.

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ACCEPTED AND AGREED

Signature _____ Date _____
month/day/year

Printed Name _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if interviewer is a minor) _____ Date _____
month/day/year

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian _____

Address _____

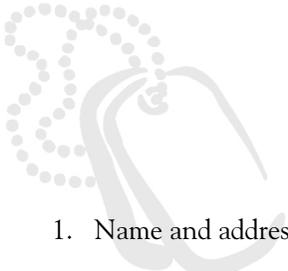
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ - _____

Telephone (_____) _____ Email _____

Name of Veteran _____

Organization affiliation (if any) _____

Library of Congress American Folklife Center VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT



REQUIRED

AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING LOG

1. Name and address of contributor or interviewer.

Name of Contributor/Interviewer _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ - _____

Telephone (_____) _____ Email _____

Organization affiliation (if any) _____

2. Name and birth date of the veteran or civilian being interviewed as it appears on the Biographical Data Form.

Name of Veteran/Civilian _____ Birth Date _____
month/day/year

3. Recording format (please check)

VIDEO type:

- Digital Video (MiniDV, DVCAM, DVPRO)
- DVD-R Video
- Flash Drive
- Other _____ (identify)

AUDIO type:

- Cassette
- CD-R
- Flash Drive

4. DIGITAL FILE type (please check)

- WAV
- MPEG4/H.264
- MPEG2
- TXT/RTF
- TIF/JPG

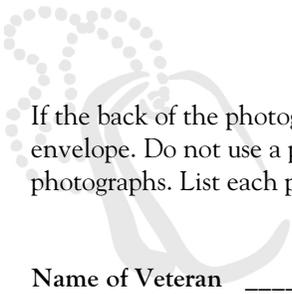
5. Estimated length of recording (in minutes) _____ Date of recording _____
month/day/year

6. Location of recording (City, State) _____

7. Please log the topics discussed in the interview in sequence. You may estimate the minute marks.
Example:

<u>Minute Mark</u>	<u>Topics</u>
1:00	introduction
2:30	enlisted with best friend
4:50	chose Signal Corps and reasons why
10:00	boot camp and early days
22:40	on board troop ship to Europe
26:00	part of 2nd wave at Omaha Beach on D-Day
30:00	message for future generations

Minute Mark (estimated)	Topics (presented in order of discussion on recording)
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



PHOTOGRAPH LOG

If the back of the photograph is too slick to label using a soft pencil, enclose each photograph in a labeled envelope. Do not use a pen or marker to label photographs. Do not use tape, glue, staples or paper clips on photographs. List each person in photos from left to right (L-R) on description line.

Name of Veteran _____ Birth Date _____
month/day/year

PHOTOGRAPH # _____ Location _____ Date _____

Description _____

PHOTOGRAPH # _____ Location _____ Date _____

Description _____

PHOTOGRAPH # _____ Location _____ Date _____

Description _____

PHOTOGRAPH # _____ Location _____ Date _____

Description _____

PHOTOGRAPH # _____ Location _____ Date _____

Description _____

PHOTOGRAPH # _____ Location _____ Date _____

Description _____

PHOTOGRAPH # _____ Location _____ Date _____

Description _____

PHOTOGRAPH # _____ Location _____ Date _____

Description _____

PHOTOGRAPH # _____ Location _____ Date _____

Description _____

PHOTOGRAPH # _____ Location _____ Date _____

Description _____

(Use additional log sheets as needed.)

MANUSCRIPT DATA SHEET

(REQUIRED with memoirs, letters, diaries or other written materials)

Guidelines for Writing a Memoir

Typewritten, double-spaced documents are easiest for researchers to read. Spark your memory by searching your home for documents and photographs from your service days. Use the interview outline (p. 2) as a guide for developing chapters or a table of contents to help researchers locate specific topics in your memoir.

Guidelines for Submitting Letters and Other Written Materials

Identify, by name, the writers and recipients of the letters and other documents and their relationship to the veteran or civilian whose name appears on the Biographical Data Form (p. 5). Describe the most interesting/important topics and events mentioned in the letters or documents.

1. Name and address of contributor.

Name of Contributor _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ - _____

Telephone (_____) _____ Email _____

Organization affiliation (if any) _____

2. Name and birth date of the veteran or civilian professionally supporting the war as it appears on the Biographical Data Form.

Name of Veteran/Civilian _____ Birth Date _____
month/day/year

Type of Item: _____

Topic: _____

Description: _____

Quantity _____ Number of Pages _____

Type of Item: _____

Topic: _____

Description: _____

Quantity _____ Number of Pages _____

Type of Item: _____

Topic: _____

Description: _____

Quantity _____ Number of Pages _____

3. Other location(s) these materials have been donated: _____

(Use additional data sheets as needed.)

ACCEPTED MEDIA AND FORMAT STANDARDS

Use the highest-quality recording equipment available to you. The Library of Congress requires that you submit unedited materials in their original format. Recordings must be **at least 30 minutes** in length. Record only one interview per media. Do not write on, add labels to or copy protect any CD or DVD.

VHP accepts the following media:

- Digital Video (DV)
MiniDV, DVCAM, DVPRO
- DVD-R Video
- Audio Cassettes
- CD-R Audio
- Flash Drives

Use the following file extensions:

- WAV on CD-R or a Flash Drive
 Specifications: 96 kHz, 24-bit (suggested) or 44.1 kHz, 16-bit
- MPEG-2 on DVD-R or a Flash Drive
 Specifications: at least 3Mbps, with a spatial resolution of 720x486 at 30fps or the highest your set-up allows.
- MPEG-4/H.264 on DVD-R or a Flash Drive
 Specifications: at least 3Mbps, with a spatial resolution of 720x486 at 30fps or the highest your set-up allows.
- TXT/RFT on CD-R, DVD-R, or a Flash Drive
 Specifications: 600 dpi (suggested) or 300 dpi
- TIF/JPG on CD-R, DVD-R, or a Flash Drive
 Specifications: 600 dpi (suggested) or 300 dpi

Contact vohp@loc.gov with any questions.

REMEMBER THE DO'S AND DON'TS

DO

DON'T

DO Send only original, unedited materials	DON'T Send photocopies, scans or edited materials
DO Send recordings that last at least 30 minutes	DON'T Send recordings that last fewer than 30 minutes
DO Conduct interviews in a quiet, indoor location	DON'T Conduct interviews outside or in noisy areas
DO Set up the recording equipment in advance	DON'T Adjust equipment/zoom during recording
DO Interview U.S. military veterans	DON'T Interview non-U.S. military veterans
DO Record veterans' firsthand experiences	DON'T Record or disclose private information or numbers
DO Send photographs and written materials	DON'T Send uniforms, dog tags or other artifacts
DO Place CDs and DVDs in labeled cases or envelopes	DON'T Label or write directly on CDs or DVDs
DO Ensure CDs and DVDs are playable before sending	DON'T Copy protect CDs or DVDs
DO Submit all required forms for each veteran	DON'T Submit materials without required forms
DO Enclose a cover letter with each package	DON'T Submit packages without a cover letter
DO Use a commercial delivery service	DON'T Use regular U.S. Postal Service
DO Use "ground" or least expensive delivery option	DON'T Pay extra for expedited delivery option
DO Submit deceased veterans' materials	DON'T Submit proxy interviews on behalf of veterans
DO Submit one veteran's interview per media	DON'T Submit group/multiple interviews on one media
DO Wait four to six months to view online record	DON'T Expect online record to appear immediately
DO Participate if you are in grade 10 or higher	DON'T Participate if you are in grade 9 or lower
DO Request a Spanish/English Field Kit if needed	DON'T Submit non-English interviews or forms
DO Voluntarily participate with VHP	DON'T Request/accept payment to participate with VHP



DO NOT SUBMIT MATERIALS BEYOND THOSE SPECIFIED.

Should any part of the collection be found to include materials that the Library of Congress deems inappropriate for retention with the collection or elsewhere within the Library, the Library may dispose of such material in accordance with its procedures for disposition of materials not needed for the Library's collections.

VETERANS' RESOURCES

The Veterans History Project is an oral history program and does not handle veterans' official service records, benefits or health care. Please refer to the following resources if you or a veteran you know need assistance.

Resource	Phone	Web
Veterans Service Records	1-866-272-6272	www.archives.gov/veterans
Veterans Benefits	1-800-827-1000	www.benefits.va.gov/benefits
Veterans Health Care	1-877-222-8387	www.va.gov/health
Veteran Crisis Line	1-800-273-8255, Press 1	www.VeteransCrisisLine.net



Do you have artifacts you wish to donate but are unable to because they are out of VHP's scope?

Visit www.loc.gov/vets/relatedrepositories.html for a list of repositories that may be willing to accept three-dimensional items such as medals, uniforms and dog tags. To ensure the safety of your collection, please contact institutions before sending materials. Some institutions maintain a specific collections focus, so please contact the museum staff, archivist or curator to learn more about their collecting policies and the kinds of materials they can or cannot accept. Neither the Veterans History Project, the American Folklife Center nor the Library of Congress can speak for their collecting policies.

*Photographs courtesy of Veterans History Project Collection,
American Folklife Center, Library of Congress*



“If we don’t tell our story, then nobody will know what transpired.”
– Donald Griffith, Korean War Veteran



“Our students have the opportunity to leave their classrooms, go out into the community and hear firsthand accounts of combat and life during wartime from the people who actually made that history. Talk about bringing history alive!”
– Eileen Hurst, Central Connecticut State University



“I cannot express how enlightening and interesting this project has been. From these people, I have learned a great deal about courage, endurance, and patriotism that I have not, and could not have, found in my own generation.”
– Brady Schuh, Eagle Scout



“It was a good thing that I sent the originals to you, or they would now be destroyed. Hurricane Katrina put 5 ½ feet of water in our home... so I’m glad the Library of Congress has them.”
– Shirley Carpenter, WWI Veteran’s Family Member



“Working as a community volunteer for the Veterans History Project, I have learned so much history, geography, and of the humble sacrifice that Americans have made.”
– Gwendolyn Copeland, Community Volunteer



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Library of Congress
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Washington, DC 20540-4615

tel: 202-707-4916
msg: 1-888-371-5848
fax: 202-252-2046
email: vohp@loc.gov
www.loc.gov/vets/

