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Lest We Forget: The Library of Congress's Veterans History Project and "Radical Trust"

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LEST WE FORGET: THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS’ S VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT AND “RADICAL TRUST”

by

Christopher Michael Jannings

A Dissertation
submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of History
Advisor: Kristin M. Szyylvian, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 2010
This dissertation examines the Veterans History Project (VHP), an official U.S. government project created under a bill signed into law by President William J. Clinton on October 27, 2000 to document the experiences of American veterans and their supporters in time of war. It explores the intersections between, cultural, social, public, and military history and addresses the following questions: Who created the VHP, what were the motivations, and what resources did Congress allocate the Library of Congress, the federal agency selected to fulfill the mandate? Who was charged with implementing the VHP, why, and what resources did they employ? In terms of the collection, what are the results? Primary sources used to reconstruct this history include oral history interviews, congressional reports, and veteran testimonies housed in its on-line archival and digital collection.

This study asserts that the VHP model was adopted based on the Library of Congress/American Folklife Center antecedents (previous oral history projects) that began with the Works Progress Administration's Federal Writer's Project (FWP) a lasted
when the democratization of U.S. history and a shift in professional research practices, ethics, and goals led to “radical trust,” a decline in expert and curatorial authority towards a more egalitarian approach, where everyone regardless of professional status shares authority. This participatory approach adopted for the VHP differs from an earlier LOC approach utilized in the WPA and 1970s projects. It is now witnessed in how the VHP grants untrained, amateur historians the authority to contribute on equal basis with trained scholars. It has largely kept with the “spirit of legislation,” inspiring numerous national partner groups, historians, educators, students, and veterans to participate. However, the VHP is politically charged and represents more of a celebratory endeavor than a serious professional scholarly effort to document veteran’s experiences. It suggests that Congress is not concerned about creating an accurate/complete historical record of wartime experiences. Therefore, the concept of “radical trust” is limited and the VHP will continue to collect materials in vast numbers and remain wildly uneven in quality of interview and coverage of diverse veteran groups across gender, race, and ethnic lines.
In memory of Theodore "Ted" Blahnik, USN
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While endeavoring to research and write this dissertation, I am acknowledgeable of the work conducted by a legion of past and present military, and war and memory historians across many interdisciplinary lines. I am forever indebted to the late Theodore "Ted" Blahnik, U.S. Navy veteran of World War II, educator, and Athletic Director at Coloma High School, Michigan for teaching me the value of oral history. For any graduate student the term mentor should hold a special place. In my case, there are two, Western Michigan University professors, Kristin Szylvian and Michael Chiarappa. I say this not only for their many years of guidance and support, but also for encouraging me to undertake this project.

For dissertation committee members, Edwin Martini III and Nicolas Witschi of WMU, and James Smither of Grand Valley State University, I am eternally grateful for their time and support, and for insightful comments offered in private conversations and during research and writing phases. Research required time and money. Marion "Buddy" Gray, WMU history department chair, and former Director of Graduate studies, Catherine Julien, for renewing my annual stipend and sponsoring a much needed travel grant. Because of them I was able to finish the project in a timely fashion (before I became a permanent fixture in the department). I would also like to thank Katherine Ellison for her assistance with any number of formatting issues during the final editing stage. History
department secretaries, Brenda Brewer and Candace List were always on hand to field an array of questions of the administrative type. I offer my sincere best wishes to all in their future endeavors.

Generous professional people at the Library of Congress American Folklife Center in Washington, D.C sat through oral history interviews. These people include AFC director, Margaret “Peggy” Bulger, Michael Taft, David Taylor, and Ann Hoog. Within the VHP, Robert “Bob” Patrick, Peter Bartis, Sarah Rouse, Tom Weiner and Alexa Potter, Rachel Mears, Monica Mohlinha, and others who willingly shared their personal experiences, views, sources, and statistics.

I owe much to my family as well. My late father, Kenneth E. “Duke” Jannings, taken from me far too early in life, inspired me to never give up hope to succeed. Along with my mother, Maria A. Jannings-Sluiter, they worked hard under trying circumstances to provide me a foundation for which to live, work, and excel. My beloved wife, Katie, mother-in-law, Frances B. Piggott, and daughters Sarah and Anna, were with me in mind the whole way, as were my late grandparents Robert and Myrtle Jannings and Joseph and Flora Leto. In presenting this dissertation, it is my fervent hope that I have honored all of you.

Christopher Michael Jannings
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The rise of social history in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s led to the reexamination of the work of the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) sponsored by the Works Progress Administration between 1936 and 1940. The FWP employed over three hundred writers from twenty-four U.S. states to record testimony from former slaves, American Civil War veterans, and everyday Americans about family education, occupation, medical needs, political views, income, and religion.\(^1\) Around the same time, the Library of Congress' Archive of American Folk Song dispatched folklorists with a strong knowledge of regional music traditions who helped assemble the traditional American music and folk onto acetate discs.\(^2\) On December 8, 1941, Alan Lomax, then head of the AAFS, telegraphed folklorists around the country requesting they interview everyday people in the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor.\(^3\) Later, these recordings

\(^1\) American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the FWP 1936-1940 at http://rs6.loc.gov/wpaintro/wpahome.html.
\(^3\) After the Day of Infamy: “Man on the Street Interviews” Following the Attack on Pearl Harbor at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afcphhtml/afcphhome.html.
became part of the digital Library of Congress American Life Histories Collection. Today folklorists and historians interested in race, class, gender, and labor history view them as key primary sources.

The concept “radical trust” was first applied at large in the genealogical community during the 2000s where everyday people began posting family histories on the Internet. Soon thereafter, the concept made its way into history and museums. It involves the contributions of both scholarly (professional) and non-scholarly (amateur). Lee Rainie, Director of the Pew Internet and American Life project, believes the concept arose as technological inventions like Web 2.0 and social media tools like Face Book, You Tube, and Twitter conceived a “a golden age of the flowering of amateur experts.” Historian Tim Grove defined it as “people” having platforms to “share their opinions with a wider world and an increased expectation that they should be included in the dialogue.” Rose Sherman, Director of Enterprise Technology at the Minnesota Historical Society, argued “radical trust” is the process of historical institutions becoming “centers for civil engagement, where people gather to meet and converse and participate in collaborative problem solving...an active, visible player in civil life.” Less enthralled, Jim Gardner, Senior Scholar at the National Museum of National History, Smithsonian Institute, believes museums should “share authority” with the public, but does not support
“abdicating our role and privileging the public’s voice or simply doing what the public votes for, nor what that might be.”

Regardless of the professional views for or against “radical trust” it has inspired a younger audience to engage history through professional (historical) organizations that trust them to do so or because they are facing budgetary crises and have no other choice. Such an approach is observed today in how public historians/cultural stewards have applied it to museum exhibits, historic sites, and WWW sites like the VHP digital archive. Then again, “radical trust” has yet to be resourced (by professionals). Kent Whitworth, Executive Director, Kentucky Historical Society, said “whether we primarily monitor and occasionally intervene, or ideally interact on a regular basis, this [radical trust] will require staff resources—and the right staff.” According to Gardner, the process of monitoring is important because sometimes “radical trust” attracts people “with problematic, if not offensive opinions, and we cannot allow such individuals to use us for their own purposes.”

The LOC embraced this concept before it was given the label, beginning in the late 1990s with the “Local Legacies Project.” The VHP and “Story Corps” followed thereafter. These oral history projects adopted an egalitarian or “radical” approach allowing everyday people to participate and to have a say in the finished product.

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5 See Kent Whitworth in “History Bytes,” 6.
6 Whitworth quoted, 6.
7 Gardner quoted, 5.
According to Grove, such projects that involve “radical trust” and/or “user generated content” (UGC) have raised concern in museums and historical societies because they “threaten authoritative voice and weaken control,” yet, for some groups, it “offers opportunities to reach and engage new audiences.” The difference between the two is what Gardner called the “blurring of the line between knowledge [scholarly organizations] and opinion [public opinion] in a Web 2.0 world,” and where professional work often “becomes more about humility than about your own authority or expertise.”

Then again, as Gardner notes, a shared authority with the public “allowed us [at the Smithsonian] to write a game-changing strategy on the cheap.” It appears the overall quality of work got better as well. He said, our thinking [for the Smithsonian’s Web and New Media Strategy]—our strategy—got better, stronger, and more focused” because we utilized public collaboration.

This study offers an opportunity to weigh or assess how “radical trust” operates in practice, using the VHP, an official U.S. government “grassroots” oral history project to document the experiences of ordinary Americans whose lives were affected by war as a model. The key questions asked are: Can the concept of “radical trust” be extended to a public history project, or does it depend on the project’s goals? If the purpose of the VHP is to create an archive or documentary record of American veterans, then does “radical trust” need to be supplemented with some type of mechanism or tool designed to give balance and fill gaps, or inconsistencies and irregularities with the collection process?

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8 Grove quoted in “History Bytes,” 5.
9 Gardner quoted in Groves, 5.
10 Ibid
How could such a mechanism be developed, implemented, and assessed for effectiveness? On the other hand, is the purpose of the VHP to celebrate veterans and commemorate their service? If so “radical trust” fits the bill minus supplementary efforts. What were the intentions behind the creation of the Project? Who is the VHP to serve, today’s veterans more than scholars? Is it more about the participatory process than the quality of the final product? Did the LOC, AFC, and VHP maintain that efforts by amateur historians are as good as or better than professionals doing the job? In doing so, they are offering our veteran’s a compensatory, and less expensive, history of their wartime experiences rather than a more lavish federally-funded effort they deserve.

When the 106th U.S. Congress unanimously passed the Veterans Oral History Project Act (Public Law 106-30) and President William J. Clinton signed it into law on October 27, 2000 they did so to revitalize a tradition of war commemoration dating back to the end of the American Revolution. However, with the VHP came a break in tradition set by Congress under the New Deal, Federal Writer’s Project, when they provided federal funding to fulfill the project and hire best trained professionals under the circumstances. Unlike its predecessor, the VHP operates on minimum funding because the program was to be for and by veterans. At present date, it has collected over sixty thousand oral history tapes, written memoirs, and diary, letter, and journal collections, featuring testimonials from male and female veterans of all branches of the Armed Forces, at every rank, from every state and territory.

In this chapter, I ask why the VHP was created, what people introduced and supported it when and why, how much direction was given by Congress. What political
motives or debates were behind it, and what concerns, if any, were expressed during the debate? What exactly did Congress charge the LOC and AFC to do? How was the Project to be administered? What human and financial resources were devoted to it? How is the Project’s success to be evaluated? Here, I will show how the VHP has opened a window through which to view larger American military, social, and cultural values as they pertain to the documentation and commemoration of war.

Of the major combatants of World War II and/or who have created an official oral history project of it or sought veteran input, the U.S. and Great Britain stand out the most. For the U.S., the war became symbolic because it lifted us out of the morass of the Great Depression, reinforced American patriotism, ended the political power of isolationists, and created a collective feeling of prosperity that unified this diverse nation of nation across many factions and regions. The British people view the war in the same spotlight. As one historian proclaimed “the [British] story of World War II remains an understandable source of national pride even today.”11 In many regards, like no other war before or since, it has united so many on the importance of remembering and/or preserving national identity. It implicated every social, economic, and political organization in the United Kingdom and the U.S. Citizens joined, served, worked, and as years passed came to view their experiences in a positive light.12 Not surprisingly, oral history accounts and/or celebration of anniversary dates of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the

German “Blitz” over Britain in 1940, the D-Day invasion at Normandy beach, or battles in North Africa and on Pacific islands, VE and VJ-Days, have collectively been used to signify both country’s finest hours in war.

Other industrialized nations like Germany, Japan, France, Italy, and the former U.S.S.R., on the whole, have struggled to overcome the fallout of World War II and therefore not gone to great lengths to document veteran testimonies. A survey of the available literature reveals that reasons are political, complex, and controversial. For Japan, one historian noted it peers through “a distorting lens that deemphasizes the atrocities committed their armies throughout Asia [Rape of Nanking],” instead focused on the massive loss of civilian life after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In France, memories of the Vichy regime, their “limited collaboration with the Nazis,” and treatment of and deportation of Jews lingers on. The ghosts of fascist dictators, Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini still haunt Germany and Italy respectively. For Poland, Belgium, Switzerland, and any number of countries around the globe who also endured occupation, enslavement, and genocide, war memories are still vivid, controversial, told from many perspectives, but few from the veteran’s perspective.¹³ Russians in the Soviet era remember World War II as the “Great Patriotic War.”¹⁴ Yet, save the “revisionist” work of a few military historians, who “unearthed evidence of even more dramatic

¹³ For treatment of the memory of politics in these countries, with the exception of Japan, see the essays written by Heidemarie Uhl, Claudio Fogu, Annamaria Orla-Bukowskain, in Lebow, Kansteiner, and Fogu, in Politics of Postwar Europe.
suffering on the part of the Soviet people” than previously acknowledged by the former communist state, little was published or made known to the West.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Lawful Beginnings: An Act of Congress}

The impetus for Congress to pass the VHP Act and create a national collection of personal histories of American war veterans was concern that time would soon run out for those who fought in World War II. Congressional action was also spurred by a private grassroots interest as a result of several anniversaries and commemoration dates honoring major battles and the end of the war. It would be a “new federally sponsored, authorized, and funded program” designed to “assist and encourage local efforts to preserve these memories.” Overall, it would allow for current and future generations of Americans to “hear directly from veterans and better appreciate the realities of war and the sacrifices made by those who served in uniform during wartime.”\textsuperscript{16}

Congressional legislation directed the LOC/AFC to implement a program to “collect video and audio recordings of personal histories and testimonials of American war veterans, and for other purposes.”\textsuperscript{17} Soon thereafter, the LOC set forth a collection policy limiting the scope of the VHP to major twentieth century wars: World War I (1914-1920), World War II (1939-1946), Korean War (1950-1955), Vietnam War (1961-1975, Persian Gulf War (1990-1995), and the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts (2001-present). The collection would also cover all branches of service from every state, and

\textsuperscript{15} Bess, \textit{Choices of War}, 315.
\textsuperscript{16} “Veterans Oral History Project Act,” 106\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2d session, H.R. 5212, In the Senate of the United States. \url{http://thomas.loc.gov/beta/billView.jsp}. 1.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
included home front as well as the battlefront testimonies to learn about the conditions, tediousness nature of military service, and the horrors and triumphs in combat in which they endured. The types of primary sources collected by the VHP would be oral histories (audio/video recorded interviews), memoirs, autobiography, autobiographical essays, diurnal forms (letters and diary collections), and visual forms."^{18}

The main Congressional findings and purposes for the VHP indicated the worthiness of preserving the war testimonial. They determined that "military service during a time of war is the highest sacrifice a citizen may make for his or her country."^{19}

Other motivations, justifications and guidelines for the Act pointed to the high number of Americans who served in major twentieth century wars, including the 4,700,000 who served in World War I, 16,500,000 in World War II, 6,800,000 in the Korean Conflict, 9,200,000 in the Vietnam Conflict, 3,800,000 in the Persian Gulf War. It was also noted that thousands of other Americans have served in officially recognized and unrecognized military engagements overseas throughout the twentieth century."^{20}

The law was also based on findings from the Department of Veterans Affairs, indicating that nearly 19,000,000 veterans live in the United States today. "Today 3,400 veterans of World War I, and of the some 6,000,000 veterans of World War II alive today, almost 1,500 die each day."^{21} Convinced that our nation's war veterans "possess

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^{18} Other stories of military or civilian service they have gathered are important but "of secondary focus. See [http://www.loc.gov/vets/scope.html](http://www.loc.gov/vets/scope.html)
an invaluable resource in their memories” that could “provide a rich history of our Nation,” Congress declared it was “in the Nation’s best interest to collect and catalog oral histories of American war veterans so that researchers and everyday Americans would have access to original sources regarding the lives of these people.” So that Americans “will always remember them,” the LOC as “the Nation’s oldest Federal cultural institution and the largest most inclusive library in human history” was the “appropriate repository to collect, preserve, and make available to the public an archive of these oral histories.” Congress declared, “oral histories are of immeasurable value to historians, researchers, authors, journalists, film makers, scholars, students, and citizens of all walks of life.”

The VHP largely owes its existence to Ron Kind of Wisconsin. A non-veteran, and native of LaCrosse, representing Wisconsin’s 3rd District, many recognize him as the “principal author and leading sponsor” of the project. His vision for the Project was conceived at a holiday gathering after listening to his uncle and father’s experiences in World War II and Korea. Their personal accounts inspired video recordings and later thoughts as to whether or not millions of other American families had ever heard similar

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23 Project Vote Smart—Representative Kind—Biography: http://www.vote-smart.org/bio.php?can_id=630. He graduated from Harvard University, London School of Economics, Law School at the University of Minnesota, and has served in the United States House of Representatives since 1996.
stories from their relatives and friends. From that day on, he envisioned a national project consisting of all American veterans' stories so as to preserve for future generations.\textsuperscript{24}

Kind secured support from co-sponsors, Republican Amo Houghton and Democrat Steny Hoyer and 235 other members of the U.S. House of Representatives. U.S. Senators Max Cleland and Chuck Hagel of Georgia and Nebraska respectively led a Senate campaign. Cleland was only 34 years old when President James "Jimmy" Carter appointed him head of the Veterans Administration. He served in the U.S. Army from 1965-1968, earned the rank of captain, and was critically wounded in combat in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{25} After the Librarian of Congress asked him for advice during the early phases of the Veterans History Project, he became a member of the "high profile external leadership" which soon turned into the twenty-six member Five-Star-Council. Amory (Amo) Houghton, Jr., one of New York's favorite sons, served with the United States Marine Corps during World War II; he graduated with a MBA from Harvard Business School in 1952, became a business executive, and later a U.S. Representative from 1987-2005.\textsuperscript{26}

Rising to the rank of sergeant in a combat infantry unit during the Vietnam War, Chuck Hagel was awarded two Purple Hearts. He served as in the United States Veterans


\textsuperscript{25} Cleland, Joseph Maxwell (Max)—Biographical Information: http://bioguide.congress.gov. Among his many accomplishments, Cleland was also a member of the Georgia State Senate, consultant to Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, Georgia Secretary of State, and member of the United States Senate from 1997-2002.

\textsuperscript{26} Houghton, Amory, Jr.—Biographical Information: http://bioguide.congress.gov.
Administration under President Ronald Reagan from 1981-1982 as was elected to the U.S. Senate (R-Nebraska) in 1996. Re-elected in 2002, he remains one of the Project’s most ardent supporters.\(^{27}\) Asked about the VHP in general, he said, “In the hands of nation’s young, rest the nation’s destiny. This project is so important for that reason alone, to connect [our history with] our young people, our next generation, the generation that will inherit the challenges of the day.”\(^{28}\)

The political motives or debates behind the Project were first revealed when Cleland and Hagel introduced the VHOP Bill before the Senate on September 28, 2000. The Bill was then passed on to the House on October 3, 2000. James V. Hansen of Utah urged the Speaker of the House “to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5212) immediately.” Hoyer said, it is “imperative we act soon, tonight because “572,000 veterans will die this year.”\(^{29}\)

Kind ended any potential counter-debate. Before the House he said, “I think this is a worthwhile project, one that will require the cooperation of countless people across the country, especially from our veterans, who can leave an incredible gift, a gift that will keep on giving to generation after generation, as they volunteer to talk about their personal experiences at war “that made this Nation the great Nation that it is today.”\(^{30}\)

\(^{27}\)See Hagel, Charles Timothy (Chuck)—Biographical Information: http://bioguide.congress.gov

\(^{28}\)Consult “Inaugural Meeting of the Five-Star Council,” 2.

\(^{29}\)Hanson and Hoyer quoted in “106\(^{th}\) Congress, 2\(^{nd}\) Session, H.R. 5212 in the House of Representatives” (September 19, 2000) at http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?q106:1:/temp/~c106yzq2Rr

\(^{30}\)Kind also quoted in “106\(^{th}\) Congress, 2\(^{nd}\) Session H.R. 5212 in the House of Representatives.”
The House voted 407-0 in favor of passing the VHOP Act. Peggy Bulger, Director of the 
AFC later said in all “my years on Capitol Hill, I have never seen a bill pass more quickly 
than the VHP.”

Congress assigned overall leadership of the VHP to Dr. James Billington, 
Librarian of Congress. A former army officer and Korean War veteran, he taught history 
before receiving an appointment as the thirteenth Librarian of Congress. For the past two 
decades, he has championed the Library’s new “American Memory” National Digital 
Library program, which makes over seven million historical collections from the Library 
and other institutions worldwide “freely” available. When honoring his twentieth year in 
office, Helen Dalrymple and Gail Fineberg wrote, “from the day he was inaugurated, 
Billington has never wavered from his vision for the Library and the future: to continue 
to acquire and preserve materials for the Library’s unmatched collections and to make 
them ever more readily available to Congress, the American people, and the world.”

The Librarian has been a major supporter of the Project and desires to create a 
representative collection. Collecting oral histories from American veterans “is a critical 
task in preserving our history and an urgent need as we enter the 21st century.”

Furthermore, such an effort would be an “invaluable resource” for future generations of

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31 Bulger interview (May 2008).
32 See Helen Dalrymple and Gail Fineberg, “Two Decades of Achievement: Library 
Marks Milestones with Billington at the Helm,” The Library of Congress Information 
33 Billington quoted in Brown and Mears.
Americans, and “will” become a permanent part of the LOC vast historical record that has been preserved for over two hundred years.\textsuperscript{34}

Congress granted the LOC several powers in order to fund the VHP and avoid political controversy. The Act empowered Billington “to solicit and accept donations of funds and in-kind contributions to carry out the oral history program.” Among the many accounts of the LOC, there would also be the establishment of a “separate gift account” for those funds categorized under private support. Congress declared that these funds of the dedicated variety “shall be deposited entirely in the gift account,” the fund contained there would be used “solely to carry out the oral history” project, and that the Librarian of Congress “may not deposit into such account” any funds “which are not donated” for the sole purpose of carrying out the Project.\textsuperscript{35}

In terms of financial resources (authorization of appropriations) to carry out the Act, the VHP was allotted $250,000 for the fiscal year 2001, “and such sums as may be necessary for each succeeding fiscal year.”\textsuperscript{36} Beyond those dollars authorized by H.R. 5212, the bulk of VHP funds would come from gifts and donations. The Congressional Budget Office along with the framers of the bill justified this course of action “because it was uncertain how much material would need to be collected and how much oral history material would need to be digitalized.” In other words, the CBO had no means to estimate cost for the Project nor did they ask the Library to provide one.

\textsuperscript{34} Billington quoted in “Ellen McCulloch-Lovell Appointed to Head Veterans History Project,” \textit{Veterans History Project News \\& Events} (May 25, 2001).
\textsuperscript{35} Robert Patrick interview (May 2008).
\textsuperscript{36} See Public Law 106-380, 2-3.
Based solely on information regarding the budget, it appears the VHP would operate on “bare bones” rather than lavish funding. The CBO declared we “expect the amount of receipts from donations to be insignificant in any given year,” acknowledging that raising money would not fund the entire program rather augment the minimal funding allotted by Congress. And, since, “this act would result in no significant net impact on the federal budget, and pay-as-you go procedures” would take precedence. Receipts from monetary donations and gifts “would be categorized as revenues and outlays of such contributions would be direct spending.” As of 2008, those sums authorized by Congress and the CBO have reached $2.4 million.

Congress charged the AFC to establish the oral history program as soon as “practicable after the enactment” of the Act. Created by the American Folk Life Preservation Act of 1976 and the home of the Archive of Folk Culture, the AFC owes much to the passing of Public Law 94-202, 94th Congress, H. R. 6673, on January 2, 1976. Margaret “Peggy” Bulger, Director of the AFC since 1999, was charged to organize the VHP. Her first task was to collect obtained recordings in order to “catalog and index” and make “available for public use thorough the National Digital Library of the [LOC] and such other methods” as she “considers appropriate to the extent of feasible subject” to other available sources.” Her powers included the solicitation, reproduction and collection of written materials like diaries and letters, and to “catalog” those

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38 Robert Patrick interview (May 2008).
materials in a manner considered appropriate, "consistent with and complimentary to the efforts" under the guidelines of project establishment.\textsuperscript{39}

By passing the VHP Act, Congress acknowledged that war is a major factor in welding together differences in American society. It also recognized that American folk life is a major contributor to the cultural "richness of this nation of nations as witnessed in the individuality and identity among our diverse population." Created to "preserve and present American Folk Life through programs of research, field documentation, archival preservation, exhibition, publication, professional training, and live performance," the AFC is presently one of the largest cultural centers in the world housing more than 1.5 million manuscripts, photographs, video/sound recordings, films, microfilms, and other items.\textsuperscript{40}

Congress charged the AFC with the task of collecting audio and video recordings of war veterans because of a successful history of implementing field-based oral history projects that recorded life stories of everyday Americans. The VHP Act took note of its "expertise, and management skills for documentation projects and experience in the development of cultural and educational programs for the public" and, in general, the power to "solicit, reproduce, and collect written materials [diaries, letters, and memoirs] relevant to the personal histories" of Armed Forces veterans.\textsuperscript{41} Furthermore, and in terms of "consultation" with human entities, the AFC could enter into "partnerships and

\textsuperscript{39} See, Public Law 106-380, 2.
\textsuperscript{40} "Peggy Bulger Appointed Director of American Folk Life Center," \textit{News from the Library of Congress} (February 17, 1999).
\textsuperscript{41} Public Law 106-380, 2-3.
agreements with other government and private entities, and may otherwise (within the limits of available resources), consult with other interested persons.”

The contents of the founding legislation stressed the manner of cataloging such war-related materials. It was left to Bulger and LOC staff to determine what is considered “appropriate, consistent with, and complimentary to the efforts.” By June 2008, national efforts resulted in the collection over 55,000 firsthand accounts, with serious consideration given to issues of race, gender, and ethnicity, in order to promote diversity. For now, collections and recordings have been placed in an indexed catalog for public use in the National Digital Library of Congress, much the same as other oral history projects.

Initially the collection policy was not strictly enforced as veterans and family members misinterpreted VHP intentions by forwarding artifacts like helmets, uniforms, dog tags, canteens, weapons, flags, medals, ribbons, pictures in frames, and other types of war booty. Because it had no suitable storage place for such items, the collection policy grew more restrictive with the first years. Overall, this oversight illustrates how either ill-advised the LOC was, or how it failed to anticipate that confusion over what to submit and not could occur by opting to charge everyday Americans with the collection process, most without professional research and oral history training. The VHP communicated changes in two ways: 1) letters sent to project partners and other volunteer groups and, 2)

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42 See, Public Law 106-380, 2.
44 Robert Patrick interview (May 2008).
bulletins posted on the project website. Both entailed new information about the types of materials it would except and not.\textsuperscript{46}

Since the 1930s WPA Federal Writer's Project there has been an uneven commitment to oral history projects, however, in the case of the VHP the government recognizes the validity of stories of all Americans at war. Furthermore, with the passing of the VHP Act it also declares that the use of existing federal agencies with proven effectiveness in the area of oral history should oversee it, and that war experiences and folklife go hand-in-hand. Folk life study “effectively demonstrates” that the nurturing of a strong nation may require the sacrifice of cultural differences. American folk life influences the “desires, beliefs, values, and characters of American people.” That, in certain cases, the Federal Government should support research and scholarship in folk life studies to better comprehend what complex problems exist in “daily beliefs and values” of our population in both urban and rural settings. Finally, in terms of the general welfare of the Nation, it is important to “preserve, support, revitalize, and disseminate American folk life traditions and arts.”\textsuperscript{47}

In a 2008 interview, Sarah Rouse, senior staff member at the VHP, said the Project hopes to “complement the Library’s own collections by providing a cross section of war experiences as seen from the point-of-view of the ordinary person. In other words, the stories from the common man and woman would dovetail with “the [LOC] renowned

\textsuperscript{46} Peter Bartis interview (May 2008).
collections representing notable military leaders and statesmen." With that overall goal in mind, the Project also established five sub-goals. Rouse said the VHP "seeks to stimulate opportunities for public learning by inviting, advising, and supporting individuals to participate." Second, "to engage public organizations" as project partners "to identify, interview, and collect" specific documents from our veterans and supporters of war. Third, it strives to "preserve and present" these materials for public use "through [LOC] exhibitions, publications, public programs, and website." It should be mentioned here, that the LOC will not verify the contents of any oral history interview or memoir. Rouse also noted "opinions expressed in the interviews are those of the interviewee only and made available to the public with his or her expressed consent." Therefore, if an individual or organization desires to challenge the validity of an interview they should first peruse the Freedom of Information Act, get results then contact the VHP. Fourth, in order to expand the scope of the project, Rouse said the Project regularly identifies the work of other "veteran’s oral history programs and archives." Fifth, to create that "comprehensive, searchable, national catalog" consisting of "all" the testimonies collected. What makes the VHP archive more democratic in appearance than other repositories is that no one collection is required to be physically housed in Washington, D.C. Because not all citizens have the means to visit the LOC, many official partners

48 Sarah Rouse first reported this mission statement to David Darlington in "Veterans History Project Launched," American Historical Association (May 2002).
50 Rouse interview, February 2008.
wish to keep their collections at home in state and local libraries, university archives, or historical societies for easier access. The VHP has recognized this option and the value "of spreading the collection among institutions" for it lessens costs of preservation and "ensures that these wonderful resources" can be accessed by the public throughout the country. To their credit, the goal remains promoting this "national" oral history project, to "work with" rather than against "existing programs" and "create partnerships." Therefore, if a partner group takes this option, all the VHP requests is confirmation that materials are destined for another repository "so that we can obtain from you or the receiving institution the necessary information to register [the collection]" with the "comprehensive national catalog."^51

The Context for the Study of Social and Cultural History

In terms of methodology and theory, this study employs an interdisciplinary, social, cultural, public and military history approach to examine the creation, infrastructure, and reception of the VHP.

Social and cultural history in the U.S. first gained acceptance in the post-1865 period when diverse traditions in American society led to regional conflicts over issues of war remembrance versus societal amnesia. Michael Kammen called the conflict a commemorative process dealing with thorny issues of reconciliation and intransigence (particularly conflict over "New South" versus the romanticism of "Lost Cause"). When

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^51 See "Do all Interviews Have to be Sent to the Library of Congress?" at http://www.loc.gov/vets/preserving.html
battlefield memorials popped up throughout the South, at Gettysburg in the North, so did attitudes change and new challenges appear in terms of the study of war and memory. Historians generally agree that Americans first began celebrating its rich history between the years 1870-1915. Despite trend changes, the prevailing mood among academics and the larger population was to create a national story that read more like “romance than history.” Kammen argued that history became reinforced by civil religion or on-going spiritual crises. Whereas in previous decades, contextual matters and American tradition revealed a societal commitment to tie culture to collective memory, or view them as past burdens, society, he said, became its own “historian for a “better or worse” to establish a national history in compliance with larger shared values.

Confronted with modernism in the interwar years, Americans continued to battle with the “social uses of myth and collective memory,” or our “obsessions with authenticity.” Kammen said thereafter professional historians searched for a “fresh synthesis of new knowledge about the American past and looked increasingly to social history, the evolution of the self consciousness of a keenly self-conscious people.” There more “populistic” approach debunked history from an elitist standpoint and punctured the past in order to bring it down to the same level as non-heroic humans. Prominent figures like Sigmund Freud, Proust, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, William Faulkner, and a long list of other notables, took notice of the correlation between self and

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53 Claude Swanson, Virginia Governor quoted in, Kammen, 130.
54 Kammen, 17-18.
55 Ibid.
society. Their views also led to heated debates between cultural elitists and cultural populists over who should control the memory process. “Myth making” was criticized but could not compete with those published books and journals that stressed democracy, military achievements, and the importance of protecting national character.  

As the international threat of fascism occupied the minds of most Americans during the late 1930s, so did a renewed commitment to democratic institutions. Books and journals stressing democracy and national character appeared in mass numbers after President Roosevelt declared that time the age of documentation by creating the WPA Federal Writer’s Project. The creation of a historically based public culture for the nation also gained momentum, with critical issues of regional and ethnic identity becoming visible. Meanwhile, many non-teaching historians earned their stripes working in manuscript collections, for the WPA/FWP conducting historical records surveys and oral histories, and in public archives, editing, and to a lesser degree in historic restoration. Many did so by working almost exclusively on college and university campuses.

In the early post-WW2 period, Americans clung tightly to nostalgia in order to combat the restlessness and fears created by cold war (communist threats in and out of country). A modest concern for tradition gave way to increased obsession with cultural heritage and national identity, something Kammen called both profitable and costly. Recognizing the profit value of history, the government soon became self-protectors of American tradition. World War II emerged as the “good war” or “golden age” fought by

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56 Kammen, 273-296, 299.
57 Kammen, 531.
America's greatest generation. “Democratization and decentralization” of tradition led to a collective amnesia and “historical ignorance” in a period often defined as having great enthusiasm for American history. Famous sites like Colonial Williamsburg, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, Washington Irving's Tarrytown, Gettysburg, Little Big Horn, and the Alamo offer models for this discourse. Considering they draw thousands of visitors a year, the larger public often views sites and programs as "sacred places," instead of objective, living histories. What became sacred was also civil. Americans of diverse "ideological persuasions," among them veterans, began to compete for a share of "powerful national stories." Many laid claim to the "nature of heroism, the meaning of war, the efficacy of martial sacrifice," and the overall significance of "preserving the patriotic landscape" or the "lessons" of the battle.

A more egalitarian approach to the study of history took shape during the 1950s when Robert Kelley, of the University of California at Santa Barbara, coined the phrase "public history." As academic opportunities narrowed in the history field because of expanding numbers, Kelley and followers encouraged movement into other areas of history—archivists, editors, and museum curators—or those professions outside of the usual classroom and library environment. Leslie Fishel argued in Barbara Howe and Emory Kemp's *Public History: An Introduction*, public history, like "new social history," gained prominence during the tumultuous decades of the 1960s and 1970s (a time not

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58 Kammen, 511-27.
60 Ibid., 1
only of great social upheaval but also when history departments suffered because of poor
enrollment numbers and financial cutbacks).\textsuperscript{61}

President Lyndon B. Johnson enacted into law several important policies during
the 1960s that benefited public and social history. Many were designed to promote
cultural and environmental affairs and to create historic preservation and activities around
the country. These included the National Foundation of Arts and Humanities Act (1965),
The National Historic Preservation Act (1966), the National Environmental Policy Act
(1969), and the American Folklife Preservation Act (1976).\textsuperscript{62} By the 1970s and 1980s,
public historians began studying and presenting history as an art form with scientific
qualities, in a broader effort to "dissect, detail and describe, delineate and disseminate"
large amounts of information and deliver them publically in a responsible manner.
Concurrently, history of the public type expressed new ideas about war and memory—its
relationship to the past, present, and future—what it means to view the public or the
relationship of diverse groups of peoples in a highly political society.\textsuperscript{63}

Such a gallant effort lost out when federal funding programs and grants were
unceremoniously cut by vengeful "Reaganites" determined to seize control of American
traditions by preserving patriotic orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{64} Overwhelming military victories in
Grenada and Panama showcased our new military might helped ease the effects of the

\textsuperscript{61} Leslie H. Fishel, "Public History and the Academy" in Howe and Kemp, Public
\textsuperscript{62} Beth Grosvenor, "Federal Programs in Historic Preservation," 130-142 in Howe and Kemp.
\textsuperscript{63} Howe and Kemp,
\textsuperscript{64} See Kammen, 562-63, 579, 652-61.
“Vietnam syndrome,” and prompted Americans (not historians) to view periods of war differently. Meanwhile, scholars viewed this new willingness to see war in a positive light as a concerted effort to cripple social and cultural history from a teaching, research, and presentation standpoint.65

How the United States chooses to remember its wartime past has been highly influenced by the rise of public (cultural) history. Phyllis Leffler and Joseph Brent argued that overall efforts foster “greater” cooperation between the community and project under investigation, and if possible, among all historians as they seek and gain knowledge of what is meant by interpretative history and a “sense of history” (where, when, and whom belongs in the larger nation, region, and community).66 Included in their work is discussion on the impact of war on our society and culture, or a field wide movement to transform individual accounts (oral history), war memorials, civic celebrations, and historic preservation sites into “living histories.”67 Unlike more traditional social and cultural history, public efforts required identification (often viewed as both magnet and exposition) later expanded through research, writing, editing, document management,

65 The “Vietnam Syndrome” is a term that originated in the U.S. and used in both political debated and political analysis to describe the overall domestic impact and controversy stirred by the Vietnam War since 1975, and how it affects American foreign policy today.
artifact collection and interpretation, evidence selection, and policy development.\textsuperscript{68}

Therefore public historians have helped create a more democratic means for everyday peoples to tell their stories at the grassroots level, witnessed today in the way the VHP recruits everyday Americans to collect firsthand testimonies from our nation's veterans and supporters at war.

The Context of Military History

The study of military history in the United States has evolved in three phases: traditional, war and society, and new social/cultural military history, which includes memory and memorialization (public history). Its writing began with the military itself. Traditional military history is characterized by a series of investigations that examines why one side won and the other lost a war, often in terms of generalship, technological advantages, or how bravery and national will determined the outcome.\textsuperscript{69} Traditionalism still exists in the writing of military history, witnessed in any number of biographies of career military officers or studies on famous battles. However by the close of World War II it was no longer viewed as a separate and distinct area of study.

Some military historians argue that "war and society" writings officially began when FDR declared the World War II era the age of documentation, largely directed toward federal agencies, state and local governments, and everyday Americans to build

\textsuperscript{68} See the essays of G. Wesley Johnson, Robert Kelley, Howard Green, and Ronald C. Tobey, "The Goals of Public History," 104-127 in Leffler and Brent.

off New Deal collecting initiatives to document the Great Depression. As war raged on the emphasis slightly shifted to build public acceptance for fighting it and because of personal beliefs that the common man would have something to say. "War and society" conveys the "nuances of the battlefield experience, how tactics and orders shaped it, the suffering of those who fought, soldier motivations, and the overall effects of military service on individuals and society," or where the impact of the military/war was seen through the lens of its social and institutional contexts.\(^{70}\)

This mode of writing continued through the decades of the 1960s and 1970s until change for all things military-related took place at American universities. Schools of social and radical history gained prominence where the focus was to create an "oppositional history" to combat the military establishment. Many opposed the Cold War "consensus" history that promoted aggressive American foreign policy and to reject any unitary notion that American people join together to celebrate a common past. At the same time, many academic military historians continued to engage in the "war and society" approach to understand how military actions are influenced by larger political, social, economic, and cultural issues. Instead of detailing the outcome of battles and the worth of their leaders, questions were asked as to who "was in the military and what happened to them while they were there."\(^{71}\)

While some traditionalists may have argued against such a conglomeration war of the military, and society (often referred to as the new social military history) others

\[^{70}\] See Lee, "Mind and Matter, 2-4, 10.
\[^{71}\] Ibid 4, 10.
believed it was necessary. Peter Karsten said the war and society melding was “a full-fledged concern with the rest of military history—that is, a fascination with recruitment, training, and socialization of personnel, combat motivation, the effect of service and war on the individual soldier” and larger society.  

Wayne Lee concurred saying “studies of the social and economic background of soldiers, civil-military relations, the marginalized within the military (women, Native Americans, African Americans, and Latino Americans),” the overall home front experience, and how war impacts the nation-state and the broader society.

By the 1980s, military historians began to ask what the relationship was between military and American culture. Lee called cultural analysis important on many fronts in that it can include both academic study and individual veteran relating their experiences through the written memoir or oral history interview. Overall, cultural takes both an interdisciplinary approach and is not far-removed from the “new social military.” Lee has argued a shift is underway towards the humanistic side of war. He says it has three phases: “strategic culture,” “societal culture,” and “memory and memorialization” (public history), overall revealing just how far the study of military history has evolved and why it is now such a broad genre. Strategic culture, Lee said, “focuses rather narrowly on how institutions or individuals consciously conceived military or policy choice” and “the

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culture of the military institutions,” usually from the perspective of those (officers) who make careers of it.\textsuperscript{74}

More recently, social and cultural history overlaps in efforts to identify what soldiers made up the ranks of the armed forces. They also ask why they chose to enlist or submit to subscription, where they came from, how their departure and return affected their communities, why they fought, how did individual service vary, how did they perform, what affect did their service have on the larger nation.\textsuperscript{75} What was new about military history included the way historians began to view our military and wartime past through the lens of their cultural impact. What cultural analysis means varies depending on who is doing the talking or writing, and whether one recognizes the overall influence of public history. Victor Davis Hanson asserts, culture and its relationship to war dates back to the ancient Greeks who created a type of warfare passed down through the ages as a Western cultural way.\textsuperscript{76} Lee calls it “information capable of affecting individuals’ behavior that they acquire from other members of their species through teaching, imitation, and other forms of social transmission.”\textsuperscript{77}

The cultural shift benefited not only military historians, but public historians as well. Both could examine new problems, search for new materials, and develop new methods. In other words, the “new” also accounted for shifts in the questions asked, methods employed, sources used, and vehicle for commemorating the message brought

\textsuperscript{74} Lee quoted in “Mind and Matter,” 10, 46.
\textsuperscript{75} Kohn, “The Social History of the American Soldier,” 555-556.
\textsuperscript{76} See Victor Hanson, \textit{The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece} (New York, 1989).
\textsuperscript{77} Lee quoted in “Mind,” 24.
about by the rise of social and cultural issues in military history that have made it better
and more nuanced. Like “new” military historians of the past, cultural and public
historians also ask “Who was in the military, and what happened to them while they were
there, or “Why did they [military] try to win that way,” instead of “Who won and why.”
Looking back, the movement is responsible for giving birth to a massive collection of
scholarly works centered on the social and economic “background” of soldiers and
civilian-military relations. Also covered are peoples once marginalized or overlooked in
military circles, particularly women, African Americans, Native Americans, and
Hispanics.78

Military Narratives

By the late nineteenth century, even as Americans became “self conscious” about
their historical past, much of the scholarship and personal narratives were still influenced
by Calvinist notions adopted by Puritans during the seventeenth century. They often were
self examinations of conduct aided by a diary, later carried forth and secularized by
Benjamin Franklin. His autobiography symbolized the image of self and preservation of
tradition, which Protestant evangelicals and the military continued to promote.

Therefore, in Franklin’s time and later the personal narrative was the work of
general officers or statesmen, most which either wrote about the military, famous battles,
leadership, or simply to promote the legacy of the nation-state as it began to realize

78 Lee, 5-6.
manifest destiny. Richard Kohn, historian, said the military personal narrative in the United States became prominent in the colonial and early republic periods as junior officers and civilian soldiers began to serve in different branches of the armed forces, in war and peacetime, along the untamed frontiers, at sea, and overseas. Pettigrew argued that most firsthand accounts from the colonial/revolutionary era through the War of 1812 "ignored ideals of service" and "supported American militarism" by detailing the combat experience in "emotionally compelling and gratifying terms."

By the end of the American Civil War, the most deadly in terms of combat casualties and physical destructiveness, the documentation process was still in the hands of an elite few, but now included gentlemen observers with degrees in higher education like Ambrose Bierce, Francis Gierson, and John DeForest, who took upon themselves to promote the legacy of nation-state at war. Such works prompted Walt Whitman to say "the real war [the Civil War] war will never get in the books." He was likely referring to academic historians like Jules Michelet and R. G. Collingwood, who often

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79 A search at World Cat (an OCLC catalog of books and other materials housed in libraries worldwide) reveals that over all numbers are not representative of all American wars, but mostly the work of military officers, diplomats, and politicians: 1. American Revolutionary War: 221 (166 books, 53 archival, 2 articles); 2. Mexican-American War (1846-1848): 356 (259 books, 68 archival, 1 article); American Civil War (1861-1865): 19,612 (14, 775 books, 4,620 archival, 217 articles); and Spanish-American War (1898): 256 (154 books, 102 archival). Also see, Patrick Hutton, "Recent Scholarship on Memory and History," *The History Teacher* 33, no. 4 (August 2000): 533-535.
82 See Kohn, 555-56, and Pettigrew, 49.
“sympathized with the political traditions” penning “spontaneous heroism,” using history to “re-create in the present the past as it had originally been imagined.” An exception to this approach was Stephen Cranes’ *Red Badge of Courage* (1895) and a series of stories published in popular magazines or hometown newspapers (previously ignored in the writing of military history). Each is credited with legitimizing interest in the experiences of the common, undistinguished soldier, while revealing that war is rarely noble or glamorous. These studies would inspire a new generation of American writers to examine their experiences in World War I.

The United States arrived in Europe late in World War I, but the poetry and war novels appeared while fighting ranged on. They included the works of Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, Robert Graves, and others, and were different from any published accounts before them. David Lundberg said, “Gone were the lofty sentiments and inflated rhetoric of the Victorian and Edwardian periods which glorified war and sanctioned death.” On the heels of these works came a bevy of semi-autobiographical novels like John De Passo’s *One Man’s Initiation: 1917* (1920) and Ernest Hemingway’s *In Our Times* (1925). Others vary in literary quality, are first or only contributions to the genre, won Pulitzer prizes, or were authored by men and women who earned that distinguished award for later books. Because of their efforts, the semi-autobiographical war novel thus evolved into a distinguishable, separate genre, a logical mode for writing about life in the

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84 Hutton, 533-535.
twentieth century, especially in terms of studying or recognizing firsthand experiences. Such accounts focused on the truths of war, horrible depictions of the front-line experience. As one critic noted, social outcasts or “bon viands” like Hemingway, Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Dos Passos, Sherwood Anderson, and Waldo Pierce, were men and women who “in one way or another shaped the literary response to all conflicts that have followed, or revealed the first antiwar sentiments from those individuals/peoples who were directly affected by it.”

It was not until World War II did the proliferation of published account’s from the typical soldier (albeit highly-decorated ones who had the help of ghostwriters) appear in masse. Other accounts came from war correspondents like Ernie Pyle, who interviewed soldiers and documented the horrific nature of war as it was being fought. This phenomenon roughly evolved into three phases: 1) “self-congratulatory” analyses of the war in both European and Pacific theaters with an emphasis placed on highly decorated servicemen (the goal here to tour this men from city to city promoting the war effort); 2) descriptive examinations of individual battles and prominent leaders (name the battle or the leader and something has been published); and 3) first-hand remembrances provided by the ordinary foot soldier, airman, or sailor.

87 Although there are any number of quality literary works called semi-autobiographical war fiction, Hemingway’s numerous works, Norman Mailer’s World War II classic The Naked and the Dead, and Tim O’Brien’s critically-acclaimed account of the war in Vietnam The Things They Carried prove invaluable because of their twentieth century focus. Each examines different conflicts, how the individual soldier’s values and traumatizing experiences often created non-heroic figures, and how this pattern persisted from war to war.
88 Lundberg, 379-388.
Between 1942 and 1945 more than two hundred veterans published accounts of their wartime experiences (most the work of professional journalists/war correspondents, and ghostwriters based on eyewitness and second hand accounts of major battles or individual accomplishments). Among those that educated Americans on the trials, tribulations, and ultimate victory through the islands of the Pacific, mountains of Italy, and the beaches at Normandy were *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, *The Raft*, John Hersey’s *Into the Valley*, Pyle’s *Brave Men*, Al Schmid’s *Marine*, Richard Tregaskis’ *Guadalcanal Diary*, and Robert Sherrod’s *Tarawa*. Neel said, “The war narratives [have] performed crucial ideological work. They [have] engaged issues that touched deep anxieties in the public...personalized the soldier thereby keeping alive the American ideal of the heroic individual, full of ‘can-do” spirit,” and ready to sacrifice his life for flag and country.”

For many writers and publishers of these narratives, promoting patriotism and gaining profits from sales went hand in hand, evident in high numbers of highly decorated soldiers who willingly or not took on the role of “hero” and toured the United States promoting the war. Whether viewed as non-canonical books or not, they remain a jumping off point for contemporary historians to judge “the war, the nation, and themselves,” laying perhaps, “the foundation upon which latter-day public memories of World War II and other American wars were molded.”

90 Neel, 3-6. Hanson W. Baldwin, *New York Times* military correspondent, described all these contributions as collectively representing a model of historical research to provide historians of today and tomorrow with the basic framework for World War II narratives.
has evolved into a literary phenomenon, one that directly or indirectly promotes the "American white male hero" as a model for "trials and triumphs of the citizen soldier of democracy".\(^{91}\)

The military personal narrative enjoyed a rebirth in the late twentieth century. Prompted by their own mortality or media attention given to the anniversaries of Pearl Harbor and VJ-Day, many have made significant historical contributions through their writings and testimonies, others appear as most historians argue, perfunctory, routine and lacking critical analysis.\(^{92}\) Regardless of interpretation, the numbers of published accounts covering the Second World War far exceeds other American wars. Veteran's recollections, written or oral, and questions raised to them by interviewers are highly selective leading one to believe that time heals all wounds or that a collective effort by veterans exists too protect one's "rite of passage" and preserve the legacy of World War II in a positive light.

Sources

The ways professional historians have chosen to remember and write about war are diverse and multifaceted, controversial, and cross interdisciplinary lines. Such is the case with the personal narrative (oral history, memoir, letters, diary, and journals, and semi-autobiographical war novels. Some of the literature examines notions of how American fighting men and women have performed in wartime, or glorify the combat

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\(^{91}\) Neel, 3-6.  
\(^{92}\) Ibid
experience individually, by unit, or branch of service. Others document the post-combat or war experience.

Oral history, the recording of oral traditions or the transmission of history and a twentieth century invention, has been used in a variety of ways to gather information about the human experience or simply to gain data about the past. About the benefits of recording the living voice, Alex Vernon said it is essential in capturing the memories of everyday veterans forgotten by time, or those “either unable or not inspired to write them down.” What separates the oral history interview from other forms is that the oral historian is both author and interviewer. They ask questions and control the process to its conclusion, which includes determining a focus and message, editing, selecting, providing excerpts, and organizing the work into a history. On the negative side, “the rhetorical situation of oral histories means that we cannot read them the same way we read other forms of personal narratives….conducted as an interview, with the historian providing the prompts, oral histories follow specific conventions, and respondents have varying expectations.”93

Vernon argued that both the memoir and oral history are autobiographical modes. They should not be overlooked because “rhetorical circumstances between a person’s authoring a narrative” in traditional memoir forms, and “a person’s fielding questions” about a past event via the recorded interview.94 After all, as many public historians attest, the positives of the taped interview, especially in the absence of the written source,

93 See Vernon, Arms and Self, 22.
94 Ibid
outweigh the negatives. Richard Grele wrote in 1987, oral testimonies allow the historian to discover “unfolding circumstances, to document the varieties of ideology, the creation of meaning, and the more subjective aspects of historical experience.”

There has been no shortage of oral history collections about the military or the individual soldier that could be used to better understand the scope of the VHP or to educate about twentieth century warfare. Martin J. Hogan’s *The Shamrock Battalion in the Great War* (2007) recalls his service with the 165th Infantry, a regiment of the famous Rainbow Division. Aided by editor, James J. Cooke, Hogan’s experiences are seen at the human level through memories of battles at St. Miehl and in the Argonne Forest. Recollections are honest in terms of detailing the non-glorious nature of war in a time before penicillin and flu vaccinations.

Stud Terkel’s Pulitzer Prize winner, *The Good War* (1984) is the best collection void of the popular white soldier’s journey through hell. This classic work is both straightforward and disturbing, with readers finding no *Life Magazine* portraits of clean-cut, All-American boys serving a grand cause. Terkel incorporates interviews with famous and forgotten participants of World War II, affirming its grandness but also providing evidence that not all Americans (whether in combat zones or on the home front) were enthusiastic in their fight for brotherhood and defeat of militaristic regimes bent on ruling the world. In perhaps the first effort to disprove “Good War” myths, this collection evolves by examining the nature of American character before and during the

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war. American soldiers come across as racist, narrow-minded, unruly, and ugly. The treatment of Japanese-Americans and other ethnic groups whose racial ancestry blended not with the white majority appears as it did, highly racist.

Terkel’s assessment of the war and the type of questions he asks veterans is invaluable, including his overall strategy of determining what war means to its veterans today. The voluminous oral history collections following “The Good War” (post-1984) owe a debt to Terkel for several reasons. First, he helped make it possible to criticize the war, federal government, and FDR. Second, he acknowledged an ugly provincial side of the U.S. Thirdly, he reveals that every veteran fought their war, and that everyone’s war was different.

The Korean War has drawn interest from scholars and veterans. Rudy Tomedi’s No Bugles, No Drums: An Oral History of the Korean War (1993) offers a wide-range of reminiscences from 31 Korea veterans who participated in the early delaying action against the North Koreans, Pusan Perimeter, the landing at Inchon, China’s entry into the war, the withdrawal of Marines from the Chosin Reservoir, and the United Nations counter-offensive that pushed combined North Korean and Chinese troops back across the 38th parallel. The main argument raised here is that oral testimonies about the Korean War differ greatly from World War II and Vietnam accounts.

Lewis Carlson’s Remembered Prisoners of a Forgotten War: An Oral History of the Korean War POWs (2002) is a continuation from his fine World War II collection entitled We Were Each Other’s Prisoners (1999). Carlson recounts the experiences of American POWs and selected Western civilians captured by Communists forces between
1950 and 1952. Motivation for the compilation stemmed from what he saw as misconceptions about the American POW created by the *Manchurian Candidate* book and film (an American soldier brainwashed by the Communists and sent to assassinate the U.S. President). Use of a chronological narrative, annotations, and analysis makes this one of the more helpful oral history collections to date, especially in those accounts that center on starvation, indoctrination, executions, and collaboration.

Interest in the Vietnam War has led to growing list of collections from a variety of peoples, including, but not restricted to, the combat veteran, conscientious objector, veterans against the war, and to people of color. Paul Budra and Michael Zeitlайн, eds., *Soldier Talk: The Vietnam War in Oral Narrative* (2004) use the oral narrative to examine Vietnam as one of the most defining moments in contemporary history (in terms of war and genocide). The authors avoid the usual synthesis of scholarly monographs by drawing on the more analytical aspects of personal/military facets vs. narrative/history facets of oral history. Richard Stacewitz, professor of history at Indiana University, compiles testimonies from men and women who fought in Vietnam and later joined the *Vietnam Veterans against the War in Vietnam in Winter Soldiers: Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans against the War* (1997). In this collection of twenty-five men and five women, Stacewitz argues these people became protestors because of deep-rooted patriotic values and belief in Democracy.

Published four years earlier was James Tollefson’s, *Strength Not to Fight: Oral History of Conscientious Objectors of the Vietnam War* (1993) is one of the best taking an antiwar stance. Testimonies vary on experiences but overall depict the conscientious
objection as sincere opponents of the war, often persecuted or prosecuted for their actions. Individual accounts are first-rate beginning with the 1960s and 1970s antiwar movement, culminating with their thoughts and views thirty years after the fact. Wallace Terry’s *Bloods: Oral History of the Vietnam War* (1985) is still the best compilation solely dedicated to the African-American experience. Twenty men tell their battlefield stories and how each day they faced a special test to prove their patriotic worth among white counterparts.

Those accounts of the Gulf War and the end of the Cold War have also been useful. In *Ask and Tell: Gay and Lesbian Veterans Speak Out* (2007), Steve Estes compiles interviews from 50 gays and lesbians, to chart the U.S. military’s evolving policy towards homosexuals since World War II. He argues that despite their silence about sexuality and military service, they have been an intricate part of developing unit cohesion and fighting capability during both war and peace. The author places these individuals within the wider gay rights and liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, reiterating that an account of these lost voices and their place in military service is long overdue. Testimony from soldiers who served silently but continue to perform admirably in a variety of military job classifications despite constant fear reprisal from heterosexuals prevails here.

In recent years oral history collections have served as a legitimate means to record and preserve important memories and life experiences of Americans who otherwise may go unnoticed. Depending on the individual collection, the wider movement suggests a societal responsibility by historians and veterans to create a
complete as possible record of firsthand accounts for future generations. Perspectives and the range of emotions appear endless. Terkel's *The Good War* deserves top billing for its originality. To avoid them (oral history collections in general), in my opinion, would be to neglect what has become a viable historical methodology although many are guilty of trying to turn a profit or making a political statement at the expense of historical synthesis. On their value to history, Thomas Saylor, historian, asserted they paint a "representative picture of the different ways women and men were themselves transformed by the cataclysmic" nature of war. We as scholars, he says, must draw on them quickly before an entire generation dies.96

**Autobiography, Autobiographical Essays, and Memoirs**

Narratives of the published or unpublished autobiography and memoir type are highly valued by the VHP. They occupy much space in the pantheon of war history (and the VHP archive) but differ greatly from other texts. Depending on the war the viewpoints from the individual writer/veteran often vary. For example in World War II, a great number of firsthand testimony may justify the fighting of wars or insist their generation made the ultimate sacrifice to rid the world of fascist and militaristic opposition bent on creating a new world order while disrupting American values and security. The same might not be said for later wars in Korea, Vietnam, or the Persian Gulf.

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Whether such forms qualify as primary sources often depends on the individual author. Hildy Neel, historian, said, “The war narratives [have] performed crucial ideological work. They [have] engaged issues that touched deep anxieties in the public...personalized the soldier thereby keeping alive the American ideal of the heroic individual, full of ‘can-do’ spirit,” and ready to sacrifice his life for flag and country.”

Yet among so many, promoting patriotism and gaining profits from sales went hand in hand, evident in high numbers of highly decorated soldiers who willingly or not took on the role of “hero” and toured the United States promoting the war. Whether viewed as non-canonical books or not, they remain a jumping off point for contemporary historians to judge “the war, the nation, and themselves,” laying perhaps, “the foundation upon which latter-day public memories of World War II were molded.”

What stands out most about this mode of writing is that authors have more time to recall past experiences, the luxury of referring to outside sources, or can reconsider what they say and rewrite passages more personal or deemed inappropriate for a reading audience. Their structure often takes a chronological approach, flashback, and reflective modes. Over time, they have evolved into a literary phenomenon that promotes individualism, a sense of “my war, and lasting images of the “American white male hero” through the “trials and triumphs of the citizen soldier of democracy.” Today, the personal narrative has evolved into a literary phenomenon, one that directly or indirectly promotes

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97 Neel, “Let Us Now,” vi, 4-5.
98 Ibid, 3-5.
the “American white male hero” as a model for “trials and triumphs of the citizen soldier of democracy”.

The usual “white” male heroism dominates the personal narrative phenomenon, often at the expense of other groups along gender, race, and ethnic lines. Critics may argue that such accounts have emerged in recent years as much from discontent with government and military treatment of veterans as from widespread patriotic sentiments. These diverse groups of Americans also made unique sacrifices and lived a transformative experience that forever shaped their lives, as well as the military itself yet, for the most part, unconsciously are viewed as second-class members of the armed forces who suffered or endured little. Sadly, many ended their wartime service only to return home not to red carpet treatment, rather to face a bureaucracy that systematically denied them veteran’s status/benefits based on race, gender, ethnicity, and social class.

More recently several important firsthand accounts have exposed aspects of the complex evolution of gender and race dynamics that created a unique yet tenuous relationship among women (officers and enlisted alike), the military, and the larger society in which both operated. For those interested in promoting our understanding of the military during World War II as an inherently, gendered/racial organization begin with Ann Baumgartner-Carl’s *A WASP among Eagles* (1999), who chronicles her service as an World War II officer/aviator. She reveals that treatment of female pilots paled in comparison to male counterparts in terms of pay, criteria for enlistment, physical exams, and oral interviews designed to test women’s ability to handle stress. Final indignation

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came when the military regarded WASPs as Civil Service employees not active duty
military personnel, volunteers to fill gaps when male pilots left for more important
positions overseas.

Charity Adams-Earley’s *One Woman’s Army* (1989) remains one of the few
World War II narratives penned by a black female officer. Part of the first all African
American WAAC/WAC Basic Training Unit formed in September 1942 she later became
the first black officer to serve in Europe (1945). Although her account introduces
complicated issues of race and gender in the military, Adams-Earley fought harder to
have others accept her authority not because of rank rather for her military skills and
character. She recalled never using coercive means to gain support from troops, instead
relying on charisma and determination to educate future generations of female soldiers to
“realize that the better they performed, the more strongly they would enhance the image
of their leaders and of the black woman in general.”

If women officers were reluctant to criticize the military for below standard
treatment, enlisted personnel were not. Unfortunately, so few have been published to
date. Montana native, Grace Porter-Miller, had this too say in *Call of Duty: A Montana
Girl in World War II* (1999), “I am proud to have been a member of the Women’s Army
Corps, but the price I paid to serve my country has been high.” When asked to explain
why she enlisted in the army, volunteered three times—first in the WAAC, second in the
WAC, and third to go overseas, she responded, “Because I am an American, and I love

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101 Charity Adams-Earley, *One Woman’s Army: A Black Officer Remembers the WAC*
my country.” For those like Miller, military service was a painful ordeal that stayed with her late into life. Women were taught to ignore cases of sexual harassment and that “rape or attempted rape was somehow their fault,” went largely ignored by the military. Irrevocably under the control of the army, we learn that many women soldiers struggled to do exactly what they were ordered. Gender privileges (except those that classified rank, pay, and command positions) had no place in the army.

The past decade has witnessed a surge of memoirs penned by male Korean War veterans. Accounts from white soldiers, officers and enlisted, still prevail, with most guilty of repetitiveness or far too much expositional material about the history of the war. Many glorify the combat experience or altogether avoid more complicated issues of gender, race, and ethnicity. At least two exceptions exist. William T. Bowers, William M. Hammond, and George MacGarrigle deserve high praise for responding to black Korea veteran’s requests to publish an account of the 24th Infantry Regiment (the U.S. Army’s last all-black unit). Black Soldier White Army (1997) will disappoint few readers in the way it ably documents/supports earlier official Korean War histories that the 24th was a below standard unit that suffered from poor morale, equipment losses, battle straggling, and panic under fire (bugging out). There is little doubt that tenuous race relations greatly undermined the American army in Korea.

103 See Miller, vii, 4.
Preceding *Black Soldier* is Lyle Rishell's short, but useful memoir, *With a Black Platoon in Combat: A Year in Korea* (1993). A former white lieutenant in the 24th, Rishell documents the performance of his unit in the defense of the Pusan Perimeter and the pursuit of the North Korean Army after General Douglas MacArthur's successful Inchon campaign. Lacking here, however, is serious treatment of race relations, only the author's belief that any criticism of black troops (then and now) is undeserved. Blacks performed as well as any soldier, and never failed him he declares. Although not well received in the academic community, this is a valuable first person testimony.

Relying on present day personal recollections (oral and written), these authors have gone beyond simply chronicling black failure by digging for the causes. Black soldiers were in excellent physical condition, but were thrust into battle unprepared for the rigors of combat (although heroic exemptions prevailed with two members winning Congressional Medals of Honor). The "bugging out" syndrome was experienced by white and black soldiers alike, and not all "white" units performed admirably either. Furthermore, blacks of the 24th did not have the luxury of black officers to lead them. Black testimony suggests that white officers in charge of black companies often viewed their assignments as a step down in the promotion process, attitudes the common soldier had to cope with on a daily basis (and one that more than likely hindered his performance in combat).

The Vietnam experience ranks second only to World War II in terms of volume. Interested parties have their choice of memoirs, diary, and oral history collections from the perspective of "heroes" turned politicians, common soldiers, sailors, pilots, POWs,

First-person accounts that cross the broad spectrum of American combat operations during the 1991 Persian Gulf War are also available, but not yet complete in terms of testimony from all Americans along on race, gender, and ethnic lines. A recent study dedicated to American officers is Frederick Kagan and Christian Kubiak’s *Leaders in War: West Point Remembers the 1991 Persian Gulf War* (2005). This compilation provides testimonies from division commanders to platoon leaders, most regarding their leadership challenges, failures, and victories. *Leaders* captures the essence of the post-Cold War U.S. Army, one largely made up volunteers who carried out a highly successful military operation while adjusting to new battle doctrines and new weapon’s systems.104

Rick Francona’s *Ally to Adversary: An Eyewitness Account of Iraq’s Fall from Grace* (1999) is information heavy, but still one of the best first-hand accounts to date. A retired lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, the author served as a key linguist and interpreter in General Norman Swartzkopf’s high command following the Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Alex Vernon’s *Most Succinctly Bred* (2006) is an academic’s war memories. The journey begins with his adolescent years growing up during the Cold War

1980s in a middle-class family, attending West Point, and deploying and returning home from the Gulf War. Vernon visualizes himself as a misplaced academic forever entrapped within the military's warrior culture. What emerges from these pages is Vernon at war with himself, one who feared the death of his own soldiers, declaring himself "a soldier, not a warrior," one who "abhors violence." He is both the reluctant soldier and the defender of U.S. military operations in 1991, claiming his experiences were meaningful, especially if incorrectly remembered or mocked by academics for its irrelevance.

Published personal narratives can serve many purposes and audiences. The motivations behind them, whether personal or political, are another matter. They do, however, reveal life experiences and educate us on the chaotic nature of war. Writers, despite a personal goal to sell the war, put the reader in the midst of the action. Such efforts often have a dramatic effect: laughter, personal trauma, and horror. Their structure often takes a chronological approach, flashback, and reflective modes. Methodology is less clear. Instead of allowing the reader to see and feel the experience directly, many accounts (especially those penned years after the fact) are often guilty of selective memory and political agendas and must be analyzed cautiously. Showing instead of telling should be the goal here, yet what we get more times than not is personal recognition rather than personal interpretation (something better reserved for the professional historian) or historical meaning.

105 Alex Vernon, *Succinctly Bred* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2006): 50, 70.
Semi-Autobiographical War Novels

The VHP welcomes non-published poetry to the collection, but at this time there is no movement underway to include any writings under the heading of semi-autobiographical war novels. These sources should be more prized considering some of the most informational (and controversial) forms of war and memory come from this category. First appearing en masse in the aftermath of the Civil War most accounts were guilty of patriotic orthodoxy, glorifying the combat experience, while avoiding true horrors of warfare. More traditional authors often viewed the struggle in romantic terms while veterans, claiming they never wanted to fight again, insisted on retelling their combat experiences with fondness or as a time of great unity, idealism, and selfless dedication to principle. Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) was the first serious attempt to expose the more unspeakable side of war. Although not semi-autobiographical, it is one of the most highly regarded fictional accounts ever penned on this epic conflict, and went largely unknown despite the presence of an active, vocal pacifist movement, until World War I and the rise of the "Lost Generation."106

Unlike their nineteenth century predecessors, the "Lost Generation" accounts of World War I revealed little patriotic sentiment and outright attacks on the military, war, or institutions that supported each. The most influential of all, Hemingway, introduced naturalistic techniques to the war novel, personally experienced the brutality of war, but is often like others, unfairly remembered as drunkards or indiscriminate "love makers" who criticized the establishment or the war machine in general. *A Farewell to Arms*

(1929) stands the test of time. Frederic Henry, protagonist/narrator and American ambulance driver and lieutenant in the Italian army, becomes steadily disillusioned, believing he has nothing to do with the war and the world he lives in. Hemingway is at his best here pitting man's struggle against an indifferent, brutal world.

_The Sun Also Rises_ (1926) charts the experiences of the "Lost Generation" as certain members wander aimlessly (or so it seems) across Europe in search of truth and meaning to their lives. Lead character Jake Barnes emerged out of World War I wounded/sexually impotent. His physical ailment has profound effects leading to a debilitating insecurity about his masculinity. Hemingway's treatment of a select group of WWI veterans and one woman at war with themselves borders on genius. The struggle over basic beliefs of justice, manhood, womanhood, morality, and love consumes each character-Barnes, Lady Brett Ashley, Mike Campbell, and Robert Cohn-ultimately epitomizing how a single generation was forced to live out an amoral existence because of the depredations and lasting effects of modern warfare.

_For Whom the Bell Tolls_ (1940) opens in 1937 at the height of the Spanish Civil War. American mercenary, Robert Jordan has left the United States to enlist in the army on the Republican side. In preparation for a major Republican offensive, the seemingly disillusioned Jordan volunteers for an assignment to blow-up a fascist controlled bridges. A love affair with fellow guerilla, Maria transforms him from the quintessential "expendable" soldier to one with meaning in life. Jordon dies protecting his newfound love and the cause of freedom, realizing in his last moments that he has finally integrated himself in a world previously misunderstood or forsaken. Hemingway, speaking from
firsthand experiences in Spain, draws on conflicting meanings of war and how the common soldier is left to discover which one he fits into.

Willa Cather, best remembered for her classic work *My Antonia* (1918) won the Pulitzer Prize in 1923 for her World War I novel *One of Ours*. Considered by critics of her day, as an inaccurate description of the war and far too romantic and sentimental, Cather’s novel chronicles the life of a Nebraska farm boy who struggles to find meaning in his life, enlists and later endures a violent death on the Western Front, albeit in a sacrificial, glorious manner. Loosely based on her cousin’s wartime letters (the first Nebraska born officer to die in World War I), this one fits nicely in the “Lost Generation” novels of the 1920s and could be viewed as both disheartening and encouraging, especially if placed in the context of antiwar sentiments, materialism and the age of industrialization that Cather experienced first hand.

When examining any number of credible war novels written in the World War II era, one notices that the “machine” was firmly assimilated in American culture. Most vehemently protested against the effects of mechanization and were seething with anti-patriotic sentiments. James Jones, former army colonel during World War II and author of *The Thin Red Line*, said in 1976, such accounts “reveal with startling clarity, [and] the war novel (and arguably the personal narrative, memoir, and oral testimony) has become one of the most logical ways of writing about life in the twentieth century.” War itself, despite the lack of “detached, objective” authors, remains a compelling subject for literature and historical writing. Jones called war the “distinguishable genre...a metaphor
for the human condition” that lingers on as “part of the overall experience of life, perhaps not entirely normal, but something to be expected.”

One of the most critically-acclaimed works came from the pen of Norman Mailer. A two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, he became famous overnight with The Naked and the Dead, loosely based on his personal experiences as a combat soldier in the Pacific theater. Far from a tribute to the American fighting man, instead we see soldiers at odds with most everything they confront and “defeated” before they enter battle by all sorts of other “deterministic” forces. These are hardly attributes of men seeking a better world to live in given the intense conflict between men, the natural forces in which they encounter, and the machine that seemingly controls their individual lives. If critics today rate it among the top 100 novels in the history of English literature, then it should be considered in examination of oral history testimonies on war and memory.

Harriet Arnow’s The Dollmaker (1954) is arguably one of the best novels written on the World War II home front experience. One can view how the Nevel family from rural Kentucky ruptures in industrialized Detroit from a variety of perspectives: Marxism, feminism, regionalism, and humanist. Genie, the lead character, stumbles in the face of adversity, as an overcrowded, alien culture of factories and tenant houses brings to life the harsh, often overlooked realities of living/working in a country less concerned with the health and welfare of the working class than winning the war by its industrial might.

While top-shelf literature on the Korean War is scarce the same can not be said for the Vietnam War. Minnesota native and author Tim O'Brien is widely considered the premier writer of the genre. He served in Southeast Asia with the 198th Infantry Brigade from 1969 to 1970. Later wounded in action he earned the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star. On the heels of his critically-acclaimed memoir entitled *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship Me Home* (1973), he penned two controversial pieces of war fiction also loosely-based on personal experiences. *Going After Cacciato* (1979) paints a dark portrait of life inside an American infantry platoon as they are ordered to cease fighting the enemy and hunt down one of their AWOL soldiers. *The Things They Carried* (1990), arguably one of the best fiction pieces on the war, has the protagonist battling with cowardice and the sickening nature of war that most soldiers encounter during extended periods of combat duty. Much the same as 1920s war novels, O'Brien almost exclusively portrays the American soldier in Vietnam as toting a heavy burden, heavy physical and emotional loads (grief, love, terror, searching for meaning in his life, or longing for a return home to days of normalcy). Overriding themes for the most part has the common soldier fighting hard out of fear of being shamed in front of his comrades or peers. Like Mailer, O'Brien examines how individual soldier’s values and traumatizing experiences often created non-heroic figures, and how this pattern persisted from war to war.

Nothing is what it seems during armed conflict and semi-autobiographical war novels reflect it. If the VHP is indeed interested in recording war stories from the “ground up,” then I suggest inclusion of these studies to their on-line educational tutorials/bibliography not only to educate partner groups and volunteers but also to keep
the war experience open for (re)-interpretation. Soldiers fight for one another, between themselves, question command decisions, and often die wondering why. There appears to be no room for memories of glorious sacrifice.

Such is the case when one examines Ernest Hemingway’s characters (and others), who sometimes represent what is worst in all men. Yet, just as the United States’ engagement in major wars varies with each, so has the various ways (content and form) in which fiction writers, novelists, and literary critics treated them. The overall subject of war remains the same, but the themes, questions, and complications raised have not. War, James Jones has argued, serves as a matrix, forming a background for particular actions, serving as a lasting testament to human condition. At the center of war fiction lives feelings of aggression, violence, sexuality, non-patriotic/antiwar sentiments, and the search for truth among those who read it. They fully explore human values and experiences while offering various representations that change over time and complicate our views of war by relaying the unsympathetic truths, and revealing that Americans have lived, and continue to live, in a world of constant violence and warfare.

If historians and journalists (and the VHP) have failed to record the influence of war on American society, then authors of semi-autobiographical novel (most of which express brutality of war) clearly relay the unsympathetic truths. At the heart of conflict was the disillusionment every day people felt over the large number of casualties caused by the Great War, or more cynical notions of morality and quest for the true meaning of life. Convincing arguments leads one to believe that their writings are some of the finest in the pantheon of American war literature. In the end, their works are representative of
thousands of disillusioned, if not bitter, veterans, who pathetically endured the fighting in World War I then faced the challenges of reentering society, often without reward. To their credit, they have utilized virtually “every structural and stylistic technique,” a tribute to their impact on American society and their use as a “suitable medium for expressing diverse human values and experiences.” War brings unparalleled intensity to the individual experience, thus writers and veterans alike have mainly focused on individual values and the “self evaluation” of war, not fully reflecting on the passing of time or “the milieu in which they were produced.”

Inclusion of literary interpretations of war and the remembering of should have value to any war and memory study.

### Diurnal Forms

Letters and diaries represent another form of autobiographical writing valued by the VHP. Such “diurnal” forms are representative of the most “faithful” accounts of an individual’s wartime experience and differ from other forms of text like memoirs and autobiographies because they are not spurred by “the necessity of fiction” or written after the fact. As Paul Fussell said, “the further personal written material materials move from the form of the daily diary, the closer they approach the figurative and the fictional.” Despite being written at the time of experience, these sources can also be problematic, primarily because most accounts undergo intense editing or fall prey to personal agendas. Vernon argued, when a writer include such forms while penning an autobiography or memoir, and end result “less fictional; yet the narrative still has an imposed structure….carefully culled….likely edited.” In other words, those from living veterans

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of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, allow researchers access to two voices, "the one belonging to the living through the experience, and the one belonging to the self, years later, thinking back."\textsuperscript{109}

Scholarly coverage of women's experiences in the Great War appears less frequently than those of men, so much so that interested parties have to combine the autobiographical essay with the letter/diurnal form to obtain adequate numbers. Early accounts came from military nurses and American civilians in France or Germany, and should "someway, somehow" be included in the VHP collection given copyright laws have expired. Some to consider include Madeleine Zabriskie Doty's \textit{Short Rations: An American Woman in Germany, 1915-1916} (1917); Elizabeth Ashe's \textit{Intimate Letters from France during America's First Year of the War} (1918); Edith Louise O'Shaughnessy's \textit{My Lorraine Journal} (1918) and; Helen Dore Boylston's \textit{Sister: The War Diary of a Nurse}; and Agnes Von Kurowsky's \textit{Hemingway in Love and War: The Lost Diary of Agnes Von Kurowsky, her Letters and Correspondence with Ernest Hemingway} (1989).

More recently, Margaret Higonnet, editor of \textit{Nurses at the Front: Writing the Wounds of the Great War} (2001), has challenged traditional definitions of war literature while defining and defending the place of women writers of the World War I canon. She offers excerpts from two American women authors/professional nurses, Ellen N. La Motte and Mary Borden, about their experiences on the Western Front in 1914. \textit{Writing the Wounds} utilizes chapters from La Motte's \textit{The Backlash of War} and Borden's

\textsuperscript{109} Paul Fussel and Alex Vernon quoted in, \textit{Arms and Self}, 23-24.
Forbidden Zone published respectively in 1916 and 1929 to emphasize their common experiences on the battlefront. Higonnet’s attempt to link both memoirs in terms of content and form succeeds, detailing a powerful, emotional, yet horrific impression of World War I. La Motte nor Borden ever fired a rifle at the enemy, but the reader learns quickly that they too experienced the agonizing and haunting impressions of battle.¹¹⁰

Lieutenant Colonel Betty Bandel emerged out of World War II as one of the army’s highest-ranking female officers. In An Officer and Lady: The World War II Letters of Lt. Colonel Betty Brandel, Women’s Army Corps (2004), her firsthand account comes to life beginning with her graduation from the University of Arizona in 1933 with a degree in music to the first of an elite group of women to gain admission to the Officer Candidate School in Des Moines, Iowa. Bandel served in the military from 1942 to 1945 leaving in charge of the entire WAC Division of the Armed Forces. After the war she earned her Ph.D in English from the University of Columbia, published numerous scholarly books, using her military experiences to suggest that a person’s worth should not be defined by sex, rather how an individual utilizes their abilities.

Aileen Kilgore-Henderson’s Stateside Soldier (2001), a collection of diary and letters from the period 1944 to 1945, captures the everyday life and work experiences of a young Alabama WAC away from home for the first time, stationed at Ellington Air Force Base in Texas. Two different writers emerge from this account, Aileen Henderson circa 2001 and Aileen Kilgore in 1944. As she admits, “The young woman writing those diary letters emerged out of World War II as one of the army’s highest-ranking female officers. In An Officer and Lady: The World War II Letters of Lt. Colonel Betty Brandel, Women’s Army Corps (2004), her firsthand account comes to life beginning with her graduation from the University of Arizona in 1933 with a degree in music to the first of an elite group of women to gain admission to the Officer Candidate School in Des Moines, Iowa. Bandel served in the military from 1942 to 1945 leaving in charge of the entire WAC Division of the Armed Forces. After the war she earned her Ph.D in English from the University of Columbia, published numerous scholarly books, using her military experiences to suggest that a person’s worth should not be defined by sex, rather how an individual utilizes their abilities.

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entries and those letters seemed to be someone I had never known. It is an act of courage
and/or foolhardiness to open one's diary to the gaze of others,” but it permits “me to lock
into memory” forever special times, all of which “helped me hold onto to details of
everyday events that I would not now be able to recall.”^111 Henderson recalls, with not
much forgiveness, the ill-treatment and gender stereotypes she endured, mostly from
hostile male soldiers. Shortcomings and oversights prevail here, but then again as
Henderson admits, she penned her account not for academics, rather for herself and
family. Gender issues prevail, not always between the army and woman or between men
and women, but along geographical lines between herself and women of the North.

The overall value of the diurnal forms of personal narrative is that most were
authored during actual time of military service or in the “heat of battle.” For the
historian/researcher, and certainly the VHP (as in the case of World War I where oral
history interviews are no longer possible) these forms writing, whether published or
unpublished are prized possessions.

Visual Forms/On-Line Postings

Authorial presentations appear in the form of photograph collections/scrapbooks,
drawings, and even cartoons. The VHP has collected thousands of these valuable sources
to augment its collection of oral and written testimonies. Collections of original photos or
artwork should number at least ten, and will be accepted in person, by mail, and
electronically. Sources of this type related to the military experience, as Vernon has

noted, have their roots in nineteenth century wars. Vernon argued that in both cases, authors present "postwar memoirs—or, better, postwar photographic war narratives."  

The number of discourses, theoretical inquires, issues, implications, and others related to autobiographical writing of the online variety have drawn recent interest in the academic community. These kinds of materials "range from text-only site postings and discussion forum 'conversations,' to personal Web pages, with their additional possibilities of visual images, audio tracks, and video clips." Because of the influence of the Internet during the 1990s, most of these testimonies appear in abundance from veterans of the Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War, and active-duty military personnel fighting today in Iraq and Afghanistan. Such forms have their up and downside. Vernon said:

"Postings to a site or discussion forum—they are usually short, composed in a single sitting, often in response to another posting and usually with no, or only minor, surface revisions—occupy an odd rhetorical position between private, immediate, diurnal narratives and published, public narratives, as they have a potentially unlimited audience of strangers."  

Prompted by their own mortality or media attention given to the anniversaries of Pearl Harbor and VJ-Day, many veterans have made significant historical contributions to the VHP through different narrative forms like visual imagery and on-line postings. While many may appear perfunctory, routine, lacking critical analysis, or incorrectly define our nations' memory of the war, they can prove invaluable with the absence of

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113 Ibid
114 Ibid
What hampers the VHP in terms of all sources collected to date, is that most relate to the Second World War, exceed other American wars.

The dissertation consists of six chapters that examine the creation, goals, achievements, and impact of the VHP across national, regional, and community boundaries. Chapter two investigates the history/evolutionary process of both the LOC and AFC. I will argue that they were chosen to oversee the VHP based on their institutional framework, turning points in their histories, and antecedents (other oral history projects undertaken before 2000). Chapter three details how the VHP is structured in terms of staff and how the Five-Star council, an outside board of advisors non-typical to LOC and AFC protocol, that guides the Project staff. I determine their educational backgrounds, historical training, and what tasks they perform on a daily basis. I ask how these peoples initially recruited and trained private organizations and volunteer groups in close proximity to Washington, D.C. in the use of oral history through LOC sponsored invitations, exhibitions, publications, and public programs.

Chapter four begins with an examination of VHP website, in an effort to gauge the value of on-line educational tutorials and how they are used to assist educators, students, and future project partners. Next, I establish the role of major partner groups like the AARP, VA, VFW, and DVA, asking why the VHP recruited their assistance and what contributions they have made. In the last part, I reveal how the Project has collaborated with communities on their veterans and fairly recorded how the military experience has affected individual lives, or if such commonalities directly or indirectly

\[115\] Neel, "Let Us Now Praise," 4-5.
unify this diverse nation of nations. I will ask why the job of documenting our war history and collecting firsthand testimonies given to veterans and their families and friends instead of professionally-trained historians and military specialists. How has public and oral history tendered a democratic process more open for interpretation, especially those military historical groups, libraries, museums, colleges and universities, and historical societies who have donated materials to the VHP? Has the experience given historical and educational purpose to interviewees, project partners, and volunteers charged with the collecting process or has it promoted a sense of pride among veterans and their supporters at war making them feel their story is important and that it needs to be told?

Chapter five examines the VHP holdings at large. What role has technology played in the creation of the non-digital archive? Is there special criteria needed for a source to become archived? How are testimonials organized by major twentieth (and twenty-first) century wars: World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War, and by branch of service? Have sufficient numbers of testimonies by veterans and their supporters of war along gender, race, and ethnic lines been collected?

Chapter six analyzes how technological advances have allowed the VHP to create an on-line digital collection which includes firsthand accounts organized into web presentations. In what ways has it allowed the VHP to share the collection with the larger public? What themes have they generated by veteran group and war? Has the collection been politically influenced or is grounded in patriotic sentiments? How has the VHP overcome a shortage of testimonies from women and other minority groups to include
them in the process? Are there trends in what the latter groups of veterans have to say? Because of their willingness to use oral history, computer-based, digital web presentations and webcasts, I argue that the Project has been able to uphold a democratic process or make it possible for every veteran group to tell his/her, while officially acknowledging that there are many versions of the same story, making for sub plots, and leaving war and memory open for interpretation.

Oral history projects like the VHP can serve as microcosms in which to influence/promote military and public history or other fields of study that typically rely on the human voice to reconstruct our past. Because the LOC envisioned it as a national project to honor our nation’s veterans and by incorporating testimonies from peoples of all walks of life, it has, at least initially, succeeded in keeping our war past open for (re)interpretation. This approach, however, has not been void of issues notably in policy implications where gaps and unevenness will result and remain with no substantial federal funding to hire a full staff able to fill in those gaps and do follow-up work. There are also concerns with the types of questions asked of interviewees (veterans and their supporters) and the overall quality of the documentation effort because the VHP has opted for amateur historians over professionals to collect such accounts. Findings also determine that upon accessing the VHP on-line archive, users of tapes (real or virtual) will realize that the larger collection is slanted towards the World War II “white” experience, and at present time has a shortage of other veterans and support groups along gender, race, and ethnic lines. It has, however, successfully spawned a national effort to document and preserve firsthand testimonies Americans on one of the most controversial,
fascinating, yet appalling, aspect of the human life—war, and far exceeded initial expectations.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{116} Adrian R. Lewis, \textit{The American Culture of War: The History of the U.S. Military from World War II to Operation Iraqi Freedom} (New York: Routledge, 2007)
CHAPTER II

HANDLING, SAFEGUARDING, AND PRESERVING: THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS AND AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER

When the 106th Congress passed the VHP Act in 2000 it looked no further than its own library, the oldest cultural institution in the United States and the largest library in the world, and its “right arm,” the AFC, to oversee the most expansive oral history project in the United States since the Great Depression. Since its conception the LOC has maintained a high-level of proficiency, often under intense scrutiny from opponents who questioned the value of creating a national library serving both the needs of Congress and the larger American public. Since the founding of the AFC in 1976 (some would argue before), what the LOC collects and preserves still serves the needs of Congress, and sees itself as directing the documentation of the breadth and depth of the nation’s cultural diversity.

In this chapter I will examine the historical antecedents of the Library and AFC to determine their approach to recording our Nation’s history.¹ What was the institutional culture of both? What was the LOC record of accomplishment in the documentation of

the life experiences of ordinary Americans? How were these early documenting projects approached or administered, and can it be determined if they affected the conception of, approach to, and implementation of the VHP? What were the main LOC/AFC projects that brought them another step closer towards gaining the means, knowledge, expertise, and management skills now employed for allowing the “folk” to gather the “folklore,” or in the case of the VHP develop a grassroots oral history project based on the experiences of American veterans and their supporters at war?

It’s More Than a Library

Located in three buildings, Madison, Jefferson, and Adams, the LOC stands alone in terms of cultural interpretations and representations. Although it began as library and research facility for Congress, today it is a multi-faceted intellectual center or institution that collects data in both print and electrical form. It is also houses the U.S. Copyright Office, the center for performing arts, gallery, archive, a reading service for all Americans, preservation laboratory, and “conservator” of our nation’s heritage and digital library. Currently, it houses a collection that includes everything published in the U.S, with more than 28 million catalogued books and other written sources in over 460 languages, upwards of 60 million manuscripts, the most complete rare book collection in North America, and other items of historical and cultural interest that now surpass 130 million.

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Established by an act of Congress in 1800 by President John Adams, the first LOC collected a variety of sources most of the legal nature reflecting Congress' role as lawmakers. Former President Thomas Jefferson was influential in the library's early years, signing into law in 1802 those that established its overall structure, giving the President and Vice-President the ability to borrow books and other materials related to the affairs of state. The Library lasted until the British burned the capitol and most of its holdings in 1814. This tragedy prompted Jefferson to donate his personal library, which numbered some 6,500 books as a replacement. His collection encompassed legal, academic or "learned books," and more popular works as well. The Congressional librarians sought to collect "everything which related to America [life] and indeed whatever was rare and valuable in every science....and other topics not normally viewed as part of a legislative library." Since the first Librarian of Congress was appointed in 1802, not all thirteen shared an equal commitment to collecting works for, by, and about the common man. Carl Ostrowski indicated that "throughout its long history" the LOC has "occupied a crossroads in America life where the nation's literary and political cultures intersect." However, from 1783 to 1791, public responses varied as to whether

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4 See Library of Congress American Folklife Center, 7.
5 The Librarian of Congress is appointed by the president with advice and consent provided by members of U.S. Senate. Of the thirteen Librarians no woman or person of color has ever held the post: 1. John James Beckley (1802-1807); 2. Patrick McGruder (1807-1815); George Watterson (1815-1829); John Silva Meehan (1839-1861); John Gould Stephenson (1861-1864); Ainsworth Rand Spofford (1864-1897); John Russell Young (1897-1899); Herbert Putnam (1899-1939); Archibald MacLeish (1939-1944); Luther H. Evans (1945-1953); Lawrence Quincy Mumford (1954-1974); Daniel J. Boorstin (1975-1987); and James H. Billington (1987 to present).
the country needed one or not. Such was a sampling of the early problems that plagued the Library from first attempts to build it through the end of the American Civil War, notably the lack of use or access to books for regular Americans, non-lawyers, or scholars.

The LOC was not conceived as a public education/research institution. A lack of non-commitment to everyday Americans can be measured in the vying political factions who argued over what materials it should house and for what audience. Not until the latter half of the nineteenth century with the overall expansion of the federal government and the support of bipartisan politics, did the LOC begin to reassert itself and become the people’s library known today. Its commitment of democratizing access to information and documents, or telling the stories of ordinary Americans began in earnest with the building of a new library. In the 1872 annual report, Ainsworth Spoffard called the Library an “unfit place for students,” revealing “with the exception of one narrow reading room in the North Wing, capable of seating only twenty readers, the entire [LOC] affords no place for the quiet pursuit of study.” In the same report one year later, he noticed the “grievous necessity of piling books on the floor, declaring it would be impossible “much longer to provide any space for thousands of volumes of new accessions.” Beverly Elson noted that in 1874, Spoffard had to plead “in nationalistic tones for a new building.”

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Pleas to Congress initially fell on deaf ears. Besides failing to secure funds to build a new facility, more work needed to be done to ensure that the Library was something more than simply a “merger of American functionalism and cosmopolitan eclecticism.”

After much deliberation, Congress did double its staff from 42 to 108 and authorized new administrative positions to help oversee the growing collection that surpassed 800,000 volumes by the 1890s. Authority was also granted the Librarian to add staff members when needed, as well as requiring Senate approval for presidential appointees of the future. Yet, a power struggle between Spofford and Congress persisted. Speaking before Congress, he declared “such a library is not for one generation alone, but its successive generations as approximately complete representation of the nation’s literature.”

That the “American people should rely with confidence upon finding in one great and monumental library.” Any effort to reduce the collection, “once lost could never be reassembled,” overall viewed as “narrow and unwise policy,” and “unworthy of a nation claiming to hold a front rank in civilization.”

Despite what seemed a legitimate storage crisis, it was not until 1888 that Congress finally gave permission to General Thomas Lincoln Casey, chief of the Army Corps of Engineers, to begin construction. When it finally opened its doors in 1897, supporters viewed it both as a national monument and “the largest, the costliest, and the

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9 See Elson in “Library of Congress,” 49.
10 See “Jefferson’s Legacy.”
12 Ibid
safest library in the world.” It services continue today as an independent branch of the federal government and as the premier repository “for the world’s collective knowledge and achievement.” Whether it would be open for all Americans to enjoy remained to be seen.

1897 to 1939 is often referred to as the Library’s period of reorganization, and arguably when it began to realize the value of shared authority with the larger public. Appointed by President William McKinley in 1899, Herbert Putnam held that position for the next four decades and is credited for revolutionizing it. He regarded the LOC as establishing or setting the precedent for other libraries state supported:

“The Library should properly stand nationally for what the State libraries are to the State, with regard to all documentary material, because the Library of Congress is the final depository of national archives, and it could so serve in helping place the State libraries with respect to their archives on a similar plane, and strengthen an render uniform their methods by its influence as a national institution.”

Putnam’s message might be interpreted as an initial commitment to public education and service to all Americans.

For some time afterwards, the LOC sought to expand its scope of operations but struggled organizationally. Putnam tried to tweak the system in place and make it more user-friendly by adding numerous indexes, bibliographies, and book loaning, and

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13 Jefferson and other quotes from “History of the Library (Library of Congress) and Mission, Strategic Plan of the Library of Congress at http://www.loc.gov/about/history
14 See Library of Congress American Folk Life Center, 7.
15 A graduate of Harvard University in 1883, he continued studies at Columbia Law School then accepted the position as Librarian of the Minneapolis Atheneum. See “Jefferson’s Legacy,” at http://www.loc.gov/loc/legacy/loc.html
maintaining international agendas. However, with no background in library science and questionable influence with Congress, it is unclear whether his changes affected the “folk” in their efforts to gain equal access to the Library’s rich collections.

On the eve of World War I, the LOC became increasingly more international and cultural in scope and more accessible to the American public, but service as a research repository for Congress remained first priority. For example, Congress established the Legislative Research Service (a division of the Library) in 1914, and later the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, which “expanded its mission and renamed it the Congressional Research Service (CRS).” The CRS approach sought a two-prong approach. It only served “Congress’s legislative needs with nonpartisan and objective research and analysis, but also “directly and exclusively” worked to provide “confidential and timely legislative support to members and committees on all issues of interest to them” and “at all stages of the legislative process.” Such changes did have a trickle down effect to meet the needs of the larger public.

For all Americans to have equal access to the Library’s rich collections first meant collecting histories about their lives. In 1915, Putnam welcomed the first collection of World War I published personal narratives and soldier letters. There is no evidence that living veterans were invited to contribute. A *New York Times* article said, “The Library especially desires to obtain collections of letters written from France, Italy, and

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17 Putnam quoted in “Putnam for Librarian,” 2.
18 *It’s More Than a Library*, 4.
England, by soldiers and officers." Charles Moore, then Acting Chief, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress, believed such letters would "contain" specific events and materials beneficial to creating a "history" of U.S. participation in war, making it "valuable to students and writers." Other materials collected by library staff or donated by veterans and their families were photographs, posters, newspapers, lithographs, broadsides, medals, and printed matter "both American and foreign." Putnam's democratization effort was not fully realized until the 1930s when Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the formation of the New Deal Works Progress Administration. One of the four arts projects established under his work relief program it also included the Federal Writer's Project (FWP), designed to employ some 6,600 unemployed professional writers, historians, journalists, researchers, geologists, editors, archeologists, and cartographers during the Great Depression. Although many of the fieldworkers hired had not completed high school, most of those who conducted oral history interviews or penned manuscripts came from the white-collar ranks. To get the Project off the ground, the FWP hired Henry Alsbury, journalist and theatrical producer, and later John D. Newsome to oversee the project. They are credited with introducing oral history techniques to those workers so as to conduct fieldwork and record/redefine American national identity and culture in terms of its ethnic and racial diversity.

20 Ibid
including gathering life stories, folk tales, songs, sayings, recollections, and living folk life.\footnote{21}{See “Jefferson’s Legacy.”}

Between 1935 and 1942, the FWP published more than 2,900 manuscripts from everyday Americans in four hundred volumes through the combined efforts of 300 writers from 24 states. The effort also merited nearly 2,300 first person accounts from former slaves. Many of the local and oral histories collected were included in “48 State Guides, also known as the “American Guide Series.” All forty-eight states eventually printed a state guide based on interviewers gathered life stories/oral histories, collected folktales, recollections, songs, sayings, and living folk life.\footnote{22}{American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1940 http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/index.html.} A significant collection of these accounts is now available via the Internet in the American Life Histories collection stored at the LOC.

When Roosevelt appointed Archibald McLeish as Librarian in 1939, the LOC officially entered the age of documentation and democratization. A graduate of Yale University and later Harvard Law School, the new Librarian became the first to take a political stance when he called on all Americans to oppose totalitarianism on behalf of the democratic free world. McLeish dedicated the newly-constructed South Reading Room in the Adams Building to Thomas Jefferson, commissioned artist Ezra Winter to paint four theme-based murals then adopted a “democracy alcove” in what is now the Main Reading Room of the Jefferson Building to secure sensitive documents like the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and the Federalist Papers. At the same time
he pursued work to recognize one of America's most famous men he also undertook efforts to document more invisible Americans. Under his leadership on October 13, 1939, the Hispanic Room of the Library of Congress opened signaling a new commitment to all American histories, not just those based on Anglo roots. The new room had a capacity for 75,000 volumes of rare books, periodicals, manuscripts, and maps.

McLeish was succeeded in 1945 by, President Harry Truman appointee Luther Evans (1902-1981) the tenth Librarian of Congress. Evans was employed by the Historical Records Survey of the Works Progress Administration, and became its first director. During his eight year term as Librarian his democratization vision expanded beyond the national to international borders. Beyond introducing a new catalog and bibliographic service Evans founded "Missions," a project that microfilmed projects for Middle East countries, and sought postwar cultural publications in United States, Europe, and Japan. Among his other accomplishments was resisting an "economy-minded Congress" that rejected many of his proposals, including those by the Appropriations Committee to undermine the Library's authority as "a national and indeed international library."

Lawrence Quincy Mumford succeeded Evans in 1954 and held the post until 1974. He entered the position with over thirty years of library experience from the New

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23 McLeish never relished his role as Librarian, but felt obligated to take the position when offered by Roosevelt in 1939.
24 See "Librarian Appeals for Rediscovery," 11.
York Public Library, Cleveland Public Library, and other special library assignments. The *New York Times* proclaimed it would be his responsibility to guard the national library from attacks on its policy and to insure the best service possible to the nation and its people.

Mumford’s visions were not simplistic, but overall effective. He was instrumental in the construction of James Madison Memorial Building and took advantage of increased spending for education to establish a global network of acquisition centers, including posts in Cairo, Egypt, and New Delhi, India. But, as early as 1954, the Library faced another budgetary crisis. The House of Appropriations Committee trimmed a half-million dollars off the annual operating budget in what disgruntled writer Dr. Lytt I. Gardner later said was intentional “to remind the Librarian of Congress that this world famous literary collection is the creature of Congress.”

Gardner also said:

> “It would seem highly appropriate that the Library of Congress be designated the National Library, and its services to a nation growing in scientific and cultural activities be expanded rather than curtailed.”

Mumford’s efforts were symbolic of the Library’s overall commitment to democratize, but they did not lessen the political battles with Congress over control.

In the 1960s, the LOC survived in house fighting and efforts by members of the Joint Library Committee to have its name changed. It succeeded in getting new institutional reform acts, expansion of the national activities and other services.

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organizational related. Many of these reforms, including name change, were later
squashed for good in 1970 with the passing of the Library Reorganization Act. In a time
when the Vietnam War took up much of Congresses time, it ensured that emphasis be
placed on generating Congress and congressional committees, allowing the Library to
assist wherever needed, but ensuring that it maintained a free-hand to do what it did best,
preserve the cultural history of the United States and other countries around the world. 29

No one Librarian was more controversial or undermined the democratization of
the Library more than Daniel J. Boorstin. Appointed by President Gerald R. Ford in 1974,
he had a resume that included a degree from Harvard and a Rhodes scholarship from at
Oxford University. A political conservative at the time of his appointment, he worked
diligently to enhance LOC relationships with scholars, authors, publishers, civic leaders,
and the larger business community. On the other hand, he raised eyebrows for opinions
on Watergate and the on-going civil rights movement. In an exclusive interview with the
Congressional Quarterly in 1973, he described the Nixon debacle as a “frightening”
eexample of “cult of personality” that had somehow been attached to the presidency. He
also warned fellow Americans against “self flagellation and crying of woe of those who
say [Watergate] is the obituary of American civilization.” 30

29 See “Jefferson’s Legacy.”
30 Daniel Boorstin quoted in “Historian Chosen as U.S. Librarian: Ford to Name Boorstin
radical and a one-time member of the Communist Party, he also had twenty-five years
experience as a lecturer and professor of history at the University of Chicago and
directorship of the National Museum of History and Technology of the Smithsonian
Institution.
Boorstin's technical qualifications as historian and librarian were undeniable. However, his views on race and ethnicity left much to be desired. The Congressional Black Caucus urged President Ford to withdraw his nomination based on what they believed to be a false “conception of the black struggle for equal opportunity” and “insensitivity to the real needs and the political efforts of black Americans. Black employees of the library shared similar sentiments, shedding light on his “depreciation of affirmative action programs as ‘intergenerational bookkeeping.” For several years they had been engaged in efforts to improve hiring and promotional opportunities at the Library under the banner “average people, like average white people.” Their pleas went largely unnoticed prompting Black Caucus members to declare, if elected, Boorstin’s concept of “affirmative action would be a particular disaster.” Although they, along with Democrat politicians, went not as far to call Boorstin a racist, if appointed he would enter under a cloud of controversy. Such accusations had little bearing on Ford’s decision, but hounded the new Librarian his entire tenure and led many Americans question why the Library had an Asian and Hispanic Division, but no African-American section.

The Billington Legacy

What Boorstin could not accomplish, or chose not to, became the focal point of the current Librarian, James Billington. Change at the LOC has been synonymous with his

32 Raspberry quoted in “Dr. Boorstin,” A23.
33 Boorstin quoted in “Dr. Boorstin,” A23.
willingness to honor a single core objective: cultural history. As he phrased it in 1987, “making the riches of this place even more broadly available to ever wider circles of multi-ethnic society.” He further recognized that the Library needed to reach new depths to create knowledge and “distill wisdom” from its unprecedented collection of resources and to call on a reliable staff to “bring them to life.” In his appointment speech he said, “This place has a destiny to be a living encyclopedia of democracy; not just a mausoleum of culture, but a catalyst for civilization.” Such a vision reached fruition by 1990, when the Library took advantage of the digital revolution that has forever transformed communications. Under his watchful eye, the Library drew on new information technologies to get “content out to readers across the country and transform internal processes so the Library could work more efficiently” and avoid becoming a “warehouse of information.”

The guiding force in the LOC since it entered the modern era has been to collect, document, and preserve historical documents by any means available. While any number of historical antecedents led to the founding of the VHP, recent initiatives have focused on the gathering and digitalizing stories from everyday people. Since Dr. Billington’s appointment, the Library has expanded its collections of still and moving images, today an “extraordinary visual history of the United States, with some 15 million prints, photographs, moving images, drawings, posters and architectural records.” Photographic imagery ranges from U.S. Capitol and Civil War daguerreotypes to work of several twentieth century artists and writers. Its film or moving image collections remain

unparalleled in scope and topic. Since the Library created the National Film Preservation Board in 1988, it now works closely with National Film Preservation Foundation to preserve our motion picture films. In 1989, Billington began a tradition of selecting “25 films for the National Film Registry….culturally, historically or aesthetically important enough to be preserved.”

Beginning in 1991, the Law Library established the Global Legal Information Network (GLIN), its first “on-line database of official texts of laws, regulations, judicial decisions, and other complementary legal sources, in their original languages, accompanied by a summary in English.” Major contributors included government agencies and other global organizations. In 1995, the 104th Congress, thanks to the individual efforts of Dr. Billington and the Congressional Research Service (CRS), mandated THOMAS (http://thomas.loc.gov), an on-line legislative database to maintain updated information on “bills, reports, and public laws.” In the same year, “Billington’s most far-reaching initiative” to date was the creation of the National Digital Library (NDL at http://memory.loc.gov), the first effort to digitalize some of the Library’s most prized collections. Use of the World Wide Web (WWW) over the past fifteen years has produced previously unimaginable results, with today more than 11 million items available on-line and “specialized sites for children and families.”

The Library’s use of Internet technology is arguably the most important way to reach a broad, diverse audience. It has also become the most convenient means to

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37 Billington first urged the creation of the NDL in 1990.
38 Source: Dalrymple and Fineberg, LOC press agents, in “Two Decades,” 197.
understand its goals and how the VHP fits in. In order to get Library collections “out to
closer audience” it became necessary in the early 1990s to digitalize collection materials,
copy them onto CD-ROMS, and distribute them nationally to “selected schools and
libraries.” By 1992, selected imagery from LOC exhibitions were available to the public
on-line, and in 1993, it added an on-line “card catalog and exhibitions” making “its
resources available and useful to Congress and the American people to sustain and
preserve a universal collection of knowledge of creativity for future generations. In the
new millennium, the LOC continues to broaden its horizon. More recently it founded the
National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program
(www.digitalpreservation.gov), collaborating with partners to preserve rare materials
otherwise loss by time and wear. In 2005, Billington, visualizing a similar program on a
global scale, spoke before the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO proposing “an
on-line collection of significant primary materials from cultures around the world.” 39

Such a commitment is witnessed in daily operations where the goal is not only to
protect collections from improper use but also make them more freely accessible not only
to scholars and private researchers, but all Americans. 40 While meeting the needs of
Congress, the LOC, AFC, VHP, and their staffs have taken on the role of historic
preservationists declaring “we are the key to handling the collections, the key to
protecting the collections, and the key to storing the collections.” 41

39 Source: “Two Decades,” 197.
During the twentieth century, the LOC broadened and democratized itself despite limited economic resources or support provided by an unwilling Congress who seemed to have an overabundance of cash available for bombs and bullets, but not books. Until the New Deal, many in Washington considered the LOC more for “Congressional” than public needs. A shift towards a more balanced distribution of services began when Billington took charge in 1987. Before, however, most Americans had only limited access to what later was called “the world’s largest” library. Prior to this time the LOC did not emphasize the collection of social and cultural histories of everyday Americans, including those divided along gender, race, and ethnic lines.

The AFC: A National Project with Many Workers

Since its conception in 1976, the AFC has worked diligently to document the histories of ordinary Americans. When the U.S. 94th Congress passed the American Folk Life Preservation Act or Public Law 94-202 on January 2, 1976 it did so in large part because of the efforts of a group of folklorists, public historians, and community groups around the country. They “sought recognition for the important role played by folk traditions in our national cultural life,” through the creation of a national center for “documenting, presenting, and celebrating the traditional cultural heritage of the United States.” What folklife means is based on six original Congress finds and declarations: 1) “That American Folk Life has, and continues, to contribute to the cultural richness of the Nation.” 2) “The history of the United States suggests the continued building of a strong nation and that it requires the sacrifice of cultural differences.” 3) “American folk life can influence the desires, beliefs, values, and characters of its citizenry.” 4) “That the federal
government is obligated to support research and scholarship on American folk life so as to better understand more complex problems and values of Americans in both urban and rural environments.” 5) “The federal government should take the initiative to encourage and support American folk life.” 6) “The preservation, support, revitalization, and dissemination of American folk life traditions is in the interest of and general welfare of the Nation.”

Therefore, such a commitment has linked the AFC to the larger folklife movement in the U.S., witnessed in a series of field works and publications emphasizing the preservation of the human voice during the twentieth century. Included among the most extensive projects is the VHP.

The bulk of the AFC massive archive consists of those firsthand accounts that embody the experiences of national traditional life and the cultural life of communities in the United States and abroad. Examples of such efforts cross interdisciplinary lines include: Native American song and dance, and stories of ex-slaves, cowboys, farmers, fisherman, coal miners, factory workers, shopkeepers, professional and amateur musicians, housewives, and now veterans of American wars. Because its collections cover diverse peoples and topics, many historians recognize the AFC as the premier primary source center in the United States.

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44 So diverse are its collections that it now includes cultural/folk material from all fifty U.S. states, as well as from U.S. trusts, territories, the District of Columbia, and other areas around the globe.
45 Bulger, AFC, 7-8.
Among the backers of the creation of the AFC were American Folklore Society and the supporters of the Archive at the Library of Congress. Peter Bartis, long-time LOC/AFC employee said the turn of the century "represents a complex time in terms of historical events and the emergence of scholarly movements." Out of it emerged a "modern study of culture" that not only expanded the works of scholars, but also "opened the floodgates through which surged new, and often, radically different viewpoints."

Among this more modern approach included social, cultural and academic changes that were accompanied by "institutional changes and early federal initiatives" that gave life to a "museum and preservation movement in America." Bartis said:

Moreover, the emergence of professionalism which rose in museums, libraries, historical societies, and academic disciplines in general may be viewed as a response to that movement which not only suggested than any subject was the property of all citizens and could no longer be sequestered among elitist scholars and donors in private institutions and college halls.

As time passed American scholars, politicians, and folklorists would share similar views on what folk means and how it fits into the broader study of American history particularly at the grassroots level.

There any number of LOC/AFC documentation and oral history projects approached or administered that could have affected the conception of, approach to, and implantation of the VHP. In order to encompass the entire experience, one must first go back to the late nineteenth century when American inventor, Thomas Edison, developed a

means in which to capture the human voice. His invention of the cylinder-recording machine in 1877 (it became available for public use in 1888) prompted a series of documentary works by several private individuals and organizations, as well as those government sponsored. It also gave birth to what historians today now call oral history. Ethnographers, as they were called then, collectively believed that a well-rounded history of the nation should include regional, ethnic, and cultural groups in the United States or "voices of its diverse population" and that recordings of sound—song and the spoken word "was a vital part of the historical, cultural record." Such a premise was the deciding factor in the creation of the AFC decades later.  

Several scholarly people put Edison's invention to use in the field. The first was Harvard anthropologist, Jesse Walter Fewkes. In 1890, he went to Maine to record songs and stories of Passamaquoddy Indians, a clear indication or immediate use of oral history to record and document the "folk" stories not the educated or literary elite. Field recordings on the wax cylinders were studied in a regional studio and later became the first ethnographic recordings to be apart of the Archive of American Folk Culture. In 1907, Frances Densmore began her thirty-year odyssey to record similar accounts from members of over forty Native American tribes. Along with other pioneering women like Alice Cunningham Fletcher, Helen Heffron Roberts, and Laura Bolton, Densmore is credited with legitimizing the field of ethnology.  

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49 Ibid.
In 1928, Librarian of Congress, Herbert Putman, sought to diversify the existing collection advance by inviting Robert W. Gordon to act as a consultant in the field of Folk Song and Literature. Between 1906 and 1917, Gordon attended Harvard University as an undergraduate and graduate student majoring in English, but left to fulfill a life-long dream of collecting American folk music. He began the process of creating “a national project with many workers” with travels, partially-funded by the LOC, to the waterfronts of Oakland and San Francisco, California, to less-populated areas in North Carolina and Georgia, accompanied by Edison wax-cylinder machine to record various folk songs.\(^5\)

By 1928, he was in contact with Carl Engel, chief of the Music Division at the LOC, who offered more institutional support and backing to “discuss his dream” of documenting American grassroots traditions. Engel supported Gordon and immediately went through the process of presenting his ideas to Congress (a similar legislative approach taken with the VHP in 1999). Engel said:

> There is a pressing need for the formation of a great centralized collection of American folk-songs....This collection [to be housed at the LOC] should comprise all the poems and melodies that have sprung from our soil or have been transplanted here, and have been handed down, often with manifold changes, from generation to generation as precious possession of our folk. [Recognizing the diversity of this nation] Countless individuals, numerous walks of life, several races have contributed to this treasure of songs and ballads. It is richer than any other country.\(^5\)

The result of his efforts led to Congress funding the building of the Archive of American Folk-Song, and later that year, cementing the idea of creating a national folk archive

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(Archive of American Folk Culture within the Music Division). Bartis said that by its fiftieth anniversary in 1978:

“The Archive of Folk Song had grown from the initial 900 field recordings made by Gordon to assume its role as the nation’s largest repository of folklife materials. Today it controls a collection of over 225,000 sheets of manuscript materials and houses over 30,000 recordings on cylinders, discs, wire spools, and tapes, which contain more than 300,000 items of folk song, folk music, folk tales, oral histories, and related materials.52

John A. Lomax carried on the tradition of collecting American folksong or the importance of documenting traditional culture as the staple of the institution. In 1936, during the Archive’s formative years, he became its first federally funded employee, and one year later the “assistant in charge.” Rarely at his home office, Lomax and his son Alan, completed numerous field trips in the Northeast, Midwest, and throughout the South, which merited a series of important documentary folk music albums entitled Folk Music of the United States. Among their other accomplishments were recorded interviews with performers like Jelly Roll Morton, that later inspired the idea to treat audiences in the Washington, D.C. area and radio audiences nationwide to the sounds of other traditional artists.53

Lomax’s collecting activities inspired a LOC documentary equipment loan program that would carry on for the next seven decades. In exchange for use of their recording machine, he vowed to donate all his recordings to the Library. As technology advanced from cylinder to disc to tape so did the number of folklorists. Among others who “were able to pursue their personal collecting activities,” and contribute to the growing national

archive included: Austin Fife, Helen Hartness Flanders, Herbert Halpert, and Eloise Hubbard Linscott to name a few. Each benefited from previous oral history training and basically had a free hand in the field, minus any written standards or guidelines from the LOC. What evolved in the grand scheme of lending equipment and recording supplies was the organization of a national network of collectors. They were productive and “helped in creating a community of folklorists with ties to the library” (later witnessed in the way the VHP would draw on project partners and everyday Americans to gather testimonies).54

During the war years (1941-1945), the Folk Archive became synonymous with collecting folk stories and materials like verbal arts, and oral history. Working at the CBS School of the Air in New York City, Lomax is credited with recognizing the historical importance of Pearl Harbor, particularly from a socio-cultural approach. On December 7, he sent a telegram to fellow folklorists stationed on the east coast asking them to “collect man on street” responses/reactions to probable war with Japan. Hundreds of testimonies were gathered and later stored at the Archive, inspiring a similar effort some sixty years later when the AFC sent out a nationwide request to document “the reactions of ordinary Americans to the tragic events” of 9-11. Since renamed the September 11, 2001 Documentary Project Collection, it consists of over six-hundred “taped interviews and more than two hundred photographs of spontaneous memorials from twenty-two states.”55

Lomax's efforts towards documenting reaction to Pearl Harbor indirectly led to the Office of War Information to sponsor what later was called (and stored at the AFC), the "World War II Rumor Project Collection." Established in 1942, the OWI called for an "informed and intelligent understanding of the status and progress of the war effort, war policies, activities, and aims of the United States government" because so much misinformation had circulated. A series of "rumors, jokes, and anecdotes about the war" collected by everyday high school students.\(^5^6\)

By the end of World War II, a large number of requests for reference information and other services soon overwhelmed the Archive. Duncan Emrich, a Harvard educated historian and folklorist, advanced the archive by reaching out to "private individuals and from radio, motion picture, and publishing firms." He lobbied hard to for a larger staff to meet America's demands for "acquisition, processing, and reference." Named chief of the Folklore Section (a part of the Music Division), Emrich devised a four-year plan to record traditional culture from twelve states not represented in the archive. Emphasis was placed on "narrative, occupational culture, and materials from urban areas and minority groups." He also proposed recording traditional performances from abroad. To help, Emrich toured twenty-one "colleges and universities around the country" to promote the value of documentary programs and to "urge the creation of state folklife archives."\(^5^7\)

His efforts during the postwar period inspired a bevy of field works across the country and gave rise to a new generation of regional collectors—individuals who

\(^5^6\) For a detailed account of the "War Years" see Bartis, "A History," 121-149.
\(^5^7\) Bartis in, "History," or LOC: American Folklife Center, 19.
specifically utilized oral history techniques to tell history. Examples included: Wayland Hand collection of miner's stories in Butte, Montana, Arthur Campa's recording of Hispanic songs in New Mexico, and Thelma James documenting of traditional stories from minority communities of Detroit, Michigan. Collections reached the LOC on a "new documentary medium of tape," utilized in Anne Grimes collection of Ohio folksongs, Ray Browne's Alabama folklife, and others completed on life in the Smokey Mountains of Tennessee, Iowa and Louisiana cultural traditions, and "fiddling traditions." In the LOC annual report from 1950, Emrich said, "the number of discs in the collection had reached ten thousand." In a memo to Librarian Luther Evans:

"It is possible to say, in 1950, that the pioneering phase of field collecting and the establishment of Archives has come close to a close and that in the future emphasis should be directed to coordinate efforts, to elimination of duplication, and to strong encouragement for scholars and other to use—in fairly exhaustive studies—the materials already gathered."

The 1950s and 1960s witnessed a renewed interest in folksong in the United States as a result of popular performers like Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. What followed was a "proliferation of coffeehouse folksingers and spontaneous hootenannies," whose music with traditional roots both "nourished and profited" the Folk Archive. Recognizing the cultural and historical significance of this music in 1974, Alan Jabbour, then in-charge of the National Endowment for the Arts' Folk Arts Program, and Joseph Hickerson, head of the Folk Archive took steps document and collect materials. Under Hickerson, the Archive sought the "organization and cataloging of the archive's

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58 LOC: American Folklife Center, 19.
59 Duncan Emrich quoted in, Librarian of Congress Annual Report (1950) and other sources.
collections, the creation of listening tapes to facilitate the study of the holdings by visiting scholars, and the further production and dissemination of recordings.”

Two years later, Jabbour and Hickerson were influential in the passing of the Folk Life Preservation Act in 1976. The Senate Bill called for the further preservation of folk life and the expansion of folk festivals at the national level. It also declared that the new center would be apart of the LOC because it “already records folk music, collects manuscripts, prints, photographs, maps, charts and film pertaining to the folk arts.” Furthermore, the Senate believed any marriage between the two would better the preservation of history, not hurt it. Although the bill would provide “loans, scholarships and grants,” at least one prominent individual was initially against it. Then Librarian of Congress, Quincy Mumford, testified “that he would prefer to leave this function to the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities. The reason given was he believed the collecting of artifacts in the folk arts field was a museum function not appropriate to the Library.” Mumford later withdrew his complaint and the formation of the AFC and its partnership with the LOC evolved, thereafter solidifying the importance of using folklife and art in telling our nation’s history.

Alan Jabbour was the first director of the AFC. Thirty-four years old at time of appointment, he brought interest in academic folklore that evolved from study of English Literature while in college and graduate school. From 1969 to 1974, he was the head of the LOCs Archive of Folk Song and supervising the National Endowment of the Arts

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Fold Arts Programs. Responding the potential of preserving American folk culture at the AFC in the summer of 1976 he first welcomed a permanent staff of about eight and available funding to hire others researchers, archivists, and lecturers. His ultimate goal as Director was to coordinate a series of projects based on scholarly documentation and the recording of folk traditions at the community level. When asked to identify neglected area of folklore, he spoke of the need for the “recording of the living spoken word, or the tracing of regional dialects,” especially in terms of urban folk tradition. Jabbour saw the 1970s and the bicentennial celebration as an opportunity to reflect on how the creation of an AFC would bring greater awareness to folk traditions in American society. He explained:

“I was thinking that maybe when the United States relaxes its concern with pressing national problems [the fallout of Vietnam] it [will look] inward at local problems. After World War II and now after Vietnam, there [can be] more reflection of what life is like in this country.”

Judging by accomplishments in the post-1976 period, it appears Jabbour was able to obtain his vision in terms of presenting folk traditions through the oral history interview. During the 1980s the AFC continued to commit itself to preserving American cultural heritage despite opposition. For example, on its tenth anniversary (1986) it still had to justify project choices to what seemed an overly critical, and money conscious public. Victoria Dawson reported that many believed was nothing more than a

63 Alan Jabbour quoted in West B1.
64 Ibid
65 Ibid
bicentennial project. Jabbour remembered “my heart would sink a little bit and I would reply bravely, well, we certainly intend to outlast the bicentennial.”

Asked in 1986 whether interest was a “fleeting cause,” Jabbour said, “Now, 10 years later, it isn’t a passing phenomenon. People remain interested. They now see, I think, a permanent place in their view of the world for this part of culture, and I find that very heartening.” Thereafter, organizing conferences ranged in topic from “Folklife and the Elderly” to “Dough Ornaments and Festive Cookies, from the “South-Central Georgia Folklife Project and the AFC heeded the “congressional decree” to “serve and present American folklife.”

There appears to be little difference between 1980s projects and earlier ones along thematic lines. Technological advances have led to higher quality audio and video recordings. More convenient modes of transportation have also made it possible for the AFC to come into contact with more diverse cultures.

Despite Library budget cuts during the 1980s, Jabbour and his fourteen staff members worked to clarify, counter, or eliminate misconceptions including “the disconcerted notion that the center’s work has to do with history” alone. He argued “many people assume that our role is documenting the past or that cultural traditions we’re involved in have a certain past tense to them.” The AFC staff had to convince the public that folklife also encompasses the present. Jabbour said, “Culture doesn’t die out ever as dramatically and as rapidly as people fear it will,” although they can “disappear

67 Jabbour quoted in Dawson, B7.
from visible and active use for awhile, with memories passing through one generation, and ‘recycling’ back in.” 69 Finally, he cautioned that the Folklife Center does more than document old storytellers wherever they reside. “We’ve succeeded best when we help Americans realize that grass-roots traditional culture is part of America today, and a crucial ingredient in our total cultural life as a nation.” 70 Throughout his tenure at the AFC, Jabbour has dedicated himself to preserving grassroots traditional culture and laid the groundwork for future oral history projects, like the VHP.

Under the Jabbour’s leadership, the AFC conducted no less than fifteen field projects and cultural surveys between 1977 and 1999. Models and project titles varied thematically, but were culturally based, relied heavily on oral history, establishing both the LOC and AFC as the leaders in “folk” story collecting. The most ambitious of these projects began in early January 1977 when the Center sponsored its first conference on the subject of “Ethnic Recordings in America: A Neglected Heritage.” The focus was on preserving Arcadian culture in Maine, but transcended to other ethnic and occupational traditions in Lowell, Massachusetts, Paterson, New Jersey, Chicago, Illinois, life in the forests and mountains in the Appalachia of West Virginia, Pine Barrens housewife recipes for cranberries, cowboy life in Nevada, and quilt makers from western Virginia. 71

The 1977 “Ethnic Recordings” conference focused on music but also introduced other aspects of the oral culture of the U.S. As Jabbour said, “the conference sought to

69 Jabbour quoted in “Fore the Lore.”
70 Ibid.
highlight the importance of the vast corpus of ethnic recordings produced by American commercial recording companies in the first half of the twentieth century.” Although scholars and music enthusiasts had long since recognized the culture impact of “hillbilly records,” no real effort had been made to collect, archive, analyze, or reissue “this stunning variety of recordings from various ethnic groups in the United States.” He also argued, “They represented an untapped trove of heritage and the gathering of scholars, collectors, ethnic record producers, and others was calculated to bring this heritage to the attention of a wider audience. 72

“Ethnic Recordings” inspired “Save Our Sounds: America’s Recorded Sound Heritage,” a co-effort by the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in the Smithsonian Institute, to preserve the audio heritage of American music and singer’s voices. Since 1973, The “National Storytelling Collection,” co-sponsored by the “International Storytelling Center” and the “National Storytelling Network,” has collected over eight hundred hours of hours of audio and video interviews, including photographs, manuscripts, and other important publications that document our history of storytelling. All of these priceless materials have been donated to the AFC, and found a place along with four thousand other collections that include Native American song and dance, stories from ex-slaves, documentation on the life cowboys, farmers, fishermen, homemakers, shopkeepers, coal miners, and quilt makers to name a few. To their credit,

72 Jabbour quoted in, “The American Folklife Center.”
the overall mission has been culturally motivated, focused on community events from all fifty U.S. states, and most regions of the world.\textsuperscript{73}

There were other efforts to add to the national story-telling project. A 1995 project that drew on oral history interviews and extensive research in museum archives focused on ranching culture in Montana. Funded by Liz Claiborne and Arthur Ortenberg, the Montana Heritage Project, much like the VHP later, relied exclusively on the work of everyday Americans, in this case high school seniors from Harlowton to collect oral histories. Students realized the powers of multi-media presentation when "they shared the story of their research quest" with the larger community. Their collection was presented to Montana Governor Judy Martz, and later published in book form. Although high school projects are rarely researched well enough to be of historical or academic value, English teacher Nancy Widdicombe required of her students to complete background research on the Bair Family, credited with "the rise of one of the largest sheep ranches in the country." When the book was accepted by the Montana State Historical Society, Kelsey Miller, one of several participants declared, "The Montana Heritage Project is not just a class—it's an adventure!\textsuperscript{74}

Organized in 1999, "Local Legacies" was a step towards the process of having an open collection based on government policy. This open, participatory, "radical" approach used here was perhaps the natural outcome of the democratic impulse under the New Deal. However, in the case of the VHP two years later, questions abound whether a

\textsuperscript{73} LOC American Folklife Center, 45-47.
\textsuperscript{74} Michael Umphrey, "The Power of the Real: The Montana Heritage Project after Seven Years," \textit{Folklife Center News} 24, no. 4 (Fall 2002).
quality control/compensatory mechanism(s) in place to keep its collecting reflective of the veterans themselves.

"Legacies" was first suggested by Billington then backed by several members of Congress and began as an effort to celebrate the Bicentennial of Congress. It “invited all Americans to join in the effort of building the national folk archive” from all 50 states, trusts, territories, and the District of Columbia. Senators and representatives were asked to help identify traditions and other cultural activities within their states and districts (the arts, crafts, and customs representative of traditional community life) and to “oversee” the many projects scheduled. James Hardin believed the Bicentennial year should celebrate the work of American libraries and the role they “play in communities” to encourage participation in the “grassroots effort to document and preserve a panoply of local legacies.” Overall, “Legacies” was a major success. In the end, it inspired state and local libraries, archives, and historical societies” around the country to “house” those materials collected for all interest patrons and residents.

While designed to be a “grassroots” effort, it took the power of Washington, D.C. based politics (like the VHP later) to get the “Local Legacies Project” off the ground. Geraldine Otremba, Director of Congressional Relations said, “Members of Congress represent the very people whose culture we want to preserve...This is why we have asked the members and their staffs to help identify traditions and customs unique” to their

76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
individual states and districts.” Billington believed the materials in the Local Legacies archives would serve as a” snapshot of American traditions at the end of the century, and they will be available to future generations.”

“Local Legacies” volunteers excelled in capturing American traditions. During the collection process they visited festivals and parades, documented how communities observe local/national historical events, and what occupations defined a community’s life through a series of photographs, sound recordings, written reports. Peter Bartis, coordinator for the project, reiterated that, “persons doing the documentation need not be professional folklorists. We will guide participants towards the kinds of projects and materials we want. The key words for us are public participation.” All told, more than three-fourths of Congress and 4,000 Americans assisted with the project. However, as one report said, “congressional” politics also played a key role. Congressional support for “Legacies” was enthusiastic and beyond initial expectations as “ninety percent of the Senate and over seventy percent of the House of Representatives nominating projects in their home states.” This is not to say that “festivals, historic sites, civic activities, occupational culture, environmental projects, and artists and craftsman” were not major players. The AFC reported, “The Local Legacies Project Collection consists of more than eight hundred projects that illustrate and showcase community culture in America.”

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78 Geraldine Otremba quoted in Hardin, “Local Legacies.”
79 Billington also quoted in Hardin, “Local Legacies.”
81 Text and quotes on the impact of Local Legacies from American Folklife Center, 74.
The “Legacies” model was used for the VHP. On Veterans Day, November 11, 2000, over five-decades after the end of World War II, the AFC officially launched the Project. In doing so, it became the first national effort to “receive video and audio-taped and written accounts, as well as letters, diaries, and photographs from war veterans and those who served in support of them.” To further promote the gathering of oral histories of America’s war veterans, the VHP also encouraged “war veterans, their families, veterans groups, communities, and students” to assist in the collection process. Over the course of nine years, Peggy Bulger and the VHP staff have tried to give careful consideration to all veterans and their supporters of war, race, and gender, in the process promoting a democratic process that strives to maintain an open dialogue about war.82

The overall VHP effort to create a democratic collection process has been successful, with only light criticism from the public. While most naysayers question whether it deserves an annual budget in the millions, one outlet accused the VHP for accepting testimonies with “fraudulent claims regarding the Congressional Medal of Honor.” In order to clear up the matter the Project released the following statement on September 19, 2007:

“[VHP] is not an official military record archive and is intended only to supplement, not substitute for the historical record. The VHP does not verify the accuracy of accounts that are provided in the project. They periodically verify collections that reference the Medal of Honor, which are a matter of widely accessible public records. These most recent claims indicate that there has been no intent whatsoever to provide false information.”83

82 Bulger interview, (May 2008).
An incident like this was likely to happen. However, the criticism from the unnamed media outlet might have targeted inexperienced oral history interviewers who had no knowledge of the types of medals awarded veterans during World War II and other wars, rather than the VHP (although its suggested interview rubic consists of a single question that asks for interviewers to list those medals and awards received by those veterans to be interviewed).

In actuality, the VHP has never been in danger of being shut down or investigated because it operates under the umbrella of the federal government. For example, since conception is has received overwhelming political support, as witnessed in any number of Bills and/or resolutions passed in the U.S. House Representative and the U.S. Senate annually. Beyond these measures, the VHP relies on elected officials to release basic information to their home states on how to participate. In October 2000 and again in May 2001, all 535 members of Congress were mailed information packets about the VHP. The packets specified actions members could take to urge their home state constituents to become participants. At the same time, a partnership was formed with the DVA “to fine tune a department wide plan to conduct interviews with veterans, especially those in VA hospitals.”

An example of the political support for the Project occurred on Veterans Day 2007. Both “houses” passed “bipartisan resolutions” designating the week of November 11-17 “National Veterans History Week.” Mary L. Landrieu, a Democrat U.S. Senator

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from Louisiana, sponsored Senate Resolution 374, a “special observance [that] mobilizes America to record oral history of its wartime veterans.” Co-sponsors included Ron Kind and “23 other members” of the House of Representatives. Landrieu called the VHP a “noble project.”85 Jon Porter, Republican Representative from Nevada declared during “National Veterans History Project Week” that his state’s “goal is to honor veterans and ensure that their stories are available for future generations... We owe every freedom we have to the service and sacrifice of America’s veterans.” Personal experiences of this type “educates us about the power of the human spirit and the realities of war.”86

The LOC/AFC commitment to document the histories of everyday Americans did not end with the VHP. In 2003, it announced plans for a new project entitled “Story Corps.”87 Founded by Daniel Isay, an award-winning radio producer and MacArthur Fellow, “Story Corps” began as an effort to commemorate the LOC Bicentennial and to celebrate America’s diverse culture. Similar to previous oral history projects, all Americans were asked to share/record their experiences in everyday life. Isay was much inspired by the Federal Writers Project of the 1930s and its efforts to record the “lives of ordinary people—housewives, farm and factory workers, former slaves, and many others.” Encouraged by this earlier effort and the oral history collections collected by Studs Terkel, he envisioned Corps as “the largest oral history project ever undertaken,” where an expected 200,000 people would eventually reveal life experiences. He later

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85 Senator Landrieu quoted in “House and Senate Pass Bipartisan Resolution.”
86 U.S. Representative Jon Porter also quoted in “House and Senate.”
87 Story Corps also included two on-line presentations gleaned from the LOC collection of WPA slave narratives.
lamented, “In my work on radio programs, I discovered that a bond was created when one person interviews another.”

“Corps” originated with a single recording booth positioned in Grand Central Terminal in New York City. James Hardin said “in its heyday [it was] a crossroads symbolic of bustling American life, even today the beautifully restored Beaux-Arts building is used by over 150,000 commuters every day.” On hand to inaugurate the first recording booth in NYC was the ninety-one year old Studs Terkel, who declared, “he’s deaf as a post,” yet wanted to encourage all Americans to “talk to one another. As if referring to the same everyday veterans the VHP sought for its collection, Terkel said, “We know who commissioned and designed it, but what about the many unknown folks who labored to construct it, and the many workers who keep it clean. It is these uncelebrated people that Story Corps honors.”

Bulger believes that Story Corps, like the VHP, can capture the memories of ordinary Americans. “At the American Folklife Center we are convinced that audio and video documentation is a vital part of the historical record, and that oral history recordings add a powerful human dimension to the study of history.” Like with the VHP, Bulger nor anyone affiliated with Story Corps raised concerns over quality of interviews, of training and preparation for amateur interviewers, or the abandonment of the New Deal precedent of using “trained” professionals.

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89 Hardin and Studs Terkel quoted in “Story Corps Donates.”
90 Bulger also quoted in “Story Corps Donates.”
Along with the VHP and "Corps," the AFC more recently drew from its historical collection of slave narratives to promote other projects focused on cultural diversity. *Voices from the Days of Slavery: Former Slaves Tell their Stories* was released in January 2003 based recorded interviews between 1932 and 1975 of "identifiable ex-slaves," people born in the nineteenth century and then over a hundred years old. It also served as a complement to another American Memory presentation called *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writer's Project, 1936-1938* (collection of transcripts numbering some 2,300 interviews). Many accounts had been previously published in the Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller titled *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk about their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Freedom* (1998). *Voices* differed in that "verbatim transcriptions of the recordings" were included. Reporting for the *Folklife News*, John Barton and Myron Briggs, recalled those topics prized most by LOC/AFC staff were how they [former slaves] felt about slavery, [their] slaveholders, how [they] were coerced [into slavery], [how it affected] their families, and how they responded to gaining their freedom.92

During the winter of 2004 the AFC acquired the International Storytelling Collection (from the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee). Soon thereafter, the LOC "launched a new initiative" for "Story Corps," when it announced plans for a nationwide "tour of mobile recording booths." Over a ten day period, two Airstream trailers containing recording booths were stationed in front of the James

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92 Ibid.
Madison Memorial Building, after which they spent the remainder of the year traveling about the country. Joanne Rasi reported that after leaving the Library grounds, most “Mobile Booths” set out in different directions across the country, several on an eastern route, other westward. Visits in each U.S. city or town lasted about three weeks, and over a one-year period stops were made in 45 cities, including Chicago and several West Coast cities. On hand were “facilitators who will help participants formulate their questions.” Bulger said, “Story Corps will provide America with important documentation on a grassroots, nationwide scale that mirrors what the historic Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Writers’ Project accomplished more than half a century ago.”

Much the same as previous projects, “Corps” relied on oral testimony as a means to record our nation’s history. Unlike under previous New Deal programs “Corps” would rely on people with an interest in collection, but with no technical, historical, or educational training. Yet, the project qualified as a national effort to gather firsthand testimonies, and therefore joined a growing list of LOC/AFC antecedents like those stored treasures of the Federal Writers’ Project, and other agencies, organizations and private not bent on preserving American culture. The overall success of the project led to the opening of a “second permanent Story Corps booth” near ground zero of the World Trade Center.

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94 Hardin quoted in “Story Corps Donates.”
Trade Center. Scheduled to last ten years, the project planned to open more booths of the stationary and mobile variety around the country.\(^{96}\) As of May 2008, more than 1,000 projects have become a part of the AFC, serving as a testament to "the uniqueness of our nation and to the rich diversity of culture and heritage that makes us all Americans."\(^{97}\) Billington said it [Story Corps] would preserve "the history and creativity of the American people, giving voice to the things that matter most to them are a vital part of that record."\(^{98}\) Bulger believed, "The sound of the human voice, the intonation, [and] the regional accent, convey a sense of time, place and individual personality in a way no historical document can alone duplicate."\(^{99}\)

"Story Corps" has relied exclusively on the oral history interview. Although different stories mean different things, democracy and leaving a legacy are at the forefront of each. Speaking on behalf of "Corps," Ron Kind exclaimed "the people are the ultimate referees in a democracy....running for office is all about the people and listening to them." W. Ralph Eubanks, LOC director of published, said after interviewing his mother, "There are things that happen in the recording booth...It is quiet, secluded, comfortable. People say things they might not talk about in a family setting. I heard new stories I had not heard before. She knew that something would be there after she is gone."\(^{100}\) When comparing it to the VHP, Deputy Librarian of Congress, Donald Scott, said both are "an important vehicle for letting everyone know about the realities of our

\(^{96}\) Rasi quoted in "Sharing Life Histories," 2.
\(^{97}\) See "Local Legacies," 1.
\(^{98}\) Billington quoted in Hardin, "Story Corps Revisited," 2.
\(^{100}\) Ron Kind and W. Ralph Eubanks quoted in Hardin, "Story Corps Revisited," 3-4.
society. [Both projects collect] the real life experiences of real people and give a real appreciation of who we are.”

Since its founding the AFC has undertaken programs to educate diverse groups of Americans on the importance of documenting their heritage. Through field research, preservation of archival collections (audio recordings, manuscripts, photographs, films, videos, and other forms of media) designed to serve academic and amateur scholars. To meet congressional expectations, the staff at the AFC has called upon audio and film production companies, other media sources, and trained students, and the larger public through usage of its reading room, telephone, and email reference services. They have also worked closely with federal, state, and local agencies and other organizations to coordinate folk life heritage and programming. They annually publish books, research guides, audio/visual recordings, and digital presentations for the World Wide Web. Create new research and archival practice models to provide overall guidance for the development of “effective” folklife programs. And, largely due to technology advances of the day “celebrate the rich variety” of American cultural heritage through “exhibitions, concerts, conferences, symposia, and other events.”

During its early years the Library basically served the needs of Congress by collecting important books and archived materials specifically for its use. Despite democratizing efforts by several Librarian of Congress such efforts often were met by stiff opposition. With the founding of the American Folk Song Archive in 1928, and

101 General Donald Scott quoted in “Story Corps Revisited,” 3.
102 See the “American Folklife Center and Library of Congress Information Pamphlet,” 1.
when FDR declared the twentieth century the age of documentation during the 1930s and 1940s, a more concerted effort began to document the experiences of everyday Americans at the “grassroots” level. The historical benefit of “grassroots” oral history projects is clear. They record family and community stories, link everyday Americans to their past, and deepen our understanding of the present, while sustaining the traditional cultural life that binds us all together.

The key issue here is that oral history projects are deeply rooted in the political process, one that began with WPA narratives set under the New Deal. By the 1990s political and economic need unwittingly drove the LOC staff towards “radical trust.” Even before the term was coined and applied to the WWW and social networking it was applied by the Library and AFC and used in Local Legacies. Therefore when the idea presented itself to the LOC to organize the VHP the model or means to collect firsthand testimonies was already in place.
CHAPTER III

TOWARDS REALIZATION: VHP STAFF, FIVE-STAR COUNCIL, AND PROJECT AWARENESS EVENTS, 2000-2008

Since its conception the VHP has visualized itself as a grassroots national project, one committed to recruiting a broad population base in order to collect as many testimonies of veterans and supporters of war as possible, with priority given to the most senior war veterans.\(^1\) This chapter shows that "radical trust" has its limits. Just because everyday Americans, most without formal training in oral history, can contribute in theory, it does not mean they will in practice.

The first step towards VHP realization began the LOC and AFC organized an official staff which included a Project director, senior program analysts, lead historian, program and public relations specialists, and several archivists and researchers to oversee and conduct daily operations (in the Washington, D.C. area) as it pertains to collecting and preserving firsthand testimonies. Next, they created the Five-Star Advisory Council consisting of current and past military people, journalists, and members of the elected elite to help seek media support to raise public awareness to the Project. Duties also included meeting regularly with the VHP Director and staff to discuss project scope,

outreach programs, preservation strategies, and the “difficult issue of the identification of what is war time,” and how to include those veterans currently serving in conflicts around the globe.¹

The first part of this chapter will ask: How is the VHP structured in terms of leadership and staff and what are their roles? Who are some of its key members, what are they charged with doing on a daily basis, and do they collectively view the Project as important to the study of history and our wartime past? What is the Five-Star Council, when was it established, from what professions do members come from, and in what ways do they promote or support the Project? Among the questions addressed in part two: How does the VHP attempt to accomplish its mission and fulfill “the spirit of legislation?”² What types of public relation programs have been organized to promote patriotic sentiments or reach, educate, and recruit national, regional, or community awareness to the Project? To what degree have these programs been successful and promoted the wartime experiences of women and other veteran groups across race and ethnic lines?

Organizing a sound leadership base and staff with experience in conducting “grassroots” oral history programs was top priority for the LOC. The first step in the selection was appointing Peggy Bulger, Director of the America Folklife Center, to oversee the operation. With a staff of twenty-four folklorists, librarians, and researchers, and a support staff of twenty, Bulger’s top priority is to ensure the Center collects,

¹ See Sorkin, 4-7.
² Ibid.
preserves (in digital formats), and presents American folklife, including oral history interviews and ethnomusicology of national and international importance. She is also responsible for planning and producing any number of media programs at the AFC/VHP, notably publications, concerts, lectures, symposia, exhibits, and other technological influenced programs designed for on site or on-line viewing.3

Bulger saw both the AFC and the VHP as agents of the preservation of traditional cultures and peoples’ voices. Both were “very powerful” parts of the historical record, with collections used for education and interpretation purposes. Efforts by the LOC to record, preserve, and educate go hand and hand. In other words, they view the preservation of dance, songs, and war testimonial, as part of supporting all peoples and their cultures. In the process, the goal is to educate future generations of Americans about everyday life or the unique experiences and sacrifices made by everyday people. When asked about the overall value of the VHP, Bulger believes there is no greater benefit than listening to someone talk about their life, whether war-related or not, because so much information is passed on that cannot be found by “reading” about it in a book.4

Directly under Bulger is Michael Taft, Head of the Archive of Folk Culture who has more than twenty-five years experience conducting folklife and oral history fieldwork in Canada and the United States before opting for a career at the AFC.5 Although not directly involved with the daily operations of the VHP, Taft had much to say about the

3 Source: Bulger, interview (2008).
4 Ibid
VHP in terms of progress and historical significance. He regarded the Project as the brainchild of Ron Kind. The structure was, however, adapted from previous LOC/AFC oral history projects. Taft is proud of the fact the VHP has been successful in collecting thousands of recordings and artifacts that tell the human story about war, and regards it as holding a “rightful place in American folklife.” He was surprised with the Project’s early success in collecting so many veteran accounts so fast, and raised concerns about the overall quality of interviews conducted by amateur oral historians. In his opinion, the VHP not only grew faster than other LOC projects, but it also reflects greater “technological advances” and reliance on volunteers rather than professional historians and folklorists to conduct fieldwork.

Taft saw (as the major benefit to the VHP) the use of computer digitalization to help preserve, prevent deterioration of the collection caused by time and “too much handling.” Until this invention, “heritage sound recording were endangered, for any number of reasons. After all, sound recordings have a shelf life and not made to last forever.” Therefore, avoiding mold attacks, grooved walls and delaminating issues of tapes was a major concern for the LOC/AFC. Taft explained, that digitalization replaces former mediums used to record human voices or songs” and basically preserve them forever. Regarding the overall digitalization process, he said it was more complicated than one might expect, requiring more work than “simply burning a CD rather much thinking and preparation over “what we want to preserve and not.”

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6 For an overview of those pertinent antecedents/oral history projects, see chapter three.
7 Taft, interview 2008.
8 Ibid
“get it right the first time” and avoid a similar problem experienced in the “Save Our Sounds Project,” a joint AFC and Smithsonian Institution effort to preserve endangered sound recordings. Taft said it became a priority of the VHP to “digitalize” original formats on to a server and avoid adherence to any one physical medium, thus allowing staff members to monitor, update, and add them to the latest software or equipment as “they become available.”

In May 2001, the VHP appointed its first director, Dr. Ellen McCulloch-Lovell. With more than three decades of experience developing cultural and historical programs in the public sector, she arrived in Washington, D. C from Vermont in 1983, leaving a position as director of the Vermont Council of Arts. From 1983 to 1994, she served as Chief-of-Staff U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy. In 1997, as director of President’s William J. Clinton’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, she wrote *Creative America,* recommending ways to strengthen cultural life in America.

McCulloch-Lovell was politically connected not without experience, but not known in the area of historical study. After accepting directorship of the VHP, she recognized the challenge at hand but said, “I am eager to lead the Veterans History Project because I find it so compelling. With 1,500 veterans dying each day, their stories die with them. We need to capture these memories so that future generations may learn

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9 Taft interview (May 2008).
from those who served.” By the end of year one, because of her political connections on Capitol Hill, the VHP seemed well on its way towards fulfilling initial congressional requests.

After McCulloch-Lovell left the VHP in 2004 to become President of Marlboro College, Vermont, the directorship was temporarily filled by, Beverly Lindsey, a consultant with the Project for three years. She took charge just prior to the opening of the National World War II Memorial. Lindsey, like other directors that followed, had worked at various levels of the federal government, notably serving on the Advisory Council of the National Endowment for Humanities, which included spearheading an array of arts and humanities programs at the national, state, and local levels. Like her predecessor, she continued to promote the VHP at the national, state, and local levels, while overseeing staff operations in Washington.12

Kresh, who became director of the VHP after Lindsey’s retirement in 2004, began her career at the LOC as a G-2 reading room messenger in 1974 as an undergraduate student at Catholic University of America. Over the next twenty-seven years she was promoted to various positions, early on in a deck attendant position and as a library technician in the Cataloguing and Publication Division. After completing her Bachelor’s Degree at Catholic University, Kresh became a copyright examiner then reference

11 “Ellen McCulloch-Lovell,” (May 25, 2001). As the U.S. Senate director of the White House Millennium Council, McCulloch-Lovell was also responsible for running several national projects and partnerships to commemorate the new millennium.
librarian in the General Reading Rooms Division (now called the Humanities and Social Sciences Division.) while completing her master’s degree in library sciences.\(^{13}\) She was apart of the LOC staff that developed the Collaborative Digital Reference Service (CDRS), “a Web-based professional reference service that meets the reference and information needs of researchers through an international digital network of libraries.” She retired from government service in 2006, credited not only with fair representation of the Project at the national level, but also for emphasizing the historical value of digital preservation.\(^{14}\)

Hired as the fourth director on May 23, 2006, Robert “Bob” Patrick is a graduate of the United States Army War College and a retired U.S. Marine Corps Colonel. He brought with him more than thirty years experience leading organizations in the areas of project management, human resources, veteran’s affairs and policy development. For five years he worked with the National World War II Memorial Project, serving as director in 2003 and 2004 and responsible for its memorial dedication.\(^{15}\) Honored to join the VHP he proclaimed it “has been a personal and professional aspiration to be a part of this project and serve with great group of dedicated professionals who are preserving the inspiring stories of America’s veterans.”\(^{16}\) Patrick’s appointment, although like others merit-based,

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\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Robert Patrick interview (May 2008).

suggests to outsiders that the Project mission (given its broad scope and themes) now necessitates someone from a military background.

In a 2008 interview, Patrick explained his job description, priorities as Director, personal views on the Project, and what message the VHP hopes to send to the nation and its veterans. His first duty “involves overseeing a staff of twenty personnel that range in job title from senior project managers, staff historian, program specialists, archivists, public relation specialists, computer programmers, and collection processors.” Beyond that, he “strives to promote the VHP at the national level,” which includes “reaching out” to private and public organizations and everyday people to volunteer to make audio/video recordings. Some of the organizations to respond have been retirement communities, veteran’s organizations, libraries, historical societies, and students in high school and college.\(^{17}\)

Patrick said volunteer groups have contributed most to the VHP. Thousands of family members and friends of veterans have “effectively utilized or accessed modern technologies on a daily basis so to more easily record war stories. When speaking to these groups, either in person or by telephone, Patrick discovered that most volunteers find it “wonderfully compelling” to ask veteran’s questions, record their stories, or simply to hear them “speak in his or hers own words.” Patrick confesses that he cannot listen to all oral histories submitted, but gets much inspiration from meeting with veterans in person and learning about “where they served, what it meant to them to where the uniform, or how the military experience shaped their future lives.” Personal satisfaction comes from

\(^{17}\) Patrick, interview 2008.
his main priority as Director, to record as many testimonies from World War II veterans as possible, “because of a sense of urgency that they are getting on in years,” and a fear that in death their stories will be lost forever.  

Patrick, like members of his staff, fixes a high historical value on the VHP. He sees it as the major strength because anyone can send in taped interviews and transcripts. In terms of the sources collected to date, he said they are “not only of value to historians, researchers, and educators, but for family members hoping to learn more about loved ones who have or continue to serve in the armed forces.” His goal is to seek “ground-level accounts about what war is really like, whether from the foxhole on the front lines, the cockpit of an aircraft, POW camps, or from those who served in support units.” Gathering firsthand accounts at the grassroots level has not been an easy process. “Some veterans, it appears, are too modest to participate or view their contributions as no more or less than any other veteran. “Others simply want to forget or avoid the emotional experience of recalling the deaths of so many fellow soldiers.” However, over the past three years he has come to the conclusion that the Project “feels good” for many veterans, offers them the opportunity to “step forward, speak out,” and allows for them to contribute in some small way to our nation’s history.

Along with directorship, the VHP required an experienced staff to handle daily operations, process oral histories, and to promote the Project to a national audience. Another role they play is determining if testimonies collected are up to standards along

18 Patrick, interview
19 Ibid
the lines of quality, length, and format of interview. Patrick said, “it is not in the best interest of the Project to turn down any donation by a veteran or family member, but that certain items are more valued than others.” He referred to an overabundance of material culture items in poor condition (old helmets, uniforms, photo-copied service records and photographs), often mailed by the box full with little regard to the Project’s shortage of housing facilities.20 Another concern expressed by at least one staff member centered on whether copied materials qualify as primary sources. This individual has argued (successfully or not) that since duplications are not originals, they are not primary sources.21

Since 2001, the staff has grown from four to fifteen people (now numbering twenty-seven if including contracted employees). An increase in staff numbers may or may not suggest the VHP has taken steps to address quality issues with submitted interviews. Interviews conducted with key staff members revealed a common thread. Each considers the Project as beneficial to future study of history and our wartime past. Collectively they had no issues (or were unwilling to acknowledge) with the gathering and screening methods employed. In terms of amateur oral historians conducting interviews over professionals, and whether the overall collection has been affected they offered no opinions.

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20 Source: Patrick and Barts interviews (May 2008).
21 This source asked to remain anonymous.
Selected for the positions of senior project managers, were Peter Bartis and Sarah Rouse. Bartis earned a PH.D in folk life studies from the University of Pennsylvania in 1982 and is the author of several scholarly books and articles on American folk life and the use of oral history to record “living histories” of everyday Americans. Among his many duties includes public relations, organizing Washington, D.C. area events promoting the Project, or working closely with program specialists in receiving and processing firsthand testimonies. When asked about the importance of preserving war histories and whether they should be included within folklife collections, Bartis said yes to the first, but was not committed to the second because the meaning of “folk” to him entails lifetime experiences, not those measured in several years.23

Based on collection numbers, the VHP has been successful in reaching World War II veterans. Bartis thought it had to do with the aging process, noting by 2000 “most veterans and their supporters were beyond retirement age and had more time to think about their youthful days. Many had spent much of the postwar period trying to downplay their military experiences or forget them altogether.” Rouse argued that the VHP “offered them a chance to unload those memories and/or experience one last important moment in their life.” Bartis later explained that what they have done for the history record cannot be downplayed in terms of knowledge about life, behavior, mannerisms, and reminders to all Americans that they too “were young, shared patriotic

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22 Rouse retired in February 2008. Bartis served eight years with the VHP and was reassigned to the AFC later that same year.
values, made contributions, and lived a full, productive life.” Bartis and Rouse concurred that, “individual stories allow for the interpretation of war to remain open for debate, in the process, leaving those that would listen to ask “What would I do if in his or hers place?” Future generations of Americans will have access to massive archive of stories and better understand its societal impact. They will learn individual accounts go beyond bravery and devotion to duty, rather tell us war is horrible, and that no one hates war more than the individual who has been in combat.

Prior to her appointment with the VHP, Rouse served as the cataloging supervisor in the LOC Prints and Photographs Division. Her duties at the VHP have ranged from giving public tours of the archive, presenting papers at historical conferences and other public speaking engagements, sitting through media interviews, and travelling outside the Washington, D.C. to conduct interviews or to promote the Project. For example, at the San Diego AARP Convention in September 2002, she and other staff members were credited with “personally speaking with over five hundred veterans,” and distributing project brochures, book-marks, and buttons. Rouse described AARP members as enthusiastic and willing to sit through taped interviews. “Many people were intrigued that a government project was interested in their own personal experiences—that these experiences could be part of the historical record at the [LOC].”

24 Bartis, interview.
25 Ibid
26 Rouse interview, February 2008.
Prior to her retirement in February 2008 Rouse reflected on her daily duties and the historical importance of the VHP. She has regularly attended professional conferences and spoke in other public sectors to promote the Project. At the 2007 annual meeting of the Southwest Oral History Association, for example, she showed rare photographs and several unprocessed veteran testimonies recently submitted. The photographs, like many testimonials, were gleaned from the VHP archive materials previously catalogued and processed by staff members. Rouse informed the audience at the SOHA that on any business day processing areas are often “overflowing with DVD recordings, large manila folders of unpublished memoirs, maps, and ‘then and now’ photographs of veterans.”

Senior project managers perform other tasks as well. They seek out veterans who neither publically, nor among family and friends, have ever shared their wartime experiences. Bartis said, “he learned many chose not to because it appeared to prideful, if not secondary in importance to others who sacrificed more or died in battle.” Others, he believed, had never been “asked where they served or with whom and therefore thought it important.” Bartis maintained that World War II veterans “placed more importance on getting on with their lives rather than talking about the war.” Instead, they “focused more on becoming apart of the blossoming postwar middle class and re-entering the civilian workforce or going to college, marrying, and raising children.” For decades they successfully melded back into society, only to step to the forefront again during the 1990s.

memory boom and later when approached by VHP partner groups and volunteers eager to record their wartime stories.\footnote{Bartis interview}

The VHP employs only one full-time historian. Tom Wiener earned a B.A. and M.A. degree in American Studies from Miami University in 1968 and an M.A. degree from Georgetown University in 1971. Over the next two decades, he held teaching positions and worked in the media/entertainment field as a publication specialist, writer, editor, and consultant. He initially began work with the VHP on a contract basis in 2003, with the primary duty to examine the existing collection, identify oral histories of “outstanding quality or merit” and prepare them for inclusion in the Project’s ‘Experiencing War’ website.’\footnote{Tom Wiener, interview 2008.}

Among his duties beyond staff historian, Wiener has regularly served on oral history panel discussions, conducted veteran interviews in the field, and promoted the VHP in a variety of public speaking engagement and promotional events like the annual National Book Festival in the Washington, D.C. area and in others around the country. As a research historian, he has primarily sorted through the larger VHP collection looking for the most intense, detailed interviews for the purpose of including them on website presentations and for publication in book form.\footnote{Ibid} Since 2004, he has edited two oral history books published by National Geographic Books entitled, \textit{Forever a Soldier} and \textit{Voices of War Stories}, both compiled from VHP material.
After he was hired as staff historian in January 2005, Wiener took on more influential role within the Project. He recalled by April of that year, he was leading the effort to construct the first of over twenty different website presentations to follow that centered on the wartime experiences of everyday veterans across all wars. When asked about the potential historical value of the Project or if it has succeeded in educating Americans about their wartime past,” Wiener said, “the primary goal of the VHP has been to educate people about our war and to someday be recognized as the most expansive and culturally-diverse oral history collection in the world.” But, it is “unclear at the present just how much they [Americans in general] have been influenced.” As a research historian, his goal “to help the collection become representative of all veterans and their supporters at war, accessible to all our citizenry for viewing, and to serve as a valuable research and teaching tool for professional historians and educators alike.” When asked what most inspires him most about the VHP collection, he said “each story is unique and most are worthy of individual recognition or inclusion in theme-based presentations. Other key members of the staff have made it possible for portions of the VHP collection to be digitalized and made available to the public via the Internet. Rachel Mears earned a Master’s Degree in American Studies/Folklife at George Washington University. She began her career at the LOC in 1999 holding several public sector jobs, which included work on Local Legacies. In 2000, she was promoted to processing

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33 For a partial list of the website presentations by theme, see chapter six.
34 Wiener, interview
technician position with the VHP. By 2003, her duties included publically demonstrating the value of “Virtual Collections,” one that would over the next two years allow selected VHP oral histories to go on-line. Her duties would extend to the VHP processing department where staff members seek to improve the search, functionality, design and usability, and technical requirements for the archive and on-line collections. In 2008, she was promoted to the title of collection manager/“team leader” in charge of nine technicians.\(^{35}\) Monica Mohlinda’s first position at the LOC entailed developing educational programs and curriculum for grades K-12. Since 2002, she has worked with high school educators to promote classroom instruction of the Project, and more recently, as a Project liaison for Ken Burns’ 2007 seven-part documentary, *The War*.\(^{36}\)

Both Mears and Mohlinda have taken on other duties as well. More precisely, they have worked in the area of data preparation and normalization, setting data entry standards, assisted VHP digital team in the area of quality control/error prevention, and overall strived to make all of the Project’s on-line services user-friendly and easily accessed. They have also spearheaded staff efforts to enhance the collections database and improve overall access to the on-line catalog.\(^{37}\) They are responsible for producing “stable copies” of interviews for the purpose of adding them to web presentations or museum exhibits. On the potential value of the on-line catalog, Mears said, “its real

\(^{35}\) Rachel Mears and Monica Mohlinda interview, May 2008.
\(^{36}\) Mohlinda interview
\(^{37}\) Mears and Mohlinda, interview.
capabilities have yet to surface because originally all that was going to appear were a list of names and their branch of service.\textsuperscript{38}

In terms of the types of sources processing technicians deal with on a daily basis, both agree some sources are primary more than others, but the VHP has to take what it gets (photocopied materials) because some donators do not wish to part ways with the original document. This is not always the case. Many veterans and family members alike recognize the need for authentic materials. As Mears noted, many have shown diligence "to revisit their war years or those of the deceased," gather materials and send them to the VHP in original form. Overall, their searches through attics and storage trunks for personal correspondence and photographs, most collected during youthful years, forgotten for decades, has made staffers jobs more rewarding.\textsuperscript{39}

Analysis of AFC/VHP staff organization and division of responsibilities is difficult to accomplish when the only source is the people in the jobs themselves. Interviewees shared similar views about their individual goals and place a high historical value on the Project. On the whole, Directors and staff members alike see no issues with the gathering and screening method employed, or opted not to acknowledge any concerns with volunteers conducting oral history interviews rather than professional historians. What can also be established is that LOC/VHP staff share five common attributes: 1) All parties have graduate level professional training in American history, public history, folklife, historic preservation, oral history, and/or public relations; 2) Professional work

\textsuperscript{38} Source: Mears and Mohlinda interviews.
\textsuperscript{39} Mears, interview.
experience, especially with modern technologies; 3) With the exception of Patrick, they are non-veteran status, rather career government employees; 4) None have a background in military history and; 5) Responses and attitudes toward their work at the VHP were overwhelmingly positive.

Five-Star Council

In our nation's capitol, all institutions and federally funded projects are by-products of the political process and/or underwritten and supported by its elected politicians. The patriotic/political feel good nature of the VHP is most dramatically underscored by the Five-Star Council membership, a select group of politicians, national military, journalist, and patriotic figureheads, not academics like Paul Fussel, Alan Millett, and others who have spent long careers researching and writing about war..

Nevertheless, Billington recognized VHP staff limits to link with veteran organizations and the military to seek advice about the Project. On October 30, 2001 he announced the formation of the Five-Star Council. He likely created the Council to legitimize the Project on a national level, or bring in dollars. A press release dated November 8, 2001 summed up the relevance of the "Five-Star" Council. Each member had "relevant personal connection," were invaluable for providing "leadership and counsel," and could bring incalculable "visibility to our project nationwide."[40] Dr. Billington added, "The Library of Congress is proud to have these distinguished people and organizations as valuable partners in the [VHP]." A biographical review of the

members indicates not only a willingness by the LOC/VHP to include peoples from
diverse ethnic backgrounds, but also that their past military service played an important
role in the selection process, and in what contributions they would (or hoped to) make to
the Project.  

Daniel Inouye of Hawaii served in World War II and later became that state’s first
elected congressman in 1959. In 1962 he began the first of seven consecutive terms in the
U.S. Senate. In 1943 he enlisted in the army, later joining the elite 442nd Regimental
Combat Team. Four years later he returned home a captain having won the Distinguished
Service Cross, Bronze Star, Purple Hear (with cluster), and twelve other medals and
citations. His finest hour came decades later when he was awarded the Congressional
Medal of Honor.  Senator John Warner of Virginia enlisted in the navy in 1945 and
again in the marines during the Korean War. From 1969 to 1974 he served as Secretary
of the Navy. Four years later, he was elected to his first term in the U.S. Senate. Speaking
on behalf of the VHP at the inaugural Five-Star Council meeting Warner said, “let us not
let other families go without” having their stories documented and preserved.  During
World War II, Sam Gibbons, former Florida senator, served time as an infantry officer,
most with the 101st Airborne Division’s elite 501st Infantry Regiment, leaving the army a
major and the recipient of the Bronze Star. In a political career that lasted three decades,

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41 Billington quoted in, “Librarian of Congress Inaugurates.” Some of the original
members of the Five Star Council included Kind, Cleland, Hagel, and Houghton.
42 See “Inaugural Meeting,” 2.
he served as both a member of Congress and as chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.  

Two African American veterans are council members, Donald L. Scott and Lee A. Archer. Often referred to as the “Libraries very own General,” Scott, a retired brigadier general and Vietnam War veteran served as Deputy Librarian of Congress and chief operating officer beginning in 1996. On those veterans who have contributed to the VHP, including himself, he said we “do more than serve the stated purpose of the war, but we actually experience and carry with us the democratic ideals of America.”  

Lt. Colonel Archer, twenty year Air Force veteran, began his military career when he entered flight training at the prestigious Tuskegee Army Airfield during World War I, serving with the all black 302nd Fighter Squadron of the 322nd Flight Group.  

Another high-ranking military officer among the elected officials is Lieutenant-General (Ret.) Julius W. Becton. In a “distinguished public service career” that has spanned four decades, most in the military, he is a graduate of many top military schools, including the “Army’s Command and General Staff College, and the National War College.” A veteran of three American wars, the general also is the recipient of “several

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46 See “Five-Star Council Profile: Lt. Colonel Archer,” VHPN (Summer 2002). In the post-war period, he earned his B.A. degree from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and an M.A. degree from New York University. Duties in the civilian workforce that further qualified him for a position on the Five-Star council, included Chairman and CEO positions with Archer Associates, president of Organization Publishing Company, board service with several corporations, and with educational and civic organizations across many fields.
honorary doctoral degrees” and, unlike few on the Council has worked in a variety of
government organizations and has held top leadership positions in education. 47 His role
as council member is highly regarded. What the VHP may value most about him is that
he is a World War II veteran, politically connected, and enthusiastic about promoting the
Project to our nation’s youth. Speaking on behalf of the Project he said “what better way
to connect to [younger people] with their history than to have seniors in schools
throughout the country to go out into their communities to interview veterans?” Becton,
also a personal friend of Billington, said it was important for the VHP to “collect all their
stories—those of African Americans, Japanese Americans, Native Americans, and
women in uniform on the home front.” He made no mention of Latino or other Asian
American groups who served, but Archer said, “The project must be all-inclusive.”48

The Council consists of few women with Major General Jeanne Holm being an
exception. She served in the army as a truck driver during World War II, then in the Air
Force in a career that spanned 33 years, retiring in 1975 as the highest-ranking woman in
armed forces history. Since her induction in the Five-Star Council, she has led a national
crusade on behalf of women veterans, arguing that the Project should include “women
and men in all kinds of non-combat jobs—truck drivers, mechanics, clerks, typists,

47 See “Five-Star Council Profile: LTG Julius Becton, USA (ret.),” VHPN (Fall 2003).
General Becton’s resume is extensive. As a military officer he served in Germany, Korea,
France, Vietnam, Japan, and the Philippines. Other positions held include, Director of the
Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, Director of the Federal Emergency
Management Agency, CEO of American Coastal Industries, Chairman of the Science and
Engineering Alliance, Director of the Boy Scouts of America, as Superintendent of
District of Columbia Public Schools.
technicians of all kinds, and recently, those who flew tankers that refuel jets over the
Persian Gulf and now over Afghanistan.” Also among her requests were to include
veterans who served in Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and more recently in Afghanistan, for
“if that’s not war, it’s pretty darned close.”

Although most members own degrees from institutions of higher learning, few, if
any, have made careers in academia. This leads one to believe that they are in place for
their promotional value to the Project, not to serve as “experts” in any grassroots study of
war that requires expertise in not only the study of social and cultural history or, but also
oral history. Everett Alvarez, Jr., founding member of the Five-Star Council, is one of
two exceptions. The first American aviator shot down over North Vietnam, he was a
POW for over eight years, released in 1973. Afterwards he earned his Juris Doctorate at
George Washington University then took a position in program management with the
Naval Air Systems Command in Washington, D. C., where he retired in 1980. In 1982,
President Ronald Reagan appointed him Deputy Administrator of the Veterans
Administration, a post held until 1986 when taking over as Vice President for
Government Services with Hospital Corporation of America.

A great many Five Star council members are from outside military or political
circles, the most notable, Tom Brokaw, Peabody award-winning newsman and

49 Gail Fineberg and Major-General Jeanne Holm quoted in Fineberg, “Learning from
Those Who Served,” 1-2.
Alvarez later formed his own consulting company, Conwall Incorporated, then proceeded
to pen to books entitled *Chained Eagle*, about his captivity in Vietnam, and *Code of
Conduct*, on how he rebuilt his life.
He joined NBC News in 1966, served as White House correspondent covering the Watergate scandal, and was the anchor for “Today on NBC” from 1976 to 1981. Over the years, he has explored racial segregation in American suburbs and championed the cause of civil rights movement. However it was his book *The Greatest Generation*, a celebratory oral history collection of World War II that earned him a spot on the Council.  

Qualifications needed for selection to the “Five Star” Council seems clear enough, but exactly what they do beyond offering occasional advice and/or sitting in on important meetings is less so. Most members are nationally recognized and come from three professional groups: military, journalism, and politics. Missing from the ranks are professional historians (the exception being the late Stephen Ambrose), many of which have published books and articles that go beyond the “nuts and bolts” of military history towards a new understanding of how war has affected our society and the individual veteran (studies that would seem to be at the heart of VHP. Therefore from the perspective of one on the outside looking it might be argued that a broader effort to “politicize” the Project is in place because of the Five-Star Council, one that has been seemingly been charged to protect the basic fundamentals of nation-building, patriotic orthodoxy, and the necessity to view our participation in past wars in a positive light.

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51 Brokaw’s personal achievements are numerous. He is the recipient of the Dennis Kauff Memorial Award for Lifetime Achievement in Journalism, the Lowell Thomas Award from Marist College, and the Honor Medal for Distinguished Service.

National and Public Awareness Programs

Beyond the Five-Star Council, the LOC/AFC/VHP has sponsored several types of public outreach programs to promote the Project at the national level. They have targeted an audience that includes all veteran groups across gender, race, and ethnic lines, their family members, and everyday Americans. In terms of types of resources available, monetary or otherwise, it appears the LOC has assumed responsibility. National Book Festivals have been effective in drawing large outdoor crowds or indoor audiences to promote the VHP. Yet, based on collection numbers alone, they have not effectively engaged minority groups to participate.

Hosted annually by the LOC in the Washington, D.C. area, the VHP appreciates how scholars have strived to tell the war experience from the perspective of women, race, and ethnic groups. The inaugural event was held at the LOC Pavilion on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol in October 2002. It allowed the VHP its first opportunity to share project information with the public. More than 40,000 people attended. In a presentation entitled “Collecting Wartime Memories,” Congressman Sam Gibbons partnered with Peggy Bulger to give demonstrations on how to conduct oral history interviews. Also on hand were several celebrities, including several prominent authors: Tony Hillerman, veteran of World War II, David Halberstam, winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1964 for his coverage of the Vietnam War, and Gail Buckley, who spoke on her most recent book.
called *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the American Revolution to Desert Storm.*

A year later, 70,000 people attended the festival, where this time the VHP shared a booth with the AARP. The History & Biography Pavilion and James Bradley, author of *Flyboys,* a World War II airmen story, hosted an interview with Everett Alvarez, Jr., Latino American veteran, former Vietnam POW, and author of the autobiography *Eagle.*


On June 17, 2005 the VHP continued this means of promotion when it invited Karen Spears Zacharias, author of *Hero Mama: A Daughter Remembers the Father She Lost in Vietnam and the Mother Who Held Her Family Together* to speak at the West Dining Room of the James Madison Building.

Zacharias gave a multimedia presentation that coincided with the “national reunion of ‘Sons and Daughters in Touch,’ an organization of adult children of service members killed in Vietnam.” The VHP called her book an “absorbing and sometimes searing story” of what often happens to families following the death of loved one in war.

Later that same year, the VHP announced plans to embark on a four-city book tour to honor veterans of past wars in Atlanta, Chattanooga, Indianapolis and Palm Coast,

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Florida, and to promote Wieners' *Forever a Soldier*. Diane Kresh, former director of the VHP said, "The purpose of the tour is to promote our second book published by the [LOC] and National Geographic Books while honoring the veterans’ stories that are featured in the book. We are pleased to be hosting [the tour] with official partners who are critical to our nationwide initiative." While covering narratives from World War I through Iraq, the VHP declared "each story is unique, but taken as a whole the compilation puts a familiar face on the universal reality, courage and fear, horror and exhilaration, [and] sorrow and triumph." The honoring of veterans across several wars included testimonies from women, people of color, and those across diverse ethnic lines.

Guest lecturers have been regularly been invited to promote the VHP, and share their views on the war experience through the lens of gender, race, and ethnicity, as part of Memorial and Veterans Day celebrations or Women’s, African American, and Asian Pacific American history months. For example, in November 2004 the LOC, in collaboration with the New York’s American Place Theatre, announced the premier of *War: A Vietnam Nurse’s Journey*, adapted from the experiences of Captain Marie Knox Prescott at the Coolidge Auditorium in the Thomas Jefferson Building. Also on Veterans Day, performances of *Voices of War* and the Vietnam War memoir, *The Things They Carried* by acclaimed writer, Tim O’Brien. Both illuminated "the challenges, triumphs and sacrifices," or more "heartwarming and real experiences," but also, in the case of

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O'Brien, examined the more debilitating aspects of war, "both physical and mental," that often give rise to anti-war sentiment.  

Also in 2004, the VHP set forth to recruit participants from two groups of Americans not often recognized for their veteran status, gays and lesbians. On September 17th, the LOC co-sponsored a panel with VHP, LC-GLOBE, and AVER—American Veterans for Equal Rights, Inc. Three gay combat veterans spoke, Captain Donna Sumption, Persian Gulf War, Mike Rankin, retired USN Doctor, and World War II veteran, PFC Michael Kameny. The VHP reported "the panelists discussed their experiences in an environment where sexual orientation placed an additional burden on situation already filled with stress." Three days before the panel met, The Washington Post published an article by Garance Burke entitled "A Call for Eternal Equality," which noted of the 25.1 million living veterans 1.3 million are gay men or lesbians.  

On July 28, 2005, Robert J. Scheller, Jr., government historian in the Naval Historical Center, appeared to promote his book Breaking the Color Barrier: The U.S. Naval Academy's First Black Midshipman and the Struggle for Racial Equality. The focus was on District of Columbia native and World War II veteran, Wesley Anthony Brown, the first African American graduate of the Naval Academy in 1949. In January 2006, the VHP invited Hilary Kaiser, oral history specialist from the University of Paris- 

58 See “When History Speaks,” VHPN (Fall 2003).
Sud and author of two books on American servicemen living in France, *Des Amours de GI’s: les petites francaises du Debarquement* (2004) and *Veteran Recall: American in France Remember the War* (2004). Her LOC special lecture centered on the 6,500 American soldiers who married French women after those two wars emphasizing that the military experience often goes beyond the battlefield.\(^6^0\) Also in 2006, Bernard Rostker lectured on his recent book, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* that documented the government's pursuit of an all-volunteer military. Co-authors Nancy Roth-Douquet, former Department of Defense employee, and Frank Schaeffer, former marine, discussed *AWOL: The Unexcused Absence of America's Upper Classes from Military Service—and how it hurts Our Country*. Along with Schaeffer, a former marine, they explored "how the all-volunteer armed forces have evolved from a heterogeneous collection of men and women from all walks of life and social and economic classes."\(^6^1\)

Guest lecturers have also spoken on more recent U.S. conflicts with an emphasis on the role of "citizen soldiers." On Memorial Day 2008, the AFC and VHP invited Larry Minear, former director of the Humanitarianism and War Project at the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University. His lecture entitled "The U.S. Citizen-Soldier and the Global War on Terrorism: The National Guard Experience," and held at the prestigious National Digital Library, drew on fifty of the project's seven hundred collections from post-Vietnam conflicts, notably from Afghanistan and Iraq where 1.5

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million troops deployed between September 2001 and June 2007 “of which 240,000 were members of the National Guard”62

Overall, academics have promoted the VHP through a series of guest lectures focusing on less covered topics in the field of war and memory like race and gender relations in the military. Director Patrick said, “The VHP is very pleased to be able to highlight some of the nearly 700 veteran’s interviews that we have collected from the current conflicts,” referring to the 50 testimonies consulted for the study, and the sixteen stories Minear cited for inclusion in the “Experiencing War” feature on the website. Jeffrey Lofton, VHP employee concurred saying Minear’s effort “captures the split in their lives between civilian careers and their part-time Guard commitment, which, for their deployment overseas, became their full-time jobs.”63

The VHP archive has been enhanced to include the collecting of photographs and drawings, and other material culture items related to the war experience. The first major promotional event in this area began on Veterans Day 2003 through January 9, 2004 when the Decatur House of Washington, D.C (named after 1818 naval hero Stephen Decatur and his wife Susan) presented “traveling photography exhibit “Open Doors: Vietnam POWs Thirty Years Later.” The bulk of the exhibit was the result of a co-effort by writer Taylor Kiland and photographer, Jamie Quinn, who spent eighteen months in Vietnam “interviewing and photographing thirty extraordinary men” former POWs. The

63 Robert Patrick quoted in, “Minear to Lecture.”
VHP announced it would “partner” with the exhibit in an educational program that would invite local D.C. POWs to talk about their experiences and take questions from the public. Another example occurred on February 7, 2008, when the AFC/VHP collaborated with the LOC Prints and Photographs Division, inviting World War II veteran and award-winning author and illustrator, Tracy Sugarman to speak. A former naval officer, he is now a freelance artist known for previous work on the civil rights struggle in the South, and other topics. Recognized for his concise details and ability to blend “artwork, excerpts of letters home and memories of his days during wartime,” his LOC was part visual presentation and part promotion of his memoir entitled “Drawing Conclusions: An Artist Discovers His America.” These types of events have effectively encouraged veterans and their families to donate photographs and artwork for inclusion in the VHP archive, and to promote their overall value to history on the same as the personal narrative (written or oral).

Reunions, Holidays, and other World War II Celebrations

Veteran’s reunions, Memorial and Veteran Day celebrations, women, African American, and Asian American history months, have also been promoted by the VHP to illicit potential interviewees and volunteers alike. Despite such public programs designed to reach minority group veterans (expanded on in chapter six), the overall collection numbers reveals much work still needs to be done.

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64 See “Former Vietnam POWs Tell their Stories through Photograph Exhibit,” VHPN (Fall 2003).
LOC/VHP interest in reunion ceremonies stems from a need to attract a broad national audience. In July 2001 Martha Hopkins, LOC employee, submitted eleven video tapes on her father and ten other male and female veterans and wartime volunteers stateside taken at the annual reunion of 411th Battalion, 3rd Army, in Roanoke, Virginia, who served in the European theater during World War II. The reunion trend continued a year later on June 6, 2002, when the VHP co-sponsored a celebration of the D-Day Anniversary at the *U.S.S. Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum* in New York City. On hand were hundreds of New York area veterans to celebrate the event and encourage all Americans to “get involved in this historic undertaking [VHP].” Present at the ceremony were Dr. Billington, Lt. Col. Lee Archer, AARP President James Parkel, and Sam Billison, World War II veteran and president of the Navajo Code Talkers Association, all whom participated in oral history demonstrations. Billington indicated these interviews would “allow the next generation to learn about and speak to those who have fought to sustain the freedom that we find challenged throughout the world today, as well as those who kept the home front running during some of America’s most difficult times.”

The LOC regards Memorial and Veteran’s Day celebrations as necessary to promote the Project on a national level and to encourage veterans to share their stories. Before the 2002 event, or the 58th anniversary of the D-Day Invasion, the VHP called a “Partner’s Meeting” where representatives from over 30 project dependent partners were invited to Jefferson Building “to share success stories from the front-lines.” Because of

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this meeting the total number of national partners ballooned to 350. Other important events included a well-publicized Five-Star Council meeting, and the first partner exhibit presented in the “mezzanine of the Great Hall.” However, it was the D-Day program which “included the premiere of a five-minute film...destined for distribution to all partners” through AARP's national out-reach programs that drew the most attention.\(^67\)

In 2004, the National World War II Memorial became the first of its kind solely dedicated to the men and women who served in that war. VHP staff and volunteers took advantage of a large turnout not only to promote itself nationally, but also to recruit potential interviewees. Largely the work of the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), the National Memorial serves as a lasting reminder of the sacrifices made by the World War II generation. Billington said, “By participating in our Veterans History Project, these veterans and all others who come forward to tell their story of service help us preserve and add to our nation’s collective memory.”\(^68\) Tom Wiener expected the event to draw more than 800,000 Americans from across the country.\(^69\) Kresh, then coordinator for the VHP volunteers at the LOC, agreed, believing that the World War II Reunion would result in the “largest-ever gathering of World War II veterans” in Washington to date. Both predictions proved correct.\(^70\)

\(^67\) See “Promotional Video Debuts,” and “May 14 Veterans History Project Events at Library of Congress” in, Veterans History Project News (Summer 2002).
\(^70\) Kresh quoted in, “The National World War II.”
The reunion, co-produced by the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and the ABMC, consisted of numerous tents and pavilions. The overall theme “Wartime Stories: Voices of a Generation” targeted veterans and civilians alike many of whom were guest speakers, interviewees, or together apart of exhibits that showcased firsthand testimonies. “Preserving Memories” consisted of “experts from military and other museums and archives” around the country that gave “advise veterans and their families on how to best preserve the documents and material that record the culture of the WW2 period.” Another presentation titled “Building the World War II Memorial,” witnessed several “architectural, engineering, landscape, and construction teams” discussing their individual roles and motivations in the creation of the Memorial. The VHP had a separate pavilion where members of the staff conducted oral history interviews as well as trained volunteers “on how to conduct an interview,” reflecting its commitment towards “grassroots approach.”

More informed groups started the memorial dedication early. A day before events kicked off volunteers paid homage to the Rolling Thunder Virginia Chapter 3 by video recording their efforts to clean the walls of the Vietnam War Memorial. “Roving interviewers” met with members at the Pentagon to collect oral history interviews, where the throng of motorcyclists had gathered for “Rolling Thunder Inc., XVII/Ride for Freedom.” Material culture artifacts on display included personal accounts of war “through letters, photographs, diaries, albums, maps, flags, and newspaper clippings.”

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72 See “400 Volunteers.”
Ceremonies drew more than four hundred volunteers, most from area high schools, universities, civic groups, and scores of other organizations. Over a four-day period, more than 30 panel discussions also took place at the VHP Pavilion. Topics and themes varied, but struck at the heart of project’s overall mission to gather experiences from “ordinary Americans” of “extraordinary times.” A few examples include: *Hispanic-American Experience during World War II, Japanese-American Experience during World War II, Navajo Code Talkers, Tuskegee Airmen, and Women in the Military.*

Memorial Day that year was unique because it marked the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. The VHP announced a special symposium co-sponsored by the LOC and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on May 26th. Delivering the keynote address was Benjamin Ferencz, U.S. Army officer who served as prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials. Individual panelists included Art Buchwald, World War II Marine veteran and national syndicated news columnist, and another World War II veteran, Yeiichi “Kelly” Kuwayama, Japanese American. Panel two consisted of several prominent academics, journalists, and government employees and focused on the equally important, if not more controversial historical perspectives on specific post-war events.

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73 Other national partners present included the American Historical Association, American Legion, and the Disabled American Veterans. Numerous others fall under civic and military organizations, libraries, veterans associations, archives, historical societies, humanities councils, museums, oral history programs, and universities.


They included: Klaus Larres, former Henry Kissinger Scholar in the LOCs John W. Kluge Center, and author of the book *Churchill's Cold War*; James Hershberg, professor of history at George Washington University; John Meachum, top editor with *Newsweek* and author of *Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait*; and Elizabeth White, deputy director and chief historian, at the Office of Special Operations in the Department of Justice.\(^76\)

Reunions, National Holidays, and World War II celebrations have effectively engaged thousands of American veterans and their supporters at war to participate on a yearly basis. They have been held on or around Women, African, and Asian American history months in hopes of inspiring these veteran groups to share their stories. Based on current archival numbers for these groups, it can be argued that the strategy has not produced results.

**Media**

Radio, television, and film projects have arguably impacted the overall VHP collection more than any other public awareness outlet. Those media outlets well known around the country and who mentioned the Project during the 2002 celebration of the D-Day Invasion were the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), NBC *Today Show*, *Black Entertainment Television*, and *CNN Report*.\(^77\) The VHP claimed that because of the broadcasts an additional 2,600 firsthand testimonies were collected through August of that year. Accounts ranged “from individual veterans and their family members to

\(^{76}\) See “Symposium Marking the 60th, (2005).

\(^{77}\) Quoted from, “Media Coverage of Project” in, *Veterans History Project News* (Summer 2002).
students, teachers, historians, writers, and partner organizations." 2,150 were of the “original or duplicated audio/video oral interviews,” unpublished memoirs, correspondence, and photographs. By the close of the calendar year, individual collections surpassed 4,000, “and by the end of September 2003, reached 10,000. In April 2004, those numbers jumped to 15,000 with the VHP reporting “collections reaching a rate of 125 per week.”

Eight days before the 2004 grand opening of the World War II Memorial, media coverage began in full force. It would appear by this time that the VHP had gotten sufficiently famous and indicated that there was an expectation of use for special events and ceremonies. The AFC announced a second program in the series “Experiencing War,” would appear on public radio in a one-hour special titled “Lest We Forget, and dedicated to the D-Day invasion of 1944. “Lest” focused on veterans “who sacrificed their youth, lost their innocence, saw a larger world and survived unimaginable hardships.” Personal narratives targeted three themes: experiences on June 6, 1944, “D-Day landings of American and British troops in Normandy, France, called ‘On the Beach;’” efforts in support of the battle, “Beyond the Beach;” and struggles in the days that followed, “D-Day Plus-1, D-Day Plus-2.” The VHP participation made it clear it was important for all veterans to reflect on “What did you do during the war?”

78 Quoted from, “Collections Growing” in, Veterans History Project News (Summer 2002).
79 Quoted from, Sorkin, “From Concept to Reality,” 7.
In February 2005, Public Radio International again aired a series of specials VHP-related. One of the most enduring was *More than Love Stories*. Television stations in Chattanooga, Tennessee and Biloxi, Mississippi joined partnership with the project, encouraging their local communities to interview veterans, which later were to be broadcasted. In Washington, DC, Mayor Anthony Williams declared May 2005 Veterans History Project Month, which prompted the Washington Transit Authority to sponsor a city-wide advertising campaign over its bus and rail lines. At the same time, the VHP stepped up partnership and oral history training outreach programs. Reports from 2005 stated that, “twelve colleges, universities, and military schools became official partners.”\(^8^2\) Overall, “Approximately 750 volunteers attended interview training workshops in eleven states,” conducted by “certified oral historians through the American Folklore Society or by VHP staff members.”\(^8^3\) Such efforts were carried out in accordance with larger VHP efforts to promote a “collection that reflects the diversity of America,” and included staff members attending conferences at the Association for the Study of African American Life and History and the “Salute to Hispanic Veterans at the National Council of La Raza Convention” in Philadelphia.\(^8^4\)

National and local news stations have also promoted the Project. The VHP goal behind the co-productions of “The News Hour with Jim Lehrer,” “Washington Week with Gwen Ifill and National Journal,” “America at a Crossroads,” “American Valor,” “Reporting America at War,” was two-fold: First, it wanted to attract more media

\(^8^2\) See *Annual Report (2005)*, 47.
\(^8^3\) Ibid
\(^8^4\) Ibid
attention and, second solicit corporate donations. Major funding for these programs and to broaden the VHP was provided by the Lilly Endowment, Inc.; PBS; National Endowment for Humanities; Corporation for Public Broadcasting; and The Arthur-Vining Foundations.  

Film has a unique way of influencing Americans about their wartime past unlike any other means of information, and the LOC has used it to promote the VHP. Recognizing the impact of visual imagery has on diverse groups, from October to December 2001, the LOC and AFC screened six war films. Gleaned from the extensive LOC Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, those selections were divided among, “Hollywood feature films, plus shorts and documentary films” that showcased the experiences of veterans or those in acting roles. Many of their films have also promoted women at war. Whether viewings have inspired more to participate in the VHP is unknown but, according to film reviews of the value of those released during the 1940s, most are representative of the separation of male and female (gender dynamics) that have affected the military throughout much of the twentieth century.

The VHP welcomes film that documents the war experiences of veterans across gender, race, and ethnic lines. One example came from Sonya Rhee, filmmaker, who discussed her Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) documentary Soldados: Chicanos in Vietnam during African American History Month (2003). Guest speaker for the event

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85 Loften, “Veterans History Project Launches.”
was Rene Poussiant, executive director of the National Visionary Leadership, who praised Rhee’s while calling for black veterans to tell their stories. Joining the event were CBS, CNN, Ohio Public Radio, and ABC Radio, with a series of published articles following in *American Libraries, USA Today,* and Chicago’s *Daily Southtown.*

No one film project earned more press coverage for the VHP than Ken Burn’s 2007 seven-part documentary, *The War.* Dr. Billington declared, “The staff at the [LOC] and I are excited to launch this comprehensive community awareness campaign.” We will “continue our tradition of honoring America’s war veterans....veterans from all conflicts, all branches of the military, all ranks, all races and ethnicities.” Burns and his small army research assistants relied heavily on oral histories, diaries, letters, and memoirs of veterans “discovered in four towns—Sacramento, California, Mobile, Alabama, Luverne, Minnesota, and Waterbury, Connecticut.” In what amounted to “complimentary national campaign” between Burns, the LOC and PBS, the goals were simple. First, it would promote the VHP on a national scale and, second, produce a companion website for *The War.* The site “guides viewers through each episode of the documentary...through the individual experience of hundreds of veterans who experienced World War II and contributed their recollections to the [VHP archives].” Patrick said “This is material you won’t see in the [film documentary],” allowing visitors

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89 Billington quoted in “Library of Congress and PBS.”
to scan the website by theme, follow the film episodes, or gain access to the entire VHP database.\footnote{For quotes and information see Loften and Maccaro, “Veterans History Project Web Site Enhances.”}

Items showcased included oral history interviews, but also photographs, memoirs, diary and letter collections from Pearl Harbor to V-E and V-J days, so as to “inspire millions throughout the country to contribute their stories to the VHP.” Our companion [site] adds hundreds of voices and perspectives to those [previously documented by Burns].” Questions asked of veterans varied from “What was it like to land at Salerno [Italy]? How did it feel walking out of a relocation camp on V-J Day? How do those present at Okinawa recount the experience today.” Patrick commented on how these “stories paint the big picture,” and in terms of how veterans remember it today (or how it has transformed their lives).\footnote{Quoted in Loften and Maccaro, “Veterans History Project Web Site Enhances.”} Burns hoped to create a film documentary that was both appealing to broad audience and instructional:

> When I set about making The War five years ago, I was interested in getting at the human dimension....to give the sense of what it might have been like to be in that war. Most historic war films lack intimacy. We are not interested in interviewing generals, in statistics that abstract human suffering and cost....We wanted to talk to men who had seen the elephant, who had been in combat, who had killed and seen their buddies killed.\footnote{Burns quoted in “National Book Festival (2007).}
There is no evidence that it greatly impacted VHP collection numbers as previously expected. It did however draw mixed reviews from any number of veteran groups, notably minorities, who claimed they were under represented.\(^{94}\)

Since 2000, the LOC/AFC/VHP have adopted several public relation programs to promote patriotic sentiments, and/or reach, educate, and recruit national, regional, or community awareness to the Project. Such events have included National Book Festivals, guest lecturers, public radio and television, film presentations, all offering coverage of those veteran groups and their supporters at war along gender, race, and ethnic lines, but not realized in terms of oral histories collected. Most have been organized around annual Memorial and Veteran’s Day celebrations, Women’s and minority group months, and veteran reunions as a means to recruit volunteers or simply to pay homage to diverse population (visitors and veterans alike).

The VHP, the benefactor of the politicization of archive, has visualized itself as a national project dedicated to the collecting of oral histories from veterans and their supporters off all twentieth century wars and conflicts. The path towards realization and national recognition began with the organization of a VHP Director and staff under the supervision of Peggy Bulger, AFC Director and the creation of a Five-Star Council, consisting of high-ranking military officers, politicians, and media personnel that had the star power to promote it nationally and to bring in dollars. In order to raise national awareness to the Project and keep with the spirit of legislation, the LOC sponsored a

series of public awareness programs initially in the Washington, D.C. area, then nationally. The broader goal here was to promote patriotic sentiments to veterans and public, educate Americans on our wartime past, and recruit national, regional, or community awareness to the Project. In doing so, it reveals the LOC, largely for political reasons, sought volunteers (amateur historians) to collect oral history interviews, in the process revealing that "radical trust" has its limitations. Whether this method/approach should have been used to gather fewer, but better quality interviews through experienced oral historians, was likely not an idea entertained.
CHAPTER IV

TO STRENGTHEN, PROMOTE AND ENRICH: THE ROLE OF NATIONAL PROJECT PARTNERS

In the archive/museum world institutions have either active or passive collection policies. They either conduct fieldwork and collect data and artifacts themselves, through agents, dealers, auctioneers, experts, and other collectors, or they sit back and wait for it to come to through the door. To be active collectors institutions need money, time, and expertise. The VHP takes two approaches. First, it is passive in that oral history collections (audio-video recordings and unpublished memoirs, journal, and diary collections) are sent to Washington, D.C. via mail. Second, to build an archive it has taken an a “shared approach” through recruitment of national project partners (organizations and individuals), most of which have no formal education or training in oral history, yet share in collection process with professional historians.

The first part of the chapter outlines the structure of the VHP website in terms of what rules and guidelines are in place for the types of sources that can be submitted by donors and potential project partners. What individuals or groups does the VHP target? How are the participants prepared for their role in terms of on-line educational or preparatory materials for the purpose of creating projects at the state or community level? Who prepares and assesses their effectiveness? In part two, I consider the publicity role
played by major veteran and senior organizations like the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). How and why did such partnerships originate? What types of relationships have been forged, and what was the VHP basis for choosing them? In the final section, I identify some of the earliest state, local, and community level oral history projects to contribute to the VHP research and collection process. From what walks of life did these Project enablers come? When were they founded? Are those stories collected representative of all veteran and support groups along gender, race, and ethnic lines, or are they more slanted towards the white-Non-Hispanic veteran group?¹

To collect firsthand accounts the VHP relies on veterans and their families, historians, high school and college level students, and everyday people. They are responsible for interviewing veterans and, in some cases, transcription of the recordings, and collecting items of material culture. Overall, they are the “fieldworkers” who undertake the “historical grunt work” or assist others in the area of research. Congress envisioned a project based on both “process” and “product.” Sarah Rouse of the VHP predicted the best possible scenario for LOC, when admitting this process entailed “intergenerational dialogue about citizen’s wartime experiences, and about a meeting between various communities.” This meant the military veteran, professional and amateur historians, and “the community” would work together in “the process of public learning”

¹ For a complete listing of official project partners, active and emeriti, and by individual state, see the VHP Website at http://www.loc.gov/vets/partners/partners/html.
about war, veterans, and to utilize oral history in a manner "that people of all ages and interest" could participate. By taking this approach, the LOC determined it would comply too the "spirit of legislation" despite not being the recipient of a big appropriation (money) from Congress.

2002 was a watershed year for the VHP in terms of national legitimacy and expanding collection numbers. A July edition of the VHP Newsletter reported the collecting of over 2600 submissions from individual veterans, their family members, students, educators, professional and amateur historians, writers and journalists, and partner organizations. Approximately 2,150 items were categorized as original or duplicated audio/video oral interviews, along with a substantial number of "textual memoirs, diaries, and correspondence, and/or photographic documentation," or primary sources, related to veteran or civilian supporter experiences from every major twentieth century war (WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and/or the Persian Gulf).

Also during the year, the LOC prepared a video about the Project that premiered at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. and was later distributed to all fifty AARP state offices and partner organizations. Its purpose was AARP and partner groups specific to not only recruit veterans to share their stories but also to help "educate and instruct" everyday Americans on how to conduct/collect oral history interviews. At the same time, according to a Library of Congress Newsletter, "the project [was] being carried out in the

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2 Sarah Rouse interview conducted at the LOC (February 2008). The same information was first published in David Darlington’s “Veterans History Project Launched,” American Historical Association (on-line at http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2002/0205/0205new3.cfm
3 See VHP Newsletter (Summer 2002), “Collections Growing.”
4 See D’Ooge, “Veterans Stories Celebrated.”
way Congress envisioned: with grandchildren interviewing grandparents, veterans interviewing each other, and students conducting interviews as part of classroom assignments.\(^5\)

On Veterans Day 2002 the LOC created a National Registry of Service of its existing 2,400 names in order to provide the VHP with another major step towards national legitimacy. This on-line resource would become a component of the Project’s modified website, www.loc.gov/vets. Press contact, Craig D’Oooge said it would honor “all those military veterans and civilians” whose testimonies “have been donated…. providing each person’s name, date and place of birth, branch of service, war(s), unit and location of service, interviewer or donor of material, and the donor’s institution of affiliation.” The Registry would also reflect any additions “in years to come, as individuals’ donations are received and processed into the collection.” Director McCulloch-Lovell said, “This is an important milestone for this project. It allows not just the [LOC] but the entire nation to acknowledge our gratitude to each of those who have sacrificed for our nation in wartime.”\(^6\)

The Official Website

The World Wide Web quickly became the VHP’s main recruiting and educational tool. Initial goals, according to Project website, were to recruit participants and reveal

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\(^6\) However, what is not said about the collection numbers might underscore a notion that documenting the war in a proper manner (using professional practices and standards) is secondary to celebrating veterans and war. See D’Oooge and McCulloch-Lovell quoted in D’Oooge, “Veterans History Project Releases National Registry of Service,” Library of Congress Press Release (November 8, 2002).
what materials had already been collected and how to access them. In November 2001, Janice E. Ruth, VHP Web-site coordinator, “improved the readability and ease” of using the [VHP Web-site] by redesigning and adding new materials, including a series of helpful suggestions and questions civilian interviewers should ask during the interview process. Such efforts produced immediate results and revealed how the use of the Internet could serve as both a promotional and training mechanism for the Project. “Hits at the Web-site rose between October and November 2001 from 13,000 to 39,000.”

As the official website evolved, the VHP encouraged the creation of “outreach” programs so as to reach other public schools, libraries, state archives, and historical societies not yet informed. The news reached Jerry Brenner, World War II veteran, in an undetermined manner. He responded, however, by donating to the VHP more than 1,200 letters written between him and his wife during the war. His letter collection became the project’s largest acquisition to date. G.W. Duquette, also a World War II veteran, donated sixty envelopes sent to his wife while serving in the Pacific theater. They included numerous “water color cartoons” drawn by Duquette’s close friend and pre-war art student, Samuel Boylston of South Carolina. Depicted were scenes from “Jungle Life, featuring boredom, letter writing, drinking, and goofing around.”

How to Participate: Educational Tutorials

Part of the mission of the VHP’s website is to provide education and training for interviewers. When accessing this site, visitors are initially greeted with a series of

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subject icons entitled “About the Project” (previously discussed), “How to Participate,” “Search the Veterans Collection,” “Frequently asked Questions,” and “News and Events.”

Probably no one section has been more influential in expanding collection numbers or recruiting volunteer groups as “How to” and its on-line educational tutorials.

The five-step plan in this section instructs on or how to register using an on-line form, access the VHP field kit, prepare for the interview, conduct the interview, and submit the collection to the LOC. The goal of the registration process is to weed out qualified interviews from unqualified ones. This portion of the five-step plan identifies the types of interviews sought. In step one volunteer’s are informed of the VHP’s collection policy, something (to the best of my knowledge) that was not made public knowledge until the homepage was expanded in 2003-2004. All participants must register the collection they wish to submit on-line. Self-recorded interviews by individual veterans are eligible; group interviews are not. Family members of deceased veterans wishing to submit materials are informed they cannot sign off on the Veteran’s Release Form without the consent of the holder of the veteran’s power of attorney, estate executor, or family member with legal ownership. Audio-video recordings are preferred, along with unpublished memoirs, journals, and diary collections. Types of materials not accepted include military issued equipment like canteens, helmets, unit patches, and

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9 Although I do not address “Frequently Asked Questions” or “News and Events” in great detail, vested parties should use them to gain a better understanding of VHP history and how to participate. See www.loc.gov/vets/vets-questions.html.

10 “How to Participate: Take these Five Easy Steps,” at www.loc.gov/vets/kits.html

11 Ibid
medals. In all cases, the LOC “encourages you to submit only original and unedited materials.” All audio/video recordings should be thirty minutes or longer.\textsuperscript{12}

The VHP website clarifies “quantity restrictions do not apply,” if the aforementioned materials accompany an interview.” In order to ensure first-rate quality, the VHP recommends that project participants submit either the interview and/or electronic copies (if available) in CD or DVD form “together with” all original documents and photographs. If one takes the “electronic” approach then they should use “.txt or .rtf formats for text files and .tif or .jpg for images (300 dpi, scanned at 8 bits per channel), and not copy protect any CD or DVD.” Non-standard materials are considered micro-cassettes, MP3s, photocopies, service stories sent by URL (send only hard copies texts or photographs), published unit histories, books, newspapers, magazines, or any written compilations of this kind, three-dimensional artifacts like medals, canteens, uniforms, helmets, dog tags and materials in picture frames. Others include interviews done on behalf of veterans or veterans who served in foreign militaries, and group interviews. “Materials falling outside the accepted scope will be disposed of or returned to the donor” to seek other repositories that will accept them.\textsuperscript{13}

Step Two entitled “Be Prepared,” offers web-site visitors suggestions on how to prepare for and carry out a successful and high quality, oral history interview. Divided into three parts, project participants are advised regarding the types of methods and equipment to use, what to do before they start, and where to conduct the interview. Project participants are also instructed to use audio and video

\textsuperscript{12} “How to Participate: Take these Five Easy Steps” at www lov gov/vets/kits.html

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid
equipment of the highest digital quality and utilize an external microphone to ensure sound quality. The VHP site recommends making two copies of the interview, one for the interviewer and the other for the veteran.¹⁴

Potential interviewers are encouraged to complete historical research on the period or war before the interview takes place. Since most VHP volunteers have little, if any, formal education or training with oral history, they are encouraged to review some of the published literature available in the on-line bibliography section. There are other preliminary tasks to consider if one hopes to be prepared. Interviewers are instructed to learn in advance when and where the interviewee/veteran served, in what unit, specific campaign, and battle. Next, individuals are advised to make contact with or visit the veteran at least once before conducting the interview. During this phase, they should ask the person if he or she has any materials (letters, photographs, or other service records) to present before the interview. Based on past experiences, the VHP says these materials have a unique way of “jogging” memories and can be donated along with the audio or video interview. Before beginning the interview process, the interviewer should request that the veteran or interviewer fill out the “Biographical Data Form.” The questionnaire suggests rather than dictates what should be asked of the interviewee. In all cases, the VHP encourages interviewers to create a secondary list of ideas or questions. In order to get the process “off all the right foot”, interviewers are told to have a short conversation

¹⁴ See Step Two: “Be Prepared” at www.loc.gov/kitsvets
with the veteran before recording, not only to help all parties relax, but to introduce the interviewee to the questions you will be asking.\textsuperscript{15}

Under the heading “Where to interview,” interviewers are directed to consider the interview setting, the quality of equipment used, and to know something about the VHP or the specific war under investigation. Interviewers should choose a quiet area with soft surfaces (carpeting, upholstered furniture) to ensure better sound quality. The VHP instructs interviewers and interviewers to be fixed seated, not in a rocking chair or recliner, to avoid background noises like chiming or ticking clocks, air vents, air conditioners, telephones, televisions, radios, computers, or rambunctious pets during the interview process. All interviewers are advised to place the microphone between six to twelve inches from the interviewee, and to avoid videotaping in front of a window or bright light. Their cameras, minus those with zoom lens, should be focused on the upper body of the interviewee. Finally, the VHP recommends that individuals test and retest equipment sound levels to ensure the interviewee is audible.\textsuperscript{16}

Also in step three are suggestions for conducting the oral history interview. The VHP requests that interviewers begin the process by announcing in the microphone the name of the veteran, date of birth, branch of service and war served in, highest rank earned, date and place (city, town, state, but not address) of the interview, your name and relation to the subject, the names of others in attendance, and that the interview is part of the VHP at the LOC. Finally, before addressing the interviewee the interviewer should be aware that veterans can recall their experiences differently, some in more detail than

\textsuperscript{15} See “Step Two: Be Prepared, Before you Start” at www.loc.gov/vets/kit.html
\textsuperscript{16} See “Step Two: Be Prepared, What Equipment to Use” at www.loc.gov/vets/kit.html
others. Therefore, as the website tutorial indicates the job at hand is “to make the interviewee feel comfortable and guide him or her through their story of service,” while keeping personal comments at a minimum. Or “let the veteran do the talking...do not interrupt....Keep the interview moving. However, if the veteran is telling a significant story, do not push him or her along.” These guidelines, however informational or suggestive, should not keep interviewers from raising other questions in order to enhance the story.¹⁷

What to Ask: The Interview

The VHP website recommends that oral history interviewers take a chronological approach mixed with topical themes. Interviewers are then advised to first collect biographical details such as where and when the veteran was born, parents’ occupations, and number and gender of siblings if applicable. The next recommendations is that the interviewer ask what the veteran did before the war, and if they had other family members in the military. After this inquiry, they should ask about his or hers “Early Days of Service,” more specifically if they volunteered or were drafted. The other questions the VHP recommends for this section include: What were the veteran’s reasons for entering a particular branch of service? How did they feel about leaving home? Where did they train and what kind of specialized training did they receive? How well did they do they, or not, adapt to military life, particularly barracks life, quality of food, and interrelationships with fellow trainees are all suggested questions?¹⁸

¹⁷ See “Step Three: The Interview: How to Conduct an Interview” in the VHP Field Kit at http://www.loc.gov/vets/kit.html
¹⁸ See “Step Four: “What to Ask” at http://www.loc.gov/vets/kit.html
The third phase of the interview encompasses “Wartime Service.” The VHP advises interviewers to focus on where the veteran or civilian served/worked, experiences during overseas transport (if applicable), action witnessed, or a summary of everyday duties away from the combat zone. Persons interviewing are advised to ease into the question of “emotions relating to combat.” These types include witnessing casualties or other aspects of the modern warfare experience (there is no reference, however, to the individual taking human life). After easing into the interview, the VHP “recommends” that individuals to return to the “emotion” question of and learn more about the less discussed, disturbing questions about the combat experience. One might inquire if the subject entered military service with any regrets, fears, or preconceived notions about war in general. After obtaining this information, the VHP asks to inquire about friends they served with, or feelings of camaraderie, how they communicated with family and friends on the home front, and what types of recreational activities they sought when “off duty.”\[19\]

The VHP next recommends interviewers ask a series of questions about the “War’s End, Coming Home” and “Reflections.” In the former, veterans are asked to recall where they were when the war ended, by what means they returned home, type of reception their family and community gave them, how they adjusted (or not?) to civilian life. This series of questions concludes with VHP recommendations for interviewers to ask the subject if they stayed in contact with fellow veterans in later years or if they held memberships in any veterans’ organizations. While not mentioned here, one can assume

that interviewers could also shape questions to allow the veteran or supporter to reflect on how the war affected their life and what lessons, positive and negative, were learned from time in the military. Finally, the VHP noted that its advice constituted only a “series of suggested topics, an outline—not a script to be followed to the letter,” and that when in doubt “let the veteran tell the story in his or her own way.”

On the whole, the instructions offered in this section are intended to help historians to get the story from the informant without encouraging emotional outbursts. In other words, the LOC wants measured, reflective interviews not emotional or raw ones. Whether or not the tips will lead to a high-quality interview will depend on the types of questions asked. VHP guidelines do, however, allow for both the interviewee and interviewer to share in the process. The main objective for the VHP is to let the veteran speak, with little regard to the important role of the interviewer as mediator charged with maintaining some level of control throughout the process, if anything to avoid regression, repetitious statements and to ensure there is time for “your” questions to get asked.

Memoir Kit

The VHP seeks the participation of veterans who may not wish to provide a taped interview, rather write down their recollections. In 2003, the VHP prepared an on-line “Memoir Kit” that offers veterans and their supporter’s guidelines and tips to assist with writing personal wartime recollections. This portion of the VHP field kit has been mass-produced and distributed to the VHPs “volunteer network” of public schools and other

20 See “Step Three: The Interview, What to Ask,” in the VHP Field Kit at http://www.loc.gov/vets/kit.html
“youth partner organizations,” and includes a “large print version and audio version,” available on the VHP home web-page. The memoir kit consists of four sections: overview of the VHP, guidelines for writing the memoir, how to deliver the memoir, and required forms.\footnote{Mamie Moore quoted in, “Veterans History Project Announces New Initiatives on 50th Anniversary of Veterans Day,” \textit{Library of Congress News Release} (November 11, 2003).}

The VHP believes that memoirs and other written narratives like diaries and letter collections are key sources of information and, thus valuable to the overall collection. While there is no maximum length all submissions are expected to be as detailed as possible (the longest memoir received to date at 900 pages, with most averaging 30 to 40 pages). However, it considers twenty page narratives a “good start.” Veterans are also encouraged to submit (together with the memoir or not), no letter, diary and journals under ten pages, as well as original maps, photographs, two-dimensional artwork, and other documents like official military, instructional, and informational pamphlets. Original documents are preferred, but “high-quality” copies are accepted.\footnote{VHP “Memoir Kit: Guidelines for Writing the Memoir,” 4, at \textit{www.loc.gov/vets/kit.html}}

Veterans are instructed to follow three steps before settling in to write. They are described on the website as “spark your memory,” “develop a timeline,” and “work on a list of topics.” The process of gathering together military papers, maps, uniforms, photographs, diaries, letters, and medals might be the best way to spark individual memories. They are also asked to recall “Where you were or what were you doing on December 7, 1941 and after the war ended?” Developing a timeline would include writing down where one served during the war, beginning with place of enlistment or
drafting, decision to enter civilian service, place of discharge (end of service), and exact
dates if possible. Finally, developing a “list of topics” is encouraged. Topics memory
related may vary depending on length of service, with some powerful and others more
mundane. Recalling the names of fellow service members or those still in contact with
might also be advantageous in terms refreshing and sharing memories.23

The VHP list of suggestive questions are meant to elicit memories and may offer
understanding or insight in determining just how they will help future generations of
Americans to understand the war experience. Questions are seemingly formatted to allow
the interviewer to maintain control of the interview and for veterans to speak freely. It is
unclear at this time, however, if the right types of questions are being that go beyond
those of the biographical type towards those of the humanistic variety that reveal the
darker, more painful side of war, or the ones that make the story most worth telling and
preserving.24

Start Writing

The VHP informs veterans that writing of any kind requires training, practice, and
above all, discipline. What is asked of veterans/civilian employees to share is similar to
those suggestions found in the “what to ask” section of the oral history interview.
Memoirists are advised to begin with personal information pre-dating their
military/civilian service then discuss early active duty experiences, and close out with
recollections about war service, when it ended, and post-war life. The VHP recommends
that he memoirist take a chronological approach with he or she opening with some level

24 Ibid.
of biographical input and/or pre-service information. The VHP welcomes candor and testimonials that approach the dark side of war, but cautions individuals to avoid "extremely derogatory statements" that one may or may not regret after submitting the memoir.\(^\text{25}\)

Such advice should raise a red flag in the academic community. First, information that may be most valuable in the wartime memoir or oral history interview is when the veteran goes back in time to recall memories long-since suppressed, horrors of war, and past feelings of guilt that often accompany them. Second, the interview may be more evenly balanced or not limited to the "flag waving" type, and towards the "darker" side of war, and/or the emotional and psychological effects that have persisted long after the war ended. Third, personal views may be lost when certain "derogatory terms" change over time, as in reference to the enemy during World War II as the "Japs" vs. postwar "Japanese. Presumably extreme comments would also include statements regarding gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and possibly antiwar sentiments that may or may not have been a factor during the war or years after. Finally, the VHP does not make it clear what such "statements" might entail, therefore leaving one to speculate whether it is interested in collecting stories based on how veterans felt at the time or in hindsight.

Penning a memoir many years after the fact can be problematic. What the veteran writes has been tainted by time, or grounded in political-correctness and patriotic sentiments. He or she may not wish to share their horrific memories of combat, or reveal racist/nationalist views. To not, however, would be as Tim O’Brien has said falls into the

\(^{25}\) VHP "Memoir Kit: Guidelines for Writing the Memoir," 6, at www.loc.gov/vets
trap of creating a story that is uplifting, noble, heroic, or moral. The VHP suggests that veterans try to recall the casualties in their unit or aboard ship, or expand on how such experiences affected them, unit, or overall morale. Although there is no mention of it in the on-line tutorials, an interviewer might ask a combat veteran to explain what was expected of them in unit operations or how they responded to changing missions, strategy and tactics, or felt about enduring long hours in isolation. Not to be overlooked would be how daily pressures affected their performance of duty or view on the war. If wounded in battle ask the veteran to recall their level of fear or trauma. Or, if a prisoner-of-war, determine if they were ever able to reconcile their situation or relationship with captors?

Especially for Educators and Students

Another special portion of the website tutorial is designed for educators and students. Like with other on-line tutorials, the VHP “Guidelines for Students/Youth Participation” should be viewed as both educational and suggestive (based on previous experiences working with younger age groups). First, these contributors should come from grades 10-12 and higher (younger grades will require considerable more supervision from teachers or parents). Educators are encouraged to explain to students what oral history entails before embarking on a project (one should not expect to simply relay dates and places of wars and expect them to go into the field, interview subjects, and come back with an extensive, high quality story. To avoid such problems, the on-line tutorial advises individuals or groups to research the VHP Experiencing War website, work closely with librarians and multi-media specialists in their area of operations, conduct
practice interviews, or view recent war films like *Saving Private Ryan* or *We Were Soldiers*.\(^26\)

How to structure the oral history interview is similar to those listed in the “How to Participate” section. Teachers should be willing to help students with the entire interview phase to avoid problems. Interviews should be at least thirty minutes long, organized chronologically, and structured based on sample questions that detail background and entry into service, basic training, wartime service and experiences, and ending with post-service and later life experiences. As the interview unfolds, students are encouraged to ask other questions (types not specified) but do so without rushing the interview. If the class project requires transcribing the interview, then teachers/students should make sure all forms are completed (Biographical Data and Interviewer Release Forms), check all spelling and grammar, or review the overall quality of the submission before forwarding it to the LOC.\(^27\) Although student and youth groups (especially those tenth grade and above) around the country are encouraged to participate, the VHP notes that individual classrooms are “ineligible” to become official partners. However, by indicating the name of the school on required forms with the interviews submitted ensures that institution will receive credit in the database.\(^28\)

If a project still has initiation problems, participants might want to take a step backwards and consult the rich collection of background/educational resources listed on

\(^{26}\) “How to Participate: Guidelines for Students and Youth Participation” at [http://www.loc.gov/vets/youth-resources.html](http://www.loc.gov/vets/youth-resources.html)

\(^{27}\) Ibid.

\(^{28}\) “How to Participate: Especially for Educators and Students” at [http://www.loc.gov/vets/youth-resources.html](http://www.loc.gov/vets/youth-resources.html)
the VHP website. Beyond the published literature, there are sample materials from other school/youth organizations projects: interview, audio-video recording logs, and transcript (all require the free Real Player to access). The sample interview with Thomas Hodge, a Vietnam veteran, runs forty-one minutes and was conducted by students from Cathedral and Lyman Memorial High School in Massachusetts.29 An audio/video recording log accompanies a series of interviews compiled by students at James Madison High School in Virginia with veterans Bernard Edelman and Lewis Robeson.30 Finally, a sample transcript made by a freshman student at John F. Kennedy High School in Washington, D.C. from an interview with veteran Carmel Arcilesi can be viewed. Other sources of value include books and web resources that present information about military history, U.S. involvement in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf War.31 The site also contains two classroom and youth participant websites to serve as models.32

Event Planning and Publicity Toolkit for Partner Organizations

The “Event Planning” tutorials target those volunteer groups wishing to organize or publicize a project through public events involving the media. The VHP suggests using National holidays, commemorative events, family reunions, and other occasions to serve

29 See “Sample Materials from School/Youth Organizations” at http://www.loc.gov/vets/youth-resources.html, 2. In this interview, the VHP appreciates how the student interviewer came prepared.
30 Note here that in both the audio and video logs they mention what the veterans talk about, not just the interviewer questions.
31 For a complete listing see “Background Resources: Web resources and books” at www.loc.gov/vets/youth-resources.html, 2-4.
32 Selected samples of youth participant websites are Loudoun Valley High School, VA: http://www.loudoun.k12.va.su/schools/vlhs/defending_the_dream/index and Mariemont School District, OH: http://www.mariemontschools.org/veterans
as interviewing opportunities. For those individuals or groups conducting interviews, but have no family members who served in the Armed Forces, the VHP suggests visiting local retirement communities and other senior care centers like VA hospitals.33

Among the activities recommended to coincide with interviewing is the creation of honor roll lists of all veterans from their hometowns and display it in a local government building. Individuals or groups are advised to conduct a Veteran’s Census and contact their local newspaper to have it published and/or create a poster of the names for mass distribution. A “to host a USO-theme” concert or gathering and to encourage veterans and their families to attend a “Veterans Open House,” or a “Veterans Appreciation Day” were also recommended. Finally, the VHP suggests partner organizations create a Web site and then link it to the VHP website to “spotlight” veterans from the community.34

The VHP acknowledges that these initiatives and guidelines clearly invoke “grassroots” approaches, but that such projects can be problematic. Depending on scope, many may require recruitment of local government offices, officials, and/or prominent community leaders. The VHP offers several tips in this area like joining forces with public libraries and utilizing local archives to “research wartime activities,” that could establish a preliminary list of hometown veterans and supporters of a particular war. By drawing on the services of librarians, participants could then more easily schedule a war

33 Just as it is suggested for individuals, potential state or local projects are reminded that along with conducting oral history interviews they should inquire about wartime letters between spouses and sweethearts, photo collections, unpublished memoirs, diaries, and journals. See “Community Events and Other Ways to Gather Veterans’ Narratives” at http://www.loc.gov/vets/Communityevents.html
34 See “Community Events” on-line at http://www.loc.gov/vets.html
film (at the library) and recruit a veteran to introduce it and discuss his or her wartime experiences. Organizing book exhibits or simply hanging posters at the library might also spark interest among veterans and home front supporters to speak about their experiences or “display their memorabilia,” and sit through an oral history interview.\textsuperscript{35}

Beyond these suggestions, beginning projects might want to expand their search for participants or volunteers to local branches of the AARP, American Red Cross, state libraries and veteran organizations, historic sites, and museums to “explore veterans-related volunteer opportunities.” Visiting these places, along with any military bases in the area, would allow participants to establish a new or “existing volunteer network” to conduct oral interviews, or at least establish a list of potential interviewees. For those volunteers unable to travel, a place to start could be local industries to “determine” workforce involvement in past wars, or to “enlist” potential VHP interviewers from a pool of retired teachers or public servant employees. Other viable options would be to contact JROTC programs and military schools where veteran and military-related studies are offered on a regular basis, and their leaders either experienced war themselves or know people who did.\textsuperscript{36}

The VHP acknowledges that other approaches might begin with recruitment of the local media and government officials. More successful ways to engage the media are writing letters to the editor before commemoration dates, issuing periodic press releases, featuring an individual veteran or veterans association via the newspaper or newsletter.

\textsuperscript{35}“Involve your Local Library” at http://www.loc.gov/vets/Communityevents.html
\textsuperscript{36}“Engage your Community”
As noted in chapter five, local television or radio stations can be powerful allies, especially if they consent to broadcasting a short project introductory audio or video piece promoting the local project. Placing public service announcements to air scheduled veteran programs, or conducting “live’ interviews with veterans have also been successful. Recruiting local, state, or national politicians to assist the project can be problematic, especially if the goal is request them to “issue proclamations on commemoration dates or to declare a ‘Day of Recognition’ for a veterans’ group.” If reaching the elected elite proves too much of a challenge, the VHP suggests that volunteer groups plan “joint projects” with VHP official partners in their area of operations.37

The Project has recruited numerous volunteers from higher education, secondary schools, and students to participate. They have recognized that these establishments have higher enrollment numbers and regularly offer coursework in history, English, communications, and other interdisciplinary fields of study which use oral history. The best way for project coordinators to recruit volunteers in their home states is to contact public schools directly and request that they “include” volunteer work with the VHP as an option for community service or service learning for students (many high schools around the country require such service for graduation). As I note at the end of the chapter, universities and secondary schools have regularly contributed to the VHP not

37 See “Have the Media Help Promote your Work” at http://www.loc.gov/vets/Communityevents.html. For a complete list of past and present VHP partners search www.loc.gov/vets/vets-partners.html
only through collection numbers, but also by attracting media coverage and promoting it on a national level.38

One of the most frequently asked questions of the VHP is what happens to a completed memoir or oral history interview? This is also covered on-line. The first step before mailing it out is to ensure the “Release Form” and Biographical Data Form” are included in the packet (a VHP representative, however, will contact you if your packet is missing forms). Next, a letter will be sent acknowledging individual participation and that your memoir has been received. The LOC will then preserve the memoir according “professional archival standards,” and the veteran’s name will logged in the Project’s National Registry of Service (it list all the names and brief service histories of those who submit materials). After this, a staff member will enter information from the Biographical Data Form into the collection database.39 Finally, “By sending your memoir to the [VHP] at the [LOC] you are making sure it will be preserved, and will provide extraordinary educational opportunities for future historians and researchers."40 It will also allow national project-partners and third party participant’s access its contents, along with acquiring basic techniques “necessary for successful interviews."41

At first glance, the VHP has created a highly useful website, and one that offers many worthwhile tips and tutorials for conducting oral history interviews, penning

38 “Engage and Educate Youth” at http://www.loc.gov/vets/Communityevents.html
40 See VHP Memoir Kit: “Delivering your Memoir to the Veterans History Project,” 6. To ensure safe delivery all materials should be sent via commercial delivery service.
memoirs, or developing state and community-level projects. Weaknesses do exist in this model. Participants are not forewarned of the time-consuming nature and care required for writing a memoir and/or transcribing an oral history and re-checking it against the interview. Furthermore, the tutorial fails to discuss how the quality of the interview depends on many factors including the skill and knowledge of an interviewer and his/her ability to develop a rapport with the informant. If such advice is taken, then the best interviews and memoirs can be forwarded to Washington, D.C., made available on the Internet, and become a great research tool for future generations of scholars and researchers.

Official Project Partners

In order to amass an extensive catalog of some sixty thousand veteran’s testimonies, the VHP relies on public participation from three major categories of people: official and youth partners, and volunteers to conduct audio and video interviews, gather and submit unpublished memoirs, and letter and diary collections. More recently the collecting policy has been expanded to include not only men and women in uniform, and non-combatants in support of combat operations. The latter group expands to those Americans who volunteered in home front activities and/or supported the armed services in some other capacity (Rosie the Riveters, interned Japanese-Americans, factory and steel workers, civilian service employees, and war protestors).  

For the first two years after its establishment the VHP relied on Washington insiders to get the word out. In the meantime the staff created a partnership program and

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42 Source: Sorkin, “From Concept to Reality,” 3-4.
sought participants from the for-profit and non-profit, including the AARP, veteran organizations, and educational institutions. The list of the founding partner groups on the VHP website reveals many are categorized as “National Organizations.” Examples include the National Museum of Patriotism, Daughters of the American Revolution, American Legion, American Libraries Association, Blinded Veterans Association, and the Association of for the Study of African American Life and History. Those partner groups listed by U.S. state consist of state historical societies and libraries, public libraries, Veteran’s Affairs branch offices, and universities and community colleges to name a few. It appears the only requirement to become a national project partner is to fill out an on-line application (the VHP makes no reference to other steps in the process).

It appears the VHP has created a uniform system for identifying and negotiating with potential partner organizations. Other than annual award ceremonies held in Washington D.C. to honor individuals who have submitted those most oral history interviews, it is unclear how or if partner groups are publicly acknowledged or rewarded for their work. Based on the partner list alone, it might be argued that the partnership selection process is subject to political influence. A non-systematic analysis of those groups listed as Founding “National Organizations” reveals they were created and or funded by the federal government. Nearly all are military branch, veteran, or war-related.

43 For a complete listing of National Organizations/Founding Partners or those by individual U.S. state see, “List of Founding Partners” at http://www.loc.gov/vets/partners/partners.html
44 Ibid.
They also just happen to be pro-veteran, pro-retiree, patriotic, capitalistic, and not pacifistic or critical of war in general.\footnote{See “List of Founding Partners,” at http://www.loc.gov/vets/partners/partners.html}

Despite such accomplishments it had yet to establish itself as a national grassroots oral history project, rather one still relying heavily on Washington, D.C. politicians to promote the Project. Published reports indicated that total of 94 U.S. Senators and 202 congress members participated or contributed. Every congressional district in the United States was represented at some level. According to a \textit{Librarian of Congress Annual Report}, “the VHP collection in AFC doubled...from 22,000 submissions totaling 80,000 items in fiscal 2004, to 40,000 submissions comprising 160,000 items” in 2005. In just a few short years, it had gone from something manageable by staff and project partners to Bulger called a “monster.”\footnote{Bulger interview, (May 2008).} This appeared the case when by the close of 2005 the searchable database included “8,592 audio interviews, 10,770 visual interviews, 312 diaries, and 33,887 photographs, scrapbooks, memoirs, films, maps, and letter collections.”\footnote{See \textit{Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress} (2005), 45-46.}

Corporate partner groups made monetary donations and established outreach programs to ensure its success. In May 2001, just days before annual Memorial Day celebrations, the LOC invited major veteran (s) service organizations and history associations to Washington, D.C. to become “official partners.”\footnote{By early 2001, the number of “project partners” endorsing the VHP reached one hundred. The names include those from prominent veteran’s organizations, universities, museums, and historical societies. The complete list can be found at http://www.loc.gov/vets/partners/partners.html} Among those invited
were the American Association of Retired Peoples (AARP) and the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA). According to a LOC news release, the partnership program was created “to encourage affiliated organizations, community groups, and individuals to collect these recollections and firsthand accounts.”\textsuperscript{49} At the same time members of Congress gathered suggestions LOC/AFC to further promote the project in the month’s upcoming commemorations, and recognized the value of these organizations.\textsuperscript{50} Ellen McCulloch-Lovell said “partners strengthen and enrich the nationwide initiative by their activities in support of the project’s goals. The have much interest in honoring our veterans at war, “in first-hand accounts of the effects of war abroad and at home and in the methodology of recorded interviews [helps] strengthen the project.”\textsuperscript{51} By utilizing higher profile organizations, she also determined it would be “easier for veterans and volunteers around the country to hear about and participate in a local or statewide initiative.”\textsuperscript{52}

To avoid the VHP becoming a clearing-house center for veteran history activity, a follow-up message ensued stressing the importance of such partner groups to act, when in doubt, independently. They were initially asked to provide “news to report, not just when we ask for it,” or as one memo read, in terms of “a veterans project you are developing…Interviewed veterans’ names and other details [using the biographical information form], so our database can include veterans. Public programs you have planned or presented, supporting the [VHP]…related publications or publicity…A

\textsuperscript{49} Source: “Congress Establishes Veterans Oral History Project,” (November 9, 2000).
\textsuperscript{50} “Ellen McCulloch-Lovell,” (May 25, 2001).
\textsuperscript{51} McCulloch-Lovell quoted in, Veterans History Project News (Winter 2001).
\textsuperscript{52} Lovell quoted in VHPN (Winter 2001).
reception or event honoring veterans in your community." The call for help thereafter led to more national organizations becoming official partners of the Project, suggesting that “partnership” did not mean close collaboration rather strength in numbers.

Becoming an “official partner” of the VHP required only that interested parties fill out an on-line form. Adhering to official terms meant collecting and preserving a minimum of twenty oral histories each year, or “recruiting volunteers, training volunteers to conduct interviews, identifying veterans to be interviewed, lending equipment; and creating veterans history projects” in one’s home state or community. From then on, partner organizations could donate recorded interviews to the LOC/VHP archives or retain the histories locally, or “notifying the [Library] of their existence in order to become part of its National Registry of twentieth century veterans’ personal histories.”

To “get the message” out the VHP sought assistance from major veteran and senior organizations.

Advanced Association of Retired Peoples

No one official, in this case corporate partner group had more impact, set the precedent, or contributed more to the VHP during its infant stages than the AARP. With a membership of 39 million, and a powerful lobbyist group in Washington, D.C., this organization enjoys status as the nation’s largest non-profit, non-partisan group for people over fifty in the country. Founded in 1958 by Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, a retired high school principal and founder of the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA), it first shed light on the need for private health care insurance to aging Americans. Since

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53 See *VHPN* (Winter 2001).
then, the overall goal has been to “promote independence, dignity and purpose for older persons, to enhance the quality of life for older persons, to encourage older people to ‘to serve, not be served.” Today it provides information and resources, and lobbies for “legislation, consumer, and legal issues; assists members in serving their communities, and offers a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services” for veterans and other non-vet members.55

By invitation from Billington and Lovell-McCulloch, the AARP was introduced as a founding corporate sponsor and leading project partner in 2001. Sponsorship was for good reason—monetary support and access to an unprecedented number of veterans. Esther “Tess” Canja, then president of the AARP, pledged $3 million support for the project over its first three years to supplement the core funding provided in the annual LOC appropriation from Congress (to date, that number is 2.4 million dollars). At the inaugural Five-Star Council meeting, Canja said in the months ahead her organization would “turn to our 35 million members to find veterans whose stories have yet to be recorded…We also will create a well-trained volunteer force to conduct proper oral history interviews with their parents, friends, and even strangers.” In close, she proclaimed that the AARP looked forward to “working with the Veterans History Project to develop public programs across the country that will allow veterans to share their experiences in uniform with new and vast audiences.”56 Few would argue that without

55 Branch offices exist in every U.S. state including the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico, with “over 2,500 local chapters” nationwide. Volunteers are able to coordinate. See, http://www.aarp.org/aarp/articles/aarphistory.html.
initial AARP funding and recruitment assistance the VHP would not enjoy the success it has today.\textsuperscript{57}

To share interest with the AARP, VHP staff members have attended their meetings and annual conventions. On September 12, 2002, the VHP joined 11,000 people in San Diego, CA. At an exhibition booth, "veterans, their spouses, and retirees seeking new careers as oral historians" visited and viewed a five-minute promotional video and to take turns investigating the Project’s website. Deputy Librarian, Donald Scott, gave a moving speech designed to generate "much interest" among those 7,500 AARP members on hand. Joining him was Walter Cronkite, also a Five-Star Council member. The previous night, both took part in a stirring tribute to Korean War veterans, a ceremonial project resulting from a joint AARP and the U.S. Department of Defense effort to "locate" men and women service veterans of that war.” VHP staff members Sarah Rouse, Nancy Mitchell, and Jason Lee “spoke personally with more than 500 veterans,” distributing “hundreds of project brochures, bookmarks, and buttons.” Rouse said, “It was very exciting for the project to see the enthusiasm on the part of AARP members.” Many people were intrigued that a government project was interested in their own personal experiences—that their experiences could be part of the historical record of the [LOC].”\textsuperscript{58}

Based on these specific events, the VHP noted an increase in activity in December 2002, when collection numbers surpassed the 4,000 mark. The \textit{Veterans History Project}
*Newsletter* reported “an exponential increase from about 600 last year at this time. Actual items amount to over 15,000. Based on the recent partner survey, we estimate thousands more interviews are on their way to us.” Official partner counts were over five hundred, up from 115 the previous year. Nearly 100,000 memoir kits had been distributed during the year, with partners contributing “40% of the VHP collections.” At this time, it can be speculated that this level of growth was possible without compromising the quality of interviews submitted.

The 2002 convention also inspired the AARP to develop program assistance workshops and on-line tutorials for veterans and potential interviewers. First, they encouraged interested partiers to arrange “free interview workshops” in their home states. Training coordinator at the time, David Albee, advised workshop leaders to keep the AARP informed with dates/times, places, and group numbers (twenty or thirty suggested). So as to ensure interviews of the highest quality, Albee recommended that people in charge follow these suggestions so that the talents of AFS and OHA volunteers located in their areas could be utilized to the fullest. These comments suggest that concerns that oversights and/monitoring issues predated the 2002 collection and might of had significant effect on concerns about the quality of interviews being submitted.

At the same time, AARP staff members assisted the VHP whey they posted an on-line guide entitled *Remembrance: Recording Veteran’s Oral Histories* at [www.aarp.org/learn](http://www.aarp.org/learn), and encouraged volunteers to write for a copy of its *Event Planning and Publicity Toolkit*, or download a copy of the text at [http://www.loc.gov/vets/vets-](http://www.loc.gov/vets/vets-)

The AARP reported immediate results particularly the formation of its first state-level project. On September 26, 2002 and in recognition of the National Day of Service, the state of Colorado "kicked off" their first veteran’s oral history project. In early 2003, coordinators announced, “there will be a state initiative that will allow us to highlight these unsung heroes” and to “establish regional leads to conduct the interviews.”

Veterans Affairs

The VHP has also benefited from the services of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Today, VA membership numbers are in the millions. How both have worked together can be measured not only in more terms of sharing access to thousands of living veterans from major twentieth century wars, but also in how they strive to honor the American veteran. For example, VA organizational mission and vision (not to different from that of the VHP) entail “serving and honoring the men and women who are American veterans,” and to “provide veterans world-class benefits and services they have earned—and to do so by adhering to the highest standards of [core values] compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability, and stewardship.”

In today’s modern VA, the strategic and enabling goals are centered on serving the living and dead veteran. First, it hopes to “restore the capability of veterans with disabilities to the greatest extent possible” and improve quality of life by paying pensions and Medicare. Second, the veteran looks to the VA for information about post-military

61 “Program Assistance,” 4-5.
62 See “AARP Colorado to Kick Off Veterans History Project,” at AARP.org
opportunities or how to make a “smooth transition from active military service to civilian life.” Third, “Honor and serve veterans in life, and memorialize them in death [burials] for their sacrifices on behalf of the Nation.” Finally, “contribute to the public health, emergency management, socioeconomic well-being, and history of the Nation.”

At a press conference on October 2001, Anthony Principi, incoming VA president and newly elected Five Star Council member, spoke on behalf of his organization regarding its participation with the VHP. “I am deeply-honored to be on the Five-Star Council of the VHP. On the eve of Veterans Day, we pay tribute to and celebrate the contribution of the 25 million men and women who have served our nation in uniform.” Principi, a combat-decorated Vietnam veteran, made another guarantee, or one ensuring a high-level of commitment from his organization. Thereafter, the VA served as a mechanism for the VHP and volunteers to comb through their hospitals for potential interviewees. Principi said that his department could “reach millions of veterans, including those in VA hospitals (roughly 60,000) and clinics (over 4 million a year seek care).” He added, “I look forward to dedicating resources of my department…Every community in America with a veterans organization or military organization will gather up their stories and lessons [learned from war], and we will preserve them for all time.”

64 See “Strategic and Enabling Goals,” at http://www.va.gov/about_va/mission.asp
Disabled American Veterans

The VHP negotiated partnership with the Disabled American Veterans organization was conducted in the same fashion as with the AARP and the VA. Early on, Project leaders determined this organization had the resources to provide national legitimacy, grants, and potential lists of interviewees from our nation's veteran's hospitals. Founded in 1920 in by disabled veterans of World War I for the purpose of championing the "unique interests," of the wounded veteran, it took until 1932 before Congress declared it the "official voice of the nation's wartime disabled veterans."

Today, the organization has a membership of 1.2 million, and eighty-eight offices in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, which employ nearly 260 National Service Officers. They "represent veterans and their families with claims from the VA, the Department of Defense (DOD) and other government agencies." Overall, members are credited with providing "grassroots advocacy and services in communities nationwide." They also are a powerful lobbyist group that educates "lawmakers and the public" about issues veteran-related, which includes adopting "legislation to help veterans and promote their service and sacrifice."  

How the DAV helps the VHP most is in sharing access to its membership of living and wounded veterans. Yearly studies are compiled to pinpoint which war or conflict contains the largest living groups. Statistics compiled in a 2003 study revealed current membership by major twentieth century conflict: World War I (0.05%), World War II (33.14%), Korea (10.95%), Vietnam (38.26%), Iran, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama

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(6.75%), and Persian Gulf, Somalia, Bosnia, and Afghanistan (6.77%). As it stands concerning the “lethality of war wounds affecting U.S. troops in these conflicts,” one notices that those numbers are numbing: World War I (21%), World War II (30%), Korea (25%), Vietnam (24%), Persian Gulf (24%), and Iraq and Afghanistan (9%). Overall membership continues to grow today. The Annual Report from 2007 noted an increase from 1.25 million to 1.4 million since 2003, with over 1 million veterans categorized as “fully-paid lifetime members.” Based on these numbers alone, it appears that the VHP will have a large pool of veterans in which to choose from and that extra attention will be given to World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

In addition to providing the VHP with lists of potential veteran interviewees and inviting its staff to attend annual conventions, the DAV offers grants for research and education purposes. One of their first monetary donations went towards printing the Project’s first instructional kit, so that all “volunteers wishing to participate in the project by interviewing veterans” and/or contributing material culture items scheduled for storage at the LOC and “VHP partner repositories” across the country. In July 2001, the DAVs 80th annual conference was held in Miami, Florida where Peter Bartis, VHP senior program analyst conducted an oral history workshop. The meeting drew hundreds and prompted the DAV September-October magazine to pen a story entitled “Collecting Veterans Stories.” David W. Graham, DAV Washington Headquarters Executive

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69 See DAV 2007 Annual Report, 35.
70 Information and Anthony Principi quoted in, Veterans History Project News (Winter 2001).
Director said, "the men and women who served [and do] much to preserve our precious liberty and way of life deserve to have their stories told."  

Veterans of Foreign Wars

When compared to other organizations, the VFW has been no less influential in its support of the VHP. It serves as the voice of veterans and has played a major role improving VA medical centers and services for women veterans. When compared to other organizations, the VFW has been no less influential in its support of the VHP. It serves as the voice of veterans and has played a major role improving VA medical centers and services for women veterans. Its history can be traced back 1899 when numerous veterans of the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection returned home and founded local chapters in order to gain rights and benefits for their military service. In 1913, the “first national organization within the United States to represent veterans of all foreign wars was established.” By 1915, membership had grown to 5,000 members and by 1936 to almost 36,000. As of 2004, the organization had more than 1.9 million members and from every major conflict from World War II to the Iraqi Conflict.

Throughout the twentieth century they undertook numerous peacetime and patriotic “lobbying efforts” on behalf of the American veteran. Unlike other veteran organizations their mission statement is to “honor the dead by helping the living,” but covers a broad spectrum to include remaining “vigilant” against all internal and external

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74 See the Official Site of Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, “About the VFW” at [http://www.vfw.org/index.cfm](http://www.vfw.org/index.cfm)
threats. Their overall goal is to stress patriotic values, with little regard to the justifications or consequences of fighting wars, like loss of life, personal injury, and how such experiences have transformed lives (either positively or negatively). The Ohio Historical Society went a step further when it said, “Contradictions between celebration of soldier solidarity and individual heroism, between collective responsibility for veteran welfare and extremist individualism, and between pervasive anti-statist rhetoric and arguments for expanded state benefits for veterans permeate the history of veterans groups in general and of the VFW in particular.”

Besides their work with veterans, the VFW has more recently helped fund the Vietnam, Korean War, World War II, and Women in Military Service Memorials in Washington, D.C. In 2001, around the time the VHP officially opened, the organization “unveiled” a special tribute to “service and country” with a dedication of Centennial Plaza. In August Director Ellen McCulloch-Lovell recognized the value of speaking in person to certain branches of the VFW in order to strengthen national support. At the annual conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Representative Ron Kind opened the session. Along with VFWs Mike Gormalley, director of the Citizenship Education and Community Service, the new VHP director informed veterans of the overall value of the project. On hand to report, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, “generated strong local press coverage,” penning an article that “inspired scores of letters, calls, and emails to Washington, D.C home office. Calls were not restricted to military veterans, but also

75 See “About the VFW,” at http://www.vfw.org/index
76 Quoted from http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org
77 See “About the VFW.”
scores of others came from potential volunteer interviewers that included members of the annual Milwaukee veterans' parade organization.\footnote{78 See “National VFW Meeting in Milwaukee Features Veterans History Project,” \textit{Veterans History Project News} (Winter 2001).}

While most on hand in Milwaukee came from the ranks of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam veterans, Gormalley concurred with McCulloch-Lovell that the project needed to find veterans of World War I “as quickly as possible.” He sent out emails to all “VFW State Departments” requesting support. Initial efforts along with follow-up correspondence, gave the VHP leads in Kentucky, Pennsylvania and Minnesota. Most helpful was an auxiliary member from the Florida VFW who referred the project to the “Veterans of WW1 Headquarters” who, in turn, forwarded copies of the WWI “veterans’ census data.” Recognizing time was short, the VHP departed from its normal procedures by “contacting professional oral historians to conduct interviews” with those living veterans.\footnote{79 Ibid.} With only a few veterans at their disposal, it became clear that the VHP was founded two decades too late and that much of the WWI experiences would be lost forever.

Also in August of that year, McCulloch-Lovell traveled to Bismarck, North Dakota to meet with Senator Bryon Dorgan. Present was a “steering committee of twelve leaders” representing several veterans groups and “other leaders of press and education organizations.” Dorgan was influential in forming a North Dakota based leadership team consisting of 69,000 veterans living in the northern plains states and college students “to bring various veterans and educational groups together” to form an oral history project.
Two daily newspapers, the Minot, ND and Bismarck, met with McCulloch-Lovell and Dorgan, and penned an Associated Press story on the meeting. The Message, an American Legion newsletter that chronicles veteran experiences across three wars (World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, also reported. They named “steering” committee members representing a host of veteran’s organizations that included the American Legion, VFW, Vietnam Veterans of America, DAV, and AMVETS.80

Since becoming official partners in 2001, the AARP, DVA, VFW, and DAV have all made significant contributions to the VHP. They gave legitimacy to the Project during its infant stages, notably in terms of national publicity, where they it looked to some partners for monetary support, the DVA to locate veterans, and others for assistance in training and education. On the whole, these organizations did not object to the VHP emphasis placed on collection numbers, at the expense of quality of interview. Nor did they get involved with project politics that adhered to the “spirit of legislation,” more precisely the part that opted for the use of amateurs over professionals.

Other National Project Partners

Many project partners have contributed to the VHP in terms of research and collection numbers. These groups are community leaders, non-profit organizations, university faculty, secondary education teachers and their students, and everyday volunteers. They have been responsible for carrying out specific VHP duties like planning, coordination and communication in the manner and scope established by Congress and the LOC. Justification for their partnerships were based on their ability to

create and advance community-based oral history projects, and marketing the VHP overall mission to a broader national audience. Since 2001 these unsung “heroes” have successfully recruited, trained, and retained staff and volunteers for the purpose of finding veterans and recording their stories. In 2002, the VHP reported that more than one-third of all U.S. states and some 250 active project partners had come onboard, including many national universities and small colleges. Other oral history projects came from the ranks of veterans and military organizations, civic organizations, state library and archive projects, and museums. All organizations not only endorsed the project, but also promised to “recruit their members as interviewers and serve as repositories for some of the materials.” Jim Parkel, incoming AARP president said in 2002 that nationwide efforts were still underway to recruit a volunteer force of interviewers and to expand public programs to teach oral history techniques.

The AARP and other senior/veteran organizations were successful in promoting the VHP at the national level, but more efforts were undertaken to gain national legitimacy, or cloak of legitimacy depending on interpretation. In this case, the LOC turned to professional organizations for training and education, acknowledging there is quite a bit of training and work involved in oral history. Two of the most sought out groups were the American Folklore Society (AFS) and the Oral History Association (OHA). Both groups were designated “national training partners” and instrumental in “conducting interviews” and for coordinating “workshop scheduling, offerings” with

professional folklorists and oral historians so as to assist in the formation of state or community-based projects. *News from the Veterans History Project* reported that such a national effort was designed to “increase participant’s understanding of the personal aspects of oral interviewing and the technical aspects of audio and video documentation.”

While recruiting the AFS and OHA to help volunteers to conduct interviews was vital to the Project, a major problem still persisted as to how to transcribe the hundreds of testimonies pouring into Project headquarters on a monthly basis. The VHP requested that participants transcribe all interviews, but did accept those not. In 2002 Ron Kind recommended using the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) where his wife Tawni was already on staff. Under the leadership of Mark Golden, Executive Director, the 23,000 member organization (each required to capture 225 words per minute with ninety-eight percent accuracy) was “committed to providing comprehensive and accurate information for the benefit of the public and private sector,” and volunteered to develop a national public program and to help transcribe some one-thousand audio and video cassettes. Ellen McCulloch-Lovell said this “is a great example of an organization using its resources and talents to participate.”

Eight years later, Bob Patrick declared, “oral histories are great but they are hard for historians to use [if not transcribed],” suggesting in the future the VHP may only accepted those transcribed. A integral part of the VHP

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82 Information and quotes from, “Workshops Offered,” *Veterans History Project News & Events* (Summer 2002).
83 Laura Daily, “Courting Veterans’ Voices” (November 2008) at www.aarp.org/makeadifference/volunteer/articles/1000 Voices.html
84 See “National Court Reporters Association,” *Veterans History Project News & Events* (Spring/Summer 2003).
are court reporters who have transcribed over 1,500 interviews "with almost 100 members now actually conducting their own [oral history interviews]. With the VHP gathering between 100 to 200 collections per week "the work may never end for the volunteer court reporters."\(^8^5\)

After joining forces with the NCRA, the VHP made major plans to celebrate Veterans Day 2003. The major benefactor of this event was national public radio.\(^8^6\) The one-hour program entitled "Coming Home," derived from the more expansive series "Experiencing War," and broadcasted "stories of sacrifice, triumph, great expectations and crushing disappointments," from the perspective of the common soldier. A reoccurring theme was that some veterans returned home "to ticker-tape parades and bonuses while others [were] told by their superiors not to wear their uniforms." Hosted by Max Cleeland, former U.S. Senator and Vietnam War hero who lost both legs and his right arm in a grenade explosion, the horrific nature of modern warfare was revealed. Reflecting on his own experiences, the crippled veteran said of his tragedy, "It was a freak accident of war, but that's war."\(^8^7\)

On November 14, 2003, the VA, DAV, and the National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL) partnered with the LOC/VHP. The goal was to "increase awareness" of the project along gender lines. The NFWL got involved in order to improve the

\(^8^5\) The cost of a single oral history transcription by most estimates ranges between fifty and one hundred dollars per hour. See Daily, "Courting Veterans' Voices" at http://www.aarp.org

\(^8^6\) Veterans Day has its origins in Armistice Day, marking the end of World War I on November 11, 1918. Our first observance of Veterans Day was in Emporia, Kansas, 1953.

representation of women testimonies within the VHP. In order to increase the proportion of female participants, they encouraged “women from every state and territory in the nation [to] serve” as team leaders in the NFWLs “Heart to Heart” Project. During the first year, from November 1, 2003 through February 24, 2004, the focus was fixed on World War II. In subsequent years interviews were made with veterans of the Korea, Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars. Nearly 3,000 interviews with female veterans were collected over a four-month period.

State Oral History Projects

Around the same time the VHP gained national recognition through Washington D.C. based programs and alliances with specific partner groups it also inspired a plethora of state oral history projects, including many from smaller communities, historical societies and public schools. Most of these projects were created in response to or inspired by the VHP, but others like the State of Pennsylvania and other military-related oral history programs preceded it. An analysis of these projects reveals that certain states have taken the lead in collecting veteran’s testimony. In each case, there were slight differences on how each was organized, when, by whom, and what veteran accounts stand out the most and which, if any are missing. As of 2009 the top ten states contributing to the VHP were:
Table 1

U.S. States/Counts

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Counts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Indiana</td>
<td>7,463</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. California</td>
<td>6,009</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Ohio</td>
<td>2,861</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Michigan</td>
<td>2,427</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Virginia</td>
<td>2,368</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Texas</td>
<td>2,019</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Missouri</td>
<td>1,919</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Florida</td>
<td>1,905</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Illinois</td>
<td>1,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Pennsylvania</td>
<td>1,754</td>
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The total number of firsthand testimonies collected from ten states constitutes nearly one-half of the entire VHP archive to date. At least factors increased the likelihood of a state's participation: 1) percentage of voters, citizens, and veterans. 2) Relative influence of the state. 3) Sponsorship support of public or private agencies. 4) Commitment from participants and veterans, quality of interview and/or leadership. Presently each of the fifty U.S. states and Puerto Rico has adopted a veteran's oral history project. The point taken here is that state projects, including those conducted

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88 For complete list of collections by state go to “Search Veterans Collection: By State,” at www.loc.gov/vets.html.
89 Ibid
by schools and historical societies differ little from state projects in that they too follow similar collection policies. Some, like Indiana, have offered more than others in terms of numbers, but the overall collection means is similar. Largely motivated by their long-time U.S. Senator, Richard G. Lugar no one state has been more enthusiastic or submitted more firsthand testimonies to the VHP. A June 28, 2002 press conference at the Member’s Room of the Jefferson Building revealed how an individual state can play in shaping the VHP. Lugar “personally delivered a batch of recordings of interviews with Indiana veterans,” bringing the total amount of tapes submitted by his state to five-hundred,” and making it “the largest collection of material from a single source contributed to the Project” to date.90 Lugar said “most Americans have simply lost touch with what it means to serve in the Armed Forces or to serve a cause greater than self.” He maintained that it was “important that veterans communicate to the next generation an understanding of the sacrifices and hardships involved in life in the military, which cannot be gained by reading books or watching movies.” Convinced that his constituents valued the VHP, Luger’s newsletter offers occasional reports on VHP contributions from Indiana91

Indiana’s success can be measured in Lugar’s willingness to travel statewide to promote the VHP. In June 2003 he invited “every high school, library, and civic organization” in his state to become involved with the Project. Nine months later, on March 28, 2003, Lugar reported that his home state had completed and submitted over

90 See “Sen. Lugar Delivers Indiana Tapes to Veterans History Project,” Veterans History Project News (Summer 2002).
91 Lugar quoted in VHPN (Summer 2002).
1,500 interviews, and he personally was able to “notify 3,604 friends and family members that these interviews have been placed into the permanent collection” at the LOC. Lugar has used his influence to garner participation from nine Indiana state high schools, public libraries, and civic clubs. Third-grade teacher Mandy Lucas, the daughter of Vietnam veteran, wanted her students to participate because she constantly encountered “children who don’t understand or comprehend the significance of history. I often have my father into the classroom on Veteran’s Day...I’m very proud.”

One of the first to recognize a shortage of women's testimonies, Lugar is credited with inspiring Hoosiers to “seek” them out the state and ask to record their “patriotic service.” By 2000 volunteers established that 23,000 Indiana women had prior service in the Armed Forces. Interviewers first targeted many thousands of Indiana men and women who worked in industry during World War II--the Chrysler Plant in Evansville where three billion .45 caliber cartridges were fabricated, and the Studebaker plant in South Bend where B-17 engines were built. By 2005, the total number of Indiana testimonies received by the VHP exceeded six thousand, establishing them as the leader among all U.S. states.

An overview of the Indiana state project reveals a common denominator. Although one can track the number of women veterans testimonies recorded then submitted to the VHP, no effort has been made to separate those collections along race.

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94 Women service statistics in “Women Served Too.”
95 Ibid
and ethnic lines. This key here is that no overall active collections policy exists as it relates to these diverse veteran groups. All the VHP and their supporters can do is print news about the gaps, oversights and omissions within the Project, and hope that quotas will be filled. In others words, there are no resources committed to make or encourage it to happen.

Not all state projects followed in the footsteps of Indiana in terms of submitting their collections directly to the VHP. In late 2000, North Dakota emerged as one of the frontrunners in a nationwide effort to gather testimonies from women, opting to store them instate. Senator Byron Dorgan began the quest when he joined forces with officials from the State Historical Society, Humanities Council, and Veterans Administration pooled their money and resources to seek out those North Dakotans “who live in or served.” 60,000 people emerged as possible interviewees. Statistics released in a 2005 magazine article said that, “a corps of dedicated volunteers [over 1,000] has been fiercely devoted to the mission.” As of late 2005 they have collected over 1,200 interviews, with “more than half” from the World War II era.96

North Dakota volunteers may come from all walks of life and cross generation boundaries, including veterans from major twentieth century wars, teachers, and students. The purpose behind the project appears uniform. The state historical society goal since formation was to collect testimonies to “illuminate individual experiences, enhance the understanding of these eras [different twentieth century wars], and provide bridges

between generations.” For Vern Useldinger of Fargo, a veteran of World War II and Korea, and Gene “Skip” Wing, of Stanley, a Montrail County Veterans Service Officer, such a commitment when beyond sharing their own personal experiences at war. Useldinger conducted thirty interviews while Wing “helped” coordinate some fifty-six others.97

North Dakota universities and secondary schools have also contributed. At Drake High School, members of “Future Business Leaders of America Club” led by advisor Joan Birdsell collected thirty-six interviews, and participated in special observances and ceremonies with veterans of the Drake American Legion. College-level projects came from five universities, including Mary, Minot State, Dickinson, Williston State, and North Dakota State Universities. Nicole Johansen and her mother, Tammy Hilton, both from Williston completed seven interviews as part of a World War II history class. They reported, “we fell in love with the World War II generation. “Their ethics, their fierce patriotism, and their appreciation for life” have had a great impact on us all. Johansen said, “there is something about seeing an elderly man cry when asked how the war affected the man he is today...It added a lot to my definition of freedom.”98

Efforts to create an Idaho Veterans History Project began in August 2002. Joyce Cleveland of Idaho Falls and RaNae Crandall of Pocatello used photographs of forty-four Idaho veterans (all in the process of being interviewed) to craft a quilt, later donated then displayed in the main lobby of the DVA through Veterans Day of 2002. The quilt was

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later returned to Boise and then part of a permanent display in the state museum.99

Beginning in 2003, the state began the most intense oral history project of women at war
to date. Under the title “The Women in World War II/Veterans History Project,” the
project consisted of forty-eight interviews/stories from those who served in different
branches of the Armed Forces as officers, assistants, code transcribers, radar monitors,
nurses, factory workers, and with the Red Cross. Examples include the experiences of
Helene Messman, a “front line” nurse serving in Europe, Glenadene Keister who served
with the WAVES from 1944-1946, Rosemary Powell, an officer with the Women’s Army
Corps, Nancy Drew, a Red Cross worker, and Fama Tackitt, an aircraft factory worker.

Taken collectively, their testimonies call into question long-standing views that women
made little, if any, contributions to the war effort and escaped not the brutality of warfare.

Said one report,

“The women interviewed for this project shared how World War II
impacted their lives in very personal ways. They often expressed their
desire to help win the War, and all of them sacrificed in a variety of way
to demonstrate their loyalty to their country.”100

A Senate Report described the overall collection as “inspiring and emotional,
many deeply personal, and some heartbreaking.”101

Around the same time West Virginia took initiatives to capitalize on a veteran
base that exceeded 200,000 (the highest number of any U.S. state).102 In March 2002,

Senator Richard C. Byrd approached West Virginia University, the first known effort by

99 See “Our Veterans Quilt,” at http://www.senate.gov/~craig/vhp1
100 Consult “Women in WWII/Veterans History Project,” at
http://www.idahohistory.net/women_vets.html
101 Cited from “What is the Project”? at http://www.senate.gov/~craig/vhp1
102 “West Virginia’s Veterans History Project,” http://veteranshistory.wvu.edu
a politician, to open classes and oral history workshops to reach natives. Soon thereafter, the WVU School of Journalism took the initiative and released a statewide memo declaring the “project is dependent upon the participation of individuals and groups throughout the state.” Early on, however, there was only a modest interest in the project. A report dated March 2003 said only twenty-one interviews had been submitted. However, by the fall of that year when the School of Journalism officially launched the state project, overall submissions dramatically increased.\textsuperscript{103}

West Virginia might differ from other state projects because it is affiliated a WVU program of study that it strives to first educate students and volunteers through classes on war and oral history, or to specifically prepare students to facilitate the interview process. Joel Beeson, WVU assistant professor and project leader said:

“They have to have a firm grounding in history....I tried to open my students up to the time and place of that generation. They had to know this before they were ready to do oral histories. They also had to understand what oral history is...it boils down a ‘democratization’ of history. Much of our history is from the perspective of generals and the political leaders of the time. Oral history helps us reevaluate history from the viewpoint of ordinary people.”\textsuperscript{104}

To his credit, Beeson recognized that not all students were capable of going right to the oral history interview, instead determined classroom instruction was necessary to make World War II and Vietnam part of their consciousness.

His students read Studs Terkel’s \textit{The Good War} and \textit{Bloods}, an oral history of black Vietnam veterans, learned about the Bataan Death March, watched a documentary

\textsuperscript{103} See “West Virginia’s VHP.
\textsuperscript{104} Beeson quoted in “Discovering Missing Voices” at http://veteranshistory.wvu.edu
film on “Rosie the Riveter,” and the HBO movie, Band of Brothers before moving on to conduct field work. Students were also schooled in the art of public relations to help get the news to all citizens of the state. Justin Pasternak, a participant in the course, said, “we had a media team that was responsible for gaining statewide attention to draw the public’s awareness to this very worthy project. It’s not like any other PR program I will ever work on because I’m dealing with something that truly matters to the public.”

By November 2003, WVU School of Journalism had sponsored its first major promotional program, “Voices of Honor: Discovering Missing Voices.” Mr. Frum’s history, video-recorded, was part of the “mini documentary” used to kick off the event. Beeson said of this first time public history program, “I think this was a wonderful opportunity for students to get hands-on experience and to contribute to the community, as well as work on national project. It’s about who we are as a nation and as a people.” Many students agreed. Adam Webster, School of Journalism graduate student, “realized he was missing a part of his family’s history.” His father served in Vietnam and grandfather during World War II. Webster admitted that his grandfather’s voice will always be missing. When [he] “passed away, I didn’t know any of his stories.” Webster believed this project served as a meeting ground. It’s a big step to go to someone’s house who had been a war veteran and to talk about the war.”

A year later, the LOC asked representatives from the WV oral history project to participate in the National World War II Reunion and memorial dedication. At this event, Tim Shurtter, spokesman for the

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105 Beeson and Justin Pasternak quoted in “Discovering Missing Voices.”
106 Pasternak quoted in “Discovering.”
VHP, said “without hesitation you (WVU) are one of our strongest partners.” Given its success at training students in oral history techniques, why other states did not follow the WVU lead is not known. It can be argued that other states could use such a model.

Other state projects have been established by collaborating with historical societies and universities. For example, Rhode Island Senator Lincoln Chafee’s office became a VHP partner in 2003 then teamed up with that state’s historical society. Another project began in September of that year led by South Dakota Senator Tom Daschle. He appeared at the Sioux Falls Veterans Association annual event to speak on behalf of “homeless” veterans and to encourage constituents to join forces with the University of South Dakota Center (another VHP partner). While this state university effort may not have offered courses like WVU, it did draw interest and support from members of the American Legion, American Red Cross, American War Mothers, and Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. On hand was Ellen McColluch-Lovell who said, “it was a terrific meeting full of energy and creative thinking.” The VHP reported that the overall “conversation focused on ways to motivate membership, increase the number of volunteer interviewers in communities, and generate even more grassroots awareness,” hopefully through a series of magazine articles, newsletters, and outreach programs.

Community Projects

State projects likely had a major impact on any number of smaller community-based projects that materialized during 2002 and 2003. Like those at the state-level, community level ones have also followed VHP guidelines. Some have opted to store

107 Adam Webster and Tim Shurtter quoted in “Discovering.”
108 See “Congressional Support” VHPN (Fall 2003).
collections in their home states or forward them to the VHP. An analysis of specific community projects also reveals they are not restricted to any one region of the country.

The first "community partner" for the VHP was The City of Forks, Washington. Here, Mayor Nedra Reed, daughter of an army veteran, helped motivate local veteran’s organizations and members of the Quileute Indian Tribe, and local schools under the guidance of Frank Walter, Superintendent of Quillayute Valley School District. The second city to become an official partner was Warwick, RI. Scott Avedisian, mayor, visited teachers and students in order to promote a project "as a way of linking the city’s five high schools with the larger community." In 2002 Donna Kenny of Clio Associates in Massachusetts reported "that they [volunteers] were doing oral histories for us this summer with the help of a summer intern—they are having a high rate of activity—about 60 interviews done in the past three weeks." Upon completion interviews were forwarded to the VHP.

In New Jersey, the Brookville College project led by Paul Zigo of the Center for WW2 Case Studies and Conflict Resolution was an example of public participation with a very different political agenda. He personally delivered seven of an expected twenty-five tapes to Washington, D.C. "The Center has taped 33 interviews with central New Jersey World War II veterans," each scheduled to appear over the Brookville television network. Zigo, revealing that his goal was not to promote the fighting of wars, said they would "utilize lessons learned from the war to prevent the recurrence of global conflict in a

110 Ibid.
111 See “Partner Activities,” VHPN (Summer 2002).
world of sovereign states with divergent interests, wants, and needs.”\textsuperscript{112} He also made no mention that students involved with project were the beneficiaries of college coursework in oral history. Regardless, the VHP accepted all of the Brookville College interviews regardless of political agenda or Zigo’s seemingly antiwar stance.

On hand for the opening of the California oral history project were Ellen McCulloch-Lovell and Celia Esquivel, Associate State Director of the AARP. Delivering the keynote speech was Donald Mattson, retired U.S. Army Brigadier General and Director of the California Military Museum. Mr. Ed Berman, President of the Rossmoor Veterans History Project, demonstrated the capabilities of oral history interviews with an interview with former World War II marine.\textsuperscript{113} The opening inspired Sheila Lichtenstein Director of the Leisure World History Society of Laguna Woods, California to announce her organization was in support of the Veterans Project. After completing their 45\textsuperscript{th} taped interview (with over 700 veterans registered in their World War II data bank), she remarked, “we think they are getting better each time. Each story is more exciting than the next.” Once relegated to historical facts about World War II battles from strictly books, and more recently the Internet, Lichtenstein and others now recognize the benefits of the “visceral, straight from the gut story about actually living in the midst of that battle.”\textsuperscript{114}

Community-level projects seemed to grow in number thereafter. The Surrey Township Library of Farewell, Michigan joined forces with the Library Teen Council and

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} See “Partner News,” \textit{VHPN} (Fall 2003).
became official partners. Their efforts drew support from the Michigan History Association, Michigan Department of Arts and Libraries, Michigan State University folk life unit, and others, who later hosted their own oral history workshops to acknowledge the state’s veterans.\(^{115}\) The *Michigan Oral History Association* (MOHA) also made its contribution to the VHP through “oral history education.” According to a message published on the VHP website, the MOHA “completed summer workshops in Comins (Oscoda County, Michigan) and at Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie. In Palm Beach, FL, Dr. Haviva Langenauer of Temple Emanu-El organized a project on Pearl Harbor veterans entitled “Eyewitness to History.” She raised an important question on the educational value of such testimonies or if anyone could possibly understand “the psychological effects of interviewing these elderly men. All I can say it that it certainly makes difference in our lives. It was an incredible experience. Our total event was very emotional and moved people to tears.”\(^{116}\)

Contributions to the VHP made by small town Americana often differ from more expansive state projects not because of guidelines used or the tapes/interviews, rather most are the work of a single individual or small group of veterans. One such example occurred in 2005 when a military history committee founded the Charlestown, Maryland project. Members pointed to the community’s long history of “men” serving in foreign wars, especially in World War II. Local statistics compiled by the committee revealed “hundreds of men went off to war and fought in every major battle,” and that the larger

\(^{115}\) See “Veterans Day Commemoration.” Since 2000, it has grown from four to fifteen people, now numbering twenty-seven including contracted/temporary employees, s” in *Veterans History Project Newsletter*, 4.

community “was hugely impacted by the war with nearly every man in uniform and in many cases whole families serving (91 men and women of Charlestown lost their lives).” Meanwhile, at the University of Toledo’s, Ward M. Candady Center (VHP official partner since 2005), a spokesperson announced that the center had collected more than “500 audio and video oral histories from local veterans” from the “Great War” through Iraq and Afghanistan. Future plans consisted of cataloging these tapes (common practice for all state projects), then forwarding them to Washington, D.C.

At first glance it appears the overall LOC effort to promote the VHP and to engage state and local communities to contribute has been successful. Initially, however, any credible partner was accepted with no clear sense of who partners should be, what their role and function would be, and what groups of people they would recruit to help. In other words, no mechanism was in place for recruiting, identifying and/or evaluating the value of potential partners or the types of materials they collected. Therefore, groups proceeded blindly forth initially to get publicity for the VHP and get the message out to veterans. Taking a passive role, the VHP recognized that partner groups could also help raise money and train volunteers on how to conduct oral history interviews. An analysis of several early projects (2001-2004) reveals they heeded VHP advice by collecting mainly from the World War II era veteran and supporter. Overall, Project efforts to reach a broad national audience has been moderately successfully, inspiring any number of oral histories.

117 “Charlestown Veterans’ History Project (Maryland),” at http://www.charlestownhistoricalsociety.org/veterans.html
history projects at the state, regional, and community level. While some projects have been more successful than others, the common theme is that most had difficulty collecting accounts from female veterans or those across diverse racial and ethnic lines.\(^{119}\)

The VHP has taken a grassroots, national project, with their project partners appearing to be the active collection agents or driven by the participatory approach. However, such projects are also driven by a much larger political system that does not deliver funds to marshal the human resources to do the job with professionals. Therefore, the partners are enablers and the success or failure of the VHP may hinge on the continued assistance from three major categories of people: official and youth partner groups, and volunteers. Overall, the VHP accepted (at least initially) any credible partner group. In other words, there is no evidence of a partnership selection process, taking place beyond filling-out the on-line application.

Partner organizations are listed as “National Organizations,” with most created and/or funded by the federal government and seemingly pro-veteran, pro-retiree, pro-military, patriotic, and not pacifistic or critical of war. Who these groups should be or what their specific role or function would be in the beginning was not clearly defined. The most helpful role for national organization partners, the Five-Star council included might be to help fill gaps as in assisting the LOC/AFC to construct and implement the proper mechanism(s) that will compensate for the omissions of “radical trust.” Instead, most groups have acted independently, with mixed results, in their efforts to promote the Project, locate potential interviewees, and/or establish project at the state, regional, and

community level when they might be better served raising much need funds. The number of testimonies collected has been impressive, however, as volunteers they should not be asked to proceed blindly forth with no real plan as to how to locate minority group veterans, perhaps living in inner cities or in isolated rural areas. In doing so, they have tied the VHP to a patriotic, feel good approach to remembering war, one largely representative of the more dominant white, Non-Hispanic group. Until “radical trust” is restored, the LOC will not likely achieve the goal of creating as close to comprehensive catalog of oral histories from all Americans at war.
CHAPTER V

"HUMBLE BOXES FILLED WITH TREASURES": THE VHP ARCHIVAL COLLECTION

Few would argue that the need for remembering our legacy at war through memorials, annual commemorations, and oral history collections is a bi-product of national, political, and societal tendencies (past and present). Since conception, the goal of the VHP has been to take a democratic approach and cast a wide net in its efforts to encourage national participation. It has targeted all veterans and their supporters at war to tell their stories, with no restrictions placed on gender, race, or ethnicity. However, at this time only ten percent of the archival collection is digitalized (full-text) and available for web browsing.

This chapter will consider the issues of public access to the VHP collection and the way it presents an image of the veteran along gender, race, and ethnic lines. What is the source of these images? Who uses the VHP and why? Do they utilize the digital collections or visit the LOC to view them in person? What are the procedures? Beyond providing the public with a web and non-web based archive, what else has staff members produced to share results of the VHP? How can researchers and the public gain access to the LOC web-based archive and is it easily navigated? What types of search options are available to researchers by individual war and conflict and branch of service, and gender,
race, and ethnic group? Finally, as the VHP attempts to provide the most comprehensible, searchable, national catalog of oral histories, from what groups of veterans are firsthand accounts lacking and how might they be located?

The purpose of the VHP goes beyond simply collection. Since April 2002, it has taken numerous steps along the lines of quality control to improve it. For example the staff began the task of organizing the collection as sources arrived, with serious efforts taken at “labeling, re-housing, and providing database entries (over 1400 so far) for these submissions, maintaining the relationships between donor, interviewer, and interviewee.” At the same time, an edition of the VHP Newsletter reported the focus had shifted to “capturing contact information, service histories, and information on the format, quantity, condition, and length of submitted materials.” New website information planned included the “building a subject thesaurus specific to the needs of this collection, and considering various preservation strategies that address the physical and digital housing, storage, retrieval, and presentation of this valuable collection.”

Not surprisingly, these reports coincided with more people accessing the official website and archive collection. A July 2002 report said the Project had received approximately “2,600 submissions” from participants across the country that included “veterans and their family members, students, teachers, historians, writers, and private organizations.” More importantly, volunteers were adhering to requests for “primary sources.” More than 2,150 of the submissions consisted of those primary documents most

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2 Ibid.
valued by the VHP, “textual memoirs, diaries, correspondence, and photographic
documentation.” Despite such progress, improving access and adding more search
options to the on-line collection has been focused and on-going. For example, in April
2007, plans were announced to build a subject thesaurus, “specific to the needs of the
collection,” with considerations given to various preservation strategies “that address the
physical and digital housing, storage, retrieval, and presentation” of the valued
collection.”

The results or outcome of the VHP and how its staff has shared the larger
collection with the public has been carried out in several ways. First, the VHP
Information Center, located on the first floor (LM-109) of the James Madison Building,
is home to a permanent museum exhibit. Visitors can view some of the Project’s most
cherished items: excerpts from memoirs, diaries, letters, journal collections, and poetry,
including photographs and artifacts (flags) donated by veterans. Above the receptionist’s
desk, visitors can view a map of the United States with dots indicating each oral history
or manuscript donated by each state.

Second, the VHP regularly airs special broadcasts on public radio. Two examples
were the “Lest We Forget” (2004) honoring the World War II generation and “While the
World Watched” (2005) accounts from VE-VJ Days. Each presentation was later
awarded the prestigious Gracie Allen Award from American Women in Radio and
Television. “Lest” was aired on ninety Public Radio International (PRI) affiliate stations
across the country. “While the World Watched” was hosted by former U.S. Senator Max

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4 How the VHP staff shares the digital collection is reviewed in chapter seven.
Cleland, and painted an "unforgettable sound portrait" of the Nuremberg Trials. Listeners heard actual testimonials from Nazi war criminals, as well as those accounts from allied prosecutors, investigators.\(^5\)

Third, the VHP has shared its collection with the public via two published books edited by Tom Wiener, staff historian, and available in paperback and on companion websites listed under "Experiencing War."\(^6\) The first, titled *Voices of War: Stories of Service from the Home Front and the Front Lines*, relates the war experience through sixty testimonials (oral history interviews, memoirs, diaries, and correspondence) of veterans and civilians of major wars and conflicts of the twentieth century, and includes photographs, drawings, and artwork. The second book, *Forever a Soldier: Unforgettable Stories of Wartime Service*, consists of thirty-seven firsthand accounts from World War I through the conflict in Iraq.\(^7\)

Fourth, the VHP shares its non-web access collection with researchers, veterans and their family's or civilians. However, for those planning to visit the LOC in person they will be subjugated to specific procedures. The VHP asks all parties to make an appointment a week in advance by telephone (202-707-4916) or email at vohp@loc.gov. The VHP states that in order to preserve original taped interviews, individuals will be

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provided listening or viewing copies, and advanced notice is required. There is no limit on the number of stories people can review. After consulting with the VHP staff and obtaining a “Reader Registration Card” in room 140 of the Madison Building (LOC), researchers can review the collections at the AFC Reading Room. The VHP cautions individuals to allow four to six months “from the time the donation” is submitted to allow for “proper archival processing and cataloging of materials.”

The LOC also notes there are fees for obtaining copies from the VHP collection. Furthermore, in order for the VHP to “release the original recording for duplication,” they must receive (from the interviewee and interviewer) written letters giving permission a person to copy the recording, thus adhering to copyright laws. Photocopies of photographs and manuscript materials (twenty cents each) can be made in the AFC Reading Room.

Since the Library is a publically-supported institution there policy for using VHP materials does not come with permission fees. Nor can it by law deny permission to any party to use such collections for publication or other forms of distribution.

Historians and other researchers using VHP materials for publication purposes must adhere to LOC and professional research rules for citing sources. They include

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8 VHP: About the Project/Using the Collections at http://www.loc.gov/vets/researchinfo.html. For other research information about conducting LOC research see http://www.loc.gov/loc/visit/ and http://loc.gov/rr/main/infoeas/register.html
9 Further information about the request process and current associated fees can be accessed at http://www.loc.gov/folklife/recording.html
citing all materials as a whole, with the last set of numbers in parentheses representing the collection ID number (ex. John W. Smith (AFC2001/001/XXXX), Veterans History Project Collection, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. If citing memoirs, transcripts, correspondence, audio/video recordings, photographs, computer files/other materials on disk, and artifacts, the names of the aforementioned sources must appear following the individual’s name (the main access method for viewing the collection on the WWW) and (AFC 2001/001/XXXX).

A content analysis of the web-based archive suggests that it can be easily accessed, but under limited search options and viewing. The search process will begin by accessing the VHP website at www.loc.gov/vets then clicking the icon “Search the Veteran’s Collection.” After accessing the archival collection, on-line site visitors are offered only a basic context to understand the taped interview or written document (memoir, letter, diary, or journal) given by the veteran. The collection is alphabetized and if the interview is available in full-text or in digital format there is a website link below the veteran’s name. Each entry, whether archived or digitalized, gives a bit of biographical data about the individual including their archival identification number (stored in the LOC), who submitted it and when, their rank, branch of service, the war they served in, and what other types of materials are included beyond the personal narrative. These may include maps, artifacts, and photographs donated by the veteran or family member. Site visitors will also have the luxury of using singular or multiple keyword searches to locate individual accounts. The archive can be assessed by combining “all fields together” or

under the last name of the veteran/civilian, service location, service unit/ship, highest rank, notes, interviewer/donor, contributor/interviewer affiliation, and collection identification number:

Figure 1

Website Search by Conflict and Branch of Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contained in:</th>
<th>Limit by Conflict or Era: (check as many as apply)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL FIELDS TOGETHER</td>
<td>World War I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>name of veteran/civilian</td>
<td>Vietnam War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service location</td>
<td>Afghanistan and Iraq Wars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service unit/ship</td>
<td>Limit by Branch of Service: (check as many as apply)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highest rank</td>
<td>Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>notes</td>
<td>Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>name of interviewer/donor</td>
<td>Army Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contributor/interviewer affiliation</td>
<td>Coast Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collection ID number</td>
<td>Marine Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(select only one)</td>
<td>Merchant Marine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Branch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prisoner of War? yes Gender? female
| no unknown | male |

Digitized Collection? yes Transcript? yes no
| no |

Other options, as indicated in the above figure, can be conducted by keyword searches under the title of war/conflict: World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War, and “others.” If one wishes to search the entire collection by “Branch of service,” they can do so by the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard,

13 Figure 1 can be accessed at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/html/search/search.html
Navy, Marine Corps, Army Air Forces/Corps, Merchant Marine, Civilian, and other branches of service occupied by our women veterans (WACS and WAVES). Testimonials are also available from “other” conflicts like Grenada, Panama, Kosovo, and Somalia, as are those from more recent armed conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, where “1.5 million U.S. troops” (including 240,000 members of the National Guard) have been deployed in this decade. To do so, would require the taking the following steps. First, select a specific war/conflict, then by branch of service, then click browse:

Other searches can be undertaken by “clicking on” subheading boxes. Examples include “Prisoner of War,” “Gender,” “Digitalized Collection,” “Transcript,” “state of residence,” and by “race and ethnicity.” Under “Gender,” expect to find an alphabetically listing of those firsthand accounts from women veterans and civilian employees. Similar to a search for male veterans, those currently digitalized will be noted as such. Website visitors also have the luxury of searching the collection by race and ethnic group. By clicking on the group of choice and an alphabetical listing of available testimonies will appear, organized together by war and branch of service:

Table 2
Search Options by Race and Ethnic Group

- Black or African American
- White

14 “Search Veterans Collection” at http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/html/search/search.html
15 See “Search Veterans Collection.”
16 Figure 6-B at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/html/search/browse-war.html
17 For a current number of VHP collections by gender, branch of service, and war/conflict see Appendices I.
It should be noted, however, that only 20% of the veterans/civilians in the Project archive have identified themselves by race or ethnic group. Therefore, any search using race as a criterion will be only pulling from that percentage.\textsuperscript{18}

The VHP website team has also made it possible to search the collection by the number of oral histories collected by each state. To access such information, browse then click on the heading “U.S. states”:

Table 3

Collection Search by U.S. State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alabama</th>
<th>Kentucky</th>
<th>Nevada</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Ohio</td>
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<td>Maine</td>
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<td>Arizona</td>
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<td>Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
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<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>South Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
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<td>Montana</td>
<td>Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>Utah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{18} Table 2 accessed at http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/html/search/browse-race.html
When selecting an individual state, viewers will then have access to an alphabetical listing of those veteran accounts currently in the archive. All fifty U.S. states have participated in the Project.19

The archival collection to date houses over 60,000 firsthand testimonies. In surveys conducted in 2008 and 2008, it was determined the number by individual war or conflict:

Table 4
Collection Numbers by Individual War or Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War or Conflict</th>
<th>June 2008</th>
<th>August 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War I (1914-1919):</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II (1939-1945):</td>
<td>34,527</td>
<td>39,933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean War (1950-53):</td>
<td>7,430</td>
<td>8,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam War (1964-1975):</td>
<td>8,961</td>
<td>10,342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf War (1990-95):</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>1,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan and Iraq (2001--):</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>1,076</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 Table 3 accessed at http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/html/search/browse-state For a complete listing of testimonials collected by individual state see, Appendix 1, 329-31.
Table 4—continued

Civilian Service: * 995

Other Wars: 128 219

Based on these figures, the archival collection over year's time has moderately increased and includes testimonies taken by members of the civilian service.\textsuperscript{20} It is, however, still weighted about 60/40 towards World War II experience.\textsuperscript{21}

Also determined in a 2009 study was the current number of collections by individual branches of military service:

Table 5
Collection Numbers by Branch of Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch of Service</th>
<th>Collections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army Air Force</td>
<td>12,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>35,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast Guard</td>
<td>569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Corps</td>
<td>5,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant Marine</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>13,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69,898\textsuperscript{22}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{20} VHP collection numbers by war or conflict completed in two separate surveys based keyword searches available at "Search Veterans Collection."

\textsuperscript{21} The numbers in “Other Wars” might vary depending on keyword search, but notice I computed no figures for “civilian workers, and those listed in the above table refer to military or civilian service during the Cold War, Grenada, Panama, and later conflicts like Somalia, Bosnia, and Haiti.

\textsuperscript{22} See “Search Veterans Collection”: Browse, by War, Gender, and Branch of Service, at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/html/search/browse-war.html. Also see Appendix 3, 332-43.
Reasons may vary as to why over one-half of the entire collection consists of army veterans. First, the VHP emphasis has been on World War II. Second, the army was then, and still is, the largest branch of the armed forces, therefore home to most of the servicemen and women who enlisted or were drafted. Third, what the total of 35,259 may reveal is that a great many of World War II veterans served in combat infantry or combat support operations.

Toward Gender, Race, and Ethnic Diversity

While the on-line collection is a valuable research tool, it is still a work in progress and has its limitations. As the VHP enters its second decade, only a small percentage of the collection is currently available in full-text or for public viewing. Reasons may vary. First, the submission of an oral history interview or written memoir only guarantees it will be received by the VHP, not that it will be selected for digitalization (complete transcript available on-line for public viewing). Second, the Project seeks high quality, or those interviews categorized as the “best of the best” (based on interview quality and/or depth or detail). Third, most submissions are from the white-Non-Hispanic group, with a great many not listing a race or ethnic group on their biographical forms. Therefore any systematic search of the archived collection by gender, race, and ethnic group will not reveal comparable or accurate numbers.

Ideally the VHP’s ethnic/gender/racial breakdown would mirror that of the broader Armed Forces, “white,” African, Latino, Asian, and African American. There are several historical reasons why such a shortcoming persists. One claim is that most minority groups were not afforded similar opportunities as “whites” to volunteer in great
numbers or serve in combat units. Another problem is that traditional minority groups have been marginalized by our larger society under the pretenses they were second-class members who suffered or endured little during wartime. As one historian said of the 1990s women’s narratives, they are “relentlessly upbeat and cheerful, and the ‘girls’ who served recorded only the sunny hours during the crusade to prevent totalitarianism from engulfing the world.” Furthermore, women and minority groups have been reluctant to tell their stories because of fear of reprisal from the larger population for undermining the “good war” mythology. If such apprehension exists, perhaps an overview of their military service will help explain why they have been historically marginalized and why the VHP has experienced such difficulties collecting their stories.

Women at War

Like their male counterparts, women have fought in wars in some capacity since the Colonial/Revolutionary period. Many bore arms along side their husbands and defended their frontier homes against the French and Native American groups who sought to reclaim lost lands. When the colonies sought independence from Great Britain women were also active participants on the front lines, either as soldiers or serving in the medical corps as matrons, nurses, and laundresses. Such actions were relived again during the American Civil War when many they took on the roles of soldier, saboteur, scout, and spy. However, by 1865, those female doctors, nurses, and matrons were dismissed from service with little, if any, fanfare. Those survivors penned a number of

24 Fenner quoted in, An Officer and a Lady, xiii-ix.
valuable memoirs, but most never reached publication or were published in limited editions. As Linda Grant De Pauw noted, few “found places on the shelves of reference libraries.”

When war broke out with Spain in 1898 women were “contracted” by the Surgeon General to board the hospital ship *U.S.S. Relief* for overseas duty. They once again proved to be valuable assets often enduring deplorable working conditions, stress, and the effects of disease. Their first rate service, “as well as the army’s desire for more control over them,” precipitated the founding of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901 and the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908. The Nurse Corps thereafter became an official part of the Armed Forces, but without the prospects of gaining rank, or benefits equal to men, and fully qualified doctors were denied access to any branch of service. During World War I 21,000 army and 1,400 navy nurses saw action, many awarded medals for valor. Of these over 10,000 served overseas, many wounded in action, taken as POWs, or died in battle. 11,000 more joined the naval reserves serving as administrators, draftsmen, designers, translators, and couriers. Despite efforts during the inter-war years to lobby for their own corps, they were met by stiff opposition in the War Department who sought to preserve the identity of the American women as domesticated.

More opportunities presented themselves for women during World War II, as more than 400,000 wore uniforms or served in some capacity. While Euro-American

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27 Ibid. xv
28 Ibid.
women constituted nearly 95% of those in the military from 1943 to 1945, in comparison, the number of African American servicewomen in World War II totaled a mere 2,532, or 65 officers and 2,467 enlisted, or 5.7% overall.²⁹ Low black numbers may suggest that they too faced a multitude of problems when attempting to serve their country (either at home or on the war front). Brenda Moore, historian, argued “African American WACS faced obstacles precisely because of their race and gender, a situation that did not confront Euro-American women.”³⁰

One group, the WASPs, served from 1942 to 1945 as “skilled” female pilots and found the process of acceptance a bit more tolerable. Under the tutelage of Jackie Cochran, famous woman aviator of the 1930s and 1940s, who founded an Air Force Cadet Program, women flyers flew the same aircraft as men, learned basic, primary, and advance skills. Later they worked for Air Transport Auxiliary of the Royal Air Force (RAF) in England and the U.S. Air Transport Command, ferrying new aircraft from production lines to export points across the United States. So rigorous was the training that of the 25,000 WASP applicants, only 1,800 were accepted, of which 1,000 earned their wings. Thirty-eight women lost their lives in the line of duty. In terms of their service to the military throughout the twentieth century:

Table 6
Women Veterans by War/Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War/Conflict</th>
<th>Veterans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War I (1914-1918)</td>
<td>33,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II (1939-1945)</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean War (1950-1953)</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam War (1964-1975)</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf War (1990-1995)</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq/Afghanistan (2001--)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others:</td>
<td>970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>517,000*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on these figures alone, it appears women have wanted to prove their loyalty and patriotism to country through military or civilian service. Considering over 500,000 women served in major twentieth century wars and conflicts, it would seem more accounts of their experiences would have been individually recorded or available in oral history collections like the VHP. It seems cultural bias towards exclusion of people from conflict, war, and armed clashes varies by gender, race, and ethnicity.

The simplest argument may be to reiterate that service in our Armed Forces has long been and image reserved for the “white” male of non-affluent status. In other words, American culture has been highly influenced by gender, race, and ethnic dynamics that have created unique, yet tenuous relationships between different veteran groups. The figures from Table 6 do not include millions of other women who worked in non-uniformed civilian support/war production jobs.
military and the larger society share equal blame. Both have operated and promoted our understanding of the military before, during, and after World War II as an inherently, gendered, and even racial organization. Society in general, particularly our country's leaders, people, and veteran's organizations have promoted "celebrations" of the Anglo-American soldier and been reluctant to include other less celebratory groups lest they cheapen their own endeavors or call into question their sacrifice.\textsuperscript{32}

The lack of participation by women veterans may be traced when searching for published personal narratives or more pristine primary sources of the unpublished type. For example, as an independent survey conducted in 2008 at World Cat Library (http://www.worldcat.org) source are available and should be considered for inclusion in the VHP archive. They include memoirs and unpublished manuscripts, letter and diary collections, and oral history audio-video interviews. Overall, World Cat lists a total of 898 materials, of which 567 are published personal narratives (World War I, 43, World War II, 250, Korean War, 16, Vietnam War, 215, Persian Gulf War, 34, and Iraq and Afghanistan, 9). There are 331 unpublished documents (WW I, 129, WW II, 141, Korea, 7, Vietnam, 34, Persian Gulf, 14, and Afghanistan/Iraq, 6).\textsuperscript{33}

To their credit, the VHP have partnered with several women organizations around the country to raise awareness of military sacrifice made by servicewomen. Examples include The Daughters of the American Revolution, Navy Nurse Corps Association, National Foundation of Women Legislators, U.S. Army Women's Museum, and the

\textsuperscript{32} See Kohn, "Social History," 555-56.
\textsuperscript{33} World Cat Library at http://www.worldcat.org. The actual number of sources available will vary depending on keyword search. I recommend using "Women," "Personal Narratives," and "World War 1914-1918."
Vietnam Women’s Memorial Foundation to name a few. Although these high profile organizations have strived to promote the VHP, more work is still needed to get the message out at the grass roots level.

Since 2002, they have also undertaken several public awareness programs to promote the legacy of women at war. In March, the AFC issued a special communique calling for “women veterans, defense workers, wartime volunteers, entertainers, and home front supporters to record” their personal experiences for preservation in the LOC and other “trusted” repositories around the country. Concurrently, the VHP established a special woman’s program entitled “Salute to Women” that included a “show-and-tell presentation of women’s materials from the collections and a VHP Web site tour by the VHP staff.” In late summer, it expanded the program to include African, Chicano, and Asian American veterans.  

To augment the “show-and-tell” session, the VHP used women’s history month and a newly-released documentary film by Elaine Prater Hodges and historian Rosemary Crockett entitled “Women in Wars Past.” Open to the public it drew rave reviews, prompting Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, Project Director, to pronounce “there is no more fitting time to honor our women veterans and those women who served and supported our armed forces on the home front.” She encouraged students, family members, and Americans in general to “volunteer a little time beginning next month [May] to interview

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35 D'Ooge, (March 4, 2002).
women who participated in America’s twentieth century wars.” Such an effort earned high praise from the media in December 2003. The American Women in Radio and Television awarded them the prestigious Gracie Allen Award “for superior quality in writing and production.”

However, efforts to raise gender awareness have failed to impact overall collection numbers:

Table 7
Collection Numbers by War and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War:</th>
<th>Male:</th>
<th>Female:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War I—306</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II—37,232</td>
<td>2,701</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean War—8,270</td>
<td>197</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam War—10,032</td>
<td>310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf War—1,610</td>
<td>285</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan and Iraq—885</td>
<td>185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Wars—127</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total—53,406</td>
<td>3,540</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection Total—56,946</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

36 Ellen McCulloch-Lovell quoted in D’Ooge, “Veterans History Project Seeks Histories of Women Veterans.”
37 Figures from Table 7 represent only those peoples who have submitted written memoirs or sat through oral history interviews. Dalyrmple and Clump quoted in “Library of Congress Presents Memorial Day Special on Public Radio,” Library of Congress Press Release (May 19, 2004).
38 “VHP Collections” (July 2009).
Based on these numbers, it can be determined that the collection is weighted approximately ninety percent male to ten percent female. Overall, the VHP collection reflects gender/cultural bias against women veterans and their civilian supporters at war. It is also the first indication that the use of partnerships to close the gap has not been successful, and that the VHP will continue to face an uphill battle in an attempt to create an oral history collection representative of all Americans at war.

African Americans

Like women, African Americans have served in some capacity in every major U.S. war since the Revolution, yet it is painfully obvious that most had neither the opportunity nor ability to present firsthand accounts. As the VHP prepared for African American history month in February 2002, the LOC invited numerous individuals and civic groups to seek out these “forgotten” veterans. Billington noted “the service and sacrifice our war veterans is the bulwark of our freedoms” and that all “service must be preserved for future generations.” Unfortunately, the library kept no statistical record of the actual number of testimonies collected during that month along race and ethnic lines. Such an oversight may be the result of the VHP biographical form that has a place for listing “race or ethnicity,” but only as optional. Or it could be that federal law prohibits interviewers from asking interviewees such questions in order to create a colorblind historical record.

African American military service “officially” began in 1862 after Congress authorized them to serve in support units for the Union army (few in uniform service). On

May 1, 1863, four months after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, the War Department announced the creation of the Bureau of Colored Troops in order to address the need for the recruitment and organization of all black regiments. Over the next two years, more than 200,000 “colored soldiers” served donned the blue uniform and bore arms in the name of freedom, with twelve earning our nation’s highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor. Of the 620,000 Americans who died in battle, 38,000 were black.40

Racism has often been the motivating factor behind their inclusion in our armed forces, evident in any major U.S. war before 1948. For example, in a daily effort to fit in during World War II black men and women, notably stateside, often found themselves isolated in separate facilities, forced to eat, sleep, and work in the remotest areas of military installations.41 Matters worsened when later on draftees waited upwards of three months to be inducted because separate training facilities had not yet been completed. Blacks were also forced to use separate buses, separate candy and cigarette counters, and movie theaters (Jim Crow roosts). Because racism and segregation ruled the day, blacks endured low enlistment numbers, revealing a major disconnect between what the U.S. was fighting against and its strict racial policies in the military. After World War II ended, President Harry S. Truman officially desegregated our Armed Forces in 1948, and this group found more opportunities beyond their usual place behind the frontlines in support units.

40 See Moore, To Serve my Country, 48.
41 Ibid.
When America committed itself to a ground and air war in Korea and Vietnam during the 1950s and 1960s African Americans enlisted or were drafted in high numbers. Such a commitment, however, is not evident in the historical record, as it pertains to published personal narratives or unpublished personal accounts stored in archival collections. For example, *World Cat Library* lists a total of 274 African American published accounts (WWI, 27, WWII, 162, Korea, 39, Vietnam, 42, Persian Gulf, 4, and Iraq/Afghanistan, 0), and 28 unpublished accounts (WWI, 0, WW2, 119, Korea, 20, Vietnam, 53, Persian Gulf, 3).\textsuperscript{42} Reasons vary for this trend, but as an independent study revealed the total number of African Americans who served in the twentieth century is high, yet what the VHP has collected in firsthand accounts to date is not:

Table 8
African American Veterans by War/VHP Collections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War/Conflict</th>
<th>Veterans</th>
<th>VHP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War I (1914-1918):</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II (1939-1945):</td>
<td>1,100,000</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Conflict (1950-1953):</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam Conflict (1964-1975):</td>
<td>874,000</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan/Iraq War (2001--):</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{42} *World Cat Library* at [http://www.worldcat.org](http://www.worldcat.org). The number of sources available will vary depending on keyword search. I recommend using “African American,” “Veterans,” “Personal Narratives,” and “World War 1939-1945.”
Table 8—continued

Other:  
*  
16243

Total:  
3,402,000  
1,302

Black testimonies are higher than any other minority veteran group. However, even if one adjusts these numbers based on the twenty percent actual/eighty percent potential numbers by race or ethnic group, much work still needs to be done.44 Adjusted numbers “could” read: (WW II, 2,385, Korea, 675, Vietnam, 1,830, Persian Gulf, 595, Iraq/Afghanistan, 215, and “other,” 810), yet not indicative of the high number who served in the military during the twentieth century.45

Latino Americans

No one group has been more marginalized by history more than Latino American veterans. However, whatever their place of origin or background and like other groups of Americans, they have served our armed forces with pride and dignity dating back to the Civil War. When war erupted in 1861, Mexican American allegiance was often divided based on geographical region (North and South), notably among those living in Texas. It has been estimated that some 2,500 fought for the South while 950 volunteered for

43 Based on August 2009 count, the VHP lists the total number of African American collections at 1,340. There are no current numbers available for Afghanistan and Iraq. “Other” refers to African Americans serving in the Cold War military during Grenada (1983) Panama (1989), Somalia, and Kosovo.
44 According to information posted on the VHP website, the existing collection is only twenty-percent completed along race and ethnic lines.
service with the North. During the Spanish America War (1898) service records are inclusive, but acknowledge two, Captain Maximiliano Luna and George Armijo (later of the U.S. Congress). This trend of marginalization continued through World War I when limited numbers of Latinos were allowed to participate in combat operations in Europe. One exception was Private Serna, who “single-handedly captured 24 German soldiers in France,” and was later awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, French Croix de Guerre, Victory Medal (with three bars), and two Purple Hearts.

During World War II, the most famous of Latino combat units was the 158th Regimental Combat Team from an Arizona National Guard Unit also known as the Bushmasters. Members of the 141st Regiment of the 36th Texas Infantry Division fought in Italy and Europe, losing “1,126 killed, 5,000 wounded, and 500 missing in action.” Their contributions to military and devotion to country continued during the Korean War. More than 43,000 Puerto Ricans served with the 65th Infantry Regiment, fighting in nine

47 See Schmal, “Hispanics in Military Service.”
48 Schmal, “Hispanics.” Before World War II it was estimated that some 2.7 million Americans of Mexican/Hispanic decent were living in the United States. In 1940, two National Guard units were formed in New Mexico (the 200th and 515th Coastal Artillery/Anti-Aircraft battalions). Largely consisting of Spanish-speaking Mexican Americans they later deployed to the Philippines, where in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor they “dug in” alongside the Filipino soldiers and fought the Japanese until surrendering in 1942. Many endured the Bataan “death march” and three years in prison camps.
49 See Raul Morin, Among the Valiant (Alhambra, CA: Borden Publishing Company, 1963). The most decorated Hispanic unit of the war, 36th soldiers earned twelve Congressional Medal of Honors, 31 Distinguished Service Crosses, twelve Legion of Merits, 492 Silver Stars, 11 Soldier Medals, 1,685 Bronze Stars, and scores of other individual and unit citations and decorations.
campaigns and sustaining nearly six hundred casualties. This unit earned a Presidential Unit Citation, Meritorious Unit Commendation, and two Republic of Korea Unit Citations. Individuals received four Distinguished Service Crosses and 124 Silver Stars. Nine Hispanics and one Puerto Rican were also recipients of the CMH. The tradition continued in Vietnam. John Schmal said “although Latinos made up about 4.5% of the total U.S. population at the time, they incurred more than 19% of the overall casualties. In all, thirteen Latino soldiers, including three Puerto Ricans won the CHM in that war.” Based on these statistics alone, it seems unfathomable that so few written or oral accounts, either in English or Spanish are available.

During the Persian Gulf War (1990-91), over twenty thousand Latino men and women participated. A March 1994 report revealed that “28,067 Latinos” are members of the U.S. Army, or five percent of all Americans enlisted in that branch of service. Their overall contributions (especially in the twentieth century) might have been best summarized by Army Chaplain (Captain) Carlos C Huerta of the 1st Battalion, 79th Field Artillery. He said, “Hispanics have always met the challenge of serving the nation with great fervor. In every war, in every battle, on every battlefield, [they] have put their lives on the line to protect freedom.” While serve to our country in time of war and peace is credible there has been no major movement on their part to pen memoirs and sit through taped interviews. For example, World Cat Library lists a total of fourteen sources, eight

published accounts (WW1, 0, WW2, 3, Korea, 1, Vietnam, 4, and 0 for both the Persian
Gulf War and conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan), and six unpublished (WW2, 5, Korea, 0,
Vietnam 1).\textsuperscript{53}

To promote their experiences, the VHP first welcomed any number of national
project partners from Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and California, or those states where
with the largest concentration of Latino American war veterans currently reside. Such
partner groups include the \textit{League of United Latino American Citizens (LULAC)}, and
\textit{LULAC-Daughters and Mothers Attaining Success Programs}. On their end, the VHP
profiled Five-Star Council member, Everett Alvarez, Jr. in 2003. The first American
aviator shot down over Vietnam, he was a POW for over eight years finally released in
1973. In 1982, he was appointed Deputy Administrator of the VA by President Ronald
Reagan. Alvarez later worked with a consulting firm, and wrote two books, \textit{Chained
Eagle}, a historical account of his captivity in Vietnam, and \textit{Code of Conduct}, an account
of his post-war life.\textsuperscript{54}

In October of that year, Representative Joseph Baca (D-California) spoke at the
LOC on “Latino Veterans through the Veterans History Project” during Hispanic
Heritage Month program. Described as an “inspired” speaker, the congressman spoke
“entertainingly and poignantly” about his experiences in Vietnam from 1966-68 as a U.S.

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{World Cat Library} at \url{http://www.worldcat.org}. Sources available will vary depending
on keyword search. For those of the published type use “Asian Americans,” “Veterans,”
“Personal Narratives,” and “World War 1939-1945,” then search under “archival
collections.”

\textsuperscript{54} He later earned a Juris Doctorate from the George Washington School of Law. “Five
Star Council Profile of Everett Alvarez, Jr.,” \textit{Veterans History Project Newsletter} (fall
Army paratrooper with both the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions. Baca's account aside, there is little inspiring about the number of living Latino veterans compared with the oral histories collected by the VHP to date:

Table 9
Latino American Veterans by War/VHP Collections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War/Conflict</th>
<th>Living Veterans</th>
<th>VHP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War I (1914-1919)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II (1939-1945)</td>
<td>127,160</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Conflict (1950-1953)</td>
<td>127,837</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam Conflict (1964-1975)</td>
<td>363,453</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf War (1990-1995)</td>
<td>256,771</td>
<td>541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq and Afghanistan (2001--)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Conflicts:</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>875,227</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only twenty percent of the VHP collection has been distinguished by race and ethnic groups. Upon completion the total number Latino American oral histories may read WWII, 670, Korea, 275, Vietnam, 800, Persian Gulf, 2705, Iraq/Afghanistan, 205, and "other,” 430.

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56 Numbers of Hispanic American veterans living in the United States were computed by state in the 2000 Census Report.
57 Collection numbers computed in “Search Veterans Collection: Browse, Ethnic or Race Group, Hispanic Americans at http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/html/search/browse-race.html
Asian Americans

If Hispanic Americans have been the most marginalized of U.S. ethnic groups, then Asians are one of the least recognized for their military service. While there was no record kept of their service during World War I, there is for World War II. Approximately 25,000 Japanese Americans served in combat units in the European Theater, with some 6,000 of them Nisei (first-generation American-born Japanese) who worked in U.S. Army Intelligence units as interpreters, translators, with 3,700 linguists on the front lines. Over 20,000 Chinese Americans volunteered or were drafted into service, as did smaller numbers of Korean and Filipino Americans. Among the most decorated units of the war was the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. The latter unit alone earned seven Presidential Distinguished citations and 18,000 individual decorations, which included “the Medal of Honor, 47 Distinguished Service Crosses, 350 Silver Star, 810 Bronze Stars, and more than 3,600 Purple Hearts.”

Asian American women also served during World War II, notably fifty Japanese and Chinese recruited by the Women’s Army Corps to be trained as translators. In 1943, Chinese American women were granted admission in the Army Air Force or “Air WACS.” Filipino women, later to become U.S. citizens, assisted American ground forces in the Philippines by carrying information on enemy movements, or smuggling in food and medicine to our prisoners-of-war.

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59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
This tradition continued during the Korean Conflict, and in those since despite encountering racist ideologies. Thus, assimilation into military culture has been difficult, as have attempts to move up in rank. In an article from the *Asian Week* archive, author Ji Hyun Lim referred to Asian American veterans, despite their highly decorated achievements during World War II, as “Once a minority, still a minority.” Today, though the military makes concerted efforts to “squash individual identities, including racial identities,” these warriors are still subjects of widespread discrimination or “racial and ethnic harassment. All is not lost, however, as American society continues to evolve and “older and younger people” approach such complicated issues differently. According to Lim, today more than 1,600 Asian Americans officers and 8,100 enlisted are serving in the U.S. Air Force alone, with their prospects of upward mobility high. The number of living Asian American veterans compared to current VHP counts reads:

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War/Conflict</th>
<th>Living Veterans</th>
<th>VHP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War I (1914-1919):</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II (1939-1946):</td>
<td>43,421</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam Conflict (1964-1975):</td>
<td>80,204</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf War (1990-1995):</td>
<td>52,185</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan/Iraq Conflicts (2001--): *</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10—continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other:</th>
<th>*</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>201,714(^{62})</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If adjusted again based on twenty/eighty percent formula, overall counts could be, WWII, 320, Korea, 60, Vietnam, 75, Persian Gulf, 30, Iraq/Afghanistan, 30, and “other,” 25, for a total of 540. However, there is no service record available for more recent conflicts, therefore any future count will not be reflective of the actual number Asian Americans who have served in any twentieth century war/conflict or who could be potential donors to the VHP.\(^{63}\)

Steps were taken early on by the VHP to alleviate the problem first when they welcomed high profile groups like the Chinese American Citizens Alliance and the Japanese American Veterans Association of Washington, D.C. as official project partners.\(^{64}\) During the annual celebration of Asian and Pacific Heritage Month, In May 2002, the VHP profiled Frances Y. Sogi, Esq., Five-Star Council member and veteran of World War II. Born in Hawaii, Sogi enlisted in the Military Intelligence Service in 1944, serving with distinction, and rising to the rank of captain. Excerpts from his recorded interview revealed VHP goals to collect all stories from all veterans and supporters of war, regardless of race or ethnicity. The VHPN reiterated “every veteran has his or her

\(^{62}\) The number of living Asian American veterans in the United States based on the findings of the 2000 Census Report. These numbers do not account for those serving in civilian support positions.


\(^{64}\) For a complete listing of national project partners see http://www.loc.gov/vets/vets-partners.html
own war, and each is the custodian of a unique story and memories.” Furthermore, “Mr. Sorgi’s selections pointed out the irony that Japanese American soldiers had family members interned in the United States, while they in turn liberated concentration camp victims in Europe.”

Despite such efforts, the VHP and its legion of partner groups need to reorganize and place more of an emphasis on collecting from this veteran group or face the possibility of continued under-representation as they enter their second decade. First on the priority list might be to locate those available published and non-published materials. This course of action may or may not be beneficial to the existing collection numbers. Nevertheless as a World Cat Library search under this ethnic group reveals sources are available: 114 accounts, 44 published and 70 archived (WW I, 0, WW2, 27, Korea, 2, Vietnam, 14, Persian Gulf, 1, Afghanistan/Iraq, 0) published, and archived, WW1, 0, WWII, 40, Korea, 0, Vietnam, 27, Persian Gulf, 3, and 0 for later conflicts). 66

Native Americans

When the VHP invited the American Indian Veteran’s History Foundation to become a founding national partner group it did so in part in response to the association of Native Americans and their warrior tradition. The VHP approaches them as holders of “distinctive cultural values” that drive them to serve their country. Most, if not all, Native American societies cling to “qualities like strength, honor, pride, devotion, and wisdom,

and have the “highest record of service per capita when compared to other ethnic
groups.” According to a published account, by the close of the twentieth century there
were an estimated 190,000 Native American military veterans. The VHP collections to
date are, however, not encouraging:

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War/Conflict/</th>
<th>Living Veterans</th>
<th>VHP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War I (1914-1919):</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II (1941-1946):</td>
<td>14,271</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Conflict (1950-1953):</td>
<td>14,758</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam Conflict (1964-1975):</td>
<td>86,000/42,000</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf War (1990-1995):</td>
<td>26,858</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq and Afghanistan (2001--):</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td></td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factoring the usual adjustments (only twenty percent of the archive organized by ethnic
group) the existing archival numbers might read: WWII, 335, Korea, 70, Vietnam, 230,
Persian Gulf, 50, and “other,” 105. However, like other ethnic groups, those stories
collected to date represent only a small fraction of those Native Americans who served in
the military or supported in during the twentieth century.

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See “Search Veterans Collection,” Ethnic or Race Group: American Indian at
http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/html/search/browse-race.html
Turning to the historical record, we learn that Native Americans like other minority groups have a proud history of serving our country. Surprisingly, there is much to learn about some of 17,000 who served during World War I and have been more recently the focus of scholarly studies. Of the most documented were the 600 Oklahoma Choctaw and Cherokee who manned the ranks of the 142nd Infantry of the 36th Texas-Oklahoma National Guard Division. Four men earned the prestigious French *Croix de Guerre* and others honored with the Church War Cross for gallantry. Unfortunately, the VHP has no firsthand testimonies from Native American veterans serving in the “Great War.” Nor will it, unless some living veteran is found or an unpublished memoir is located in some remote repository. For example, an independent search conducted on *World Cat Library* revealed few written accounts: 48 total sources, 33 published, and 15 unpublished available by all twentieth century wars/conflicts: (published: WWI, 1, WW2, 27, Korea, 0, Vietnam, 5, Gulf War, 0, and Afghanistan/Iraq, 0) and (unpublished: WW1, 0, WW2, 9, Korea, 1, Vietnam, 4, Gulf War, 1, and Afghanistan/Iraq, 0) respectively.

Like other minority groups, some at a faster pace than others, the process of acceptance as “Americans” took time. For Native Americans, the passing of the Snyder

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68 See Thomas Britton, *American Indians in World War I, at War and at Home* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 59, 102. For example, in a post-war survey conducted by the U.S. Navy of 1,200 veterans it was determined that 744 (62%) served in infantry units, 190 (16%) served in field artillery, 100 or 8 percent in ammunition trains located in the rear, of which 9 were officers and 195 non-commissioned officers.

69 For a more narrow overview of the Native American soldier/sailor in combat see “Native Americans and the U.S. Military,” at [http://www.history.navy.mil/FAQs/FAQ61-1.htm](http://www.history.navy.mil/FAQs/FAQ61-1.htm).

70 *World Cat Library* at [http://www.worldcat.org](http://www.worldcat.org). Once again, available sources may vary depending on the keyword searches used. I recommend a search under “Native American,” “personal narratives,” and “World War 1939-1945.”
Act of 1924 granted them full citizenship, and thus, more freedom to enter military service. With outbreak of World War II they once again answered their country’s call to arms. Out of a total population of 350,000, an estimated 44,000 served in uniform between 1941 and 1945. Additionally, over 40,000 men and women left their reservations and took up jobs in industries, factories, and ordinance depots. According to the 2000 Census Report, 14,271 are still alive. To locate them might require a more intense search by the VHP, if indeed it had or sought more resources (monetary) to do the job themselves, rather than rely solely on partner groups to fill in gaps.

When the Korean Conflict erupted, the U.S. military welcomed not only those battle-tested veterans from World War II, but also new recruits more than willing to enlist and fight the spread of communism around the world. The 2000 Census Report recorded of the 44,000 Native Americans who served in Korea, 14,758 are still living. The trend continued during the Vietnam War as 42,000 served, with more than 90% of them volunteers. During the 1980s and 1990s, Native Americans saw active duty service in Grenada, Panama, Somalia, and the Persian Gulf. In the latter conflict, 26,858 served and are still living. While no service statistics are readily available for the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, one can assume this group is in uniform and performing their duties on the same level as other veteran groups. The current VHP collection numbers by major race and ethnic groups:

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73 See 2000 Census Report “Native Americans and the Korean War.”
Table 12  
VHP Collections by Race and Ethnic Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnic Group</th>
<th>July 2009</th>
<th>August 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>21,068</td>
<td>21,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1,321</td>
<td>1,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic American</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian-Alaskan Native</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>735 *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number specified</td>
<td>23,901</td>
<td>24,249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>36,036</td>
<td>36,368</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the numbers, it can be concluded that VHP efforts to organize its collection by race or ethnic is a work in progress. Currently 60,000 oral histories have been archived, but only 23,901 (around twenty-percent) by race or ethnic groups. 36,368 are unspecified with the dominant group (white, non-Hispanic) consisting of 90 percent.

The actual VHP archival collection numbers by gender, race, and ethnic groups is inconclusive. Along with information from census reports and published studies, they reveal more underrepresented veteran groups like women, African, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native Americans have served in significant number in every

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74 July and August 2009 counts were computed in “Search the Collection: Browse, Race and Ethnicity,” at www.loc.gov/vets/html.
75 “Search the Collection”: Browse by Race and Ethnicity.
major twentieth century war/conflict. Thousands from each group are still living, but have yet to be located or interviewed. Time is running out on the World War II generation, and those from the Korean and Vietnam War eras will soon follow. Despite any number of LOC promotional campaigns designed to promote or reach these groups, efforts have failed to impact overall collection numbers in terms of women and minority groups. Until then, partner groups researchers, and educators must do what they can with the existing collection, in hope that more veterans will to step forward, either influenced by personal neglect or their own mortality, to contribute and/or set the record straight about their unique wartime experiences.76

Implications/Suggestions for Project Diversity

Oral history is a valuable historical methodological, especially in the absence of the written account. How then could the VHP achieve diversity for its current along the gender, racial, and ethnic lines? The first step might be the inclusion of several quality scholarly studies that have approached war and memory from the perspective of minority groups. Beyond their overall educational and promotional value to the Project, they could be helpful sources for participants and volunteers if they were posted in the on-line library/bibliography section. This advice should not be taken as an authorial effort to wave the “academic banner,” rather to make it clear that professional historians largely base their studies on primary sources, have spent entire careers “digging” in archives or used oral history during research phases. They can be easily contacted, are objective-minded, and often share their research. In other words, they could be valuable project

76 Authorial opinions/suggestions based on information provided by Census 2000 and Census 2000 Brief (May 2003).
partners or Five-Star advisors. As it stands now, the VHP has made no effort to recruit professional historians, graduate or undergraduate level history majors to organize (and lead) national, regional, state, or county level teams to research, recruit, train, interview, or transcribe interviews.

While there are certainly copyright laws to contend with in their published works, there are none that I am aware that forbid the passing on lists of veteran names, places of residency, and/or copies of transcripts from interviews. In other words, key veterans and interviewers could be contacted for more information or for re-interviewing purposes. If anything, key information, especially as it pertains to war and memory studies focused on diverse veteran groups could then be forwarded directly to the VHP or any number of their national project partners. Volunteer groups might then be encouraged to target individuals or groups for the purpose of "re-conducting" an oral history interview under a different format or set of questions.

The Census Bureau

The Census 2000 reported that of the 208.1 million civilians (18 years and older) living in the United States nearly 26.4 million, or 12.7% were veterans.\(^77\) It also indicated that the number of living veterans not on active duty decreases by decade. In 1980, census figures listed 28.5 million living in the U.S., but by 1990 that number dwindled to 27.5 million (14.5% of the adult population). The downward trend continued in 2000 Census with the veteran population listed at 26.4 million. Perhaps most important to the VHP is that during this two decade period mortality rates claimed nearly all World War I

\(^{77}\) Source: Veterans 2000 Census Brief (May 2003).
veterans, as well significant numbers from World War II and the Korean War. Overall, between 1990 and 2000 veterans declined in relationship to the civilian population in all U.S. regions. What follows is a summary of an independent Census Bureau study conducted in 2008-2009 that may assist the VHP and their partner groups to locate potential interviewees.

In terms of geographic distribution of veterans (2000 Census), the highest concentration lived in the South (9.9 million) and the Midwest (6.1 million). The West region had populations of 5.7 million and the Northeast, 4.6 million. However, between 1990 and 2000, veterans decreased in every region except the South (9.3 to 9.9 million, or a 6.7 percent increase). The Northeast suffered the greatest decline (5.5 to 4.6 million, or 15.4 percent). The percentage fell by 7.6 percent in the Midwest and 2.7 percent in the West. During the same decade, veterans also declined per the percentage of the civilian population. Most affected was the West (-2.3 percentage points), followed by the Northeast (-2.2), and the Midwest and South at -1.7 and -0.9) respectively.

Also documented was the number of civilian veterans (in the millions and aged 18 and over) by period of military service. For example, those serving from 1990 or later (including the Gulf War) number 3 million. Those in service from September 1980 through July 1990, are 3.8 million, and from May 1975 to August 1980, 2.8 million. The amount in the Vietnam era (August 1964 to April 1975) is 8.4 million while numbers from (February 1955 to July 1964) is at 4.4 million. Meanwhile, those living veterans from the Korean War (4 million) and World War II (5.7 million) can also be noted.

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78 Source: Veterans 2000 Census Brief (May 2003), 2.
79 Source: Veterans 2000, 4.
Overall, of those groups listed it can be determined that nearly one-third of all living veterans fought during Vietnam, followed by WWII veterans.\(^{80}\)

Among all fifty states plus the District of Columbia polled in 2000, California was the only state with more than 2.5 million veterans. In addition, six other states had a population over 1 million: Florida, Texas, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois. Most beneficial to the VHP is that these seven states make up 44.6 percent of the entire U.S. population, 11 million out of 26.8 million living veterans, or 41.6 percent of the U.S. total. Alaska (17.1%) was home to the highest percentage of living veterans per total population, with New York (9.5%) and Washington, D.C. (9.8%) having the lowest. Although between 1990 and 2000 veteran numbers fell nationally, many states witnessed significant increases. Nevada, one the fastest growing states, increased its veteran population by nearly 31 percent (from 182,000 to 238,000). Other states with an increase by 10 percent or more were Arizona, Idaho, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Utah. Of the twenty-five states who reported declines in veteran populations, New York led with 20.3 percent, followed by New Jersey and Connecticut.\(^{81}\)

The population numbers of veterans all fifty states reveals some interesting trends. Generally speaking, the heaviest concentrations are found in those states with the highest general population, including California, Texas, Florida, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. However, in an effort to locate World War II veterans the VHP and partner groups might want to consider more intense searches in those warmer climate or retirement destination states, regardless of their overall population. For example,

\(^{80}\) Source: Veterans 2000 Census Brief, 3.
\(^{81}\) Source: Veterans 2000, 4-5, 7.
Louisiana, Georgia, and Arizona might reap rewards, notably among minority groups like African Americans and American Indians:

Table 13

U.S. States with the Highest Veteran Populations

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. California</td>
<td>2,569,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Florida</td>
<td>1,875,597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Texas</td>
<td>1,754,809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. New York</td>
<td>1,361,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pennsylvania</td>
<td>1,280,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ohio</td>
<td>1,144,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Illinois</td>
<td>1,003,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Michigan</td>
<td>913,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. North Carolina</td>
<td>792,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Virginia</td>
<td>786,359</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to another survey, it was determined that in the year 2000, the veteran population in these ten states was “roughly” 51 percent of the total veteran population in the U.S. and Puerto Rico (53 percent in the 1990 Census).\(^83\) Despite impressive numbers among the top ten states, only two showed an increase in veteran populations between 1990 and 2000: Florida (156,468), Arizona (98,893), Georgia (75,450), North Carolina (73,188), and Nevada (56,044).\(^84\)

\(^83\) Ibid
\(^84\) Ibid
Other useful census data for the VHP and its project partners is a listing of the national veteran population by “top ten metropolitan areas.” The leader was New York City (including northern New Jersey and Long Island) with 1.38 million, followed by Los Angeles (Orange County), 1.05 million, Washington, D.C. (Baltimore, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland), 742,858, Chicago (Kenosha and Gary), 654,192, Philadelphia (Wilmington and Atlantic City), 570,281, San Francisco (Oakland and San Jose), 527,645, Boston (Worchester and Lawrence), 502,222, Detroit (Ann Arbor and Flint), 469,328, Dallas (Fort Worth), 415,367, and Seattle (Tacoma and Bremerton), 404,531. Based on these counts, the VHP would be well served to contact public schools, community colleges, and universities in these areas for assistance.85

Arguably the most valuable census data is that information on the numbers and percentages of living veterans by individual war or conflict, and where they live by state, city, county, to those “rural and non-metropolitan counties.” For example, information is available on the top ten places with the highest concentration of Gulf War and Vietnam era veterans in the civilian population. In the former war, four cities are located in the greater Washington, D.C. area. Leading the way was Virginia Beach, VA (21,176), followed by Hampton Roads, VA (13,981), Newport News, VA (8,010), and Chesapeake, VA (6,413).86 Hampton Roads veteran population (all groups) makes up 27.1% of the total population.87 In the case of Vietnam veterans, several of the top places: Virginia Beach (22,763), Colorado Springs, CO (20,011), Anchorage, AK (12,801), Columbus, Columbus,

87 Unless otherwise noted, the information and statistics in this section were computed from the 2000 Census Report.
GA (9,245), Sunrise Manor, NV (7,208), and Fayetteville, NC (6,935). Noticeable here is that these top areas have military bases in close proximity. \(^8^8\) For information on the highest number of veterans living by state counties, interested parties should consult the “Veterans: 2000: Census 2000 available on-line. \(^8^9\)

Of the total number of veterans listed in 2000, 1.6 million or six percent were women. More importantly, while the “total number of civilian veterans in the United States has been decreasing,” the “number of female veterans has been increasing.” Percentages for women in the military are higher the more recent the war. For example, only ten percent served between 1975 and 1980, thirteen percent between 1980 and 1990, and fifteen percent from 1990 to 2000. The largest percentage listed as “white, non-Hispanic” women reside in the states of California (122,548), Florida (97,387), and Texas (76,481), followed by New York (48,452), Virginia (47,078), Ohio (46,312), Pennsylvania (40,553), and Washington (40,368). \(^9^0\)

However, if one accesses on-line the 2007 Department of Veterans Affairs study they notice a significant increase in numbers when women of race and ethnicity are factored. For example, in California counts rose to 166,984, while in Texas to 148,960, Florida, 138,342, Virginia, 88,082, and in Georgia to 73,390 (31,173, white, non-Hispanic veterans from 2000 census figures). \(^9^1\) These numbers by state are helpful

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\(^8^8\) Source: “Veterans Census Brief,” 8.
\(^9^0\) 2000 Census Brief
\(^9^1\) The most recent study is the 2007 Department of Veterans Affairs Study on-line at [http://www.](http://www.)
however, what information that might not be known to project partners operating there is that women veterans can be located not only by city, but also county of residence.\textsuperscript{92}

African Americans are the second largest veteran group in the U.S. The 2000 \textit{Census} lists a total of 34,700,000 or 12.3\% of the total U.S. population. In terms of veterans aged 18-64 they number 2,560,000 or a twelve percent, but less than 6\% aged 65 and older. Overall, they represent 9.7 \% of the entire veteran population or “slightly more than 11.0 percent of the general population. Since so few testimonies have been collected among this veteran group in the past eight years, the VHP might want to “reorganize” and focus any future promotional campaigns in the ten states which more than 100,000 black male and female veterans call home. They are: California (208,000), Texas (187,000), Georgia (172,000), Florida (149,000), Virginia (141,000), New York (140,000), North Carolina (136,000), Maryland (130,000), Illinois (124,000), and Ohio (108,000).\textsuperscript{93} Like with women veterans, the VHP and its partner groups could also locate the number of African Americans veterans living in these states (or any for the matter) in their highest population density either by city or county of residence.

In terms of population growth over the past decade, no one ethnic group equals that of Latino Americans. According to 2000 figures 35,000,000 (or 12.3\%) are living in the U.S, of which some 1,518,000 are veterans. A survey further determined that the states of California with 6,928,000 and 285,000, Texas 4,287,000 and 246,000, and Florida 1,985,000 have the highest general and veteran populations respectively. The

\textsuperscript{92} I list the top five states only as examples. Such research can be conducted on any of the fifty U.S. states.

\textsuperscript{93} For more precise figures see “Veterans 2000”, keyword: African Americans
veteran count of 623,000 in these three states, which includes women, is about forty-percent of the entire population nationwide. Based on these figures alone, any concerted effort by the VHP or partner group to locate them might begin here. This may fall under the category of “easier said than done,” but once again the Census Bureau has charted their largest population density by region, state, and county. Similar information can be found for other ethnic groups like Asian and American Indian/Native Alaskan.

The VHP should consider adding key information from current Census reports/data (available on-line in full-text) to their website and stress to project partners, participants, and volunteers that it can be a valuable primary source for locating diverse veteran groups not only by state of residency, but also by region and county. As noted earlier in the chapter, such an oversight has caused the Project to experience difficulties fully diversifying their archival collection. To continue this course of action, as in not providing a web-link to census data for their users, would be to overlook that the racial makeup of veterans is now only recently beginning to mirror the population as a whole, and that the time to collect their stories is quickly fading.

As it stands today, the VHP has opted to undertake several public awareness and promotional programs around national and veteran holidays. Despite such efforts, there is no evidence suggesting they have greatly impacted the diversity of the collection. Real changes might evolve if the broader promotional effort shifts from using elected officials to “pass the word” on to their individual states, not knowing if what really needs to be

95 For veteran populations by state for Asian and American Indians see 2000 Census Report.
done in terms of diversifying the larger collection is reaching the masses, or inspiring them to participate. What is meant here is that such an approach may be convenient for the VHP (because it is located in Washington, D.C.), but may not be invoking the “spirit of legislation” or inspiring the continuation of its grassroots initiative.

This chapter first established the VHP as the most expansive oral history project in the country. In terms of the archival collection specific, it was determined that it is user-friendly and easily accessed, but with limited search options largely because the majority of the collection is non-web based (in full-text or digitalized). Those search options currently available to researchers, educators, and the larger public, are under the headings of war/conflict, branch of service, gender, and race and ethnicity and will be helpful in conducting a statistical survey like the one presented here. Data collected from VHP website has also determined that testimonies from women, African, American Indian, Asian, and Latino groups, both in the veteran and support groups, are under represented and no plan in the works to change this trend. The overall results or outcome of the archive, however limited in full-text sources, has been shared with the public. Staff members have provided researchers and the public with a means to visit the VHP in person and review the sources and visit the permanent exhibit, or hear many of its stories via public radio or read samples in books and articles.

Problems do persist for the VHP. Like most oral history projects (the exception being the WPA slave narrative), more attention is given to the process of amassing the collection than analyzing the collection itself. At this time, it can not be determined if it is widely used by the public or to what extent researchers have used the on-line collection.
or if the LOC requests “actual use” at the archives in order to publish books and articles. I offered several suggestions of the educational variety to alleviate some concerns. It might be wise to add scholarly studies on war and memory, or gender, race, and ethnic specific published personal narratives to the on-line bibliography to assist project partners and students. In the process, it could be beneficial to the VHP or public historians if more academics were considered for non-pay partnership roles. They could, like veterans, offer much insight and knowledge about war and, perhaps, establish more oral history projects at the university level. Statistical information gleaned from the 2000 Census Report could also be useful to partner groups. Available on-line data can be easily accessed, and could assist project groups in pinpointing the exact locations of the largest concentrations of minority veteran groups by state of residency, region, and county. Educating these groups on the value of census reports could someday reap benefits in terms of creating an archive representative of all Americans at war. The VHP currently reflects larger trends recognized from other studies, that a general call for volunteers in the U.S. (to participate in the Project) will result in under-representation of racial and ethnic minorities. Surprisingly, this is well known cultural trend, yet the VHP did not plan on how to avoid or address such an issue. Consequently, the majority of the archival collection is slanted towards the “white” male veteran experience.
CHAPTER VI

TOWARDS DIVERSITY: DIGITAL COLLECTIONS
AND WEBSITE PRESENTATIONS

Since 2001, the VHP has responded to larger national trends and international shifts resulting in archival material on the World-Wide Web. Such an approach has become necessary in today’s society because of reliance/convenience to seek information at our fingertips, accommodating a large percentage of the population unable to access those archival materials housed at the VHP. In theory, the site is open for all to use and contribute (researchers, historians, and the public). The reality is such that those intended parties do not use and contribute. Unfortunately, the WWW seems like a “field of dreams” where large amounts of built in information is stored, in hopes all will come to visit. In the case of the VHP digital archive, it does not account for individual’s deep cultural/economic/political reluctance, distrust, or unwillingness to contribute or use its materials.

The benefits of a virtual collection have been far-reaching and now allow for free application and playing video and audio files to impact the growth and popularity surrounding it. Patrick Hutton said technologies of communication share in the overall history process, as “all manner of memory topics” fall within such purview—“from the tug of tradition to the constancy of personal introspection, to the accelerating speed with
which collective memories are evoked and obliterated in today’s electronic culture.” The
power of the WWW allows us to wander freely from site to site in search of magnificent
images of people and places in an effort to “explore deeper realms of knowledge...we go
to them at the click of a mouse, and each click leads us deeper into their inner
sanctums.”¹

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the VHP website for content,
navigability, and the use of digital technology to share war stories with the public. I will
ask: What factors exist in determining if an individual collection will be digitalized?
What does the digitalization process entail? What types of sources are used? How has the
VHP used web presentations to build their collection and have any alterations been made
to their original format? What selections have staff members made, and how are they
situated by war, branch of service, and veteran group? Has the VHP adhered to its
mission statement of providing equal representation of all American wars, veterans, and
their supporters? In particular, how has it been able to overcome a shortage of
testimonies in the archival collection highlighted in the previous chapter, to make those
contributions made by women, African, Hispanic, Asian, and Native Americans come to
life in a digital format?

Only those oral history interviews, unpublished memoirs, diaries, and letter
collections detailed, adhering to LOC standards, and/or oral history interviews of the
highest quality are selected by the VHP staff for digitalization and/or special web

¹ See Hutton “Recent Scholarship on Memory and History,” 533.
presentations. More evidence that “radical trust” has its limitations. Over time they could be valuable teaching and research tools. LOC staff believes they are “media-rich” historical context with interactive opportunities for researchers, educators, and students. They have been organized to present historical background on groups or individuals and to investigate curriculum or, as with the VHP, war themes. Arguably their greatest asset is that they promote “interactive” classrooms or can be used to “present specific topics” rather than “broad-based themes.” On the other hand, webcasts are “media files.” Popular in today’s “high tech” world, they are designed then distributed over the Internet “using streaming media” technology, a “single content source [an audio-video oral history interview]” for the purposes of reaching many “listeners or viewers,” much like a radio broadcast.  

The bulk of the items that comprise the digital collection were the work of volunteers, veterans, their families, historians, and folklorists. The types of materials are largely of the sound recording, moving image (video interview), printed manuscript (memoirs, letters, diaries, and journal collections) and photographic type (individual or group photographs taken during actual service time, some with maps), and text transcription (oral history interview). Most are originals and displayed by the LOC with little, if any, use of digital processing/alteration. In other words, the WWW does not influence oral history content, only accessibility. However, some sources received are “photo-duplications or photocopies of originals; others may be copies from copies,”

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2 For guidelines to submit written sources refer back to chapter five. Quality oral history interviews are generally defined as those that are an hour long and which utilize suggested questions previously mentioned in chapter five.
3 http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities.html
which might raise concerns from any savvy user if they are truly original, unaltered documents. Images may also “vary greatly in their degree of quality.” Some have received “post-processing” (an LOC term) to fit into the “digital domain” or appear more legible. In terms of user equipment for the creation of audio and video recordings there are also limitations. They range from “broadcast quality to consumer grade” with some interviews varying in terms of sound and image quality. In terms “pre-or-post processing” performed on the recordings, the VHP has kept it to a minimum and strived to feature on its website the “highest quality images” possible.⁴

Many of the presentations consist of sound recordings and are available on the WWW, in relative equal proportions with written documents and photographs. Prior to digitalization, the VHP staff transfers original analog audiocassettes to “digital auto tape (DAT) to produce a master source.” Next, and largely for the more “tech savvy” individual, “wave files” are then produced “from the DAT tapes. It should be noted regardless of the latest technologies at their disposal and efforts to only make slight adjustment to volume and equalization, the VHP admits that not all “surface noise” has been eliminated from recordings.⁵

Digitalizing moving images or videotaped interviews is the primary goal of the Project. The first step is to transfer the original videotape to Digital Beta-cam and

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⁵ They consist of a sampling rate of 44,100 Hz per second, 16-bit word length, and a single (mono) channel.” To create RealAudio and MPEG 2, Layer 3 (.mp3) “files were derived from the Wave files using the .mp3 and RealAudio plug-in of Sonic Foundry’s Sound Forge software. See “Building the Digital Collection: Sound Recordings (same website).
produce a “master source for digitalization.” Despite such technological innovations, such use does not guarantee the absence of background noise and some recordings/files may “start or end abruptly,” video and audio levels may change as on the original recordings. “Streaming media,” as the VHP calls it, has another downside in that “image quality” could be affected depending on “modem speed, network traffic, processor speed,” and in other areas.

Manuscript collections are often considered a part of the larger personal narrative genre, although photographic material many not. Both forms are scanned on site at the LOC Information Technology Services (ITS) scan lab “using overhead digital cameras with Phase I software, and post-processed using Adobe Photoshop software.” In the case of text transcriptions, the I.T.S. adheres to accepted historical editing guidelines. Documents are transcribed with few alterations to the original document. The overall effort is to “preserve original appearance, content, and idiosyncrasies of composition,” as is any “period language and terminology.” Transcription efforts can be described as “literal” as it pertains to the veteran’s capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and any “visible corrections” like crossed out or partially erased words. Any alterations to an original text have been consistent throughout the text with editorial comments found in

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7 Vidipax, private contractor out of New York, created MPEG-2 files using the Opti-base MPEG Movie Maker 200S hardware card. It is controlled by Opti-base MPEG-2 files “through Helix Producer Plus and created for users” who have minimum 56K modem on their computers. 450kbps is the normal data rate and the video size measures at 352x240. See “Moving Images,” at http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/digital_collection.html
8 Images, depending on the quality of the original, can be scanned either in grayscale or color mode, “at 300ppi and saved in the uncompressed TIFF file format.” See “Photographic Material and Manuscripts,” at http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/digital_collection.html
In other words, oral history interviews have their pitfalls because they are often victimized by "selectiveness." It might be argued that they are no more biased than the creator of the document (memoirist). Some historians might argue they intend to make either a pro-war political statement or "sell" patriotism. Regardless of interpretation, the technological "wonder" called multi-media presentations allows for mass viewing and keeps the future study of war and the individual experience open for reinterpretation.

Creating a Digital Collection

The VHP has established no target percentage in order for its collection to be representative of all Americans at war. However, the use of digitalization has made it possible for many firsthand accounts by women and people of color to be organized by themes, accessed individually, and viewed in full-text. This process began by year two of its founding (2003) when VHP staff members simultaneously began posting their personal favorite accounts under the title of "Treasured Collections" and selecting other oral histories for inclusion into web presentations.

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9 Spelling errors are noted with [sic] with those of the reoccurring type (spelling or grammar) in the single document will be marked the first time only. Crossed out words appear in {braces}, whereas any special emphasis for "underlining" is noted with an asterisk. When the original author spelled out a word "and" it appears spelled out, the editor utilizes the ampersand (&). See "Text Transcriptions" at http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/digitalcollection.html.
The VHP Director and staff, along with the Five-Star Council, and prominent veterans and VHP initiators concurred that digitalized archival collections would become a “larger effort” for the Library “to make its collections accessible on-line.” Initial funding for digitalization likely came from the original three million dollar VA donation in 2001. Current VHP staff members, particularly those with advanced computer skills were charged with receiving those stories of the highest quality for digitalization. Since this process had many phases, taking nearly a year to complete, no hard time line for completion could be established. Anneliesa Clump, LOC press agent, said, “the initial presentation of personal narratives will be followed by many more culled from the 7,000 submissions” collected to date. Presently, approximately 7,700 testimonials (or eight percent of the current collection) have been digitalized.

Staff Favorites

With access to thousands of firsthand testimonies, and in an effort to benefit researchers, educators, veterans, family members, the goal at the VHP has been to post as many as possible on-line for public viewing. This is a work in progress, but was first undertaken by staff members who selected accounts from the most “treasured collections” listed under heading of “staff favorites.” The following will examine several of these accounts, determine from what war and veteran groups they represent, and what they say about war and military service overall.

10 Rachel Mears, interview (May 2008).
11 The digital collection also includes testimonies from prominent veterans and VHP initiators men and women: Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb); William Valentine Loncaric; Sen. Max Cleeland (D-Ga); William Jennings Arnett; Bruce Donald Fenchel; and Rep. Amo Houghton (R-NY).
12 Tom Wiener and Mears interviews (May 2008).
Special stories represent only written descriptions from major twentieth century wars, World War I (4), World War II (6), Korea (1), and Vietnam (1)) with an emphasis placed on the diversity and “dramatic content” of the current VHP archive. Of these twelve accounts, only one is from a female veteran and none are from racial and ethnic minorities.\(^1\)

VHP staff historian Alexa Potter is a specialist in World War II, Holocaust, and Central European history. She selected the story of Staff Sergeant Edward Bayon. Bayon served in World War I and later a veteran of the Army Air Forces/Corps assigned to the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. His experiences in the Great War are chronicled in written memoir entitled “A Thrilling Adventure,” and reiterates that the VHP is interested in more than telling the battlefield story.\(^14\) Potter’s choice highlights how war has/hand noble purpose. Soldiers can act with dignity and honor and carry out their daily duties in a manner citizens can respect.

“Thrilling Adventure” transpires in Belgium and France after the fighting ended in 1918. Not long after arriving in Europe he married a French girl and volunteered for the American Graves Registration Service, consisting of American soldiers assigned to “bring home” those who had fallen. His odyssey reached a high water mark, when in 1923 he took command of a barge “laden with the caskets of 952 through the canals of France, Holland, and Belgium on their way home.” Bayon passed many accounts his journey, but no more detailed than his memory of a “remarkable reception” given by the

\(^{13}\) “Staff Favorites: an introduction to the Edward Bayon collection at http://www.loc.gov/vets/staff-favorites-edwardbanyon.html.

\(^{14}\) Source: Edward J. Bayon--Manuscript Collection (AFC/2001/001/5816, VHP, AFC, and LOC) or at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.05816.
Belgians. At each canal stop as they waited to clear the locks, he noted that large crowds gathered to “lay wreaths and flowers” in honor of the U.S. war dead. Bands played music, children sang songs, and local leaders gave speeches. In the town of Liege, “a salute of cannons was fired and a cavalry regiment met us and escorted us on both sides of the canal.” At the last lock he recalled “everyone was uncovered and many women were kneeling, praying, and weeping.” Before leaving Belgium a local official presented him with “a letter for the mothers of the dead.” The event had such an impact on Bayon that he said, “I would remember the honor paid... for the rest of my life.”

Stephanie Weaver, VHP processing technician, highlighted the veteran experience of “beach landings” in the World War II Pacific Theater. She chose the story of Staff Sergeant Julius J. Siefring, a U.S. Army veteran. Born in New Weston, Ohio, Siefring began military service at Camp Atterbury, Indiana and completed basic training at Camp Wolters, Texas. Thereafter he was shipped Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, then moved on to New Guinea, Luzon, and Mindanao Island. At Leyte Island in the Philippines he stormed the beachhead as a member of Company D, 19th Infantry Regiment 24th Infantry Division. Siefring’s account, a one-hour long audio/video interview, accompanies a photo album with enlisted record, report of separation from service, and a letter written to his wife Henrietta dated August 23, 1945.

Siefring’s story details what many combat infantrymen experienced in wartime. Before landing at Leyte Island, he witnessed from his ship how U.S. warplanes “bombed

15 See Bayon collection.
and strafed the island” in order to pave the way for the landing. He told of “unimaginable horrors” including watching fellow soldiers under heavy enemy machine gun fire, jumping over the sides of the landing crafts, “only to be weighed down” by heavy packs. He recalled how many drowned before reaching the objective. Once his division reached the shore, and with cover and concealment not existent, many soldiers clung to and “scratched at trees” until the stress of enemy fire finally broke them. Siefring’s interview suggests that the carnage was great, and unforgettable. Still he did what he could do by giving medical aid to wounded men, in what amounted to an individual act of bravery to save lives.17

Yvonne Brown, a processing technician, selected the account of Geraldine Fisher-Livtak, World War II civilian worker and the lone female account among “staff favorites.” Born in Evansville, Indiana, Fisher-Livtak moved to San Antonio, Texas at the age of eighteen to attend Business College. Like so many other who recall the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, she too was inspired to help the cause the next day after hearing President Roosevelt’s radio announcement that said “we are at war.”18 Her first duty assignment was at Camp Hood, Texas (now Fort Hood). Later when stationed at Randolph Air Force Base, she participated in “invitation-only Tea Dances” that drew military personnel not only from Randolph but installations. When asked what the highlight of her war years was she referred to “earning a high security clearance” to enter the base and “entertain” those returning veterans from the European theater, many

17 Siefring quoted in oral history interview accessed at http://www.loc.gov/vets/staff-favorites-juliussiefring.html
still suffering from wounds received in combat, or from "battle fatigue." When asked how the war transformed her life, Livak hinted that she learned first hand through these chance meetings about the horrific, tragic effects that war imposes on the individual soldier, and how some were inconsolable and likely carried such memories with them the rest of their lives.19

Matt McCrady, a Digital Conversion team member, selected the audio interview of Edward L. Pierce, Korean War veteran born in Calumet City, Illinois. The Pierce collection also consists of a photograph album and over 120 letters. Only twenty years old when the U.S. Army drafted him in summer of 1952, he wrote daily to his parents back home that began with detailed accounts of his "boot camp" experiences, aboard ship bound for Korea, and while fighting from the front lines against North Korea. His letters reveal the drudgery of army life including what all soldier's experience recall of their duty in Korea, the coldest weather "ever experienced." Pierce's account is most valuable because it is both told during the war and long after it ended. More importantly, it fulfills the "spirit of" VHP legislation and accounts for the experiences of the typical American soldier in Korea.20

In her second selection, Stephanie Weaver chose Seattle, Washington native and former army sergeant James Sawvell. According to his video interview, he originally enlisted in hopes of serving somewhere else other than Vietnam. His recruiter promised

19 Fisher-Livtak remained in civilian service many years after the war, at one time working as Director of Publicity and Public Relations for TV Station KEYL (San Antonio).
20 Edward L. Pierce collection in, "See and Hear Veterans' Stories: Staff Favorites" at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story.loc.natlib.aft2001001.08025
him a duty assignment to Germany after completion of basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Initially, he received those orders for Germany, but it was 1968, the height of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and his leadership skills “were badly needed.” After more training at Fort Knox, Kentucky and Fort Hood, Texas, Sawvell shipped out for South Vietnam as one of the newest members of the 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 25 Infantry Division, later serving with Company B, 4th Battalion, 37th Armored Division. Sawvell might be described as “mans man,” or one who had a habit of taking danger head on with few regrets. This is not to say he no initial doubts when first arriving in Vietnam. When “I came into the compound [Cu Chi] and everybody was bandaged…and I am going, what kind of meat grinder have I dropped myself into?” In later experiences, we learn that anything could happen in Vietnam, mostly of the death variety.\(^\text{21}\)

The most vivid and detailed of Sawvell’s experiences centered on patrolling in the jungle in what, more times than not, amounted to a futile attempt to locate highly mobile opposing forces. While apart of “ambush teams,” he often participated in daylight insertions, “dropping” into Viet Cong base camps where casualties were high. Or, as he pointed out, many of those intended deployments failed from the beginning when “they” became targets of ambushes themselves by the “VC” or the North Vietnamese Army. Sawvell was injured in 1969 while assigned to clear landmines off a main road, only to

\(^{21}\) James A. Sawvell Collection--Type Written Document and Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/6036, VHP, AFC, and LOC) or accessed at http://www.loc.gov/vets/staff-favorites-james_sewvall.html.
have his tank run over two landmines causing him lose hearing in one ear.\textsuperscript{22} His account is unique because it describes the hazardous nature of being a ground soldier in war. Vietnam era soldiers faced many obstacles including constant fears of stepping on landmines, into booby traps, or setting off trip wires for other explosive devises.\textsuperscript{23}

An overview of “staff favorites” reveals most are from the World War I and World War II generation, and who served time in combat. Only one account is from a woman, and none from a specific race or ethnic group. At this time, why this is so cannot be ascertained, only questioned, as why not supplement staff picks with those from others (professional historians) who can better contextualize the material. Nor can it be determined if the VHP is aware of this oversight or if staff members are in the process of collecting higher quality or more detailed accounts for future inclusion. If so, then soon such types of stories, like those from the white, non-Hispanic group will be apart of the “best of the best,” revealing not only the unique sacrifices they have made, but also how wartime service forever transformed and shaped their lives, as well as the military itself.

Web Presentations/War Themes

The majority of the VHP digital collections are included in twenty-eight thematic sub headings, under the major heading of “Experiencing War.”\textsuperscript{24} A content analysis of the digitalized themes suggests they are representative of all major U.S. wars, branches of service, and comprise of diverse veteran groups who served. Both audio and transcripts are present under each sub-heading. Depending on availability, portions of a number of

\textsuperscript{22} Sawvell, quoted from oral history interview
\textsuperscript{23} Sawvell.
\textsuperscript{24} For a complete listing see “Experiencing War” at www.loc.gov/vets/stories
different interviews are available for each sub-heading, ranging from six to twenty. Testimonials from women, African, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, and other ethnic group veterans/supporters, are a part of most, or are concentrated in those that honor them collectively by group.

Those themes selected for content analysis emphasizes woman and minority groups so as to determine the Project commitment to diversification. They include:

1. African Americans at War: Fighting Two Battles
2. Women at War
3. Asian Pacific Americans: Going for Broke
4. Women of Four Wars
5. Hispanics in Service
6. Buffalo Soldiers: The 92nd in Italy
7. Willing to Serve: American Indians

Shortly before Memorial Day 2003, the AFC announced that the VHP had entered the digital age with the posting of its first twenty-one oral history collections previously submitted by veterans and civilians under the title “Courage, Patriotism, and Community.” Staff presumably searched through many interviews to come up with the most compelling stories or accounts. “Patriotism” stories are not void of women or people of color. For example, Violet Hill Askins-Gordon, African American, enlisted during World War II along with her best friend, Mildred Osby. Together they endured the hardships of serving in a segregated army, first stateside, then in England and France with

See VHP website at www.loc.gov/vets.
the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). Gordon, born in Talihanee, Oklahoma, noted how her willingness to overcome such obstacles would earn her high praise from superiors and later promotion to commanding officer of the 32nd Company, 6888th Central Postal Directory. Late in her oral history interview, she recalled several episodes where “discipline” in the barracks was lacking and racism reared its ugly head. However, in the end, Gordon had much praise for the army for pushing her in the right direction, transforming a once shy, introspective person, into a full-fledged leader of troops.26

The theme “Community” is situated into the context of war and can mean many things. For veterans and their civilian supporters alike, the “community” of soldiers means allegiances to individual units, or simply interacting with those fellow soldiers taking leave from combat zones. An overview of the collection reveals “an all-out war” beyond the battlefield experience.27 One such account came from Captain John W. Earle, New York native, who served as a Special Services Officer with the 14th Infantry, 71st Division of the Army during World War II. Among his many duties, whether stationed stateside in California, overseas in Panama or Europe, was to help make soldier’s lives better. This could mean passing out cigarettes or organizing a “memorable night” of dancing at the mess hall. In one letter he said “the function of the Special Services is to relieve the soldiers’ mind of stress.”28 Earle is just one example of how many civilian

26 See Violet Gordon Collection—Manuscripts and Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/146, VHP, AFC, and LOC).
27 http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/community.html
supporters sacrificed "with small gestures of everyday life" in a time of great need. Overall, his rich collection of letters largely penned to his mother, grandmother, and select family members is called by some "an extraordinary [effort] to provide entertainment and treats for troops in service."

What stands out the most in the presentation of oral histories under "Courage, Patriotism, and Community," like other themes that followed, is the emphasis placed on the individual experience rather than the broader war, or even war itself. Oral histories were selected to emphasize that there are two types of "Courage," physical and moral. Many a veteran faced abnormal hardships and/or accepted "challenges that put not only their lives, but their emotional well-being and their reputations on the line." The VHP staff selected excerpts that raised the issues of how every generation has come to "redefine patriotic behavior." Less documented is if those individual feelings changed after the war experience, or if patriotism meant "displaying the flag or practicing dissent, or both." Community, it is said can "mean identifying with a specific" military branch or unit, "or bringing honor to one's home town, or sharing recreation and special treats with fellow soldiers." On the whole, these accounts remind us that whether from the battlefield or from everyday life in the military, in the end, there are many stories to tell and "nuances and rewards of cooperation with other human beings."

Early "Experiencing War" web presentations like "Courage, Patriotism, and Community, or "Life Altering, Hurry-Up and Wait were consistent with the VHP effort

29 http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/community.html
30 Clump and other information cited in "Veterans Stories Online."
31 See “Community” at www.loc.gov/vets/stories/community.html
to develop broad-based themes. Once committed to themes like "Military Medicine" and others web-site users are reminded that there are numerous ways beyond more popular topics of ground and air combat to experience war. This is evident in the ways these veterans and supporters at war from this group link these sources with the oral or written interview both share their work and personal experiences with equal enthusiasm. While women testimonies are included in most web presentations, the same cannot be said for African Americans and other ethnic group veterans (at least in the same numbers as the white veteran). This is not an oversight by the VHP rather because so few testimonials collected to date they have opted to use those available under separate themes.

Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

These selections of themes indicate the AFC/VHP recognizes the importance of gender, race, ethnic, and class. Therefore in the post-2003 period, the Project began to develop web presentations that either narrowed down the scope of war by theater, specific units, or veteran groups. Two such presentations were solely dedicated to women. Most accounts offer a glimpse of gender dynamics at work in the military from the perspective of nurses, stateside "Rosie the Riveters," one flight surgeon, and two officers who now have a place in the annals of U.S. military history. Grouped into two segments, "Women at War" and "Women of Four Wars" both serve as much for individual dedications as they do to honor/cover "nearly sixty years and documents and the changing role of American women in wartime service."32 Bob Patrick said "Thanks to

32 Robert Patrick quoted in Lofton and Maccaro, "Veterans History Project Presents 'Women of Four Wars' Calls Americans to Interview Female Vets During Women's History Month," (February 27, 2008).
volunteers nationwide the [LOC] has preserved the recollections of more than 55,000 veterans. Yet, fewer than 4,000 of those interviews are from women. We need more personal accounts from female veterans, and we need the American public to record them.\(^{33}\) Based on the table information below, the digital collection by war and gender at present:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War/Conflict</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War I (1914-1919):</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II (1939-1945):</td>
<td>4,404</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean War (1950-1953):</td>
<td>1,049</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam War (1964-1975):</td>
<td>1,318</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf War (1990-1995):</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan/Iraq Wars (2001--):</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Conflicts/Type of Service:</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13(^{34})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to these figures, the VHP has digitalized 7,411 accounts from the 59,052 (over eight percent) available accounts from males, and 856 out of 4,110 (around twenty percent) from females.\(^{35}\) However, these numbers (those represented in the overall VHP

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\(^{33}\) Patrick quoted in Lofton and Maccaro.

\(^{34}\) Figures compiled at [http://www.loc.gov/vets.html](http://www.loc.gov/vets.html). "Search the Veterans Collections: Browse," then click on search boxes titled gender, digital, and by individual war.

\(^{35}\) "Search the Veterans Collections" by total number of collections by gender and then by those "digitalized."
collection and digitalized) are less telling than the percentage of men and women who served.

Set for release during the annual commemoration of Women’s History Month in February 2008, *Women at War* consisted of twelve full-digitalized accounts comprised of the usual letters, diaries, and written memoirs. The stories began with World War II, the first war in which women wore the uniform of the armed forces, through the Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf Wars. Patrick said, “We’re humbled by the significant contributions these valiant women have made to our military history, and we offer these stories as a way of encouraging more women to come forward with their own experiences.”

Darlene Iskra enlisted in the navy in 1979 at the age of twenty-seven, recently divorced and with modest ambitions other than desiring a change. It appears she entered service at the right time, as the navy and other service branches were beginning to find a place for women. Iskra became the first female to graduate from dive school and later became an officer. Although politics initially stood in the way of her earning command status, patience paid off and by 1990, she became the first women to take charge of a navy warship, the *U.S.S Opportune*. In terms of handling the pressures of command and being a woman in charge, Iskra had a motto, “Don’t treat me any differently [than a man]; I am the commanding officer and that’s it.”

37 Source: Darlene Iskra Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/3482), VHP, AFC, LOC.
Lieutenant Colonel Liberty’s story is unique in that her saga in the military spans three major wars: World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Upon enlisting in the Army Nurse Corps in 1943, she recalled “They weren’t really prepared to handle woman.” Throughout her 28 year military career Liberty called herself as a staunch disciplinarian, “and a bit of a maverick.” In Vietnam, she escaped from a downed helicopter and was under attack by the North Vietnamese Army at Cam Ranh Bay. Over a three war period, she could not recall how many wounded entered her tent, but in terms of those “going to die,” she defiantly said “let them see an American woman that smells good.” The saving grace of her tour in Vietnam was seeing her brother, taking part in the frequent practical joke, or continuing to serve her country with much fondness.38

Three other narratives also reveal gender dynamics at work in the military. Helen Eileen Hause, Air Force flight nurse, logged more than one-thousand hours transporting patients during Vietnam. Her job mainly consisted of prepping wounded troops for evacuation aboard an “85-bed plane,” but also withstood enemy attacks while stationed at Ton Son Nhut Air Base. Brenda Vosbein joined the WAC in 1970 and over a twenty-nine year career “experienced—and quickly adapted to—the massive sea change in the military as women’s roles expanded.” Lieutenant-Commander Holly Harrison was the first women recipient of the Bronze Star. During “Operation Iraqi Freedom” she captained the 110-foot cutter Aquidneck and patrolled the dangerous waterway separating

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38 Source: Frances Liberty Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/2548), VHP, AFC, LOC.
Iraq and Kuwait. After service in the Persian Gulf War, she later became executive officer of the Maritime Law Enforcement Academy.³⁹

The theme Women of Four Wars consists of 17 testimonials from nurses and other veterans who served in the army, navy, and air force during Korea, Vietnam and in the Persian Gulf and Iraq/Afghanistan. A content analysis reveals gender dynamics at work in the military, as most of the women who served in the first two wars either were restricted as nurses in hospitals or aboard hospital ships, yet witnessed firsthand the horrifying results of armed conflict and/or exposure to extreme climates that affected themselves and patients alike. The VHP noted that “the pop culture images of how women served in these wars—the nurses of MASH and China Beach—isn’t far from the truth.”⁴⁰ There were, however, other roles that women played beyond caring for the wounded.

Clara “Chris” Johnson, African American, was born in Jackson, Mississippi, and served in both the Korean and Vietnam wars. Looking for a steady income, she was welcomed into the air force as an officer candidate in 1950 because she had attended college and “had skills that could be developed.” Soon thereafter, Johnson found herself “competing with male training squads,” and quickly learned that the “only way to survive in the Air Force was to be competitive.” On how white nurses received her, Johnson said, “I was always impressed with my female colleagues in that I was the only person of color

³⁹ See Lofton and Maccaro, “Women of Four Wars.”
and they were readily accepting me.”⁴¹ When she shipped off to Vietnam in 1968, she was two years away from retirement. Assigned to the 377th Combat Support Group Ton Son Nhut, it was not long before she encountered life-altering experiences. One recollection revealed the harsh realities of modern war go beyond the battlefield. She remembered “finding baby girls thrown away by their families [whether fathered by American troops she doesn’t say], and having to take them to local orphanages, and later delivering confiscated rice” to feed them.⁴²

Marion Birkhimer enlisted in the navy in 1957 beginning a twenty-seven year career that included service in Vietnam aboard the hospital ship, U.S.S. Repose. In charge of the ship’s surgical ward, Captain Birkhimer had to treat fire casualties aboard the U.S.S. Forrestal (1967), witness the burials at sea of those who perished, and later ground forces wounded and/or dying from action in the Tet-Offensive of 1968. In her oral history interview, she described herself as sensitive to the morale and needs of colleagues and wounded alike, striving to give the best care possible while under the most trying of circumstances. Birkhimer perhaps spoke for all nurses regardless of war or conflict, when she said sometimes there are no answers to give for dying men’s questions.⁴³

Joan Furey’s experiences as an army first lieutenant with the 71st Evacuation Hospital during the Vietnam War echoed many of Birhimer’s. Stationed with an intensive care unit in the Central Highlands near Pleiku, she recalled “I don’t think anything in civilian life can prepare you for combat casualties.” Given decision-making latitude by

⁴¹ Clara Johnson Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/4283), VHP, AFC, LOC.
⁴² Clara Johnson Collection
⁴³ Marion Birkhimer Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/23458).
doctors “in the best interest of the patients,” Furey learned first that she was not initially prepared to deal with mass injuries and death, finding “everything overwhelming.” Throughout her tour from 1968 to 1970, she recalled how many nurses had delayed stress reactions and later like herself, learned to “detach in the moment from the horrible, life-altering injuries” suffered by young soldiers. Many years after the war, she had to readjust to civilian nursing and found it difficult because there “was no one to about her experiences in Vietnam.” In an effort find “closure,” she and four fellow nurses took a cruise to Vietnam. In her oral history interview, she recalled how “the country was recovering and people [Vietnamese] were welcoming,” but that seeing places” she once associated with horror were now tourist attractions” was, overall, disconcerting.”

Also apart of this collection is the interview given by Kathryn Miller-Taylor, captain in the Air Force Nurse Corps and veteran of the Korean War. Born in Danbury, CT, she was seemingly undeterred by anything she accounted, including landing in Kunsan, Korea in 1952 during an air-raid. She recalled the excitement level at being in the “midst of the action.” Taylor experienced a “bit of everything,” wounded pilots and ground troops, to a breakout of mumps. During off-duty time, she recalled having fun communicating with South Koreans and learning about their culture. However, it was her recollections or gripes about Korea that stood out most. For example, she recalled “there were no indoor toilets at the hospital.” Everyone had to “go” outside and Miller regularly “complained about it.” After she left Korea, the air force finally installed indoor

44 Joan Furey Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/19249), VHP, AFC, LOC.
plumbing. “But they named it after me and somebody sent pictures of it: the Kathryn Miller Memorial Latrine.”

A native of Ruso, North Dakota, Nan Borg’s military career began in 1961 when she joined the Army Reserves. Her main motivation was for a “chance to travel” and to reunite with a brother serving with the air force in Europe. One year later, she went on active duty. Borg’s training as an intensive care nurse began in Seoul, South Korea in 1964. From 1970 to 1971, she served with the 24th Evacuation Hospital in Vietnam. Like nurses of all wars, Borg experienced her fair share of “death and dying.” In an oral history interview, she detailed the structure of the 24th Hospital in terms of numerous “Quonset huts” not always the most sanitary or suitable for caring for the wounded and sick. Nevertheless, by the close of her tour, she took it upon herself to counsel junior officers having difficulty coping with the daily horrors of war and or treating “patients with fatal injuries.” For Borg, perhaps the most unsettling of her experiences occurred when she returned home. After landing at San Francisco Airport and fearing reprisals from antiwar demonstrators, she said, “I wanted to get out of uniform because I was scared for my life.”

Those stories included in part one Woman at War and part two, Persian Gulf and Iraq/Afghanistan wars are equally compelling in terms of the overall transformative experience. In most cases, veterans reveal the far-reaching, sometimes politico-military effects of gender dynamics at work across many wars and in the larger military. The

45 Kathryn Taylor Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/23641), VHP, AFC, LOC.
46 Nan Borg Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/46805), VHP, AFC, LOC.
message sent by those women who served in Korea and Vietnam was that their advanced roles during service were limited. However, in the two most recent wars/conflicts, the VHP has showcased how women participation has dramatically expanded, with more subjugated to and experiencing the true nature of modern warfare, often under trying circumstances or with dire consequences.\textsuperscript{47}

The VHP also sends a message as to why these interviews were selected for digitalization. First, they acknowledge sexism has existed in the Armed Forces or that women have for time been considered second-class soldiers. Second, they acknowledge women need to be as good as or better than men. Third, they concede that the modern military recognizes standards for fair merit among its soldiers. Finally, women as they are situated into VHP web presentations can be a “good seller,” with the possibility of the same applying to those veterans of different race and ethnicity.

African Americans at War: Fighting Two Battles

The AFC/VHP recognizes that many African American veterans joined the military as part of the larger World War II effort to defeat those totalitarian regimes built on the myth of national or racial superiority. Unfortunately, that war would dramatize the “disconnect between what America was fighting against and its racial policies in the military.” African American men and women faced the prospect of serving in racially-segregated units, yet set out to prove they too could fight, and deserved equal standing “both inside the barracks and in the civilian world from which they came.” Despite such mindsets the “stench of racism lingered on” there and in other American wars where

\textsuperscript{47} Source: “Experiencing War.” Women of Four Wars: Korea & Vietnam, Persian Gulf & Afghanistan at \url{http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-women4wars.html}
other “complex factors” played as well. It might be said that memories are lasting because of this ill-treatment, but in the post-Vietnam era, some veterans claim “race became a non-issue for their entire tour of service.” Despite having only limited numbers of African American testimonies, the VHP was able to digitalize many and created two separate web presentations honoring their service to country. Their current digitalized accounts are available by war and gender:

Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African Americans by War/Gender</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>War/Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>World War I (1914-1919):</td>
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<tr>
<td>World War II (1939-1945):</td>
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<td>Korean War (1950-1953):</td>
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<td>Persian Gulf War (1990-1995):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iraq and Afghanistan Wars (2001--):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Conflicts/Types of Service:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current archival collection lists over 1,400 Black/African American testimonies, of which 243 (approximately 6 percent) are digitalized. There are only 40 accounts from women, but as noted above almost half came from those veterans who served in the Persian Gulf War (their number is more than males).

48 *African American Pioneers* under the heading “Experiencing War” at [www.loc.gov](http://lcweb.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/search?query=race:Black%20or%20African%20)
The initial plan for African Americans at War: Fighting Two Battles reached fruition in January 2006 before African American History Month the following month, when the VHP announced twenty-three stories would be digitalized. Meanwhile, the VHP staff members conducted public programs “to honor veterans and official partners,” in several U.S. cities, many with the highest African American populations: Detroit, Michigan, Chicago, Illinois, and in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Also included was the VHP Retirement Community Outreach Initiative,” a program established earlier to target veterans in our nation’s retirement communities, later called “An Exemplary Aging Project” by the “Aging Affinity Group.”

Bob Patrick, then acting director of the VHP, sais “As the nation celebrates Black History Month, the Veterans History Project is honoring African American veterans who served in the United States military by highlighting some of the remarkable stories we have received. We also invite and encourage all minority military veterans to contribute their story so that their sacrifice and service on behalf of this nation will not be forgotten.”

One of the eleven featured black veterans was Pearle W. Mack, Jr., who endured the hardships of serving in a segregated army during World War II. Mack went on to serve thirty years in military and added much depth to the project when he revealed how positive changes in race attitudes occurred over time. Mack, like millions of other Americans, tried to enlist on December 8, 1941. However, his effort was thwarted by a racist recruiter. The army finally accepted him leading to a career that lasted thirty-one

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years and through three wars. In World War II, Mack provided logistical support to
General George Patton’s armored corps. During Korea, he led a transportation unit that
maneuvered on both sides of the present day 38th Parallel. As major during the Vietnam
War, Mack served in as an intelligence/psychological warfare specialist. Throughout his
long military career, he witnessed the cruel reality of racism towards African Americans
by white soldiers. What made it difficulty during World War II he said was the “lack of
black officers,” and that the army had “racial quotas.” He noted that beginning in
Vietnam there were “improving conditions over his career for blacks in the Army,” but
that he still found himself “barred from an officers’ club because of race.” In his oral
history interview, Mack said, that when it came to the war itself race protected no one,
referring to the dangers of flying in a helicopter, “running out of fuel, being shot at by
civilians,” or taking in large amounts of the herbicide Agent Orange.

For other African American pioneers in military service listed in this collection,
all had to overcome racism. Bobby Wallace, World War II navy veteran, said “we had
to wars to fight: prejudice…and those [Japanese].” Prudence Burrell, lieutenant, and
World War II veteran who served with the Army Nurse Corps 268th Station Hospital
(segregated unit that treated only black soldiers) in New Guinea, said, “I didn’t come to
serve any of them, I came to nurse them [hinting that black women were in the service to

52 Source: Pearle W. Mack, Jr., “Experiencing War,” at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp-
stories/loc.natlib.afc2001001.05764
53 Source: Mack—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/5764), VHP, AFC, LOC.
54 Quote from, “Experiencing War”: African American Pioneers, at
http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/afam-pioneers.html
55 Wallace quoted in, Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/4736), VHP, AFC, LOC.
provide males entertainment of different sorts].”\textsuperscript{56} Rutherford Brice, World War II veteran said, “I was one of those, I would say, fortunate blacks. I was one of the fortunate 143 ‘experimental’ blacks who were sent to Aviation Machinist Mate School.”\textsuperscript{57} Harry Leavell, Tuskegee Army airman in World War II, recalled “they did everything [the army] they could to keep you from succeeding.”\textsuperscript{58} Quentin Smith, also a Tuskegee pilot, remembered “the white boys went in at 18; we couldn’t come in unless you had a college degree.”\textsuperscript{59} On the difficulties blacks faced in obtaining combat commands, Lieutenant Isaiah McCoy, Jr. lamented “whenever one of us got a command during World War II, it was because they [the army] ran out of white guys to command the units.”\textsuperscript{60}

Brice’s story is unique on many fronts. He served twenty five years in the military and along with Mack one of the few black soldiers in the VHP collection to initially serve as an enlisted man, then as an officer, and during three wars. Like most during World War II he felt the sting of racism, recalling “although I was a specialist, my sleeping quarters were with the cooks and stewards, totally separate from whites.” After the war ended he attended college at Morgan State University (first Reserved Officer Training Corps graduate) and was an All-American football player. He graduated in time to join the army, but because of his athletic skills was sent to Fort Knox, KY to coach the

\textsuperscript{56} Burrell quoted in, Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/4747).
\textsuperscript{57} Brice quoted in, Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/5397).
\textsuperscript{58} Leavell quoted in, Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/2658).
\textsuperscript{59} Smith quoted in, Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/3001).
\textsuperscript{60} McCoy quoted in, Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/2503).
backfield (running backs) of the football team. When he did ship-off to Korea, it was as a commissioned officer assigned to the 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division.  

As one of the most decorated African American soldiers in Korea, Brice fought at the battle of Heartbreak Ridge and at the siege on “Old Baldy.” In the latter, he was as an executive officer of Company C, took part in heavy fighting with Chinese troops, and later earned the Silver Star. He later served two tours in Vietnam as a lieutenant colonel with the U.S. Army’s 114th Air Assault Special Forces, retiring from the military in 1966. In his oral history interview, he said the most memorable part of his time in the military, aside from experiencing the brutality of war and racism in the army, which he said, “never goes away,” was having the opportunity “to broaden his skill set” and taking “full advantage” of all career possibilities available to him.  

“The Next Generation,” or part two of the presentation is equally engaging, but lacking the female voice. On the whole, this collection of stories reveals how more opportunities presented themselves to African American servicemen and women. Although racism lingered, so did the controversies of fighting these wars (particularly Vietnam). The unpopular nature of that war affected both white and black, but for some veterans here “race became a non-issue.” For example, William Boyd served two tours of duty in Vietnam (as the only black man in his platoon who flew in an air ambulance. As a

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61 Source: Brice biographical information--Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/5397).
62 The Battle of Heartbreak Ridge” was fought between September and October 1951. It was one of several engagements between United Nation forces and the North Korean army that occurred near the “Punchbowl” overlooking the hills of northern town of Chorwan (located a few miles north of the 38th Parallel). The battle of “Old Baldy” was a series of five separate engagements fought between United Nation and Chinese troops that began in June 1952 and ended in July of the same year.
63 Brice quoted in Oral History Interview (5397).
pilot his helicopter was shot down three times. He spoke passionately about race relations when he said, rather surprisingly, “Once you get with a unit and you start working as a team, color never comes up.” Boyd nevertheless avoided capture and injury, or as he put it “not bad enough to stop me” or from doing his job by continuing to fly dangerous missions in search of casualties.\textsuperscript{64}

Boyd’s singular assessment of race relations may be true for certain parties, but not for all.\textsuperscript{65} Charles Berry, twenty-two year serviceman with army and veteran of three wars, recalled racism following him everywhere. “I am an American. And when I go home [from Korea] I can’t even sit and eat where I want to...Can’t ride the bus...Can’t get a job I’m qualified for...Then what the hell am I fighting for”? Daniel Burress, Vietnam War veteran, said, “You feel like you’re fighting for someone else’s freedom and you don’t have your own...the racism comes when the fight is over.” Black men feared reprisal from white soldiers in terms “relationships” of any kind with white women. Terona Chiver, Vietnam veterans, recalled, “I’m up here in Alaska, and I got this white woman rubbing my back. This is not going to work, you know?” Marion Marshall, Vietnam ear pilot believed racism “was a very low threat as long as you obeyed the rules.” Others like Solomon Read, veterans of Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War “didn’t


\textsuperscript{65}Fearing reprisals from commanding officers and senior non-commissioned officers, most enlisted personnel were inclined to express inner feelings about minorities in more overt ways.
see his [military service] as breaking barriers. I saw an opportunity was presented to me,” to succeed in life.66

Asian Pacific Americans: Going for Broke

The AFC/VHP concedes that no one group of Americans was isolated more from American society or military service than those Americans from Asian-Pacific backgrounds. Although their stories are less in number, when examined collectively we learn they too made memorable wartime contributions. A content analysis of this theme reveals collective issues at hand. Whether they served in the military, as civilian supporters, or were confined to Internment Camps, their loyalty to the U.S was always questioned. For those in uniform there was a sense of having to be “won over” by fellow soldiers. Like with African Americans racism persisted, total acceptance was rare, even if one served with distinction and honor. Current digital collections:

Table 16

<table>
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<tr>
<th>War/Conflict</th>
<th>Male/Female</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>World War I (1914-1919):</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II (1939-1945):</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf War (1990-1995):</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

66 Berry, Burress, Chiver, Marshall, and Read quoted in Oral History Interviews (AFC/2001/001/5950), (AFC/2001/001/1811), (AFC/2001/001/6049), (AFC/2001/001/10760), and (AFC/2001/001/7936).
Table 16—continued

Iraq/Afghanistan Wars (2001--): 1/0
Other Conflicts/Type of Service: 0/1

As noted in chapter six, the total number of Asian American testimonials collected to date is 117, of which 17 are digitalized (seven percent), with only two available from women.68

The eight stories accounts in this collection (seven male, one female) are from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq. None are more valuable that those from men and a single woman “who put their lives on the line for their country,” while certain members of their families were being confined in Internment (Concentration) Camps stateside.69 One such account is from Yeiichi Kelly Kuwayama, a graduate of Princeton University and son of Japanese immigrants, who worked at the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in New York when the army drafted him in 1940. The attack on Pearl Harbor ensured that his military service would be lengthy. After serving in a variety of administrative positions, often at “out-of-the-war” bases, he joined the 442nd Japanese American Regiment as a medic. Inspired by their “Go for Broke” motto, the 442nd became one of the most highly-decorated combat units in U.S. military history.70 Kuwayama served with honor and distinction while with the 442nd, recalling his first taste of combat and “encounter with death” as one of the pitfalls of military service. Despite

68 “Search Veterans Collections” by “Asian American,” www.loc.gov/vets
70 See “Asian Pacific Americans” or “Site Tops 1,000.”
being wounded he remained undeterred, fighting along side fellow Japanese Americans
and men from Hawaii through campaigns in Italy and France, later earning the
prestigious Silver Star for bravery.\(^\text{71}\)

For Carolyn Hisako Tanaka, captain and Vietnam veteran with the Army Nurse
Corps’ 24\(^{\text{th}}\) Evacuation Hospital, her wartime experiences actually began at age six when
witnessing her family evicted from their California home in the aftermath of the Pearl
Harbor attack. They were relocated to an internment camp in Poston, Arizona, after the
war returning to California to find their house burned to the ground. Despite these bitter
memories, in 1966, while working as an emergency room nurse, opted to enlist in the
army. In her unpublished memoir, she told fellow workers “I have a skill that is needed in
Vietnam, and I am going there to do my duty for my country.” After leaving Long Binh,
her return home would be marred by an “unwelcome” reception from a group of antiwar
protestors. Tanaka said, “I could not believe I was coming home to the same reception I
received twenty-three years before, following World War II. This time I was not the
enemy, but I was there saving lives, perhaps their loved ones.”\(^\text{72}\)

One of the more compelling stories in the collection came from Grant Jiro
Hirabayashi, technical sergeant and World War II veteran of China-Burma Theater who
served in the famous commando unit, “Merrill’s Marauders.”\(^\text{73}\) Already enlisted in the
army and stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington, young Hirabayashi had been expecting a

\(^{71}\) Yeiichi Kuwayama Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/7423), VHP,
AFC, LOC.
\(^{72}\) Carolyn Hisako Tanaka Collection—“Road Runner” memoir (AFC/2001/001/7423),
VHP, AFC, and LOC.
\(^{73}\) The name “Merrill’s Marauders” was coined by American war correspondents serving
in the China-Burma Theater and in honor of their commander, General Frank Merrill.
visit from his parents when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Much to his dismay, they were removed to a relocation camp near Heart Mountain, Wyoming. While serving in the Far East, Hirabayshi worked in both intelligence and combat roles, “translating capture documents” and fighting alongside “white” soldiers when called upon. His oral history interview is highly detailed whether recalling battles, describing an assortment of jungle ailments his unit endured like dysentery and malaria, or how he personally struggled to eat army-issued K-rations because of allergic reactions.\textsuperscript{74}

Hirabayshi was one of fourteen out of two-hundred men selected for service with “Merrill’s Marauders.” The unit’s mission was to “re-establish the supply line” to China via Burma. In what proved to be one of the “great stories” of World War II, Hirabayshi and comrades undertook a “700 mile, 87-day march through Burma” and deep behind Japanese defense lines. He recalled that such a march led to a “depletion of troops” because of illness and jungle conditions. In one episode, Hirabayshi, who could not swim, had to cross a river and “keep his dictionary and maps dry” while being shot at by a Japanese sniper. Among only a handful of Nisei troops in the march, he remembered their value when it came time “to sneak up” on the enemy “to overhear their strategies,” and how one Nisei report “turned” a potential “surprise attack” by the enemy into a U.S. ambush. After the “Marauders” disbanded, Kirabayshi continued to fight, transferring to India then back to China. In his oral history interview, he called receiving the “Combat Infantryman’s Badge” his most cherished award because “it showed I survived…and had

\textsuperscript{74} Grant Hirabayshi Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/28498).
good comrades. In the postwar period, he served in the occupation of Japan, serving as a translator in a military tribunal held in Yokohama. There is one episode while interrogating a Japanese soldier that he said cannot be forgotten. “He looked at me in the eye and he said, ‘You’re a traitor.’”75

On the whole, this collection reveals that Asian Americans made lasting contributions to America’s twentieth century wars. Unfortunately, “Going for Broke” is more a tribute to Japanese Americans who served with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in Europe during World War II than any other group or war. Despite this shortcoming, along with the absence of the female voice, what viewers will learn is that these men risked their lives for their country, the U.S., while basically fighting a war on racism, witnessed in their stateside families being confined to internment camps, minus their freedom and worldly possessions.76

Hispanics in Service

The AFC/VHP goal in this presentation is to reveal that Latino Americans have served our armed forces with pride, dignity, and honor across several wars. Those of the World War II generation, like women and African Americans, endured discrimination on the home front, yet “saw their service to country as affirming the ideals of democracy.” In the VHP their stories range from inspirational to heartbreaking as with Charles Rodriguez, who distinguished himself while serving with “Merrill’s Marauders” in World

75 Today, Kirabayshi is one of only three Nisei to be inducted in the prestigious U.S. Army Ranger Hall of Fame at Fort Benning, GA. Source: Hirabayshi Collection, Oral History (28498).
War II Burma, or Jose Mares, a teenager during the Korea War, who endured much hardship, but survived his ordeal as a POW. Among those accounts digitalized or available in full-text:

Table 17
Latino Americans by War/Gender

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<thead>
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<td>World War II (1939-1945):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iraq/Afghanistan Wars (2001--)</td>
<td>9/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Conflicts/Civilian Service:</td>
<td>8/1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Collecting firsthand accounts from Hispanic veterans has been as problematic for the VHP as with other race and ethnic groups. Of the 550 plus Hispanic testimonies currently available, 154 are digitalized (or slightly over twenty-percent.). As noted in the table above, most accounts are from World War II and the Vietnam War veterans, and only twelve from women.

Hispanics in Service consists of twelve stories and like other minority group based themes covers the broader war experience, beginning with World War II through

77 Hispanics in Service at www.loc.gov/vets
78 Current digital collections under “Hispanic” group compiled at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/search?query=race:Hispanic
Iraq and Afghanistan. The overall message projected here is that Hispanic Americans have been loyal to the U.S. and have overcome cultural views against them serving in the military.

In 1943, Eva Jacques (the lone female veteran in the collection) was junior in college when she was inspired by the most unlikely of persons. “I went to mass on Sunday and the priest asked the mothers to please don’t interfere if your daughters are willing to go into the military, to please don’t keep them from going, because it’s everybody’s war.” Initially, the Army Air Force Corps rejected her because of height limitations (she was 4’11” or one inch short of military standards). When recruiters discovered Jacques had three years of college and was bilingual (English and Spanish), they waived the height requirement. After initial training at the Military Administrative Academy, she departed on a two year odyssey overseas that included service in New Guinea and the Philippines, she recalled several lasting memories. “I met a male friend (the friendship has endured over sixty years) and we took joy “in signing marriage certificates as witnesses” for couples “rushing” to get married.79

Soon thereafter transferred to the West Coast she described that long cruise across the Pacific in a “converted luxury liner with nine to a cabin” as an ordeal not easily forgotten. Because of cramped quarters and intense heat, she “slept on deck” during the month long voyage, one that made “no stops” and was prolonged by constant “zigzagging” to avoid Japanese submarines.80 Jacques never served in combat, but recalled being close enough to the battle zone to “hear snipers firing” at night. Moreover,

79 Source: Eva R. Jacques Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/18443)
80 Ibid.
the war came at a high price as her fiancé (engaged before going overseas) lost his life in a plane crash over Europe. Overall, her military experience can be seen in positive terms. She said, “I was promoted four times in eighteen months...experienced no prejudice...lived with diverse peoples [including Filipino natives] and got along with everybody. Before leaving service in 1945, Jacques was promoted to staff sergeant. Her personal views on the Japanese military were largely based on what she did not witness personally, especially reports and photographs depicting their “atrocities” against American POWs and Filipino women.

While Jacques may not have experienced firsthand the devastating effects of combat because of job specifications placed on her gender, other Hispanic veterans, whether aboard a naval vessel or on foot in combat, did. Manuel Castro Perez, recent immigrant born in Mexico, enlisted in the navy in 1943 despite reservations from his wife and having to leave his two young children behind. Like other Hispanics, he felt compelled to enlist “out of sense of duty to his new country,” opting for naval service because “he wanted to see some action.” As a seaman first class with the Navy Amphibious Service, 38th Task Force, he manned a small “Landing Craft Infantry (LCI) ship,” and witnessed firsthand some of the bloodiest battles in the Pacific war while “patrolling” in the waters off Tinian, the Marshall Islands, Saipan, and Peleliu. Perez recalled the first time his ship lost a sailor, a demolitions expert “blown up in front him.”

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81 Jacques, Oral History (18443).
82 Ibid.
It had a resounding effect on him, “After that, it was common knowledge, someone was always getting hurt [or dying].”

Perez recalled any number of difficulties experienced by his unit. In terms of ship life, he referred to the “limitations of facilities,” which included washing and rinsing clothes with salt water, and constantly being short of supplies and having to “scavenge” whatever they could to subsist. Even more compelling was the “constant pressure” that came from patrolling alone in shallow waters, “dodging mines and corral reefs.” Other pressures included being caught in a typhoon off Tinian, while simultaneously fighting a sea battle and taking in water. Perez found the action he sought and in the process experienced no racial prejudices. However, his memories of the dead linger, not only among those American troops, but also Japanese civilians (men and women holding babies) who rather than surrender committed suicide by jumping off the “Bonsai” cliffs on Saipan.

Raymond Ayon, airman first class and Korean War veteran was born in Azusa, CA. Intrigued by World War II stories, films, and the letters his older brother sent home, he dropped out of high school (age 16) in 1945 and enlisted in the Merchant Marines. His service ended a year later when superiors discovered he was under aged. Ayon returned to school, graduated, then enlisted in the Air Force in 1948 serving in Japan with fighter

83 Source: Manuel Castro Perez Collection, Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/10017).

84 Ibid

85 John Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945* (New York: Random House, 1970), 519. The Battle of Saipan took place between June and July 1944 and is considered the most costly of the war in terms of American lives lost: 2,949 dead and 10,364 wounded out of the 71,000 who landed on the beach. Th
bomber squadron. When the U.S. went to war in Korea, he served there as a medical corpsman. His most emotional memory entailed “loading casualties” aboard aircraft bound for Japan and “unloading pine boxes which were caskets.” When asked about the fighting in Korea, he said, “I was originally told [it] was a brief police action,” but found out otherwise “watching it escalate into something bigger and longer.” On the possibility of losing his life, “It’s a fact that when you feel like you’re going to die, you can live your whole life through, I found that to be true.” Such an experience occurred when “almost killed by a casket in the back of the truck he was driving,” and during a “big push to get North Koreans” out of the South, as a passenger in truck driven by an “intoxicated” soldier.\(^\text{86}\)

Of the twelve Hispanic collections, Ayon’s might be the most insightful in terms of how war transformed his life, and continues to do so today. While he experienced no prejudice, he remains “sensitive” about the war. For example, he spent time in a MASH unit and claims the famous television series of the same name depicts it wrong. Over the years, he has become “irked” with fellow veterans who insist on discussing the combat experience only. Therefore, he feels resentment towards those that sport medals “they didn’t earn…refusing to join a veteran’s service organization.”\(^\text{87}\)

Two accounts from veterans of the Vietnam War reveal that the horrors of war were not restricted to those of different race or ethnicity. For example, Raymond Emilio Torres was a combat medic with E Company, 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) Battalion, 26\(^{\text{th}}\) Marine Regiment, of the

\(^{86}\) Raymond L. Ayon Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/21141).

\(^{87}\) Ibid
3rd Marine Division, who survived the deadly "Siege at Khe Sanh." He was initially attached to a Marine unit near Fubai assigned to "guarding bridges" all along Highway 1, where the "Vietcong were active in the area, but not the North Vietnamese Army." His story not only reveals a well-spring of information about daily life in country but also what it was like to "be shot at." As a guest speaker for a community college class, Torres spoke of his experiences at Hill 861 where he manned an aid station just three miles from the heavy fighting. He learned quickly about the ins and outs of running patrols and firing a weapon (not permitted for a medic under Geneva Convention). The enemy, he recalled, "always" attacked under the cover of darkness, forcing them to stand "two hour" guard shifts with little sleep. While on patrol he carried a "70 pound backpack," and in order to lighten his load chose the .45 caliber pistol as his weapon of choice rather than the M-16 rifle.

During the famous Tet-offensive (1968), Torres was assigned to Khe Sanh. He vividly recalled a "rough landing, evacuating the plane under heavy mortar fire as it kept moving, heading for trenches on either side of the runway." Later in his interview, he admitted that the "area was not a strategic point and the battle was unnecessary," and that during the course of it "sometimes U.S. sentries would shoot their own people in the confusion." Torres described the battle scene in terms of intense bombing, as "six thousand Marines" challenged some forty thousand NVA. The camp itself "was inside a

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88 The battle at Khe Sanh took place between January-April 1968 in the northwestern portion of the Quang Tre Providence, formerly of the Republic of South Vietnam. Considered a tactical victory for anti-communist forces, combatants consisted of the 3rd Marine Amphibious Force, elements of the South Vietnamese Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and the Peoples Army of Vietnam (PAVN).
89 Source: Raymond Torres Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/30980).
bomb crater, with trenches dug around it,” and “my central aid station was in the middle of the crater.” Wounded by a grenade in the process of being overrun by the NVA, he had “shrapnel dug out of him” by a fellow medical corpsmen. In a desperate effort to avoid capture, the Marines launched tear gas, only to have the winds shift and the gas blowing through friendly lines. Relentless artillery blasts helped “them out” but Torres said, we “lost twenty men, with forty wounded.” Helicopters tried to retrieve the wounded. “The one I was supposed to get on filled up and was later hit by [enemy] fire and blew up.”

For many Vietnam veterans like Torres, the process of recognizing the resourcefulness of the Vietcong took years. They could “repurpose any item U.S. troops discarded.” Women, even those who were pregnant he recalled “could carry heavy loads on bamboo poles,” a feat “I could not master.” His training in the states did not prepare him well for Vietnam. Learning how to avoid their “booby traps” could not be learned only experienced. When not administer medical treatment to wounded Marines, Torres took up arms and fought. Like many veterans of this war time does not heal all wounds. Today, he questions the justifications of the war, and the need to defend South Vietnam because of such “great costs” and loss of life.

Gary Villereal, native of Pontiac, Michigan, was living in San Francisco in 1968 when he received a draft notice. After basic training, he shipped out to Vietnam in May 1969. As a member of the 1st Cavalry Division and 2nd Field Forces he served in several isolated Special Forces fire support bases near the Cambodian border at Bu Dop, Song Be, Phuoc Luu, and Duc Hue. His arrival in country can be described in terms of shock.

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90 Source: Torres Collection—Oral History Interview.
91 Ibid.
Those men tenured the longest, he recalled “were filthy and they didn’t seem to acknowledge anyone else” other than those within their own units. Initial duties were as a lead mortar radar operator. When recalling his first combat experience, Villereal “saw a woman with a rifle pointed at me...not wanting to fire,” however “rules were that anyone [enemy] in the wire surrounding the camp was in a free fire zone.” He returned fire and later found a U.S. soldier dead in the wire area presumably “shot by a fellow G.I.”

As his tour in country lingered on, Villereal became an introvert. “No one outside of my unit was important...I shut down after several friends were killed.” He was hardened by the brutality of war and had no patience for “newbies” who “were slightly injured and overreacted...We didn’t want to have anything to do with him.” Villereal took many lessons from the war, particularly, “don’t take anything [in life] for granted, nothing is insurmountable.” On the whole, he believes Vietnam veterans “are misunderstood, especially when it comes to suicidal thoughts” over the horrors they experienced. He admitted, however, that the war affected him physically and psychologically. “We would talk later about how we would shake, just physically shake, but we wanted to shake by ourselves.”

An overview of this collection has revealed a conscious effort by the AFC/VHP to include the history of Hispanics at war. Beginning in World War II through more recent conflicts in the Middle East, it has been determined that veterans came from either rich military backgrounds or joined the war effort because they felt their country needed them. Nearly all claimed they after they donned the uniform of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and

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92 Gary L. Villereal Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/8428).
93 Ibid.
Marines, that they experienced opportunities not previously afforded them in society.

Twelve individuals, however, cannot speak for an entire ethnic group. Until more interviews are available in full-text one must be satisfied that "none expressed that even a hint of prejudice marked their experiences, a remarkable testimony to the democratic ideals of military service."94

The image projected by the AFC/VHP in Native Americans: Willing to Serve is that like other minority groups they have been loyal to the U.S. across many wars. They were valued in the military because they were good soldiers and descendents of a warrior culture. The VHP has honored this veteran group for their contributions in World War II through the war in Iraq, claiming "for all American Indian veterans the honor of defending their country overrode all other considerations." What we do know is that unlike other minority veteran groups, certain Indians, like the Navajo Code Talkers, were valued for "speaking their own language and "few encountered any overt prejudice while in uniform." Navajos, like other Native American veterans, likely had more private reasons for serving. Many had the opportunity to honor the defense of their country and prove "wrong the bigots back home."95 The total number of Native American accounts currently digitalized:

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94 Source: "Experiencing War": Hispanics in Service at http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-hispanicveterans.html
95 Willing to Serve at www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-nativeamericans.html
Table 18
American Indian/Alaskan Native by War/Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War/Conflict</th>
<th>Male/Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World War I (1914-1918):</td>
<td>0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II (1939-1945):</td>
<td>26/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean War (1950-1953):</td>
<td>2/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam War (1964-1975):</td>
<td>13/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf War (1990-1995):</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq/Afghanistan Wars (2001--)</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Conflicts/Type of Service:</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>32/0(^{96})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on these figures, the bulk of the digitalized collection consists of World War II and Vietnam testimonies. Any attempt to cover the “American Indian/Alaskan Native experience across many wars (unless one testimony is sufficient) will not be possible, considering out a total of 169 accounts, only forty-five (eighteen percent) are digitalized, with only one from a female veteran.\(^{97}\)

Those accounts in “Willing to Serve” are valuable sources for determining “what price” many had to pay while serving in uniform. Such was the case of Lewis Sawaquat, staff sergeant and Korean War veteran, who enlisted in the army at the age of eighteen. A


\(^{97}\) “Search Veterans Collection” under “American Indian/Alaskan Native” at www.loc.gov/vets
native of Harbor Springs, Michigan, he served with the 987th Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Republic of Korea (ROK) Corps in the last year of the war. Upon arrival, "he was rattled" by the constant sound of gunfire, "but soon got used to it." In his interview, Sawaquat spoke openly about racism, "but saw blacks" as more frequent targets from white soldiers. What bothered him more than getting shot at (by 1953 the chances of that diminished because the ground war had become a stalemate), were the horror stories passed on about what awaited him if captured by the enemy (North Koreans). Still, he could not avoid the frontlines. In one episode, he remembered being assigned to a "so-called elite unit" that said were "actually ruffians, dirty and smelly, speaking in crude pidgin Korean-English." Hearing the gunfire as his unit got closer to the frontline, he thought "this is not for me."98

Sawaquat's interview is detailed and much valuable, especially in terms of how he "Koreans saw him as one of them" because ancestors of the American Indian "has crossed the land bridge from Asia." His account also includes the ever popular "G.I." entertainment story, when during off-time he played cards, drank beer (apparently the liquor supply was unlimited), learned to play chess, and saw the honeymooning couple of Joe DiMaggio and Marilyn Monroe while visiting Japan. Sawaquat remained in army until 1956 at which time he opted to use the G.I. Bill (main reason he enlisted), and claims he had no difficulties transitioning from war to civilian life.99

98 Lewis Sawaquat Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/41256), VHP, AFC, LOC.
99 Ibid.
Dan Akee is a World War II veteran and former Marine Corps Sergeant Major, who saw service with the 25th Regiment, 4th Marine Division. He is yet another example of an American Indian (and other veterans) who at a young age desired to enter military service, but later admitted “not necessarily in war.” Born on the Navajo Reservation in Old Canyon, Arizona, Akee initially enlisted in 1942 but failed to pass his physical. In 1944, he tried again, and passed. When recalling his boot camp experiences, he disliked the way he was treated by Marine drill sergeants but, overall, did not think “they were discriminatory” against him because of ethnicity. Soon thereafter he became a member of the famous Coder Talker Team, and saw action on four Pacific Islands: Tinian (Northern Mariana Islands), Marshall Islands, Saipan, and the last at Iwo Jima.\textsuperscript{100}

Akee paid a high price for his service. He recalled after the blood letting at Iwo Jima, where American casualties were high (four Code Talkers killed-in-action), “that he broke down after an “all-night shelling.” After the island was secured, Akee was sent back to Maui for recuperation (and where he was at when the war ended). Like so many veterans he too took advantage of the G.I. Bill, but unlike most “started having nightmares.” His tribe “tried treating him with traditional medicines” and special ceremonies, but it failed. Deeply troubled he “took” to the bottle, “but that didn’t work either.” After a reservation doctor informed he had a serious kidney disease and advised him to “consider religion” and “to get on with his life,” he listened, and according to an oral history interview “has been sober for 47 years.”\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{100} Dan Akee Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/41256), VHP, AFC, LOC.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
While Sawaquat and Akee accrued no major wounds in battle, the same cannot be said for Joseph Beimfohr, staff sergeant and veteran of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars. Born in Harbor City, California, he enlisted in the army two days after his seventeenth birthday (with the approval of his grandmother, who had raised him). After two tours in Korea, he arrived at Fort Riley, Kansas in 2004, and began training for duty in Iraq. Once in country, Beimfohr was assigned duties in Baquba (about 35 miles north of Bagdad) “clearing villages and houses, looking for enemy,” and/or confiscating weapons, clearing travel routes. By this time a non-commissioned officer, he was critically injured in July 2005 while searching in a small town outside of Baquba. Beimfohr recalled the incident in horrific terms. Local contractors who were paving roads were found executed, with their bodies left unburied.\(^{102}\)

He remembered the next day, his unit set out to locate perpetrators. In the course of their investigation, a bomb went off, and he was hit “with rock and debris” and “shrapnel” entered his body below the waist into his leg. Once found, and thinking much about dying, he was evacuated by army helicopter the nearest hospital for immediate surgery. He said, “I woke up eight days later in Walter Reed Hospital [Washington, D.C.] with both legs amputated.” Although Beimfohr admits not having “nightmares or flashbacks” over the incident, he should considering all the pain suffered. In closing interview comments, he said “I have learned to not put limitations on myself, to overcome these injuries.”\(^{103}\) What is learned most from this account is that American

\(^{102}\) Joseph Beimfohr Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/54904), VHP, AFC, LOC.

\(^{103}\) Ibid.
Indian soldiers can handle experiences of death and maiming without allowing it to break their resolve.

The lone female story from the collection was given by Marcella R. LeBeau, first lieutenant and World War II veteran of the Army Nurse Corps. In 1943, after completing nurse training in her home state of South Dakota, she accepted a medical position at a hospital in Pontiac, Michigan. It was here she heard on the radio that the army was in desperate need of nurses. Soon thereafter, she volunteered, serving in the England, Wales, France, and Belgium. In June 1944, LeBeau recalled preparing a hospital for the much anticipated D-Day invasion. Two months later she was “camped out in cow pasture” near Omaha Beach, then followed the troop advance toward Paris.104

While working in Paris, her hospital crew endured strafing from German aircraft, even as she treated German POWs. She said, as the aircraft strafed the nurse area, “a friend was taking a bath,” and later confessed to her “she would not take [another] bath until it [the war] was over.” To add more irony to the story, LeBeau remembered that the aircraft was shot down “and the pilot” ended up a patient in her hospital. She, like other nurses, did not escape the horrors of warfare. While stationed at the Battle of the Bulge “a buzz bomb” hit her encampment killing 25 men. When asked about discrimination in the army, LeBeau said, “I did not experience any. Fellow nurses “assumed” because her great-grandfather was a tribal chief, “she was a princess.” About experiencing war itself,

104 Marcella LeBeau Collection—Oral History Interview (AFC/2001/001/24202), VHP, AFC, LOC.
she claimed "I was young and I didn’t know what war was...I guess in a way that was my saving grace."  

"Willing to Serve" is a rich collection of American Indian accounts from World War II through more recent conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan. Of those testimonials profiled, it can be determined regardless of war, most eagerly volunteered for military service and did with much pride whatever their jobs entailed. Much the same as other minority group veterans, the VHP has few accounts from Native Americans to draw from, and only one depicting the female experience. Of those digitalized veterans had no recollections of encountering prejudice while in uniform, rather claim that the honor of defending their country took precedence over all other considerations and that individual service was mostly a positive, transformative experience. 

The goal of the AFC/VHP since conception has been to utilize the latest technological advances like the World Wide Web to not only impact its growth and popularity, but also to accommodate millions of veterans, family members, and everyday Americans, unable to access the larger collection. An overview of the early web presentations reveals they were broad in scope, but fairly representative of all Americans and their civilian supporters, major twentieth century wars, or current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. More accounts from women or minority groups may have been in order but, as noted, the VHP has a shortage of these testimonials and therefore is limited to the number they can digitalize. To their credit, the WWW site tries to show value possibilities of radical trust. Taken as a whole, once they narrowed the scope of web

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105 Source: Lebeau Collection.
presentations, they were able realize diversification and create special presentations solely dedicated to women, African, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American veteran groups.

By adhering to such initiatives, the Project has partially succeeded in democratizing their oral history collection through digitalized web presentations and webcasts. Clearly they bring to life the individual experience or in groups by war and branch of service. Selection of tapes for digitalization is done, however, with more than technical clarity in mind. At present time, there is no on-line blog service for veterans to chime in with suggestions about collection and its contents, making it clear that "radical trust" has been limited within the VHP. There are other content and political issues at hand too. The image the VHP is trying to project is that collectively each veteran or support group has similar but unique wartime experiences or that each group has played an important role, therefore sharing democratic ideals

Overall, women and minority groups share reasons for joining the armed forces and serving in wars, similar to those veterans of the "white-non-Hispanic" group. They too experienced the horrific nature of modern warfare, served with honor and pride and, with the exception of African Americans experienced no prejudice once in uniform. From a political standpoint, digitalization provides several layers of filtering in terms of what is offered to the LOC by project partners, what is accepted/accessioned into the collection by the AFC, what is digitalized and presented on the WWW by the VHP, and what is presented in publications.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Before the tragedy of September 11, 2001, national views on the U.S military and aggressive foreign policy were under heavy scrutiny because of the fallout of the Vietnam War. With each passing war and armed conflict since, war has arguably become more remote and less publicly supported, despite efforts by academic historians, journalists, and other writers to either promote or denounce it. When Congress passed the VHP Act in 2000 it was envisioned as a means to collect firsthand accounts from everyday Americans from all walks of life, background, gender, race, and ethnicity, and perhaps to restore some national confidence in the military, its veterans, and to overcome the fallout of the Vietnam War. In doing so, congressional parties unanimously voted to create an archive on the most controversial, appalling, and deadly aspect of the human life, warfare.

At every turning point of this narrative, the goal has been to investigate the VHP not only in terms of its military history value, but also through a lens which one can view American society and its commitment to remember war and those who participate in it. In terms of thesis, it has been established that the VHP is a compensatory history offered to and paid for by ordinary American servicemen and women for the sacrifices they have made to our country during war. Its creation grew out of national desire to recognize the
sixtieth anniversary of World War II or simply to honor “The Greatest Generation” before “time ran out” and stories were lost forever. Overall, contributions made by the VHP have helped usher in an era of oral history where a “radical trust” in collecting firsthand testimonies is not done only by “experts” or professionals, but by everyday people (amateurs) who ideally use guidelines/scripted questionnaires to conduct interviews. The cost of this approach is twofold. First, the interpretation of the sources collected is not in the hands of the VHP alone but a much broader constituency, one that has only partially succeeded in keeping our war past open for (re)interpretation. Second, because of the VHP has granted untrained, amateur historians the authority to contribute in the collection process on an equal basis with trained scholars it will continue to accept materials in vast numbers but at the expense of quality of interview and diversity among veteran groups.

Throughout this study, I have presented several strengths and weaknesses of the VHP. One such concern was the legislation for the VHP which was passed unanimously and without negative debate. What legislation did not address was using an approach akin to the New Deal, Federal Writers Project of hiring experts or trained interviewers to lead the Project. Nor did Congress turn to the military for assistance where officers and professional historians at the U.S. Military History Center at Carlisle Barracks and elsewhere turnout historical studies, or college and university faculty who write histories about the typical soldier/veteran and/or facilitate them through oral history. Therefore, policy implications are evident where gaps and unevenness will remain with no sufficient federal funding in place to hire a full staff able to fill in gaps and do follow-up work.
Congress wisely chose the LOC/AFC to implement legislation for the VHP. I have established that the model for the Project is grounded in historical antecedents and institutional culture of both the LOC and AFC, which includes experience with developing oral history projects of the “shared authority” or democratized approach to collecting history. The process began slowly as the Library mainly served the needs of Congress by collecting books and other documents specifically for their use. Despite early democratization efforts by several Head Librarians, throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century their record of accomplishment in the documentation of the life experiences of ordinary Americans was at best limited. Change occurred after the “New Library” was finished in the 1890s and when Anthony Swofford was appointed Librarian. Although the LOC continued to serve the needs of Congress, it began a collection process that centered on social and cultural history and made it more appealing to the general public.

When World War II erupted, America had officially entered what FDR called the “Age of Documentation.” On the heels of the New Deal, Federal Writer’s Project there was a more concerted effort within the federal government to document the experiences of everyday Americans or at the “grassroots” level. Over the next for decades, the LOC embraced its new institutional culture, shared authority and more democratized approach to record not only this nation’s, but the world’s history. Relishing the new title of “World’s Largest” Library, then under the leadership of James Billington, it added to its record of accomplishment in the documentation of the life experiences of ordinary Americans. Regular funding from Congress or private endowments enabled both Library
and AFC to benefit from more sophisticated oral history techniques and expand their efforts nationally. Projects varied in scope and theme but, on the whole, centered on recorded family and community histories, linking everyday Americans to their past, enhancing our understanding of the present as well as sustaining the tradition of culture that binds this nation of nations together.

When the AFC was established in 1976 it immediately inherited the responsibility of carrying out federally-funded grassroots oral history projects. In an effort to shed light on their egalitarian approach, I examined early documentation/oral history projects beginning with the WPA, FWP, then in the post-World War II through the late 1990s with the founding of Local Legacies, Story Corps, and the VHP. Most were approached or administered in a similar fashion, either with AFC conducting fieldwork or assisted by a strong volunteer network. Some drew upon precedents like the WPA narratives and ignored others. Overall, projects were successful and brought the LOC/AFC a step closer towards gaining the means, knowledge, expertise, and management skills now employed for the “folk” to gather “folklore.” More importantly, such experiences allowed for them to create a grassroots oral history project centered on American veterans and their supporters at war. The VHP was undertaken with much enthusiasm and public support. By the close of the first year (2001), it had wasted little time in establishing a sound leadership base and undertaking the arduous task of recruiting national project partners and collecting wartime stories that detailed the inordinate sacrifices made by nation’s veterans and the armed forces.
Based on the foundation established in the first two chapters, I was then able to explore how the VHP is organized in terms of leadership and staff. Oral history interviews with the Project Director, senior program analysts, historians, program and public relation specialists, and archivists key players established what they do on daily basis and how the Project has evolved during its first decade. I learned that all are college educated and/or earned graduate degrees in history/public policy/public history, folklife studies, public relations, and have applicable experience working with oral history or abilities to use the latest technological advances to archive and digital interviews for public viewing. All are career government employees, or strive to be, but none except Robert Patrick, current Director, have served in the military.

During this investigative stage, I also determined the motivations behind the formation of the Five-Star Advisory Council. Council members are fairly divided along gender, race, and ethnic lines and come from diverse professions, most high-ranking military people (retired or not), prominent national media figures, including journalists, and politicians, most with military backgrounds. With the exception of the late Stephen Ambrose, no present members are professional historians. Their relationship with the VHP is primarily advisory or raising public awareness, although they meet on a regular basis with the Director to discuss project scope, progress, preservation strategies, and proposed outreach programs. Overall, members have taken an active approach by rubber stamping the Project, often prodding staff to attempt one approach or another to get more or better interviews. Indirectly, it may be argued that their star power is more for name recognition and publicity than for shaping project content. Or that their status allows
them to ensure that the larger collection remains what it is, a national project dedicated to promoting military service in a positive light in terms of patriotic values and democratic ideals. In other words, what they may silently communicate, given so many of the members are high-ranking military officers is they do not really want to hear from veterans who decry war.

Since Project conception, public participation has been unwavering, and these initiatives/efforts seemingly have been undertaken to promote patriotic sentiments or to reach, educate, and recruit a national audience. Programs have ranged in both theme and scope, from veteran reunion ceremonies, national and veteran’s holidays, World War II memorial celebration, and celebrations of Women’s, African, and Asian American history months. The LOC reported large turn outs at these events, calling the overall effort to raise public awareness of the Project an honor all Americans at war a success. However, as argued in another chapter, it is not clear whether such efforts have inspired a national movement among women and minority groups. The only evidence to go by is the archival collection. Based on those currently organized by gender, race, and ethnicity, it is clear much work still needs to be done.

What separates the VHP from other oral history projects, military included, can be witnessed in two ways. First, it is the benefactor of the politicization of archive, but operates under the umbrella of a grassroots, democratic approach to collect stories from “ordinary Americans” in “extraordinary times” in their lives. Second, they rely on public participation from three major groups of people: official and youth partners, and volunteers from all walks of life, including high schools and institutions of higher
education. During its first years, the VHP accepted any credible partner group. There was no partnership selection process beyond filling out an on-line application. An overview of national partner organizations reveals they fall under the category of "National Organizations," most created and/or funded by the federal government, pro-veteran, pro-military, patriotic, and not critical of the military or war. What their specific role or function would be was not clearly defined, with most acting independently in their efforts to promote the VHP or to establish state or local projects. The number of testimonials collected by these groups has been impressive but, on the whole, it appears they proceeded forward in the collection process with no real plan to locate minority group veterans living in rural or inner city areas. Until the LOC/AFC/VHP is more representative of these veteran groups, they will fall short in creating a close to comprehensive catalog of all Americans at war.

Despite impressive collection numbers (at present over sixty thousand), the gathering of "quality" firsthand testimonials from as many surviving war veterans as possible has proven to be a monumental task for the VHP and its partner groups. Perhaps this would be less so if more professional historians at the college or university level were involved in the process. What the VHP says about the veteran/society is that we should celebrate our victory and participation in wars rather than probe for causes, costs, and results of them. In order to alleviate this concern, the VHP might consider gathering more quality interviews and materials, instead of promoting egalitarian window dressing to uphold national myths.
The VHP website is well-organized and information rich. Its value to potential project partners was first measured by the rules and guidelines that are in place, and the types of sources that can be submitted by individual donors and others. Of particular value, are the on-line educational tutorials that offer the best strategies for conducting oral history interviews, penning memoirs, and to organize individual projects at the state, regional, or local level. I have argued that these instructions are necessary to educate those “amateur historians” who have no academic training with oral history. However, there has been no test or certification that the tutorial was completed, or that such tips will guarantee high quality interviews or that interviewer and interviewee successfully share in the process. Necessary questions, beyond those suggested on the VHP on-line questionnaire to get to the heart of the wartime experience and ensure the larger collection avoids becoming biographical have not been asked. More times than not interviews appear upbeat or morally up-lifting, when in fact, war is rarely noble or uplifting for the typical soldier.

During the Project’s earliest days, they forged relationships with high profile military, veteran, and senior organizations, notably the AARP, VFW, DVA, and DAV. The basis for choosing was to itself at the national level, secure monetary donations, or to secure access to the names and residency of large numbers of veterans. Next, they succeeded in establishing partnerships with universities, public schools, libraries, state archives, historical societies and museums to either establish regional oral history programs or recruit volunteers to conduct interviews. The contributions made by state, local, and small communities has far-exceeded initial expectations. Many projects were
founded early on and consist of enablers or fieldworkers who undertake the historical "grunt work" of recording interviews and doing research. The key here is that project partners appear to be active collection agents driven by a participatory approach. However, such projects have also been driven by much larger political system that does not provide funds to marshal human resources, train them effectively, or do the job on the same level with professionals. Therefore whether the Congressional goal of creating a project based on both process and product and an intergenerational dialogue between the citizenry and the veteran has not been satisfactorily fulfilled. Such an oversight might lead to a reorganization effort to shift the emphasis towards better quality interviews, less depicting the white soldier's experience, and with more emphasis placed on locating, and interviewing diverse veteran groups.

I also inspected the structure of the Project website to determine if a set of rules or guidelines were in place to governor what sources could be submitted by donors or project partners. It appears that during its first years, the website offered no such guidelines, as many veterans and family members unwillingly forwarded artifacts and other military gear to Washington, D.C. Next, I established the educational value of online tutorials, what groups or individuals they target, and what information they offer about conducting oral history interviews or writing memoirs, or creating a state/community level project. Updates to the website are likely pending. On the whole, available materials seem to have engaged and educated diverse Americans across the country about the historical significance of the Project. On the other hand, such tutorials have not succeeded in educating the amateur oral historians to raise appropriate questions
and conduct quality interviews (a process that takes professionals entire careers to master). Therefore, I have argued that because of this approach the overall collection is wildly uneven in terms of representation and will likely remain so.

Archival collections, in this case those of the military/war type, are the by-product of the political system, predominantly used to shape/control the direction of collective memory and national identity. Since the VHP is located in our nation’s capitol, it can be argued it too has been largely influenced in the same manner. I inquired how the VHP archive is organized by war/conflict, branch of service, and by gender, race, and ethnic group. Overall, the on-line non-digital archive is easily accessed and user-friendly. Tables situated throughout the chapter indicate a project-wide effort to collect testimonial from all wars. Initial collection efforts targeted those veterans and civilian supporters of World War II, recognizing the need to react before “time ran out.” Therefore the numbers indicate the archive is weighted about 60/40 in favor of that war, with most accounts being from veterans of the Army or Army Air Force. Accounts from women and other veteran groups are considerably less than that those categorized as “white, non-Hispanic.” The overall results or outcome of the archive, however limited in full-text sources, has been shared with the public. VHP staff has successfully provided researchers and the public to visit the Project in person, select firsthand accounts, visit the permanent exhibit, or listen to stories via public radio or read samples in books and articles. Whether the archive is being used by researchers via on-line, by visit in person, or in the manner initially intended cannot be substantiated at this time.
It is a well-known fact that the Census Bureau relies on a volunteer network to collect data. The VHP might consider taking a similar approach by enlisting help from those states with the highest concentration of living veterans, in this case, women, and other minority/ethnic groups. By taking advantage of both 1990 and 2000 census reports available on-line in “full text,” partner groups could conduct independent surveys to pinpoint veteran by state, region, and county of residency. In doing so, the VHP could be notified (if they are not aware of it already) and more easily conduct preliminary research and determine the feasibility of such a quest. After studies were completed, summary findings could be forwarded to the VHP and or directly to state historical societies, veteran’s organizations, and even individual school districts in the area.

Why the VHP has not encouraged more diligent use of census data is perplexing, considering statistics compiled in 1990 and 2000, along with other published reports pinpoint the current location by state and county of those veteran groups lacking: women and minority groups. I have offered further inquiry about the shortage of female accounts. It begins with what may be inadequate efforts by state or communities to establish oral history projects in those areas where the highest concentration of them reside. The same might be argued for minority groups. Furthermore, of those state and community projects studied in chapter five, it can not be determined that any were conducted in predominantly minority communities.

Simultaneously, the LOC/VHP might consider adding a few qualified academics to the ranks of the prestigious Five-Star Council. As argued, much of their careers have

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1 See Veterans Census Brief (May 2003).
been spent conducting fieldwork and oral history interviews, analyzing military history or revolutionizing the war and memory genre, making it a highly respected field of study. By doing so, the VHP could inherit rich bibliographies including lists of potential oral history candidates, and other primary documents located in more isolated repositories around the country. Finally, it could be beneficial for all interested parties to include titles of their work in the on-line for both reference and educational purposes. Until then, the VHP faces the prospect of continuing to have an archive that is under-representation of gender, racial, and ethnic minorities.

The age of technology and the invention the World-Wide Web (Internet) has made it possible for the VHP to digitalize full-text memoirs and oral history interviews. Sources of this type appear individually as part of “staff favorites,” theme-based web presentations, and webcasts. Webcasts are defined as media files designed to be distributed over the Internet using “streaming media.” Such technology has been used at the VHP to broadcast individual oral history interviews for the purpose of reaching a mass audience. Web presentations are media and historically rich providing numerous interactive opportunities for classroom instruction. They have been used to present historical background on groups and individuals either under broad-based war themes or by specific topic. Overall these technologies allow for the Project to maintain a level of consistency, include testimonials from all Americans at war, and ensure themes, elements, and individual actions can be preserved from beginning, middle, and end.

On the whole web presentations are representative of all major U.S. wars and conflicts of the twentieth century (now the twenty-first), service branches, and diverse
groups of Americans at war. Early themes were broad in scope and placed an emphasis on patriotism, community of service, and life-altering experiences. Later themes have successfully narrowed down presentations by theater of war, individual units, or by military and civilian occupations. We learn as subjects go back in time, they do recall the death scenes, horrific experiences, and the personal trauma they experienced, leading one to believe that there are certain life experiences that cannot be forgotten. Despite limited numbers of firsthand testimonies from minority groups, the VHP has persevered and adhered to its original mission statement of making it as diverse as possible. As it relates to their experiences, there is no indication that it has failed to promote their experiences with the same enthusiasm as other veteran groups. Such a commitment is witnessed in any number of national holidays, LOC sponsored outreach programs, and special web presentations and themes undertaken to honor their service to country.

The study has demonstrated how a single piece of legislation ignited a national commitment to honor our nation's veterans, and how today it is the largest collection in the world. The hidden message in the Project is that it indirectly says to the history profession that war testimonials are valuable for their potential content and that oral history should be a part of their research methods and sources. However, despite any number of personal achievements, including the larger collection having exceeded initial expectations, I cannot satisfactorily conclude that it is currently the real, unadulterated history of the United States war experience. I have offered solutions to make it so. First, lines of communication need to be broadened between the VHP and their legion of national supporters to ensure the “message” is reaching school districts in the inner cities
or more isolated areas in those states Native and Hispanic Americans call home. For now, the "spirit of legislation" has not been fulfilled because the larger collection is currently weighted towards the World War II experience and the "white, Non-Hispanic" experience, with suitable numbers of testimonials from women, African, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islanders, and American Indian and Native Alaskans not yet collected.

I have tendered other suggestions for improvement. One such was addressing the historical and educational value of the oral history questionnaire which, in my view, might be more suited in a biographical rather than grassroots study of war. Although questions are of the suggestive variety, I would hope for more accounts that stir the echoes of guilt, trauma, or even defamatory memories of war. This would allot the VHP, professional historians, researchers, and educators a more comprehensive understanding of the true nature of modern warfare and how it can have a lasting impression, sometimes negative, transformative effect, on the individual veteran.

To date, the VHP remains an ambitious effort to collect wartime stories. Selected accounts will likely be the topic of future library exhibits, serve historians and educators in research, writing, and teaching, and quench the public’s thirst for information about the war experience. Technological advances have made it possible for the VHP to post the contents of the archival collection on-line, with seven thousand oral histories now digitalized and available for research or public viewing. I have demonstrated that the website is user-friendly offering any number of search options to locate individual testimonies by name, war, gender, race, ethnicity, and branch of service. The collection itself, and with few exceptions, is not close to becoming a comprehensible, searchable,
national catalog of oral histories from all veterans and their supporters at war. As noted, lack of diversification is a problem, with no plan or time table in place for making it less so.

Oral history projects like the VHP are microcosms that jointly promote military and public history along with other fields of study that rely on the human voice to retell history. The process of interviewing a veteran can be a rich and rewarding experience, despite time in uniform meaning different things to different veterans. For many men and women military service during war or peacetime was grounded in patriotic fervor, often serving as the transformative experience of their lives. Decades after the fact, most who have sat through oral history interviewees recall their service with much pride and accomplishment, and unfortunately some through rose colored glasses. No one group epitomized such feelings more than the World War II veteran, core members of the “Greatest Generation” whose service to country has been remembered in terms of self sacrifice, national strength, collective courage, and desirable traits.

The problem here is that most veterans have been socialized to believe what they did was good overlooking issues of race hate or atomic evil that cost the U.S. billions of dollars during the Cold War. Also, it appears most have opted to keep to themselves incidents of personal trauma, terror, anguish, horror, guilt, and social injustices, many brought on by themselves under the most trying of circumstances. It appears the larger VHP collection will be minus such accounts as long as it uses a standard questionnaire and mostly volunteer, amateur interviews, over professionals capable of situating such
important historical questions into an oral interview that keeps war and memory open for reinterpretation.
### APPENDIX A

**VHP Collection Numbers by State of Residence**

*(as of July 2009)*

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</table>
Louisiana—240
Maine—149
Maryland—1,641
Massachusetts—825
Michigan—2,427
Minnesota—923
Mississippi—243
Missouri—1,919
Montana—164
Nebraska—857
North Carolina—1,170
North Dakota—871
New Hampshire—144
New Jersey—1,104
New Mexico—640
New York—1,642
Nevada—312
Ohio—2,861
Oklahoma—331
Oregon—716
Appendix A—continued

Pennsylvania—1,754
Rhode Island—118
South Carolina—370
Tennessee—1,529
Texas—2,019
Utah—522
Vermont—168
Virginia—2,368
Washington—850
Wisconsin—650
West Virginia—419
Wyoming—117
APPENDIX B

VHP Service Statistics by Gender

(as of June 2008)

Women:

**Afghanistan and Iraq Wars:**

Air Force—4

Army—41

Coast Guard—1

Marine Corps—3

Navy—11

Navy Nurse Corps—2

**Bosnia, 1995-1998:**

Army—1

**Cold War Era, 1945-1991:**

Air Force—77

Air Force Nurse Corps—5

Army—93

Army Nurse Corps—16

Cadet Nurse Corps—1

Coast Guard—3
Appendix B—continued

Marine Corps—20

Navy—5

Navy Nurse Corps—5

WAAC (Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps)—1

WAC (Women’s Army Corps)—26

WAVES (Women’s Navy)—9

Other—3

Grenada, 1983:

Air Force—1

Navy—1

Korean War, 1950-1953:

Air Force—31

Air Force Nurse Corps—1

Army—19

Army Nurse Corps—15

Marine Corps—4

Navy—24

Navy Nurse Corps—6

WAAC—2

WAC—19

WASP—2
Appendix B—continued

WAVES—4

Kosovo, 1999:

Army—1
Navy—1

Other (war not specified):

Army—2
Army Nurse Corps—1
Cadet Nurse Corps—2
WAC—1

Persian Gulf War Era, 1990-2003:

Air Force—8
Army—16
Army Nurse Corps—2
Marine Corps—2
Navy—7

Persian Gulf War, 1990-1995:

Air Force—38
Air Force Nurse Corps—1
Army—93
Army Nurse Corps—4
Coast Guard—1
Appendix B—continued

Marine Corps—10
Navy—34

Somalia, 1992-1995:
Army—1

Vietnam War, 1961-1975:
Air Force—46
Air Force Nurse Corps—7
Army—45
Army Air Forces/Corps—1
Army Nurse Corps—46
Marine Corps—12
Navy—32
Navy Nurse Corps—12
WAAC—1
WAC—18
WAVES—1
Women Marines—1
Other—2

World War I, 1914-1920:
Army Nurse Corps—4
Appendix B—continued

Navy—1

World War II, 1939-1946:

Navy Nurse Corps—1
Air Force—17
Air Force Nurse Corps—3
Army—112
Army Air Forces/Corps—47
Army Nurse Corps—374
Cadet Nurse Corps—47
Coast Guard—27
Marine Corps—55
Navy—138
Navy Nurse Corps—73
Other—20
SPAR (Women’s Coast Guard Reserve)—33
WAAC—111
WAC—210
WASP—50
WAVES—423
Women Marines—87
Appendix B—continued

Total (all wars)—3,486

\(^1\) Source: VHP collection numbers compiled by Rachel Mears (June 3, 2008).
APPENDIX C

Male Service Statistics

(as of June 2008)

**Afghanistan and Iraq Wars:**

- Air Force—43
- Army—327
- Army Air Forces/Corps—2
- Coast Guard—4
- Marine Corps—103
- Navy—53
- Navy Nurse Corps—1
- Other—1

**Bosnia, 1995-1998:**

- Air Force—1
- Army—18
- Marine Corps—5
- Navy—3

**Cold War Era, 1945-1991:**

- Air Force—697
- Air Force Nurse Corps—1
- Army—1,161
Appendix C—continued

Army Air Forces/Corps—19

Coast Guard—19

Marine Corps—38

Merchant Marine—225

Navy—598

Other—11

**Grenada, 1983:**

Air Force—5

Army—20

Coast Guard—1

Marine Corps—5

Navy—4

**Haiti, 1994-1995:**

Navy—1

**Korean War, 1950-1953:**

Air Force—1,176

Air Force Nurse Corps—1

Army—2,656
Appendix C—continued

Army Air Forces/Corps—32
Coast Guard—22
Marine Corps—623
Merchant Marine—6
Navy—961
Other—5

Kosovo, 1999:
Air Force—2
Army—9
Marine Corps—2
Navy—2

Other (war not specified):
Air Force—10
Army—21
Coast Guard—3
Marine Corps—7
Merchant Marine—1
Navy—7
Other—3
Appendix C—continued

Panama, 1989:

Air Force—2
Army—12
Army Air Forces/Corps: 1
Marine Corps—2
Navy—5

Persian Gulf War Era, 1990-2003:

Air Force—32
Army—73
Army Nurse Corps—1
Coast Guard—2
Marine Corps—30
Navy—37
Other—5

Persian Gulf War, 1990-1995:

Air Force—172
Army—394
Coast Guard—6
Marine Corps—165
Merchant Marine—3
Somalia, 1992-1995:
Army—9
Marine Corps—5
Navy—2

Vietnam War, 1961-1975:
Air Force—1,287
Air Force Nurse Corps—1
Army—3,878
Army Air Forces/Corps—22
Army Nurse Corps—1
Coast Guard—31
Marine Corps—1,086
Merchant Marine—8
Navy—1,209
Other—23

World War I, 1914-1920:
Air Force—1
Army—229
Appendix C—continued

Army Air Forces/Corps—9

Marine Corps—10

Merchant Marine—1

Navy—29

Other—1

World War II, 1939-1946:

Air Force—1,103

Air Force Nurse Corps—2

Army—14,153

Army Air Forces/Corps—6,328

Army Nurse Corps—2

Cadet Nurse Corps—3

Coast Guard—330

Marine Corps—2,077

Merchant Marine—277

Navy—7,842

Navy Nurse Corps—1

Other—37

WAAC—1

WAC—4
Appendix C—continued

WASP—1

WAVES—7

Total (all wars)—48,166

\(^2\) Source: VHP collection numbers compiled by Rachel Mears (June 3, 2008).
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Library of Congress and American Folk Life Center Veterans Oral History Project


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http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/collate000017

*Imperial War Museum* at [http://collections.iwm.org.uk/](http://collections.iwm.org.uk/)

*Studs Terkel/WFMT Oral History Archives* (Center of Oral History, Chicago Historical Society)


at [http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS19222](http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS19222)

*Victorians at War* at [http://www.victoriansatwar.net/themes/index.html](http://www.victoriansatwar.net/themes/index.html)

**Semi-Autobiographical War Novels:**


Selected Oral History Collections (Published):


_Suggested Personal Narratives (Published):_


**Suggested Diaries, Journals, and Letter Collections (Published):**


**Newspapers (keywords: Veterans History Project, 2000-2008):**

*Chicago Tribune*

*Herald Palladium (St. Joseph/Benton Harbor, Michigan)*

*New York Times*

*US Federal News Service (including U.S. State News)*
Secondary Sources

There is a substantial body of scholarly secondary literature on war and memory and public history. Some studies are groundbreaking others, like oral history collections, repetitively address the same questions or veteran group. Answers to historical questions often depend upon and reflect authorial positions on broader issues of American war history. Only recently have historians begun to take an interdisciplinary approach to analyze the diverse meanings attached to our major wars and by the men and women who fought them. What follows is a non-comprehensive listing of the secondary literature valuable to this study and/or which might be useful to the VHP for public education purposes.

Books:


Bodnar’s argument hinges on a belief that public memory “emerges from the intersection of official and vernacular cultural expression,” and that continued conflict between the two forces remains a constant tension dating to the nineteenth century.

This is not a comprehensive account of the FWP, nor a complete overview of all state published guides. Bold argues that guidebooks were publicized in terms of discovering rather than creating America, and when published they were more effective at masking serious arguments between federal and state governments and locals than celebrating the new arts project.


Britten is alone in its analysis of Indians as professional soldiers, how whites respected them because of their inherent warrior qualities, and how service helped foster new cultural practices and identities after the war.


Chen argues that film and literature have made Asian Americans targets for intense racism and consternation in their efforts to join the war effort and/or meld into American society and culture.


Authors document the trials and tribulations of 45,000 World War I veterans who entered Washington, D.C in freight cars, jalopies, motorcycles, or on foot to demand payment for a government-promised bonus at the end of the war. The thesis here is that the protest failed on many fronts, and that protesters were viewed differently by different people (communists by some and underdogs by others). Many testimonies reveal dissatisfaction with the federal government and corporate corruption, blaming both for the Great Depression.

Edwards, Paul H. *To Acknowledge a War: The Korean War in American Memory.*


Englehardt, Tom. *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles of the American Past.*


Franco, Jere Bishop. *Crossing the Pond: The Native American Effort in World War II.*


Grotelueschen, Mark E. *AEF Way of War: The American Army in World War I.*


Harris offers insight into the everyday life and experiences of these men during training in stateside camps, how they interacted with civilians and other soldiers, and how they performed in combat. Perhaps the best coverage beyond the individual experience on the front-lines in France is how racism was a constant problem in the U.S. Army and in American society on the whole.


Kammen argues that before 1870 Americans had little interest in preserving their history (forming a collective memory) and did so thereafter only when conflicting forces
and tensions, notably regional versus centralization, modernism versus tradition, and authenticity versus myth took center stage.


   Keene refutes a long-standing assumption among American historians that World War I had little significance for the country by arguing that it not only transformed relationships between soldiers and the state, but also inspired serious changes in the military structure during the war and afterwards in domestic affairs.


Lewis asks why Americans fight. Using culture as the major determining factor for historical changes, he argues that the U.S. traditional way of fighting and conducting war was no longer valid in the latter half of the twentieth century.


Linenthal reflects on the numerous challenges of interpreting the bombing from the context of local, regional, and national memory, using treatment of shame, denial, and the horrors of tragedy, revealing how they sometimes works against the memorial and museum process.


Lotchin's purpose is threefold: he reveals the fragmented nature of World War II studies on the home front, most revealing a universal desire for total victory by all (a façade, he later claims); the connections between the home front and the process of fighting a war, generally within the confines of personal sacrifice and the "latent military resources" of California; and a conscious effort to rebuff popular beliefs that World War II ushered in a second "gold rush," an impossible turn of events given that no many different ethnic groups battled against the powers for transformation and conformity.


He heads an effort to offset the imbalance in scholarly literature that focuses solely on Japanese American internment, blacks, and women, at the expense of other equally engaging topics (Poles, Italians, Chinese, et. al) during World War II.


Norris engages the tragic effects of modern warfare with high criticism reflecting both history and the cultural representation of it from early twentieth century trench poetry to military policy during the Persian Gulf War. What emerges here is the relationship between modern art and mass warfare and the ethical problems they have created.


Raises concerns over America’s newfound interest with the World War II generation, notably how prominent journalists like Tom Brokaw used his book *The Greatest Generation* to promote that generation who made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of democracy and freedom. Rose argues that the war disrupted the lives of Americans in the military and on the home front more than what is widely accepted. All contributors call into question the “Good War” myth, pointing out that racial and labor unrest, juvenile delinquency, adultery, and high divorce rates ran at all time highs.

Rosenberg draws on a broader public infatuation with its historical past, a phenomenon she attributes to the “memory boom” of the 1990s. She argues that two competing frameworks continue to vie for wider public acceptance, the innocence of narrative aroused by the affects of the Day of Infamy speech and a sleeping nature riled by an unmitigated, treacherous attack.


The author argues that war is the result of an innate difficulty by peoples to confront the realities of mass death and the result of state and political wielding of
technology. D-Day, she claims, is often selectively remembered by its participants as the major point of entry for America’s use of memory and World War II.


Vernon, Alex, ed. *Arms and the Self: War, the Military and Autobiographical Writing*. Kent: Kent State University Press, 2005.


Despite this ethnic group’s willingness to serve in the war their overall experience was not positive, especially for those men in uniform mistaken for the Japanese enemy and made outcasts.


Journal Articles:


**Dissertations:**


