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Veterans History Project

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I. Scope

The Veterans History Project (VHP) preserves stories of American war veterans and their service during times of war. VHP relies on volunteers throughout the nation to collect veterans' stories on behalf of the Library of Congress. Operating as part of the American Folklife Center, VHP archives its collections at the Library of Congress and makes them available to researchers and the public.

The Veterans History Project accepts first-hand accounts of service by men and women who served in uniform for the United States, primarily during major conflicts beginning with World War I and continuing through the current conflicts.

II. Research Strengths

Since accepting its first donation of materials in 2001, the Veterans History Project has grown into an archive of nearly 60,000 collections, each telling a unique story of service during wartime to the United States. No other archive of wartime experiences can match the breadth of the Veterans History Project. In documenting the stories of individuals, the vast majority of them not high-ranking officers and many of them women and minorities, VHP is creating a history of America at war that is only rarely glimpsed in standard histories and texts.

Originally an oral history project, VHP soon realized that accounts of wartime service could take many forms, and its collections are now rich with personal correspondence, private diaries, memoirs, photographs, and art work, providing an even more diverse narrative of Americans in wartime than was first conceived.

The Project has established itself with a network of veterans' organizations, affiliated archives and museums, and academic institutions, as well as individuals with an interest in recording veterans' histories, thus ensuring an ongoing interest in our work and a steady stream of donations, still numbering over 100 a week.

By fully digitizing over 5,000 of our collections, making their contents available through our web site, we are providing access to the stories in VHP to every home, library, and classroom with a computer. Our online database allows researchers to organize a reference search in to

dozens of combinations. The number of collections digitized will continue to grow, offering researchers a chance to explore the details of a broader array of wartime stories.

III. Collecting Policy

The accounts VHP accepts may take several forms: (1) first-person oral history interviews on video or audio* (minimum length: 30 minutes); (2) veterans' own original correspondence, diaries, or journals, or copies of self-published memoirs (minimum: 20 pages or 10 letters, unless submitted with an interview); VHP prefers those portions of a memoir that deal with military service; (3) contemporaneous visual documentation of service experiences, such as scrapbooks, original photographs or high-quality scans of photos, original art work, motion pictures, and videos (minimum quantity: 10 photos or works of art, unless submitted with an interview); (4) official military records, and official military and other contemporaneous instructional or informational pamphlets that enhance accounts of an individual veteran's story of service (only as supplements to any of the first three items).

* The Veterans History Project accepts audio and video recordings in a variety of media and formats, with some exceptions. For details on what we accept and do not accept, consult our web site or our Field Kit.

IV. Exclusions

The Veterans History Project does not accept

1. micro-cassettes or MP-3s.
2. photocopies of any material--photographs, correspondence, diaries, or journals-- for which the veteran possesses the original (exceptions on a case-by-case basis).
3. three-dimensional objects, such as uniforms, medals, weapons, and souvenirs.
4. framed materials
5. published materials, such as books, major periodicals and newspapers (such as Life, Stars and Stripes, etc.) that are in the Library of Congress's catalogue
6. three-dimensional works of art (sculpture, collages, works of fiber arts)
7. interviews done on behalf of veterans
8. group interviews, unit histories, or written compilations of veterans' stories
9. collections of veterans who performed military service for other countries
10. collections with scant amount of materials (interviews under 30 minutes, memoirs under 20 pages, fewer than 10 original photographs)
11. official government photographs, such as those taken by the Signal Corps
12. computer discs without an accompanying hard copy of the material on them (for details on acceptable formats, see our web site or Field Kit).
13. homefront collections from civilians not employed in support of the war
14. more than one interview on one piece of media

The Veterans History Project will return to the donor any materials which do not meet its minimum standards.

V. Collecting Priorities

Presently, while continuing to maintain high interest in collecting interviews and written accounts from all American war veterans, we have three immediate collecting priorities. Our overall Collecting Policy goals are to:

- (1) collect the accounts of the oldest segment of veterans, those who served in World War II and the Korean War;
- (2) collect the accounts of female veterans and veterans representing minority communities;
- (3) collect stories from underrepresented veteran branches and bodies such as the National Guard;
- (4) improve the intellectual and technical qualities of interviews;
- (5) solicit the donation of the recorded reminiscences of all American war veterans.

The collecting policy including the priorities echo the principal goals outlined in the enabling legislation which is to collect, preserve and provide access to veteran accounts, to gather the accounts of those aging veterans first, and to create an archive that reflects the diversity of the overall military population.

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