

America's Defenders

Make Veterans Day Veterans History Day

(NAPSA)—Veterans call them “war stories,” but to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Library of Congress the first-hand accounts of those who served the nation during war are the stuff of history.

That is why VA is beginning its new partnership with the Library of Congress/American Folklife Center's Veterans History Project this Veterans Day, November 11, 2001.

The Veterans History Project, authorized by Congress last year, calls upon the American Folklife Center to develop a program to collect and preserve audio- and videotaped oral histories of America's war veterans.

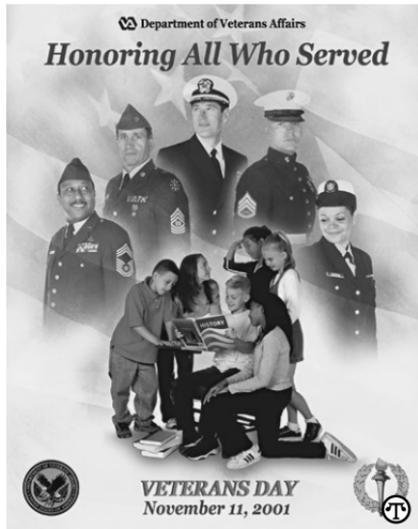
Project organizers are asking private and not-for-profit groups to partner in this national effort and immediately turned to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi to call on all veterans to participate.

“Of America's 25 million living veterans, nearly 19 million have served during time of war,” Secretary Principi stated. “There are 19 million stories to tell, 19 million histories to preserve. I'm proud that VA is a partner in this project and can't think of a better time than Veterans Day to enlist the public in this important effort.”

Principi said VA's national force of more than 90,000 volunteers will assist VA staff in veterans hospitals and benefits offices across the country in recording veterans' histories and bringing local groups and organizations into the project. He noted the urgency of the task.

“There are only a few thousand World War I veterans left and they are all over 100 years old,” he said. “The average age of our World War II veterans is 77 and we are losing 1,500 of them a day. We have to reach them and preserve their great legacy right now, and this project is the way to do it.”

The project encompasses veterans of World Wars I and II, and the Korean, Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars; men and women of all ranks in all branches of military service. The Veterans History



Many people will observe Veterans Day this year by recording veterans' histories.

Project offers “how to” guidelines for taping oral histories on its Web site at www.loc.gov/folklife/vets/. Start-up information is also available by writing Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, 101 Independence Ave., SE, Washington, D.C. 20540-4615.

All recordings and personal histories and documents submitted to the Veterans History Project will be part of the Library of Congress/American Folklife Center National Veterans History Collection. They will be housed at the Library and partner institutions such as military museums, history centers or local libraries and archives. The Library of Congress will create a comprehensive, searchable catalog of all materials so that researchers and the public will have access to them.

“I'm particularly interested in involving students and youth groups in this project,” Principi said. “I can't think of a better way for a school class to observe Veterans Day and to learn American history than by recording veterans' histories for this project.”

VA provides a complete guide to Veterans Day and how to observe it, including U.S. flag rules and etiquette, on its Internet Web site at <http://www.va.gov/pubaff/vetsday/index.htm>.