



Preserving Stories of America's Heroes

There are 19 million war veterans living in the United States today, yet sadly, every day we lose 1,500 of them. As a Navy veteran myself, I

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know that with each passing, America not only loses a brave defender of democracy, but also gains a story of sacrifice in service to our great nation.

Every veteran has a story to tell – stories of hardship and loss, friendship and heroism. Stories about how their military or civilian experiences in turbulent times changed their lives and the life of our nation. That is why Congress passed and I supported legislation to create the Veterans History Project through the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center.

Preserving the stories of America's veterans is what the Veterans History Project is all about. This important initiative is conducting interviews with veterans and those who supported them. It will also collect their documents, such as letters and photographs, for a national collection. The materials will be preserved so that veterans, researchers, authors, film makers, teachers and students can learn how America's brave veterans helped to defend the freedoms we all enjoy.

Iowans have already undertaken similar efforts to preserve the stories of Iowa's veterans. Two teachers at Central Alternative High School in Dubuque led a project in which thirty students compiled the stories of local veterans and published them in a book entitled, "A Tribute to Victory: Dubuque in World War II." The students then donated the proceeds from their book to the World War II Memorial in Washington, DC. Their contribution was the largest of any Iowa school and I've encouraged them to add their research to the Veterans History Project.

Every Iowan can be a part of the Veterans History Project. Interview a veteran. Maybe it will be your grandfather or your aunt. Ask them to talk about their experiences, and to pass on their knowledge on audiotape or videotape or through their writings. Work with your post, or club, or classroom to add to this collection.

The duty of these veterans was to preserve, protect, and defend the land we love. Our duty is to preserve the stories of our veterans and to craft from their lessons the best possible future for America. I hope you will help honor our veterans and America by participating in this historic project.

For more information about how to participate in the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project visit <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/vets/> or call (202) 707-4916. You can also contact my office by e-mail [tom_harkin@harkin.senate.gov] or by calling or writing any one of my Iowa offices.

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