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FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
19th Judicial Circuit
Lake County
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

THE 19TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT HOSTS ITS 10TH ANNUAL VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

On Thursday, November 11, 2021, 15 Veterans participated in the [Veterans History Project](#) at the Lake County Courthouse. The Veterans History Project gathers the oral histories of veterans, which are given in response to questions asked by volunteer judges and attorneys and recorded by volunteer court reporters. The transcripts are archived at the [Library of Congress](#), making accessible the personal accounts of American veterans for future generations to hear the stories directly from the members of the military. This year's group included veterans of the United States Army, the United States Marine Corps, and the United States Navy who were involved in the military during both conflicts and times of peace dating back to World War II.

"The events that these men and women have witnessed first-hand must be recorded to preserve their experiences for future generations. Archiving their stories will honor their service and what they swore to protect and defend; our American freedom and way of life," said Chief Judge Diane E. Winter.

The Lake County Veteran's History Project is supported by resources from many community organizations including Freedom Farm for Vets, Gold Star Families, Gurnee Christian Academy, HealTeam6, Lake County Bar Association, Lake County Bar Foundation, Lake County Honor Flight, Lake County Public Defender's Office, Lake County Sheriff's Officer, Lake County State's Attorney's Office, Lake County TV, Lake County Veterans and Family Services Foundation, Lake County Young Marines, Midwest Veterans Closet, Quilts of Valor, School of St. Mary (Lake Forest), St. Patrick's School (Wadsworth), United States Marine Corps League Tri-County Leathernecks Detachment #1392, and Veteran's Treatment and Assistance Court.

Thursday's event began with a breakfast followed by North Chicago Police Officer James Perrin singing the *National Anthem*, the Lake County Young Marines leading the attendees in the *Pledge of Allegiance*, and Lake County Sheriff's Office Court Security Officer Daniel August singing *God Bless America*.

Medal of Honor recipient and Vietnam War Veteran Sargent Allen James Lynch served as the event's keynote speaker, sharing "This is an important project. We take our freedoms for granted, even us Veterans. We must tell our story about what it is like to be in combat, what it is like to serve away from home, what it is like to see your friends killed; I know it's hard, but we must do that. It is the only way that our young people are going to respect what they have. They must know that these freedoms that we have come at a very, very high price. Freedom is one generation away from being lost. Today and every day we must focus on what it is like to be a Veteran, what it means to sacrifice, and why it is worth sacrificing everything."

Third Class Petty Officer, Auscencio "Al" Almanzo, was one of the World War II veterans that participated in the project. The 96-year-old stated that he was drafted but given a choice as to which branch of the military he wanted to join. He stated he chose the Navy because of their advertisements, "Join the Navy, See the World." He served on the U.S.S. Bausell DD 845 as a projectile-man, gun turret, and member of the fire brigade. He was first-generation military in his family, and he shared how his parents expressed their concern for his safety when he was drafted. They would stay in touch via letters and phone calls, but after training at Great Lakes Naval Base stated that he and his platoon "Were excited to get in the fight and get it over with. We were trained to fight." At the end of his deployment, he was asked if he wanted to re-up, "I had a choice to be discharged or stay to be an instructor in the gunnery school. I wanted to come home, I had a girlfriend." That girlfriend later became his wife and the mother of his children.

The event was chaired by two of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit's judges: Circuit Judge Charles W. Smith and Associate Judge Elizabeth M. Rochford.

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