



News Release

FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
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Lake County
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Point of Contact: Fred Foreman
Ken LaRue
Telephone: 847.377.4500
847.377.3105

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

LAKE COUNTY TO PARTICIPATE IN VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT ESTABLISHED BY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Chief Judge Fred Foreman announces the participation of various partners of the Lake County legal community to work together with the Library of Congress on its program, the Veterans History Project. On Friday morning, October 26, 2012, 18 combat war veterans will be interviewed at the Lake County courthouse in Waukegan and have their oral histories recorded by official court reporters of the 19th Judicial Circuit who in turn will produce transcripts of their interviews. The transcripts eventually will be archived at the Library of Congress. It is anticipated that there will be recurring participation in the program by Lake County several times in the future as well.

The Library of Congress sponsored project collects first-hand accounts of veterans from World War II (1939-1946), Korean War (1950-1955), Vietnam War (1961-1975), Persian Gulf War (1990-1995) and Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts (2001-present), as well as collecting personal items such as copies of diaries, letters, etc. from the veterans, if they so choose.

Those U.S. citizen civilians who were actively involved in supporting war efforts (war industry workers, such as "Rosie the Riveter," USO workers, civilian flight instructors and pilots, medical personnel, etc.) are also invited to share their valuable stories.

In addition to the court reporters, the program will utilize assistant state's attorneys, assistant public defenders and members of the Lake County Bar Association volunteering their own time to conduct the oral interviews of the war veterans and the civilians that supported the war effort. Judge Foreman is seeking volunteers from each group to assist in the important effort.

Chief Judge Foreman, himself a Vietnam-era Air Force reservist, said, "Northern Illinois is the home to hundreds of thousands of war veterans and those civilians that helped them. As time goes on,

more and more war veterans pass away and the details of their experiences and those of their comrades are lost to the American people. For example, the last World War I veteran, Frank Buckles, died in February 2011 at the age of 110. World War II veterans are in their late 80s or older and are quickly leaving us. War veterans are often hesitant to talk about their own experiences because of a sense of humility but they are often the last witnesses to the sacrifice and bravery of others who did not survive the war or have since passed. The events they witnessed firsthand need to be preserved. For example, it is 70 years ago this autumn that the Battle of Guadalcanal, the first major offensive against the empire of Japan, was fought. My father, a U.S. Marine, fought there and was wounded. He died in 2001 and he and many of the World War II comrades in arms are no longer here to relate what occurred from the perspective of the individual service members.”

Court reporter Vernita Allen-Williams, who along with Colleen Eitermann will be coordinating the court reporters support of this important project, said, “The official court reporters covering Lake County’s first Veterans History Project are very excited to be a main part of this effort. The firsthand accounts will be archived in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress for use by researchers and to serve as an inspiration for generations to come, making accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war.”

Associate Judges Michael Fusz and John Scully, both retired officers of the U.S. Navy, will be contacting the various veterans organizations in Lake County to advise the organizations of the project and to seek their help in passing the word to war veterans and civilians that aided in the war efforts. They will also be involved in recruiting Lake County lawyers, assistant state’s attorneys and assistant public defenders to interview the war veterans and civilians.

Ken LaRue, a current Navy reservist and supervisor at the Lake County State’s Attorney’s Office who can be reached at 847-377-3105 or klarue@lakecountyil.gov, will be the main contact for this effort. He will be coordinating the volunteers, the veterans and courthouse personnel. Any World War II or Korean War combat veteran interested in being interviewed or anyone interested in volunteering to assist in this project should contact Ken.

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