



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

For Immediate Release:
November 10, 2005

For More Information Contact:
Penelope Campbell:

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White Launches Illinois Veterans' History Project

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White today announced the official launch of the Illinois Veterans' History Project. The Project is designed to create a permanent record of the names and stories of Illinois war veterans and civilians who served our state and country during war, so that their contributions will not be forgotten.

“As we celebrate Veterans Day, I would like to recognize the many contributions that veterans have made to both Illinois and the nation,” White said. “Their commitments have helped to build the future of our city, state and country, and they are truly an integral part of our community.”

The Illinois State Archives, a division of the Secretary of State's office, will collect the information and place it in a permanent repository. The initiative follows a law passed by the federal government authorizing the Library of Congress to collect and preserve the histories of American veterans and civilians who served in wars from World War I to the present.

To participate in the Illinois Veterans' History Project, veterans or their family members can obtain an Illinois Patriots Information Form from the Secretary of State's office. The forms are available in Driver Services facilities statewide, or on the Secretary of State's website at www.cyberdriveillinois.com. Veterans or their family members can complete this form and share their remembrances on the back or on a separate sheet of paper. Those who participate will receive an Official Certificate of Appreciation for their participation in this project.

Henry Ellerbrock, an Illinois Veteran of World War II and Pearl Harbor, appended his story to the form:

“I was aboard the battleship U.S.S. West Virginia.... We immediately received orders to man your fire and rescue station. My station was on the quarterdeck we could see over at the 1010 dock where the U.S.S. Ogala was laying on her side and was burning.... As I was down below deck, two torpedoes hit our ship. The heat and concussion was so great it felt like every hair on your body was singed. We could hear our shipmates praying and also hollered, ‘help save me, help save me.’ We did what we could.... As I came out of the hatch, Japanese planes were strafing us. One pilot came in so low, you could see the grin on his face and the ribbon on his helmet... We were then ordered to fight fires on our ship. We fought it for a couple hours, when we were ordered to abandon ship. We were tied up outboard of the U.S.S. Tennessee....As we swam around the bow of the Tennessee, the water was on fire from the West Virginia and the Arizona. We had to come up from underneath and slash as hard as we could to keep from getting burnt...”

I was put on the burial squad for two weeks. They would bring the bodies over to us and we would put them in rough boxes, put a sheet over them and put their identification on the rough box.... We lost 105 men on our ship alone.”

John J. Terrell, another Illinois patriot, also shared his story:

“As the attack began and from the third deck, I witnessed the devastation being wreaked on the ships.... Later I was detailed to go aboard the U.S.S. Pennsylvania to fight fire, pass ammo by hand (the ship had lost power caused by near bomb-misses) and handle casualties. There I remained until cease fire.”

The shock of coming under unexpected hostile fire did alter our lives forever.”

The United States Congress created the Veterans’ History Project in 2000. The authorizing legislation ([Public Law 106-380](#)), sponsored by Representatives Ron Kind, Amo Houghton, and Steny Hoyer in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senators Max Cleland and Chuck Hagel in the U.S. Senate, received unanimous support and was signed into law by President Clinton on October 27, 2000.

At the press conference, White thanked Illinois’ veterans and encouraged them to obtain a form. “I commend all of Illinois’ veterans for their hard work, caring and dedication,” said White. “They have paved the way for many of us and their commitments continue to inspire us. I look forward to honoring them by preserving their stories for future generations.”

##