Veterans History Project Spotlights the Service of Native American Veterans

Joseph Beimfohr enlisted in the Army two days after his 17th birthday; his grandmother, who raised him, signed his enlistment paperwork. He went to Iraq in January 2005, and his unit was tasked to clear travel routes that were polluted with improvised explosive devices (IED) and to search households for weapons. In July of that year, Beimfohr and his men had just disarmed an IED when a second explosion ripped into him. He lost both legs, but he did not lose his sense of pride in his work and his determination to persevere.

The Veterans History Project (VHP) at the Library of Congress American Folklife Center spotlights his story and other interviews of Native Americans in "Willing to Serve: American Indians," a website feature that comprises nine first-person accounts of those who volunteered to serve during conflicts from World War II to Iraq. These one-of-a-kind stories can be found at www.loc.gov/vets/.

“As with veterans of other minority groups, the service and sacrifice of Native American veterans are often overlooked," said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. “Having their recollections among the over 66,000 individual stories in the VHP collection enriches our archive for researchers and scholars, and ensures that we recognize their important service in support of our nation.”

The Library of Congress, the nation’s oldest federal cultural institution, is the world's preeminent reservoir of knowledge, providing unparalleled collections and integrated resources to Congress and the American people. Many of the Library’s rich resources and treasures may also be accessed through the Library’s website, www.loc.gov, and via interactive exhibitions on a personalized website at myLOC.gov.

The Veterans History Project was created in 2000 by Congress as a national documentation program of the American Folklife Center (www.loc.gov/foeklife/) to record, preserve and make accessible the first-hand remembrances of American wartime veterans from World War I through the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war. Approximately 66,000 individual stories comprise the collection to date. The project relies on volunteers to record veterans’ remembrances using guidelines accessible at www.loc.gov/vets/. Volunteer interviewers may request information at vohp@loc.gov or the toll-free message line at (888) 371-5848. Subscribe to the VHP RSS to receive periodic updates of VHP news.