

# Collecting Stories, Research, and the Bigger Picture

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Military Writers Society of America National Conference

# United States Army Heritage and Education Center

*Telling the Army Story... One Soldier at a Time®*

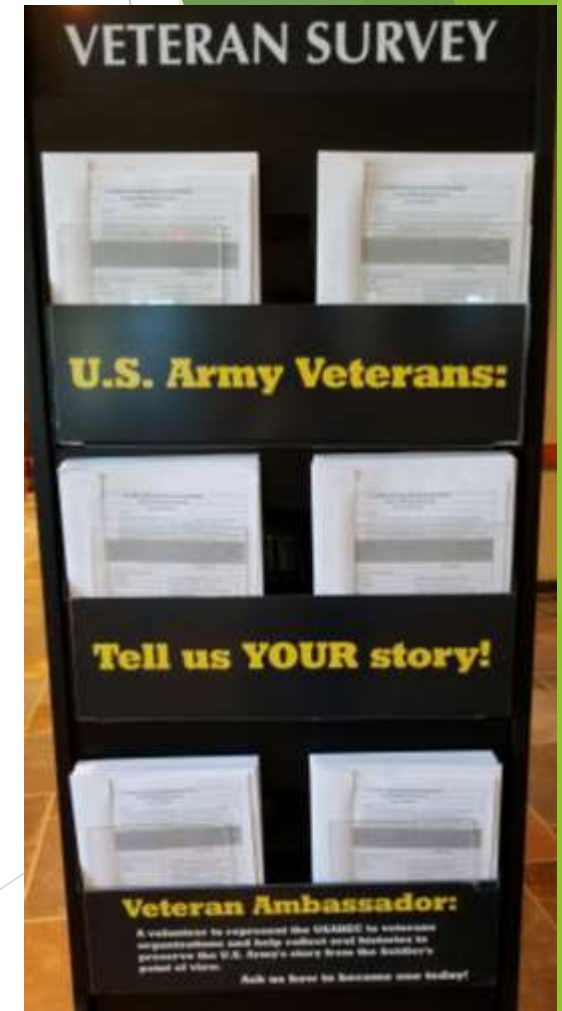




# Veterans Service Surveys

Tell the Army, and America, YOUR Story!

Veterans Service Surveys collect YOUR story from YOUR point of view. By filling out a survey, you give the Army's historical archives an official document to better understand your experiences as a Soldier. Completed surveys are available to the American public, and your decedents. Surveys can also serve as a template to collect form other services.





## Researching Your Own Story: Placing your time in the military in the “bigger picture”

The USAHEC Archival collections can help you better understand **YOUR OWN STORY**. With over 400,000 books and millions of archival files ranging from unit histories to after action reports and regular military history, the collections can give you the background you need to “fill in the blanks.”





# Researching Your Own Story: Examples of Useful Collections

- Personal papers of prominent figures in U.S. Army history such as Tasker Howard Bliss, Matthew B. Ridgway, Eric Shinseki, Benjamin O. Davis Sr., Margaret D. Craighill, Omar Nelson Bradley, Hal Moore, and Gordon R. Sullivan
- Personal diaries, letters, and photographs of American Soldiers from before the French and Indian War to today
- Veteran surveys and oral histories from the Spanish-American War to the War on Terror
- After action reports, operation orders, battle analysis, other “official” documents
- Rare books, including volumes from the original War Department Library and early modern European military science texts
- The Army’s superseded military publications: doctrine, regulations, field manuals, technical manuals, training, and administrative publications
- An artifact collection totaling 70,000 objects including over 40,000 that are searchable online, with more being added daily



## Explore the USAHEC Collections Online

- The USAHEC has embarked on a multiyear digitization project for the Army's Archives
- As part of that project, we have contracted a firm to scan and create metadata for our archival collection
- Our new interface will allow users to search USAHEC collections for anything from books to uniforms, manuscripts to weapons in one place.



# United States Army Heritage and Education Center

## *Telling the Army Story... One Soldier at a Time®*



Explore the USAHEC Collections Online: <https://arena.usahec.org>

The screenshot shows the USAHEC website homepage. At the top is a dark banner with the U.S. Army logo on the left, the text "U.S. ARMY HERITAGE & EDUCATION CENTER at Carlisle Barracks" in the center, and the USAHEC seal on the right. Below the banner is a navigation bar with links for "Search", "Resources", "Visit Us", and "About", along with buttons for "USAHEC" and "My Account".

**1** A box titled "Explore the USAHEC Collections" contains a paragraph of text and two buttons: "Ask Us a Question" and "For USAWC Students, Faculty, and Staff".

**2** A search bar with the placeholder text "Search for books, manuscripts, artifacts, photos, and much more..." and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar is a link for "Advanced search".

**3** A section titled "New and Notable" displays five book covers: "Gallipoli", "Groundless", "True yankees", "Theaters of the A...", and "Dunmore's War".

What you can do on this page:

1. "Ask Us a Question" - submit a question to our research librarians.
2. Search the USAHEC collections- books, manuscripts, archives, museum artifacts, photographs...
3. Discover what has been added most recently

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## *Telling the Army Story...One Soldier at a Time®*



Explore the USAHEC Collections Online: <https://arena.usahec.org>

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The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL 'arena.usahec.org'. The search bar contains 'MACV'. The results page shows 'Your search for MACV returned 109 hits'. There are two tabs: 'Library' (selected) and 'Museum & Archives'. The search results are sorted by 'Relevance'. Two results are visible:

Image	Title	Availability
	<b>MACV</b>	AVAILABLE
	<b>The Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) during the Vietnam endgame</b>	AVAILABLE

Each result includes author, year, language, call number, and media class information.

1

2

What you can do on this page:

1. Switch between Library books, Archival material, or Museum artifacts
2. Narrow your search using the filters on the right side of the page.
3. Find information on the copy center, contact research staff, Additional Resources, and Bibliographies and Finding Aids.





## Accessing our Collection Online and Requesting Materials

- Some books and unit histories may become available through a program called Inter-Library Loan. Some books or unit histories may not be available due to conservation or because we hold the only copies.
- Once you find a book or unit history you would want to borrow, you can request it through your local library to see if it is available.
- Our archival materials are only available with an on-site visit. Until digitization is completed, if you need a copy of a document you can request scans through our Copy Center. (See handout)
- As collections/items are digitized, they will be uploaded and available to view online, for free. This does not include books since they are copyrighted.

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## Additional Military (Non-Army) Resources - Official Personnel Records

The USAHEC does not hold official personnel records (such as DD214, Medical files, etc.)  
To assist you in those areas, these agencies can be contacted as follows:

### **U.S. National Archives and Records Administration**

Veterans' Service Records

8601 Adelphi Road

College Park, MD 20740-6001

[www.archives.gov/veterans](http://www.archives.gov/veterans)

### **National Personnel Records Center**

1 Archives Drive

St. Louis, Missouri 63138

Telephone: (Toll free) 1-866-272-6272

<https://www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center/military-personnel>

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## Additional Military (Non-Army) Resources

The USAHEC maintains very little information on other services. Each military branch's historical agencies are far better equipped to provide substantive information on them. These agencies can be contacted as follows:

### **U.S. Navy**

Naval Historical Center Building  
57 Washington Navy Yard  
Washington, DC 20374  
[www.history.navy.mil](http://www.history.navy.mil)

### **U.S. Marine Corps:**

Marine Corps History Division  
3079 Moreell Avenue  
Quantico, Virginia 22134

### **U.S. Coast Guard:**

U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office  
<https://www.history.uscg.mil/>

### **U.S. Air Force:**

Air Force History Office  
AFHSO/HOS 200 McChord Street, Box 94  
Bolling Air Force Base  
Washington, DC 20332-1111

U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency  
600 Chennault Circle  
Maxwell Air Force Base, AL 36112-6424  
<https://www.airuniversity.af.mil/>

### **U.S. Air Force Museum**

1100 Spaatz Street  
Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, OH 45433  
<https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/>



# Questions/Break



# The Veterans Ambassador Program

The USAHEC Veterans Ambassador Program (VAP) is a nation-wide U.S. Army initiative to train volunteers to collect U.S. Army Veteran's stories via surveys and oral history interviews for inclusion into the Army's archives. The stories the VAP Ambassadors collect honor Army Soldiers and keep their story alive and available for ever.

## The Veterans Ambassador Mission:

**Represent** the USAHEC to Veterans and Veterans organizations and promote awareness of the USAHEC as a historical repository for the Soldiers' history.

**Distribute** and collect Veteran Service Surveys to provide a basic historical record of a Soldier's service.

**Conduct** oral history interviews of Army Veterans in your community. Ambassadors are trained to conduct oral history interviews to be accepted into the Army's historical collections.



# VAP Mission: Represent

A Veterans Ambassador represents the USAHEC to the Army Veterans in his or her community. By providing outreach into their community, they increase awareness of the USAHEC's Veterans services, research resources, and the VAP mission. Veterans Ambassadors also reach out to local organizations and Veterans groups to make the larger community aware of the resources and programs offered.



# VAP Mission: Collect Veterans Service Surveys

The Veteran Service Survey is an eight-page form which has multiple purposes:

- Historical document in and of itself.
- The **ONLY** regulated, reviewed, simple public record that the Veteran will produce that will be available to everyone for scholarly, genealogical, and educational use.
- Provide information for Ambassadors to prepare for oral history interviews.

## How do the Veteran Service Surveys work?



# VAP Mission: Collect Oral Histories

Veterans Ambassadors are trained in accordance with U.S. Army regulations and policies to collect oral history interviews with Army Veterans for inclusion in the Army's historical archives.

## The Process:

- 1) Initial Contact
- 2) Veterans Service
- 3) Survey
- 4) Research
- 5) Q/T List
- 6) Coaching
- 7) VAP Recording Kit
- 8) Interview
- 9) Review
- 10) Accession





# VAP Mission: Collect Oral Histories

**BUT WAIT!!!**  
**What about CLASSIFIED INFORMATION!?!**

**DON'T WORRY!**  
**Practice CLASSIFIED**  
**DATA COLLECTION**  
**AVOIDANCE to**  
**mitigate at each step!**

## The Process:

- 1) Initial Contact
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# So you want to be a Veterans Ambassador?

**Recruiting:** What kind of person makes a good Veterans Ambassador?

**FACT:** Veterans Ambassadors do not need to be a Veteran.

**FACT:** Ambassadors do as much or as little work as they want.

## A Veterans Ambassador is:

- A “People Person” capable of speaking as easily to crowds as to a single Veteran.
- Able to Represent the USAHEC in a professional manner.
- Able to dedicate time and effort to the VAP mission.
- Enthusiastic about preserving and protecting the U.S. Army Soldier’s rich story.



# So you want to be a Veterans Ambassador?

**TRAINING:** Veterans Ambassadors go through training in accordance with U.S. Army regulations and USAHEC policies.

**ONSITE Training:** The USAHEC VAP team sends a Senior Ambassador to an organizations to train 10-20 potential Ambassadors at a time. Onsite training is 16 hours over 2 days.

**ONLINE Training:** (phase-in early 2019): 5 week online semester-based course. Modules are self-paced each week, with assignments, mock interviews, coaching phone calls, and two webinars.

**Individual Phone-based Training:** (phase-out early 2019): Correspondence-based on-the-job training.



# QUESTIONS?

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

To set up a training or an oral history interview: Contact Karl Warner,  
[Karl.k.warner.civ@mail.mil](mailto:Karl.k.warner.civ@mail.mil)

Learn More about the VAP and review VAP materials - visit the Veterans  
Ambassador Online Toolbox: <https://usawc.libguides.com/vap>