



Jesse White hosts "Preserving Their Memories: A Celebration of the Illinois Veteran's History Project"

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SPRINGFIELD - Secretary of State Jesse White hosted "Preserving Their Memories" to honor veterans and their contributions to the Illinois Veterans' History Project today at the Illinois State Library in Springfield. The Illinois Veterans' History Project honors Illinois veterans by documenting and preserving their experiences.

"The Illinois Veterans' History Project provides a place to honor our veterans as well as a memorial for those who have served our country," said White. "Today, there are nearly 6,000 records, submitted by veterans or their loved ones. With this initiative, future generations will have a better understanding and appreciation of the sacrifices Illinois veterans have made."

White, who served as a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division of the U.S. Army, was also a member of the Illinois National Guard and a reservist. As State Librarian and

Archivist, White initiated the Illinois Veterans' History Project in 2005, in conjunction with the Library of Congress, to provide a permanent record of the names and stories of Illinois veterans and their families.

“With the use of technology, my office has been able to share over 350 personal history videos online via the Illinois Veterans History Project YouTube channel,” said White, whose own video testimony is included in the project. “It is my hope that the contributions of these veterans will live on and their experiences will not be forgotten.”

At the event, veterans were able to obtain an updated driver's license or ID card with the word “VETERAN” displayed on the front of the card. This designation helps ensure veterans living in Illinois, who have received an Honorable or General under Honorable Conditions discharge, receive veteran services and benefits.

White was joined by representatives from the Illinois Court Reporters' Association and the Illinois Disabled American Veterans. Throughout the day, volunteer court reporters transcribed accounts from veterans in attendance. The event included musical performances by Glenwood High School's Titan Fever Show Choir from Chatham and trumpeter Richard Martin, a U.S. Marine veteran. The Veterans of Foreign Wars Lafore Lock Post 755 Honor Guard presented the colors.

Author Cyndee Schaffer, daughter of Women's Army Corps (WACs) enlistee, Mollie Weinstein Schaffer, gave a presentation that drew upon excerpts from Mollie's letters written home during the war. Mollie's letters are included in a book that Cyndee Schaffer co-wrote with her mother called, “Mollie's War: The Letters of a World War II WAC in Europe.”

Illinois Patriot Guard's “Illinois Fallen Heroes Traveling Memorial Wall” and the Portrait of a Soldier memorial tribute, provided by the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, were on display during the event. Both exhibits will remain on display at the State Library through the end of the week and are open to the public.

For more information about the Illinois Veterans' History Project, visit: <http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/public/veteransproject.html>.