How I Served

An Archival Collection of Veterans’ Stories
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Monday, November 12, 2012
11 a.m. Exhibit opens, Gidwitz Lobby
12 p.m. Program, Performance Hall
Logan Center for the Arts
60th Street and Drexel Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Wall of remembrance and veterans’ submissions will be on display at the Logan Center from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Welcome
Aneesah Ali, Associate Provost and
Affirmative Action Officer

Color Guard
Denver Barrows, Patric Bergman, Joel Greeson,
Richard Scherl, ROTC Cadets

University of Chicago Veterans Outreach Initiative
Aneesah Ali, Associate Provost and
Affirmative Action Officer

Introduction of Speaker
Fountain Walker, UCPD Deputy Chief, Patrol Services;
Chair, Veterans Events Subcommittee

A Veteran’s Reflection
John W. Boyer, Dean of the College and
Martin A. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor,
Department of History

Closing
Fountain Walker, UCPD Deputy Chief, Patrol Services;
Chair, Veterans Events Subcommittee
Welcome to the University of Chicago 2012 
Veterans Day recognition program and exhibit

The men and women at the University of Chicago who have served in the military enrich, strengthen, and inspire our community as students, alumni, faculty, and staff. Through the veterans outreach initiative, now in its fourth year, we continue to explore ways to acknowledge the contributions of University of Chicago veterans and foster a welcoming environment. Through a host of events and activities, and the work of the Veterans Outreach Committee, a sense of community is growing among veterans across campus.

This year’s Veterans Day Recognition Program is the first to which the entire University community has been invited and asked to contribute. We have an extraordinary opportunity to encounter the personal experiences of military service through the window opened by veteran members of the University community. As part of a special project, University veteran students, staff, faculty, and other academics—across many generations and wars—were encouraged to share their stories in any medium to reflect their individual experiences. The submissions exhibited today at the Logan Center for the Arts inaugurate the archival collection that will be preserved at Regenstein Library. It will continue to be expanded by other veterans at the University and those who wish to add their stories to this important collection in the future.

Special thanks to President Robert J. Zimmer and Provost Thomas F. Rosenbaum for their continuing support of the University’s outreach program for veterans, Dean John Boyer for remarking on the personal significance of his service, members of the Veterans Exhibit Advisory Group, and the 12 University of Chicago veterans who answered the call to launch this project by submitting their stories in this founding year.

We encourage you to take a few moments to remember and identify one or more veterans who have been important in your life by leaving a note, photo, or memento on the wall of remembrance. At the end of today's exhibit, the wall will be photographed and included in the archival collection. As a result, the personal and collective meaning of this very special collection can be multiplied.

Sincerely,

Aneesah Ali
Associate Provost and Affirmative Action Officer
The University of Chicago
Personal Objects

VIctOr GarcIa
X’03
The University of Chicago
United States Marine Corps

Rifle Magazine 1
One standard issue 5.56mm 30-round rifle magazine from the United States Marine Corps. Recovered April 11, 2004. Contains one bullet hole from round fired from an AK47 assault rifle that struck Corporal Daniel “Kung-Fu” Amaya.

Shrapnel 4
One piece of shrapnel believed to have come from a 155mm artillery shell, improvised explosive device. Recovered by Sgt. Victor Jesus Garcia of the United States Marine Corps, on patrol in the city of Haditha, Iraq, in March 2004. The explosion left a 5’ x 5’ crater in the road between vehicles in the patrol. This shrapnel was found approximately 100 meters away.
“On the right arm is the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) patch. This was the patch that I wore when I was stationed at the 8th Radio Research Field Station in Phu Bai, which is a few kilometers south of Hue in central Vietnam. While here, I eventually became the post interpreter (because of my people skills, not my language skills, alas). My primary job was to be the liaison between the American troops and the South Vietnamese (ARVN) troops. This is why I wore the red patch on my left breast pocket, the Joint General Staff insignia. At the end of December, 1971, I was transferred to Headquarters Troop, 3rd Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry, 1st Aviation Brigade. The winged sword patch on the left arm is the insignia of the 1st Aviation Brigade.” —STANLEY MCCrackEN

STANLEY MCCrackEN
AM’78, PhD’87
Senior Lecturer, School of Social Service Administration
The University of Chicago
United States Army

Brass Incense Burner 2
An incense burner created from expended artillery shells melted down and made into a variety of objects from the brass, such as Buddhas, bells, and incense burners.

Black dashiki 3
A black, embroidered dashiki, worn in the fall of 1972 for musical performances with the Command Military Touring Shows (CMTS).

Jungle Fatigue Shirt 5
Fatigue shirt with rank insignia on the collar and patches on the sleeves and breast pocket.
TJ RAJCEVICH
AB’05, MS candidate, Threat and Response Management, Graham School
The University of Chicago
United States Marine Corps

Shirt and Cap  6
A United States Marine Corps Desert Uniform shirt and cap worn in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Military Patches  6
Two military patches worn in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

Marine Corps Unit Flag  6
A United States Marine Corps Unit Flag for the Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO), flown in Afghanistan.
As I was standing on the roof of the adjacent building overlooking the target house I remember hearing the words “Oh my God! Oh my God! Shit! Shit!” after the initial burst of what I could clearly distinguish as AK47 fire. I remember fighting the urge to run down the stairs with the entire fire team and storm the house. At this time I saw a body being pulled out of the house being carried by several marines when I heard the platoon commander, Lt. Stokes, say, “he is hemorrhaging!” I still clearly remember to this day when they pulled out Daniel’s body because I could not recognize it as him. My mind could not process fast enough that my squad leader had been killed, we all knew it just by looking at him. I remember seeing a pale lifeless body being pulled out of the house. Standing next to me was a team leader, Lcpl. Smith, I exclaimed to him, “Who is that? Who is that?” I was clearly seeing his face in front of me, I recognized the gear. I just could not process the scene before me. The company gunnery sergeant took over the extraction of Daniel. I never saw my friend again.
“My understanding of war, and humanity changed dramatically in the year I spent as an Infantry soldier in Iraq. . . . I learned early on, I would require every aspect of my being to endure the year ahead. I also chose to never lose compassion, though this too would be challenged again, and again.” —MICHAEI GALASSI

Abu Ghraib, June 2005
An Excerpt

Slowly,
   I hear myself say
   “They must have had him on his knees
   when they shot him.”

I wonder if he had time to beg for his life, or pray.

For that moment, I wished his killer could have been
a new friend
asking him to sit for tea and dates
   later, lamb and rice
talking late into the night
after curfew
   about promise

about
change.

MICHAEL GALASSI
MS candidate, Computer Science
Professional Program
The University of Chicago
United States Army

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I had asked him the question that day, nearing my return to college, the same age when he had joined the army. When he repeated a similar speech, this time ten ranks improved, officer promoted, teenager matured, stranger acquainted, I couldn’t hold back my frustration. These speeches start with “son” and end with “behave,” another journey thrown in the mix, the likes of which would leave an empty spot at the dinner table. Son, I’m going to Afghanistan this time. No, I don’t have to. But I miss something about it. Making something of myself again and contributing. One year, starting in two months. I know I’ll miss your birthday. And Christmas too. Behave.

“Hey dad,” I had asked, “why were you gone for so long when we were in Germany? And mom says you dropped us off in Kentucky and Missouri for a bit too while you went away. Where did you go? Why did you go for so long?”

“Well, son, they needed me most of those years when you were born and a little boy. Eighty-nine, Noriega. ninety to ninety-one, the Gulf War. Ninety-two for a while onwards, the Bosnian War…”

And he retells that odyssey.
DLR was a character. Of course anybody with a nickname like DLR has to be a character. I believe those were his initials, David L Robertson, or maybe Dennis. Nobody seemed to know for sure, which is typical in the Army. Half the time you don’t even know your friends’ full names. There are no introductions in the Army. I’ve known GIs for months without ever knowing their full names. People go by nicknames or simply their last names, which shows on the uniform nametag.

DLR thought nothing of buying a motorcycle, then trying to repair it, and not knowing how, destroying the engine in the process, and then selling it at half price to buy a car he couldn’t afford. DLR was a character. See the character ruin his motorcycle.

DLR went into the woods to smoke some pot, and in the process started a small forest fire. The officer of the day investigated. “What were you doing in the woods DLR? I saw smoke, so I went to check it out. I saw the fire so I tried to put it out, sir.”
“HOPEFULLY, MY WORDS CAN CONVEY A GLIMPSE INTO WHAT LINGERS FOLLOWING WAR.”

—TJ RAJCEVICH

_Incessantly Slipping_
An Excerpt

Perhaps an epiphany floats with the smoke ever-rising, incessantly slipping from these arthritic hands or is it indiscernibly buried between the barriers of language & culture, freedom & religion

Perhaps we were just men by age but boys at war, at war within the inevitable entanglement of morality & survival, politics & dollars, obedience & home

Perhaps it is simply causality or actions & reactions, biology & ballistics...

The cacophony of clarity ricochets in hindsight and erodes reality as its echo fluctuates like an erratic pulse

Stitch by stitch I attempt to rip into enlightenment There’s nothing but a woven complexity of wrinkled thinking reinforced by a perpetual question...why?

_TJ RAJCEVICH_
AB’05, MS candidate, Threat and Response Management, Graham School The University of Chicago United States Marine Corps
Military Service 1943-1952

An Excerpt

When the company returned to the United States, some of the soldiers received a hero’s welcome for heeding the call of duty during the war effort. When the ship arrived in Boston, the white soldiers on the upper levels were allowed to disembark first per custom. The awaiting black soldiers were able to hear the fanfare and excitement which welcomed the disembarking white soldiers overhead. The sounds of a marching band drifted down to their expectant ears. There were murmurs that Red Cross volunteers were meeting each soldier with a cup of coffee and a donut as he stepped off of the ship.

As the last white soldier disembarked and the first black soldier prepared to step back on American soil, the music suddenly stopped. All of the band members and the Red Cross volunteers took a simultaneous recess. The black soldiers were instructed to walk over to the refreshment table to grab their own coffee and donuts. The pride and excitement of the black soldiers was replaced with sadness and humiliation. Some reflected on the uncertainty that their military service to their country would shield them from any of the daily indignities faced by African Americans in the middle of the 20th century.
To Jamie:

We did a range on a hill in the middle of the vast eastern desert. I got to shoot the 50 cal sniper rifles which was pretty fun. We were hitting things at 1000 meters which is way further when you see it. We’re in pretty good with them but our command is getting in the way of our helping them to shoot people in their faces. We almost shot someone today or maybe we didn’t. On our way back we thought we saw some people digging in the road but it was just people working on a bike in the middle of the road. I’m going back to Rankel, or the base we came from tomorrow, it’s not far away but that’s kind of part of what I’m so pissed about. I’m really not looking forward to the summer. Summer means I’m almost home though. We listened to this one song in the matv today, it was like all I ever wanted was just to see you smiling … I thought it was funny that we were expecting to shoot these people and listening to that. Well, we weren’t going to shoot anyone, the snipers probably could have done that without us, but still. I don’t have much more to tell you, just one more day in Afghanistan.
A Visit to Babylon

This video follows Josh Cannon, a PhD student in Anatolian archaeology. Beginning with Cannon’s decision to join the Marine Corps, it depicts his early years of service and ends with a visit he made to the ruins of Babylon while deployed in Iraq.

JOSH CANNON
PhD candidate, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
The University of Chicago
United States Marine Corps

How I Served: An Archival Collection of Veterans’ Stories
ANITA NIKOLICH
AB’91
The University of Chicago
United States Marine Corps

My Unique Experiences in 1st Marine Division  2
A video chronicle by Anita Nikolich of several unique and life-changing experiences in her short time as a Lieutenant with 1st Marine Division, during which she led a Special Security Communications Team, served on a combat warship, was among the first U.S. troops to land in Somalia, and provided intelligence support during the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

STANLEY MCCrackEN
AM’78, PhD’87
Senior Lecturer, School of Social Service Administration
The University of Chicago
United States Army

Monterey  3
Photo taken in about 1970 when Stanley McCracken (left), Jack Yeager (middle), and Dennis Weigel (right) were studying Vietnamese at the Presidio of Monterey.
"The impossible becomes possible."

TIm Strejc
Senior Refrigeration Engineer,
Central Utility Plants
The University of Chicago
United States Marine Corps

Military 4
FOUNTAIN WALKER
UCPD Deputy Chief, Patrol Services
The University of Chicago
United States Marine Corps

I Reminisce

The video by Fountain Walker is a compilation of stories that occurred between 1986 and 1994 while Walker was serving as a United States Marine. Many of these stories revolve around his experiences at Parris Island, SC—Boot Camp.

“The impossible becomes possible.”
—FOUNTAIN WALKER
IN MEMORIAM

Joshua Casteel
December 27, 1979–August 25, 2012
Graduate Student, University of Chicago Divinity School
Veterans Outreach Committee Member
Graduate Arts Management Fellow, University of Chicago Arts Council
Editor, The Lumen Christi Institute
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