

800 Vine Street
Cincinnati, Ohio
45202-2071
www.CincinnatiLibrary.org

Phyllis Hegner
Assistant Manager
Phone 513-369-4571
Fax 513-369-4564
Phyllis.Hegner@
CincinnatiLibrary.org

Richard Helmes
Public Information Officer
Phone 513-369-6959
Fax 513-369-4564
Rick.Helmes@
CincinnatiLibrary.org



Press
Release

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50th Annual Veterans Day Program
Thursday, November 11, 10:45 a.m.
Main Library

As an Army Ranger who had just been shipped to Belgium during World War II, Tom Anderson's first mission was to retrieve maps from a downed B-17 to keep them out of enemy hands. "I can still remember that day," he said. "The crew had parachuted out of the plane before it crashed, but one crewmember remained, in the back. I don't know if he had been shot before the plane crashed, or just didn't make it out in time. He was still strapped in his seat, and had the New Testament in his lap." That sobering image was his first glimpse of the realities of war.

Mr. Anderson will be the guest speaker at the Main Library's 50th Annual Veterans Day program, on Thursday, November 11, 10:45 a.m. He grew up in Price Hill and joined the Army in 1943, and attended Army Ranger School in Little Rock, Arkansas, stationed in Camp Shanks, New York a year later. Forty days after that, he was among the thousands who were transported to Britain on the *Queen Mary*, where he then sailed on to France in the summer of 1944, then by truck to Belgium.

Assigned one of the most perilous jobs in an anti-tank unit, he spent his 20th birthday in the Battle of the Bulge. "Unless you've experienced being strafed at six o'clock in the morning and then having Panzers running towards you at seven—well, if you haven't, you're lucky," he said. "And nights were even worse."

One of Tom's major duties was to disarm enemy land mines and booby traps, and occasionally planting them, a job requiring the handling of high explosives daily. The job was difficult because each success at disarming another land mine would be offset by new techniques used by the enemy to design new ones in their place. Sixty years later, Mr. Anderson remembers the precise moment when his luck ran out.

“I was 40 miles outside Cologne on February 19, 1945 at 7:00 p.m.,” he recalled. A booby trap he was working on exploded, knocking him ten feet into the air. Landing on his back, he realized that the explosion had ripped off his left hand and torn off the fingers of his right. He immediately thought of survival. “I was afraid I was going to die,” he said. After being patched up by battlefield medics, he was taken to Belgium for treatment, and then shipped home. Military doctors performed additional surgery on his left arm to allow the use of a prosthesis, although he gets by without one. He received ten medals, including the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and Combat Infantry Badge, among others. Tom Anderson was 21 at the time.

“When you’re 21, you feel you’re invincible,” he said. “Although I was depressed for about a year, I snapped out of it and was able to adjust to the loss.” He worked for the U. S. Post Office for nine years, and ran his own flooring business for 28 years. He was happily married for 48 years to wife Joan (nee Broderick) until she passed away ten years ago. His daughter Terri Huwell lives in Price Hill (he has nine grandchildren), and he has coached football and baseball. At the age of 79, Anderson plays tennis two days a week, and also works four days a week as a consultant for Schoch Tile.

He distinctly remembers landing at LaGuardia Airport on his way home, where a red carpet had been rolled out for him and 27 other veterans. “I was the only one who was able to walk on his own,” he recalled.

Mr. Anderson feels it is important for people to remember. That’s why he’s called upon frequently to speak about his experiences, most recently at Dater High School. “I speak to schools or anyone who will listen,” he said. “World War II veterans are fast becoming a dwindling number. It’s good for kids to hear first-hand experiences, something that you can’t find in a book.”

History of the Main Library’s Veterans Day Program

When the Main Library opened to the public in January 1955, it was the first major public library built in the United States after World War II. It was also dedicated to the memory of all Hamilton County veterans who had died in combat since World War I. The *Book of Homage*, which lists the names of over 3,000 Hamilton Countians who died serving their country, was unveiled on Memorial Day 1955, and is permanently housed in the Veterans Memorial display in the Atrium. Addendums were added to include the names of 273 Hamilton County citizens who had died in the Vietnam War, and the names of two local veterans were included from the Gulf War. Each week a page is turned to remember those who gave the supreme sacrifice (it takes 33 weeks to view the entire volume). Facsimile editions of the *Book of Homage* are available at the Main Library, and can be picked up at the program.

November 11 is the anniversary of the Armistice that was signed in the Forest of Compiegne by the Allies and the Germans in 1918, ending World War I, after four years of conflict—the eleventh month, eleventh day, and eleventh hour. An Act of Congress changed the name to Veterans Day in 1954. This Veterans Day marks the 50th anniversary of the Veterans Day program at the Main Library.

The Program

Sheriff Leis' Bagpipe and Drum Corps will open the program by playing as they march through the atrium. The 70-member Walnut Hills High School Choir will perform the National Anthem and later sing a medley of patriotic songs. Also participating in the program will be the Western Hills Jr. ROTC Color Guard, along with area veterans groups who will present memorial wreaths. After the Lighting of the Flame of Remembrance, the ceremony will conclude with Taps.

On June 5, 1955, President Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote that in the Main Library “we and others who shall hereafter live in freedom will be reminded that to these men and their comrades we owe a debt to be paid with grateful remembrance of their sacrifice and with the high resolve that the cause for which they died shall live eternally.”

Other Veterans Day Programs

Saturday, November 6, 10:30 a.m.

Civil War Genealogy

Delhi Township Branch Library, 5095 Foley Road (369-6019)

Trace ancestors who served in the Union or Confederate Army during the War Between the States. Learn what records are available and what those records can tell you about your relative's participation in America's greatest armed conflict.

Saturday, November 6 at 11:00 a.m.

Greenhills Branch Library, 7 Endicott Street (369-4441)

Veteran's Day Program

The Boxcar Veterans Association (Vietnam War) and some members from the 40/8 organization (La Societe des Quarante Hommes at Huit Chevaux, an independent fraternal organization of veterans, popularly known as the FORTY & EIGHT, was organized in 1920 by American Legionnaires as a fun and honor society) will be on hand. The branch will also have an extensive display of military uniforms and artifacts dating from WWII to the present with Tom Horton; a photography display from Vince Re; visitors from the Military Order of the Purple Heart; a marine veteran with his military truck and artifacts display; and Tom Griffin, one of the famous Doolittle Raiders from WWII. Tom is visiting as a friend along with Vince. The branch will also be starting a Veterans Scrap Book to record stories and memories, and photocopies of Veterans' pictures.

Monday, November 8, 7:00 p.m.

Harrison Branch Library, 10398 New Haven Road (369-4442)

A Look Into Cincinnati History: Remembering Our Veterans: A Tribute to Area Veterans through Cincinnati History

Tuesday, November 9, 6:30 p.m.

Covedale Branch Library, 4980 Glenway Avenue (369-4460)

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the War - Reminiscences of World War II with Bob Doolan

Saturday, November 13, 10:00 a.m.

Main Library, 800 Vine Street (369-6908)

Veteran Ancestors: Those Other Wars

Information about finding ancestor veterans of lesser known wars with Curt Witcher, Historical Genealogy Department Manager at Allen County Public Library

Saturday, November 13, 11:15 a.m.

Main Library, 800 Vine Street (369-6908)

Veteran Ancestors - Those Other Census

Learn about the Agricultural and Manufacturing Censuses with Curt Witcher, Historical Genealogy Department Manager at Allen County Public Library

Sunday, November 14, 2:00 p.m.

Main Library, 800 Vine Street (369-6908)

Surviving World War II: Tales of Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times with Glenna Meckstroth

Glenna Meckstroth will discuss her most recent book

Sponsored by the Library Programs Fund.

Tuesday, December 7, 7:00 p.m.

Green Township Branch Library, 6525 Bridgetown Road (369-6095)

Doolittle Raiders Mission

Learn about the historic mission from World War II with Thomas Griffin, one of the 80 Doolittle Raiders, Green Township

✓ **Information about the Main Library and 41 branch libraries is available on the Internet site: www.CincinnatiLibrary.org.**

✓ **Our goal is to make our programs accessible to everyone. Please request ADA services one week in advance at 513-369-4406 (TTY 369-4409).**