



THE
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

of Cincinnati
and
Hamilton County

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Press Release

January 18, 2006

African American Series Focuses on Veterans: Sundays in February at 3:30 p.m.

February is Black History Month and a time to celebrate courage. This year the Library's History & Genealogy Department will host a three-part lecture series highlighting African Americans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces. The programs will take place at the Main Library (800 Vine Street) in the Huenefeld Tower Room (south building, 3rd floor).

Sunday, February 12

Company G Goes to War – Officially organized in 1924, the Ohio Army National Guard's Company



G was the only all-Black military unit from Cincinnati to serve in World War II. Hasker Nelson Jr., founder/president Heritage Research Creations, author, and former producer/host of "Black Memo," will deliver a multi-media presentation featuring information about the company's formation, its longtime African American commanding officer, its meeting/training place in a West End hotel, and still-frames of the Company from a motion picture film. Mr. Nelson was recently inducted into the "Hall of Fame" by the National Association of Black Journalists and the regional Society of Professional Journalists.

Sunday, February 19

WWII Monument at Lincoln Court – Thousands of people drove or walked by this 20-ft. edifice daily from its erection in 1946 at Lincoln Court entrance, on Lincoln Park Dr. (now Ezzard Charles) until it was removed in 2002. However, not many people today recall its significance. The monument's plaque lists 268 names of African Americans who served in the military during WWII. Local historian, Hasker Nelson, tells the story behind the monument and shares related photos including those of its new "permanent" location at Ezzard Charles & Cutter.



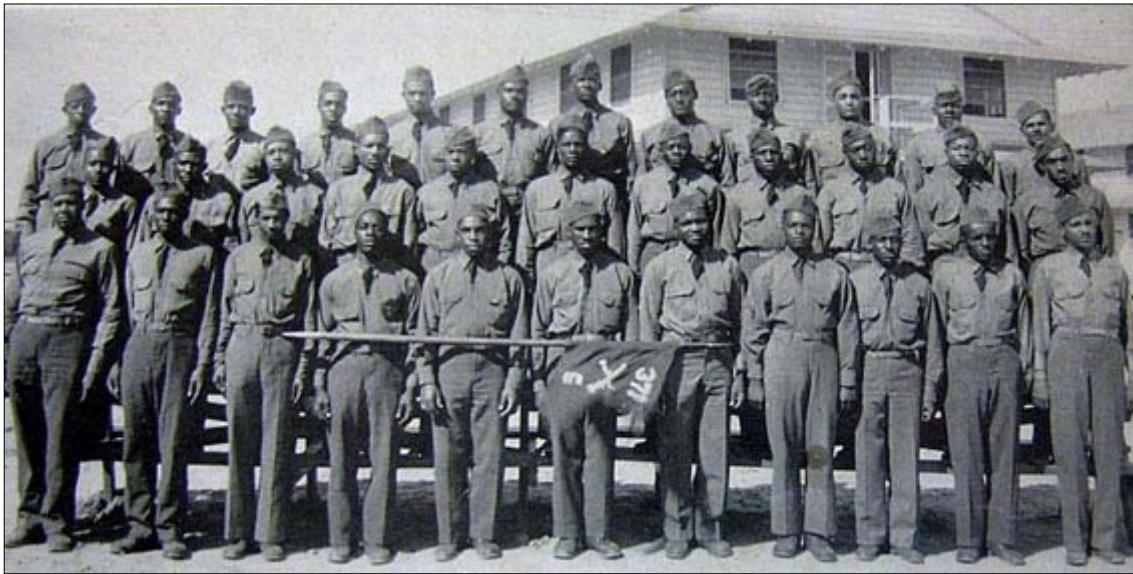
Sunday, February 26

WWII Veterans Swap Stories – Tuskegee Airman John Lehr and Veteran William Goins will share their stories of serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. John Lehr, P51 Fighter Pilot, flew over 130 combat missions in the European Theater during WWII and later became a flight instructor for bomber pilots. Mr. Lehr has received numerous honors, among them the Freedom Center's "Everyday Freedom Heroes" award. William Goins served in the 366th Infantry Regiment in World War II. Upon graduation from Wilberforce College in 1941, Mr. Goins, a member of ROTC, entered the service as a Second Lieutenant and was stationed in the Mediterranean Theater, active in Italy and North Africa.



Information: Contact Patricia Van Skaik at (513) 369-6908.

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African Americans in World War II

African Americans contributed heavily on the field and on the homefront during World War II. In this effort, the “Double V” concept applied. Coined by the African American newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, in 1942, the phrase implied participating in victory over the fascist regimes of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan would lead to victory at home in attaining basic civil rights and the end to segregation.

At first, the armed forces relegated black servicemen to support functions only, such as guarding ammunition depots or, with the Navy, handling preparation of meals. But, similar to the Civil War, as the casualties among white soldiers and sailors mounted and victory over the Axis powers still appeared many months away, the military found it imperative to begin using black servicemen in combat.

The over 900,000 African Americans in the armed forces did not disappoint, despite the policies of segregated units. Highlights of valorous conduct included: the Tuskegee Airmen, who provided valuable fighter protection to U.S. bombers attacking Germany; the 761st Tank Battalion, who helped spearhead the Allied drive through France during the Ardennes Campaign, and helped liberate the Nazi concentration camps of Buchenwald and Dachau; and a major role driving trucks for the Red Ball Express, which provided badly needed supplies to Allied troops liberating France during 1944. Women also played an important role in the military as more than 4,000 joined the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps (WAACs) and more 500 became part of the Army Nurse Corps.

After a hard struggle for acceptance, many white commanding officers began to acknowledge and even respect the performance of black soldiers, sailors and airmen. Eventually, this acceptance would pave the way for full integration of the armed forces in 1948. African Americans still had to contend with enforced segregation on the homefront, particularly in the Southeastern United States. Therefore, although many of the racial gains made during the War were somewhat lost afterward, a foundation had been set for the more permanent civil rights gains attained in the 1950’s and 1960’s.

For a list of Library resources on African Americans in World War II, see the Library’s website at www.CincinnatiLibrary.org

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Be Part of the Veterans History Project

As part of Black History Month, African Americans from around the Tri-State are invited to be among the first to participate locally in the Veterans History Project. In partnership with the Library of Congress, the Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County will create a lasting legacy of recorded audio and video interviews from those who served in the armed forces, beginning with World War II.

Here's how to participate:

1. Working with volunteers, the Public Library will coordinate, preserve, and provide access to taped copies of the interviews. Training will be provided for conducting interviews and running equipment.
2. The narratives, which may include an audio or video recording with transcript, personal letters, diaries, photos, or other memorabilia, will be sent to the Library of Congress to be part of a national collection. The Public Library will also maintain a copy to be available to the general public.
3. If interested in interviewing or being interviewed for the Veterans History Project, pick up a form at your local library. Return to any of the Library's 42 locations or mail to Public Library History & Genealogy Department, 800 Vine St., Cincinnati, OH 45202. For more information, contact the department at (513) 369-6907 or Denis.Daly@cincinnatilibrary.org.

✓ Our goal is to make our programs accessible to everyone. Please request ADA services one week in advance at 513-369-4400 (TTY 369-4409).

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