

Conservation and Preservation of Military Records of the Vietnam Era



Democracy Starts Here.

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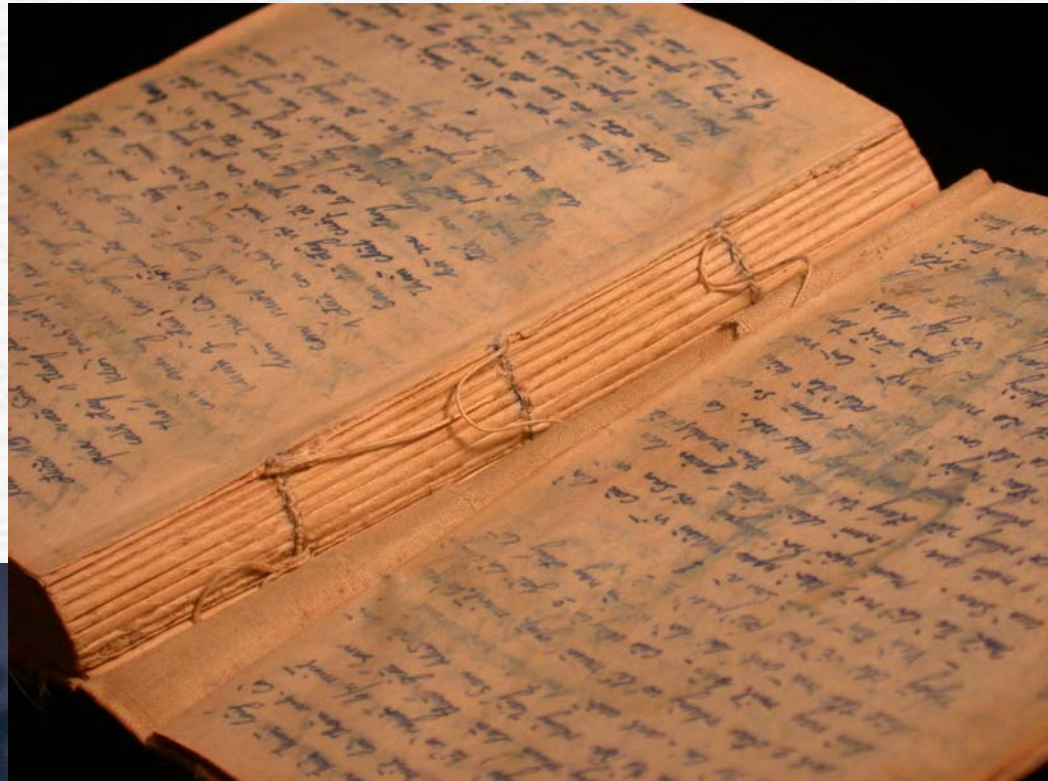
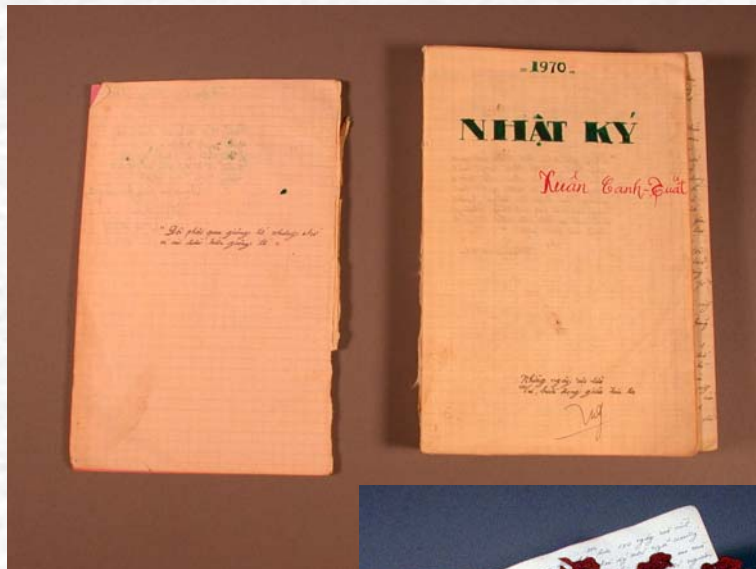
Definitions

- Conservation: Activities which include examination, documentation, treatment, and preventive care of cultural property, supported by research and education.
- Preservation: Protection of cultural property by minimizing chemical and physical deterioration and damage and that prevent loss of information content.

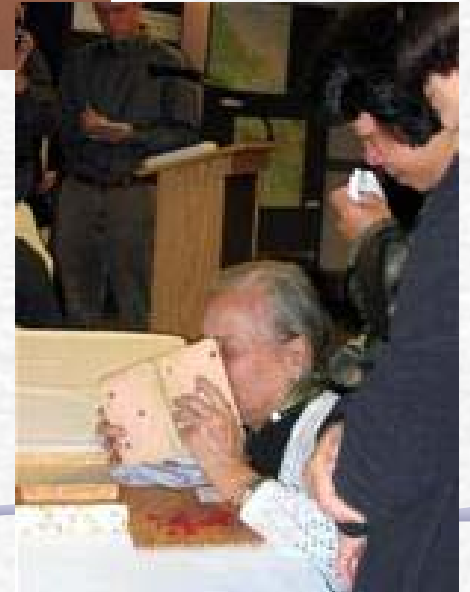
Some Potential Problems in Preserving Vietnam-era Records

- ☞ Paper quality
 - Especially typical of materials printed in Vietnam before and during the war
- ☞ Ink
 - Can be sensitive to water, limiting treatment options
- ☞ Binding structures
 - Poor design or use can cause damage
- ☞ Adhesives
 - Tape, glues, “magnetic” photo albums, etc.

Single-item Treatment



Decision Making




What Do You Do When You Have So Many Things Can't Individually Treat Every Single Item?

- NARA's National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) is the largest archive outside the Washington, D.C. metro area
- Currently houses approximately 57 million records in three facilities (over 4 million cubic ft.)
- Houses both archival records (open to the public) and records center records (restricted access)
- In 2008-2010 will move into two new facilities which are compliant to NARA 1571 (Archival Storage Standards)



NPRC Holdings

- Military personnel, health, and medical records of discharged and deceased veterans of all services during the 20th century
 - Personnel records of separated civilian Federal employees
 - Medical records of retirees and family members at Naval medical facilities and military family members treated at Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard facilities
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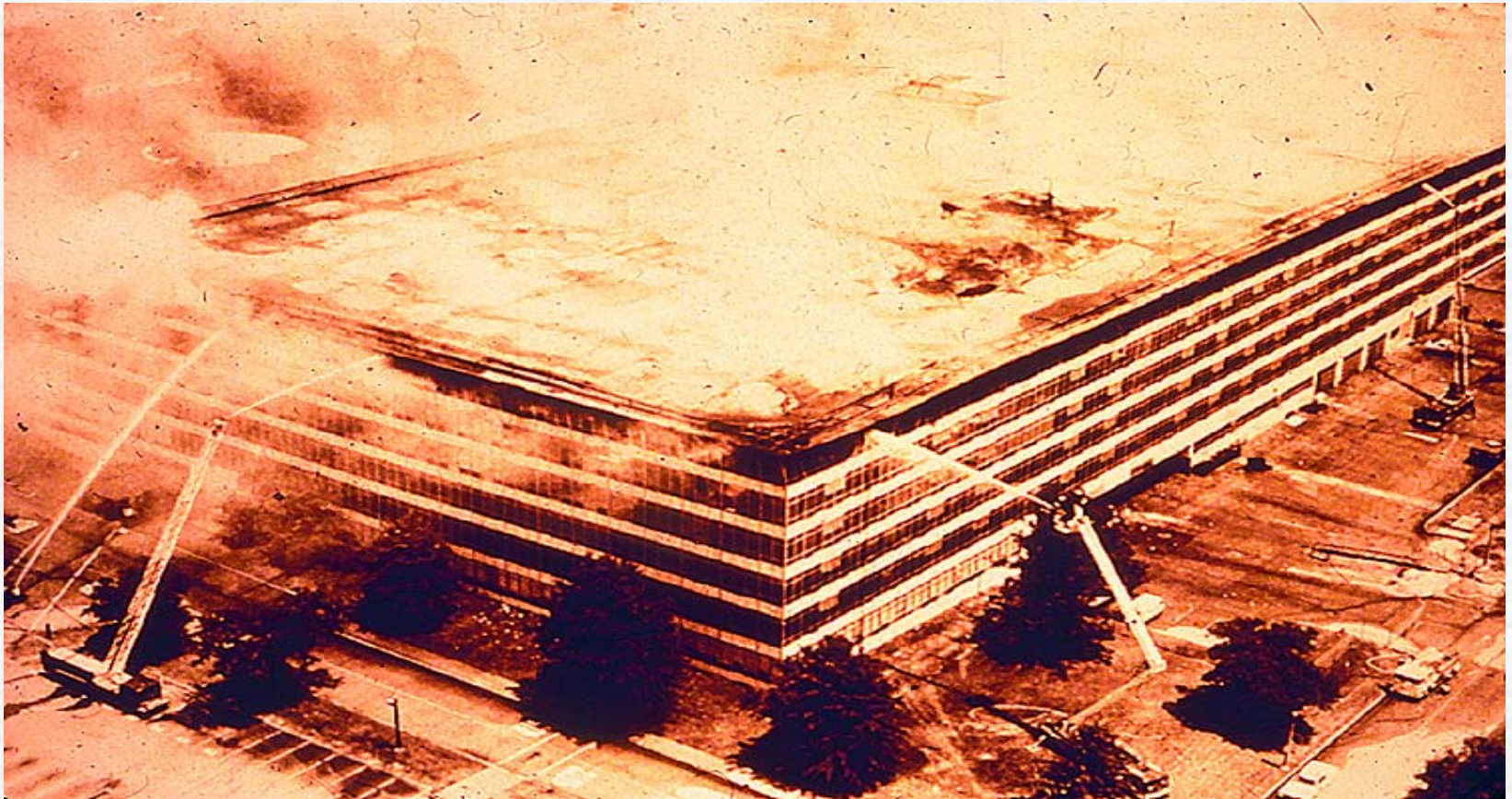
NPRC

- Three facilities in St. Louis County
- Military Personnel Records (MPR) in Overland
- Annex also in Overland
- Civilian Personnel Records in south St. Louis

MPR Building

- Completed in 1956
- 728 feet long, 282 feet wide, 6 stories high
- Extensive facades of glass and aluminum on all sides
- In designing building, Dept. of Defense was more concerned about water damage than fire damage and the architect opted to leave out sprinkler systems
- The building also had few fire breaks

July 12, 1973: Single Largest Archives Disaster in the U.S.



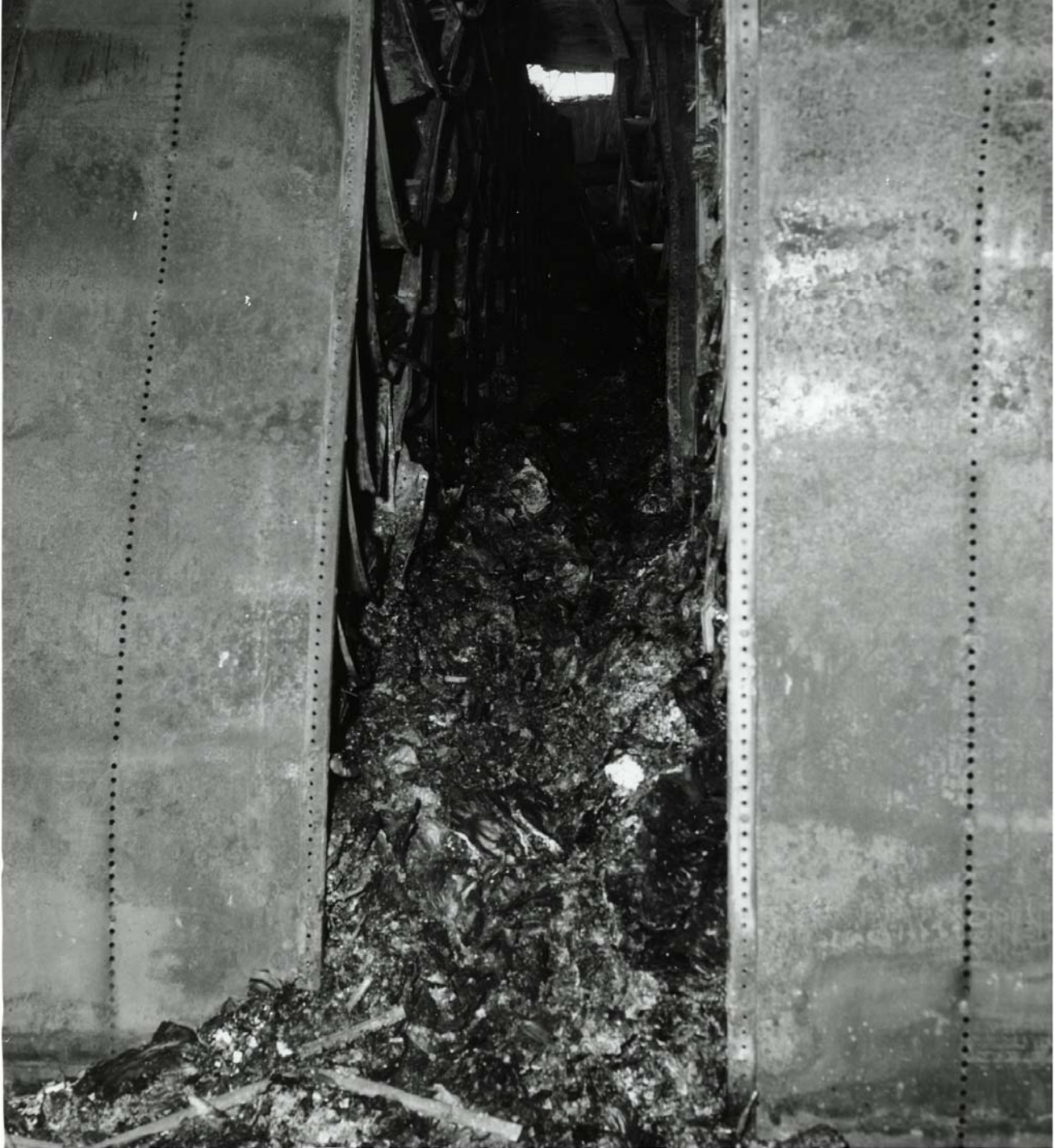
July 12, 1973 Fire

- 12:16 a.m.: First alarm
- Ultimately 42 districts involved in fighting fire
- 1:05 a.m. firemen had reached 6th floor, but unable to locate source
- 3:15 a.m. internal firefighting abandoned
- July 14, 2:44 a.m. firemen able to access 6th floor again
- July 16th, one company remained
- Contract firemen were still using water until late July to stop rekindling









Records Lost

- 16-18 million Official Military Personnel Files destroyed
- 80% of Army files for personnel discharged between Nov. 1, 1912 and January 1, 1960
- 75% of Air Force files for personnel discharged between Sept. 25, 1947 and Jan. 1, 1964
- Every floor of the building had several inches of standing water, with heaviest damage on the 5th floor

Salvaging Records

- About 4 million records were salvaged from the 6th floor
- For records destroyed, alternative records are used to reconstruct information lost











Ongoing Salvage



Problems With Our Current Building



Problems With Our Current Building



New Facilities

- NARA is in progress of preparing to move all records from current buildings to new sites in the St. Louis area
- The new main facility will be located in North St. Louis County and will include a Research Room
 - This facility will house records which are archival and permanent records that will become archival
- The annex facility will be located in Valmeyer, Illinois and will house temporary records

NARA 1571

- Directive issued in 2002, setting specifications for structural, environmental control, fire safety, preservation, and security standards for archival storage conditions
- Both new buildings will meet or exceed this directive
- New storage standards and removal of records from current buildings are necessary to ensure preservation of all OMPFs

NPRC Facts

- Staff responds to more than 2 million requests for information every year
- Records are owned by the military service which created them until they pass into archival status
- Records become archival 62 years after the last date of discharge
- Until records become archival, requests for access is restricted to the veteran or a deceased veterans next of kin

Access to Non-archival Records

- Limited information is provided to requestors who can identify the record sought
- Information not releasable under the Privacy Act can only be released with the veteran's written authorization
- Veterans and next of kin of deceased veterans can request records through eVetRecs at <https://vetrecs.archives.gov/>
- Form SF-180 can also be used

OMPFs

- Official Military Personnel Files
- Have been appraised as permanently valuable historic records of the federal government
- Over time, all OMPFs will be accessioned as archival (62 years after date of discharge)
- Can contain enlistment contracts, duty locations, performance evaluations, award citations, training records, and the Report of Separation (DD 214)

Persons of Exceptional Prominence

- OMPFs of individuals designated as “Persons of Exceptional Prominence” (PEPs) are available to the public 10 years after the individual’s date of death
- These records are the only exception to privacy guidelines otherwise restricting access to OMPFs until 62 years after the date of discharge

Vietnam related PEPs

Service in Vietnam:

- Creighton Abrams
- Michael Blassie
- Joe R. Hooper
- Mary Klinker
- Barry Sadler
- Lance Sijan

Service during Vietnam War:

- Arthur Ashe
- Lewis B. Hershey
- Grace Hopper
- Hyman Rickover

Persons of possible interest serving before Vietnam War:

- Spiro Agnew
- John M. Birch
- Thomas Dooley
- John Foster Dulles
- Lyndon Johnson
- John F. Kennedy
- Robert F. Kennedy
- Steve McQueen
- Richard Nixon

DD 214

Most often requested form

Contains dates and character of service, final rank, awards earned, and military occupation specialty

Needed for benefits such as home loans, education, and medical care

Most requests worked in 10 workdays

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT RECORD
SAFEGUARD IT.

PERSONAL DATA	1. LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, MIDDLE NAME		2. SERVICE NUMBER		3. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER		
	4. DEPARTMENT, COMPONENT AND BRANCH OR CLASS ARMY RA SIG				5a. GRADE, RATE OR RANK SP4	5. PAY GRADE E-4	6. DATE OF RANK DAY MONTH YEAR 29 OCT 69
	7. U. S. CITIZEN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		8. PLACE OF BIRTH (City and State or County) TEXAS		9. DATE OF BIRTH DAY MONTH YEAR JUN 48		
SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA	10a. SELECTIVE SERVICE NUMBER		11. SELECTIVE SERVICE LOCAL BOARD NUMBER, CITY, COUNTY, STATE AND ZIP CODE			12. DATE INDUCTED DAY MONTH YEAR NA	
	11a. TYPE OF TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE TRF TO USAR (SEE 16)				11b. STATION OR INSTALLATION AT WHICH EFFECTED FT DIX NJ		
TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE DATA	12. REASON AND AUTHORITY AR 635-200 SPN 411 EARLY SEP FR OS				13. EFFECTIVE DATE 31 MAR 70	14. TYPE OF CERTIFICATE ISSUED NONE	
	12. LAST DUTY ASSIGNMENT AND MAJOR COMMAND SVC BTRY 2D BN 6TH ARTY USAREUR				13. CHARACTER OF SERVICE HONORABLE		14. REENLISTMENT CODE RE-1
	14. DISTRICT, AREA COMMAND OR CORPS TO WHICH RESERVIST TRANSFERRED TRF TO USAR CON GP (REINF) USAAC ST LOUIS MO				15. REENLISTMENT CODE RE-1		
SERVICE DATA	16. TERMINAL DATE OF RESERVE/ LIMITS OBLIGATION DAY MONTH YEAR 10 APR 73		17. CURRENT ACTIVE SERVICE OTHER THAN BY INDUCTION a. SOURCE OF ENTRY: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENLISTED (First Enlistment) <input type="checkbox"/> ENLISTED (Prior Service) <input type="checkbox"/> REENLISTED <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER			18. TERM OF SERVICE (Years) 3	
	18. PRIOR REGULAR ENLISTMENTS NONE		19. GRADE, RATE OR RANK AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO CURRENT ACTIVE SVC PV-1		20. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO CURRENT ACTIVE SERVICE (City and State) SPOKANE WASHINGTON		
	21. HOME OF RECORD AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE (Street, APO, City, County, State and ZIP Code)		22. STATEMENT OF SERVICE		YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS
	23a. SPECIALTY NUMBER & TITLE 36K20 WIREMAN		23b. RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND D.O.T. NUMBER 829.281 WIREMAN MAINT		24. CREDITABLE FOR BASIC PAY PURPOSES		
	24. DECORATIONS, MEDALS, BADGES, COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND CAMPAIGN RIBBONS AWARDED OR AUTHORIZED GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL NATIONAL DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL SHARPSHOOTER M-14 SHARPSHOOTER M-16		25. EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMPLETED ATP 21-114 CODE OF CONDUCT C B R TNG RVN TNG WIREMAN 8 WKS 67		26. NET SERVICE THIS PERIOD 2 11 20		
	26a. NON-PAY PERIODS TIME LOST (Traveling Time) NA		26b. DAYS ACCRUED LEAVE PAID NA		26c. CREDITABLE FOR BASIC PAY PURPOSES 0 0 0		
	27a. INSURANCE IN FORCE (MILITARY OR CIVILIAN) <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO		27b. AMOUNT OF ALLOTMENT NA		27c. MONTH ALLOTMENT DISCONTINUED NA		
	28. VA CLAIM NUMBER C-		29. SERVICEMEN'S GROUP LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000 <input type="checkbox"/> NONE		26. TOTAL ACTIVE SERVICE 2 11 20		
	26. FOREIGN AND/OR SEA SERVICE SEE 30 1 9 26		30. REMARKS HOOD GP 0 8 YRS ELEM (GEN) USARPAC VIETNAM 22 OCT 67 - 20 OCT 68 USAREUR GERMANY 3 JUN 69 - 5 APR 70				
	AUTHENTICATION	31. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES AFTER TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE (Street, RPO, City, County, State and ZIP Code)				32. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING TRANSFERRED OR DISCHARGED	
33. TYPED NAME, GRADE AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICER CPT FA ASST CHIEF ENL BRANCH				34. SIGNATURE OF OFFICER AUTHORIZED TO SIGN			

Other Common Requests

- Replacement or newly authorized medals
- Verification for entitlement for burial in a national cemetery
- Records of one's own (or a family member's) military service
- More complex requests may take up to five weeks to process

For More Information

- ☛ Pick up a copy of the St. Louis Archival Research Room guide
- ☛ http://www.archives.gov/research_room
- ☛ <http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/>
- ☛ <http://www.nara.gov>
- ☛ <https://vetrecs.archives.gov/>