



News Release

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Legacy of Servicemembers Honored Through New Project at The University of Denver

Storytelling project launches on Veteran's Day to lift up untold stories from Fort Logan National Cemetery

Denver - The University of Denver's Department of History, in commemoration of Veteran's Day next Monday, November 11, will launch an ambitious digital campaign to profile servicemen and women now resting at Denver's Fort Logan National Cemetery. The project, titled "**More Than A Headstone**", which will launch at www.morethanaheadstone.org, blends military biography with human texture and vibrancy.

More Than A Headstone is thematically organized, exploring topics often suppressed or forgotten in the military lexicon. These themes include stories of racial adversity, the service of women, relationships formed between supposed enemies, individuals re-located or interned domestically, and those who went missing in action.

Among those highlighted is Joanne Conte, who during the Korean War worked as a Morse code operator for the United States Air Force. Conte, who in 1933 was born Joseph Baione, would go on to serve in Arvada's city council from 1991-1995, as the first openly transgender individual to fill the position. Byron Johnson, an African American soldier serving in World War II, is similarly profiled in the More Than A Headstone project. Johnson made forays into military officer school but was denied given his skin color. He instead served in a segregated unit for the entirety of the war. Prior to his enlistment, Johnson played in the Negro Leagues as a shortstop and even toured with Satchel Paige's team in 1939-40. John Werito, also interred at Fort Logan, was a Native American born on a Navajo reservation. Early in life, Werito was sent to the Indian Southern Ute Boarding School in Ignacio, Colorado. Though inculcated in a school designed to rid him of his culture and language, Werito would go on to use his proclivity for Native languages in service of the Marines later in life, during WWII. Another story describes the traumatic experiences of a family whose son has gone missing in action. A young Marine by the name of James Jacques joined the war efforts in Laos and Cambodia in 1974, but only seven months into his service had his helicopter shot down by the Khmer Rouge during the Mayaguez incident of May 1975. Though presumed dead, Jacques's remains were not verified for many decades and it was not until 2012 that his family laid him to rest at Fort Logan.

These and other extraordinary profiles were researched and written by University of Denver history students. Each is accompanied with pictures of the subjects, families and artifacts.

The project is part of a nationwide effort on the part of the Veteran's Legacy Program to increase education and exposure about the lives of Veteran's through partnerships with universities, professors, schools, students and communities. By harnessing the storytelling capacity of modern mediums, VLP hopes to give new dimension to the lives of American servicemen and servicewomen throughout history.



The website for More Than A Headstone is at: www.morethanaheadstone.org

Later iterations of the site will include digital walking tours, using augmented reality to navigate the physical landscape of Fort Logan Cemetery and inviting users to explore stories as they are encountered. Submissions are still being welcomed, and can be directed to: info@morethanaheadstone.org

WHAT: The University of Denver's Department of History announces the release of More Than a Headstone, a program of the Veteran's Legacy Program. More Than a Headstone chronicles the stories of service members buried at Fort Logan Cemetery, highlighting those of service members with marginalized identities. University of Denver students have engaged in meticulous research and in order to collect and compile stories of over 40 service members for the Veteran's Day launch. Further iterations of the project will include additional stories as well as a walking tour available as augmented reality.

WHERE: Fort Logan Cemetery is located in Denver, Colorado.

WHO: A team of faculty and students from the University of Denver's Department of History

WHEN: The project will launch on Veteran's Day, November 11, 2019.

ABOUT VETERANS LEGACY PROGRAM (VLP): The Veterans Legacy Program (VLP) is the National Cemetery Administration's educational outreach initiative, whose mission is to memorialize our nation's Veterans through sharing their stories of service and sacrifice. They partner with universities, schools, teachers, professors, and students of all levels to research Veterans interred in NCA cemeteries and how they contributed to their country as servicemembers, and how they contributed to their community as Veterans. VLP also works to modernize how we memorialize by embracing new media for sharing Veterans' stories and through digitizing the national cemetery experience for all.

ABOUT THE PROJECT: More Than A Headstone is a project of the Veteran's Legacy Program, an initiative of the Veteran's Administration. It is funded by the National Cemetery Administration and implemented by the University of Denver's Department of History.