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Researcher's findings shine light on World War II heroes

BY NICOLE WAGNER
The Daily Illini

Heroes like Tom Hanks' character in *Saving Private Ryan* can be found in more places than the cinema, according to the findings of one University professor.

Brian Wansink, professor of business administration and agricultural and consumer economics, and 10 University students asked more than 6,000 World War II veterans "What makes a hero?" About 1,400 responses told stories of everyday heroes;

many came from small towns, he said. Wansink will present these findings today, along with others from the nationwide survey, "Greatest Generation Summaries: Surveying Private Ryan." The event runs from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Krannert Art Museum, 500 E. Peabody Drive, Champaign.

Wansink began the research 15 months ago. He said he has spent \$31,000 of his money to fund the project because searching for grant money cut into research time. He said he initiated the survey to conduct a comprehensive study of an

aging generation.

"For a long time, there has been a lack of information about what the World War II generation has done," Wansink said.

The 16-page study asked World War II veterans, non-veterans and members of other generations about topics including shopping, Internet and health habits. Veterans also answered questions to record how World War II affected their personalities. Some respondents sent diaries and other personal belongings from the war. Other respondents —

including veterans traveling from Arizona and Colorado — will be in attendance at today's event.

"Whenever I'm working on this project ... everything I learn, I think about how it relates to people I know," said graduate student John Seagraves.

Releasing the results of the study is only the first step, Wansink said. He plans to post the collection of data on the Internet, and he wants to combine some of the respondents' stories with the data to write a book.