

Oral History Project Sample Interview Questions

Before the actual interview, announce the following onto the audio tape:

- Name of the veteran.
- His or her birthdate.
- War served in and branch of service.
- Highest rank achieved.
- Date and place (town and state, not the address) of recording the interview.
- The interviewer's name and relationship, if any, to the veteran. Also, the name of anyone else present assisting with the interview.

Sample Questions to Ask the Veteran:

1. Initial set of biographical questions
 - a. Where were you born?
 - b. When were you born?
 - c. What did you do before entering the service?
 - d. Are there any other family members who served in the military?

2. Before Action
 - a. Did you enlist in the military or were you drafted?
 - i. If enlisted, why and the reason for choosing that particular branch (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines)?
 - ii. When did you join?
 - iii. Where (town and state) did you join?
 - b. Were you an officer or enlisted?
 - c. What was the initial pay back then?
 - d. Where did you receive basic training?
 - e. Did you receive any training other than basic?
 - f. What unit were you in? (Division, Regiment, Battalion, Company, Platoon, Squad; or if Navy, duty station or ship)
 - i. Where was your unit when you joined?
 - ii. What was your job (MOS)?
 - g. How did you get to your duty station? Can you describe the trip and conditions?
 - i. How was the food?
 - ii. Do you remember anything outstanding about the trip?

3. During the War (if the veteran was in a war)
 - a. When did you first see action?
 - b. Do you remember when you first fired your weapon?
 - i. If so, can you describe?
 - c. Do you remember when you were first shot at?
 - i. If so, can you describe?
 - d. Were you wounded?
 - i. Where (location)?

- ii. Where (on your body)?
 - iii. Describe what happened, what you and your unit were doing.
 - iv. Was anyone else wounded at that same time?
 - v. Where were you treated? Battalion Aid Station? Further back?
 - vi. When did you return to your unit?
 - vii. Was it the same unit?
- e. Did you get any furloughs or passes?
 - i. When?
 - ii. Where (location)?
 - iii. How long?
- f. Did you have any close friends during the war?
 - i. Did they make it back?
 - ii. If not, can you describe what happened?
- g. How did you stay in touch with family and friends back home?
 - i. How often did you write?
 - ii. How often did you receive letters or packages?
- h. Did you ever capture any prisoners?
 - i. If so, can you describe?
 - ii. What were they like?
 - iii. Did you talk with any of them?
- i. Were you ever captured?
 - i. When?
 - ii. Where?
 - iii. How long were you a POW?
 - iv. How did you escape or were you released?
- j. Were you in any major battles?
 - i. Where was your unit?
 - ii. What do you remember about that battle?
- k. Were you or your unit ever under "friendly fire?"
 - i. Where was your unit?
 - ii. Was anyone hurt?
 - iii. Can you describe the circumstances?
- l. Where were you when the war ended?
 - i. Can you remember the mood of the troops?
 - ii. How long after you received word that the war ended before you moved out to another location?
- m. What was the highest rank you attained?
- n. Did you receive any medals or awards?
 - i. Which ones?
 - ii. Can you describe the action?
 - iii. Which one is the most valuable to you?

4. After the War

- a. Where were you?
- b. What did you do?
- c. When did you get back home?
- d. How did you get back home?
- e. What did you do after the war?

f. Have you stayed in contact with other veterans in your unit?

5. Reflections

- a. How did the war affect your life?
- b. What did you learn from the war?
- c. Have you talked much about the war with your family?
- d. If not, why not?