


The Library of Congress  
 VETERANS  
HISTORY  
PROJECT



**FIELD KIT**

**Conducting and Preserving Interviews**

Library of Congress  
American Folklife Center

*The Veterans History Project collects and preserves personal stories and other documents from America's war veterans, and those American civilians who served in support of them.*

The Veterans History Project (VHP) honors American war veterans and civilian workers who supported them by preserving stories of their service to our country. The U.S. Congress voted unanimously in October 2000 for legislation to create the Veterans History Project at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. VHP relies on volunteers throughout the nation to collect veterans' stories on behalf of the Library of Congress. We depend on people like you to record and submit first-person narratives by wartime veterans.

VHP archives its collections at the Library of Congress and makes them available to researchers and the public. In addition to compiling a unique archive for scholars, the Veterans History Project hopes to inspire future generations with these stories of service to our country.

This Field Kit outlines five steps for participating in the Veterans History Project. We ask you to register at our Web site, [www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets), before submitting a collection. Once you register, you will receive a reminder of what we can accept and how to submit your collection.

You may also submit your collection without registering, but this could delay the timely addition of your submission to our archive.

Our Web site contains all the information you need to participate in our project. For additional copies of this kit, contact our toll-free message line at 1-888-371-5848, or email us at [vohp@loc.gov](mailto:vohp@loc.gov).

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# STEP 1. LEARN ABOUT VHP

## The Collections

The Veterans History Project collects first-person accounts of military service in World War I, World War II, the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf, and the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. We also collect stories of civilians who supported these efforts, including men and women who worked in defense-related industries, as USO entertainers, and as Red Cross workers.

## Go Online to Register

Go to our Web site at [www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets) to learn more about our project. There, you can register the collection you wish to submit. Once we've received your registration information, you will receive a reminder of what we accept and how to submit your collection. You may also submit your collection without registering, but this may delay our receiving and processing your collection.

## What VHP Can Accept

We accept the following items if they specifically relate to the veteran's or civilian's wartime story.

- Audio and video recordings at least 30 minutes long.
- Original wartime memoirs or diaries of at least 20 pages.
- Collections of original letters (10 or more).

In addition to submitting oral history interviews or the above-named manuscript materials, you may also donate:

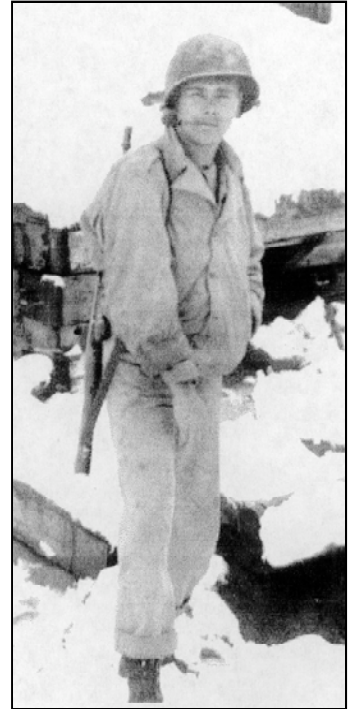
- Original photographs or artwork (10 or more, unless accompanying interview or manuscript materials).
- Home movies, photograph albums, or scrapbooks (related only to wartime service).
- Official military personnel documents for the veteran.
- Original maps.

## What VHP Can Not Accept:

- Photocopies of anything. Originals only, please.
- Medals.
- Uniforms.
- Memorabilia.
- Framed materials (photos, art work, citations). You must remove the materials from their frames.
- Unit histories or yearbooks.
- Flags.
- Weapons.

Please remember to include the required forms with your collection.

**NOTE:** VHP accepts any approved material on behalf of living and deceased veterans.



## STEP 2. BE PREPARED



### What Equipment to Use

Please use:

- High quality or digital audio or video equipment. Digital is preferred.
- Standard-size audio cassettes or compact discs. All video formats are acceptable.
- An external microphone.

Please do not use:

- Mini or micro audiocassettes.
- Microphone built into a camera or audio recorder, unless necessary.

**NOTE:** We urge you to make a copy of the interview. VHP cannot make copies of material already submitted.

### Where to Interview

- Interview the veteran (or civilian) in a quiet area with soft surfaces (carpeting, upholstered furniture) for better sound quality.
- The interviewee should be in a fixed seat, not a rocking chair or recliner.
- Avoid background noises: chiming clocks, hissing air vents, air conditioners, ringing telephones, televisions, radios, computers, or noisy pets.
- Set the microphone six to twelve inches from the interviewee.
- Do not videotape your subject sitting in front of a window or bright light.
- Focus the camera on the upper body of the interviewee.
- Do not use the zoom feature on the video camera.
- Test your equipment for sound levels to make sure your subject is audible.

### Before You Start

- Do some homework. Try to learn in advance where and when your veteran served. If the veteran was involved in a specific campaign or battle, research it.
- Ask the veteran if he or she has any materials to bring to the interview. Personal photographs, letters, or other records of service might be useful in jogging his or her memory. Originals of these materials may also be donated as part of your veteran's collection.
- If the veteran has not filled out our Biographical Data Form prior to the interview date, you may want to work with him or her on it before you begin the interview. This may give you some ideas on questions to ask later.
- Have a brief conversation with your veteran before you start recording. Even if you know your interview subject, it will help to relax both of you.

**NOTE:** The Veterans History Project does accept self-interviews by individual veterans. The Project does not accept interviews of groups of veterans.



## STEP 3. THE INTERVIEW

### How to Conduct an Interview

Every interview is different. Each veteran will recall his or her own experiences, some more vividly than others. Your job is to make the interviewee feel comfortable and guide him or her through their story of service.

- Keep your own comments to a minimum and let the veteran do the talking.
- Do not interrupt.
- Keep the interview moving. However, if the veteran is telling a significant story, do not push him or her along.

**IMPORTANT:** Begin your interview by announcing:

- The name of your veteran.
- His or her birthdate.
- War served in and branch of service.
- Highest rank achieved.
- Date and place (town and state, but not address) of recording.
- The interviewer's name and relationship (e.g., relative, friend), if any, to the interviewee. Also, the name of anyone present assisting in the interview.
- The interview is being conducted for the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

**NOTE:** Do not ask for personal information such as home address, phone number, Social Security number, or family names.

## What to Ask

Here are a series of suggested topics. **This is an outline—not a script to be followed to the letter.** Let your veteran tell the story in his or her own way.

1. A Few Biographical Details.
  - Where and when veteran was born.
  - Family details: parents' occupations, number and gender of siblings.
  - What veteran was doing before entering the service.
  - Other family members who served in the military.
2. Early Days of Service.
  - How veteran entered service—draft or enlistment.
  - If enlistment, why and the reason for choosing a specific branch of service.
  - Departure for training camp, early days of training.
  - Specialized training, if applicable.
  - Adapting to military life: physical regimen, barracks, food, social life.
3. Wartime Service.
  - Where veteran served.
  - Details of the trip abroad, if applicable.
  - Action witnessed, or duties away from the front line.
  - If applicable, emotions relating to combat—witnessing casualties, destruction.
  - Friendships formed and camaraderie of service.
  - How veteran stayed in touch with family and friends back home; communication from home.
  - Recreation or off-duty pursuits.
4. War's End, Coming Home.
  - Where veteran was when war ended.
  - How he or she returned home.
  - Reception by family and community.
  - Readjustment to civilian life.
  - Contact with fellow veterans over the years; membership in veterans' organizations.
5. Reflections.
  - How wartime experiences affected veteran's life.
  - Life lessons learned from military service.

For more information on how to conduct an interview, go to our Web site and click on "Participate in the Project."

## Writing a Memoir

The Veterans History Project accepts previously written memoirs as well as memoirs written specifically for the Project. Submission of a memoir must be accompanied by a Manuscript Data Sheet. For more information and guidelines, go to our Web site and download our Memoir Kit. You may request a printed copy of this kit by contacting us.





## STEP 4. HOW & WHERE TO SEND IN YOUR COLLECTION



- **Make yourself a copy of the interview** and any other items you are submitting. (We are unable to make copies of any items once you have submitted them.)
- Make sure you fill out all the forms marked **REQUIRED**. (Additional copies of the forms may be printed from our Web site.) If you need guidance in completing the Audio and Video Recording Log, go to our Web site and click on How to Participate, then Learn About the Audio and Video Recording Log.
- Please send original materials and forms to the Library of Congress **via a commercial delivery service** such as UPS, Federal Express, or DHL. Due to security procedures, U.S. Postal Service mail to the Library of Congress is screened. Unfortunately, this process damages paper and melts plastic materials such as audio and video cassettes. Send collections to:

Veterans History Project  
Library of Congress  
101 Independence Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, DC 20540-4615

DO NOT SUBMIT MATERIALS BEYOND THOSE SPECIFIED. Should any part of the collection be found to include materials that the Library of Congress deems inappropriate for retention with the collection or elsewhere within the Library, the Library may dispose of such material in accordance with its procedures for disposition of materials not needed for the Library's collections.

## STEP 5. WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR COLLECTION AT VHP

When VHP receives your materials, we do the following:



- We check the required forms. If any are missing or incomplete, your materials go “on hold.” We will contact you and request that you complete these forms. Your collection cannot be processed until we receive all required forms.
- We send you an acknowledgement note card within six months of receipt of the collection.
- Once all required forms are received, we enter basic information about the veteran into the VHP database. Please note the following:
  - Biographical and service information are made public on the VHP database, which is accessible through our Web site ([www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets)).
  - Processing a collection may take as long as six months due to the extraordinary public response to our project. Please refrain from contacting VHP regarding the status of your collection for at least six months after the date of submission. We appreciate your patience.
- Your collection will be carefully stored and maintained in keeping with professional archival standards. This will ensure that your materials will be preserved for use by generations to come.

The materials you send will be available at the Library of Congress American Folklife Center Reading Room for use by researchers, educators, family members, and others. An advance appointment is required to view materials.

# REQUIRED

## Biographical Data Form

To ensure inclusion in the Veterans History Project, this form must accompany each submission. **Please use reverse or additional sheet if service was in more than one war or conflict.**

### PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Veteran  Civilian  \_\_\_\_\_

first middle last maiden name

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) - \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ Male  Female

Branch of Service or Wartime Activity \_\_\_\_\_

Commissioned  Enlisted  Drafted  Service dates \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Highest Rank \_\_\_\_\_

Unit, Division, Battalion, Group, Ship, etc. (Do not abbreviate.) \_\_\_\_\_

War, operation, or conflict served in \_\_\_\_\_

Locations of military or civilian service \_\_\_\_\_

Battles/campaigns (please name) \_\_\_\_\_

Medals or special service awards. If so, please list (be as specific as possible): \_\_\_\_\_

Special duties/highlights/achievements \_\_\_\_\_

Was the veteran a prisoner of war? Yes  No

Did the veteran or civilian sustain combat or service-related injuries? Yes  No

Interviewer (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

(Please use reverse for any additional biographical information.)





# REQUIRED

## Veteran's Release Form (See reverse for Interviewer's Release Form)

### TO BE COMPLETED BY VETERAN OR CIVILIAN

(In cases of deceased veterans, to be completed by the donor of the material.)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am a participant in the Veterans History Project (hereinafter "VHP") of the Library of Congress American Folklife Center. I understand that the purpose of the VHP is to collect audio- and video-recorded oral histories of America's war veterans and of those who served in support of them, as well as selected related documentary materials such as photographs and manuscripts, for inclusion in the permanent collections of the Library of Congress. These oral histories and related materials serve as a record of American veterans' wartime experiences and as a scholarly and educational resource for Congress and the general public.

I understand that the American Folklife Center plans to retain the product of my participation in the VHP, including but not limited to my interview, presentation, video, photographs, statements, name, images or likeness, voice, and written materials ("My Collection") as part of its permanent collections.

I hereby grant to the Library of Congress ownership of the physical property comprising My Collection. Additionally, I hereby grant to the Library of Congress, at no cost, the perpetual, nonexclusive, transferable, worldwide right to use, reproduce, transmit, display, perform, prepare derivative works from, distribute, and authorize the redistribution of the materials in My Collection in any medium. By giving this permission, I understand that I retain any copyright and related rights that I may hold.

I hereby release the Library of Congress, and its assignees and designees, from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of My Collection, including but not limited to any claims for copyright infringement, defamation, invasion of privacy, or right of publicity.

Should any part of My Collection be found to include materials that the Library of Congress deems inappropriate for retention with the collection or for transfer to other collections in the Library, the Library may dispose of such materials in accordance with its procedures for disposition of materials not needed for the Library's collections.

### ACCEPTED AND AGREED

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewer (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Library of Congress American Folklife Center VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

# REQUIRED

## Interviewer's Release Form

(See reverse for Veteran's Release Form)

TO BE COMPLETED BY INTERVIEWERS, RECORDING OPERATORS, AND PHOTOGRAPHERS

(Please circle appropriate category.)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am a participant in the Veterans History Project (hereinafter "VHP") of the Library of Congress American Folklife Center. I understand that the purpose of the VHP is to collect audio- and video-recorded oral histories of America's war veterans and of those who served in support of them, as well as selected related documentary materials such as photographs and manuscripts, for inclusion in the permanent collections of the Library of Congress. These oral histories and related materials serve as a record of American veterans' wartime experiences and as a scholarly and educational resource for Congress and the general public.

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I hereby grant to the Library of Congress ownership of the physical property comprising My Collection. Additionally, I hereby grant to the Library of Congress, at no cost, the perpetual, nonexclusive, transferable, worldwide right to use, reproduce, transmit, display, perform, prepare derivative works from, distribute, and authorize the redistribution of the materials in My Collection in any medium. By giving this permission, I understand that I retain any copyright and related rights that I may hold.

I hereby release the Library of Congress, and its assignees and designees, from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of My Collection, including but not limited to any claims for copyright infringement, defamation, invasion of privacy, or right of publicity.

Should any part of My Collection be found to include materials that the Library of Congress deems inappropriate for retention with the collection or for transfer to other collections in the Library, the Library may dispose of such materials in accordance with its procedures for disposition of materials not needed for the Library's collections.

### ACCEPTED AND AGREED

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if interviewer is a minor) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) - \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Veteran \_\_\_\_\_

Partner organization affiliation (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Library of Congress American Folklife Center VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

# REQUIRED

## Audio and Video Recording Log

1. Name and address of collector or interviewer.

Name of Donor/Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) - \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Partner organization affiliation (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name and birth date of the veteran or civilian being interviewed as it appears on the Biographical Data Form.

Name of Veteran/Civilian \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

3. Recording format (please check)

VIDEO type: Betacam  VHS  8mm  High-8  DVD  Other  \_\_\_\_\_

AUDIO type: Cassette  CD  Digital (DAT)  \_\_\_\_\_ (identify)

4. Estimated length of recording (in minutes) \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Recording \_\_\_\_\_

5. Location of recording \_\_\_\_\_

6. Please log the topics discussed in the interview in sequence.

For example:

1:45 enlisted with best friend 22:30 on board troop ship to Europe  
2:50 chose Signal Corps and reasons why 26:30 part of 2nd wave at Omaha Beach on D-Day

Minute Mark	Topics presented in order of discussion on recording
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

(Continue on back or on additional sheets as needed.)





# Photograph Log

Photographic prints should be numbered with a soft (no.1) pencil on the back of the photograph in the lower-right corner. If the back is too slick to write on, enclose each photograph in a labeled envelope. **Please do not use a pen or marker to label prints.** Photographers should sign a release form when possible. If more than eight photographs are submitted, please make photocopies of the second page of this form to complete.

Name of Veteran/Civilian \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

## PHOTOGRAPH # 1

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Description \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## PHOTOGRAPH # 2

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Description \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## PHOTOGRAPH # 3

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Description \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Continue on back.)

(You may photocopy this side of the form to use for additional photographs if needed.)

**PHOTOGRAPH #** \_\_\_\_

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Description \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PHOTOGRAPH #** \_\_\_\_

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Description \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PHOTOGRAPH #** \_\_\_\_

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Description \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PHOTOGRAPH #** \_\_\_\_

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Description \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PHOTOGRAPH #** \_\_\_\_

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Description \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





# Manuscript Data Sheet

Please complete this form when donating letters, diaries, and other printed and handwritten manuscripts to the Veterans History Project. It is to be used in conjunction with the required forms.

1. Name of donor.

Name of Donor/Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) - \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name of veteran/civilian.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Types and dates of manuscripts submitted, for example:

Diary, November 20, 1942–February 17, 1944; Service records, 1951–1953; Letters, 1969–1972; Commendations, 1991; Unpublished memoir, 2001; etc.

Title of Item: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Title of Item: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Title of Item: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Number of items: \_\_\_\_\_ Is this an exact  or estimated  figure?

5. Number of pages: \_\_\_\_\_

6. If these items are copies of originals, identify when the copies were made. Please note that the Veterans History Project encourages you to donate the originals to the Library of Congress or another trusted institution for long-term preservation and for access by researchers.

Copies     Originals     Mixed

Form(s) of reproduction: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) reproduced: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Location of originals: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Describe the scope and content of the manuscripts by addressing the following:

Please identify by name the writers and recipients of the letters and other documents. What is their relationship to the veteran or civilian whose name appears on the Biographical Data Form?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are the most interesting/important topics and events described in these documents?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Have any of these materials been published, or have copies of them been donated elsewhere? If so, please provide full citation of the publication or the location of the copies.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **BEFORE YOU SUBMIT**

**Did you remember to:**

- **Make a copy for yourself and/or veteran**
- **Include registration form (if you registered online)**
- **Complete all required forms (Biographical Data Form, release forms, audio/video log)**
- **Label all tapes and remove tabs**
- **Complete photograph or manuscript logs if appropriate**

Veterans History Project  
American Folklife Center  
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Washington, DC 20540-4615

tel: 202-707-4916  
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