

THE WAR

A KEN BURNS FILM

DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY
KEN BURNS AND LYNN NOVICK

FIELD GUIDE

CONDUCTING AND PRESERVING INTERVIEWS

Created in partnership with the Veterans History Project
and the Library of Congress



THE WAR is a production of Florentine Films and WETA Washington, DC. Directors/producers: Ken Burns and Lynn Novick. Writer: Geoffrey C. Ward. Producer: Sarah Botstein. Co-producers: Peter Miller and David McMahon. Editors: Paul Barnes, Erik Ewers and Tricia Reidy. Cinematographer: Buddy Squires. Narrator: Keith David.

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THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS

The Library of Congress and its Veterans History Project, an American Folklife Center initiative, welcome the invitation from Ken Burns to join him in his latest chronicle of American history. *The War*. Ken's love for the stories that have informed and inspired us is evident in this latest documentary about World War II.

It may seem like an over researched subject, but many aspects of World War II have yet to be documented. Ken Burns and colleagues have taken a fresh perspective by using the accounts of ordinary citizens from four American towns as threads in a large tapestry. Reading an account of the attack on Pearl Harbor or the D-Day landings at Normandy by historians like Gordon Prange or Cornelius Ryan offers the magisterial view of these chapters of the war. In contrast, Ken Burns has created an epic that is also intimate, telling the story of that war from the ground up.

This grassroots approach is one that the Veterans History Project has taken from its inception, when it was created by a unanimous act of Congress in 2000. Not only has the Veterans History Project chronicled World War II and World War I, but it has also collected stories of the more recent conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf. No other collection in the Library is quite like it, a running account of history told by the participants, one that keeps growing and, as it does, deepens our knowledge of some of America's darkest and most inspiring days.

By partnering with the Veterans History Project, Ken Burns makes it clear that *The War* is only the starting point and he challenges us to locate a veteran from that conflict and record his or her story. These stories then will be permanently archived in the library of Congress.

Ken Burns's three decades of interviewing historians and historical participants show each of us that we, too, can write the history of an epic event, one veteran at a time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James H. Billington".

James H. Billington
The Librarian of Congress

FLORENTINE FILMS

Friends and colleagues,

Seventeen years ago, we made a film on the Civil War. It was phenomenally successful, becoming the highest rated series in the history of PBS, engaging tens of millions of viewers in the events of the war, and reminding us of the power of television to connect people across continents, and across history.

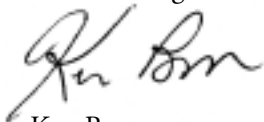
Although we had an interest even then in making a film about the Second World War, we were reluctant. We didn't want to be typecast or seem to be exploiting the success of our earlier film. But we were constantly receiving letters and phone calls from children of veterans, asking us to tell their parents' remarkable stories. When I learned that more than 1,000 veterans of World War II are dying each day in America and that our young people—many of them the grandchildren of those brave soldiers—believe we fought *with* the Germans *against* the Russians in World War II, I realized that we had to do something. How could the story of the greatest cataclysm in history be lost?

We felt almost honor-bound to find a new way to tell the story of the Second World War, a way that would engage our young people, honor our elders, and educate our entire audience. We decided to tell the story from the bottom up. Instead of focusing on the stories of generals and presidents and other celebrities of the war, we would tell the stories of so-called “ordinary” people, the men who did the fighting, the women who worked in the factories and served as nurses, the ordinary citizens who suffered hardships on the American home front. Of course, the idea that these men and women were ordinary quickly dissolved and we realized that, in extraordinary times, there are no ordinary lives.

Our film, *THE WAR*, is as much about story telling, about sharing unique experiences, as it is about World War II, and as such we hope that it touches on the universal human experience of battle. Of course, the film only provides a small window into the much larger experience of the hundreds of thousands who have served during times of war. That's where you can help. We hope that by providing the tools in this guide to people around the country, especially young people, we can work together to capture many more of these stories before the generation that fought in World War II has passed.

Thank you.

With best regards,



Ken Burns

About the Film

THE WAR is a seven-part series, directed and produced by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, which provides a partial snapshot of the World War II experience through the personal accounts of a handful of men and women from four geographically distributed American towns: Waterbury, Connecticut; Mobile, Alabama; Sacramento, California and the tiny farming town of Luverne, Minnesota. The series explores the most intimate human dimensions of one of the greatest cataclysms in history — a worldwide catastrophe that touched the lives of people throughout the country — and demonstrates that in extraordinary times, there are no ordinary lives.

THE WAR will be broadcast on PBS beginning September 23, 2007.
For more information visit pbs.org/thewar.

About this Guide

As part of an enormous community engagement campaign for THE WAR, over 100 public television stations nationwide will reach out to a broad range of veterans and their families to capture the stories that make up the rich mosaic of America. In total, public television stations will target thousands of individual stories to be shared locally on-air, online and through community events and activities. The goal of the outreach campaign is to ensure that THE WAR resonates beyond the broadcast by providing many people with an opportunity to share their stories and to involve the entire country in a national discussion about World War II and the contributions of this generation.

This guide — a collaboration between the Library of Congress Veterans History Project, Florentine Films and WETA public television station in Washington, DC — contains hands-on production tips and interview techniques from Ken Burns and Lynn Novick as well as information on how to send completed interviews to the Veterans History Project. This guide was created to help individuals and groups research, conduct and preserve the stories of our nation's veterans and to ensure that they become a part of our country's collective and permanent history.



Two soldiers in Geich, Germany. December 11, 1944

Overview of the Veterans History Project

The Veterans History Project (VHP) honors American war veterans and civilian workers who supported them by preserving stories of their service to our country. VHP collects and archives the one-of-a-kind stories that represent the diversity of the veterans who served our country — veterans from all conflicts, from all branches of the military, all ranks, all races and ethnicities. The U.S. Congress voted unanimously in October 2000 for legislation to create VHP 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.

What VHP Can Accept

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. VHP also collects stories of civilians who supported their efforts, including men and women who worked in defense-related industries, and as USO entertainers and Red Cross workers. **NOTE:** VHP will accept any approved material on behalf of deceased veterans.

VHP accepts 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 Cannot 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 include the required VHP forms when you submit your collection to the Veterans History Project. **All forms are included at the back of this guide.**

Note: If your interview falls outside the scope of VHP guidelines, contact your local PBS station about submitting your materials as part of THE WAR community engagement effort.

Interview Preparations

Before doing anything else, you'll need to select an interview subject. Look for someone who has interesting experiences and perspectives to share, who is willing to participate and who is well spoken and able to tell a story effectively. If you are submitting materials to the Veterans History Project, follow the guidelines listed and restrict your pool of interview candidates to men and women who served in World War II or in defense-related industries. If you are not submitting to VHP, consider interviewing others who were alive in the 1940s and have a war-related story to tell. For instance, think about interviewing someone whose brother or sister served overseas. Don't rule out a subject because of his, or his family's, lack of direct World War II service. The experience of living in wartime America affected all citizens, regardless of their direct involvement in the conflict or war-related industries.

Finding a World War II Veteran to Interview

Finding a veteran to interview may be as easy as talking with family members, friends or co-workers; someone you know is likely to have a connection to the war or war-related services. In addition, there are numerous local, state and national organizations with which veterans are affiliated. Look for one of the following online or in your local phone book.

Organizations and Agencies Representing Veterans

- Alliance of Women Veterans (www.americal.org)
- American Ex-Prisoners of War (www.axpow.org)
- American GI Forum of the United States (www.agif.us)
- The American Legion (www.legion.org)
- AMVETS (www.amvets.org)
- Arab American War Veterans, Inc.
- Blinded Veterans Association (www.bva.org)
- Disabled American Veterans (www.dav.org)
- Hispanic War Veterans of America (www.hwva.org/)
- Italian American War Veterans of the USA (www.ITAMVETS.org)
- Japanese American Veterans Association (www.javadc.org)
- Jewish War Veterans of the USA (www.jwv.org)
- Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc. (www.purpleheart.org)
- National Association for Black Veterans, Inc. (www.nabvets.com)
- Paralyzed Veterans of America (www.pva.org)
- Polish Legion of American Veterans, USA (www.plav.org)
- The Retired Enlisted Association (www.trea.org)
- Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (www.vfw.org)
- Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II
- Women's Army Corps Veterans Association (www.armywomen.org)
- Women In Military Service for America Memorial (www.womensmemorial.org)
- The Women Marines Association (www.womenmarines.org)

Once you've chosen a subject, your next step will be to gather as much background information about that person and her wartime experience as you can. The research phase is of paramount importance. The effectiveness of your interview will hinge on the planning and forethought that take place here.

First, talk with your subject and find out the basics of his wartime experience, making a note of the branch of service and unit in which he served and the campaigns in which he participated, and what his jobs were during his service. Encourage him to bring photos or memorabilia to the meeting. Look at these materials together, making notes about the places and dates of each. If your interviewee brings a telegram or letters that are difficult to read, look through these together and then type up any passages you might want him to read on camera. Print these passages in large type and bring them to the interview.

Armed with this personal information, you're now ready to begin your research. Visit your local library or the online sources, listed on the next page, to get books and background information on the basics: the timeline/events of the war and the historic period in which it occurred. Find out what it was like living in the 1940s and what the average family experienced during wartime, in America and in the country where your interviewee served. Do your best to become familiar with the terms and facts your subject is likely to discuss. Then, focus your research on your interviewee's unit, the specific campaigns in which he served or the industry in which he worked.

Resources to Consult for WWII Background

General Online Histories of WWII

World War II History

<http://worldwar2history.info/>

A great introduction to the war, with an historic overview, FAQ and lists of other sources to consult.

Hyperwar: A Hypertext History of World War II

<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/>

A collection of public domain documents about the war, including official government histories, source documents, primary references and detailed information on battles.

WWII History Books

Alastair Cooke, *The American Home Front: 1941-1942*.

John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*.

David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*.

Eric Larrabee, *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War*.

Donald L. Miller, *Masters of the Air: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany*.

Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War With Japan*.

Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America In WWII*.

As you do your research, take notes on what you find. From these, compile your list of topics to cover and questions to ask during the interview. Be sure to ask questions that are open-ended and aren't likely to result in simple "Yes" or "No" answers. For example, instead of asking, "Did you fight on Omaha Beach?" ask: "Where were you on D-Day?"; instead of, "Did you feel scared?," ask: "How did you feel?" These less specific questions will encourage your interviewee to tell his story more completely and more authentically. Once you've finalized your list of questions, have a conversation with your interviewee about the topics you might cover, but don't send him the list of questions in advance. During the interview, you'll want the energy and spontaneity that comes with telling someone a story for the first time.

Sample Questions for WWII Veterans

- Were you aware of the war that was already going on overseas before Pearl Harbor was attacked? Did you think America should get involved?
- When did you go into the service — did you enlist, were you drafted? How old were you? Which branch of the service did you choose/get assigned to?
- How did you feel when you said goodbye to your family, left home, and went into the military? What was it like going from civilian life to military life? What do you remember about your training? What did they teach you in the army/navy/marines?
- Where did you serve? (dates, which division, which unit, which ship, etc — as much detail as possible).
- (If in combat) Which theater of the war were you in? Were you ever wounded? What specific details do you remember — sights, sounds, smells, sensations? What was the worst moment?
- Tell me about the chaos of the war — did you know where you were most of the time, where the enemy was? Where your objective was? What to do when you found it?
- What did you believe, at that time, was at stake in the war; what did you think you were fighting for? Did that change once you actually got overseas and into combat?
- How did you feel about the enemy (German, Italian, or Japanese...) that you were fighting? How do you feel about them now?
- Did you write home often? Did you describe what you were actually experiencing in your letters? What reminded you most of home when you were overseas? What did you look forward to the most when you thought about coming home?
- After the war was over, was it possible for you to put it behind you completely? What parts of the experience have stayed with you?
- What do you think people today should know about what you went through? What do we need to remember about World War Two?

Additional questions are available at [pbs.org/thewar](https://www.pbs.org/thewar)



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

New Orleans, Louisiana. March 1943

Going Deeper — Doing Research Online and On-Site at the National Archives

The National Archives and Records Administration in the Washington, DC Area

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the permanent repository of the records of the federal government. Among the holdings in the Washington, DC area are millions of textual documents, photographs, maps, posters, motion pictures, sound recordings and electronic records that touch on World War II. These records are crucial to understanding the many facets of the war: military and political; economic and technological; social and cultural.

Nearly 16 million Americans served in uniform during World War II, and chances are good that someone in your family was one of them. NARA has custody of many records relevant to personal participation in the war, including unit records of the U.S. Army, Army Air Forces and Marine Corps, as well as Navy ships. These records vary in arrangement, content and completeness, but all focus on documenting unit/ship organization and operations. To search these records as they relate to a veteran, you will need to know the exact designation of the unit/ship in which the service member served (e.g. Company A, 16th Infantry, 1st Division; 249th Engineer Combat Battalion or USS *Missouri*) and the approximate dates of service.

If this information is unknown to you for an Army soldier, try searching NARA's online database of Army enlisted service numbers and cite this number when requesting a service record from the National Personnel Record Center (NPRC) in St. Louis (see more information below). Access this database at <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/> then click on "World War II" in the "Browse by Category" section. Created from microfilmed "punched cards," the database is arranged numerically by Army service number. Basic information provided about the individual soldier includes service number, name, residence, place of enlistment and year of birth. The series contains records of approximately 9 million enlisted men and women (no officers) in the Army and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. (Note that there are known gaps in the coverage of the database and in the data available for each individual because certain cards did not scan completely or at all.)

In addition, NARA has World War II records concerning enlistment, prisoners of war, casualties, Japanese American internment and relocation, civilian participation at home and the Cadet Nurse Corps. This material reflects every aspect of the war — the home front (including rationing, war bonds and the War Production Board), information and propaganda, military strategy and diplomatic initiatives. The scope of these holdings stretches even beyond the American war effort to include captured German and Japanese records.

NARA also has special media records including the largest collection of documentary film footage from World War II in the world. Documenting both the home front and the battlefield from the perspective of both Allied and Axis powers, these films include training and combat footage, newsreels, propaganda and public service announcements. Finally, NARA preserves aerial photographs, military maps, ship plans and charts, sound recordings, war posters and still pictures. World War II records of all formats are housed primarily at NARA's College Park, Maryland, facility. Visit <http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/> for directions, hours and researcher information.

NARA has developed research guides and "finding aids" to help you identify records relevant to your research. Some are available online, while others are available only in printed form. To get started, call 1-866-272-6272 or 301-837-2000, or visit NARA's home page online at www.archives.gov and click on "Subject Index" and then "World War II."

Click here to go directly to NARA's guide to World War II finding aids:
<http://www.archives.gov/research/ww2/finding-aids.html>

NARA's National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, Missouri

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has custody of Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs) for individuals who served in the Army, Army Air Forces, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard during World War II. In July 1973, a fire destroyed 85 percent of the Army and Army Air Forces individual personnel files, but the NPRC staff often is able to locate some information relevant to a person's service from other records in their custody. The fire did not affect records of Marine Corps or the overwhelming majority of Navy or Coast Guard personnel.

It is important to note that a request for an OMPF should contain certain basic information to aid in locating the service record with reasonable effort. This includes the veteran's complete name used while in service, service number, social security number, branch and dates of service, date and place of birth, place of entry into the service and, if possible, place of discharge. Upon discharge from the military, each veteran received a "Report of Separation" or "summary statement." Is your veteran's original paperwork available?

Your request should include the reason or purpose for your inquiry, which must be signed and dated by the veteran or next of kin (defined as the unremarried widow or widower, son or daughter, father or mother, brother or sister of the deceased veteran). You are considered a member of the general public if you are asking about a veteran who is no relation to you, or a veteran who is a relative but for whom you are not the next of kin. Without the consent of the veteran or next of kin, only limited information from an OMPF is releasable to the general public until 62 years have passed since the veteran's separation from the service. After 62 years, the file is permanently transferred from the originating military branch to NARA custody and is open to the public.

The preferred method of requesting information from NPRC is via the Web at <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>. Written requests may be submitted on Standard Form 180 (SF 180), Request Pertaining to Military Records. This form and other information about NPRC can be found at <http://archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/get-service-records.html>. You may also put your request in a letter. Call NPRC customer service at 301-801-0800 for more information.

NARA's Presidential Libraries, Coast to Coast

Presidential Libraries are not libraries in the usual sense. They are archives and museums, bringing together in one place the documents, audiovisual materials and artifacts of a president and his administration. These libraries are found across the country, from Massachusetts to California. Every president from Hoover to Clinton has ties to World War II, and the Libraries are rich resources for the World War II researcher.

The Libraries make available not only the correspondence, memos and telegrams of the president and other high-ranking officials in the administration but also include thousands of photographs, sound recordings, videos and oral histories, which give insight into the president's decision-making process and provide context for the war. Materials in the Libraries may also be used to explore the military service of those presidents who served during the war.

On a more personal note, the Libraries also have select letters of condolence sent by the president to the families of veterans as well as letters written by citizens to the president in protest or in support of the war. Explore the wealth of information and digitized materials on the Libraries' Web sites, and contact an archivist for suggestions on your research topic.

For a list of all the Presidential Libraries and their Web sites, go to www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/contact/libraries.html.

Interview Equipment

General Guidelines

A huge variety of video and audio recording equipment is available today. The simple rule in conducting taped interviews is to use the best equipment available to you, whether that's a state-of-the-art broadcast-quality digital camera or a handheld camcorder.

Although the Veterans History Project will accept an audio-only interview, it's highly preferable for you to record your subject using a video camera. Using video allows you to capture facial expressions, gestures and other nonverbal information, as well as photographs and other materials your subject brings to the interview. If you don't have video equipment, it may be possible to borrow what you need from friends, family or the interviewee. Many stores that sell audio-visual equipment will also rent on a daily basis, but often at a substantial cost. If you or a member of your immediate family is associated with a college or school, it may be possible to borrow or inexpensively rent equipment through the school's audio-visual department.

Remember, participating PBS stations can also help with equipment and ideas.



Pennsylvania Station. New York, New York. 1943

Basic Equipment Checklist

- Video camera
- Microphone (preferably a lapel or lavalier mic)
- Tripod
- Headphones
- Extra tapes and batteries for all equipment used
- Extension cord and/or power strip

Cautionary Notes

- Always check your equipment — cameras, recorders and microphones — a few days before the interview to make sure it is working properly. If you're using borrowed, rented or new equipment, be sure to familiarize yourself with it thoroughly well in advance of the interview.
- Be sure all equipment batteries are fully charged and bring plenty of extra batteries to the interview.
- Bring more tapes than you think you'll need. You won't want to run out in the middle of a wonderful story!

Camera Work

Careful placement and use of your camera is essential to a good video recording and often determines whether your interview will be effective. If at all possible, find someone to operate the camera for you while you conduct the interview. Not having to worry about tapes, sound levels and the other variables of successful recording will allow you to focus full-time on your interviewee and what she is saying — your most important task as an interviewer.

Be sure to use a tripod when setting up your camera. Camera shake can become a serious distraction and in severe cases, has been known to cause motion sickness in viewers. Be certain the image in the video screen is level by lengthening or shortening individual tripod legs. Make sure all legs are firmly locked in place.

Look for the most flattering angle for your subject, using the widest-angle lens possible. To do this, place the camera fairly close to the subject and zoom out, rather than placing the camera far away and zooming in. The shot will look more natural, and if the microphone built into the camera is the only one in use, being closer to the subject will ensure considerably better audio quality.

Keep on-tape camera movements — like zooms and pans — to a minimum. A well-composed static shot of your subject, framing their upper body in the view screen, will produce the best results.

Use the settings on your camera to their best advantage. Be sure to record your interview at the fastest speed possible, sometimes called two-hour mode or SP speed. Set the white balance on the camera to ensure accurate color reproduction. Check the camera focus to be sure your interviewee's features are crisp and clear.

Audio

Good, clear audio is essential to an effective interview, since the majority of information communicated will come through this channel. If at all possible, use a separate microphone — not the microphone built into the video camera or tape recorder — and place it as close as possible to the speaker's mouth. It's best to use a lapel or lavalier (lav) mic. Lapel mics tend not to record as much background noise as freestanding ones because the body of the wearer helps to absorb unwanted noise. If you don't have access to a lapel mic, use a microphone on a stand placed 6-12 inches from your interviewee, but try to keep it out of your camera shot. If possible, try to use a uni-directional or cardioid microphone, which picks up sound in front but not behind. Be aware that when you ask a question during the interview, your voice will, in all likelihood, be quieter than your interviewee's, given the placement of the microphone. Be sure to speak clearly and loudly to ensure that your question is audible.

Check the sound quality of your recording before you begin the interview. If you have headphones, put them on and listen closely to the sounds your recording device is receiving. Listen for any unwanted noises — whirring fans, equipment noises or sounds from the microphone rubbing on clothing or jewelry, for example — and take steps to eradicate them, either repositioning the microphone or removing the sound. If you hear hiss, your recording level may be set too low. If your subject's voice sounds distorted, the level is set too high. If you hear a humming sound, your microphone may be too close to the recorder or another electrical device.

Choosing an Interview Location

When deciding where to tape your interview, there are three important factors to keep in mind: 1) the environment of the room, specifically its lighting and sound qualities; 2) access to electrical outlets and 3) the comfort of your subject.

When you call to set up the interview, ask your subject where he would like to be interviewed. In most cases, the person you interview will be most comfortable in his own home. Suggest this as one option. Other suggestions include a comfortable room at your local public library or public television station, or in your own home or office. Explore the room in question before suggesting it to be sure that it is a place where you won't be interrupted. The ideal recording room has soft furnishings and carpet, which allow your interviewee to sit comfortably and also serve to absorb, rather than reflect, sound (which can cause an echo effect). The room should also have a source of bright, even light, no distracting noises and plenty of electrical outlets for plugging in your equipment. Avoid conducting the interview outside, where it is impossible to control the background noise.

Regardless of where the interview takes place, you will need to be sure that the environment is conducive to video and audio recording. The most important elements are the lighting and sound in the room. Be sure there are no distracting sounds in the room — buzzing from fluorescent lights, loud traffic noise from beyond the windows or clanking from a radiator, for instance. Be sure there is enough light for the camera to function properly and avoid situations where the subject will be lit strongly from behind, such as being seated in front of a daytime window. Avoid mixing daylight and incandescent sources of light as this can confuse the camera's built-in color-correcting function. An easy way to fix this is either to close the curtains, using only incandescent light, or turn off the lights and open the curtains wide, bathing the subject in natural light.

Make a note of where electrical outlets are located in the room. Even if the wall closest to your ideal camera placement, given sound and lighting considerations, contains an outlet, it's a good idea to bring along a power strip and extension cord, just in case. Plugging in to A/C power allows you to focus on the interview, rather than on whether your battery is running low.



Leyte beach

Courtesy of the National Archives

Conducting the Interview

Your first priority upon entering your recording room, once you've determined where to set up within it, is your interviewee's comfort and convenience. If possible, set up your recording equipment before your subject enters the room. Arrange with others outside the room to have no interruptions, and turn off all phones and cell phones. When your interviewee arrives, seat her in a comfortable chair and offer her a glass of water. Attach or position the microphone, perform sound checks (see "Audio" section, above) and adjust your camera lens so that the interviewee's upper body is framed in the camera's view screen. Once you've double-checked your settings, tapes and battery levels, you're ready to begin the interview.

Start by asking your interviewee some "warm-up" questions — about his family, his hometown, his friends in school, and so on — to put him at ease and begin developing rapport. Once he is used to the camera, begin asking the questions generated by your research. Be careful not to become trapped by your list! If your subject has something interesting to say that's not written there, encourage him to talk more about it. Ask follow-up questions to get more detail and clarity; don't be afraid to probe (politely!) for more information. Listen attentively and do not interrupt. If you have questions, jot these down and come back to them. Use a pencil and note cards to keep your writing noise to a minimum. **Sample questions can be found on page 8 of this guide.**

If your interviewee brings photos or memorabilia to the interview, take these from her before the interview begins. You'll want to be sure to take video of the objects so the audience can see the items. At an appropriate time during the interview, show these to her, spending ample time on each. Keep the items in your hands, allowing your interviewee to remain focused on the camera, and use them as conversation starters. Ask about the people and places shown in the photos and about what was happening that day and the days immediately before and after. Ask about letters from home and friendships made during the war. If your subject brought letters or telegrams to your initial meeting, ask him to read some of the passages you prepared. Talk about his feelings upon receiving items from home. If your subject experiences sadness, be respectful and kind. Offer tissues, your understanding and more time to answer. Let him know that he needn't feel compelled to elaborate if it's too difficult to do so.



Saipan

Courtesy of the National Archives

End your interview with some concluding questions. Ask your subject his thoughts about the war and his role in it. What was it like coming home? What did he do after the war and how did his life change as a result of his participation? How did the world or America change? Ask about any positive or negative ways in which he is still connected to his wartime experience.

At the conclusion of your session, ask for any clarifications or spellings of unfamiliar terms and names. Thank your subject for his generosity and let him know that you might be in touch with follow-up questions. Encourage him to be in touch if he has any questions or concerns, too. Offer to send him a copy of the interview tape and discuss a possible family or community showing, if you think he might be interested. Follow up with a thank-you letter and the promised video promptly. Be sure to include your interviewee in any other activities involving his interview.



Okinawa

Interview Checklist (housekeeping)

- Note the name of your subject, the date and the location of your interview by making both an audio and video slate of the start of the interview. Speak the information directly into the microphone and also write it down and show the camera.
- If you're running the camera yourself, keep track of battery levels and tape used; try to make changing these as quick and unobtrusive as possible.
- When you've used a tape, be sure to slide the tab on the tape to the "lock" position, ensuring you do not accidentally record over the interview later.
- Periodically look through your camera's viewfinder and listen to the sound to be certain your settings have not changed.
- Write down unfamiliar names and terms and ask for clarifications and correct spellings at the end of your interview.

How to Send in Your Collection to VHP

Register the collection you wish to submit to the Veterans History Project at www.loc.gov/vets. Once VHP has received your registration information, you will receive a reminder of what they accept and how to submit your collection. You may also submit your collection without registering, but this may delay VHP receiving and processing your collection.

- Make a copy of the interview and any other items you are submitting. (VHP is unable to make copies of any items once you have submitted them.)
- Make sure you fill out all the VHP forms marked REQUIRED. (Additional copies of the forms may be printed from the VHP Web site.) If you need guidance in completing the Audio and Video Recording Log, go to the VHP 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. Do not use the U.S. Postal Service. Security procedures require the U.S. Postal Service to irradiate all incoming mail to the Library of Congress. Unfortunately, this 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



Rentwertshausen, Germany. April 10, 1945

Courtesy of the National Archives

What Happens to Your Collection at VHP

When VHP receives your materials, staff members of the project do the following:

- Check the required forms. If any are missing or incomplete, your materials go “on hold.” VHP will contact you and request that you complete these forms. Your collection cannot be processed until VHP has received all required forms.
- Send you an acknowledgment note card within six months of receipt of the collection.

Once all required forms are received, a VHP staff member enters 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 the VHP Web site (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.

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’s American Folklife Center Reading Room for use by researchers, educators, family members and others. An advance appointment is required to view materials.

Forms

These forms are extremely important to the process. VHP cannot accept your submission without them.



Kaiser shipyards, Richmond, CA. 1943

Courtesy of the Library of Congress



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 _____



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.

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 _____

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) _____



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.

