

## Questions for Veterans

### Segment 1: For the Record:

State at the beginning of the interview:

- Date and place of the interview
- Name of the person being interviewed
- Interviewee's birth date
- Names of the people attending the interview (including the interviewer and camera operators)
- The organization you're working with, if any
- **If interviewing a veteran:**
  - War and branch of service
  - What his or her rank was
  - Where he or she served
- **If interviewing a civilian:**
  - What type of work he or she performed
  - Where he or she served
  - What war he or she served during

### Segment 2: Jogging Memory:

Were you drafted or did you enlist?  
Where were you living at the time?  
Why did you join?  
Why did you pick the service branch you joined?  
Do you recall your first days in service?  
What did it feel like?  
Tell me about your boot camp/training experience(s).  
Do you remember your instructors?  
How did you get through it?

### Segment 3: Experiences:

Which war(s) did you serve in (WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf)?  
Where exactly did you go?  
Do you remember arriving and what it was like?  
What was your job/assignment?  
Did you see combat?  
Were there many casualties in your unit?  
Tell me about a couple of your most memorable experiences.  
Were you a prisoner of war?  
Tell me about your experiences in captivity and when freed.  
Were you awarded any medals or citations?  
How did you get them?  
Higher ranks may be asked about battle planning. Those who sustained injuries may be asked about the circumstances.

## **Segment 4: Life:**

Ask questions about life in the service and/or at the front or under fire.

How did you stay in touch with your family?  
What was the food like?  
Did you have plenty of supplies?  
Did you feel pressure or stress?  
Was there something special you did for "good luck"?  
How did people entertain themselves?  
Were there entertainers?  
What did you do when on leave?  
Where did you travel while in the service?  
Do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual event?  
What were some of the pranks that you or others would pull?  
Do you have photographs?  
Who are the people in the photographs?  
What did you think of officers or fellow soldiers?  
Did you keep a personal diary?

## **Segment 5: After Service:**

Appropriateness of questions will vary if the veteran had a military career.

Do you recall the day your service ended?  
Where were you?  
What did you do in the days and weeks afterward?  
Did you work or go back to school?  
Was your education supported by the G.I. Bill?  
Did you make any close friendships while in the service?  
Did you continue any of those relationships?  
For how long?  
Did you join a veterans organization?

## **Segment 6: Later Years and Closing:**

What did you go on to do as a career after the war?  
Did your military experience influence your thinking about war or about the military in general?  
If in a veterans organization, what kinds of activities does your post or association have?  
Do you attend reunions?  
How did your service and experiences affect your life?  
Is there anything you would like to add that we have not covered in this interview?

Thank the veteran for sharing his or her recollections.

Please be sure that the veteran, interviewer, and photographer (if any) sign the appropriate release forms found in the Project Kit.

## **Sample Questions for Civilians**

### **Segment 2: Jogging Memory**

What is your name? For married women, what was your maiden name?  
Age?  
Where were you born and raised?  
What was your family background? Educational background?  
What is your current occupation? Current address?  
At the time of the war, were you in a relationship, married, or single?  
What was your spouse's or partner's name and wartime occupation (if interviewed for that reason)?  
If married, when and where were you married?  
Did you have children at any time during the war?

### **Segment 3: Wartime Work**

Where did you live/work during the war?  
What was your main wartime activity?  
Were you employed outside the home?  
In industry?  
Why did you choose that activity?  
What kind of training were you given?  
What was your title?  
What kind of activities did you perform?  
Who was your supervisor?  
What was your specialty at work?  
What did you like and dislike about it?  
What special rules or conventions did you have to follow?  
With whom did you work?  
If you had children, was there child care at work?  
If not, what arrangements did you make?  
Were you unionized?  
Were you an organizer?  
How did you feel about the unions?  
Did you develop friendships during training or the activity itself?  
Did you have family and friends in the service or doing war work?

### **Segment 4: Life During Wartime:**

#### **General:**

How did you feel about the war?  
What were your family or friends' feelings?  
Did you live with family, friends, or coworkers?  
In what ways did the war change your activities or habits?  
Were you or others in your community treated differently because of your gender/ethnicity/race or other factors?  
If so, how did you or others react?  
What were some of the first changes in your life after the war started?  
What different responsibilities did you have to take on?  
What social activities were you involved in at work or after work with coworkers?  
How did you entertain yourself outside of work?  
Did you or others get married during wartime?  
What were weddings like?  
Did you worry that our side might not win?  
Did you know anyone who was killed or wounded in the war?  
Tell me about corresponding via letters or otherwise with friends or family in the service.

What effect did the war have on your physical and mental health or that of others you knew?  
Do you think that medical care changed because of the war?  
Did you have worthwhile experiences because of the war?  
What was your most memorable experience? Most memorable character? Most humorous experience?  
Have you visited any memorials or participated in any commemorations of the war?

### **World War I and World War II:**

Was there a lack of social opportunities and friends because of the war?  
How did your community respond to the war and civil defense (or other home front) initiatives?  
Did child care activities change for mothers?  
Tell me about shortages and rationing of food and gas.  
Did you have a victory garden or other ways to get enough food?  
How did you cope with wartime shortages?  
Talk about recycling of rubber, grease, or other commodities.  
To what extent was there hoarding or black market activity in your area?  
How did you feel about war news from newsreels or radio?

### **Korea, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf Wars:**

If your spouse was in the service, did you feel you got good support from the service?  
Were you comfortable and did you have a reasonable standard of living during and after the war?  
What effect did the war have on your physical or mental health?  
Did you think it was right for America to be at war?  
What did you think about the enemy?  
How did you feel about war news from television?  
How did you feel about antiwar protests?  
Did you trust and support American civilian and military leaders?  
Did you change your views over the span of the war?

### **Segment 5: Postwar Experiences:**

How did you feel when the war ended?  
What did you do when you heard the news? (For WWII: Where were you on V-J Day? V-E Day?)  
How would you describe the ways that the war changed your life and those of others?  
Did you keep your job or continue other wartime activities after the war?  
Is there one thought about your wartime experience that you want to share with future generations?

### **Segment 6: Closing Questions:**

Is there anything else I should ask you?  
Is there anything that you would like to add on this subject

## **Acknowledgments**

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