GSC’s WV Veterans Legacy Project

Interview Guide

(These guidelines are only to assist the interviewer in developing a formal conversation with the participant. If the participant is carrying on a conversation with you about a certain subject matter, it is never a good idea to interrupt them in attempts to get all questions covered. This is the participant’s interview, and the best end product comes from the individual being comfortable and sharing information that they want to share. If an interesting experience is brought up, always try to get the participant to share as much on that subject as much as possible by using words such as describe, elaborate, how, and when. It may also be a good idea to get the participant to give their own personal feelings about the subject by asking them how they felt or how they feel about it now. There is nothing wrong with documenting a participant’s feelings towards their own experiences, a certain political view, leader, or period of time in their life that they now look at differently. Also, once the initial introduction is made, there is no specific structure or timeline to complete a successful interview. This is only provided to the interviewer to spur ideas for questions. Many participants will touch on different parts of this outline without prompting, and the interviewer must make adjustments to their planned discussion as the interview progresses.)

1. Introduction:
   a. Announce who you are, where you are, when you are there, and what the theme of the project is- “Today is October 10, 2011, I am John Smith, and I am interviewing Jane Doe about her military service for the West Virginia Veterans Legacy Project.

   b. Develop a background description of the person being interviewed.

   i. FULL NAME OR ALIASES:
      1. Could you please give me your full name as it is recorded on your birth certificate?
      2. Do you currently or have you ever had a nickname?
      3. What would you have been known as during your time in the military?

   ii. CHILDHOOD/BACKGROUND (Potential Questions & Tips)
      1. Where were you born and raised?
      2. Use words such as Describe or Elaborate during you conversation with the participant to get a better picture of their life growing up.
      3. What did your parents do for a living? Were either of them or any other members of your close family unit involved in the military?
4. Where did you attend school?
5. What was your childhood like?
6. Are there any specific events during your childhood that you would like to describe?
7. Have you remained connected to the area where you were raised?

iii. SEGWAY INTO MILITARY SERVICE DISCUSSION
1. Always have the participant’s project survey sheet handy for your reference
2. Did you feel the need to enlist in the military or were you drafted?
3. Were you permitted to pursue the branch of service that you wanted? Did other people influence your decisions? Why did you want to join your branch of service?
4. Where did you attend your basic training?
5. How did you feel about your basic training?
6. What was your first memorable assignment after basic training?
7. How long were you in the military? Did you know how long you were going to stay in the military when you started?
8. What was your opinion of your officers?
9. What was your opinion of any other branches of the military?

iv. DISCUSS JOB DUTIES
1. What was your job(s) in the military?
2. Can you describe some of the duties you were responsible for? (Get the participant to go into detail about their duties)
3. How did you feel about your job(s) and or the duties that were part of it?

v. DISCUSS DEPLOYMENT, IF THE PARTICIPANT WAS EVER DEPLOYED
1. During your deployment(s), were you involved with any foreign nationals? If so, are there any specific experiences with them that you would like to describe?
2. Was there a different view of women where you were deployed?
3. Were there ever any problems that arose because of our differences in their society’s view towards women, different religions, or anything else?
4. How did you feel about the climate/weather during your deployment?
5. Did you serve with any other West Virginian’s during your deployment? If so, do you have any stories that relate to the other West Virginians?
6. Did you interact with any of the civilians during your deployment? If so, do you have any experiences that you would like to describe?

7. Were you provided with any rest and relaxation or downtime during your deployment? If so, what did you do during that time?

vi. DISCUSS COMBAT, IF APPLICABLE, AND OR STRESS

1. Did you experience combat or any other situations where you were faced with stress during your military career that you would like to share?

2. Can you describe your experience and how you felt about then and how you feel about it now? What do you remember most?

3. What were your feelings toward the United States’ involvement in the conflict?

4. How did you reduce or handle the stress of combat at the time?

5. Would you like to make any comment about taking part in any actions at night?

6. Would you like to comment on the mud or other environmental factors that may have been involved during your actions?

vii. Conclusion

1. What was it like to leave the military or when you returned home from a deployment? If you had been deployed, did your family and friends give you an elaborate welcome home?

2. Did you make use of the GI Bill at any time?

3. Have you made use of any V. A. services that are offered?

4. Would you do anything differently? Would you have stayed in the military longer? Would you have left the military sooner, if that was an option? Would you have made a career out of it?

5. Is there any advice that you would like to give to individuals that are currently serving our country or for our young people whom are considering joining the military?

6. Is there anything that you would like to add?

viii. Thank the participant!!

1. Always thank the participant for taking part in this project and also: Thank the Veteran for their service to our country.