



Dear NCRA/VHP Volunteer:

I welcome you to the family of volunteer historians who are making the Veterans History Project (VHP) the largest national documentation effort since the 1930s and 40s government-sponsored Works Progress Administration.

VHP collects and archives the personal recollections of U.S. wartime veterans to honor their service and share their stories with current and future generations.

The recorded interviews you have agreed to transcribe will become part of the permanent collections of the Library of Congress. Researchers, historians, students of history, family members, and anyone else who has an interest in these stories will now be able to access these one-of-a-kind oral histories in printed format.

For more information, visit www.loc.gov/vets or www.ncra.org/vets.

Your contribution is invaluable to us, and I thank you, the National Court Reporters Association and the National Court Reporters Foundation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Patrick", is set against a light blue, textured rectangular background.

Bob Patrick
Director, Veterans History Project

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A Guide to Transcribing and Editing Oral History Interviews

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Note: More and more court reporters are recording the stories of the veterans in their lives-and then transcribing that interview. Please consult the Veterans History Project Field Kit (a how-to-record-a-story booklet located at loc.gov/vets (click on "How to Participate")) for straightforward, step-by-step instructions on how you can conduct interviews of the veterans in your life.

Section I: Introduction to the Veterans History Project

The United States Congress created the Veterans History Project (VHP) in 2000. The authorizing legislation (Public Law 106-380), sponsored by Representatives Ron Kind, Amo Houghton, and Steny Hoyer in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senators Max Cleland and Chuck Hagel in the U.S. Senate, received unanimous support and was signed into law by President William Jefferson Clinton on October 27, 2000.

Since its inception VHP has collected over 90,000 stories from veterans and civilian war workers who share their unique perspective on the major conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries: World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, and future conflicts.

NCRA Member Tawni Kind, wife of Representative Kind, envisioned an opportunity for court reporters to play a significant role in VHP. Since March 2003, members of NCRA have been transcribing the recorded interviews of veterans. Once VHP receives the transcribed interviews from NCRA, the VHP processing staff integrates them into the collection, and each transcript is digitized and put online (www.loc.gov/vets).

To date, NCRA members have transcribed more than 3,600 interviews, thus increasing access to VHP's collection, allowing staff, researchers, and the general public a more comprehensive look at each story.

Section II: Creating and Editing Transcripts

The Veterans History Project provides NCRA with exact duplicates of its master recordings via VHP Web links. Interviews are conducted by volunteers who may not have professional training, and the audio or video-recorded interviews may contain inherent flaws, such as poor audio/video quality or conversations that end mid-sentence. Please make every effort to transcribe them as-is, and note any problems that arise.

A. Formatting the Hard Copy version of the Transcript

The transcript should consist of two parts, the cover sheet and the body. The cover sheet will be page 1 and will contain the essential identifying information for both the veteran and the transcriber. **When formatting the transcript, please use one-inch margins, double-space the text and paginate** (bottom right of page). **Do not use ALL CAPS.** Times New Roman, font size 11 is preferred, but not mandatory.

1. Cover Sheet

On the cover sheet, identify:

- Veteran's Name
- Interview Date (if known)
- Transcriber
- Transcription date

2. Body

- Identify all speakers at the start of their comments, by typing their name in bolded letters, followed by a colon, e.g., **John Smith:**

Example:

Adam Jones:

Good morning.

John Smith:

Good morning.

Adam Jones:

Mr. Smith, tell me about your first day of basic training.

John Smith:

They shipped us to Fort Benning by train. We arrived at dawn and were escorted to our barracks.

- **Do NOT include line numbers in the transcript or borders around the text.** This formatting interferes with VHP's ability to digitize the transcript.
- **Do NOT include headers or footers.**
- **Do NOT include time indicators.**

B. Formatting the CD and Electronic File*

- Save file as "Veteran's Last Name", i.e. Smith.txt.
- **Save file in .txt format.** If using Microsoft software, such as Word or WordPad, or other proprietary software, please remember to save the transcript as a .txt file, otherwise it may automatically save in another format.
- **Do NOT include any additional files on the disc.** If you are submitting an original audio interview, please submit the interview recording on a separate disc.
- Label the CD case or sleeve with the veteran's name and collection number, i.e., "AFC 2001/001/#####" (found on the interviewee's webpage), if applicable. **Do NOT write or place a label directly on the surface of the CD.**
- After saving the file, re-open the file to ensure it is readable.
- In addition to saving the electronic file on CD, **please save a copy on your hard drive.** This ensures that if the CD is damaged in transit there is a back-up copy available.

PLEASE NOTE: As of **July 2010**, we no longer accept floppy disks. All transcripts must be submitted on CD.

C. Interview Web links

- To listen to a VHP interview through a web link you must have RealPlayer downloaded onto your computer. RealPlayer is available for **free** download at www.real.com.
- Follow the RealPlayer instructions to download the files.
- You may need to restart your computer after the download is complete.
- Audio and video files may be accessed directly via the VHP website, or downloaded onto your computer.

Section III: Style Guidelines

All media deteriorates over time; this is one of the reasons transcription is essential to the long-term preservation of the Veterans History Project collections. To ensure the accuracy of the transcript, please keep the following suggestions in mind:

- Listen to the recording in its entirety once to become familiar with the voices and the questions being asked.
- Create a verbatim transcript, but omit such expressions as "um" or "ah". Include expressions such as "umhum" or "huh-huh" when used to mean "yes" or "no" in response to specific questions.
- Do not revise the narrator's words to force them into standard written prose. Leave untouched any sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and incorrect grammar. Commas and dashes may be used to reflect pauses in the spoken words.

To ensure the consistency of the transcripts, listed below are style guidelines:

- Abbreviations:
In general, spell out words in full. Abbreviations, however, should be used for these common titles: Mr., Ms., Dr. Spell out names of currency (dollars, cents, pounds), percent, and number, (e.g. number 14, not #14). **Do not use ampersands (&)**. Spell out the words "and", "okay", "etcetera."
Example: A: In October, I left for R and R leave to Japan.
- Abrupt sentence shifts or quick thought changes:
Use two dashes (--).
Example: A: Will he--can he--open the door?
- Garbled or inaudible portions of the tape:
If one word is inaudible, indicate the gap with a ____ . When multiple words are inaudible, insert ____+ or estimate the elapsed time using the indicator ____ (____seconds).
- Interruptions:
Put in brackets explanations about why the interview was interrupted or why the tape recorder was turned off, i.e., [Interview interrupted by a telephone call].
- Motions or gestures:
Only include when a motion or gesture is in place of spoken words or affects the content of the interview. Use brackets.
Example: A: {Coughs}--Excuse me.

- **Numbers:**
Spell out one through nine, and use numerals for 10 and above. Likewise, spell out first through ninth, and use numerals for 10th and above, i.e., First Division, 182nd Airborne.
- **Spelling:**
Spell all words accurately to the best of your ability. **Check the spelling of all proper nouns and place names to ensure they are correct. Leave out accents.** For words that are only partially decipherable, spell the word phonetically as best you can. Indicate that it is a phonetic spelling by typing (ph) after the word (see the LOC Suggested Reference Guide for helpful Web sites).
- **Uncertainty about a word or phrase:**
Place a question mark before and after a word or phrase to indicate any uncertainty about it, e.g., (?destroyed?).

EXAMPLE

VETERAN: John Smith

INTERVIEW DATE: July 18, 2009

TRANSCRIBER: Jane Johnson

TRANSCRIPTION DATE: August 3, 2009

Bryan Williams:

Okay. Today is July 18th, 2009. I am the interviewer, Bryan Williams, and I am interviewing the veteran, John Smith. His birth date is July 19, 1959. He is a veteran of the US Air Force, and he was in the Air Force from August 1977 to August 1997. I guess the interview will begin.

So John--

John Smith:

Yes.

Bryan Williams:

As a veteran of Desert Storm, you probably did not enlist. I mean you probably were not drafted into the service. You probably enlisted.

John Smith:

That's right.

Bryan Williams:

Why did you enlist? What was your motivating factor?

John Smith:

I was getting out of high school. I didn't want to go to college. We really didn't have the ____+. I wanted to do something. I didn't want to stay in my hometown and do nothing or, you know, get some minimum-wage job. I wanted to do something. I wanted to, I guess, be out on my own. So the military seemed like a good, a good opportunity. My father was in the Air Force. I--that may have had some influence on my decision, maybe a little bit, but my folks were divorced. So that may not have had a great amount of influence after all.

Section IV: Library of Congress Suggested Reference Guide

Medals/Descriptions of Criteria

http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/Awards/order_of_precedence.aspx

<http://www.gruntsmilitary.com/navyribs.php>

Navy Ranks

<http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq78-2.htm>

Geography and Place Names

<http://www.columbiagazetteer.org> (available online with a subscription)

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nagpra/DOCUMENTS/BasesMapIndex.htm>

<http://apps.mhf.dod.mil/pls/psgprod/f?p=MI:ENTRY:5074549998058069>

VHP Web Site

<http://www.loc.gov/vets>

Commonly Misspelled Words and Place Names

Miscellaneous Names and Words:

Bombardier
Cavalry
Commendation Medal
General Douglas MacArthur
Marine Corps
Medals (awards) – NOT metals (i.e. gold or copper)
Ordnance

US locations:

Camp Atterbury, Indiana
Camp Lejeune, North Carolina
Parris Island, South Carolina

European Theater locations:

Le Havre, France

Pacific Theater locations:

Bougainville Island (Solomon Islands)
Enewetak Atoll (Marshall Islands)
Guadalcanal (Solomon Islands)
Ie-Shima (Ryukyu Islands)
Kwajalein Island (Marshall Islands)
Leyte Island (Philippines)
New Hebrides
Peleliu Island (Palau)
Tarawa Atoll (Gilbert Islands)

Vietnam locations:

Bien Hoa
Cam Ranh Bay
Da Nang
Long Binh
Nha Trang
Phu Bai
Pleiku
Qui Nhon
Tan Son Nhut

Veteran's Name: _____ AFC/2001/001/_____

GRATUITOUS SERVICE AGREEMENT

I, _____, (please print) hereby acknowledge that I am not an employee of the Library of Congress, but that I have agreed to provide gratuitous services to the American Folklife Center Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

The specific service that I am offering to perform is to transcribe Veterans History Project materials such as audio and/or video recorded interviews. I agree:

- i) to transcribe narrative material from burned CDs or DVDs, or Web links provided by the Veterans History Project (VHP) via the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA), or original recordings of veterans interviews conducted by me or a volunteer interviewer in my local area.
- ii) to have transcripts formatted along NCRA's standard guidelines, and
- iii) to return to the NCRA, who will forward to the VHP, within a two-month period, the burned CD or DVD, or original recording, if applicable, along with transcribed material, which includes a paper copy and a CD, the latter in ASCII (.txt) format which can both be printed in hard copy and used for digital uploading.

There is to be no release or publication of work or dissemination of any information relating to materials or products developed under the terms of this Agreement without prior written authorization of an appropriate Library official. The physical materials to be transcribed are the property of the Library of Congress; any copyrights in the materials are owned by the persons (veterans, civilians, and interviewers) who participated in the creation of the materials and submitted the materials. The use of these materials is governed by agreements between the Library and such persons. I understand that I may not claim copyright in any product first prepared under this Agreement, and I agree that I will identify any portion of a product which I submit that has already been copyrighted. In signing this Agreement I authorize the Library and its clients to use, reproduce and distribute the transcriptions, with the understanding that I may not be credited for my individual contribution and that the Library is under no obligation to give such credit.

As a necessary condition for entering into this Agreement, I hereby assure the Library of Congress that to the best of my knowledge and judgment, there are no real or apparent conflicts of interest (associations, financial, or otherwise) which affect my ability to perform this work in an objective, unbiased manner.

I hereby waive any and all compensation from the United States Government for any and all services I may perform while providing gratuitous services to the Library of Congress. I acknowledge that this gratuitous services relationship with the American Folklife Center Veterans History Project will not entitle me to a position in the Library of

Veterans History Project Checklist

NOTE: The Veterans History Project requires that the following items be returned with your transcription.

- Signed and completed Gratuitous Service Agreement
- VHP CD or DVD of original recording, if applicable
- Hard copy of the transcript
- Separate CD with an electronic copy of the transcript in .txt format
- Signed and completed VHP PDC Request form (Certified Reporters only)

Please note any problems you encountered with the recording (background noise, muffled voices, etc. . .).

More and more court reporters are recording the stories of the veterans in their lives-and then transcribing that interview. Please consult the [Veterans History Project Field Kit](#) for step-by-step instructions on how you can conduct interviews of the veterans in your life.

- Including a copy of the audio or video recording of the interview along with the transcript would be greatly appreciated.

Mail your completed packet to:

NCRF VHP
12030 Sunrise Valley, Dr. Suite 400
Reston, VA 20191

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