



Wisconsin Veterans Museum Research Center
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PROGRAM STATEMENT FOR THE VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Wisconsin Veterans Museum Research Center

History

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program began in June of 1994 with the interview of a D-Day veteran from Madison. Approximately 200 interviews were conducted by Dr. Mark Van Ells, museum archivist. Volunteer Dr. James McIntosh continued the work started by Dr. Van Ells and has conducted over 200 interviews from 1999 to 2002. In 2002, the oral history program expanded with training and training packets designed to expand the volunteer force of museum oral history interviewers.

Purpose

The primary purpose of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program is systematic collection, preservation, description, and distribution of recorded verbatim accounts of Wisconsin soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and National Guard members.

The effect of the program will be the development of an oral history archives at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum which captures the experiences of Wisconsin men and women, combat and non-combat veterans, present and former residents of Wisconsin who served in the military from World War II to present. It is intended that the oral history program provide recorded information that both compliments and extends the archives, library and artifact collections of the museum.

Program Principles

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program operates under the following five general principles:

1. **Oral history as source for information not already available.**

Together, narrator and interviewer create a primary source document that contains information not available in another format. Interviewer strives to keep bias to a minimum.

2. **Cooperative Approach.**

The oral history interview is a cooperative venture between the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, the interviewer, and the narrator. The narrator is encouraged to think of the interview as a joint effort and to take an active role in planning what material will be discussed.

3. **Sound Quality and Multi-Purpose Use.**

Oral history is a special kind of source document which combines human factors with technical aspects of tape recording. An interview may be excellent in terms of informational content, yet be impossible to listen to due to poor sound quality. Good technical quality and good interviews are of equal importance. In addition, poor technical quality precludes multiple purpose use of the oral history tape.

4. **Interviews are Available for Present and Future Use.**

Oral history interviews created under the auspices of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program are intended for present and future use by scholars, students, teachers, interested persons, and for possible broadcast. Towards this end, unnecessary restrictions placed on use of the interviews by the narrator are discouraged. However, valid and legitimate reasons for desiring restrictions will be carefully followed.

5. **Narrator Rights Protected.**

Legitimate rights and interests of the narrator are protected. The narrator is informed of interviewer's goals, purpose of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program, and the WVM Research Center where the interview will be preserved. Following discussion with the Archives Collection Manager, any restrictions the narrator wishes placed on use of the interview will be observed.

Administration of the Program

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program is under the auspices of the WVM Research Center with the Archives Collection Manager serving as the program director. Guidance is provided by the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Director.

Procedure for the Program

Interview request forms are available to bring prospective interviewees to the attention of the program director. The primary source of individuals to be interviewed will be military service veterans currently residing in Wisconsin. However, the program director may also include civilians or out-of-state veterans

if their contribution to Wisconsin's participation in military conflicts is significant or existing documentation is minimal.

The Program Director shall select individuals to be interviewed, may make initial donor contact with prospective narrators, select and train interviewers, provide informational handouts and consultation to aid interviewers in conducting quality interviews, establish procedures and supervise the transcription of interviews, provide proper storage of the recordings and transcriptions, and describe and catalog the interviews for national access to encourage use of the interviews.

The interviewer shall conduct whatever background preparation is necessary for each interview, prepare target questions to add to the developed question set, make arrangements with the narrator for interviewing, conduct the interview, notify and program director of any donor follow-up needed, and write a brief interview summary immediately following the interview.

Technical Specifications

The oral history interview will be recorded on 60 or 90 minute audio cassettes with the following specifications: mid-high quality, low noise, high output, polyester based mastering tape.

After the interview has been recorded on the cassette tape, WVM Research Center staff will make a duplicate copy of the interview. The original recording will be designated the "master tape" and the duplicate copy will be designated the "user copy." Transcriptions will be completed from the user copy.

Archival Storage and Preservation

The interview transcription will be considered the archival copy of the interview and the Archives Collection Manager assumes responsibility for archival storage and preservation of the interview. The master tape will be preserved under proper archival storage conditions, although valiant efforts to preserve the audio recording will not be carried out with most interviews.

Access, Use, and Availability of Interview

Utilization of non-restricted oral history interviews is encouraged for educational, research, public relations, and broadcast purposes. The Program Director will supervise the description and cataloging of oral history interviews so they are nationally accessible through OCLC, a national library database.