

Appendix

How This Book Came About and Was Written

This project was conceived as a way to tell the stories of the veterans of our church. For the Veterans Day church service in 2006, a list of all of the church veterans appeared in the bulletin for that day. Because our family has always had an interest in learning about and preserving history, I decided that we should undertake to gather and tell the stories of those men and women who have served our country in the Armed Forces.

Pastor Bob Hoffman was an enthusiastic backer of the project from the start. In June, Susan Morris sent out letters from Bob to all of the church veterans, explaining the project and asking them to participate.

Over the next four months, Helen, Jay, and I conducted 35 face-to-face interviews at the church, at our house, and in the homes of the veterans. Each interview was recorded as well as typed and handwritten as we heard the story of each veteran's experience. We conducted the interviews by working our way chronologically through their story, starting with "What were you doing before you enlisted/were drafted?" From there, we talked about boot camp, where they went next, and the rest of their military service. Interviews averaged 1 ½ hours.

Each veteran told the story in his or her own words, and each interview concluded with us asking a series of questions that we came up with at the beginning of this project.

1. What did you most look forward to doing when you got home? Did you do it?
2. What was your commanding officer like? Did you like him or her?
What qualities did you like?
3. If enlisted: How did you decide to enlist? How did you pick the branch?
4. Did you ever wish you were back at home and had never been drafted/enlisted?
What were those times?
5. What are your favorite memories of your time in the service?
6. Did you make friends? Are you still in touch with them?
7. What is your proudest accomplishment?
8. When were you most scared?
9. Did you get any souvenirs?
10. Was there anything you carried around with you all the time? (Photo, Bible, letter, etc...)
11. What kind of religious services did you have in the service?
12. Did you meet or see anyone famous?
13. Were you able to stay connected to the outside world?
14. What changed the most in civilian life while you were in the military?
15. What sites did you see? On and off duty?
16. What was the most unusual thing you saw?
17. What surprised you about the military?

One theme that kept occurring was when I approached a veteran about sitting down for an interview, he or she would almost always say that they didn't do anything of note and there wasn't much to talk about. These interviews would still take an hour or longer.

If the veteran brought along photos, medals, scrapbooks, uniforms or other items from their service, Helen would take pictures. Many of the pictures you see on these pages are of items brought to the interview by the veteran. Some photos of places, weapons or ships were pulled from the internet in order to visually enhance the story. Unfortunately, the copying process used to produce this book does not do justice to the photos.

The stories are mainly as the veterans told them. Very little outside research was done except to verify spellings or dates of significant events. After the interview, Helen or I wrote the story using the typed notes taken during the interview, supplemented by the hand written notes and the recording. Once written, each veteran was given the opportunity to review the story for accuracy and content.

Jay developed the method for storing the audio files on the computer so they could be easily accessed and CDs of their interview burned for each veteran. Sandie set up the master document in which the stories were laid out in book format giving it an easy to read and professional look. She even helped by typing the notes during one of the interviews.

There is one more step to this process. The Library of Congress in Washington, DC is running a national Veterans' History Project to gather the story of veterans who have been in America's wars. With the permission of those veterans who are eligible, we will be submitting their recordings of the interviews, notes and photos to the Library of Congress.

Scott Armstrong
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