

Interview Questions

Interviewer: Christopher Spaman

Interviewee: James Szczur

General Information:

Name, Address, Date/Place of Birth, Present Occupation, Marital Status, Number of Children

Introduction:

- When & Where were you born? How long did you live there? Did you move to any other place? Why did you make those moves?

Grandparents: (First mother's, then father's)

- Can we talk about your grandparents?
- Do you remember your grandmother? Grandfather?
- Where did your grandparents live? (Details of migration)
- What were their occupations?
- How often did you see them?
- Did you ever visit them? How long would you usually stay with them?
- Were either of them a strong influence on you?
- How many children did they have?

Relatives:

- Do you remember any other relatives of an older generation? Great Uncles? Great Aunts?

Parents:

- Father:
 - Where/When was your father born?
 - What type of work did he do? Did he always have the same job? Do you remember him ever out of work?
- Mother:
 - Where/When was your mother born?
 - Did she work? Who watched you while she worked?
 - How many children did she have? Can you remember when they were born?
- Did your parents bring you up to consider certain things important in life?
- What happened if you did something they disapproved of?
- What sort of things were they strict about?
- How were you punished? Physically?
- Can we talk about your parents as a couple? Do you know the story of how they met?

Siblings:

- Now I'd like to talk about your brother and sisters, is that ok?
- How many brothers & sisters do you have? Ages?
- How did you all get along while you were growing up?
- Where do you brother and sisters live now?
- Are they married? Do they have children?
- Do you have a favorite sibling? Was he or she an important influence on you?

Uncles/Aunts/Cousins:

- Did you have Aunts & Uncles that lived near you? Live with you?
- How often did you see them?
- Did you have a favorite aunt or uncle?
- Where any of your aunts/uncles an important influence on you?
- Were you close with any of your cousins? Do you stay in touch with him/her?

Extended Family:

- Were there any occasions when you got together with extended family?
- Can you describe a typical family get together?

Daily Life/Childhood:

- Who owned the house you grew up in?
- Does your family still own the house?
- Can you describe the house to me? The neighborhood?
- Did you parents improve the house in any way?
- Who all lived in your house growing up?
- How did your family manage chores?
- Did your parents keep animals or grow a garden?
- What was your mother's job? Father's job?
- Who did you play with growing up? How did you entertain yourself?
- Did you play any sports? Join any clubs/organizations?
- Did you go to church as a child? Which religion or denomination were you?
- Were you seriously ill as a child? Any siblings or parents?
- When you were a child was there any talk of politics? Unions?

Community:

- Can you describe your childhood neighborhood to me?
- Did neighbors help each other out? In which ways?
- Did you parents have the same or different friends?
- Which social class would you describe your family as part of growing up?
- In your neighborhood were you better off or worst off then most your neighbors?

School:

- Where did you start school? (Elementary) How old were you?
- How did you do in school? (Academically, Socially, Discipline)
- What do you remember about the teachers?
- Gangs/Violence at school?
- Did you notice if they treated different kids from various social or ethnic backgrounds differently?
- What is the highest level of schooling you completed?

Military Experience: (Training)

- What branch of the military did you serve?
- What was your rank? Where did you serve?
- How did you get involved in the military? Did you enlist or get drafted?
- Where did you receive your basic training?
- What jobs did you hold during the Vietnam War? Did you request a specific job?
- Tell me about military life in those days (How was the food, how were the rules, what were the hours, what did you do with your free time, what kind of uniforms were you issued, what shelter was provided, what was the weather like?)

Military Experience: (In the Field)

- How did you get to the war zone?
- What was your first experience in a foreign country, what was your first impression?
- What do you remember about your fellow soldiers? About your commanders?
- Did you trust and support American civilian and military leaders?
- What battles were you involved in?
- 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 change your views over the span of the war?
- How did you feel when the war ended?
- What did you do when you heard the news?
- 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?
- What was your homecoming like? Was there anyone waiting for you when you returned?
- Did you receive any medals or citations? What was your highest rank?
- Did you ever meet anyone famous? Did you ever attend a USO show?

General Vietnam Questions:

- Did you know much about Vietnam before you were deployed there?

- What are your political views about how the war was handled by varying administrations? (Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon)
- Militarily, the Tet Offensive is considered a great victory for the US. However, the press & the public considered it a massive defeat. What are your feelings about this event?
- Unlike previous wars, such as WWI & WWII, Vietnam saw many protests. What do you think made this war so different than previous wars?
- Much is said about the drug use in Vietnam. Was the drug problem really that widespread or has this been greatly exaggerated?
- Is there any one movie or book that you think really sums up what Vietnam was really like?

After the War:

- Do you stay in contact with those you served in the military with?
- I understand you are involved in the local VFW post. Why did you decide to get involved? What positions have you held?
- Do you think students today learn enough about Vietnam in school?
- What are some misconceptions about Vietnam?

Employment:

- In school any part time jobs? Summer jobs?
- What did you want to do, as you were growing up and going to school?
- How did you get your first full time job? What were you doing?
- What was the working environment like? (Relaxed, strict)
- Join any trade unions?
- Did you ever have more than one job at a time?
- Did you ever want to change jobs? Why?

Leisure & Courting:

- How long did you live at home? Did you have your own room?
- What did you do in your free time? (Movies, Sports, Church groups, organizations)
- Do you remember doing anything that would have gotten you in trouble with the police?
- Did you ever get into fights?
- What were your parents' attitudes toward girlfriends? Dating?

Marriage & Children

- Can you tell me how & where you and your wife first met?
- Where did you live? Did either of your parents help you out with your first place to live?
- Can you describe the subsequent homes you lived in?
- Why did you decide to get married? How old were you?
- Can you remember your wedding day? What sticks in your mind about that day?

- What type of work does your wife do? Same as when you were dating?
- Do you have children? How many? (Names/Years of birth)
- When you were bringing up your children, what did you think was important to give them?
- How had your children's education gone? What types of schools have they attended?
- Were your attitudes towards your children, their friends, their spouses or girlfriends different from your parents views?

Adult & Later Life

- How have your interests changed as you have matured?
- Do you enjoy traveling? Driving?
- How has your health been in your adult life? What are your feelings about alternative medicine?
- What type of food do you usually eat? What is a "typical meal"?
- How often do you exercise? Do you feel it is important to live a healthy lifestyle? Did your parents have the same feelings?
- How do you think social attitudes have changed about funerals & death? How have funerals changed in your lifetime?

Conclusion:

- How would you describe your identity? (i.e.: Italian, working class)
- What would you describe as the best thing in your life? The worst thing?
- What would you like to do with your time ahead?

Thanks:

Thank you for you for giving up your valuable time to assist me with the Veterans History Project.

