Orientation on World War II Veterans – Lesson Plan

How old were the veteran's you are about to interview in 1942, when the US was just entering World War II? Probably between 18 and 21—they could have been your older brothers, and some of you could have enlisted to fight—with your parent's permission. Much has changed since then, and I will use the next 20 minutes to orient you to the veterans then and now.

I will start by briefly introducing myself and my organization's role with Cumberland Valley School District and the Army Heritage Center Foundation, the 3 sponsors of this program. I'll next reveal the life of a teen ager as these veterans saw it, and then what you can expect of them seventy years later. I hope this will help you get started with the oral history process.

- SST Veteran's Memorial Committee:
  -- My name is Clarence Bouchat a 30 year Air Force veteran, retired as a lieutenant colonel
  --- flew fighters, F-4s/F-111s, stationed in Germany, Japan, Korea, England, and Malaysia
  --- served during Cold War, Op Desert Storm (Kuwait), Op Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan
  -- member of SST Veteran's Memorial Committee whose mission is:
  --- remember and honor the sacrifice of all veterans, peacetime and combat—all eras
  --- help motivate the community to service beyond self: local, state, country, and beyond
  --- part of memorial in Willow Mill Park dedicated 11 November 2011 BROCHURE

- My interest in this program is the oral histories you will create as a living part of the memorial
  -- your oral histories will help us do that -- remember the veterans and tell their stories
  --- why your oral history and the reflection piece is on how serving influenced the veteran
  -- incorporate your works in official archives, but also locally as part of SST Veterans Memorial
  --- posted on SST VMC web site http://www.sstveteransmemorial.com/default.htm
  --- use to inspire others with veteran's stories, what you produce will endure
  -- other opportunities to help – Volunteer for web page, research history, design landscaping
  - In this program I act as the liaison for the veterans, if any questions about a veteran ask me

America in 1940
- What was America like when these veterans were 10-25 years old? Changes and similarities
- Population
  -- 132,000,000 Americans in 1940 – in 2011 over 310,000,000 – more than doubled
  --- PA 2nd largest (9.9 mil), # 1 NY (13.4), IL (7.9) OH (6.9), CA (6.9) – 2010 #6 12.3 mil
  -- Urban, USA only 58% live in cities, PA 66% -- 2010 82% live in cities
  -- life expectancy 63 years, half of population dead – 2010 78 years old, half not collect SS
  --- IMR all deaths under age 1, 45/1000 -- 2010 6/1000 - much better medical care now
  --- Penicillin and blood plasma both first used – very important in treating war wounded

- Economics – America coming out of depression, in 2011 America trying to avoid a depression
  -- GDP $101 billion, in 2007 $14,074 billion – 140 times larger (not accounting for inflation)
  --- industry converted to war arms and America becomes arsenal for democracy
  -- 28% men in agriculture or mining, 32% industry, 40% services – 2010 1%, 22%, 77%
  --- few women worked outside the home, but the war effort would change that too
  --- unemployment at 14.6% end of depression
  -- High school graduates in 1945: 32%, college: 5% -- 2010 80%, 27%
  --- teachers earned $1,374, spent $85/student – 2010, 49K per teacher, 4K/student yearly
  -- new car $800, gas 18c/gl, new house $6550, milk 34c/gl, bread 8c
  --- PA Turnpike opens as America's first super highway – stimulus project
Entertainment: no internet, no smart phones, no iPods, no music videos right???
popular song:  http://www.last.fm/music/The+Andrews+Sisters/_/Boogie+Woogie+Bugle+Boy
Walt Disney's *Pinocchio* top movie at cinema, with others a shared experience

1940 Olympics are cancelled due to the war, were to be held in Tokyo and Helsinki
*McDonalds* and *Dairy Queen* both get their start
Newspapers and radio are how most people get their news and entertainment reading about

- Politics:
  -- Alaska and Hawaii are not states – although both will be attacked by the Japanese
  --- World War II already started for the rest of the world,
  --- Japanese conquest and atrocities in China since 1937
  --- Germany invades Poland, Denmark, and Norway, and France falls. Britain stands alone
  -- US *Selective Service* starts, many of you young men have been eligible to be drafted
  -- FDR will be the only president elected to a third term, in office 8 years already

That was then, this is now. What happened to those World War II veterans?
- 12 WWII, 2 Korean partic: 2 Pearl, 1 So Pac, 1 D-Day, 1 Bulge, 2 B-29s, 3 POW, 1 Inchon
  -- only 10% of WWII veterans saw combat, still served in USA, training, maintenance
- This generation saw so much destruction spent their lives building—GI Bill sends to college
  -- 4 WWII veterans became career military, 2 officers, 1 MSgt retired
  -- generation builds the *interstates*, man on moon, reverses Jim Crow, wins Cold War, polio
- Korean War overshadowed, not as popular (rebuilding), start of Cold War and nuclear deter

- Today an 18 year old soldier in 1942 is 87 - veterans you'll meet were junior enlisted/officers
  -- gone from radio shows to digital age – not as technologically savvy as you
  -- age related physical ailments – poor eye sight, hard of hearing, poor mobility, memory lost
  -- some have ailments from their service – malaria from the jungle, scars, burns, broken bone
  -- all of this means you need to accommodate, use telephone and mail, go to their home
  -- may be curmudgeonly – irritated that they are not as strong as once was or as independent

- What does all of this mean for you?
  -- be *patient*, work with veterans to overcome their problems
  -- ask about war reaction, basic training, duties, transport, home coming, what it meant
  -- *call ahead*, be punctual, be prepared, be respectful, get in their shoes (old and young)
  -- they'll complain some – feeling pains, feeling forgotten, feeling lonely, feeling mortality
  --- *complaints* against the military or veterans administration – be sympathetic
  -- be creative in contacting them. May not hear telephone ring
  --- they are much more use to receiving mail or visits, so use that if no phone contact

- Some have not talked about their experiences, and bottled them up
  -- raw emotional experiences – outbursts, crying, suppressed memories
  -- memory loss, remember events wrong after 70 years — not according to history books
  --- be respectful, ask for clarification, gently ask about what you think is the right answer
  --- accept answer and research later. With facts seek more clarification, but do not confront

- Some may die during this year
  -- last year when we identified 23 World War II veterans, 2 have died
  -- natural process for elderly, we can expect at least one veteran to die this school year
  -- if it happens be respectful and sympathetic to his family
  --- send a sympathy card expressing your condolences
  --- if you connected with the veteran, other things to consider:
---- call the family to express condolences, share notes already taken with veteran
---- CVSD grief counselor, talk to your own family members and friends
--- if sufficiently advanced (after first interview), complete project as memorial to veteran

- To help you get a better perspective of this period from the view of the veteran, posted on web site are lists of movies to watch, books to read, or music to listen to
  -- I hope I put into perspective your project and how your interviewees saw and see the world

Sources:

Events:  http://whathappenedinmybirthyear.com/
         http://www.answers.com/topic/1940

Population data:  http://www.1930census.com/1940_the_year_in_history.php
                  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1940_United_States_Census
                  http://www2.census.gov/prod2/statcomp/documents/1941-02.pdf
                  eO: http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0005148.html#axzz0zRg23xAh
                  IMR: http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5714a6.htm

Econ:
GDP: http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0104575.html#axzz0zRdQDEMI
Ed: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educational_attainment_in_the_United_States
Costs: http://www.tvhistory.tv/1940%20QF.htm

Juke box: http://www.6thcorpsmusic.us/

--- Harrisburg 83,000 people in 1940, but only 49,000 in 2010
-- 33 million 15 years or less – over 25%, only 13 million older 65 -- 2010 60 mil, 20%, 39 13%
-- Tony Dorsett "I'll Never Smile Again" 1940 top of the charts MUSIC LIST