

“Peace and War in the Heartland: What has history taught us?”

Family History Project

Objective: To create an archive of family history accounts in diverse media formats to be stored at the Minnesota Historical Society.

- The issue of war and peace has touched almost every Heartland family.
 - There is a wealth of archival material lost every year as family members die.
 - Their war time activities (pro and anti) are often lost or destroyed.
 - Creating a family history account strengthens families in many ways. Family memory is especially useful for young members as they form their personal and social identities and commitments.
 - Family history accounts provide insights into historical events often glossed over by general historical narratives.
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Archival materials

Whatever format you use, it will be preserved. Newspaper clippings, family letters, military papers and awards, alternative newspapers, music (sheets or other formats), CD-ROM, audio and videotapes, etc., are sought.

Copying

When providing materials, please indicate whether you want them copied and returned, or that they are donations.

Interview Material

A limited number of interview questions follows.

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Interview Questions

- These are simply starter questions.
- They can be asked in whatever order fits your situation.
- The goal is to discover the untold story within your own family.
- While most of these questions relate to males who participated in or protested a specific war, they should also be asked of women of the family.

1. What war did you participate in or protest?
2. Did you enlist or were you drafted?
3. Did you refuse induction, that is, to “step forward”?
4. Did you have a deferment? “Conscientious Objector,” student, etc.
5. Did you protest while in the military service?
6. Did you protest as a veteran? If so, did you join a veterans protest group, e.g., Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Veterans for Peace.
7. Did you actively encourage others to enlist in or resist the war effort?
8. How long were you active?
9. How did you feel about the war as it started?
10. How did you feel about the war after it ended?
11. How did you feel about protesting before and after the war?
12. What were the key factors that influenced your decisions at that time?

Rank the 5 to 7 most influential with #1 being the most influential, etc.

- Parents
- Peers
- Siblings
- Teachers
- Faith Ministers

- Veterans of previous wars
- Family: uncles, aunts, grandfather, cousin, etc.
- Movie figures: e.g., John Wayne, Audie Murphy, Rambo, Ron Kovic.
- Musicians: e.g., Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Bruce Springsteen, Charlie Daniels.
- Public figures: politicians, corporate leaders, nonviolent leaders, etc.
- Intellectuals: authors, TV and radio personalities, internet sites, documentary producers, etc.
- Other:

Discuss and expand upon your selections.

13. In the midst of your activity (pro or anti-war) did you ever question your initial decision? If so, what caused you to question yourself?

14. After the specific war's end, did you ever question your initial decision? Provide a time-frame for your decision-making situations, and expand.

15. What were the images of healthy and true masculinity in your generation?

Rank the 5 to 10 most influential with #1 being most influential, etc.

- Breadwinner and household provider
- Disciplinarian
- Muscular
- Worked hard and played hard (drinking & smoking)
- Care-giver
- Foundation of family affection
- Moral leader
- Civic-minded (always voted; participated in community affairs)
- Teacher (non-classroom)
- Coach

- Athletic
- Even-tempered moderate
- Victor/Winner (in whatever endeavor undertaken)
- Family Man
- Change agent
- Man of faith
- Cultured
- Obedient
- “My country, right or wrong, my country!”
- Optimistic
- Exact just vengeance
- Protector
- Listener
- Abhor violence
- Abuser of women is a coward
- “War secures the peace.”
- Christian man
- “What would Jesus do?”
- Defender of the poor, weak and disadvantaged
- Persecutor of evil-doers
- Others:

Discuss and expand upon your selections.

16. External influences

- List the books, articles, movies, public discussions, protest activities, public speeches, posters, pictures, letters, etc., that influenced you.
- What images and language (catch phrases, “Loose lips sink ships!” or “Hell No we won’t go!” and the like) best characterize your war and generation’s attitude. For example, the movie “All’s Quiet on

the Western Front,” “Apocalypse Now, ” or “Jarhead.” Or, the comedies of war, Abbott and Costello’s movies or “Dr. Strangelove” or “The Dogs of War.” The same with other media, such as the poster of the My Lai massacre, WWII posters of Japanese soldiers, the Army’s “Be all you can be,” the famous “Uncle Sam wants you!”, and so forth. The same with music, from religious (“Onward Christian Soldier”) to “All we are saying is give peace a chance.”

17. Summary and Interpretation

- Comment on what this project has revealed about your family’s involvement in and attitude towards the issues of war and peace.

Contact: information@minnesota8.net and ask where materials should be sent.