



*The foundation for court reporting philanthropy*

Dear NCRA/VHP Volunteer,

Thank you for volunteering to transcribe the firsthand recollections of America's war veterans.

Please refer to *A Guide to Transcribing and Editing Oral History Interviews*, a document by the Library of Congress Veterans History Project that provides a brief overview of VHP and other creation and style guidelines you should follow.

As a measure of our appreciation for your participation, NCRA will award 0.25 (that's "point two five") PDC for each transcription that you complete, and you may accumulate a maximum of 1.0 PDC (or four transcriptions) per three-year certification cycle. But we encourage you to transcribe as many interviews as you like.

Please return a hard copy of your transcript; a CD with the transcript as a .txt file; and a signed Voluntary Services Agreement with your work information on it to Jill Parker Landsman within one month of receipt of this letter and related materials. **If you are transcribing more than one collection, please complete and return a separate two-sided Voluntary Services Agreement with each transcription. Include your name, company name, employer, or independent contractor status.**

For more information, visit [loc.gov/vets](http://loc.gov/vets) or [ncra.org/ncrf/oralhistories](http://ncra.org/ncrf/oralhistories).

Again, thank you for helping to transcribe a veteran's oral history.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jill Parker Landsman".

Jill Parker Landsman  
Foundation Manager  
[jlandsman@ncra.org](mailto:jlandsman@ncra.org)  
703-584-9052



Dear NCRA/VHP Volunteer:

I welcome you to the family of volunteer historians who are making the Veterans History Project (VHP) the largest national documentation effort since the 1930s and 1940s government-sponsored Works Progress Administration.

VHP collects and archives the personal recollections of U.S. veterans to honor their service and share their stories with current and future generations.

The recorded interviews you have agreed to transcribe will become part of the permanent collections of the Library of Congress. Researchers, historians, students of history, family members, and anyone else who has an interest in these stories will now be able to access these one-of-a-kind oral histories in printed format.

For more information, visit [loc.gov/vets](http://loc.gov/vets) or [ncra.org/ncrf/oralhistories](http://ncra.org/ncrf/oralhistories).

Your contribution is invaluable to us, and I thank you, the National Court Reporters Association, and the National Court Reporters Foundation.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Kerry Ward, VHP Liaison Specialist at 202-707-1196 or [kwar@loc.gov](mailto:kwar@loc.gov).

Sincerely,

Karen Lloyd

Director, Veterans History Project



# A Guide to Transcribing and Editing Oral History Interviews

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**Note:** More and more court reporters are recording the stories of the veterans in their lives and then transcribing that interview. Please consult the Veterans History Project Field Kit (a how-to-record-a-story booklet located at [loc.gov/vets](http://loc.gov/vets) (click on “How to Participate”)) for straightforward, step-by-step instructions on how you can conduct interviews of the veterans in your life.



## Section I: Introduction to the Veterans History Project

The United States Congress created the Veterans History Project (VHP) in 2000. The authorizing legislation (Public Law 106-380), sponsored by Representatives Ron Kind, Amo Houghton, and Steny Hoyer in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senators Max Cleland and Chuck Hagel in the U.S. Senate, received unanimous support and was signed into law by President William Jefferson Clinton on October 27, 2000.

Since its inception, VHP has collected more than 110,000 stories from veterans who share their unique perspective on the major conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries: World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, and future conflicts.

NCRA Member Tawni Kind, RMR, CRR, CRC, wife of Representative Kind, envisioned an opportunity for court reporters to play a significant role in VHP. Since March 2003, members of NCRA have been transcribing the recorded interviews of veterans. Once VHP receives the transcribed interviews from NCRA, the VHP processing staff integrates them into the collection, and each transcript may be digitized and put online ([loc.gov/vets](http://loc.gov/vets)).

To date, NCRA members have transcribed nearly 4,300 interviews, thus increasing access to VHP's collection, allowing staff, researchers, and the general public a more comprehensive look at each story.



## Section II: Creating and Editing Transcripts

The Veterans History Project provides NCRF/NCRA with exact duplicates of its master recordings via VHP Web links. Interviews are conducted by volunteers who may not have professional training, and the audio or video-recorded interviews may contain inherent flaws, such as poor audio/video quality or conversations that end mid-sentence. Please make every effort to transcribe them as-is, and note any problems that arise.

### A. Formatting the Transcript

The transcript should consist of two parts: The cover sheet and the body. The cover sheet will be page 1 and will contain the essential identifying information for both the veteran and the transcriber. **When formatting the transcript, please use one-inch margins, double-space the text and paginate. Do not use ALL CAPS.**

#### 1. Cover Sheet

On the cover sheet, identify:

- Veteran's Name
- Interview date (if known)
- Transcriber
- Transcription date

#### 2. Body

- Identify all speakers at the start of their comments, by typing their name in bolded letters, followed by a colon, e.g., **John Smith:**

Example:

**Adam Jones:**

Good morning.

**John Smith:**


Good morning.

**Adam Jones:**

Mr. Smith, tell me about your first day of basic training.

**John Smith:**

They shipped us to Fort Benning by train.

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- **Do NOT include line numbers in the transcript or borders around the text.** This formatting interferes with VHP’s ability to digitize the transcript.
  - **Do NOT include headers or footers.**
  - **Do NOT include time indicators.**
  - **DO ensure formatting is consistent – size, font, etc.**

## **B. Formatting the CD and Electronic File**

- Save file as “Veteran’s Last Name”, i.e. Smith.txt.
- Save file in .txt format. If using Microsoft software, such as Word or WordPad, or other proprietary software, please remember to save the transcript as a .txt file, otherwise it may automatically save in another format. Please do not submit a file in PDF.
- **Do NOT include any additional files on the disc.** If you are submitting an original interview, please submit the interview recording on a separate disc.
- Label the CD case or sleeve with the veteran’s name and collection number, i.e., “AFC 2001/001/#####” (found on the interviewee’s webpage), if applicable. **Do NOT write or place a label directly on the surface of the CD.**
- After saving the file, re-open the file to ensure it is readable.
- In addition to saving the electronic file on CD, **please save a copy on your hard drive.** This ensures that if the CD is damaged in transit there is a back-up copy available.

PLEASE NOTE: As of July 2010, we no longer accept floppy disks. All transcripts must be submitted on CD or thumb drive.

## **C. Interview Web links**

- Audio and video files may be accessed directly via the VHP website, or downloaded onto your computer.



## Section III: Style Guidelines

All media deteriorates over time; this is one of the reasons transcription is essential to the long-term preservation of the Veterans History Project collections. To ensure the accuracy of the transcript, please keep the following suggestions in mind:

- Listen to the recording in its entirety once to become familiar with the voices and the questions being asked.
- Create a verbatim transcript, but omit such expressions as “um” or “ah”. Include expressions such as “umhum” or “huh-huh” when used to mean “yes” or “no” in response to specific questions.
- Do not revise the narrator’s words to force them into standard written prose. Leave untouched any sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and incorrect grammar. Commas and dashes may be used to reflect pauses in the spoken words.

To ensure the consistency of the transcripts, listed below are style guidelines:

- **Abbreviations:**  
In general, spell out words in full. Abbreviations, however, should be used for these common titles: Mr., Ms., Dr. Spell out names of currency (dollars, cents, pounds), percent, and number, (e.g. number 14, not #14). **Do not use ampersands (&).** Spell out the words “and”, “okay”, “etcetera.”  
Example: A: In October, I left for R and R leave to Japan.
- **Abrupt sentence shifts or quick thought changes:**  
Use two dashes (--).  
Example: A: Will he--can he--open the door?
- **Garbled or inaudible portions of the tape:**  
If one word is inaudible, indicate the gap with a \_\_\_\_ . When multiple words are inaudible, insert \_\_\_\_+ or estimate the elapsed time using the indicator \_\_\_\_ .... (\_\_\_\_ seconds).
- **Interruptions:**  
Put in brackets explanations about why the interview was interrupted or why the tape recorder was turned off, i.e., [Interview interrupted by a telephone call].
- **Motions or gestures:**  
Only include when a motion or gesture is in place of spoken words or affects the content of the interview. Use brackets.  
Example: A: {Coughs}--Excuse me.



- **Numbers:**  
Spell out one through nine, and use numerals for 10 and above. Likewise, spell out first through ninth, and use numerals for 10th and above, i.e., First Division, 182nd Airborne.
- **Spelling:**  
Spell all words accurately to the best of your ability. **Check the spelling of all proper nouns and place names to ensure they are correct. Leave out accents.** For words that are only partially decipherable, spell the word phonetically as best you can. Indicate that it is a phonetic spelling by typing (ph) after the word (see the LOC Suggested Reference Guide for helpful websites).
- **Uncertainty about a word or phrase:**  
Place a question mark before and after a word or phrase to indicate any uncertainty about it, e.g., (?destroyed?).





# EXAMPLE

**VETERAN:** John Smith  
**INTERVIEW DATE:** July 18, 2020  
**TRANSCRIBER:** Jane Johnson  
**TRANSCRIPTION DATE:** August 3, 2020

**Adam Jones:**

Okay. Today is July 18th, 2020. I am the interviewer, Adam Jones, and I am interviewing the veteran, John Smith. His birth date is July 19, 1959. He is a veteran of the US Air Force, and he was in the Air Force from August 1977 to August 1997. I guess the interview will begin.

So John--

**John Smith:**

Yes.

**Adam Jones:**

As a veteran of Desert Storm, you probably did not enlist. I mean you probably were not drafted into the service. You probably enlisted.

**John Smith:**

That's right.

**Adam Jones:**

Why did you enlist? What was your motivating factor?

**John Smith:**

I was getting out of high school. I didn't want to go to college. We really didn't have the \_\_\_\_+. I wanted to do something. I didn't want to stay in my hometown and do nothing or, you know, get some minimum wage job. I wanted to do something. I wanted to, I guess, be out on my own. So the military seemed like a good, a good opportunity. My father was in the Air Force. I--that may have had some influence on my decision, maybe a little bit, but my folks were divorced. So that may not have had a great amount of influence, but



## Section IV: Library of Congress Suggested Reference Guide

Navy Ranks

<https://www.history.navy.mil/>

Geography and Place Names

<http://www.columbiagazetteer.org> (available online with a subscription)

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nagpra/DOCUMENTS/BasesMapIndex.htm>

VHP Web Site

<http://www.loc.gov/vets>



## Commonly Misspelled Words and Place Names

### Miscellaneous names and words:

Bombardier  
Cavalry  
Commendation Medal  
General Douglas MacArthur  
Marine Corps  
Medals (awards) – NOT metals (i.e. gold or copper)  
Ordnance

### US locations:

Camp Atterbury, Indiana  
Camp Lejeune, North Carolina  
Parris Island, South Carolina

### European Theater locations:

Le Havre, France

### Pacific Theater locations:

Bougainville Island (Solomon Islands)  
Enewetak Atoll (Marshall Islands)  
Guadalcanal (Solomon Islands)  
Ie-Shima (Ryukyu Islands)  
Kwajalein Island (Marshall Islands)  
Leyte Island (Philippines)  
New Hebrides  
Peleliu Island (Palau)  
Tarawa Atoll (Gilbert Islands)

### Vietnam locations:

Bien Hoa  
Cam Ranh Bay  
Da Nang  
Long Binh  
Nha Trang  
Phu Bai  
Pleiku  
Qui Nhon  
Tan Son Nhut



# Voluntary Services Agreement

## Veterans History Project

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ACTIVITY

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DATE(S)

By signing this form you agree that, for the activity indicated above, you will provide voluntary services to the Library of Congress on a gratuitous basis as explained in any instructions that the Library may separately provide, and you certify that you may lawfully perform such services.

- You waive any compensation for your services and waive any future claims against the Library for pay for these services.
- You are not an employee of the Library while providing these services and working in this capacity does not entitle you to benefits available to Library employees or to a future position in the Library.
- The Library is entitled to use, at no cost, any work product you may produce as a result of your services.

THE VOLUNTEER:

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NAME

---

SIGNATURE

---

DATE

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EMAIL



## Veterans History Project Checklist

**NOTE:** The Veterans History Project requires that the following items be returned with your transcription.

- Signed and completed Voluntary Services Agreement
- VHP CD, DVD, or original recording, if applicable
- Hard copy of the transcript
- CD or thumb drive with an electronic copy of the transcript in .txt format

Please note any problems you encountered with the recording (background noise, muffled voices, etc. . .).

More and more court reporters are recording the stories of the veterans in their lives and then transcribing that interview. Please consult the Veterans History Project Field Kit (a how-to-record-a-story booklet located at [loc.gov/vets](http://loc.gov/vets) (click on “How to Participate”)) for step-by-step instructions on how you can conduct interviews of the veterans in your life.

Be sure to include the audio or video recording of the interview along with the transcript.

**Mail your completed packet to:**

Ms. Jill Parker Landsman, Foundation Manager  
National Court Reporters Foundation  
12030 Sunrise Valley Dr. Suite 400  
Reston, VA 20191