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Sample Interview Questions

The following is a generic set of questions for interviewing an elderly person. This is compiled primarily for recording a family history and childhood memories.

You do not have to ask all of these questions. This is only a guide that will help the person you are interviewing, to remember various details from the past.

If you are a volunteer and only recording childhood memories or lifestyles from the past, you can skip the family history part.

In the event the person you are interviewing served in the military during any war or was married to a member of the military that served during a war, we have a separate set of interview questions that deal with the war years.

- 1) Would you tell me your name? (Have them spell out any unusual or difficult names)
- 2) When and where were you born?

Family History

Fathers Side of the Family

Father

- 3) Could I have your fathers name and the date and location of his birth, if known?
- 4) Do you have any stories you can share about your father, such as what type of work he did, stories about his personality, or stories he shared about his life when he was young?

Grandparents

- 5) Who were his parents and do you know when and where they were born?
- 6) Do you have any stories you can share about your fathers parents, such as what type of work they did, their lifestyles, etc.
- 7) Do you have any old recipes or photographs of your father's parents?

Great-grandparents

- 8) Who were your fathers grandparents and do you know when and where they were born?
- 9) Do you have any stories you can share about your fathers grandparents, such as what type of work they did, their lifestyles, etc.
- 10) Do you have any old recipes or photographs of your father's grandparents?

Aunts, Uncles, etc.

- 11) Did you father have any brothers and sisters and if so, what type of stories can you tell me about them or their lives?

- 12) Did your father's parents have any brothers or sisters and if so, what type of stories can you tell me about them or their lives?

Mothers Side of the Family

Mother

- 13) Could I have your Mothers name and the date and location of her birth, if known?
14) Do you have any stories you can share about your mother, such as what type of work she did, stories about her personality, or stories she shared about her life growing up?

Grandparents

- 15) Who were her parents and do you know when and where they were born?
16) Do you have any stories you can share about your mothers parents, such as what type of work they did, their lifestyles, etc?
17) Do you have any old recipes or photographs of your mother's parents?

Great-grandparents

- 18) Who were your mothers grandparents and do you know when and where they were born?
19) Do you have any stories you can share about your mothers grandparents, such as what type of work they did, their lifestyles, etc?
20) Do you have any old recipes or photographs of your mother's grandparents.

Aunts, Uncles, etc.

- 21) Did your mother have any brothers and sisters and if so, what type of stories can you tell me about them or their lives.
22) Did your mothers parents have any brothers or sisters and if so, what type of stories can you tell me about them or their lives?

Memories

- 23) Did your parents ever tell you how they met or share any stories about their courting days?

24) Do you have any brothers or sisters?

25) Can you tell me any stories about them, such as if any of them served in the military, or any information about their personality, lives, jobs, etc.

26) What type of games did you play, when you were young?

27) What type of music did you listen to, sing or play?

28) What other forms of entertainment did you enjoy?

29) How big was the school you went to?

30) What was the first vehicle you ever saw, rode in or drove?

31) What types of foods did your mother serve when you were young?

32) Describe the bed you used as a child.

33) Describe other furniture in your home, when you were a child.

34) Describe the clothing you wore as a child.

- 35) How was your home heated? What type of lighting did you have and what type of stove did your mother use?
- 36) Share a favorite Christmas, New Years, Fourth of July or Halloween memory from your childhood.
- 37) Do you remember The Great Depression, the assassination of our President or any other vitally important life altering event in history and if so, how did it affect your life?
- 38) What was your first job? How old were you and how much did you get paid?
- 39) Did you ever serve in the military and if so, what branch and outfit were you attached to?
- 40) Do you remember the day Pearl Harbor was attacked, a man landed on the moon or any other FIRST Major WORLD EVENT and if so, how did you hear about it and what was your reaction or the reaction of others around you?
- 41) Who was the first person you ever dated? How did you meet them and what types of things did you do on your dates?
- 42) Did you ever get married and if so, who to? How did you meet? Who proposed and how? Describe the wedding. Did anyone perform Shivaree after your wedding?
- 43) Do you have any stories you would like to share about your spouse and things they told you about what their life was like before you met?
- 44) Do you have any other stories or memories you would like to share about your life, the lives of others or old lifestyles in general?

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