



## The Importance of Knowing Another Person's Story

### LOOKING BACK:

World War II was arguably the greatest event of the twentieth century. It fundamentally changed our military, economy, and social structures. The generation that lived through this war—both fighting and serving on the Homefront—has become known as the *Greatest Generation*. After growing up in the Great Depression, these men and women were called to put their lives on hold and meet the challenge of a world war. Some volunteered for the military, some were drafted, some joined the workforce, and some worked in their homes and communities to support the war effort.

This generation is now in its late 80s and 90s. As more of these men and women pass away, their stories pass with them. Some of them mistakenly think that if they were not in active military service, their stories do not matter, but the stories of all those who contributed make up the fabric of our national history.

Oral histories allow us to capture people's stories and pass them on. The main tool needed to conduct an oral history of one of your family members or friends is time at home—and that is something we have right now.

### ONLINE RESOURCES:

Explore this National Park Service website that explains why oral histories matter and watch a few stories:

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/worldwarii/oralhistories.htm>

Visit this Website from the National WWII Museum to prepare for and conduct an oral history of your own:

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/oral-history-resources>

### LIVING THE LEGACY:

- Conduct an oral history. Who do you know who lived through the World War II era? Are you able to speak with that person on the phone or on a video chat? If you don't know anyone who lived through World War II, who is someone who lived through another interesting era you could interview?
- Develop your interview questions ahead of time. What are some things you would like to ask him/her? Remember, you are not limited to these! As you actively listen to this person's story; ask follow-up questions.
- Audio or video record the conversation so you can go back and listen to it again.
- When you are done, transcribe (type) the interview word-for-word. The format should look like this:  
**Oral History Format:**  
**Jennifer Smith:** How old were you when you were drafted?  
**Robert Smith:** I was drafted in 1943 when I was 20 years old.
- Finally, reflect on the experience of creating an oral history. What did you learn? What might you change next time? Where will you keep the oral history, so it stays in your family?

To learn more about The Michigan WWII Legacy Memorial, visit our Website at [www.michiganww2memorial.org](http://www.michiganww2memorial.org) or "like" us on Facebook.