

RMS Sept. Update: Top 5 “Do’s and Don’ts” When Capturing Oral History for Your Command

Message from RMS President, Sharlene Hawkes

Whether you’re working with us, or someone else, I really hope that your Command and Unit history is getting done. And one of the biggest elements of that history is of course, your oral history. Get those interviews while details can still be remembered! And when our editors receive the hours and hours of videotaped interviews from any one of the Units we’re working with, invariably there will be an amazing soundbite that is simply unusable for the historical record. Why? Because whoever was shooting the interview didn’t understand some basic rules of video camera work. RMS is in the process of completing a full training video specifically for this purpose, but in the meantime, here are the top 5 Do’s and Don’ts to watch out for:

#5 DON’T double or triple up on interviews. Only interview one person at a time, unless there is a particular shared experience that would be enhanced with the simultaneous re-telling of it. The other exception is families with small children, if you want the children participation.

#4 DON’T videotape in front of a window. Your subject will become a silhouette and will look like they’re in the witness protection program. Don’t put them in front of a blank wall either. **DO** set up a nice backdrop. Display a flag and your unit's crest. Maybe even a plant on the other side, but make sure it doesn’t look like branches are growing out of the subject’s head.

#3 DON’T use overhead lighting that will give the subject dark circles under their eyes, and avoid fluorescent lighting. **DO** make sure the subject is well lit from the front. Often, sitting the subject in front of a large window—but not in direct sunlight—will be the perfect light.

#2 After you begin recording, **DO** ask your subject—even if he/she is already well-known to the interviewer--to slowly say AND spell their first and last name, rank, and the unit they deployed with. This begins every interview.

#1 DON’T interview your subject standing on the side of a freeway. Surprisingly, we’ve seen quite a few of these. **DO** choose a QUIET spot where you know you will not be interrupted by loud noises, ideally inside a quiet room or office. Avoid outside interviews if possible. Use a clip-on microphone for best audio quality. Remember any outside noise interruptions you hear while interviewing, will end up on the tape. Don't be afraid to ask a question again if there was an interruption.

Bullets

- Remember My Service was in the Washington Times on August 13, 2009. [Click](#)

[here to read entire article.](#)

- Welcome to Wyoming National Guard! We can't wait to kick off next week!
- **FYI to all National Guard:** Please note that there is \$5,000,000 in the Senate Defense Appropriations Bill FY2010, specific to National Guard Unit History Records.

Sharlene's Calendar:

- Sept 10-12 NGAUS in Nashville, TN
- Sept. 30-Oct 2 Orlando, FL
- Oct 4-6 AUSA in Washington D.C.
- Oct 12-19 Afghanistan
- Oct 23-24 Dallas