

Preserving the History of Martin County Military Veterans

A key mission of the Martin County Historical Society is to preserve local history. One means of accomplishing this mission is by recording oral histories. Since January of 2011 the MCHS has been conducting oral history interviews of Martin County military veterans. This project is ongoing and currently being accomplished by Ernie and Sandy Nuss who have graciously given of their time to conduct and videotape these interviews.

The prospective individuals to be interviewed are identified by Ernie Nuss in looking through military books, newspapers, as well as from suggestions made by local people with knowledge of military veterans in Martin County. Once an individual is identified to be interviewed, Ernie follows a detailed procedure in preparation for the interview. First, he conducts historical research on the time and location in which the person served. Then, he spends several hours visiting with the individual and taking notes on the persons experiences. Next, he verifies all dates and locations discussed to be certain of accuracy. Finally, he will review his final draft of the interview with the participant for their approval. His objective in this detailed approach is to make every effort to include all aspects of the experience, including those contributing to the individual's experience that might not be readily observable on the surface of the interview.

The actual interview could take place in the person's home, the Pioneer Museum, or another location. The format for conducting the interview involves the participant being on camera, Ernie being off camera, and Sandy doing the taping. The interview begins with Ernie giving the introductions and prompting the interviewee by asking predetermined questions regarding his or her experiences. The intent regarding the content of the interview is to discuss only those things that the person being interviewed is comfortable with discussing. The entire preparation for the interview process from start to finish for Ernie typically involves twelve to twenty hours, while the interviews themselves normally last from thirty to sixty minutes.

Upon completion of the taping, the interview is transferred to DVD by staff at the Pioneer Museum and kept in the museum video library. Ernie and Sandy Nuss also purchase copies of the interview for the interviewee and their family members.

All county schools and Presentation College are provided information regarding the use of DVDs for educational purposes. The DVDs are also available to the public for viewing Monday through Friday at the Pioneer Museum at the media station in the Research Library.

To date, twenty-seven interviews have been conducted and taped and the twenty-eighth is currently in progress. This project is limited to lifelong Martin County residents, or residents that have lived a significant part of their lives in Martin County. The following have interviews on file in the Pioneer Museum: Chuck King, Truman Kittelson, Cliff Meyer, Mildred Brodt, Hurley Morris, John Hilgendorf, Veryl Champine, Jim Wetzler, Ray Park, Lester Sparks, Leo Mau, Delevan Hiebert, Fred Wollschlager, Rose Bancks, Mel Langford, Jim Simser, Loren Tesdahl, John Wagar, Chase Crawford, Clarence Luhmann, Herb Russ, Tony Stadler, Martin Welchlin, Thomas Wescott, Richard Kramer, Jeff Hagen, and Al Drobinski.

If you, or someone you know, would like to take part in this project call either the Pioneer Museum at (507) 235-5178 or Ernie Nuss at (507) 235-6281.





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