



Ten Things You Should Know about WWII

1. While African Americans served in segregated units, the U.S. military did not officially recognize Latinos as their own ethnic group; therefore, they were usually documented as, and lumped in with, Anglos. As a result, it's impossible to know exactly how many Hispanics fought for the U.S. during WWII.
2. Members of the military were both volunteers and draftees.
3. Much of the U.S. military during the WWII years was made up of people who were children during the Great Depression, so many were at least somewhat accustomed to austere living.
4. For many Latinos who served in WWII, the experience was the first time they felt like they were treated as equals to Anglos.
5. As a result, they wanted to be treated as equals when they came back home after the war, which was a huge impetus for the Latino civil rights movement.
6. The GI Bill of Rights gave many Hispanics who otherwise would not have had the funds a way to pay for college and other types of formal education.
7. Since so many men went off to war, U.S. women had unprecedented work opportunities; some directly participated in the war effort by joining the Armed Forces in one capacity or another, while others filled in for absent men in the work place.
8. During the WWII years, joining the Armed Forces to help the U.S. win the war was the cool thing to do. Young boys, in particular, dreamed of becoming American soldiers, and, one way or another, often enlisted before they were 18.
9. Unlike other wars since, Americans were largely unified in their support for the WWII effort.
10. The U.S. Postal Service was Americans' main vehicle of communication during WWII. Letters from military personnel to civilians were often censored by the military.



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Please start with this preamble:

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____. Today is month/day/year. I am in city, state, and location interviewing _____ for the Voces Oral History Project. Thank you, Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____ for agreeing to interviewed by our project.

Please know that if there are topics you don't wish to discuss, you will not have to discuss them. Also, if there is something you wish to discuss, we want to hear you. If at any point you wish to stop the camera to get a drink or use the facilities, please let us know.

As we said earlier, your interview will be housed at the Nettie Lee Benson Library at the University of Texas at Austin campus. So, let's begin.

Prewar

Family Life

1. Tell me about your childhood — what was your daily life like?
2. Do you have any brothers or sisters?
3. Were you the oldest?
4. Did you have to help take care of your siblings?
5. What kinds of things would you do together?
6. What are your memories of your childhood?
7. Where were your favorite places to be?
8. What did your parents do? Where were they born?
9. What memories do you have of your parents?
10. What traditions did your mother and father maintain from their up-bringing?
11. Were those traditions from their country?
12. Did your family have to struggle economically?
13. Were you aware of the Great Depression within the nation?
14. During the 1930s did any of your family members participate in any of the New Deal Programs President Roosevelt implemented, such as the CCC, or the WPA?
15. How did it affect your family?
16. What kinds of things did you do without?
17. How did you make up for things you couldn't get, like toys or clothes, etc.?
18. Did any of your family members participate in WWI?
19. How old were you when your parents died?
20. Do you think your attitudes about the country were different from your parents?
21. Do you think the expectations and opportunities were different for you than say your mother?
22. What languages did/do you speak?
23. Did you speak different languages in different settings, such as home, school, or work?
24. Did you read any Spanish or English publications before the war? After?
25. Did you listen to Spanish or English radio before, during, or after the war?

School Years

26. Tell me about your school years?
27. How many years were you in school?
28. Where did you go to school?
29. What were your first years in school like?
30. What was your school like?
31. What kinds of activities or clubs did you participate in?
32. Do you have any special memories about being in school?
33. What did you think about your teachers? Were you treated differently or just like everyone else?
34. Were your schools predominately Latino?
35. What was high school like?
36. What kinds of activities or clubs did you participate in?
37. What do you remember most about your high school days?
38. What kinds of things did you do with your friends after school?
39. Did you work while you were in school?
40. Was your school segregated in any way?
41. Do you remember being treated any differently from other students?
42. Do you remember others being treated differently?
43. Was the education you received about the same as the one your brothers and sisters received?
44. What did you do for fun while in school and after?

Life after School

1. What do you remember about what was going on in the country and your community when you were growing up during the 1940s?
2. How did your parents feel about you dating the opposite sex? Where would you go on dates? In groups or individually?
3. Did you attend college?
4. What did you study?
5. Did you encounter difficulties there?
6. What did you do during the 1940s, work, care for family, or participate in the National Youth Administration?
7. What do you recall about the time WWII started? How old were you? Did older siblings enlist? Were others later drafted?
8. Would you say you were like most other Latinas of your generation? In what ways were you similar or different?
9. What do you remember about Pearl Harbor?

War Experience

Home front

1. Were you a part of any organizations before the war? LULAC?
2. Did you support the war effort? What did your family do to support the war effort?

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3. Do you remember the rationing of goods during this time period? What did you and your family ration? How did you all get by without these commodities?
4. Would you describe yourself as being “political” or “apolitical” or something else?
5. Did you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, something else, or none of the above?
6. Did you discuss the war with friends and family?
7. What kinds of things do you remember talking about?
8. Did you want to go or did you not want to go serve in WWII? Why or why not?

Enlistment or Draft

9. How old were you when you enlisted and where were you?
10. What was your military branch?
11. Were you drafted or did you enlist voluntarily? What was the date of your enlistment or the date you were drafted? How long were you in the military?
12. If you entered military or government service voluntarily, why did you make this choice?
13. How did your family respond to your decision to enlist or to you being drafted?
14. Were many Latinos drafted or did many enlist in your community?
15. If several were drafted or enlisted, how did the community respond to the numbers?
16. Were you married when you went to serve? If so how did your wife react to your decision?
17. If married, where did you wife stay? What did she do while you were away? Did she work or stay with your or her family?

Basic Training

18. Where did you go for training? Describe this experience.
19. Was this your first time away from home? How did you feel about this?
20. How many other Latinos were with you at the training facility?
21. If there were others, did you all speak Spanish with each other? What other aspects of your culture did you retain while at the camp?
22. Did you befriend anyone while at the training camp?
23. Do you have a special memory while training?
24. Did your training prepare you for serving in the war?
25. Were you briefed about the people, culture, or terrain of various places you would serve while in training? Was it what you expected when you arrived?

Overseas

26. Upon arriving in your destination, what did you think of the indigenous population? How much contact did you have with them?
27. What was the interaction between the U.S. troops and the native population? What about with the native women?
28. What was a typical day like for you?
29. Describe the base in which you lived. What were your living conditions like? Housing, food, etc. Was there anything you missed about home? What did you miss the most?
30. Describe the ethnicities of the people in the base. Describe your relationship with these people, men and women.
31. If there were other Latinos stationed with you, did you all speak Spanish with each other? What other aspects of your culture did you retain while overseas?
32. What did you do for recreation?

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33. Describe the most memorable experience from base life.
34. Did you or someone you know face any type of discrimination while overseas? If so, can you describe the situations?
35. Did you feel any type of racial tension among enlisted men/women/officers? Can you provide examples?
36. Did you write letters to relatives and friends? If so, how often did you write?
37. Did you keep a diary or journal?
38. Were you involved in any major battles or engagements? Or were you at any point in contact with the enemy?
39. What were your specific duties during the war?
40. Were the assignments distributed equitably between the Anglo, Latino, and African-American troops? Was one group assigned to more combat missions than the other or was it equal?
41. Were you ever wounded down during the war? Describe this experience and the medical treatment that followed your injury if needed. How long were you out? Were you sent home?
42. Were you ever captured at any point during the war or know of anyone who was? Describe this experience please.
43. How did you feel about the military leadership within your unit? Did you feel secure under their leadership?
44. What do you remember most about combat if you were involved?
45. If you were a leader or commander, please describe the most difficult challenges you faced while as a Latino leader?
46. Were there several other Latino or African American officers? If not, why do you think many were not officers?
47. What awards, citations, or commendations did you receive for your service in WWII?

Postwar

48. How were you treated by the community and your family when you arrived in the states?
49. What do you think and feel about your service as a Latino in WWII?
50. What do you think and feel about US participation in the WWII? In other countries?
51. Do you suffer any disabilities because of the war?
52. Do you believe that the government took care of its troops during the war? Its veterans today?
53. Was it difficult for you to adjust back to civilian life after military service? Please explain?
54. Did you use the GI Bill for your education or to secure a home loan?
55. How did the war affect your life?
56. Have you ever been diagnosed or treated for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)? How are you coping? How did your family feel about your condition?
57. Would you change anything about your WWII experience?
58. Are any other members of your family in the military? How did you feel about this?
59. Recalling life before the war for Latinos, do you think life changed for them after the war, for example, advancement in education more job opportunities, etc.?
60. What did you do after the war? Where did you work?
61. Did you marry after the war? How many children did you have? Did you teach them Spanish?
62. What does military participation mean to you as a Latino?

WWII Interview Questions

63. Do you think that WWII affected Latinos differently than other races or do you think everyone was affected the same? Can you give some examples?
64. Do you think that war had an effect on the Latino community? In what ways? What difficulties remain?
65. Did you join any organizations after the war? LULAC, AGIF, American Legion, VFW?
66. Did you participate in the civil rights demonstrations after the war or were aware of any going on near you?
67. Do you remember any racial conflicts in your community or reading about any during the war or after?
68. From your life experience, is there a story about WWII that hasn't been told or that hasn't been told accurately?
69. How do you think your experience is different from those who served in Korea and in Vietnam?
70. What advice do you give to future Latinos listening to this interview?
71. Is there anything else you would like to add?