

MY FATHER'S WAR

Memories from Our Honored WWII Soldiers

EDUCATOR & DISCUSSION GUIDE

ABOUT THE DOCUMENTARY

My Father's War is an 80-minute documentary built around firsthand interviews with nine World War II veterans. Rather than using actors or scripted recreations, filmmaker and author Charley Valera lets veterans describe the war in their own words - what they experienced, how they survived, and how they returned home to build their lives after the war.

The project grew from Valera's effort to understand his own father, a World War II veteran who rarely spoke about his wartime experiences. That search led to years of conversations with veterans and ultimately to the book and documentary My Father's War.

EDUCATIONAL USES

The film can support courses and programs in U.S. history, World War II, military history, oral history, veterans studies, documentary studies, and intergenerational memory. It is especially useful as a starting point for discussion about the difference between the public history of war and the private memories carried home by those who experienced it.

KEY THEMES

- Firsthand testimony as a historical source
- The experiences of ordinary service members
- Service across U.S. military branches and both theaters of war
- Combat, fear, survival, duty, and loss
- Why many veterans remained silent after returning home
- How wartime experiences shaped veterans, families, and later generations
- Preserving eyewitness history before it disappears

SUGGESTED PROGRAM FORMAT

Full Screening	80-minute documentary
Filmmaker Introduction	Brief context on how the project began and how the veterans were found and interviewed
Post-Film Discussion / Q&A;	Conversation with Charley Valera when available
Classroom Use	Selected themes and questions can be used before or after a screening, or with approved excerpts

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

My Father's War: Memories from Our Honored WWII Soldiers

1. What can firsthand testimony reveal that a textbook or official military history may not?
2. Why do you think so many World War II veterans spoke very little about their wartime experiences after returning home?
3. Which veteran's story or moment stayed with you most, and why?
4. How does hearing veterans speak in their own voices affect your understanding of World War II?
5. What are the strengths and limitations of personal memory as a historical source?
6. What similarities do you notice among veterans who served in very different roles or locations?
7. How might wartime experiences have affected veterans' relationships, parenting, careers, or views of everyday life after the war?
8. What questions would you ask one of the veterans if you could speak with him today?
9. What responsibility do families, historians, filmmakers, and communities have to preserve eyewitness accounts?
10. How might future generations understand World War II differently once no living veterans remain to tell these stories themselves?

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Charley Valera is the author and filmmaker behind *My Father's War: Memories from Our Honored WWII Soldiers*. The project began with research into his father's World War II service and expanded into interviews preserving the experiences of veterans from across the U.S. armed forces.

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

The documentary is based on the book *My Father's War: Memories from Our Honored WWII Soldiers*, which preserves additional veteran stories, photographs, and historical material beyond the film.

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