Cold War Interview

Attempt to interview someone born prior to 1950 so that they have a good recollection of the Cold War time period. Try a family member, friend, neighbor or possibly someone on staff at school.

Ask them to allow for a one hour interview session. Take careful notes or record your interview and take notes later. You need to encourage the interviewee to answer as fully as possible. Use phrases such as “tell me more”, or “what do you mean by that”, or “how so?” Be sure to show how much you appreciate the interviewee’s experiences and time. Consider following up by writing a thank you note.

Your interview should be word processed and include it on your display or in your Webpage/PowerPoint. Include a summary of what you think you learned as a result of the interview. What did the interview provide to your understanding of the Cold War?

Possible Questions – here is a sample of questions you might ask.

• Where were you living during the Cold War? Did this have any influence on your experiences with the Cold War?
• What fears did you have during the Cold War?
• What do you remember thinking or hearing about communism?
• What were your experiences with civil defense efforts?
• What actions or people made you feel the nation was secure or insecure?
• What do you remember about the bomb, nuclear testing, or radiation?
• What historic events or people do you remember? (Berlin Wall, Cuba, U-2 Incident, Khruschev, Korea, domino theory, McCarthy, Kennedy)

How did you react to these events or how did your parents react to them?

• What is your position today on nuclear arms race? How should we protect our national security? Do you think a nuclear war is still possible? Why or why not?
• What is one lesson that we should learn from the Cold War era?

Other Considerations

• You may come up with a series of questions that focuses in on your topic. For example, if you are interviewing someone who fought in the Vietnam War you should think about several questions about their experiences in Vietnam.