The Questions

The answers to the questions help shape the whole service and bring relevance to each part, but especially the Eulogy, their story.

There are two reasons for the questions that follow - the first is simply to get a reasonable chronological timeline of their life. The second is to use some of the answers to add colour to the whole thing. It’s what made them special.

However, it is important that the person we are talking about would be comfortable with the things that will be said during the service.

Anecdotes will reinforce memories and remind people about their life. Both parts will make their story. Tales of their early life, for example, will help paint a picture in words of who they were and how those days affected their adult life.

The Order of Service can be completed before we talk your loved one in detail This can be done by phone and/or email.

We can do the meeting itself by phone, video call or face to face. With the help of the questions, some families prefer to write their thoughts and send them across to me.

Allow about an hour altogether for discussing everything - it is a chance for you to get to know me and me to get to know them. It’s worthwhile having any certificates handy - long birth certificates, marriage certificates, enlistment papers, discharge papers all provide useful information for the meeting.

**How were they known?**

* The name that they were known by. This is how I will refer to them during the service.
* Their maiden name or other name changes:
* The names of key family members - this should be kept to people who will be mentioned by name (especially if they will be at the service):
* Parents names:
* Siblings (brothers and sisters) names:
* Partners name(s):
* Other family members:
* Children:
* Grandchildren:
* Great Grandchildren:

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**Birth details:**

* Where were they born?
* When were they born?
* What were/are their parent's names and what did they do at that time?
* Did they have brothers and/or sisters?
* What were their names in order? What was the difference in ages of their siblings?

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**Life as a child:**

* Can you describe their character and personality as a child?
* Are there traits that are family traits in behaviour or attitude?
* Did they take after anyone in a particular skill or talent?
* Are there stories of the games and sports that they played with each other, trouble that they got into or things that they enjoyed doing and sharing with their siblings?
* Did they have a particular close/best friend either in childhood or later life? Lists of names are always a sensitive part of a service - better to have no list, than miss out a person.
* Where did they grow up? Where were they brought up? *Someone brought up in the country would have a very different background to someone who lived in a big city. If at some point their family moved, say to a New Town like Harlow or Stevenage the contrast in their life might be great.*
* Why did the family move?
* Where did they go to play?
* Were they close to extended family members, grandparents, uncles and aunts etc?
* Did extended family get together mch? Was there a piano at home? Did they learn an instrument?
* If they were a child during the war, were they evacuated - if so where to? Children were often evacuated more than once and not always kept with their siblings.
* Did extended family play a major part in their upbringing?
* Was it an experience they enjoyed? Did they revisit years later or keep in touch?
* When they were young did the family take holidays. Where to? What type of holidays were they?
* Did they go to Sunday School or belong to any clubs or groups... Cubs, Guides, Army, Air or Navy Cadets or go to swimming, dancing lessons etc?

**Life as a teenager:**

* What schools did they go to?
* What did they enjoy about school? What didn’t they enjoy?
* What was their favourite subject?
* When did they leave school? *(The leaving age was 14 up to 1947, 15 to 1972, 16 afterwards)*
* Did they win any awards - sporting trophies, school prizes etc.
* When did they leave school?
* Did they go on to further education?
* What was their favourite music at this time? Favourite films or TV?
* Did they pick up on the culture of the time - fashions, music, films, TV etc?
* Did they have a big crowd of friends?
* When they were old enough to go away by themselves were there special holidays then?
* The decade that someone hits their late teens is often very significant and impacts on much of their later life.

**Homes:**

* Where people lived is a wonderful source of memories.
* What was their house like? If they lived in a Victorian terraced house in the 1920’s and 30’s, they probably had gaslight, an outside toilet, a tin bath. Is their childhood home still there?
* What addresses? E.g. 45 Engleheart Road in Catford was always a happy place. Norah simply had an open door policy - everyone was welcome and somehow she always had food to feed them.’
* Who else lived there?
* Were there special neighbours?
* Did they have a ‘family forever home’?
* Why did they move to particular areas?
* For some people in their younger days it might be appropriate to discuss their bedroom - *perhaps it was covered in pictures from a sport or a pop artist?*
* Were there garden/garage/room features that reflect their hobby? Perhaps there was a very tidy and organised shed, or a chaotic garage - *‘John was a just in case man… his garage was full of things that he kept - just in case. To anyone else it was disorganised, but he knew where every last thing was!’*

**Working:**

* What was their first job?
* How did they get it?
* Where did they work and how did they get to work?
* Did they do National Service? Which branch? Did they serve abroad?
* What jobs did they do?
* Where did they work?
* Are there amusing stories of them in the workplace?
* Are there work colleagues that might have useful input?
* When did they retire?

**Holidays:**

* Where did they go with their birth family?
* Where did they go with their own family?
* Where did they go in later life?
* Are there any funny holiday stories or stand out holidays?
* Did they go away with other people - friends, family etc?
* Did they prefer to relax on holiday or were they very active?
* What sort of things did they enjoy doing on holiday?

**Love & Marriage:**

* How did they meet their partner?
* When did they meet?
* How long did they court for? How long were they engaged?
* Are there stories about the proposal, the wedding day or the honeymoon that could be shared?
* Where and when did they get married?
* Was it a big wedding?
* Where did they start married life?
* Where was their first proper home together?
* In uncomfortable situations, relationships don’t need to be mentioned.

**Family:**

* Did they have children?
* What are their names (in order)?
* When were they born?
* Are there grandchildren, great grandchildren?
* If they didn't have their own children are there any others that played an important part in their lives (nephews, nieces etc)?
* Are there special memories of them as a mum or a dad, an uncle or aunt or as a grandparent?
* Were they a good homemaker? Were they organised. Did they like everything to be in its place?
* Were they a good cook? What particularly? Did they have a signature dish?

**Hobbies & Pastimes:**

* What hobbies did they have? *(E.g. gardening, knitting, crocheting, DIY, walking, cycling, driving etc?)*
* What were they good at?
* Did they keep in touch with family and friends by letter, phone calls or visits?
* Did they belong to any clubs or teams (sport, hobby or social)?
* Did they do puzzles - *e.g. jigsaws, Sudoku, crosswords?*
* What sports did they enjoy/follow/participate in? *e.g. football, cricket, boxing, bowls*

**Likes & Dislikes:**

* What types of music, books and movies did they enjoy?
* Did they have favourite TV programmes?
* Did they like animals and have any pets?
* Did they like the outdoors?
* Did they enjoy cooking?
* Are there signature dishes that will always be remembered?
* Did they have favourite foods or perhaps ones that they didn't like?
* Did they embrace technology – Phone/tablets/TV remotes/computers/the Internet etc?

**Character & Personality:**

* Did they have any particular sayings, phrases or stories?
* What do you think they will be most remembered for?
* Is there anything that they would have been particularly proud of?
* Can you come up with say 10 words that describe their character and personality honestly – remember everyone listening to the service knew them, so make it realistic?
* Looking at the words that describe them can you give examples of why those words were chosen?
* Did they have a personal philosophy on life?
* Are there any stories that show their character?

**Awkward moments**

* This is not an exclusive list – we can add anything that you think is appropriate. Sometimes it is useful to discuss things that wouldn't be appropriate as part of the service - most families have something that falls into this category. Knowing what to avoid or even imply is very useful. For example: dates can be difficult, particularly when a child is born a few months after a wedding! Prison is difficult and will vary from family to family - some like it mentioned in a light hearted way, others really don’t want it shared in any way. The service is a positive way to celebrate a life, not to share negative points.
* There may be great sadnesses that need to be mentioned - often the loss of people very close.
* Many families have estranged members and the immediate thought is not to mention a miscreant brother or a troublesome sister.
* Fallings out generally happen later in life. They can be mentioned as part of the beginning of the Eulogy - John was the oldest of four. By the time he was five he had been joined by George, Paul and Ringo. It’s just stating a fact and they need not be mentioned again. Much harder implying he was an only child.

The more information we have to choose from, the better - we can leave out the less significant bits. The questions will simply be a starting point.

**All of these can provide a rich source of memories and anecdotes…**

* Someone born during the 1920’s is likely to have done some sort of work for the War Effort.
* Anyone born up to about 1940 may have done War service or National Service. Regiments etc as well as postings and jobs are useful.
* Discharge papers often have a testimonial that we can use in the service.
* As a member of the Armed Forces, they are entitled to have a Union Jack or appropriate flag draping their coffin.
* Men born before the 1st October 1939 were eligible for National Service.
* During the War, women over the age of 18 had to work for the War Effort in either the ATS, factories or as a Land Girl. Meny enlisted.
* Someone born in the 1930’s may well have been evacuated during WWII - for many this played a very big part in their lives. There may be other wartime memories - sights and sounds. For some the war had a huge impact on their families, for others very little. They may well have remembered times spent in Anderson shelters or Morrison shelters. Children loved watching the dogfights high above and exploring bomb sites.
* Whichever decade a person experiences their late teen years may influence the clothes they wore, the music they liked, their social life. Their mode of transport will be very much linked to the time. The 1950’s were a time when motor bikes with sidecars were popular, as was cycling.
* The period after the War finished was a time of austerity and rationing. Make do and mend was the rule and living during this period often formed people’s attitude to money and waste. For many families in East and South London hop-picking was a memorable part of their lives.
* Holidays in the 1950’s were generally family orientated, revolving around camping, caravanning and holiday camps. The late 1960’s were the beginning of package holidays. These were important times and often the only break a working parent might have. Often companies had an annual shutdown so work colleagues might meet up at the seaside.
* One of the great attractions of a holiday camp was being waited on. The entertainment of an evening may have been the only time the family went out socially together. Often Hi-Di-Hi holidays!
* In many towns the period from 1950-1990 was the time when every large company had a social club with lots of varied entertainment. Life often revolved around them.
* Sometimes you won’t have all of the information - if you are the son or daughter of the person who has passed away, you will have missed say 20 years or so of their life - you weren’t there. There may be older family members, brothers or sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins or even just lifelong friends who are worth asking. The worst that will happen is that they will say they don’t remember - but sometimes the most wonderful information comes back. Not only does it enhance the service, but it makes them feel remembered and included.
* From the early 1950’s the music charts are a good source of evocative music and a great way to fix a point in time. When they got married Love Me Do by the Beatles was at Number 1. News events may also be relevant.