**686 research (Joe)**

**Tell me about yourself.**

I live in Wainesvlle, MO. I was medically discharged from the military for injuries sustained in dessert storm.

I retired in DC and moved there in ’93 and have lived there ever since.

**Have you used VA for services before?**

Yes. Dental clinic, podiatry, optomotry, and for the pain management clinic, but I refuse to go back.

**How do you access your benefits?**

I tried to get into your site once and I had some problems which discouraged me from going back to it. I’ll generally make a telephone call. I’ll callthe clinic and say “it’s time for a follow up appointment.”

**Do you remember any specifics about the website experience?**

I had a lot of trouble with the password. I’d try to establish a password and then either I was doing it wrong or it wasn’t acknowledging my password. I just had trouble with it so…

**Do you have any dependents who are using benefits through your VA records?**

No, my daughter used my benefits to go to college. She should be working on her masters. They’re older now.

My son… I think he tried to use it but then he just gave up. [Doesn’t know why] Like I told him, “the benefits are there, use it. You’re a fool for not using it.”

**Do you remember the application process for when your son or daughter tried to use benefits for the first time?**

For my daughter, it wasn’t that hard. She had me go on once or twice for a verification.

**Did she do it online?**

I think she did.

**Do you know if she used eBenefits?**

I do not know other than I know she went to college using my benefits.

[On Vets.gov] Look at this page and tell me what the purpose of this page is.

I see in places it is equivalent to 686-C. I like the idea that you can fill the form out and you can come back to it. I really like that you don’t have to go back through the information over and over.

**When you’re filling out forms like this, does it usually take more than one session?**

Sometimes it does because sometimes they ask you for the stupidest things. Sometimes it’s something you forget and you have to look up because they ask for a specific date and you don’t remember and you have to go find the form and where you thought you put it and it’s somewhere else.

You know, I kind of like what you’ve done here “for when you apply, please have the following things on hand.” The social would have been easy, previous marriage details are easy, details about unmarried children…. By telling me I need these items up front, I can check off and say “got it got it got it.” Date of birth I remember very well.

If you were to imagine your daughter was going to college for the first time, and you were going to add her to your benefits, would you feel like you had everything you needed to get started?

Yes.

Sometimes doing it online does make it easier, sometimes if you travel like me, you have to travel to a VA center and we’re talking 8/9 miles one way. So if I don’t know I need multiple information, then I have to make multiple trips. But if I’m in my office, I know where to find their social security number because that’s on the tax return. Doing it online means I don’t have to put up with the frustration or the heat.

**Did you notice where it said, “if you’re claiming a dependent who’s between the ages of 18 – 23…” Would you be able to download and print it out?**

Yeah, but I don’t see why they couldn’t make it a fill in form where I can bring it up, fill in all the blanks, and then if I had to send it it would look neat and clean. So having that as a fill-in, printable form would be even better. AND if we coud do it online, that would make it even sweeter.

Would it prolong the process for you if you had to do the process in multiple parts?

Yes, especially if I didn’t know what was required.

**What do you think would be require?**

I don’t know… name, address, my social… everything is based off of my social. It’ll probably ask what branch of service I’m in. It’ll probably ask for dates of active duty and dates of discharge. Other than that, ain’t no telling what they’d ask for.

**OK, let’s go ahead and start this application**.

Damn, alright. [Inaudible, muttering field names]

**Is this what you expected to see**?

No, cause there is some stuff in here I would have never thought of.

**If I were to ask you to go back to the general form, what would you do**?

There is a VA on ft. (something) and I would go there and say “guys, this is what I’m trying to do.” But If I could do it online, I’d have my daughter there with me and we could knock it out a whole lot easier and quicker.

When you are filling out a form that requires someone else’s info, do you usually have them there?

Yes, but if I know up front what is required, I can have it ready. [Reads some fields] She would have to be present because she definitely would know that.

**Where would you could if you wanted to start the Declaration of Dependents Application?**

Right there at 21-686C. Obviously it don’t work. [What would be your next action?] I would take my happy little butt into Ft. (something) and ask for that form. Although, I could check the web. I would copy the form and open up a browser and paste that in there. So that would be a possibility too. But it would be nice if it was linked right there.

**What do you think would happen if you clicked this blue button?**

OK, I didn’t really pay attention to that one.

**What would you see on the next page?**

I’d hope to see the form 21-686C.

Wth the button being down lower I probably wouldn’t have noticed it.

**Before you fill out anything on this page, it will not save or submit anything on this page. This is a prototype. You can use fake information.**

**On this page, whose information is it asking for?**

Well, it would be hers. [Who?] Your daughter because it says “your relationship to the Veteran.” I initially thought it would have been mine until I saw this.

Right, so I guess at the top it should say “Recipient information” or something like that.

**So you would expect it to be asking about the dependent who is looking to get benefits.**

Right.

[Muttering field names]

After I read that, it’s just what I thought it was.

**Who is the sponsor it is referring to?**

It is referring to the veteran.

**Why would someone choose “other?”**

With what the military is today, with what they allow, I’m thinking it would fall under that realm. Or there could be an exception to the policy for who knows.

**Who might select other**?

Could be a step child, or it could be a…um… if it’s a granddaughter to grandson, or a relative that’s not necessarily the sponsor’s actual child.

**Why don’t you go ahead and continue the application**.

**Who’s information are we asking for here (next page)?**

It’s still a continuation of the first person on the first page.

**How would you recall the SSN on behalf of the depenedent?**

I do have their socials written down because of what I do for them, or I’d have them present, or I’d call them up and say “hey, what’s your social?”

**OK, you can keep going with the form (next page).**

[Muttering to himself as he fills things out]

Oh, that button’s not working. OK.

**Keep on going**.

**On this page (2 of 5), who is it asking for?**

It clearly states the veteran’s information.

**Why do you think it needs to know the veteran information**?

It has to bill it somewhere.

I like the idea that at the bottom of everyone you have “save and finish this application later.” Hopefully everything I put into that… it would save and put me in the position I left off at, or it would take me to page one to make sure everything is current and correct and filled in.

**Why do you think it is asking about marital status, and whose?**

The veterans because they will probably verify it against the ID card system. [how do you know?]. Because the previous page dealt with the veteran, so it is the continuance of the previous page’s information.

**Why do you think it needs to know this information if you are divorced?**

Because if she is receiving benefits they probably want to link it somewhere. But personally I think they need to do away with that part of it because if they are divorced… to make that shorter, they should ask “if your ex-spouse receiving benefits, yes or no.” Cause I wouldn’t want to put her information down. I don’t like to think about her.

I probably wouldn’t fill it in or put in there “none of your business.” I personally could care less about [muttering] and the less I have to think about her the happier I am. Otherwise, it brings back PTSD.

That’s where I think the block ought to say “is your ex receiving benefits, yes or no.” There are veterans that would rather shoot their ex than mention their names because it has been a very bitter situation.

**Feel free to enter whatever information makes the most sense for these fields (3/5 spouse info)**

**How does it feel to see the error message**?

Well, I kind of figured that was going to come up. Again, you’re just prolonging my agony (laughs). It’s not even going to let me put the bad info in.

Your down arrows aren’t working.

See, that right there would be very frustrating to me if I can’t type it in or if the down arrows don’t work. Then I would definitely get frustrated. Right now, it’s not allowing me to put anything in there.

**If you were trying to fill this out and you were getting these errors messages?**

I would close you out and go find the form. I don’t have patience for these kinds of problems and I guarantee you that a lot of us older veterans have the same problem. I’ll be honest with you, this is one reason I don’t fill out forms on the internet because of problems like this. If I could download and fill in the blanks then I would have control then I’d probably be more happy.

I’ve been trying to enter something and at this point I would have said “screw this crap” and have closed it out and I wouldn’t come back to your site.

Then if I called and got a non-English speaking person, then I would really fly off the handle then I would never use your site. If I use your site on American site, then I should talk to someone whose English is good. Otherwise I’ll hang up.

[Some rant about Macys]

At this point, I probably wouldn’t call the number. I’d just close it out.

Now a lot of sites have chat help. Now if you had that, I would probably click that and have a conversation that I’m having trouble filling in the month and the year. And if they couldn’t help me, I would never come back to your site again because then I’d feel like you have a program that doesn’t work and programmers that don’t know how to solve problems. Therefore, you’d lose me immediately.

**I think this is a good place to wrap up**.

Any time you want to do something like this with me, call me, email me, I’m more than willing to help you guys.

**Amazon or PayPal**?

PayPal.