



Oral History Overview

OC Historical Commission — August 2, 2022



What is Oral History?

- The Oral History Association defines it as a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving, and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events.
- It predates the written word, but it is also a method of modern historical inquiry by using 21st Century recording technology.

First Steps

- Identify a Narrator that fits the criteria of the program.
- Have a discussion to gauge their willingness to participate.
- Explain the program and purpose and time needed to complete the interview.

First Steps

- Once the Narrator has agreed to the interview, set a date for:
 - Pre-interview meeting or phone call.
 - Actual recorded interview.
- Check with OC Parks staff that recording equipment is available for the day of the interview.

Pre-Interview Meeting

- Meeting can be over the phone or in person.
- Make sure to cover the following topics:
 - Legal Paperwork to be signed.
 - Options for video and audio recording or audio only.
 - Setting a time and place suitable for the recorded interview.
 - Background questions to guide your own research.

Prepare Interview Questions

- Research is needed in order to produce the interview questions.
 - 10 questions minimum.
- Consider what was happening in local history at the time and who else this individual might have known.
- Investigate the Narrator's past and affiliations in order to ask open ended and probing questions.

Prepare Interview Questions

- Ask open ended questions that allow the Narrator to answer at length.
 - Can you tell me about your favorite project you completed?
- Avoid closed questions like "Did you serve on the Commission?"
 - Some closed questions are needed to establish a timeline, like when the Narrator was born, what city they grew up in, what year they joined a Commission.
- During the interview you can ask follow up questions and ask for clarification as needed.
- Do not feel locked into your prepared questions. The interview is a conversation, and the Interviewer must always be flexible and follow where the Narrator is leading.

Equipment

- Preferred set up of the interviews is both audio and video recording.
 - Narrator can choose to only do audio if preferred.
- Go Pro Camera will be used for video and MixPre 3 recorder for audio recording.
- Staff can give a full demonstration of the set up when the equipment is picked up by the Interviewer.
- Always practice with the equipment before the interview.
- Equipment is stored at the Old Orange County Courthouse.

During the Interview

- Creating and maintaining rapport is essential.
- Review and sign all agreement forms before the interview begins.
- Have a pen and paper with you to take notes. Write down thoughts as they come to you.
- Each interview will start with an introduction by the Interviewer.
- Always follow up on details that need clarification.
- Take care if you need to challenge questionable information and be gentle and respectful.
- Avoid asking leading questions that show bias.
- The Interviewer must remain impartial and unbiased.

After the Interview

- Once you have closed out the interview and the recording is stopped, thank the Narrator and pack up all equipment.
- Ask for clarification on any names or places added to the Proper Words List.
- If needed, schedule a follow up interview with Narrator.
- Return equipment to OC Parks staff.
- Staff will take the following steps:
 - Save recordings onto shared drives.
 - Save copies of any photos with the audio files.
 - Save copies of signed paperwork.
 - Give the interview an archive number.
 - Provide copies of audio files to Interviewer.

Links for More Information

- Oral History Association
 - <https://www.oralhistory.org/web-guides-to-doing-oral-history/>
- Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
 - <http://sites.clas.ufl.edu/spohp/files/2014-Oral-History-Workshop.pdf>
- CSUF – De Graaf Center
 - <http://coph.fullerton.edu/resources/remotefinterviewing.php>

Questions?

History
Recording
Commission
Memory
Orange
Oral
History
Storytelling
Important