

# Orange Oracle

An Occasional Electronic Update from the Orange County Historical Society

## Newsbits

### Historical Society reopens June 22-

- ◆ No more than six guests at a time. Social distancing required.
- ◆ Appointments strongly recommended. Call 540-672-5366.
- ◆ Masks required. Free disposable masks available as well as hand sanitizer and gloves.
- ◆ Staff will sanitize all surfaces in between guest visits.
- ◆ Go to [www.orangecovahist.org](http://www.orangecovahist.org), click on COVID-19 tab for full list of procedures and protocols.

## Interview Tips

**Who should conduct the interview?** Insider? (someone intimately familiar with the subject) Outsider? (objective stranger) Both is best, but not mandatory. Don't have more than two interviewers.

**A conversation, not an interrogation:** Start by asking the subject to state his/her

## Oral History Interview Guide

Although the Coronavirus has prevented me from conducting new interviews, there is no reason why the "Memories" oral history project can't continue by doing it yourself! If you have a smart phone or a fairly new and inexpensive (\$500 or less) small camera and a way to keep it steady (tripod), you can record and preserve your loved one's stories at home.



Myrtle Martin of Dogwood Village—Her memories are preserved forever.



Memories are our most precious possession, ranking right up there with our children. Unlike objects, they cannot be replaced. When they are lost due to death or dementia, they are gone forever. But now you can save them forever just by following these simple steps.

Let's say you're using a smart phone. The first rule is to hold it HORIZONTALLY, not vertically. Our eyes are located on our head, side by side, not one on top of the other. So turn

full name and date of birth. Then relax.

**Ask questions** that will stimulate detailed answers and the telling of stories. Don't ask questions that can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no.' Instead, ask about:

- ◆ place of birth
- ◆ childhood
- ◆ education
- ◆ sports
- ◆ military service
- ◆ occupation and skills
- ◆ spouse and children
- ◆ church
- ◆ family traditions
- ◆ food
- ◆ What did you do for fun? Music, art, travel, hobbies.
- ◆ What is the best, worst, funniest thing that happened to you? Accomplishments, failures, illnesses, accidents.
- ◆ Where were you when? (Pearl Harbor Day, Kennedy assassination, 9-11)
- ◆ What advice would you give the younger generation

**Be objective.** This is their story, not yours.

**Ask a question once and then shut up.** Encourage silently with body language, eye contact, nodding.

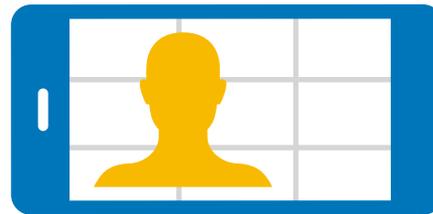
**The Rabbit Hole:** follow them down; it just might lead somewhere interesting.

Finally, have the subject sign a **release form**. Down-load one: [www.folklife.si.edu](http://www.folklife.si.edu)

the cell phone 90 degrees so that it is showing the picture the way we watch TV!



Seat the person you are going to interview in a comfortable, familiar place with good natural and artificial light NOT coming from behind them, but shining on them, like from a window. Set up the camera/smart phone on a tripod so that the subject's head and



shoulders are in the frame. In the background, it's always nice to have family photographs showing.

Turn off all distracting sounds and activities like TVs, radios, cell phones (yours included), screaming children, annoying pets. If lawnmowers or traffic sounds are a problem, close the windows.

Making sure that the battery is fully charged, start the camera/smartphone and let it run. Don't pan. Don't zoom in and out. Check it periodically to make sure that it is indeed recording and hasn't stopped to buffer. If it does, halt the interview, press "record" again and continue where you left off. Conduct the interview. Feel free to use the "Tips" listed in the box to the left.

When the interview is over, take still photographs, or better yet scan, a half dozen family photographs that show the subject's various stages of his/her life: infancy, childhood, teenager, young adult, mature adult, senior citizen. Then transfer the stills and video files to a computer. If you don't know how to do that, get a teenager to help you. Then make a copy onto a thumb drive and take that to the James Madison Museum so they can copy it to the master project files.

Phil Audibert