

THE MARIA ROGERS Oral History Program

NEWSLETTER

JULY 2002

Mid-year Statistics

AS OF THE END OF JUNE, the Oral History Program had registered **29 new interviews** this year. If we continue to record interviews at this pace, we will **break last year's record** of adding 53 interviews to the collection! **Hearty kudos and thanks to all of you** for your work on preserving the history of Boulder County.

NEW INTERVIEWS

OH 1016V A-B. Whittier Elementary School secretary and historian, Polly McDonald, gives a tour of the Whittier School, which opened in 1883. Fran Bascom, whose father was an early Whittier principal, talks about growing up in the neighborhood in the 1920s. By Hope Perry.

OH 1069V. In this wide-ranging interview, Boulder businessman Ray Joyce discusses his involvement in the grocery and banking businesses, his tenure as a Boulder city councilman, and as a board member on the Open Space, Liquor, and Water Conservancy District Boards. By Shirley Steele.

OH 1070V. Dr. Joe Green, born in 1913, was a north Boulder veterinarian for many years. He talks about his veterinary practice and describes Boulder in the 1940s and 1950s. By Nicky Lee.

OH 1071V. Andrew Ernst lived on the Lohr Farm as a 9- and 10-year-old boy in the mid-1950s. He talks about the house, barn, outbuildings, crops, dairy herd, chores, and Shortie Lohr. By Anne Dyni. Filmed by Liz McCutcheon.

Interviewing Tips

We took a mid-summer break from our usual first-Saturday-of-the-month volunteer meeting in July. Monthly volunteer meetings will resume August 3. In lieu of the usual "news from the last volunteer meeting," this issue of the newsletter will feature oral history interviewing advice from Dr. Barbara Truesdell, Assistant Director of the Indiana University Oral History Research Center. The advice below is excerpted from the pamphlet, "Oral History Techniques: How to Organize and Conduct Oral History Interviews."* Copies of the complete text of the pamphlet are available for oral history volunteers at the Carnegie library.



- Prepare for the interview by knowing the subject you're studying thoroughly. Know what information you want to gain from the interview.

- Knowing as much as you can about the interviewee beforehand helps establish rapport with the interviewee by laying a groundwork of shared knowledge and confirming your interest in him/her. [Remember: usually



Polly McDonald, secretary and historian of Whittier School (OH 1016)

COMING EVENTS

Volunteer Meeting:
Saturday, August 3
9:00 a.m.



* ©1999. Reprinted with permission

Wendy can pull news clippings from the *Camera* about the person you are interviewing.]

- Prepare a list of questions. You will not follow this list exactly; other questions will arise during the interview, but they will give a solid organization and cohesiveness to your interview. Group the questions logically, so you and your subject can easily follow the progression of ideas in the interview.
- Start your interview with simple biographical information. This puts the interviewee at ease with talking on tape and gets the basic information about your subject up front in the interview.
- Don't ask leading questions. For example, if you were interviewing a factory worker, you would not ask,

"Don't you feel that management was hostile to your concerns?" but "What was the attitude of management toward your concerns?"

- Ask open-ended, simply structured, single-stranded questions. Questions should be not only open but concrete, avoiding, as much as possible, jargon or theoretical concepts.
- Sharing a lot of history in common with the interviewee can be as challenging to work past as meeting the interviewee for the first time. Things you both know can be taken for granted, and things taken for granted are generally unspoken. Don't be shy about stating what is (for both of you) the obvious. Remember you're speaking for a third person.

• After you ask a question, stop...and wait for the answer, even if you sit in silence for several seconds. Subjects often need several moments to think about the questions you ask. Give them quiet time; it's not really as long as it feels!

• Once the answer comes, don't cut off or talk over an interviewee. Let them talk to the end of their strand of thought. Cutting them off gives the impression that what they're saying isn't important to you.

• Take care not to sound judgmental, impatient, or disrespectful. An interview is not the place to show off how much you know, or to take issue with an interviewee's beliefs or opinions. All interviewees should be treated with unfailing courtesy, respect, and gratitude for the privilege of sharing a part of their lives with you. Even if you come away having learned nothing of material benefit to your project, you can consider any interview a success if you have maintained a positive, polite, professional stance throughout.

THE MARIA ROGERS Oral History Program NEWSLETTER

The public is invited to stop by
the Carnegie Library to listen to
or view any of our more than
1,000 interviews.

Carnegie Branch Library
1125 Pine St.
Boulder, CO 80302

PHONE:

Carnegie Library:
303-441-3110

Oral History Voice Mail:
303-441-1981

E-MAIL:

Wendy:
hallw@boulder.lib.co.us

Susan:
Lextra@earthlink.net

WEB SITE:

www.boulder.lib.co.us/branch/carnegiemariarogers.html