

...a good way to record the passing of time...



viewee when you wish to interject a question into the narration, arrange a signal with him, like raising your hand. Also, do not say “uh-huh”, “yes”, as it is very distracting when the tape is played back. Instead, use non-verbal cues to reassure the interviewee.

Take notes on names, places, dates. This is important and you might wish the interviewee to expand on these different areas.

6. Try to ask your questions from the interviewee’s point of view — a woman’s approach to events can differ from a man’s. Another important factor to remember is not to be afraid to enter into controversial areas if it is related to your topic. For example, the interviewee’s reactions to such things as birth control, religion etc. can reveal a great deal about his prejudices and areas of interest.

Always look for the human aspect to situations. Did the townspeople display discrimination against the immigrants? What holidays or religious days were kept? How were these celebrated? Did the home have indoor plumbing? Were there severe blizzards? This sort of direction to your questions will help to make the interview more “human” and, therefore, more interesting.

7. Remember to *always* keep control of the central theme of the interview because from time to time, the interviewee may stray from the topic and wander off on an irrelevant tangent. It is necessary for you to

bring the person back to the topic as politely as possible.

8. As the tape approaches the end of one side, try to find a natural break in the conversation at which to conclude the recollections.

If the interviewee seems tired, suggest either a break as you turn over the tape, or a return trip at a later date to complete the interview.

When ready to continue the interview, begin with “You were talking about...”

9. The average time for a good interview is approximately one hour. This is plenty of time if you have planned the interview well and have remained in control.

Due to circumstances, however, some interviews may be longer or shorter. Flexibility is important, but remember that the more you tape, the longer it will take to make an outline. It is best to establish beforehand a mental time limit and stop at an appropriate break in the interview.

Before you leave, ask the interviewee to verify the spelling of names and places in your notes, and thank him for his time. Also, it is a nice gesture to send a thank you note the next day.

10. If you have planned more than one interview session, spend several minutes discussing those areas that will be covered next time. Try not to remain longer than one half hour after the interview, as you will be getting material which should be related at the next session.

OUTLINING TAPES

After the conclusion of the interview, it is *very* important to make an outline of the tape. The importance of this cannot be stressed enough, as a tape without some form of finding aid is almost useless and very difficult to use.

1. The entire tape is played through with the use of the speakers or a set of headphones. Listen to the tape and according to the tape footages, list the subject matter by pertinent headings and subheadings.

A verbatim transcription is good to have if you can afford the time and money.

2. When writing an outline, good typing skills are not the foremost requisite. It is more important to be perceptive, to have good spelling and to use correct punctuation.

3. Two copies of the outline are typed, an original and one carbon. The original outline is kept in your files and the carbon sent to the interviewee. This will allow the interviewee to make any necessary corrections in spelling and will also allow him to discover if there are any events or persons mentioned which he does not want made public knowledge. However, the interviewee should understand that although he can make editorial changes on the outline itself, the tape is never changed.

Sample interview questions are on page 16