

# SEEKING THE PAST & CAPTURING HISTORY



Audio/Video Interviewing

Oral History Program

Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital



**The Achives and History Committee  
Girl Scout Council of the Nation's History**

4301 Connecticut Ave. NW Suite M-2

Washington, DC 20008

[www.GSCNChistoryarchives.org](http://www.GSCNChistoryarchives.org)

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## GUIDELINES FOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS

*GSCNC Note: While we are always interested in stories of Girl Scouting, **in general interviews** should focus on the person involvement in GSCNC History and/or one of the parent council's prior to 1963 merge. (i.e. Arlington GSC, Alexandria GSC, Northern Virginia/Fairfax GSC, Southern Maryland/ Prince George County GSC, National Capital GSC, GS of the District of Columbia and Montgomery CO, MD)*

### TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS

An interview is not a dialogue. The whole point of the interview is to get the narrator to tell his/her story. Limit yourself to brief questions to guide him/her along.

Ask questions that require more than an answer of "Yes" or "No." Start with "Why, How, Where, What kind of..."

Ask one question at a time.

Ask brief questions. Have a prepared set of questions as a guide and keep the questions brief.

Start with non-controversial questions. A good place to begin is with the narrator's youth and background.

Don't let periods of silence fluster you. Give your narrator a chance to think of what she wants to add before you ask the next question.

Don't worry if your questions are not as beautifully phrased as you would like them to be for posterity.

Don't interrupt a good story because you have thought of a question, or because your narrator is straying from the planned outline. If the information is pertinent, let the narrator go on, but jot down your question on your note pad so you will remember to ask it later.

If your narrator does stray into non-pertinent subjects, try to pull her back as quickly as possible.

It is often hard for a narrator to describe persons. An easy way to begin is to ask her to describe the person's appearance. From there, the narrator is more likely to move into character description.

Interviewing is one time when a negative approach is more effective than a positive one. Ask about the negative aspects of a situation. *Excerpted from NHPC?CSPL #40-155-067 ORAL HISTORY*

GSCNC Archive and History Committee suggest that you include visual clues and will lend appropriate uniforms, badges, handbooks, songbooks, equipment or other materials that might assist in soliciting remembrances and/or adding interest for future viewers

Contact: Archives and History Committee

Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital

Archives@GSCNC 202-237-1670 X291

[www.GSCNCHistoryArchives.org](http://www.GSCNCHistoryArchives.org)

or

[Julie Lineberry \(703\)548-7663](mailto:Julie.Lineberry@verizon.net)

email [Julie.Lineberry@verizon.net](mailto:Julie.Lineberry@verizon.net)



Girl Scouts.

### Interviewee/Girl Scout's Personal History



Girl Scouts.

Please print or type. Reasonable facsimile accepted. Use additional paper if needed.  
Form available on computer disk and at [www.gscnc.org](http://www.gscnc.org).

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteer Name:** First: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_

Currently registered with GSUSA? \_\_\_\_\_ # years as girl \_\_\_\_\_ # years as adult: \_\_\_\_\_

GSUSA ID:\* \_\_\_\_\_ Association/Service Unit: \_\_\_\_\_ Troop: \_\_\_\_\_ Any council debt?\*

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

| <b>Girl Scout Position(s)<br/>Troop membership</b> | <b>Focus of Service</b><br><i>Troop, service unit,<br/>association, council<br/>(GSCNC or other),<br/>national (GSUSA or other)</i> | <b>Beginning<br/>Date</b><br><i>(Best approx.)</i> | <b>Ending<br/>Date</b> | <b>Previous<br/>Recognition?*</b> |
|--|---|--|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
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| <b>Positions in Other Community Groups (current, and previous)</b> | <b>Date(s)</b> |
|--|----------------|
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| <b>Previous Recognitions (Girl Scout or other)</b> | <b>Date(s)</b> |
|--|----------------|
|--|----------------|

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\*May be researched through your service unit manager  
 \*\*Indicate if the volunteer has already been honored for this position and/or years of service. This ensures that work previously recognized is not considered in the current nomination. For further explanation, see page 3. If you are unsure of which service has been previously recognized, simply list the recognition under "Previous Recognition," with the year it was presented.

**ORAL HISTORY  
INTERVIEW DATA SHEET**



1. Has the release form been signed? Yes / No
2. Name and address of interviewee \_\_\_\_\_
3. Date of interview \_\_\_\_\_
4. Time of interview \_\_\_\_\_
5. Appropriate title of address for interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Mr., Miss, Ms., Mrs., Dr., Prof., Rev., Judge ,Other )*
6. Your name and address \_\_\_\_\_
7. Specific place of interview \_\_\_\_\_
8. Estimated length of interview \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_
9. Conditions: Excellent Good / Fair / Poor Recording problems \_\_\_\_\_
10. Date Finalized and put to DVD \_\_\_\_\_
11. Does interviewee desire a copy of the interview? Yes / NO
12. Future interviews anticipated Yes/ No/ Maybe
13. Other interviews suggested by interviewee:
  
14. Comments:

**ORAL HISTORY – RECORDING LOG**

Interview Master No. \_\_\_\_\_

Interview date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

DVD # \_\_\_\_\_

In addition to noting subjects discussed, please indicate all unusual words that transcribers may not be able to spell - names of towns, rivers, relatives, organizations, companies, and words spoken in a foreign language.

Subjects Discussed

## ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWING

Oral History interviews can bring history to life. Oral interviewing can be a satisfying experience for both those interviewed and those doing the interviewing. Information gathered from oral history interviews can fill in the gaps between written documents and bring past events to life in a vivid and memorable fashion.

### Points to Consider Before Deciding on an Oral History Project

For the project to be successful, a good deal of time will have to be devoted to planning and implementation. Selecting participants and setting up the interviews is not an easy task, nor is interviewing or transcribing the interviews or interpreting the information. Availability of recording (or videotaping) equipment and supplies as well as people to do the transcribing of interviews must be taken into consideration.

- Those doing the interviews need to prepare for them by gathering background information both on Girl Scout history and US history of the time period that the interviewee was involved in Girl Scouting. Each interview takes about one and one-half hour, and a second interview may be necessary.
- Interviewers must also be trained in oral history interview methodology, such as asking probing questions that elicit thoughtful responses without intimidating or antagonizing the person being interviewed.
- When possible, once the interviews have been conducted, they need to be transcribed so that they are easily available for research use. An interview of one hour's length typically takes ten hours to transcribe. Each transcription would then need to be edited to be sure it was transcribed properly.

## SUGGESTED ORAL HISTORY QUESTIONS

To get the best out of oral history interviews, it is helpful to have an established set of questions to use as a guide in conducting the interview. Such a set of questions gives structure to the interview, helps to ensure that valuable information is solicited, and frees the interviewer to listen more intently, not having to think as much about what should be asked next. Also, by using the same set of questions with all interviewees, you have a common basis for comparison and a uniformly objective way to ask potentially sensitive questions.

The following questions are derived from a set developed by Dr. Mary Logan Rothschild, Director of Women's Studies, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

Begin each tape by noting the date and identifying yourself, the interviewee, and the purpose of the interview.

1. Were you active in Girl Scouting as a girl? As an adult? When was that? Where was that?
2. If the person was active as a girl, ask individual questions such as:
3. What was a favorite personal activity? A favorite troop activity? Did you have camping experiences? If so, describe.
4. If the person was active as an adult, not a girl, ask:
5. How did you get started? What happened to involve you? What did you do? (Leader, staff, etc.)
6. If the person was active as both a girl and an adult, follow up on both
7. individually with the relevant questions.
  - 2 What was the moment or event in Girl Scouting you remember most? Why?
  - 3 Did Girl Scouting provide you with unique experiences and/or opportunities?
  - 4 How do you feel about the people you have met or worked with in Girl Scouting? What have they been like?
  - 5 Is your life different today because of Girl Scouts? How? Why?
  - 6 Is Girl Scouting to you different today than when you were a Girl Scout? If so, how? Why do you think change occurred?

These are guidelines. The goal of the interview is to find out something about the individual's experience in *Girl Scouting*. *National Historic Preservation Center, March 1995*

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW**

It is difficult to define a "good" oral history interview, but some of the following criteria apply:

The interview location selected is comfortable, free from distractions and interruptions, and has adequate electrical facilities for tape recording or video equipment.

The sound quality of the actual tape (or video) is good, with no distracting background noises. There should also be few interruptions for technical difficulties such as volume adjustment, changing tapes, or replacing batteries. Practice ahead of time to work out glitches in sound quality and operation of the recorder.

The interviewee understands the purpose of the interview and signs the release form so that information can be used in the future.

The interviewer has established a rapport with the person being interviewed.

The interviewee is the "star" of the interview. The interview is not a conversation between two people, but rather a narration of a story by the person being interviewed. The interviewer's role is to make the interviewee feel comfortable and relaxed, to listen thoughtfully and in an encouraging manner, and to provide structure to the interview by asking questions that evoke memory or follow up on points previously noted in passing.

The interviewee has an interest in remembering the past and in talking freely about it, with an eye for details and an ability to describe them clearly and in an interesting manner.

The interviewer has done enough research about the subject and the topic being discussed to be able to supply a name, date, or fact if the interviewee is struggling to remember a specific detail in the middle of a good story.

The interviewer does not avoid "sensitive" issues, but handles them in an objective manner.

The interviewer tactfully brings the interviewee back to the point, if the interviewee starts to wander into non-pertinent topics.

The interviewee is not overly tired by the process, does not feel rushed or under a deadline.

Information from the interview fills in gaps in the council's written record.

Information from the interview is later used to bring history back to the people interviewed and/or the community.

Photographs or memorabilia from the interviewee are contributed to the council history collection either the day of the interview or later.

# PROJECT PLANNING CHECKLIST

The following is a short checklist to use as a reminder of important tasks.

## SET THE GOALS FOR THE PROJECT

- Determine what the council already has available on its history. Does the council know of someone who could provide valuable insights through an oral history interview?
- Decide how you will develop a list of people to be interviewed.  
Decide how you will choose interviewer(s), and whether they will be girls and/or adults. If they are girls, adult/girl teams should be established.
- Decide how you will use the interview(s) after the project and transcription.

## ARRANGE THE INTERVIEWS

- Decide where and when the interview(s) should be held.
- Contact potential interviewees by letter, with a follow-up telephone call.

## CHOOSE AND TRAIN THE INTERVIEWERS

- Choose interviewer(s) using the method decided upon.
- Arrange for interviewer(s) to research background of the person(s) to be interviewed.
- Arrange for interviewer(s) to research Girl Scout history background as well as any available council history.
- Arrange for interviewer(s) to research US and local history for the period.
- Arrange for interviewer(s) to receive basic training in oral history interviewing techniques and use of recording/video equipment.

## PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEWS

- Review the background information and the suggested questions.
- Call to confirm the interview time and place.
- Be certain all equipment is in working order.
- Collect all necessary forms
- Pre-record the introduction to the tape/DVD and label it.

## AT THE INTERVIEW

- Have the interviewee sign the release form
- Assure a comfortable interview setting.
- Take a few minutes to "break the ice" and be sure the interviewee is relaxed.
- Set up and test the equipment.
- Pay attention to where you are on the tape as you conduct the interview so that you can stop before the end of the tape and turn it over without losing any of the interviews. Most recorders have counters that can be monitored for this purpose. Otherwise, keep track of the time.
- Note the interviewee's physical stamina as the interview progresses. Do not overburden the interviewee.
- Pack up equipment and tapes, being sure all tapes are properly labeled.

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Listen/watch the tape/DVD, making notes of areas where follow-up questions at a second interview could clarify points or provide further information.
- Prepare a written summary of the content of the interview.
- Arrange for the tape/DVD to be transcribed, providing the spelling of proper names, names of events, places, etc., wherever possible. This is helpful in case the accent or intonation of an interviewee is difficult to understand.
- When the transcriptions are completed, read them through, checking against the tape/DVD for accuracy.
- Implement plans for using the information from the tapes.

This checklist was based on a guide developed for a 1981-1983 National Endowment for the Humanities funded oral history project completed by Senior Girl Scouts from the Girl Scouts of Greater Philadelphia Girl Scout Council and distributed by National Historic Preservation Center March 1995

REQUEST FORM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Troop# \_\_\_\_\_ Service Unit \_\_\_\_\_ Association \_\_\_\_\_

Leader/Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Individual Girl Project (YES / NO)

If individual, Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Project \_\_\_\_\_

Request to Borrow:

Sony DVD Camcorder \_\_\_\_\_ Trained for \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Vintage Uniforms \_\_\_\_\_ Years/Era's \_\_\_\_\_

Vintage Handbooks \_\_\_\_\_ Years/Era's \_\_\_\_\_

Camp History Materials \_\_\_\_\_ Years/Era's \_\_\_\_\_

Photographs \_\_\_\_\_ Years/Era's \_\_\_\_\_ Subject(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Other materials: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates needed: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated return Date for Materials: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated completion for Tape/DVD/CD \_\_\_\_\_

FAX , Email or Mail to  
Achives and History Committee  
c/o Program Department  
Girl Scout Council of the Nation's History  
4301 Connecticut Ave. NW Suite M-2  
Washington, DC 20008

Archives@GSCNC.org  
202-237-1670 /800-523-7898  
Fax: 202-274-2161 Fax: 202-274-2161



# Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital

**Girl Scouts.**

## PERMISSION TO PHOTOGRAPH OR TAPE

Girl

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

You have my permission to use my daughter's voice or photo to tell the public about the Girl Scout program.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature



# Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital

**Girl Scouts.**

## PERMISSION TO PHOTOGRAPH OR TAPE

Adult

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

You have my permission to use my voice or photo to tell the public about the Girl Scout program.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

**Archive and History Committee  
Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital  
Gift of Personal Statement**

**to**

**The Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital for deposit in Archives and History collection and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a taped interview. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to GSCNC. In consideration of this gift, the donor will receive a duplicate tape or transcription of the interview.
  
2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to The Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital with the educational goals and mission of the Center. Public programming could include the use of interview material in live or recorded programs for radio, television, cable, multimedia, any other forms of electronic publishing (including publication on the Internet).
  
3. I understand that I am granted a license (permission) to reproduce, publish, broadcast, transmit, perform or adapt the interview myself.
  
4. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Chairman, Archives and History Committee, or his designee, if it appears desirable.
  
5. The material donated to The Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact in Archives Collection, Girl Scout Council of the Nations Capital.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of donor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Donor Address Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Donor phone number

Accepted by \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Archives and History Committee  
Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital

The Archives and History Committee is happy to assist by suggesting individuals that we would like interviewed and in loaning vintage uniforms, books and photos that would enhance the interview and sharpen memories,

Sample Oral History projects may be viewed/heard at  
[www.GSCNCArchivesHistory.org/OralHistory](http://www.GSCNCArchivesHistory.org/OralHistory)

## *Program Links*

### Older Girl /Teen Interest Projects/Studio 2B Projects

|                                     |                                   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Collecting                          | Museum Discovery                  |
| Computers in Everyday Life          | On a High Note                    |
| Desktop Publishing                  | Once Upon a Story                 |
| Exploring the Net                   | Photography                       |
| Folk Arts                           | Reading                           |
| From A to V: Audiovisual Production | The Performing Arts               |
| From Fitness to Fashion             | The Plays the Thing               |
| Games for Life                      | Travel                            |
| Generations Hand in Hand            | Understanding Yourself and Others |
| Graphic Communication               | Women Through Time                |
| Heritage Hunt                       | Writing for Real                  |

Participation and completion of these interviews may be considered for Silver Projects, Silver Trefoil and Council (Archives and HIstory Committee) Service hours