

American Veterinary Medical History Society

State Veterinary Medical Associations
Veterinary Specialty Boards
Allied Veterinary Organizations

CONDUCTING
VETERINARY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS
of
Veterinary Professionals

A GUIDE
For Interviewers



Compiled by
Oral Histories of Veterinary Medicine Committee
American Veterinary Medical History Society

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Introduction

Oral history is a well-respected and established method employed by historians, anthropologists, social scientists, teachers, and others to tell and preserve participants' stories. Because of its wide-spread use for capturing eyewitness evidence of past events, there are many excellent guides published in print and readily accessible on the Internet regarding various aspects of oral history.

The purpose of this Guide is to help individuals who will be conducting oral history interviews with retired veterinarians and other veterinary professionals in America. As such, it is intended to present an overview of the oral history process and provide helpful suggestions to those involved with conducting such interviews. Some potential interviewers may never have been involved with oral history creation and thus may be unfamiliar with the aspects involved in completing a successful interview.

This guide will also help coordinate standards of practice and promote consistency for oral history interviews across the country as many state and local veterinary associations and specialty boards become involved with capturing oral histories.

Since there are so few courses or tutorials for oral historians, the best approach is careful planning and preparation followed by "practice, practice, practice."

We hope that each veterinary-related interview conducted will be a rewarding experience for both the interviewee and interviewer. Through the recording of personal experiences, each completed interview will provide a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, the tremendous strides veterinary medicine has made over one generation in the recent decades since the 1930s. It is anticipated that these interviews will serve as a primary historical research resource in the future.

Early in 2013, the American Veterinary Medical History Society (AVMHS) began contacting the State and Local Veterinary Medical Associations and various specialty boards that had expressed interest in establishing oral history programs. We further hope that this will become an ongoing effort as additional interviews will be conducted depending upon level of interest, funding, and participation in coming years.

Finally, do not be overwhelmed or intimidated if oral history is unfamiliar to you. Like introducing a new diagnostic procedure into your practice, learn as much as you can, plan and prepare well, take things a step at a time, and trust your own experience and judgment.

Good luck and enjoy.....your participation is greatly appreciated.

For more information, contact:

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American Veterinary Medical History Society
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Background and Rationale

“Oral history, well done, gives one a sense of accomplishment. Collecting oral history, we have a sense of catching and holding something valuable from the receding tide of the past.” (Moyer)

Over 30 years ago, Dr. J. Fred Smithcors conducted some oral histories of important veterinarians. However, only recently has an apparent renaissance begun to emerge in conducting interviews with veterinarians. Among the contributing factors include digital technology, wide-spread availability of quality portable recorders, recognition that valuable recollections are being rapidly lost as people age and pass away, wide-spread use of telephones and email in place of written letters, and the Internet. As a result, a number of interesting new oral history initiatives in veterinary medicine have been started.

In October 2009, Dr. Fred J. Born, a retired veterinarian from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and board member of the American Veterinary Medical History Society, had become increasingly concerned about preserving the heritage of past veterinary practice and advances. Also having served on the board of the Fond du Lac Historical Society and created a veterinary museum at Galloway House and Museum, he was fully aware of all the changes that have taken place in the profession in recent memory. However, these experiences were under increasing threat of being lost forever as witnessed by those veterinarians who “made history.” Their “stories” would be irrevocably forgotten and thus lost upon their deaths.

In addition, Dr. Born conducted an informal, non-scientific poll of some American Veterinary Medical History Society members which revealed that our veterinary colleagues who practiced between the 1930s and 1980s experienced some of the greatest changes in the veterinary profession in one generation.

As a result, Dr. Born drafted a proposal for establishing a veterinary oral histories program to the board of the American Veterinary Medical History Society. Recognition of the imminent need for preservation of important past history and subsequent implementation of this oral histories initiative has been timed perfectly this year to coincide with the AVMA 150th Anniversary. The goal is to create as many oral history recordings as possible of veterinarians across the United States who were born in the 1910s, 1920s and early 1930s.

It is anticipated that once momentum has been generated by current projects, individuals will develop skill and confidence in applying oral history techniques to veterinary medicine. In addition, their value as historical resources will become more widely known, understood, and appreciated and that even more initiatives will be started in coming years.

What is an Oral History?

“An oral history is the recording, preservation and interpretation of historical information, based on the personal experiences and opinions of the speaker.” It is both a method and a product.

“Oral history is the systematic collection of living people’s testimony about their own experiences.”

Oral histories are thus first-hand, in-depth spoken recollections of personal events, reflections, and experiences which can serve as primary historical information resources. They can be organized into collections of stories with a defined objective or focus. Their purpose is to describe the past as it contributes to an understanding of previous years rather than comment on primarily contemporary events.

These spoken interviews often cover aspects of “real life,” “actual practice,” or generally unknown or candid material of lasting value not included in written scientific journal articles, speeches, or other formally published sources. As such, they can capture little known or otherwise unrecorded aspects of efforts and information often overlooked to obtain unique insights and valuable background perspectives.

While often associated with preserving the knowledge and understanding of older people, they can also involve interviewing younger individuals, or those of any age who have witnessed events first-hand or who can give testimony concerning their experiences which should be preserved for future generations.

An oral history is a unique historical document unlike any other interview form. As such, no two interviews will be exactly the same.

Oral histories are NOT:

- Prepared or presented speeches
- Complete biographies
- Written memoirs
- Analytical presentations
- Journalistic interviews
- Folklore, gossip, hearsay or rumor

“The Oral History Association encourages individuals and institutions involved with the creation and preservation of oral histories to uphold certain principles, professional and technical standards, and obligations. These include commitments to the narrators [interviewees], to standards of scholarship for history and related disciplines, and to the preservation of the interviews and related materials for current and future users.” Source: Oral History Association.

Please see OHA “General Principles for Oral History and Best Practices for Oral History”, Adopted October 2009. Available online at <<http://www.oralhistory.org/do-oral-history/principles-and-practices/>>

Overall Procedure for Conducting Oral Histories

Each oral history initiative sponsored by an individual or organization will be unique and have its own tailored implementation depending upon the focus, purpose and characteristics. However, there are some “better practice” suggestions that experience has shown will improve chances for overall success, respect the interviewee, adequately maintain functionality, and achieve the intended results.

The process of arranging and conducting an oral interview often includes the following major steps:

Planning

1. Develop an overall plan based upon goals, objectives, outcomes, timetable, personnel, expenses, promotion, repository, etc.
2. Identify potential interviewees.
3. Identify qualified interviewers.

Pre-interview

4. Contact interviewee, describe the project, provide the background, arrange a meeting, and obtain a signed release of ownership.
5. Gather and review background information about the interviewee.
6. Prepare for the interview, including questions and protocol notes.

Interview session

7. Conduct and record one or more short interview sessions.

Post-interview

8. Maintain a file of records, signed forms, and materials related to the interview.
9. Prepare and edit a transcript of the voice recording.
10. Get signed final copyright releases from interviewee and interviewer(s).
11. Deposit the interview recording, written transcript, and associated materials in a designated repository for preservation and access.

Ownership, Copyright Release, and Informed Consent

An oral history interview is the joint product of both the interviewee and one or more interviewers. Both parties immediately hold copyright ownership to its intellectual content.

In compliance with best practice principles, interviewees should be fully aware of the purpose and nature of the interview which should conform to the stated parameters. Interviewees should also voluntarily give their consent to be interviewed and understand that they may withdraw or refuse to answer a question at any time.

Two fundamental but separate issues are addressed on the release form:

- Transfer of copyright ownership of the intellectual property to the repository or sponsoring organization (copyright release).
- Donation of the intellectual property to the repository or sponsoring organization (deed of gift).

Transferring ownership of content should be addressed and agreed upon in advance with any restrictions. The interviewee usually signs a copyright ownership release form in advance of each interview session. This document outlines the nature of the project and assigns or transfers copyright ownership to the sponsoring organization/institution or repository represented by the interviewer. Interviewees may be asked to sign both a preliminary release prior to the interview as well as a final release when the revised transcript or product has been completed.

Interviewees should also understand how the interview will be preserved and made accessible to future researchers and members of the public. In particular, if the interview will be posted in full or part on the Web or disseminated by other media, this should be so stated and agreed upon through informed consent and the release forms.

It is also necessary for all of the interviewers present during the interview to transfer their copyright ownership to the sponsoring organization/institution or repository as a legal deed of gift. A deed of gift is a voluntary transfer of property without consideration.

Since oral historians are often unpaid volunteers working on behalf of non-profit organizations, they are considered independent contractors.

In addition to copyright ownership release, it may also be necessary, depending on the source of funding support (federal, state or private funds), to have signed human subjects consent forms. Many colleges and universities must work with their local Institutional Review Board (IRB), a body charged by the federal government with protecting the rights, interests, and dignity of human research subjects or participants.

Shopes, Linda. "Human Subjects and IRB Review." Oral History Association. Web 17 Feb 2013
<<http://www.oralhistory.org/do-oral-history/oral-history-and-irb-review>>.

Sample release, consent, and deed of gift forms are available from many sources. Also contact the AVMHS OHVM Committee Chair.

Additional information may be found in:

Mould, David H. "Legal Issues." In: DeBlasio, Donna M., Ganzert, Charles F., Mould, David H., Paschen, Stephen H., Sacks, Howard L. *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*. Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 2009: 56-81.

Neuenschwander, John A. *A Guide to Oral History and the Law*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Selection of Interviewees

Typically, an oral interview will be conducted one-on-one by a single interviewer. However, a second (or third) individual may be involved to keep time and assist the interviewer in maintaining focus during the interview. These associates, including veterinary students, may also be present to gain valuable learning experience for conducting their own interviews at a later date.

The Oral History Association recommends choosing potential interviewees “based upon the relevance of their experiences to the subject at hand.”

Selection of veterinary interviewee candidates will depend upon the nature and scope of each oral history initiative. For example,

- Capturing the historical experiences of veterinarians in general practice or the careers of specialty practitioners, such as equine practitioners, will have defined criteria.
- A State Veterinary Medical Association may want to interview past-presidents or other officers who have had a broad understanding of the profession over the years, locally and nationally.
- Veterinary schools may wish to interview past graduates for general information about what their students have done or experienced during their careers and thereby identify overall trends.
- Veterinary schools may want to conduct oral histories to document the establishment of the school itself or an important center or program as an anniversary project.

State and Local Veterinary Medical Associations are in a good position to identify potential interviewees due to their connections with many veterinarians representing various types of practices over broad geographic areas and span of years. For VMAs, it might be helpful to solicit names from members and ask for volunteer interviewees, then sort and prioritize the list of veterinarians who might be candidates for oral history interviews.

INTERVIEWEES

Interviews of potential veterinary professionals may be divided into several categories.

General Interviews:

1. Any older or retired veterinarians who were born in the 1910s, 1920s and the early 1930s and who are now in their late 70s, 80s, and 90s, whose veterinary practices spanned a long period from the 1930s to the 1980s.

Pioneer or Innovator Interviews:

2. Older veterinarians who have made significant contributions to the veterinary profession, including publications, founding organizations, medical discoveries, innovative surgical techniques, and so forth.

Milestone Interviews:

3. Also appropriate candidates are “milestone veterinarians,” such as the first (or oldest living) female veterinarian, first (or oldest living) international graduate who passed the “Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates (ECFVG)” examination process, the first (or oldest living) veterinary graduates of various minorities (African-American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian American), and so on.

Professional Association Officer Interviews:

4. Veterinarians who have held important positions or have been active within local, state, and national professional veterinary or related organizations and specialty boards who possess a broad perspective of veterinary practice and issues that have affected the profession.

Notable Contribution or Experience Interviews:

5. Veterinarians who are notable for other reasons, such as having witnessed significant events or contributed to certain developments. Such involvement might include authorship of publications, military or war service, tuberculosis testing, disease epidemic eradication, drug development, public health advancement, animal disaster relief, or local community leadership outside veterinary medicine.

In addition to veterinarians, other oral history possibilities can include interviewing animal health technicians and spouses who are major contributors to the success of veterinary practices and have witnessed significant changes in the field over the years.

Additional interviewee selection considerations might include:

- Willingness and ability to be interviewed.
- Senior or retired practicing veterinarians or individuals closely associated with veterinary medicine.
- Associates, mentors, or well-known and respected individuals.
- Long-time members of State or Local Veterinary Medical Associations.
- Representatives of a wide variety of veterinary practice types-- general or specialty, species, group or solo.
- Owners or associates in a clinical practice.
- Animal health technicians and other supporting personnel, including spouses.
- Representatives of a special geographic area, such as rural versus urban.

- Have an interesting, unique, or even “nothing-out-of-the-ordinary” story to tell or share, or something to say.
- Offer some unique perspectives, contributions, overviews, or experiences. Examples might include rodeo or circus veterinary medicine, zoo or wildlife medicine, or human-animal public health programs at home and abroad.
- Made distinctive contributions to veterinary medicine in areas other than practice, such as those with veterinary degrees working in regulatory or government service, public health, military veterinary medicine, academic teaching, pharmaceutical research, and others.

Identification and Qualifications of Interviewers

In addition to identifying and choosing potential interviewees, it is also necessary to identify and compile a registry or list of individuals who are willing to prepare for and conduct the actual interviews.

Among those who could perform this function are:

- Veterinarians (usually younger than the interviewees).
- Others with sufficient knowledge of veterinary medicine with good communications and interpersonal skills.
- Veterinary students working with more experienced veterinarians.

State and Local Veterinary Medical Associations are again in a good position to identify and recruit potential interviewers because of long-standing connections with their membership for soliciting names and asking for volunteers. Interviewers might be designated according to the geographic area, type of practice, or specialty.

Veterinary students may also be involved. In some areas of the country, members of the Student Veterinary Medical Association (SAVMA) could choose to make an oral history contribution by working with “older” colleagues on their respective State VMA historical committees or on special topical projects.

INTERVIEWERS

Successful interviewer candidates should be willing to:

- Expand their interest in history and gain knowledge of the past background of the profession.
- Communicate with and learn from older veterinarians.
- Devote the time required for preparing and conducting oral history interviews and transcriptions.
- Travel to meet an interviewee at locations of varying distances.
- Develop skill in this historical research technique.
- Mentor, train, or help others in developing oral history skills and appreciation.
- Volunteer time in lieu of compensation, contribute financially, or help raise money for oral history expenses, as needed.

Most veterinarians already possess sufficient interpersonal and interview skills for doing outstanding oral histories having worked closely with clients and taken animal clinical histories daily in their practices.

Qualities of an effective interviewer include:

- Ability to listen well, actively and intently.
- Be patient, considerate, respectful, and non-judgmental.
- Have good interpersonal and communications skills.
- Focus on the interviewee and not be a self-promoter.
- Have some understanding of the interviewee's background and the subject matter to be covered, but not necessarily be a subject expert and should not be a close colleague.

In fact, knowing too much about the subject matter may be a disadvantage for the interviewer. He or she may be too closely involved and thus unintentionally allow the interview to go off on tangents with scientific discussion, and jargon, and thus not gather the information needed. The interviewee may also be reluctant to describe experiences in a straightforward, unimpeded manner thereby placing a strain on the relationship.

Moreover, like having a family member interview another family member, some distance between interviewee and interviewer is advised. This is referred to as the "stranger value."

As a result, interviewers should not be close colleagues of the interviewee. Pairing veterinarians from different areas might be a good solution. One oral history expert advocates establishing a 'clinical relationship' between interviewee and interviewer. (DeBlasio 88)

- For specialty interviews, it is recommended that the interviewer represent the subject specialty but not be a close colleague and try to avoid excessive technical jargon.

Interviewers need to realize that they are facilitators rather than the focus of the interview. It is also good to remember that an oral history tells the interviewee's story which should not be overshadowed by a self-promoting interviewer, deliberately or inadvertently.

Duties of an effective interviewer include:

- Make initial contact and maintain communication with the interviewee throughout the interview process.
- Arrange for an interview date, time, and location.
- Do background research and gather information about the interviewee and his or her practice.

- Obtain signatures on all legal ownership release, informed consent, and gift of deed forms.
- Prepare questions with protocol notes in advance to be used during the interview.
- Record opening or preliminary remarks that include introducing both the interviewee and interviewer along with the purpose of the interview, date, time and location at the beginning of the each recording session.
- Maintain a conducive environment during the interview sessions.
- Keep the interview focused regarding subject content and time.
- Ask appropriate follow-up and probing questions.
- Maintain a productive environment during the interview (keep interviewee at ease, watch for signs of fatigue, handle difficult situations).
- Prepare a word-for-word transcription of the interview which will be audited and edited by the interviewer as well as reviewed and/or corrected by the interviewee.
- Keep records and assemble all materials associated with the interview including transcription and original recordings.

Subjects for Interview Questions

According to the Oral History Association, “interviewers are obliged to ask historically significant questions...”

Veterinary oral history projects will vary and have different objectives. Consequently, questions relevant to, and focused on the purpose of a project as a whole and tailored to individual interviewees are necessary to solicit the desired information from the interviewee.

If appropriate, based upon the limitations of time and effort, an interviewer might consider establishing a specific theme or focus for the interview sessions which would guide the questions and obtain meaningful responses. For example, the project might include all living VMA past presidents, only large animal practitioners, state public health veterinarians, or other specific groups.

Questions are a guide, not a script. When formulating questions, include verbs such as “describe,” “illustrate,” “explain,” “discuss,” “compare.” Also, use “tell me about...”, “please elaborate.....”, “how did you address that.... [or feel about that.....]”, “what happened when....”, and so forth.

Some oral historians feel that a list of specific questions should not be given to interviewees in advance, but rather provide a general idea about the range of topics to be covered. In their opinion, it removes spontaneity and thus produces “canned” or “prepared” speeches from the interviewees.

Productive questions should avoid asking for a simple “yes” or “no,” but rather encourage “essay-type” responses that require longer answers. It is important not only to know what happened or what the person did, but what the person thought and felt about the event or experience.

Also, if you will be interviewing a number of veterinarians, you might want to identify a few standard or uniform questions that would be asked of all interviewees. This will provide insights into how different individuals related to changes, held certain viewpoints, or had different practice or educational experiences that could be compared and analyzed across the entire group.

The subjects of the interviews will be one or more of the following:

1. Interviewee recounting experiences and memories as a practicing veterinarian in a veterinary hospital or clinic or other endeavors.
2. Explain how he or she became interested in veterinary medicine as a career.
3. Describe educational background and preparation for veterinary college, in addition to notable experiences with the curriculum, professors, or other students, and the value of that training later in practice.
4. Describe any other educational or previous work experience, even if not related to veterinary medicine.

5. Describe what practice was like on a day-to-day basis, or describe a typical (or atypical) daily routine.
6. Veterinarians from different generations can discuss a disease and its treatment “then and now” (how the disease was historically treated versus how it is treated today), and how much or how little progress has been made. Possible diseases/treatments include laminitis, hip dysplasia, heart disease, and diabetes.
 Note: Ideally, both the interviewer and interviewee will be members of the relevant veterinary specialty board.
7. Provide advice and recommendations for younger colleagues and aspiring veterinarians.
8. Indicate how the profession and practice of veterinary medicine in general has changed over the years.
9. Describe his or her involvement with professional associations, including as the AVMA, State or Local VMAs, specialty boards and other veterinary-related organizations.
10. Describe any involvement with veterinary medicine in the military or international services.
11. Describe how practices have changed—sole practitioner to group specialty practices.
12. Forecast where they think the profession is going and what the future of veterinary medicine will be.
13. Additional topics might include the following major changes. As examples,
 - Introduction of effective veterinary drugs
 - Vaccines
 - Narcotics and controlled substances
 - Rural versus urban practice
 - Significant evolution of small animal medicine and surgery
 - Veterinary education
 - Women in veterinary medicine
 - Diagnostic techniques and equipment
 - Production medicine in agriculture
 - Diversity
 - Growth and impact of specialization
 - Participation in state and national professional and specialty associations
 - Human, zoonotic and public health issues
 - The public’s attitudes toward veterinarians and veterinary medicine
 - Career opportunities in veterinary medicine

Some examples of possible questions for veterinary professionals are included in the Appendix; Review completed oral history interviews and/or contact the AVMHS Committee Chair for additional sample questions.

Equipment

Oral history recordings should be made using modern digital recording equipment. If only an analog recorder is available, the completed interview should be converted to a digital format for effective preparation of the transcript and preservation of the original recordings.

There are many digital voice recorders on the market today. In general, use the best equipment available within the limits of your financial resources to reproduce the interviewee's voice as accurately as possible. It is not necessary to have the most expensive unit on the market. Good quality, pocket-sized portable digital audio recorders are available for less than \$200, and even \$50 units can be satisfactory.

In selecting equipment also consider:

- USB equipped port and cable for easy uploading to a computer
- Storage capacity
- Battery life and battery level indicator
- Tracking and other features
- Size and overall ease of use
- Customer service support

Remember: Whatever brand and model recorder you use, ALWAYS practice in advance before an interview and be very familiar with the equipment.

AUDIO (Preferred or standard)

Audio recording is the preferred format for oral history interviews, along with an accompanying still photograph(s) of the interviewee, supplementary illustrations, and other image documents and artifacts. It is usually sufficient for capturing the spoken word containing recollections of past events and experiences.

Audio interviews can easily be conducted by one interviewer and require minimal equipment and setup.

Subsequent transcription will remove clutter, such as "um's," "ah's," "you know's," or other repetitive speech mannerisms.

Equipment can be purchased from popular electronics sources, including in-person retail outlets and over the Internet.

The Oral History Association provides recommendations for suitable audio equipment and other technical considerations online.

The best digital audio recorders based on price can be found on the following web site:

<http://www.martelelectronics.com/1645.html>

There are also many sites on the Internet that offer reviews of digital voice recorders, such as TopTenREVIEWS at <http://digital-voice-recorder-review.toptenreviews.com/>

Seriously consider power sources. When in doubt, always use AC power with battery backup to assure no problems with power supply interruptions.

VIDEO (optional)

Video recording of oral histories should be considered only in instances where a full or continuous visual record is needed or desired. For instance, there might be too many visual artifacts to describe each one adequately on an audio recording and which are essential to the content of the interview. Or, the geographical location or the appearance or mannerisms of the interviewee are essential for some reason to supplement the person's voice.

Video recording is more complicated as it requires additional equipment capable of capturing both audio and visual content. In addition, it is necessary to use a tripod and have a separate person to serve as the "camera" operator. Effective site preparation, including lighting, background, and other environmental considerations are also involved along with editing and storage capabilities for larger video files.

If the project might involve one or more videotaped interviews, do sufficient investigation in advance. Also, contact the AVMHS Committee Chair for more background information and possible referrals.

Additional information is available from:

Mould, David H., Ganzert, Charles F. "Audio and Video Recording." In: DeBlasio, Donna M., Ganzert, Charles F., Mould, David H., Paschen, Stephen H., Sacks, Howard L. *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*. Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 2009: 136-162.

Preplanning and Making Arrangements Prior to Interview Sessions

Adequate advanced planning and other considerations are essential to completing a successful oral history interview. These include conducting sufficient background research, adequate preparation, and establishing a quiet, relaxed and comfortable environment for each session. It also requires effective communication and keeping track of all documentation throughout the process.

The Oral History Association offers some “Best Practices for Oral History” for conducting oral histories at <http://www.oralhistory.org/do-oral-history/principles-and-practices/>

Here are some recommendations for an interviewer to facilitate and assure an effective oral interview.

Extend invitation

- Make initial contact and create a personal relationship by telephone to explain the reasons for requesting an oral interview, describe the overall oral history procedure, extend a verbal invitation to participate, and ask for permission to record the interview.

Some oral historians prefer to send a letter in advance then follow-up with a phone call.

Some oral historians choose to make a pre-interview site visit that is not recorded to discuss the purpose, arrangements, and to sign forms, rather than relying only on a telephone conversation.

- Ask the interviewee for background information, including curriculum vitae, a recent photograph, a list of published articles as well as newspaper articles or other materials.
- Send a written follow-up letter of invitation along with printed materials concerning the project and release forms for the interviewee’s signature.
- Make a file folder for each interviewee in order to secure all materials related to the interview.
- An interview checklist may also be helpful to keep each interview “on track” at various stages and to monitor progress. It can serve as the first page of the file folder.

Set location, time and date

- Identify a location, time and date mutually convenient to both interviewee and interviewer.

Suitable locations could include:

Personal residences

Dining rooms or home offices make suitable interview locations as lounge chairs in living rooms might be too relaxed and a kitchen too distracting.

Conference or meeting rooms at colleges, universities or public libraries.

Designated quiet and low traffic meeting rooms at local or regional veterinary meetings and conventions.

- Expect to conduct one or more interview sessions.
- Allow only 1-2 hours per session to avoid fatigue.
- Provide comfortable surroundings to reduce stress and interference for both parties.

Do preliminary research and preparation

- Perform background research and obtain materials from the interviewee regarding his or her veterinary practice or experience in veterinary medicine to help focus the topics to be covered, determine meaningful questions to ask, and obtain desired responses.
- Select or construct appropriate questions including any that may be specific to that individual.
- Review materials in advance.
- Prepare a written protocol sheet or outline with questions that can guide the actual interview and provide a place for making notes or reminders during the session.
- Practice in advance and become familiar with your equipment -- VERY IMPORTANT !!
- Bring equipment, supplies (extra batteries), description of the project or brochure, release forms, questions and protocol sheet, business cards or other identification to the interview

Set up the environment prior to the interview session(s)

- Re-confirm date, time and location.
- Check temperature, room lighting, incoming sunlight from windows, or other environmental features.
- Set up recording equipment carefully to avoid cluttering or interfering with the interview process.
- Plug in the recorder and do a preliminary sound (or video) check to make sure the equipment is operating properly.
- Eliminate potential distractions and interruptions, such as pending meetings, lunch breaks, incoming phone calls, friendly pets, etc.

- Reduce all sources of background noise as much as possible. Air conditioners, ticking clocks, outside traffic noise, scheduled church chimes and sirens, etc. can be very distracting.
- Turn off cell phones and other mobile devices.
- Use restroom facilities in advance to reduce potential interruptions

Photograph of interviewee

If not already available in advance, request a digital photograph of the interviewee at the time of the in-person interview. Use of this image can be covered by the release form and be incorporated in any publications that might be produced.

During the Interview Session

David Mould (90) states that “the best interviews are conversational in style, but they are never conversations.”

Interviews should be professional and business-like while also being friendly and enjoyable. The purpose is not to interrogate but rather to gather meaningful personal recollections in a pleasant but somewhat structured manner.

Each interview is unique given the combination of the interviewer, interviewee, location, topic, and other factors. It is difficult to separate the interviewee from the interviewer. Consequently, the content may originate from the interviewee, but the interviewer has an important role in shaping the interview.

The interviewer should:

- Remain calm.
- Avoid eating during the interview, but water or its equivalent is acceptable for both parties.
- Minimize initial chit-chat and small talk before the recording session actually begins.
- Record a preliminary introduction at the beginning of each session that includes introducing both the interviewee and interviewer along with the purpose, project description, date, time and location.

Consider using a standard opening format for consistency across interviews in the same series or project.

- Maintain eye contact and express interest in the process.
- Remind interviewee of his or her rights for participation.
- Maintain a conducive and productive environment during the interview sessions.
- Pace or ask one question at a time.
- Reformulate or restate questions as needed during the interview.
- Keep the interview focused by guiding the subject content and time.
- Use chronology as a guide during the interview.
- Be an attentive listener.
- Allow and encourage the interviewee to speak.

- Ask easy questions at first, such as biographical information, and end the interview with lighter questions.
- Present appropriate follow-up, open-ended, “essay-type,” neutral, and probing questions.
- Keep the audience and purpose of the interview in mind.
- Avoid fidgeting, shuffling papers, or creating other distractions.
- Limit verbal acknowledgements, such as “I see”, okay”, “sure”, “uh-ha”, “got it”, “yup” etc.
- Take the position of an “educated layperson” to avoid jargon and tangential scientific diversions.
- Give verbal descriptions of any artifacts, photographs, or other items mentioned and keep copies with the original recording and transcript.
- Take notes on the prepared written protocol sheet as the interview proceeds and maintain a list of words frequently used including people, places, etc., that can be verified later.
- Add time codes if the interview will be uninterrupted or requires structure for future ease of use.
- Bring memory jogs, such as photos, clippings, and other items.
- Allow silence to give the interviewee time to think and formulate meaningful responses.
- Avoid deliberately leading or forcing the interviewee as the interviewee should feel he or she is in control of the content.
- Avoid constructing history as you might wish it to be.
- Resist the temptation to give your own opinion on a veterinary issue or relate your own clinical experience.
- Avoid interrupting, arguing, antagonizing, or otherwise “one-upping” the interviewee, or pushing one’s own beliefs or values (it’s the interviewee’s story).
- If potentially controversial or defamatory issues should arise, the interviewer is partly responsible for a claim of liability. The interview can be halted immediately. Also, as mutually agreed by the interviewee and interviewer, that section should be clearly labeled on the subsequent transcript so it can be “locked” or “blocked out” until after the interviewee’s death .
- Watch for verbal and non-verbal cues or signs of fatigue, stress, or discomfort.

- Feel free to stop and resume the interview at any time, even if it's several hours later or the next day.
- Close comfortably with a statement of thanks to the interviewee plus date and time.

After the Interview Session

Following the close of the last interview session, the interviewer should:

- Label all recordings immediately and prepare a backup copy for storage in a safe place.
- Jot down organized field notes or a summary of the interview without delay while the memory is fresh. This can include what went well and what didn't.
- Call the interviewee and send a follow-up note of appreciation for his or her participation.
- Sign deed of gift forms for each interviewer present at the session(s).
- Check any facts or questions that occurred during the interview.
- Gather further information to verify the spelling of frequently used words, terms, names, etc., mentioned during the interview.
- Assemble, label and file all documentation and supplementary materials.
- Complete an interview record form (if used) or take down relevant notes and comments.
 These details will be used as part of the transcript title page to describe that particular interview during its processing and preservation.

The interviewer should maintain communication and continue to serve as a liaison with the interviewee during the transcription preparation and editing phase in producing a final written dialog document.

Transcribing the Oral Interview

Transcription is an important step that follows the oral interview session(s). As recommended by the Oral History Association, oral histories interviews should be transcribed to enhance access by the intended audience as well as for preservation purposes. Although a transcript is not required, pages of printed text are much easier to scan and read than listening to the entire linear interview recording, let alone try to find a relevant clip on an hour or longer recording.

What is transcription?

A transcript is an accurate, word-for-word written representation of the actual oral interview, with corrections and clarifications, in a question-and-response dialog format. It should retain the flavor and intent of the actual interview but will obviously lack verbal inflections.

To prepare a transcript, it is necessary to listen to the audio recording (or view a video recording) and make a written copy of the spoken dialog as is, word-for-word, from beginning to end, including the opening introduction and closing remarks.

This can be an expensive and time-consuming process similar to language translation. DeBlasio (106) indicates that “at best it takes eight to ten hours to transcribe one hour of taped interview.”

Transcription can be performed by the interviewer, an administrative assistant, student, or other reliable and competent individual. The individual should have good typing skills, be familiar with the terminology and English grammar, and be able to hear and interpret sounds. Accuracy is more important than speed.

If the project involves performing a number of interviews, the investment in special transcribing equipment and a software program should be considered. For example, digital transcription can be performed using:

- Standard desktop or portable computer equipped with sound card and USB port
- Word processing program
- Head phones (lightweight)
- Foot control pedal
- Transcription audio playback software program

Some excellent audio playback software programs are freely downloadable on the Internet. The program should offer a tracking bar, fast forwarding and reversing, variable voice speed and volume controls, audio and video playback, file saving, naming features, easy start/stop/replay features, and accurate resume placement that greatly facilitate the transcription process. Using a small foot pedal for controlling playback of the recording and other functions keeps hands free for typing.

In addition, there are commercial companies and private individuals who specialize in performing transcription services for audio recordings and dictations, including medical records. These services are provided on a cost per hour basis.

When completed, the transcript serves as the “heart” of an oral history. From the experience of those who have done transcriptions, the self-satisfaction of completing the final interview is remarkable.

First Draft Preparation

Standard word processing programs along with specialized transcription playback software are satisfactory to produce quality electronic documents for review, editing, and final printing.

For the first draft, a double-spaced format is suggested for easy reading and editing-- first by the interviewer and then by the interviewee. Thereafter, dialog text blocks can be single-spaced to reduce the number of pages.

It will be necessary to differentiate speakers on the transcript. This can be accomplished in several ways, such as by simply using Q: and A: or the first letter (or full last name) of the interviewer and interviewee in bold capital letters. A blank double spaced row between each interaction can be useful to separate the dialog. For example,

S: Dr. Williams, I think first of all we’d be interested a little bit about your personal background; perhaps what led you into veterinary medicine?

W: Well, Dr. Smithcors, I suppose thatI might say that my first introduction into the field of veterinary medicine was when a neighbor of mine attended Kansas State College, now Kansas State University, to study veterinary medicine and graduated about the time that I was in high school. When I learned that veterinarians were used in the inspection....

SMITHCORS: What changes have you....been most conscious of in the last 25, 30 years in the veterinary profession as a whole over the nation so far?

ARBURUA: I’d like to go back a little farther. I came out of school in 1915 in the transition period from the horse to our present age. And I have seen some great changes.

Brackets should be put around anything that is unclear or cannot be recognized on the audio recording such as, “[cannot recognize],” “[unclear],” or “[inaudible].”

TRANSCRIPT AUDIT

Once the rough first draft of the transcript has been compiled, an audit should be conducted. This compares the transcript against the actual recording for completeness, consistency, faithful representation of the dialog, and retention of the flavor of the interview.

It involves having the interviewer listen to the audio recording from beginning to end while viewing the draft of the written transcript. If omissions are found or corrections or other changes are needed, they are noted on the draft document for subsequent revision and updating the manuscript.

INTERVIEWER REVIEW AND EDITING

Then, the interviewer should review and edit the audited draft to:

- Check spelling of names, places, drugs, procedures, etc.
- Verify any facts, such as the correct name of a practice, dates, etc.
- Resolve as many unclear or unrecognizable words or thoughts in [brackets] as possible.
- Remove any repetitive speech mannerisms, such as “um’s,” “ah’s,” etc.
- Revise or clean up any obvious grammar and language errors.
- Add notations for further clarification in brackets.
- Use brackets to indicate anything that continues to be unclear from the audio recording, is replaced, or added for clarification.
- Avoid making significant changes to the wording or intent of the text to re-construct history as one might wish it to be or otherwise skew the intent of the interviewee during the interview.

REVIEW BY INTERVIEWEE

Once audited and corrected by the interviewer, a copy should be sent to the interviewee. The interviewee should:

- Read the document for accuracy and completeness as a representation of his or her spoken words during the interview.
- Revise or elaborate on anything in brackets that is unclear.
- Make any minor corrections or clarifications.
- Avoid major re-writing or making additions or changes to the original content which might modify the original purpose of recording spontaneous recollections of a person’s experiences and perspectives.
- Sign any final release forms making the interview and its transcript public with any restrictions noted.

Generally, the oral interview recording and transcript are kept confidential until the final release forms are signed by the interviewee.

If the interviewee wants to make significant or extensive editing or content changes to the transcript, then it ceases to be an oral history and a faithful representation of the actual interview transaction. In these instances, the text might still be useful for historical purposes, but should be considered an oral biography rather than an oral history.

When the interviewee completes the review and makes any corrections, the interviewee should also complete a final release of ownership for the transcript and its content.

Final format

Having been reviewed and accepted by the interviewer and interviewee, a final printed oral history manuscript might include:

Cover or title page

- Name of organizing or sponsoring organization.
- Project and/or program name.
- Name of interviewee.
- Name of financial sponsor (if any or different).
- Interviewer(s)'s name(s).
- Subject keywords.
- Location of the interview.
- Date of the interview.

Photo

Biographical statement or CV of the interviewee.

Copy of signed final release forms.

Abstract of the interview with any significant points about the interview.

Text of the full final interview (transcript).

Index—as detailed as possible (optional, but very helpful; some word processing programs offer an index function).

Depositing the final product

The final version of the print transcript, original recording as an electronic file on CD or flash drive, and accompanying material and artifacts should be deposited with the designated repository or sponsoring organization. This might include the historical committee of a State or Local VMA. The repository will

preserve the product, make it available to researchers, relatives conducting genealogy projects, and otherwise utilize it as a historical resource.

The interviewee may also want a copy for his or her files.

Additional information about transcription may be found in:

DeBlasio, Donna M. "Transcribing Oral History." In: DeBlasio, Donna M., Ganzert, Charles F., Mould, David H., Paschen, Stephen H., Sacks, Howard L. *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*. Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 2009: 104-114.

Preservation and Access

After all of the materials for the completed oral history have been forwarded to the designated repository or sponsoring organization, it is the responsibility of that unit to preserve and make the interview content available to researchers.

Examples of possible repositories include:

- State VMAs.
- Veterinary schools, libraries and archives.
- Local and State historical societies.

If the interviewee was associated with a veterinary college, depositing a copy with his or her alma mater's college library or archives might also be considered to increase the chances for preservation.

It will be the responsibility of the repository to:

- File and maintain copies of the printed interview transcript manuscript.
- Store digital files of the manuscript and original recording on secure servers.
- Comply with any restrictions on Web posting or other public access as requested by the interviewee. In some instances, all or parts of oral interviews may be withheld from public access until after the interviewee's death as specified by the interviewee.
- Make copies of the manuscript and/or original interview recording available to scholars, historical researchers, and others as needed.
- Post any or all of an oral interview on a World Wide Web site:

Whether to post interviews, including full transcripts, on the Internet is an important consideration. The pros and cons of which must be considered carefully.

For obvious reasons, it might be appropriate to post only limited aspects, such as the title page information, photo, short biography, short audio clip, or abstract or selected excerpts on Web pages. The full text of the transcript would be available only from the repository upon request.

- Extract summary information from different oral interviews for various purposes.
- As authorized by and in conjunction with the original sponsor, publish partial contents from individual oral histories or summaries in a printed publication or on a CD-ROM. For example, a volume of oral histories of past-presidents of a State Veterinary Medical Association, or other derivative publications, might be compiled, including journal articles summarizing the trends presented in a sample of oral histories.

Promotion and Marketing

The sponsoring VMA, organization, and/or interviewers should not underestimate the need for effective promotion and marketing of their oral history initiative, especially if many veterinarians are involved in the project as interviewees and interviewers.

Planning documents can be used as a proposal to get acceptance from officers and governing boards of various State and Local VMAs and specialty groups. These materials are also useful when meeting with interviewees and potential sponsors and financial donors.

Experience has shown that having a clear focus can maintain momentum and enthusiasm for an oral history project. This involves effective channels of communication.

Promotional materials that might be considered include:

- A one-page description of the purpose and scope of the oral history project.
- Several testimonial statements or excerpts from interviewers and interviewees.
- Press releases.
- Informational brochures.
- Web pages.
- Advertisements or announcements in newsletters and other publications.
- Announcements at meetings and conventions.

Costs and Expenses

Conducting oral history interviews is not without cost, actual or gratis. The level of coverage or reimbursement of expenses will depend upon the project and the sources of funding support or sponsorship.

Among the cost elements to be considered are:

Personnel

- Secretarial assistance (for large scale projects)

- Interviewer reimbursement (often gratis)

- Technical assistance

- Transcription

 - Interviewers may be responsible for covering the costs of transcription unless funding can be arranged by the State VMA or sponsoring organization, from donors or other entities.

 - Commercial company, paid assistance, versus donated effort

Equipment

- Portable digital audio and/or video recorders.

- Microphone (optional depending on recorder and interview site)

- Batteries for backup.

- Flash drives for storage.

 - Computer with word processing program, playback software, and backup file storage.

Travel and related logistical expenses

- Transportation to the interviews.

- Food and lodging.

- Room rental.

Supplies

- File folders.

- Flash drives, CD-ROM discs, etc.

- Pens, pencils, paper, envelopes, etc.

Postage

Printing and photocopying.

- Forms, promotional brochures, transcript drafts, etc.

Telephone/fax charges.

Web page development.

Partnering and Collaboration

If implementing a complete oral history project is not feasible, consider partnering or seeking collaboration with existing history-related organizations in your area.

- Colleges and universities

Many colleges and universities have established oral history programs in history and other departments which are active in capturing the reminiscences of professors, alumni, or important events and happenings. They could provide a solid foundation upon which to build a mutually productive relationship in interviewing senior veterinarians.

- Historical societies

In addition, many city, county, regional and state historical societies have been involved with oral history interviewing for many years. They bring extensive experience that could be valuable to Local and State Veterinary Medical Associations, not only in getting started but in handling many of the ongoing details involved in arranging interview sessions and transcribing recordings.

- Senior citizen organizations and public libraries

In some areas, senior citizen organizations, including some public libraries, have done oral history interviews of community members and could thus contribute advice and other support to veterinary oral history preparation.

- Independent interviewers

Finally, it is possible to hire independent or private interviewers, some of whom may have extensive interviewing experience and knowledge of history.

Note:

When becoming involved in any relationship, it is recommended that all of the expectations and deliverables should be thoroughly discussed by both sides so that there is a clear understanding of each party's responsibilities. This might even involve signing a simple, written memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreement.

Alternatives to Oral Histories

As noted, an oral history has a defined spoken format and a suggested “best practice” protocol as an established historical research and preservation methodology. In some cases, it may not be appropriate or realistic for some veterinary professionals.

Consideration might be given to several alternatives:

- Narrative summaries versus verbatim transcripts

Written transcription is very important to oral history use and preservation. However, it can be time-consuming, tedious, and expensive.

A possible shortcut to such a strict interpretation might include the preparation of a more general narrative based upon the content presented in the actual interview. Summary narratives are not oral histories and special care should be taken to show the intent of the interviewees.

The narrative would be prepared by the interviewer as a person knowledgeable about veterinary medical practice and reviewed by the interviewee. This alternative will be more forgiving and flexible than the traditional transcript and could still have a role in describing past events, recollections, and experiences.

- Do-It-Yourself Oral History

While oral history traditionally refers to a dialog between an interviewee by an interviewer, it is also possible for an individual veterinarian to record his or her own interview using an audio or video recorder along with a set of questions without the presence of an interviewer.

These self-interviews lack the advantage of an evolving dialog with an interviewer asking open-ended and follow-up questions. Also, they may not be as spontaneous and will be focused toward the interviewee’s perspective. However, they can still be useful to capture first-hand experiences with events and developments.

A written transcript or narrative summary of a self-interview continues to be important.

- Memoirs

Many veterinarians have chosen to write about aspects of their life-long experiences and share their stories more extensively in written memoirs or autobiographical publications. These can be commercial or self-published printed volumes or posted on the Web on a personal home page or added to a designated repository or archive.

They do not offer the opportunity for hearing a spoken word, but can be rich resources for historical information depending on their focus and content.

Additional Resources

There are many sources of information available on the Internet and elsewhere concerning the why and how's of conducting oral histories. This list contains some selected resources.

--- Associations

Chemical Heritage Foundation

<http://www.chemheritage.org/>

Oral History Association

<http://www.oralhistory.org/>

Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR)

<http://ohmar.org/>

--- Books

Baum, Willa K. *Transcribing and Editing Oral History*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1991. 127 pgs

Charlton, Thomas L., Myers, Lois E., Sharpless, Rebecca, eds. *Handbook of Oral History*. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006. 625 pgs.

Charlton, Thomas L., Myers, Lois E., Sharpless, Rebecca. *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007. 318 pgs.

DeBlasio, Donna M., Ganzert, Charles F., Mould, David H., Paschen, Stephen H., Sacks, Howard L. *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History*. Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 2009.

Neuenschwander, John A. *A Guide to Oral History and the Law*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. 167 pgs.

Ritchie, Donald A. *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 318 pgs.

Sommer, Barbara W., Quinlan, Mary Kay. *The Oral History Manual*. 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2009. 121 pgs.

--- Centers and Collections (general)

Oral History Association. Centers and Collections

<http://www.oralhistory.org/resources/centers-and-collections/>

Provides a list with links to Web sites of universities and centers with general and specialized oral history programs.

--- Journals

The *Oral History Review*, published by the Oral History Association, is the U.S. journal of record for the theory and practice of oral history and related fields

<http://www.oralhistory.org/publications/oral-history-review/>

--- Web Resources

Moyer, Judith. "Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History." 1999. Web 17 Feb 2013

<http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html>

Assistance and Questions

We hope this *Guide* will provide a useful overview along with many practical suggestions for those interested in conducting oral history interviews in veterinary medicine. It is not intended to be comprehensive nor can it cover everything or address all questions that might arise.

As a result, we offer:

- Answers, Advice, Consultation

Members of the American Veterinary Medical History Society who have had personal experiences with oral histories can provide many answers and referrals to source material and samples. Our members are also available for advice and consultation, preferably by email or over the telephone.

- Catalog

AVMHS also maintains an online catalog or finding tool for locating known completed oral history interviews of veterinarians and others.

AVMHS Oral Histories of Veterinary Medicine Catalog

<http://www.refworks.com/refshare?site=010271135918800000/RWWEB103399991/115521284142881000>

- Clearinghouse

As oral history activities become more widespread, we intend to maintain an **OHVM Clearinghouse** file or sources for obtaining sample invitation letters, consent forms, brochures, press releases, and other supporting materials that individuals may wish to share with others.

- Projects and Collections Roster

A list of **current and past veterinary-related oral history projects and collections** is available on our Web site at <http://www.avmhs.org/>

Please contact:

Dr. Fred J. Born
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American Veterinary Medical History Society
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This *Guide* was compiled by Susanne Whitaker, AVMHS Secretary-Treasurer, with assistance from Dr. Fred J. Born.

APPENDIX A – Interview Process Checklist

Plan

- Goals and objectives
- Project description and proposal (e.g., scope, focus, time table, equipment, personnel, costs, repository selection, output products, etc.)

Selection

- Identify interviewee(s)
- Identify interviewer(s)

Pre-Interview

- Extend invitation
- Send written invitation and accompanying materials
- Schedule date, time, and location
- Make travel or other logistical arrangements
- Send release forms
- Receive signed release forms
- Obtain or schedule equipment

Preparation

- Obtain background information
- Select or compose relevant questions
- Prepare interview protocol sheets

Interview

- Set up equipment
- Provide bottled water
- Perform a sound check on equipment operation
- Check environmental factors
- Minimize noise and distractions

Post-interview

- Send written letter of appreciation
- Assemble materials
- Complete Interview record form or notes
- Attach supplemental materials (curriculum vitae, publication list, photographs, etc.)

- Prepare, edit and review transcript of interview sessions

- Forward materials to repository

APPENDIX B – Forms and Contracts

Sample release, consent, and deed of gift forms are available from many sources. Also, contact the AVMHS OHVM Committee Chair.

Preliminary release form (for interviewees)

Human subject consent IRB form (for interviewees)

Final release form (when final transcript has been completed) (for interviewee)

Donation / Deed of gift (for interviewees and interviewers)

Biographical information summary [or curriculum vitae]

Interview Record (to be completed and kept with the transcription, original interview recording, and any supplemental materials, e.g., curriculum vitae, publications list, photographs, artifacts, etc.)

Name of interviewee:

Year and place of birth:

Veterinary school:

Graduation year:

Types of practices or other life work in career:

Name of last practice:

Location of last practice:

Type of last practice(s):

Interview date, time, and location:

Interviewer(s):

Signed original preliminary ownership release form

Signed original consent form (if needed)

Signed original deed of gift form(s)

Invitation letter (copy) and any additional communication or notes by or about the interview

Gratitude and acknowledgement letter (copy)

Protocol sheets and notes (if appropriate)

Format: audio/video

Interview length /number of sessions:

Brief summary of content:

Notes:

Interviewee signature and date:

APPENDIX C -- Letters and Promotional Documents

Sample letters, invitations, and promotional documents are available from many sources. Also, contact the AVMHS OHVM Committee Chair.

Short description of the purpose, content and overall interview process (for interviewee)

Invitation letter

Appreciation and acknowledgement letter

Project brochures or fliers

Press releases

News announcements

APPENDIX D – Suggested Interview Questions for Veterinary Professionals

The range and content of questions are varied and should be tailored to the goals of the oral history program as well as the individual veterinarians being interviewed. In general, orient questions toward the information, experiences, and recollections you wish to obtain or gather from the senior veterinarians.

Remember---there are no right and wrong questions, but open-ended, essay-type responses are most productive. Asking appropriate questions is an art not a science.

The following is not a prescriptive list, but rather represent a few “suggestions” or samples of the many possible questions that might be asked. Interviewers could review a few completed interviews for further ideas and suggestions.

I. General Interview Questions for Practicing Veterinarians

General Information:

Name

City, State

Year and location of birth

Veterinary school and year of graduation

Early years:

1. Where were you born and grow up?
2. Tell us something about your early education.

Choice to pursue veterinary medicine:

1. When did you decide to become a veterinarian?
2. What made you decide to become a veterinarian and pursue veterinary medicine as a career?

Memorable reflections of veterinary school:

1. What veterinary school did you attend, when did you graduate, and why did you choose to study there?
2. Was there a professor who inspired you and significantly affected your education and/or career?
3. What was the atmosphere like in veterinary school when you were there?
4. Were there methods that are not in widespread use today? (diagnostics, surgical techniques, etc.)
5. Did veterinary school prepare you for what you encountered when you entered veterinary practice and the changes you saw over time?

Changes seen in veterinary practice/career field:

1. What changes did you see, and which changes did you find to be most difficult or easiest for you to adopt?
2. What were your most challenging problems and how did you address them?
3. How did you obtain continuing education? How did that change over the years?
4. Did changes in society affect your practice and the profession during your career? If so, what were they and how did they affect you?

Practice experiences:

1. What did you do after graduation?
2. Describe a typical (or not so typical day) in your practice, or give us some insights as to what you did on a day-to-day basis when in practice.
3. What were some of the greatest challenges you faced in practice?
4. What are the most difficult and most enjoyable things about veterinary medicine for you?
5. What was most rewarding to you in your career in veterinary medicine?
6. What was nature of your military service, if any?

Advice for aspiring veterinarians:

1. What advice would you offer to someone who would like to become a veterinarian?
2. What is the one thing you learned about veterinary medicine or veterinary practice that they didn't teach you in vet school?

Storytelling and memorable experiences:

1. What was your favorite thing about veterinary practice? Or, what did you enjoy most about your practice (or being a veterinarian)? Or, least favorite.....
2. Do you have one patient, or case, experience or event that has stayed in your memory all these years? Why did it stay with you?
3. Do you have any professional regrets? If so, what are they?

State, local, national VMA or specialty board activities:

1. When and why did you become involved with _____?
2. Could you share any memorable experiences of being active in your Local or State VMA or specialty board (if applicable)?
3. What activities (or offices) were you involved in?
4. What value to do you feel you received (or contributed) from this participation?
5. How has the involvement of members in professional organizations changed over the years?

Direction for the profession:

1. How do you think the profession of veterinary medicine as a whole has advanced during your time in the profession?
2. Where do you think the profession is going and what is its future?

II. Additional Questions for Interviews of Pioneer Veterinarians

If time allows, consider asking the questions from the general interview as well.

These interviews would ideally be conducted by a veterinarian in the same field – for example, if they are discussing a surgical technique, the interviewer should be a younger professional who is familiar with the technique and has performed it.

1. What inspired you to develop the technique or other innovation?
2. What challenges did you face when developing this innovation? How did you overcome them?
3. Was there a certain person or colleague who was especially inspirational or supportive through the process?
4. How did this innovation change your life?
5. How did this innovation help animals and the profession?
6. What has been the most rewarding part of this for you?

III. Questions Suitable for Pioneer interviews about historical changes in veterinary procedures, methods, etc.

If time allows, consider asking the questions from the general interview as well.

These interviews would ideally be conducted by a veterinarian in the same field – for example, if they are discussing a surgical technique, the interviewer should be a younger professional who is familiar with the technique and has performed it.

Ideally, these interviews are more of a discussion about how a disease was diagnosed and treated or a procedure was performed “then vs. now” and have a discussion on how much progress (or how little progress) has been made over time.

**IV. Questions Suitable for Others Related to Veterinary Medicine
(Spouses, Animal Health Technicians, Librarians, etc.)**

1. How did you contribute to your spouses' practice?
2. How did you and the family handle the practice's busy schedule including vacation time?
3. What credentials or background do you think have been important for spouses of veterinarians?
4. As a spouse, describe any experiences related to the practice that stand out or are particularly memorable?
5. Describe your involvement with the state and/or national Auxiliary?
6. What was it like to go to national veterinary meetings with your veterinarian spouse?
7. What made you decide to become a veterinary technician?
8. How have the roles of AHT's changed over the years?
9. Describe your duties and responsibilities as a member of the practice team? What did you like best, or least about this work?
10. Describe how your technical education did or did not prepare you for working in a veterinary practice.
11. What were some of the greatest challenges you faced as an AHT in caring for animal patients or in practices in general?
12. Describe any career experiences that stand out in your mind for any particular reason?
13. What do you think is the future of animal health technology?