

## **TRANSCRIBERS' GUIDELINES: SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESERVING THE ESSENCE OF THE INTERVIEW.**

### **Format**

Transcribe tapes, ideally using word processing software that allows you to make corrections easily. Print out a copy of the transcript and place it in a folder on which is typed the name(s) of the narrator, the interviewer, and the date of the interview.

Each oral history interview is to be preceded with a title page.

Following the title page, should be the interview abstract, release form, life history form, and proper word form; these should be provided by the interviewer.

The transcript of the interview begins at the top of the next page.

Double space throughout.

*Margins* - Top - 1.0"; Bottom - 1.0"; Right - 1.0". These margins will allow the transcript to be bound and give even margins throughout.

*Page numbers* - Page numbers are located in the upper right hand corner starting on the second actual page of the interview, after title page and index. (The page number on the first page should be understood and need not be printed.) This command is located under Page Number - From Top - .5".

*Header-Running Titles* - Starting on the second page of the interview, the name of the interviewee should appear in the top left hand corner of each successive page in bold face. This command is located in Word under View/Header-Footer.

Indent each time a new speaker enters in. Use the whole name the first time the speaker appears; then use initials each time thereafter.

Indicate the beginning of a new side of tape by starting a new page and typing "START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B" (or whatever is appropriate). Indicate the end of the side of a tape by typing "END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B" (or whatever is appropriate).

Indicate when the interview is finished with "END OF INTERVIEW."

### **Content**

NOTE: The interviewer has the responsibility for supplying an accurate list (on the Proper Word Form) of proper names which occur in the interview.

The transcriber is expected to proofread each page of manuscript for mistakes in spelling and/or typing. Spelling must also be checked, using the computer's spell-check option. (Correct mistakes; do not XXX out).

Where a word or a phrase is inaudible, type (        ). Do not type "inaudible," or (?).

When a speaker fails to complete a sentence, this is indicated using two dashes, the first dash flush with the last letter of the last word spoken. The second dash should be followed by some form of end punctuation (period, question mark, etc.), as in "Well, you see there was nothing more I could--."

To indicate interruptions use two dashes flush with the last word spoken. For example, "He had planned to go to Yale and--." (Speaker breaks off because another speaker enters, etc.).

When a speaker interrupts him or herself in mid-sentence to add a supplementary or clarifying remark--a strong parenthetical digression--the remark is set off by dashes as shown in this sentence, with the dashes flush with the preceding and following words. Weaker parenthetical expressions may be set off with commas.

More distinct interruptions, such as for telephone calls or for moments when the tape recorder is turned off, or for laughter should be identified by adding brackets and the appropriate explanation of the sounds. [Interruption] or [Laughter] or [Recorder is turned off and them back on].

Noticeable pauses in conversation by a speaker, should be indicated by using brackets with the word [pause]. Common verbal lapses, such as the droppings of the "g" sound in "ing" endings, or the omission of the "a" and "d" sounds in "and," should usually be written in their proper form. The meaningless guttural sound "uh" should not even be transcribed unless it indicates some sort of emotion or real quandary on the part of the narrator.

Use lower case for state legislative bodies, upper case for national; lower for public officials; capitalize Democratic but not party; where in doubt, use lower case.

Numbers one through one hundred and large round numbers should be spelled out, as should fractions. Large complex numbers should be written numerically, as should numbers in a series, percentages, ratios and times. The word "percent" should be used rather than the symbol %. The days of the month are written numerically, as are years and series of years, except for such expressions as "the fifties," or "the roaring twenties." Expressions such as the 50s or 60s should not contain an apostrophe before the "s."

\* Please note: As will be further explained in the guidelines for editing, over-use of dashes only weakens a transcript. One must judge that it is important to the context of the interview for the reader to know that the speaker did pause, was in a quandary, and therefore did not speak straightforwardly. Where the pauses are not this significant, simply end the sentence with a period or a question mark.

## **Editing**

This is the aspect of transcribing which is the most challenging, making this sort of typing quite different from "rote work." It demands the full attention of the transcriber to what is being said, and how-- by the interviewer as well as the narrator. When one is aware of the context of an interview, and also of the rhythm and mannerisms of speech of the person involved, one is ready to edit in a sensitive and intelligent way. Habitual false starts, or unnecessary and repetitive phrases can be cleaned up; "run-on" sentences can be broken with appropriate punctuation; the context of the interview can provide clues where there is a question of audibility of a word or phrase.

The following are instances which most frequently seem to require a transcriber's editing:

-- difficult to anticipate, but important to try to catch, are long run-on sentences or

-- questions which can, for clarity's sake, be broken up into separate sentences. In other words, one should not type long sentences with many commas separating thoughts.

Rather, the transcriber speaking should--whether the voice of the person speaking indicates it or not--use periods or at least semi-colons to make for easier reading and comprehension. Where possible in long narrator sections, paragraphing can also assist the reader. The transcriber may use, sparingly, exclamation marks and underlining where the emphasis seems called for in the context of the interview.

Obviously implied in the above is the fact that speed is not the highest priority in the transcribing process. Rather, care and accuracy require that the tape be played over again where necessary to catch a phrase or anticipate where editing should come in; a dictionary might need to be consulted, perhaps and an atlas for an unfamiliar proper name or geographical location. The transcriber must satisfy him or herself that the manuscript is readable, makes sense as it is typed, and of course, is free from typing and spelling errors.

The transcriber will find standard dictionaries, almanacs, and geographic indexes very useful when questions about the spelling of proper names and locations occur. Your media center or local library will be able to help you identify reference books that might be helpful.

The transcriber is not expected to double check historical information, dates, book titles, etc. However, one quick telephone call to your local library will often provide the correct spelling of a person or place when the transcriber doesn't recognize it.