



NSCDA Oral History Initiative Preparation and Interview Ideas

BEFORE the Interview

1. Contact your interviewee and conduct a pre-interview. Gather as much information as possible about him/her and the topic to be discussed prior to the day of the actual interview. This will help you research and formulate relevant interview questions. The better your questions, the better the interview!
2. It is helpful if the interviewee sends you biographical information or a c.v. and a brief outline of the proposed talk in advance of the interview.
3. Confirm interview date in writing and by telephone. Plan to arrive punctually if interviewing at the interviewee's residence. Arrive early to set up if interviewing elsewhere.
4. Know your equipment!
 - a) **Make sure that your device has enough storage to capture the entire interview!**
 - b) Practice doing an interview in advance of the actual interview. This YouTube video [link](https://youtu.be/jIeZRMAKvMs) has some good "how to" information: (<https://youtu.be/jIeZRMAKvMs>)
 - a) Fully charge all devices the night before.
5. If possible, have someone who can assist you as a timer. The timer does not speak. This person notes the approximate minute in the recording when topics change. The creation of a written index or recording log is a great help for future researchers.
6. Checklist of things to take to the interview:
 - ❖ iPhone, iPad or other recording devices. (Newer iPhones have excellent video and audio recorders. You should not need an additional microphone)
 - ❖ Charger and extension cord
 - ❖ Tripod with phone clip (Inexpensive and available on Amazon or Wal-Mart for ~\$20.)



- ❖ Your list of interview questions tailored to suit the specific interview. (see [Questions PDF on Historical Activities Committee webpage](#) for examples),
- ❖ Release form ([Release Template PDF located on Historical Activities Committee webpage](#)) - Print out a couple just in case.
- ❖ Pens, pencils, pad of paper
- ❖ Bottled water
- ❖ Small pack of tissues (some interviews can be emotional, especially for veterans).

Interview SET-UP

1. Pick an indoor location that is quiet and free of distractions where the interviewee can be comfortably seated. Be mindful of the background. It's helpful to have a table surface between the interviewer and subject.
1. Make sure the light source is not behind the subject or directly in their eyes.
2. Plug your device into your charger and connect to a power source.
3. Set your phone on "Airplane Mode" / "Do not Disturb."
4. Place the phone on the tripod horizontally using the "Landscape" orientation.
5. Before beginning the interview, do everything possible to relax the subject. This is the time for your chat. Explain what is going to happen.
6. Explain the importance of the Release Form and have the subject sign it. Sign it yourself.

CONDUCTING the Interview

- ❖ Be a gracious host. See to the comfort of your interviewee. Offer water and let them know that you can pause the interview if they need to take a break.
- ❖ When you are ready to begin, test the volume and camera angle.



- ❖ Begin the interview by stating the date, the location, your name and “we are interviewing here under the auspice of The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America (in the State of _____)”.
- ❖ Introduce the interviewee by saying something like “Thank you _____ for being with us today to share your story. Let’s begin with your background.”
- ❖ Listen and use follow up questions to help illuminate the interviewee’s experience for the audience. Be a visibly good listener -nod, smile etc. Remember the interview is about the person being interviewed, not the interviewer.
- ❖ It is fine to ask for clarification if something is unclear and to tactfully redirect the conversation if necessary. However, if the subject drifts off the topic you may not want to stop him or her. Sometimes terrific things emerge by accident. You can always pick up your track later.
- ❖ To wrap up the interview, you can say something like: “Is there anything else you would like to mention? Anything we haven’t covered?” If they say, “no,” then you can say: “Thank you _____ for sharing your story and being part of the NSCDA Oral History Project.”
- ❖ If you haven’t gotten the Release signed before the interview, make sure to get it now. Sign it yourself. **Do not leave the interview without the signatures!** The interview cannot be used in any public way without the signed consent form.

AFTER the Interview

Saving the interview to a physical device

Copy or transfer the interview from your iPhone to a computer either by “airdrop” (if copying to an Apple computer) or USB hard wire connection between the phone and computer.

Once the interview is on your computer it can be put onto a USB Flash Drive. Having the interview on a flash drive provides another format for saving /preserving your interview. If you are saving more than one interview on the same Flash Drive make sure that they are clearly labeled to distinguish between interviews. (Suggestion: place Flash drive in a zip lock baggie and staple the baggie together with all paper documentation; time sheets, releases etc.)



To send your recordings electronically from your iPhone to Dumbarton simply:

Open “Photos”, scroll down to “Videos”
Tap the video
Click the “Share” icon (📎)
Scroll down and click “Copy iCloud link”
Open your phone’s email app, click “compose”
“Paste” the link into the body of your email
Send to archives@dumbarton.org

Release/Consent forms may be emailed at the same time or separately.

Once your iCloud link is received at Headquarters, your interview will be stored on Dumbarton’s server in a folder containing your state society’s Oral Histories and backed up in three cloud-based locations around the world.

Older recordings on physical devices e.g., flash drives, DVDs, cassettes tapes, etc., can also be sent to Dumbarton where they will be physically and electronically stored.

Mail physical Oral Histories to:

Dumbarton House
2715 Q Street NW
Washington, DC 20007-3041

To the attention of: Samantha Hatton (Collections Manager)

Once your interview is successfully saved and transferred:

1. Send the interviewee a handwritten note thanking them for sharing their story and contributing to our Oral Histories Project.
2. If possible, transcribe the interview into a WORD document and send to Dumbarton.
3. If the oral histories are audio only, they should be saved as MP3 files. If they are videos, they should be saved as AVIO, WMV or MOV files.