



Doing Oral History:
Helping Christians Tell
their Own Stories

Jean Paul Wiest

Workshop held at Trinity Theological College, Singapore
14-18 March 2005

A Word of Welcome

from the Director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia
Trinity Theological College

Michael Poon

Welcome to all on behalf of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia, Trinity Theological College.

Over the past year, the Centre was exploring ways that it can help churches in this region to collect and organize their records, and start to reflect on their own histories. We benefited from the stimulating discussion last August in Port Dickson during the *Project for Archives, Documentation and Oral History* Study Group discussion in the International Association of Mission Studies Conference. For the past few months, we were able to embark on a joint venture with the four governing churches of the College on a *Singapore-Malaysia Church History Research Centre Initiative*. One of the first projects that we identify is to encourage churches to collect their local stories.

We are very grateful that Dr Jean-Paul Wiest is able to come to lead this Workshop on oral history. Dr Wiest is the founder of the Center for Mission Research & Study at Maryknoll, U.S.A. He is at present on research assignments in China. We are grateful to the United Board for Higher Education and to Overseas Ministries Study Center in Yale for their financial assistance to this Workshop.

We are very happy that thirty-eight representatives from the churches in Singapore and Malaysia and from the research students in the College are able to participate in the Workshop this week. We warmly welcome especially colleagues from the Methodist Church in Malaysia. We hope that the skills we learn, the vision we share, and the friendship we foster, over the next five days would help us to venture together to write down and declare the great things that the Almighty has done in the lives of many individuals in our localities.

Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia
Trinity Theological College
Doing Oral History: Helping Christians Tell Their Own Story
March 14-18, 2005

Venue : Trinity Theological College, Singapore

Course Outline

Course Description: This hands-on workshop on oral history provides participants with the skills and techniques needed to collect individuals' living memories in order to document church/mission/community history.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Mon, Mar 14	1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. 3:15 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Final Registration Getting to Know Each Other Characteristics of a Christian History Relevant to Our Times
Tues, Mar 15	9:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. 3:15 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. <i>Evening</i>	Planning an Oral History Project: Presentation Planning an Oral History Project: Group Practice Group Practice (continued) Planning an Oral History Project: Plenary Discussion <i>Outline Your Own Oral History Project (Optional)</i>
Wed, Mar 16	9:30 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. 10:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Pre-Interviewing & Interviewing: Presentation Preparation of Questionnaire: Small Group Practice Video Interview Practice
Thurs, Mar 17	9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. 10:45 a.m. - 12:00 a.m. 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Transcription: Presentation Thematic Analysis: Presentation Thematic Analysis: Group Practice
Fri, Mar 18	9:00 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. 9:45 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. 10:15 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. 10:30 a.m.	Finalize Thematic Analysis 1 st Presentation 2 nd Presentation Pointers for Writing Oral History/Evaluations

Resource Person: Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest, former director of the Center for Mission Research & Study at Maryknoll, is presently on research assignment in China. He has been using and teaching Oral History Techniques for over twenty years.

Recommended Readings: Ritchie, Donald, *Doing Oral History*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995.
Yow, Valerie Raleigh, *Recording Oral History*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994

"Doing Oral History: Helping Christians Tell Their Own Story"

Doing Oral History is a practical workshop directed toward the needs of persons wishing to use oral history to document mission and church history. The flesh and blood stories of key participants and observers of significant events and transitions in the story of missions make historical writing interesting and meaningful.

Through the workshop's structured approach to interviewing, recording, and analyzing data, participants learn how to tap into the living memories of the people most directly involved--and to keep the memories of those people alive.

Workshop participants are taken step-by-step through the process of developing an oral history project in a Christian context. From interviewing techniques to logistics, both simple and more complex types of projects are presented.

This is a hands-on seminar. Each presentation is followed by a practice session. Working together in small groups enables participants to gain confidence and a real sense of how to develop an oral history project.

Selected Bibliography

Ives, Edward D. *The Tape Recorded Interview*. Knoxville, Tenn.: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1995.

Ritchie, Donald. *Doing Oral History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest, former director of the Center for Mission Research and Study at Maryknoll twenty years, now serves as Research Director of the Jesuit Beijing Center and visiting professor of Christianity at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Born in France, Wiest holds the Sacred Theology Licentiate from the Gregorian University in Rome and a doctorate in Chinese history from the University of Washington in Seattle. With research focused on the Christian missionary endeavor, Wiest has field experience in Europe and in Asia.

Lecture 1

Toward a Christian History Relevant to Our Times

Traditional Types of History

Chronicles

Are detailed accounts of events arranged in order of time with little or no analysis.

In-House Histories

Are written primarily to keep a community aware of its roots and development.

Official Histories

Have the endorsement of whoever may have commissioned them and usually refer to works for public use.

Inspirational Histories

Are meant to edify the faithful and to arouse vocations

Secular Histories

Consider the Christian phenomenon mostly as a religious manifestation of the broader socio-economic and political impact of the West on Third World countries.

Characteristics of a History of Christian Witness Relevant to Our Times

More Than a Secular History

To leave out theological concerns such as the establishment of the Kingdom of God or the church's vocation to evangelize would deprive a history of Christian witness from its most important dimensions.

A Tool for Evaluation

Unless we tap the living memory of leaders and ordinary Christians, crucial information about the beginning and the development of a local church could disappear with their passing away.

A Service and a Step Toward Partnership

A history of Christian witness should be as much the story of missionaries as the story of the beginning and development of a local Christian movement perceived in indigenous and motivated by indigenous considerations.

Building a Legacy of Understanding

If the historian is a successful storyteller and a keen analyst, his/her images of the past and allotment of praise and blame will be appreciated by both missionaries and indigenous churches as a true measure of their common history and relationship.

Lecture 2

Planning an Oral History Project

DESIGNING AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

For a sound, feasible plan we need:

- **To know what we want to achieve**
- **To be personally well prepared**
- **To take these elements into consideration:**
 - **Location**
 - **List of persons to interview**
 - **Other sources of information**
 - **Time Line**
 - **Finances**
 - **Categories/Themes/Ideas**
 - **Questionnaire**

**SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRES
& TOPICS FOR
BROADLY-FOCUSED PROJECTS**

SOCIETY HISTORY PROGRAM INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

I. Portrait of the Missioner

1. Who were/are these Maryknoll men and women missionaries?
2. Why were/are they there in your village/city?
3. What did/do they try to do?
4. How successful were/are they in doing what they tried/try to do?
5. How long were they in your area? What kind of influence or change did they bring about in your personal life as an individual and in the life of the village/region?
6. What was/is their lifestyle like?
7. How much have they become a part of the life of your village/city?
8. What were/are some of the difficulties in their adjustments to you way of life?
9. How much did they come to understand your people and your way of life? Do you recall any situation showing their understanding or misunderstanding?
10. Did the Maryknoll men influence the local men? The Maryknoll Sisters the local women? Did these men and women become better citizens, better parents, better husbands and wives because of that contact?
11. How much were/are the missionaries, Maryknollers in particular, part of political upheavals?
12. What did/do the officials, Christians, and other people think of Maryknollers? What do you think of them?

II. The missionaries' relationship with the local people

13. What brought you into your first contact with the Maryknollers?
14. What has been the nature of this relationship? [Was it similar to the relationship between employers and employees? Teachers and students? Benefactors and recipients? Co-workers or colleagues? Friend? Or ...?]* Did you feel that this relationship could be reciprocated?

Did that relationship change or evolve throughout the years?
15. In what way did the work of the Maryknollers contribute to or affect your work or your role in your village/city?

* Questions in brackets should only be used as prompters if the interviewee is puzzled by the general question.

16. For what did you feel you could depend on the missionaries? [Deepening of your faith? Financial or material support? Counselling on village or family affairs? Advice about work or business? Companionship? Others?]
17. Did you feel they had more material means, more power, more status or more knowledge than you did? In what ways?
18. Did you feel your relationship with these missionaries enhanced or hindered your relationship with your non-Christian friends and neighbors? Did your relationship with them bring about any changes in your life?
19. What did this relationship bring to you? [Sound and good spiritual values? A richer and broader view about things in life? More status? More money? A sense of authority and power? Others?]
20. Would you recommend or bring your friends or relatives into such relationships with these missionaries?

III. Establishing local churches

21. How did these missionaries go about establishing local churches? What worked? What did not work?
22. Who became Christians? From what social and economic background in your village/city did they come? Did you become a Christian? Why? How were you contacted and trained?
23. What did you learn from the missionaries about God? About Jesus? About the Church (The Pope, the universality of the Church, Rome etc.)? About prayer? What differences did their ideas make in your life? In your relationships with others?
24. How has your view about these ideas evolved over the years? What is your thinking on them today?
25. What were some of the ideas you found most attractive in the Christian religions?
26. Did you convert from a non-Christian religion? Did this result in any conflict in your family/community?
27. Was your relationship with other Christians in your family/village a determining factor in your conversion?
28. Did you become a priest? A sister? Why? How were you recruited and trained? What was your role in the local church with the Christians? With the non-Christians? With the foreign missionaries?
29. What was the Christian life of your parish, or "base community," like?
30. Describe your participation in the parish or "base community" life.
31. Do you recall some of the more prominent lay church leaders in your area? Who were they? How did they become such leaders? How did their roles evolve?
32. Describe the role of the catechist. How were they selected and trained?

33. Describe the catechists' and other lay leaders' relationship with the ministers and with the local people. Did they help to explain the missionaries to the local people or the local people to the missionaries?
34. Did you aspire to be a lay-church leader? Was it a role people in your community would want to cultivate?

IV. Mission Works

35. Describe the various types of work the missionaries established in the area where you lived: orphanage, dispensary, school, old folk's home, refugee camps, etc.
36. What contribution did these make to the life of the local people in the village/city?
37. Are you part of a "base community?" What is the missionary's role in relation to your "base community?"

V. General Evaluation

38. What are some of the lessons you learned from your association with the missionaries?
39. In your opinion, if the missionaries want to bring Christianity to your country, are small villages the right place to begin, or should the cities and their educated leaders be the primary targets? Is there any difference?
40. What was the more effective method? [Direct evangelization? Works of charity? Educational work? Presence? Embracing the cause of the poor and oppressed? Etc.]
41. What is your understanding of the Maryknoll missionary activities today?
42. Do you think that Maryknoll missionaries have a place in the future of the church in your country? If so, what method do you think they should use? What advice will you offer?
43. What do you think of the role of foreign missionaries in other countries today? Do you think they have a role in the future of the local church?
44. Do you think the institution of the Christian religion (i.e. the Roman Catholic Church) has a place in the future of your country". In other countries and cultures?
45. Do you think that the Christian message and the values it presents has a place in the future of your country? In other countries and cultures? If so, what can be done so that it ceases to be a 'foreign' religion?
46. Did you ever put any of your reflections in writing or any kind of publication? If so, where can they be found?

SOCIETY HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONERS

I. The Missioner's enlistment, motivation and training

1. What was your reason for going into the Society and into mission work? Why did you go to your Region/Unit?
2. What was your education and formation prior to going overseas? What education and formation did you receive in your Region/Unit? How much study of language and culture? Were you able to read and write the local language? Fluently? Which dialect?
3. What (in your view) was the major motivation for the Maryknollers? [To save souls? To help people in need? To share American superior culture and religion? Other]*
4. What were your initial visions and goals of Maryknoll work in your Region/Unit before you arrived there? Did those visions and goals change?
5. Describe your personal experience with Maryknoll founders. What do you consider the founders' lasting influence on the Society? On you?
6. Who are the people that had a major influence on you during your training in the U.S.? Why?

II. Fathers' and Brothers' life and experience in their Region/Unit

7. What do you believe are Maryknoll's major goals for its work in your Region/Unit? What do you believe are the major issues, struggles, problems and decisions that Maryknoll has to make in your Region/Unit?
8. What were/are the most successful programs and work of Maryknoll in your Region/Unit? The least successful?
9. What were/are the specific tasks of Maryknoll Fathers? What were/are the specific task of Maryknoll Brothers? How did/does the work of the Fathers and Brothers correlate with the work of the Sisters?
10. Describe the daily life and work, the daily schedule of a) the Fathers, and b) the Brothers.
11. How did the life and work of the Fathers and Brothers change and develop through the years?
12. A basic task of Maryknoll was evangelism and establishing churches. What were the methods used? What worked? What did not work? What changes have taken place since Vatican II? Is Maryknoll's task different today". If so, how and why?
13. What lesson did Maryknoll learn from its experience in your Region/Unit?
14. What were the most satisfying and rewarding work experiences for you? What were the most difficult?
15. What were your relations with other religious societies (Both Catholic and Protestant)? With native religions?

III. The Local Church

* Questions in brackets should only be used as prompts if the interviewee is puzzled by the general question.

16. Describe the recruiting, training and assignment of local priests and sisters under Maryknoll administration. Describe your local colleagues. What was/is your relationship to them; what did/do they do? Did/do they have positions of authority and responsibility?
17. If you work in a parish setting, describe the Christian life of your parish (liturgy, catechetical training, etc.) Describe the special work of your mission station.
18. Describe the role of the catechists (men and women). How were they/are they selected and trained? How are they paid? What type of catechetical training did/do they give? Discuss the role of women catechists. Were/are there other local people employed by Maryknoll? What did/do they do?
19. Describe the selection, training and work of other Christian lay leaders.
20. Describe other work of your mission station, such as orphanages, schools, medical work, social work. How did this serve the primary goals of Maryknoll in your Region/Unit?
21. If you work in a non-parish setting, describe your work, your responsibilities and your relation to the local people. How do you characterize the involvement of the local people?
22. Are you in touch with basic Christian communities or similar emerging new forms of ecclesial life in your Region/Unit? If so, describe.
23. Who is the Maryknoll missionary that you admire most? Why? Who according to you is the greatest missionary in your Region/Unit? (He/she does not have to be a Maryknoller.)

IV. Relations with local people, politics and society.

24. Do you feel you have/had close relationships with the local people? Did you understand their society and culture quite well?
25. Did you (or others) experience anti-foreignism: Anti-U.S. sentiments? Describe incidents. Do you remember anything that could be viewed as “cultural imperialism?”
26. Did/do you receive some orientation about the socio-economic and political struggles that were/are taking place in your Region/Unit? Prior to Departure? In the field? What were/are your views of those struggles? What is your understanding of the political and social situation? What newspapers and magazines did/do you read? What are your other sources of news?
27. Did/do you have any personal experience with civil unrest, bandits, etc.?
28. What were/are your relations with friends and colleagues native to your Region/Unit? Did/do you visit in their homes, have meals there and vice versa? Did/do you have close friends among them?

V. Influence of Maryknoll on American views of local Region/Unit

29. Did you write about your experiences? Are these writings available?
30. How did/do you and other Maryknollers influence American views of your local Region/Unit? Give examples

SOCIETY HISTORY PROGRAM DESCRIPTOR LIST

(NOTE: Capital letters = Main topics
Other entries = Sub topics)

ACCOMMODATION: Will include missionaries effort to adapt to another culture, climate, etc. (Interviewee's sensitivity and lack of sensitivity to a culture and the people of that culture.)

- Culture
- Custom
- Difficulties
- Language
- Sacraments
- Sensitivity Toward

AGRICULTURE:

- Cooperative
- Crops
- Dairy
- Failure
- Grain
- Irrigation
- Livestock
- Success

APPRAISAL:

- Agenda
- Catholic Church
- Maryknoll
- Mission Methods
- Mission Work
- Personal

ARCHITECTURE:

- Chapel
- Church
- Construction
- Convent
- Mission Compound
- Outstations
- Seminary
- School

ASSIGNMENT: (Use only when substantial information is given. See also **RESPONSIBILITIES**)

- Development (includes Vocation office)
- Education/Formation
- Mission Region (name of)
- Parish, etc
- Social Communications
- SSU (Special Society Unit)
- Unit

BACKGROUND:

- Personal
- Family

COMMUNICATION:

- Daily
- Grape vine
- Letter
- Newspaper
- Periodical
- Publication
- Radio
- Television
- Dialogue

CUSTOM: (Give name of local custom being discussed. See also **ACCOMMODATION**)

- Marriage
- Polygamy

DESCRIPTION: (OF ABOUT WHOM listing, or of a place)

- Portrait
- Home
- Life

- Family
- Parish
- Mission
- Life style
- Town
- Village
- City
- Event
- Ordination

EDUCATION: (for Maryknollers, local clergy – religious, laity, etc)

Religious Training

Beyond catechism; for the purpose of teaching or training other people. List special courses as Subtopic 2, eg. Liberation Theology)

- Primary (Elementary)
- Secondary
- University
- Seminary
- Novitiate
- Self-study
- Mission Studies
- Mission Training
- Language
- Technical
- Fine Arts
- Orphanage
- Degree
- Illiteracy
- Leadership training
- School (kindergarten through university)
- Continuing Ed. (CPE, etc)
- Teaching

EVALUATION: (See **PLANNING**)

EVANGELIZATION: Spreading of faith. Refers only to Catholicism. For other religions, see **RELIGION**.

Also see **PARISH WORK**

- Vision (Rationale or theology)
- Method (Visiting or one-on-one instruction, etc)
- Program
- Conversion
- Catechumenate (includes instruction, baptism, etc)
- Leadership training (catechists, etc)
- Rural setting
- Urban setting
- Statistics

FINANCE:

- Poverty
- Prosperity
- Parish
- Salary
- Problems (with cooperatives, etc)
- Inflation
- Income
- Debt
- Expenses
- Donation
- Fundraising
- Credit Unions

GEOGRAPHY:

- Climate
- Earthquake
- Landscape
- Floods
- Drought
- Typhoon
- Hurricane
- Map

GOVERNMENT: (see **POLITICS**)

HEALTH: (see also **MEDICINE**)

- Abortion
- Alcoholism

Birth control
 Birth defect
 Blind
 Burn Out
 Clinic (Subtopic 2 would be Safari, Suitcase, etc)
 Deaf
 Disease
 Drug abuse
 Epidemic
 Euthanasia
 Hospital
 Hygiene
 Leper colony
 Living conditions
 Mental Health
 Nutrition
 Nursing Home (for the elderly)
 Sickness
 Surgery
 Training
 Work

HISTORY:

Maryknoll
 Regional
 Diocesan
 Family
 Local (tribal)
 Personal
 National
 Folklore
 Mission
 Of (second descriptor names, place or specific person)

IMPACT ON US: (see also **COMMUNICATION**)

Movies
 Writings
 Attitudes
 Politics
 Development Dept
 Local (tribal)
 National

INCULTURATION: Will include all efforts – even basic efforts of simple acculturation – of the Church and its message into the cultural milieu of every nation and age) (see also **COMMUNICATION**)

Acculturation
 Ritual
 Christianity
 Liturgy
 Of
 Sacraments
 Translation

INDIGENIZATION: Refers to the missionaries' work toward establishing a native clergy and sisterhood, well-trained catechists and apostolic laity. (see also Leadership Training under **EVANGELIZATION** and **PARISH WORK**)**LAW and ORDER:**

Banditry
 Crime
 Detention
 Lawsuit
 Clan rivalry
 Injustice
 Piracy
 Riot
 Rebellion
 Repressive Measures
 Surveillance

LIFE STYLE: (see also **DESCRIPTION**)

Daily
 City

Community (people brought together by a special bond, such as a religious community)

Town
 Village
 Leisure
 Modernization
 Option for poor
 Support Group

MEDICINE: As a profession or a practice (see also **HEALTH**) Practice**OBJECTIVES:** (see **PLANNING**)**PARISH WORK:** (mainly nurture of Christians)

Vision (rationale or theology)
 Rural setting
 Urban setting
 Program (enter as Subtopic 2:
 Catholic action
 Youth club(s)
 Legion of Mary
 Marriage encounter, etc)

Home visits

Retreat

Evangelization (catechumenate outreach for non-Christians)

Instruction (for people already baptized)

Liturgy (sacraments, processions, Mass, etc)

Christian Life

Local support

Land purchase

Lay leadership

Leadership training (parish leaders, catechists, etc)

Basic Communities

Outstations

Schools

Statistics

Sacraments

Success

Emphasis

Reliance on

Starting parish

PERSECUTION: Refers only to religious persecutions. For other types, see **LAW AND ORDER**

Demonstration

Detention

Arrest

Martyrdom

Intimidation

PLANNING

Environment

Vision (rationale, theology or mission vision,)

Impact of Vat. II

Research

Objectives (long range (personal, Maryknoll, world, etc)

Goals (short range)

Directors

Implementation

Evaluation (statistics)

POLITICS: (see also **GOVERNMENT**)

Treaty

Communism

Marxism

Capitalism

Socialism

Anti-foreignism

Nationalism

Problems

Demonstration

Involvement

Arrest

Detention

Assassination

RELATIONSHIP: to be used in conjunction with the
ABOUT WHOM listing. Between (implied "and")

With

RELIEF WORK:

Food
Clothing
Housing
Organization

RELIGION:

Catholicism	Protestantism
Islam	Pentecostalism
Buddhism	Ecumenism
Hinduism	Christianity
Folk	Veneration
Local Belief	

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Assignment	Administration
Teaching	Regional Office
Parish Work	Evangelization
Special society unit	Chaplaincy (prison, hospital or youth)

SOCIAL QUESTION:

Moral issues	
Justice and peace	
Oppression	Birth control
Illiteracy	Human rights
Exploitation	Refugee camp
Community project	
Family problems	
Suppression	
Civil Rights Movement	
Migration	
Poverty	

SPIRITUALITY: (see also **EDUCATION**)

Retreat
Missionary
Religious Experience
Oath
Personal
Veneration

TRANSPORTATION:

	means of locomotion
Boat	Train
Bicycle	Plane
Foot	Bus
Motorcycle	Truck
Public	Automobile
Horse	Mule

TRAVEL:

Domestic (in country discussed)
Foreign (outside country discussed)
Accident
Difficulties
Abroad
Modernization

VISION: (see also **PLANNING**)

Personal (for personal vision/ideas about the
future)

VOCATION:

Discernment (includes laity)

Missionary
Priesthood
Religious (Sisters and Brothers)
Recruitment

WAR

WWI	WWII	Korea
Vietnam	Local fighting	(name of War, if any)

Society History Program Descriptor List

FOR ABOUT WHOM LISTING

Aborigines	Orphans
Aspirants	Patients
Babies	Patients/Mental
Buddhists/Monks	Patriotic association
Buddhists/Nuns	People/Urban
Businessmen	People/Rural
Catechists	Postulants
Catechists/Female	Priests/Maryknoll
Catechists/Male	Priests/Native
Catechumens	Protestants
Catechumens/Female	Refugees
Catechumens/Male	Rice Christians
Children	Sisters/Maryknoll
Catholics	Sisters/Native
Communists	Soldiers
Deacons	Students
Doctors/foreign	Students/Catholic
Doctors/local	Superiors/Religious
Employees/Mk1	Teachers
Emigrants	US Military
Foreigners	Virgins
Landowners	Women
Government officials	Women/American
Hakka	Women/native
Immigrants	Youth (older, teens)
Infants/dying	Youth/female
Land owners	Youth/male
Lawsuit Christians	
Lay leaders	NOTE: This list is just an
Lay Missionaries	example. Any linguistic
Lepers	group or nationality can be
Local people	entered. For instance, if
Maryknollers (Frs &/or Broth	the interviewee is talking
Merchants	about the Mexican people
Migrants	in general, "Mexicans"
Military	would be an appropriate
Missionaries /Catholic	entry. If he/she were
Missionaries/Protestant	talking about the Maya
Non-Christians	Indians in Mexico,
Novices	"Maya" would be a better
Nurses	entry.
Officials	

Lecture 3

Pre-Interview & Interview

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT CHECKLIST FOR INTERVIEWING

1. Contact narrator, making certain that he or she fully understands the project.
2. Acquaint yourself with the general background of narrator.
3. Of possible, arrange a pre-interview visit so that you and the narrator may become personally acquainted.
4. Prepare a list of topics for discussion.
5. Thoroughly check out equipment prior to the interview. An interview should not be an on-the-job training session.
6. Make certain you have all the materials you need before departing for the interview: recorder, external microphone, adapters for two-pronged outlets, fresh batteries, tapes, pencils, pads, and release forms.
7. Make certain you are interviewing in a room which will minimize external noise.
8. Make certain the recorder is recording. Identify yourself, the narrator, the date and place, the purpose of the project, and ask the narrator to agree to the project.
9. Interview. During the interview, jot down proper nouns and other words whose spelling is questionable.
10. Be sure to ask narrator about spelling and other questions which you may have concerning the interview.
11. Have narrator sign release form.
12. When you arrive at home or office, write down aspects of the interview that you think may be useful to future indexers and transcribers.
13. Send "bread and butter" thank you note to the narrator.

Adapted from Talking about Connecticut: Oral History in the Nutmeg State.

INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

TOOLS

- ◆ Tape Recorder
- ◆ Tapes
- ◆ Batteries
- ◆ Recorder Accessories
- ◆ Several Pens
- ◆ Notebook

LABELING

- ◆ Make sure the tapes are labelled properly as you use them

ACTUAL INTERVIEW

- ◆ Begin with “small talk”
- ◆ Don’t argue with the interviewee
- ◆ Use your questions as guide
- ◆ Use your listening skills
- ◆ More difficult questions should come at the end

INTERVIEW TIME

- ◆ No more than 90 minutes per session
- ◆ Interviews (ideally) should be conducted in at least two sessions

LEAVE GRACEFULLY

GUIDELINES: CONDUCTING A GOOD INTERVIEW

WHAT *NOT* TO DO

- ☒ Force your beliefs or opinions on the Interviewee
- ☒ Force Responses to Sensitive Questions
- ☒ Ask Leading Questions
- ☒ Draw Attention to the Recorder
- ☒ Make a lot of Noise
- ☒ Argue with the Interviewee
- ☒ Make the Interview very long so you and the Interviewee get very tired

Open-Ended and Closed Questions	
Closed	Open-Ended or Evocative
Where were you born?	What do you remember about the place you were born?
Where were your parents born?	What did your parents tell you about their lives?
Did your family have gatherings?	Describe you family gatherings.
What holidays did your family celebrate?	How were holidays celebrated in your family?
Was religion important to your family?	Tell me about the religious observances in your family.
When did you finish school?	How did your formal education end?
Did you and your friends play games as children?	Describe some of the games you played as a child.
Were you in the service during World War II?	Tell me about your life during World War II.
Did you get a job after the war?	Tell me what you did after you got out of the service.
Did you like your job?	Describe how you felt about your job.

Examples of Leading Questions	
Leading	Neutral
You must have been happy on election night	How did you feel on election night?
You didn't like Mr. X. Did you?	Tell me about Mr. X?
What do you think of Mr. Jones' outrageous behaviour?	What did Mr. Jones do then?

Don't Do This!

This is an excerpt from an interview of a former Maryknoll associate priest who did much of his mission work in Peru. He now heads his own parish in the U.S., and has given his permission to us for use as a classroom example.

Interviewee: I was thinking wouldn't it be wonderful to sign a contract again (laughing), as they were doing it today. I am thrilled to see that there are 8 of them from 8 different diocese of the country, including Anchorage, Alaska! Obviously, it is getting the support of the Bishops of the country. I believe Maryknoll had only 5 ordinations of their own this

Year, but they've got 8 associates. So I see that as a very positive contribution, and I was telling them this afternoon. That's one of the reasons I'm down here now was to share my own experience. It was one of the most enriching phases of my life as a priest, to have come in to Maryknoll, to have had this world vision, to have learned a new language and a new culture, to go to another country. That has given a whole new dimension to my own priesthood, and I'm sure it will to these 8 men that are coming in now. And so I certainly see the program as an important ingredient to the Maryknoll apostolate in the world, and I think it enriches the life of the diocese. Of course Maryknoll was founded, well, by two diocesan priests.

Interviewer: To represent the Church in America, diocesan clergy especially

Interviewee: So I think it's wonderful., It certainly was wonderful in my own life (laughing), and having served 6 years the first time in Peru, and then 5 years here at Maryknoll, NY in a number of capacities for the Justice and Peace and the Center. I asked the Bishop, when my 6 years were up in the parish that I was in, for permission to return. And he didn't feel free to let me go, but I think that it's a marvelous program, and I certainly would like to see it grow and develop. And the fact that there are 8, is a

Interviewer: I know James Anthony Walsh, yes, he used to visit Maryknoll at Los Altos on his trips to the Orient. He went frequently to the Orient and would stop over, going over and coming back, and give a report to us. He always would report on his observations in the Orient, and of course he would speak, and was very, very inspiring. But the early Maryknollers too had the spirit, and we knew those people even better.

So now I'm anxious to try to get these things down just as the founders. James Anthony Walsh was great on history, and did a lot of wring and communications, and was tremendously interested in that field. And I'm enthusiastic about this work.

Interviewee: So you're putting together the history of the whole Bolivian region?

Interviewer: Yes, yes, the whole Bolivian region. We went there in '42, and we started a lot of things that have grown. Like the little dispensaries went on to big hospitals, two room school has gone into a complex, a grammar school and high school. And we started the cooperatives, we started this movement actually. We helped the priests from many diocese to get started. St, Louis, Lacrosse, Dubuque, well, I don't know how many others, but they showed interest at least, and many of them made a very positive contribution. St James Society was really inspired by the Maryknollers in Bolivia, and the Nuncio wanted to try to get priests, Maryknollers a bit hesitant, because they thought the Bishops would complain, but obviously (laughing) they didn't! Actually, they were against the idea for fear that it would work against Maryknoll, but then they soon came around.,

I know it was interesting for me because Ed Fedders had spoken to me about the possibility of receiving in the language school, where I was director '55, '56, '57. So I agreed to have one, I saw no difficulty, but then there was this problem of Maryknoll.

Interviewee: Oh, right off?

Interviewer: Yes, well, see it was in the making

END OF TAPEEE
END OF INTERVIEW

Date: _____

I, _____, give permission for my interview with _____ to be used by individuals engaged in writing the History of the Maryknoll Mission Community in Brazil. I further permit these materials to be donated to the Maryknoll Society History Program of the Center for Mission Research and Study and the Maryknoll Archives in order for my thoughts and ideas to be available to future researchers.

Signature of Interviewee

Date

Lecture 4

Transcription

TRANSCRIPTS

- * Verbally Label your Tape
- * Each Cassette Tape should be clearly labelled
- directly on tape and on case
- * Keep a list of Correct Spellings
- * Regulate Style Points
- * Be Specific About Deadlines
- * Discuss Costs before You Begin
- * Use Red Ink to Edit Transcripts
- * Do an Audit/Edit of Each Interview

INTERVIEW LABELING

Rev. John Q.

01/01/93
Interview A

SMITH

At Maryknoll Center

Tape 1 of 3

Interview of Rev. John Q. Smith with Jane Jones at Maryknoll Center
Tape 1 of 3, 01/01/93

Annel: *Yes, that's all you can do. I'm very glad that the Maryknoll Sisters have the policy that whoever you are, however great and exalted you might be, you can be a peon for a while. If I wanted to come back and work as a doctor here, probably they would have me up on the fourth floor, to work with our nursing home, or something like that.*

I wanted to step out of that role for a while and it was a good time for me. I'd been on call for too long. I mean besides doing all the teaching, I had done a fair amount of work in the hospital and everything else. And I think I wanted out of being on call for people's illness. That was delightful. But now I'm real ready to go back into medicine and be on call.

McDonald: *So, you've been out since 1988?*

Annel: *Yes, the end of 1988, four years.*

McDonald: *And you haven't done any medical work since then?*

Annel: *No, not really. Not directly other than talking about it and educating. The closest to doing it is that while I've been here in the States, I've been doing something that's called training for transformation courses.*

McDonald: *I have never heard of it.*

Annel: *It's based Pablo Freire's methods of participative education, and empowerment of the people who are being educated. And I've given courses in those methods. It's not specifically medicine, but it's very close to what I did with the health workers, and the types of teaching techniques we used.*

McDonald: *I think I'll take you up to the present now.*

Annel: *Ok. You don't want to know more about the hospital in Jacaltenango and that health work?*

McDonald: *If we have time I would like to know more about that. Yes, I do want to know more about that (laughing), but I also want to know about this AIDS ministry thing. Are you going to be working on that similar to the way you did the training?*

Annel: *I think everything I've done and been up until now has been training for the AIDS ministry. And we do bring our history with us I think. I do feel that God has been leading me to this.*

About a year and a half ago I felt called in prayer to say to my community that while I'm still young enough to learn another culture and another language, I would be willing to change regions if they could set

Lecture 5

Thematic Analysis

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

is a classification of your data from the interviews according to a system that corresponds to your need and purpose and that is as efficient as possible within the limitations of the budget and equipment at your disposal.

INDIVIDUAL REPORT FOR: ROBERT E. LEE

MAIN TOPIC	SUBTOPIC 1	SUBTOPIC2	ABOUT WHOM	YEARS FM	TO	S	O	C	PAG 6	PGS 1	CODE A	LOCATION	DISCUSSED	VICARIATE/DIOC YUCATAN	PARISH/INSTITUTION
AGRICULTURE	CROPS	CHICLE		1943								MEXICO			
ARCHITECTURE	CONSTRUCTION	SLOW/OF CHURCH	VERHAGEN, NORBERT	1948		S			7	2	A	MEXICO		MEXICO CITY	ARINAL
DESCRIPTION	PORTRAIT	OF	MORRISON, JOHN						22	1	A	MEXICO			
DESCRIPTION	PORTRAIT	OF	WALSH, JAMES E						21	2	A	MEXICO			
DESCRIPTION	PORTRAIT	OF CARILLO PUERTO		1943	1944				24	2	A	MEXICO		QUINTANA ROO	CARILLO PUERTO
DESCRIPTION	PORTRAIT	OF MEXICO CITY		1938					23	2	A	MEXICO		MEXICO CITY	
DESCRIPTION	TOWN	NAME CHANGES		1943					5	2	A	MEXICO		QUINTANA ROO	CARILLO PUERTO
EDUCATION	SEMINARY	LIFE	LEE, ROBERT E	1939	1949				3	1	A	USA			
EVANGELIZATION	OF		YOUTH	1989					11	2	A	MEXICO		MEXICO CITY	
EVANGELIZATION	PARISH WORK	TURNING OVER	MARYKNOLLERS	1943	1989		O	C	18	2	A	MEXICO			
GEOGRAPHY	CLIMATE	HOT/HUMID		1943				C	5	1	A	MEXICO		YUCATAN	
GEOGRAPHY	EARTHQUAKE		LEE, ROBERT E	1985					23	2	A	MEXICO			
HEALTH	SICKNESS	CANCR, STROK, ETC	LEE, ROBERT E	1970					14	3	A	MEXICO		MEXICO CITY	
HISTORY	PERSONAL	& FAMILY	LEE, ROBERT E						1	2	A	USA		BROOKLYN	
LIFE STYLE		OF	MARYKNOLLERS	1943	1989			C	25	2	A	MEXICO		QUINTANA ROO	CARILLO PUERTO
PERSECUTION	INTIMIDATION	BY MEXICAN ARMY	MARYKNOLLERS	1943				C	6	3	A	MEXICO		YUCATAN	
PERSECUTION	INTIMIDATION	BY MEXICAN ARMY	MARYKNOLLERS	1948					24	1	A	MEXICO			
RELATIONSHIP	BETWEEN	LAY MISSIONERS &	PRIESTS/MARYKNOLL	1989					17	2	A	MEXICO			
RELATIONSHIP	BETWEEN	SEMNARIANS	LEE, ROBERT E	1939	1943				3	2	A	USA			
TRANSPORTATION	HORSE		LEE, ROBERT E	1943	1944			C	25	2	A	MEXICO		QUITANA ROO	CARILLO PUERTO
VOCATION	DISCERNMENT		LEE, ROBERT E	1932	1937				1	2	A	USA		BROOKLYN	
WAR	WWII			1948		S			7	2	A	MEXICO		YUCATAN	

Lecture 6

Review and Suggestions for Writing

REVIEW 1

- Consider from the beginning of the project the range of anticipated users.
- Familiarize yourself with the significant literature in the field.
- Research thoroughly the specific individual and incidents you expect to cover in the interview.
- Regularly evaluate your interviews and work to improve your interviewing techniques – consult OHA's *Evaluation Guidelines*.

REVIEW 2

- Always listen to what the interviewee is saying.
- Be prepared to follow-up on unexpected information gained from the interviewee.
- Don't be afraid to admit you didn't know something and ask for clarification.
- Don't settle for a single session interview unless you are convinced the person has exhausted the subject.

REVIEW 3

- Limit your project to the number of interviews you can reasonably handle from researching to processing.
- Begin processing the interview immediately after it is conducted.
- Transcribe whenever possible.
- Identify both the interviewee and the interviewer at the beginning of the transcript and make sure both sign a deed of gift, specifying the conditions under which the interview may be opened for research.

REVIEW 4

- Index the transcripts.
- Preserve the tapes under optimal conditions.
- Publicize the existence of your interviews as widely as possible