

RSS Oral History Project

The **RSS Oral History Project** is a collective effort to capture the memories, recollections, and insights of members of the Rural Sociological Society.

A key aim in developing the project was an interest in the evolution and development of rural sociology as a specialty area of sociology, but also the development of rural sociology as an organization. The initial focus of the project is on interviewing past presidents, but it is fully anticipated that the project will not be limited to past presidents.

Three goals form the focus of the project:

- (1) to develop a sense of where rural sociology has been, what progress it has made, and where it is heading;
- (2) to compare past challenges/issues/opportunities with those of today; and
- (3) to develop a better understanding of the relationship between sociology and rural sociology.

Project Summary

Interviews will be conducted by volunteers, likely from within the RSS membership, but anyone is welcome. Persons living close to the interviewees are particularly encouraged to conduct an interview.

The interviews will follow a semi-structured format with 5 questions common to all interviews:

- How did you become interested in rural sociology?
- What led you to decide to run for President of RSS?
- What were some of the dominant issues or challenges confronting RSS/rural sociology or rural society when you were President?
- If you were involved in other associations (e.g. ASA, PAA, regional associations), based on that experience, how was rural sociology/RSS seen by those within that association?
- What do you see as the future issues or challenges for RSS as an organization or rural sociology as a field?

All interviews will be recorded and copies deposited in the RSS Archives at the University of Missouri.

Each Interviewer is asked to assemble a poster on their interviewee with highlights from the 5 common questions and biographical information. Any other items of interest from the interview are also welcome.

Posters of completed interviews will be shared at the 2010 RSS conference in Atlanta.

Resources:

These are the key documents that interviewers will need to conduct their interview.

1. **Project Overview** – This provides a summary of the project as well as key details.
2. **Release and Consent Form** – For the interviews to be accessible to researchers, both the interviewee and interviewer need to sign a release and consent form. This should be returned with the recording of the completed interview.

3. **Biographical Cover Sheet** – This coversheet is intended to help participants gather key biographical information on their interviewee. These should be returned with the recording of the completed interview.
4. **Reminder List** – This is a checklist of the key items that need to be completed.

Additional Resources:

Potential Additional Questions – The 5 common questions were selected from a much longer list. These are included in case you might find them useful as follow-ups, prompts, or as inspiration for other, more interesting questions.

Full List of Past Presidents – While the initial focus is to conduct interviews with past presidents, not all of our past presidents are still with us or we do not have current contact information. In case interviewers would like to ask their interviewee about other past presidents, this is a full list and the years they served.

Oral History Resources – There are many resources online to help anyone interested in doing oral history. The Baylor University Oral History WORKSHOP ON THE WEB is a good place with many resources (http://www.baylor.edu/oral_history/index.php?id=23566). In addition to those at Baylor, the attached list contains other places on the web that also contain useful resources.

Principals and Standards of the Oral History Association – Oral history is an entire field onto itself. This document provides selections from the principals and standards document developed by the Oral History Association to provide guidance on conducting oral history.

For more information,
or to sign up to conduct one of the interviews, contact:

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