

record
life stories

testimony

**Oral History
Interview Guidelines**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

understand
listen

memory
history

recollect

Oral History Interview Guidelines

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

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Oral History Interview Guidelines

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	i
Introduction	v
I. THE PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW	1
Purpose of the Preliminary Interview	
Creating a Questionnaire	
Providing Options for the Interviewee	
Conducting the Preliminary Interview	
How Much Detail?	
Timing of the Preliminary Interview	
Assessing the Preliminary Interview	
Summarizing the Preliminary Interview	
II. MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE INTERVIEW	7
Contacting the Interviewee	
Scheduling the Interview	
Interview Note Taker	
Individuals Present at Interview	
Legal and Ethical Considerations	
III. CONDUCTING RESEARCH	11
Set Aside Time for Research	
Review Interviewee's Experiences	
Important Items to Research	
Things You Can Do at Home	
Visit a Library or Research Facility	
Maps	
Other Resources for Locating Places	
Expanding Your Search for Resources	
Using the Museum's Resources	
If You Need Clarification	
Challenges	
Research List	
When to Stop	

IV. PREPARING QUESTIONS	21
Notes on Preparing Questions	
Organizing Questions	
Using Questions in the Interview	
V. SUGGESTED THEMES	23
Family/Occupation/Education	
Religion and Politics	
Gender	
VI. SUGGESTED QUESTIONS	25
Prewar Life	
The First Questions	
Childhood Recollections	
Nazi Rise to Power	
Holocaust/Wartime Experiences	
Ghettos and Transit Camps	
Labor Camps, Prisons, Concentration/Extermination Camps	
Hiding/Passing and Escaping	
Resistance	
Postwar Experiences	
Liberation	
Displaced Persons Camps	
Emigration/Immigration	
Beyond the War/Life After the Holocaust	
VII. CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW	39
Arrival at the Interview	
Commencing the Interview	
Open-Ended and Specific Questions	
Interjecting vs. Interrupting	
Non-Verbal Responses	
Chronology of the Interview	
Taking Breaks	
Providing Historical Context	
Allocation of Time in the Interview	
Concluding the Interview	
Post-Holocaust Interviews	
Before Leaving the Interview	
Donation of Artifacts	
VIII. TECHNICAL GUIDELINES FOR AUDIO INTERVIEWS	47
Cassette Tapes and Batteries	
Labeling Tapes	
Recording Equipment	
Location/Setup	

Recording Level
Starting to Record
Tape Slating
Monitoring the Recording
Technical Troubleshooting

IX. TECHNICAL GUIDELINES FOR VIDEO INTERVIEWS	55
Studio/Location Setup	
Composition	
Lighting	
Sound	
Other Technical Considerations	
Tape Slating	
The Interviewee	
The Interviewer	
X. AFTER THE INTERVIEW	59
Thanking the Interviewee	
Creating Interview Finding Aids	
Use and Storage of Tapes	
Donating the Interview to the Museum	
APPENDIX 1: Sample Preliminary Interview Questionnaire	61
APPENDIX 2: Sample Preliminary Interview Summary	75
APPENDIX 3: Sample Interviewee Overview	77
APPENDIX 4: Sample Interview Research List	79
APPENDIX 5: Selected Bibliography	81
APPENDIX 6: Guidelines for Note Taking	85
APPENDIX 7: Style Guidelines for Transcripts	91
APPENDIX 8: Guidelines for Copy Checking Transcripts	95
APPENDIX 9: Guidelines for Authenticating Transcripts	107
APPENDIX 10: Guidelines for Writing Summaries	123

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FOREWORD

THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM is America's national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serves as this country's memorial to the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust.

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry and other victims by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims—approximately six million were murdered; Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), people with disabilities, and Poles also were targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

The Museum's primary mission is to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy, to preserve the memory of those who suffered, and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.

Chartered by a unanimous Act of Congress in 1980 and situated adjacent to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., the Museum strives to broaden public understanding of the history of the Holocaust through multifaceted programs, including exhibitions; research and publication; collecting and preserving material evidence, art, and artifacts relating to the Holocaust; annual Holocaust commemorations known as the Days of Remembrance; distribution of educational materials and teacher resources; and a variety of public programming designed to enhance understanding of the Holocaust and related issues, including those of contemporary significance.

THE ORAL HISTORY BRANCH of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum produces video- and audiotaped testimonies of Holocaust survivors, rescuers, liberators, resistance fighters, prosecutors, perpetrators, and bystanders. The mission is to document and preserve Holocaust testimonies as primary sources that will allow future generations of students, researchers, teachers, and filmmakers to hear and see the people who experienced, witnessed, or perpetrated the genocidal policies and crimes of the Nazis and their collaborators. Part of the Museum's mandate is to produce oral histories that add to our knowledge of all genocides.

The Museum has been collecting and producing oral histories since 1989—four years before it opened. As of 2007, it has created an archive of more than 9,000 audio and video testimonies, mostly in English. Of those, the Museum itself has produced more than 2,000, including more than 350 Hebrew-language interviews of Jewish

survivors who emigrated to Israel, and more than 100 of Jehovah's Witnesses who survived Nazi persecution. Although the Museum has focused on producing videotaped testimonies of Jewish and non-Jewish survivors—including Polish Catholics, Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), political prisoners, homosexuals, and members of resistance and partisan groups—the full range of interviews includes rescuers, liberators, postwar prosecutors of Nazi crimes, displaced persons camp relief workers, and members of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

The unedited audio and videotapes, which are housed in the Museum's Archives, serve as resources for scholars, educators, filmmakers, and the public. In addition, the Museum now has more than 100 agreements with other organizations and individuals to house their interviews within the Museum's Archives.

Because of their powerful impact, edited segments of some interviews are included in the Museum's permanent and special exhibitions and public programs, as well as the Museum's Wexner Learning Center and Web site.

With the generous support of a number of grants, the Oral History Branch is working to further its mission in building an oral history collection that represents the breadth of Nazi persecution. Projects supported by the grants include the production of interviews with survivors living in Belarus, Greece, Macedonia, Poland, Ukraine, the Czech Republic (with Roma), Israel, and the former Yugoslavia; interviews with witnesses, collaborators, and perpetrators in Estonia, former Yugoslavia, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, the Nether-

lands, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine; the Post-Holocaust Interview Project, which traces the lives of survivors after the Holocaust; the production of educational videos and other resources, and transcripts of interviews to increase accessibility of our oral history collection; and the ongoing preservation and cataloging of the collection.

INTRODUCTION

“The story reveals the meaning of what otherwise would remain an unbearable sequence of sheer happenings.”

—Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*

The interview journey through the Holocaust, or other such tragedies, can be a painful and difficult one. To ask survivors of the Holocaust to tell their stories is to ask them to describe the sights, smells, and sounds of the human destruction they witnessed; to relive the deaths of family and friends; and to describe the stories of their own survival. It is one of the most difficult requests one person can make of another.

Yet, the oral history interviews that result from such requests provide glimpses into the history of the Holocaust that cannot be obtained from documents or written records. While textual documents are essential for the study of the Holocaust, an individual’s testimony can supplement those documents by providing a detailed and personal look at a historical event that may be underrepresented or even absent from written works.

These Guidelines provide direction in all aspects of conducting an interview, including making first contact with a potential interviewee,

conducting research and preparing questions for the interview, and exploring technical aspects of recording interviews, both on audio and videotape. The Guidelines also explore the intense interpersonal aspects of the interviewer-interviewee relationship.

*The
interview
process
is an art,
not a science.*

The interview process is an art, not a science. Although many purposes can be served through standardized interviews, they bear little resemblance to what we mean by an “oral history.” The oral history interview is an attempt to provide a place for the interviewee to tell his or her life story as he or she remembers it, and for the interviewer to ask questions that stimulate memory. The questions posed are very important, so studying the subject areas in the person’s life is imperative. But the interaction between interviewee and interviewer can create a bond between the two people that even ill-conceived questions cannot destroy. It is within that bond that questions and answers flow, and that history is revealed.

Defining an oral history interview this way creates a broad mandate. It assumes that there is no single correct interview technique or mode, and that different styles of interviewing are acceptable. This concept of different styles can be clarified by comparing the interview process with musical interpretation. If one listens to Horowitz, Rubinstein, Argerich, and Guller playing a Chopin sonata, one will hear the same piece of music, but it will sound different with each pianist. Is one style right and the other wrong? Within certain limits, one cannot admit to such a judgment; the issue of taste is a separate matter. Since interviewing is an art, strategies for success must be varied. Thus, the same person may give distinct, even divergent interviews

to different interviewers. The same or similar questions may produce different answers because of the particular bond between an interviewer and an interviewee. A variety of other circumstances also can affect the interview—the setting, a personal difficulty, the weather. Even though we are listening to one person’s story and trying to facilitate its telling, the story will not necessarily sound the same on any given day, with any given interviewer. For this reason, we maintain an expansive view of the interview process to take advantage of these variables.

This is not to say that there are no limits or boundaries. For example, an interviewer ordinarily should not argue with an interviewee. Although interviewees make mistakes, it is not the role of interviewers to correct them during interviews. Interviewees may say things that stimulate conversation, but a conversation is not our aim. Rather, our aim is to listen. Nevertheless, such limits should not constrain probing questions when answers are too minimal, confusing, or even seem mistaken, or when the interviewer thinks a question is necessary.

There is certain basic information that should be included in each oral history interview that makes it accessible and usable for the listener. Interviewers should not become so engrossed in the interview process that they forget to ask for specific dates, names, and locations that help place the interviewee’s experiences in historical context.

Genuine listening means that the interviewer hears the contours of the story as it is being told. Often, important subjects in an interviewee’s story are only hinted at; the interviewer must keep a constant watch for these hints. The interviewer guides the interview, but does not direct it. The interviewer is a facilitator of the interview, but does not

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manipulate it. This is not a place for ego to be exhibited; interviewers should not use the interview to prove their knowledge. Comfort with long silences is crucial to the listening process, and the timing of questions often requires the interviewer to sit through the silences of the interviewee's internal dialogue.

Because the content of these interviews is often tragic and terrifying, learning to listen also means that the interviewer needs to discern his or her own fears. We sometimes intuitively want to protect ourselves from what interviewees have to say. However, we must learn to listen to everything about which the interviewee is able to speak. We must be able to ask about everything in a way that invites response. This means that difficult questions usually should be posed in a simple, straightforward way. If we expose our fears by asking questions emotionally, people often will respond to that emotion in an attempt to protect us, rather than to answer the question we have posed. Therefore, we must respect the interviewee's limits, but not allow our own limitations to restrain the stories that interviewees can tell us.

As interviewers, we travel with the interviewee. We try to see more than the mere representation of the interviewee's experiences. We attempt to sit within the person's story as if nothing else exists, and we try to understand. We try to understand from the inside as if we were there—much like the musician playing a piece of music. But we are always outsiders, even while we share an intimacy with the interviewee. It is important to balance our ability to listen empathetically with our ability to listen carefully and critically.

These Guidelines are intended to be used as a reference throughout the interview process. They may be useful to the individual who plans to conduct only a few interviews, to the newly established organization interested in initiating its own oral history project, or to the already established organization looking for new insight and methods for conducting oral history interviews. The Guidelines focus more on preparing for and conducting the interview than on preserving it archivally; however, we cannot overemphasize the importance of proper post-production treatment of the interview (storage, preservation, cataloging, etc.). *See Chapter X, After the Interview, for more information.*

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The Guidelines were originally created for the Oral History Branch's own interviewers, and often make specific references to resources available for public use at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. However, they also provide general advice that can be applied to a wide variety of oral history projects, particularly those with a Holocaust or genocide-studies orientation. They also provide suggestions for finding resources in other libraries and resource centers.

I. THE PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW

Chapter Overview

Purpose of the Preliminary Interview, 2

Creating a Questionnaire, 3

Providing Options for the Interviewee, 4

Conducting the Preliminary Interview, 4

How Much Detail?, 4

Timing of the Preliminary Interview, 5

Assessing the Preliminary Interview, 5

Summarizing the Preliminary Interview, 5

The Oral History Branch gathers names of potential interviewees from a variety of sources. From these referrals, we elicit more information primarily through the preliminary interview. Preliminary interviews often are conducted by volunteers, who use a questionnaire as a guide to ensure that no basic information is neglected. These preliminary interviews usually are conducted over the telephone. After each is completed, the interviewer writes a summary of it, based on the questionnaire and notes taken during the interview.

Preliminary interviews serve a variety of purposes. They help us determine with whom to conduct full-length recorded interviews; they provide an outline of the interviewee's experiences on which research for the full-length interview is based; and they provide at least a basic summary of the interviewee's experiences for future use in the event

that we are not able to follow up with a full-length interview. The interviewee receives a copy of the typed preliminary interview summary, and is asked to check it for accuracy.

After the telephone interview is completed, the file goes to the Director of Oral History, who decides whether or not to conduct a formal interview with that person. The Oral History Branch has established some interview priorities, which are subject to change as the representation in our collection changes.

In general, we look for persons who have compelling or interesting stories. Clarity of memory and the ability to relate one's experiences in a coherent narrative often will take precedence over any priority list. At the same time, if a person's ability to tell his or her story is less than perfect, the historical importance of a story may take precedence. Since we are limited in the numbers of interviews we can do per year, we must use some criteria for the choices we make, even though the criteria need to be flexible.

**Purpose
of the
Preliminary
Interview**

An essential part of the preparation for a full-length, recorded interview is the preliminary interview (unless there already exists some detailed material about the interviewee's experiences, such as a written memoir). The information gathered at the preliminary interview often is the basis for all other interview preparation.

Most oral history projects cannot interview everyone who wishes to be interviewed. Thus, another primary function of the preliminary interview is to gather sufficient information to determine whether or not a full-length video or audio interview should be conducted.

The aim of the preliminary interview is different from that of the full-length recorded interview. The purpose of the preliminary interview is to create an outline of the interviewee's story. This limits the scope of a preliminary interview in comparison with a full-length interview. In a sense, the

preliminary interview is designed to be more clinical than the full-length interview. For example, a questionnaire is very helpful for use in a preliminary interview to guide the discussion and to ensure that the basic information has been covered. Conversely, such a standard set of questions usually is not used in a full-length interview. Rather, individualized questions are formulated based on the preliminary interview information. The full-length oral history goes into much greater depth and detail, and includes more reflection than the preliminary interview.

This limited scope must be kept in mind in order to conduct an effective preliminary interview. However, it should not limit your ability to engage in the interview process with sensitivity and tact. It may be a challenge for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss such difficult subject matter over the telephone with a stranger. Thus, the preliminary interview requires knowledge, delicacy, perception, and skill.

If you plan to conduct preliminary interviews with many people, we recommend that you create a questionnaire. Questionnaires need not be strict; they may contain a list of suggested questions from which the interviewer may choose while conducting the preliminary interview. However, certain consistent information should be gathered in the preliminary interview, such as the interviewee's date and place of birth, and a basic chronology of his or her wartime locations. The Museum has created several questionnaires for varying interviewee experiences. We have separate questionnaires for the Holocaust survivor, witness, liberator, rescuer, and perpetrator. Although these categories are by no means perfect, they provide structure while allowing a certain degree of flexibility in conducting preliminary interviews. *See Appendix 1 for an example of our most-used questionnaire, the Survivor Questionnaire.*

If you plan to make the questionnaires available to researchers, be sure to ask the interviewees for permission to use the information for research purposes. Interviewees will most likely comply if you assure them that their addresses and telephone numbers will not be released to researchers without their consent.

Creating a Questionnaire

**Providing
Options
for the
Interviewee**

Often the telephone maintains a distance between interviewer and interviewee that makes it difficult to explore the heart of the interviewee's story. If the interviewee expresses discomfort in talking about certain experiences over the telephone, the interviewer must respect that wish and accept the limitations of interviewing by telephone. In such cases, it is wise to have a questionnaire on hand to send to the interviewee.

However, getting a sense of how someone speaks is an important criterion in determining whether or not to proceed with a full-length interview. The telephone often is the only viable way to determine that. If an interviewee deems the telephone inappropriate, you might suggest that the person write a basic outline of his or her experiences or fill out a questionnaire, and ask permission to call again afterward with a few follow-up questions.

Preliminary interviews also may be conducted in person. However, the interviewer should make it clear that the preliminary interview is only intended to gather information in preparation for an interview and that it is not an in-depth recorded interview. This can be confusing for interviewees, who may be more inclined to go into detail about their experiences in person than they would over the telephone.

**Conducting
the Preliminary
Interview**

In the preliminary interview, find out the basic chronology of the interviewee's experiences, including dates and locations, so you will be able to conduct thorough research and construct thoughtful questions for the recorded interview.

**How Much
Detail?**

One challenge of the preliminary interview is to create a balance between being too concise and being too verbose. If it is necessary to err, err on the side of including too much information rather than too little. More information is always better than not enough because all further preparation and research will be based on what is gathered at the preliminary interview (unless other information exists, such as a memoir).

Conduct the preliminary interview more than a week in advance of the recorded interview (preferably several weeks in advance). Otherwise, you may have the problem of the interviewee saying over and over again on tape, “As I told you last week” Conducting the preliminary interview weeks in advance of the recorded interview also will allow you time to call the interviewee with additional questions, should any arise during the process of preparing research for the interview.

Timing of the Preliminary Interview

When deciding whether or not to proceed with a full-length interview, it is important to consider not only what the interviewee said, but how it was said. This requires the interviewer to describe the preliminary interview, including clarity of speech and memory; the ability to relate experiences in a coherent narrative; and the ability to reflect upon and create a context for those experiences. *See page 74 (Appendix 1) for a sample format of the preliminary interview assessment.*

Assessing the Preliminary Interview

The interviewer should write a summary of the preliminary interview soon after it is conducted. The longer the interviewer postpones writing the summary, the more difficult it will be to remember how scattered notes fit together into a narrative. Alternatively, we highly recommend that you invest in a recording device that can be connected to your telephone. You then can use the recording to write the summary and use it for review purposes. However, do not think of the recording as a substitute for the written summary, because audiotapes are more difficult to review than written summaries. Also, do not consider the recording of the preliminary interview as an archival document that can be kept in lieu of an in-person taped interview. Tapes are expensive and take up space, and it is time consuming to preserve them properly. The quality of recorded telephone interviews will not be high enough to warrant such time and expense. *See Appendix 2 for a sample preliminary interview summary.*

Summarizing the Preliminary Interview

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II. MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE INTERVIEW

Chapter Overview

Contacting the Interviewee, 7

Scheduling the Interview, 7

Interview Note Taker, 8

Individuals Present at Interview, 8

Legal and Ethical Considerations, 8

Once you have determined who you would like to interview on tape, and have a time frame in mind, contact the interviewee to see if he or she is willing to be interviewed, and to offer more information about your project. Be sure to let the interviewee know what is expected of him or her before the interview takes place. For example, give an estimate of how long you expect the interview to last, how the interview will be used once it is completed, where the interview will take place, and who will be present at the interview. Also explain that a release form must be signed, and give the interviewee a sense of what is included in the form. *See “Legal and Ethical Considerations” (page 8) for more information about release forms.* Being as informative as possible can make interviewees feel more comfortable and in control of a difficult process, about which they may feel quite vulnerable.

**Contacting
the
Interviewee**

When scheduling the interview, be sure to allow plenty of time for conducting research and preparing for the interview. Many factors may necessitate a lengthy preparation period, particularly if you have not conducted Holocaust-related oral history interviews before. If this is the case, be sure to review these Guidelines thoroughly before setting a date for the interview, so you will have a good sense of the time required to prepare.

**Scheduling
the Interview**

**Interview
Note Taker**

If you are conducting a video interview in a studio, there may be a greenroom, where one can sit and watch the interview as it is being conducted. This is a room, separate from the studio, with a TV monitor. In this scenario, someone can take notes there as the interview transpires without distracting or disturbing the interview. It is helpful to have the note taker write down the phonetic spellings of any personal names or obscure place names that are mentioned. The note taker then can confirm spellings before the interviewee leaves the studio. This is important because some spellings are impossible to confirm without the help of the interviewee. If you decide to have a note taker at the interview, give that person plenty of advance notice.

If there is no greenroom or similar setup available, do not plan to have a note taker in the same room where the interview is being conducted. Instead, wait to confirm spellings until you have made a copy of the tape. In this event, the person who takes notes will want to do so as soon as a copy of the tape (or transcript) is available, so that he or she can call the interviewee before too much time passes.

**Individuals
Present at
Interview**

We generally recommend that few people as possible be present in the room during the interview. The presence of an interviewee's family member, while comforting for the interviewee, may distract the interviewer or the interviewee. However, handle this decision on a case-by-case basis, and make exceptions for those who strongly prefer a family member to be present.

**Legal and
Ethical
Considerations**

The Oral History Association has written principles and standards for conducting oral history interviews that detail the responsibility of any interview project to its interviewees, the public, the profession, and sponsoring and archival institutions. Review and follow these principles and standards in the conduct of any oral history project. *See Selected Bibliography (Appendix 5) for more information.*

To obtain the right to use an interview in your archives or in any production, each person you interview must sign a legal release form. This form will determine who owns copyright of the interview and under what terms or restrictions the copyright is owned. If no form is signed, copyright

of the interview will automatically belong jointly to the interviewer and the interviewee. For more information on legal issues involved with conducting oral history interviews, see *Oral History and the Law* by John A. Neuen-schwander. See *Appendix 5* for more information.

If you plan to donate an interview to an archive, you most likely will be required to supply a signed release form along with the interview. The kind of release form you create will depend on the goal of your interview collection. Several sample release forms can be found in the book *Doing Oral History* by Donald A. Ritchie. See *Appendix 5* for more information.

After you have confirmed a date for the interview, send the interviewee a standard information sheet or letter that reiterates the basic arrangements for the interview, including when and where it will take place, who will conduct it, how long you expect the session to last, etc. Enclose a copy of the release form so the interviewee can review it carefully and ask any questions before the interview. You should be very familiar with the release form, and explain it carefully to the interviewee either before the interview or at the interview. Ask the interviewee to bring the release form to the interview, but be sure to bring an extra copy in case the interviewee forgets his or hers.

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III. CONDUCTING RESEARCH

Chapter Overview

- Set Aside Time for Research, 12**
- Review Interviewee's Experiences, 13**
- Important Items to Research, 13**
- Things You Can Do at Home, 14**
- Visit a Library or Research Facility, 15**
- Maps, 16**
- Other Resources for Locating Places, 16**
- Expanding Your Search for Resources, 17**
- Using the Museum's Resources, 17**
- If You Need Clarification, 19**
- Challenges, 19**
- Research List, 19**
- When to Stop, 20**

You need not be an expert on the Holocaust to conduct a successful interview. However, you must have knowledge and understanding of the basic historical facts. The people you interview will expect this as well. In addition, you must become knowledgeable about the particular circumstances of your interviewee's history. The most important ingredient for a successful interview is the preparation that you do before the recorded interview. Even the most experienced interviewer will spend hours preparing for an interview by reading historical material

relevant to the interviewee's story and preparing questions based specifically on that material. Preparation is critical.

There are thousands of books and articles about the Holocaust in print. The *Selected Bibliography (Appendix 5)* includes what we consider the most useful published sources. Once you have determined whom you will interview, it is critical that you gather sufficient research materials tailored to that person. The Oral History Branch has developed the following step-by-step guide to help make the process go smoothly.

**Set Aside
Time for
Research**

Once you have the summary of the interviewee's experiences in hand, begin to do your research. Expect to depend on the help of a good local library, Holocaust resource center, or other research facility to get this research done.

Plan to spend at least three to four hours gathering your research materials and four hours or more reading and preparing questions for each interview you do. It is likely that for each interview, the total time spent on research, reading, and preparing questions will be at least eight hours. When you are doing research, try to be realistic about how many pages of reading you will be able to do prior to the interview (some Holocaust resource centers and libraries don't allow patrons to check out books, so photocopying may be necessary). Be selective and photocopy only the most relevant materials (rather than *all possible* relevant materials). With four hours set aside for reading and preparing questions, you should try to limit the research packet to 100 pages of photocopied materials. Even with 100 pages or less, there may be some pages that you will read very closely and others that you will skim. Of course, if you intend to spend more time reading, you will want to copy more materials. The goal, however, is to collect the most suitable research for the specific interviewee's experiences, rather than indiscriminately photocopying every article or book on a certain topic.

Start by reviewing the preliminary interview questionnaire and the summary that was based on the telephone interview and any other information in the interviewee's file. Take note of the people, places, events, and organizations that you want to learn more about in preparation for the full-length interview. We recommend that you jot down a one to two-page overview of the person's experiences, incorporating information from the questionnaire, the summary, and other materials in the file. It can be helpful to write these notes in bullet or outline fashion. *See Appendix 3 for a sample interviewee overview.*

Review Interviewee's Experiences

Read the following guidelines to get a sense of the questions you can ask yourself as you review the information in the interviewee's file and take notes on the most important items to research.

Important Items to Research

Names of Interviewees

You may be able to find specific references in published sources about an interviewee if that person or an immediate family member was well known or had an unusual position—such as an administrator within the *Judenrat* (Jewish Council) at the Lodz ghetto—or was part of a small or select group, such as an escapee of Treblinka or Auschwitz. Make a special note of the interviewee's name(s) during the war for doing this kind of research. Often, people changed their names after the war when they immigrated to the United States or other countries.

Names of People Mentioned by Interviewees

Use the same considerations as above. Try to get more information about a person with whom the interviewee had contact, especially if that person was well known, had an unusual position, or was part of a small or select group (for example, it could be someone now known to have been a protector or rescuer or perpetrator). Again, consider the possibility that someone could have different names (birth name, war name, postwar name, etc.).

Places

Whenever possible, research the place where the interviewee grew up as a child. Whether it was a large city or small village, some information usually can be found in published sources. Then research other places to which the

interviewee went or was taken during the Holocaust/war and immediately after (ghettos, camps, towns or cities where he or she might have hid, displaced persons camps). Make a note of all places you wish to research. Make it a priority to research those places where the interviewee may have had memorable experiences and/or stayed for a considerable period of time. Conversely, if the interviewee was taken to a camp for a half-day stopover and did not have memorable experiences there, it would not be necessary to do much research about that camp for the interview.

Events/Organizations

Do research on events that the interviewee experienced or witnessed, as well as organizations and movements in which the interviewee participated. Do enough research on events and organizations so that you are familiar with the details and can visualize scenarios that the interviewee may discuss.

In most cases, you will know which events and organizations to research based on the information in the person's file. However, as you read about the places where the interviewee grew up and went thereafter, it is important to be aware of the dates when the interviewee was in each place and to be on the lookout for events that the interviewee may have experienced or witnessed, even if the interviewee had not previously mentioned the events. Often, if you are familiar with events that occurred in a particular place, you can prepare more thoughtful and stimulating questions. This knowledge can be especially important in cases where an interviewee forgot to mention events when the preliminary interview was conducted.

Things You Can Do at Home

There may be some preliminary research that you can do at home prior to making a visit to a library or Holocaust resource center. First check any Holocaust-related books that you may have in your home library for information pertaining to the interviewee. We have attached to these Guidelines a *Selected Bibliography (Appendix 5)*, consisting of what we consider some helpful resources on Holocaust history, Holocaust research, and oral history methodology. This is by no means a comprehensive bibliography, but it should be helpful as a starting point. The text that we recommend most highly on the history of the Holocaust is *The Destruction of the European Jews* (three volumes) by Raul Hilberg. You may be interested in purchasing some

of the other books listed in the bibliography, but by no means will all of the books listed be useful to you for each interview that you do. It is impossible to buy enough books that deal with all the possible research topics in-depth, so the sources you would have at home will most likely be helpful for the preliminary, more general stages of research.

You may wish to write to various Holocaust resource centers or other research facilities to learn if they have any information on the subjects of interest to you. When writing to research facilities, be precise about the kind of information you are seeking, and conscientious about any research facility's limited capacity for answering detailed research questions. Responses may be slower than you expect. A list and contact information for Holocaust resource centers can be found in the *Directory of the Association of Holocaust Organizations*, which is updated annually. Copies of this directory may be obtained by contacting the Holocaust Resource Center and Archives of the Queensborough Community College in Bayside, New York. The Museum Web site houses the USHMM International Catalogue of audio and video testimonies. See "Research" on the Museum's Web site.

Many research facilities' holdings are now searchable on the Internet, so a few keyword searches may yield positive results. If you have a computer with access to the Internet and are able to visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to conduct your research, you can search the Museum's Library and Archives collections before your visit.

Eventually, you will need to visit a local library, Holocaust resource center, or other research facility. Keep in mind that if you are working with a local library, the selection of books may be limited, and you might have to obtain the books you are looking for through an interlibrary loan. This can take several weeks, so plan ahead.

If you can visit the Museum's Library and Archives, it is best to do so on a weekday (except for national holidays) between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. because many more resources are available then than on weekends. You may use the Library's collection on-site only. If you are interested in listening to testimonies from the Museum's collection of interviews, you may request them from the Reference Archivist. Refer to the Reference Archivist also for access to unpublished documents in the Archives collection. The Photographic

**Visit a
Library or
Research
Facility**

Reference Collection and Survivors Registry also are potential sources for relevant information.

Maps

Begin your research by obtaining copies of maps that reflect the places where the interviewee grew up and went during the Holocaust and immediate post-war periods. Even if you are familiar with geography, it is best to treat each interview as distinct and re-familiarize yourself with the specific locations of the interviewee's experiences. The goal is to become intimately aware of the person's path prior to, during, and immediately after the Holocaust. By highlighting the locations on maps, it is easier to obtain an understanding of the distances covered from one place to the next. In general, maps provide a good opportunity to visualize the interviewee's experiences.

An excellent source for maps is the *National Geographic Atlas of the World*. You can make a copy of the maps of countries pertinent to the interviewee, then highlight the relevant towns and cities on each map. Often if a person went to several different countries, you will want to make a copy of a map of Europe and highlight relevant place names on it, as well as on maps of each country.

If you still need to identify the country in which a town is located, or if it is difficult to find a town on a map, look up the place name in the atlas' index. If you find the place name, turn to the appropriate page of the atlas and use the coordinates listed in the index to locate the place on the map. Then highlight it on your copy of that page.

Other Resources for Locating Places

If you do not find the place in the index of the atlas, there are other sources to use. It always is key to consider that the place name may be spelled incorrectly or that a name has changed over the years and a different version is more commonly accepted today.

Check the following additional sources when trying to locate a place (town, city, ghetto, camp):

Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer

Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem (also known as the Arolsen List—especially useful for identifying camps)

Encyclopedia of the Holocaust

Encyclopaedia Judaica

The Ghetto Anthology

Historical Atlas of the Holocaust

Maps of specific countries (showing greater detail than the *National Geographic Atlas of the World*)

Where Once We Walked

Yizkor Books (memorial books, mostly written in Yiddish or Hebrew)

See Selected Bibliography (Appendix 5) for more information on these sources and a list of our other most-used published sources.

It usually is possible to find the place in one or more of these sources. There will be rare instances when a place is so obscure that it cannot be found. In such cases, you should be able to get an idea of the town or city that is closest to the place in question.

You may be able to fulfill a substantial amount of your research inquiries by using our *Selected Bibliography (Appendix 5)* of the published sources, especially if you are looking for information on a well-known topic such as “Auschwitz,” “Lodz ghetto,” or “Dr. Mengele.” But you also will want to check for relevant information in a library’s larger collection of books (and relevant unpublished materials, if available). Additionally, many of the books listed in our bibliography contain extensive bibliographies of their own.

Expanding Your Search for Resources

The Museum will be a helpful resource for conducting interviews if you are in the area and have an opportunity to visit. The sections below provide guidance on how to use resources in the Museum’s various divisions. In addition, some of the Museum’s resources are searchable on the Internet.

Using the Museum’s Resources

The Museum’s Web site address is www.ushmm.org.

Once you are at the web site, select the option to search “Research” which includes the Library and Archives. In doing these searches, you will be

able to get the call numbers for materials you are interested in reviewing when you come to the Museum.

Library

If you have the opportunity to visit the Museum, you can use the Library's computer catalog to find specific books that are relevant to your research. If you are using this system for the first time, ask the Reference Librarian for an introduction to how it works. Even if you have used the system before, feel free to ask for assistance.

With titles and call numbers written down, you can find the books on the Library's shelves. If you cannot locate a book, ask the Reference Librarian for help (occasionally a book is waiting to be shelved or has been mis-shelved).

Begin your search for information with the book's table of contents. Next, check the index (if one exists). Also, refer to the book's bibliography for more sources. Often, information can be found simply by flipping through the pages of a book. There will be times when you will not find relevant information in a book, even though its title gave you the impression that it would be helpful. Similarly, a book that didn't appear useful by its title may have relevant information. Thus, it is good to be on the lookout for books other than the one you are trying to locate on the shelves, since books on the same topic are shelved together. After you have removed a book and are finished reviewing it, place it on the designated re-shelving carts. Do not re-shelve it. If you obtained the book from the Reference Desk, return it to the desk.

We recommend that you wait until you have had the opportunity to review the Library sources you've gathered before making copies. By waiting until you have reviewed most of your materials, you will have a better sense of the most relevant pages to photocopy. When you have determined the pages you want to photocopy, ask the Reference Librarian for assistance.

Archives

You may want to check the Archives for information, especially if you have not found much material in the Library. There is a separate computer catalog at the Museum that searches for the Archives' holdings. Also, you would want to search the Archives' holdings if you think the interviewee may have donated his or her unpublished writings.

Photographic Reference Collection

Occasionally, an interviewee will mention that he or she was photographed in the ghettos or camps. There may be other times when you have reason to believe there may be photographs of the interviewee from that time period. Go to the Photographic Reference Collection to see if such photographs are at the Museum. Also, check with them if you have not found much information on a town, camp, or ghetto, but believe there may be photographs of the place.

As you are conducting your research, it may become apparent that you need further clarification or elaboration on an aspect of the interviewee's experiences in order to effectively carry out your research. In this event, call the interviewee directly and ask for a clarification, leaving enough time before the interview to allow you to do more research if necessary.

**If You Need
Clarification**

Even with clarifying information from the interviewee, it may be difficult to find relevant materials on certain topics, such as lesser-known towns, ghettos, camps, etc. Consult with a Holocaust resource center when seeking specialized information.

Challenges

When you have completed your research, it is helpful to write down a list of the sources you have compiled. *See Appendix 4 for a sample research list.* Keep this list in the interviewee's file; it may be useful to someone in the future (for example, if a follow-up interview is arranged).

**Research
List**

**When to
Stop**

Ideally, after three to four hours of skimming materials and making photocopies of items you want to read or review later, you will have compiled a well-rounded research packet. In essence, the packet should represent detailed information about the interviewee's experiences (much of this information would have been gathered in the preliminary interview) and the larger historical context of the interviewee's experiences. Review the section "*Important Items to Research*" (page 13) and the overview you made based on the preliminary interview to make sure you have covered the important points.

IV. PREPARING QUESTIONS

Chapter Overview

Notes on Preparing Questions, 21

Organizing Questions, 21

Using Questions in the Interview, 22

For every interview, it is essential to know about the interviewee's history so you can construct questions that directly relate to that person. Use the research materials that you have gathered and a good chronology of events as references in preparing questions. Additionally, you may find some questions that are relevant to your interview in our list of suggested questions.

You will be constructing questions from the time you have the preliminary interview information in hand through the recorded interview itself. Therefore, as you prepare your questions, it is important to consider how you plan to conduct the interview and what direction you anticipate the interview will take. *See Chapter VII, Conducting the Interview.* Consider what kinds of information you want to get from the interviewee and look for blank spots and intriguing areas in the preliminary interview summary that you would like to explore.

**Notes on
Preparing
Questions**

Some interviewers type up pages of questions prior to the interview, but then put them aside before they begin the actual interview, because looking at a list of questions can be distracting from listening to the interviewee. This works if you have an excellent memory and a great deal of experience conducting

**Organizing
Questions**

interviews. We recommend instead that you write down your questions, highlighting those you consider most important, so you can read them easily during the interview.

Organize your questions chronologically, perhaps in phases, such as “prewar life,” “Lodz ghetto,” “Auschwitz,” “liberation,” etc. In other words, organize the questions according to the major episodes of the interviewee’s experiences. Then, during the interview, hold your list of questions in your lap, and only glance at it occasionally to be sure that important questions do not go unanswered. You may wish to write your questions on several 4 x 6 index cards, which make little noise when handled during the interview. Ideally, you will be familiar enough with your questions that you will need to refer to them only occasionally, if at all, during the interview.

**Using
Questions
in the
Interview**

During the interview itself, do not plan to ask one question after another as they are listed on the page. Often an interviewee will anticipate and answer your questions, and there will be no need for you to ask them. If you are overly concerned about having the interviewee answer your specific questions, you will be distracted from what the interviewee is telling you. Therefore, even though you have your questions written down, you should attempt to have your most important questions in your mind, rather than depending on a piece of paper. If you have a thorough sense of the events in the interviewee’s life before you begin the interview, then the information that the interviewee gives you during the interview should remind you of your questions. Allow yourself to follow the interviewee’s lead and put your questions aside for parts of the interview. You may find that what the interviewee is telling you will prompt new questions that you had not even considered.

In any interview, focus on asking questions that invite reflection on the part of the interviewee, rather than one-word responses. Generally avoid yes or no questions. Still, good questions do not have to be complicated or flashy. One of the best sentences you can use during the interview to elicit details is, “Tell me more about that.”

V. SUGGESTED THEMES

Chapter Overview

Family/Occupation/Education, 23

Religion and Politics, 24

Gender, 24

We have highlighted below a few thematic areas within the broad spectrum of Holocaust experiences that you might consider weaving into the interview. These are meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive, and some interviewees' experiences may call for a different set of thematic areas.

Once you are familiar with your interviewee's experiences, consider identifying certain themes that run through his or her life, and create your own outline of themes. If you find that the themes outlined below are applicable to your interviewee's experiences, go to Chapter VI for some suggested questions that relate to the themes you have outlined.

It is important to have some idea of the ways in which education (religious, musical, scientific, etc.) played a role in a person's life. If one's education or background was not academic (for example, if the person were a trade or skilled laborer), that factor may have provided opportunities that saved his or her life. Knowing the situation in which someone was raised, including home environment; relationship with parents, siblings, and friends; and the parents' occupations, can help us better understand the interviewee's life.

**Family/
Occupation/
Education**

**Religion and
Politics**

The religious upbringing and beliefs, as well as the political views or activities of the interviewee and the interviewee's family and friends, are relevant to understanding the interviewee's choices and actions during the Holocaust. When possible, it is helpful to get the interviewee to articulate this background. There even may be some connection between religious practice and political activity that might lead you to deduce something about the connections between the environment in which a person was raised and his or her later actions during Nazi persecution.

Gender

Gender is an area of investigation that is rather new to Holocaust studies as a whole, and in the field of Holocaust oral history, it has generally been ignored as a category. Nevertheless, it is essential to think through questions that relate to gender. Some can be based on physiology, for example, questions about menstruation, pregnancy, abortion, sexual relations, as well as sexual violence.

There also are questions that can be based on cultural and political issues relating to positions of power held by men and women. For example, positions on the *Judenrat* (Jewish Council) were held exclusively by men, but the councils sometimes had to make decisions that specifically affected women. Nazi directives forbidding pregnancy forced the Jewish Councils to make decisions concerning abortions. Decisions about those who would be deported were sometimes made on the basis of gender. Explore how access to jobs, food, and other resources differed for men and women. The similarities in the lives of men and women also warrant exploration.

Other questions relating to gender can be based on the differences in the ghettos, camps, and resistance groups. As men and women were separated in most camp situations, ask about differences in how the two genders related and organized. When men and women were together in ghettos or other places, such as the Czech family camp in Auschwitz, what sort of organization was constructed? Ask questions that elicit the structure of daily life in the camps—food distribution, sharing of food, days off, sanitation, barrack life, work assignments, roll call, friendships, brutality, etc. Such questions clearly pertain to men and women alike.

VI. SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

Chapter Overview

Prewar Life, 26

The First Questions

Childhood Recollections

Nazi Rise to Power

Holocaust/Wartime Experiences, 28

Ghettos and Transit Camps

Labor Camps, Prisons,

Concentration/Extermination Camps

Hiding/Passing and Escaping

Resistance

Postwar Experiences, 34

Liberation

Displaced Persons Camps

Emigration/Immigration

Beyond the War/Life After the Holocaust

Although we do not recommend that you use a standard questionnaire for the interview, it is extremely helpful to be detailed about topics and the kinds of questions you will construct in preparation for an interview. No one should ask as many questions in one interview as we have outlined in this chapter. Rather, these questions serve as a guide to the level of detail we hope an interviewee will reveal. The questions also will provide hints as to what you might ask if the interviewee does not go into details about certain experiences.

When interviewing Holocaust survivors, the structure of the recorded Holocaust testimony is typically divided into three sections: prewar life, the Holocaust and wartime experiences, and postwar experiences. Therefore, we have organized our suggested questions according to these three broad categories. Questions for interviewees with other Holocaust-related experiences, such as liberators, rescuers, bystanders, or postwar relief agency workers, will require a different set of questions than those outlined in this chapter. However, these questions may help you create appropriate questions for other interviewee categories.

**PREWAR
LIFE**

This section of the interview deals with the interviewee's childhood and upbringing—family life, friends, relationships, schooling, and prewar life in general. Especially when speaking with survivors, this part of the interview should demonstrate the kind of life and culture that was interrupted or destroyed by National Socialism. It is important to get some sense of the person's interests and hobbies, along with the events that marked his or her life prior to the Nazi rise to power or occupation. It also is important to draw out the interviewee's earliest recollections of the Nazis—especially what he or she heard or read or experienced, such as the escalation of restrictions and legal measures, and how they affected family, school, friends.

**The First
Questions**

1. What was your name at birth? (Sometimes people have changed their names, thus it is important to get this information at the outset. Throughout the interview, when it is relevant, be sure to ask about nicknames or other name changes, including changes at the time of liberation and emigration.)
2. Where were you born?
3. What was your date of birth?

1. Describe your family, including the role of your mother and father in the household and their occupations. Describe your family life and your daily life.
2. Describe school, friends, hobbies, affiliations with organizations.
3. Describe the nature of religious life in your family and community.
4. What were your family's political affiliations?
5. What are your recollections of your city or town before the war, including relationships between Jews and non-Jews? Any recollections of anti-semitism or racism of any kind?
6. If the interviewee is older, ask him or her to describe job/occupation, relationships, marriage, children.

Childhood Recollections

1. What did you know about Hitler or Nazism? How was the Nazi rise to power or Nazi policy understood in your family/community?
2. How did you become aware of the Nazi presence? Do you remember the first day of occupation? Any recollections of seeing the Nazis? Experiences? Feelings? Discussions? If you were a child, how did your parents or other adults respond to the Nazi presence?
3. Describe recollections of escalation of Nazi power—How did the Nazi presence change your life? Were you persecuted? Any plans or attempts to leave?
4. If in Germany—Ask about the April 1933 boycott, book burnings, Nuremberg race laws, *Kristallnacht* (“Night of Broken Glass”), etc.
5. Elsewhere—Ask about the imposition of the Star of David on clothes, Jews prohibited from public places, confiscation or destruction of Jewish property, forced labor, movement out of homes.
6. Describe ability or inability to run business or maintain occupation.
7. If not Jewish, what did you know about the circumstances of Jews? Did you know any Jews? Did you try to help them?

Nazi Rise to Power

**HOLOCAUST/
WARTIME
EXPERIENCES**

It is essential to know about the particular ghetto, transit camp, labor camp, prison, concentration or extermination camp where an interviewee was interned. Specific questions must be constructed according to that interviewee's particular experiences.

There is no "typical" Holocaust experience, although there are some categories of experiences into which many people fit. Alternately, there are instances where one person's experiences fit into multiple categories.

**Ghettos
and Transit
Camps**

Most often, incarceration in a ghetto or transit camp preceded deportation to labor, concentration, and/or extermination camps. Most Jews spent time in a ghetto or transit camp; most non-Jews did not.

1. When and how were you notified that you were to leave for the ghetto? (For some people, a ghetto was formed where they already lived; consequently, some of these questions may not be applicable.) How old were you? How did you get to the ghetto? Was the "trip" organized? What did you bring? What did you think about this "move?" What did you know? What were your recollections of arrival at the new site? Describe your first impressions. What did the ghetto look like? Was there a wall? If so, what kind?
2. What are your recollections about getting adjusted? Were you alone? Where did you live? Where did you sleep? Did you sleep well? Did you have dreams? Nightmares?
3. What are your recollections about living conditions—food, sanitation, medical facilities, housing? Describe relationships among family members and in the larger community. Describe daily life, including play and school for children. Describe social services—soup kitchens, hospitals, orphanages, schools, facilities for the disabled. Did you have any mobility or freedom of movement? Was the ghetto closed at a certain time? What sort of transportation was there in the ghetto? Were there any non-Jews in the ghetto? Any relationships between Jews and non-Jews?

4. If non-Jewish and in a ghetto, discuss your arrival, adjustment, living circumstances, work, relations to Jews and to Nazi authorities.
5. What sort of work did you do? Did other family members work? How did you get this “job?”
6. Describe any cultural, religious, or social activities—concerts, lectures, parties, religious observances. What about friends and recreation? Were intimate relationships important?
7. Did you hear any news of what was happening outside the ghetto? What did you understand about your situation? About the situation of Jews? Did you know about killings? Labor camps? Extermination camps? What rumors were in the ghetto? What did you believe? Did you or anyone you knew think of escaping or actually escape?
8. Were the lives of men and women similar or different? Different tasks? Different positions in the community? Were men and women treated differently? If so, how? Did you even notice that you were a man or a woman? In other words, did gender matter to you? In what ways? What about sexuality in the ghetto—relationships, menstruation, pregnancy, abortions, prostitution, rape?
9. How did people around you treat each other?
10. Describe the structure of the ghetto—*Judenrat* (Jewish Council), police, work, food and clothing distribution, housing, medical care, etc. Evaluate the work of the *Judenrat* and Jewish police: Were they corrupt? Helpful? Trying to help in an impossible situation?
11. Were you involved in resistance activities? What did you do? Were you a member of a group? Was the group primarily men or both men and women? Roles? Activities?
12. What kept you going? Discuss your motivations and inspirations, if they existed. Were you ever depressed? Did you ever not want to keep going? Describe your situation.
13. Describe the Nazi presence in your ghetto or transit camp. Give names of Germans or collaborators if possible. Describe relationships or experiences.

**Labor Camps,
Prisons,
Concentration/
Extermination
Camps**

1. Describe deportation to camp—What were the circumstances of selection of those to be transported? Who did the selecting? Were you arrested? Rounded up in selection? What was the method of transport? Approximately how many people were transported? Conditions during the trip? Any idea of the length of the trip? What were you told of the purpose of the trip? Did you believe what you were told?
2. Describe your arrival and first impressions. Did you even know where you were? With whom did you arrive? If with family, what happened? What happened to your belongings? Describe any thoughts, feelings, hopes, fears. What did you see, hear, smell? What was your condition on arrival? Time of year? Time of day? Were there prisoners at your arrival point? Describe any interactions. Describe your impressions of the camp personnel.
3. Describe your registration into the camp—Shaving? Showers? Tattoo? Delousing? Uniform? Barrack assignment? (Be sure to get the tattoo number or other identification used in the camp—number and/or letter on uniform, etc.) Bunk? Who was with you? From where? Were all the people in your barrack Jewish? If not, why were they there? Language problems?
4. Specific living conditions—food, sanitation, medical facilities.
5. Work—In which *Kommando* (work detail) were you? How were you chosen? Were you engaged in different kinds of work at different times? Were there privileged prisoners? What did you know about their situation? Was Sunday a day off? What did you know about the structure of the camp?
6. Daily existence—Roll call? Breakfast? Lunch? Dinner? Was there stealing of food? Brutality? Punishment? Latrines? Selections for the gas chambers? How did you sleep? Recollections of noises, smells, discussions, humor? Any cultural activities? Explain. If religious, did you try to retain some religious traditions? Explain what and how. Were there any religious observances? Did anyone receive mail? Was there a canteen in your camp? What was the method of currency? What was available? To whom was it available?
7. Illness or physical problems—Diseases? Dental problems? How did women deal with menstruation? Pregnancy? Babies and killing newborns? Medical treatment?

8. What were the relationships between people? Did you have any good friends? Did anyone ever help you? Did you help anyone? Were people affectionate with one another? Were there sexual relationships in the camp? Sexual brutality? Was there a brothel in the camp? Did you know anyone in the brothel? Who could go to the brothel? What were your relationships, if any, with non-Jewish prisoners? If non-Jewish, what were your relationships with Jews?
9. What are your recollections of the guards? Nazi personnel? Prisoner functionaries? Do you remember names?
10. Explain any involvement in resistance activities or the underground.
11. What were your experiences of witnessing killings and deaths?
12. What was your emotional state? What kept you going?
13. What did you know about the “outside world?” How did you learn?
14. Describe your evacuation and “death march,” if applicable.

It should be understood that escaping and hiding were interrelated. Often, people had to escape before they could hide or pass as someone they were not by assuming a false identity. These areas of inquiry are divided here only for organizational purposes.

Hiding/Passing and Escaping

Hiding/Passing

1. How was the decision made to hide? With whom did you hide? What do you recollect about going into hiding? How old were you? What did you take with you? Did you know where you were going?
2. Who hid you, and what was your relationship with them?
3. What kind of hiding? A hiding place with no outside contact? Did you have a false identity? If so, explain how you acquired or assumed the particular identity. Explain the problems of maintaining that identity. For example, did you have to pretend you were not Jewish? Was that difficult? How? Who knew about your real identity? When did you resume your real identity? Or did you? Did you ever try to help Jews by using

your false identity? Describe any important relationships you had while in hiding or in passing. Did you ever engage in resistance activities? How? Doing what? With whom, if anyone, in the resistance movement did you have contact?

4. Describe the hiding place(s). Size? Kind of place? Conditions? Movement? What did you do all day? Work? Food? Sanitation? (If a woman, what about menstruation?) Sexual abuse or threats?
5. Feelings during this situation? Fears, dreams, hopes, questions?
6. Were you ever discovered? Did you ever have any close calls? How did you know whom to trust? Did you have contingency plans? Did you stay in one place? Was there a Nazi or German presence in your situation?
7. What kept you going?
8. How did you emerge from hiding?

Escaping

1. Describe your decision to escape. Were you alone, or with others? If alone, why? If you were not involved in the decision, describe how the decision was made by those with whom you escaped.
2. Describe others who escaped with you.
3. Describe preparations for the escape.
4. Describe the specific circumstances of the escape. Did it go as planned? Where did you go? Who helped?
5. What happened after the escape?
6. Dangers? Close calls?
7. What kept you going?

Resistance

Resistance activities might have been organized in ghettos, camps, prisons, cities and towns, or in the forest. They might entail individuals acting alone or in groups, spontaneously or with calculation. Thus, as usual, questions will have to be geared to the particular situation of the interviewee. Generic questions can only serve as a guide to create questions specific to a particular interviewee's experiences.

1. Describe how you got involved in the resistance. Were there entrance requirements?
2. Describe the kind of group(s) and the kind of resistance activities. What were your tasks? Were there rules within the group? What was the group's goal?
3. Give names and recollections of those with whom you worked.
4. Name of the resistance group? Jewish or non-Jewish? If you were with the Soviet partisans, how did you make contact? Did they welcome Jews? Did you ever have contact with other resistance groups? What were those relationships, if any?
5. How was the group organized? Who were the leaders? How were decisions made? How did you get assignments? Were there women as well as men? Children? Were tasks assigned by gender?
6. Did you receive training? Describe. Did you have weapons?
7. Where did you live? What sort of work did you do in the group?
8. Was there support (money, food) from the local population? Did they give the support voluntarily, or were they forced to provide it?
9. Describe friendships in the group. Difficulties arising from personality differences? Political or strategic differences? Any cultural activities—Telling stories? Singing? Religious observance?
10. Were most people in the group married or were there sexual liaisons formed for reasons of protection and/or love? Did married individuals also have lovers in the group? Was there sexual violence of any kind? Were there pregnancies? Abortions? Any babies born in the group?
11. What sort of medical care was available? What sort of medical problems? How were sanitary issues handled? Did women menstruate? Was that a problem?
12. Specific events? Activities? Smuggling? False papers? Bombing? Stealing? Fighting? Sabotage?

13. If you were not in any organized resistance group, did you know about resistance in any form? How did you individually resist? Why did you decide to resist? How often did you engage in resistance activities?
14. What kept you going?

**POSTWAR
EXPERIENCES**

Again, specific questions must be developed for the individual and the particular circumstances of the interviewee—liberation site, displaced persons camp experience(s), and/or emigration experiences. Obviously, if people went back to their former homes, to the United States, to Palestine (and after 1948, Israel), or to all of these places and/or any other country, the interview should reflect these specific experiences and provide some historical context.

Liberation

1. Describe your circumstances leading up to liberation. What was your physical and mental state?
2. What do you recall about the moment when you realized you were “free?” When and where were you liberated? By whom? What was your reaction to your liberation?
3. Describe the first few days of liberation. Describe the conditions of your environment. What did you do? What was your physical state? What was done to you? Was there any physical or sexual abuse that you witnessed or experienced during this period? How did your liberators treat you? Describe the medical help and the food supply.
4. What happened to perpetrators? Prisoner functionaries? Any retaliation from prisoners to their former captors?
5. Describe how you tried to put your life together. (Years of mending could be discussed.) Where did you go? With whom? What did you do? Did you look for family?

1. When and how did you get to a displaced persons camp?
2. What happened in the displaced persons camp? Food? Sanitation? Sleeping quarters? Illness? Fears? Nightmares? Hopes? What was the organization of the camp? Leaders? Police? Political and religious organizations? Cultural activities? What about education? Training? Food? Health? Clothes? Shelter? Black Market? Relationships? Marriage? Work?
3. Did you find members of your family? Old friends? If yes, were there problems adjusting to each other? If no, how did you adjust to others and the situation?
4. Did you talk about your experiences? Who listened?
5. How long were you in the displaced persons camp? When did you leave and how? Where did you go?

**Displaced
Persons
Camps**

1. Where did you want to live after the war?
2. To where did you emigrate? When, why, and how?
3. Describe your early experiences as an émigré. How did you adjust to your new country of residence? Did you face any discrimination? Language barriers?
4. Describe living conditions, work, and/or family in your new home.

**Emigration/
Immigration**

See “Concluding the Interview” in Chapter VII before devoting extensive attention to an interviewee’s postwar experiences.

1. How did you adjust to “normal” life after the Holocaust? What problems did you face? What gave you strength to go on? Did religion play a role? The arts? Political ideology? Any belief system?
2. What did you do in this new situation? Was it easy to make new friends? Did you talk about your wartime experiences with anyone? Did you identify with the people in the country to which you emigrated, or feel

**Beyond the
War/Life
After the
Holocaust**

isolated? How would you characterize your relationships immediately after the Holocaust?

3. Did you go to school? Work? Marry? Raise a family? Have any serious illnesses? Did you have nightmares? Fears? Hopes? What were your living circumstances? What did you do for pleasure?
4. Can you talk about the long-term impact that your experiences during the Holocaust have had on you? For example, how did the Holocaust affect your family, raising children, values, trust, fear, your work? Are there sounds or smells that evoke past experiences? When you dream about the Holocaust years, what images still haunt you?
5. Do you think that survivors with a wide range of Holocaust experiences share commonalities? Describe.
6. Are your friends mostly survivors?

Although postwar history is a huge topic, there might be some moments that made an impact on the life or the thoughts of the interviewee who came to the United States. It will not be at all clear whether and in what sense most survivors of the Holocaust related to some of the historical circumstances listed below until you begin to talk with them. It might be worth exploring some areas with certain interviewees to get a sense of what, beyond the private life of the individual, the Holocaust has sensitized or desensitized in that individual's perception of events. Here is a list of some possibilities:

1. Atom bomb and nuclear age
2. Japanese internment camps in the United States
3. The Cold War
4. The era of Joseph McCarthy and the Red Scare
5. The Korean War
6. The Civil Rights Movement
7. The Vietnam War and the antiwar movements (such as the killing of students at Kent State and Jackson State Universities)
8. The New-Left Movement

9. The Counter Culture
10. The Feminist Movement
11. The assassinations of Medgar Evers, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert Kennedy
12. The presidencies of the United States from Truman to the present.
13. Israel as a state in 1948 and the wars of 1948, 1967, 1973, and 1982; the trial of Eichmann in Jerusalem in April through August 1961; the Intifada and negotiations with the Palestinians; the wars in Iraq; genocide in Cambodia, former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Darfur.

page 38 blank

VII. CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Chapter Overview

- Arrival at the Interview, 40**
- Commencing the Interview, 40**
- Open-Ended and Specific Questions, 41**
- Interjecting vs. Interrupting, 41**
- Non-Verbal Responses, 41**
- Chronology of the Interview, 42**
- Taking Breaks, 42**
- Providing Historical Context, 42**
- Allocation of Time in the Interview, 43**
- Concluding the Interview, 44**
- Post-Holocaust Interviews, 44**
- Before Leaving the Interview, 45**
- Donation of Artifacts, 45**

The oral history interview documents personal remembrances and reflections. The interview should elicit details about everyday life in cities, towns, ghettos, camps, and resistance movements, not just the outline of a story or general reflections on the story. The interviewees' day-to-day activities are essential—what they knew, saw, thought, dreamed, and feared; who were their friends, lovers, enemies; their experiences with ghetto *Judenrat* leaders, Jewish police; in camps, experiences with block leaders, *Kapos* (prisoners appointed to head work groups in the camps) or Nazi officials; their work; their relationships;

and even philosophic ruminations about their outlook on life, especially if they can put their own experiences in greater historical context. These details are important because they provide information that cannot be found in any other type of historical documentation.

There is no one “right way” to conduct the interview, and there are few rules. This chapter provides guidelines on creating a framework for the interview, but we cannot provide a step-by-step guide for conducting the interview. We hope, rather, that this chapter will evoke a sense of what it is like to be engaged in an interview, and will provide a starting point for further explorations into the interview process.

**Arrival
at the
Interview**

Before you arrive at the interview, prepare extensively, as detailed in the preceding chapters. When you arrive at the interview, put your personal concerns about the interview aside and help the interviewee feel at ease. An interviewee may wish to speak with you a little to “warm up” before jumping into the interview. He or she may have questions about the interview. You may wish to spend a few minutes getting familiar with the interviewee, and getting a sense of him or her. You may want to tell the interviewee that if he or she wishes to take a break at any point during the interview, that would be fine. Then, find a comfortable, quiet place to sit for the interview and/or proceed into the studio. *If you are conducting an audio interview, see Chapter VIII for more information on setting up and using your equipment; if you are conducting a video interview, see Chapter IX.*

**Commencing
the Interview**

If you are conducting an audio interview, see “Tape Slating” in Chapter VIII for information on verbally “slating” the tape before asking your first question. Visually slating the tape for video interviews is described in Chapter IX. After you slate the tape, we recommend that you formally begin the interview by asking the interviewee to state his or her name at birth, date of birth, and place of birth.

In his book *Doing Oral History*, Donald A. Ritchie suggests that open-ended questions be used to introduce a subject with the interviewee, and specific questions be used to follow up on the details. “Tell me about your family life before the war,” is an example of an open-ended question, while “What was your father’s occupation?” is a specific question. Ritchie suggests that opening a subject with specific questions gives too much control to the interviewer over the direction of the interview. According to Ritchie:

**Open-Ended
and Specific
Questions**

The use of open-ended questions has...been cited as a means of “empowering” interviewees—that is, by encouraging interviewees to relate and to interpret their own stories, such questions shift the balance of power from the interviewer to the interviewee.... The interviewer may be asking the questions, but the interviewee is actively shaping the course of the interview rather than responding passively.

As an interviewer, you should avoid intrusive interruptions at all times, but be prepared to interject questions at opportune moments. Ideally, you will have the opportunity to interject a question without interrupting the flow of the narrative. A rule of thumb for interjecting is to do so when the interviewee makes a major transition in the narrative. For example, if Mrs. X were chronicling her prewar life and then suddenly jumped to life in the ghetto, you may wish to ask her to pause for a moment to answer a few questions. This would be your best opportunity to ask whatever questions you have about prewar life, then allow Mrs. X to resume her narrative about life in the ghetto.

**Interjecting
vs.
Interrupting**

Most oral history interviews will remain unedited, and many “uh-huhs” can be distracting over the course of a few hours. Consequently, your responses, except for questions, should be minimal. When you feel the need to respond, but do not wish to ask a question, use eye contact or other forms of body language to express yourself.

**Non-Verbal
Responses**

**Chronology
of the
Interview**

It is preferable that the interview be conducted in chronological order. When guiding the direction of the interview, you may find that the interviewee has a tendency to jump from 1941 to 1993 quickly. If this is the case, allow him or her to pursue the thought, but when you have a chance, gently bring the discussion back to 1941. No chronology is ever strict, and there is no sense in trying to keep the interviewee from occasionally ranging out of the chronological framework. The human memory often draws parallels between two events separated by great spans of time. It is your job to allow the interviewee the freedom to explore those connections, while keeping track of where you and the interviewee left off in the timeline of his or her life.

If the interviewee suddenly jumps, for example, from being in Warsaw in 1941 to being in Bermuda in 1993 and then says something fascinating about what happened in 1993 that you would like to follow up on, what should you do? Should you ask the question, or save it for when you have chronologically reached the year of 1993 in the interview? Often it is best to make a mental note on these occasions, and tell the interviewee, “I would like to come back to that later. But right now, I have a question about Warsaw in 1941.”

**Taking
Breaks**

For both audio and video interviews, you will have a natural built-in break every half hour to an hour when you need to flip or change the tape. You may want to use this opportunity to give the interviewee a chance to rest, to review your questions, or to strategize about topics you would like to explore when the tape is running again. Or, if the interview has a momentum that you do not wish to interrupt, you may choose to keep going instead of taking a break.

**Providing
Historical
Context**

There is certain basic historical knowledge that we assume a researcher listening to an interview will have, or will easily be able to learn. For example, we will not ask an interviewee to define the term *Appell* (camp roll call) each time it is mentioned. However, we might ask the interviewee specific questions about the *Appell*, such as how long it lasted. We do not want to ask the interviewee to give us a historical overview or lecture about things that he or she did not directly witness. Rather, we want to extract details about the interviewee’s own life.

There are, however, certain types of historical context that the interviewee should provide during the interview. The interviewee should be encouraged to anchor his or her experiences in a chronological and geographical framework using dates, place names, and names of individuals, including family members, wherever possible.

Where the interviewee does not remember specific dates or locations, the interviewer can probe for clues of the general time frame or region in which a given event may have taken place. For example, the interviewee may remember the season in which an event took place, a political event that marked the time, or a larger city or town that was near the location in question.

In conducting interviews that focus on the Holocaust era, the most significant part of the interview should be the interviewee's experiences during the Holocaust and the war, rather than prewar or postwar life. However, it is important to learn about one's family and the sort of life lived before Nazi persecution, just as it is important to know what happened in the interviewee's life after the war.

One should judge carefully about how much time is spent on the details of prewar life, unless the interviewer knows that he or she can return on another day to continue the interview, and thus can afford to dwell on those details. Remember that many interviewees are elderly and their ability to sustain a long interview in one sitting is not always possible. If you are limited to two hours, leave prewar and postwar to about 20 minutes each. If too much time is spent on prewar life, and the interviewee becomes exhausted, it will be considerably more difficult for the interviewee to speak about his or her wartime experiences.

Even if you have time for a longer interview, you may want to limit the telling of prewar experiences, depending on the health and stamina of the interviewee. If you have more time, you may wish to consider letting the interviewee tell his or her complete story. If possible, you should allow at least four hours per interview. Often people are finished with their story in three hours—sometimes more, sometimes less. Flexibility is beneficial in the conduct of an interview.

If you have the opportunity to continue the interview on another date, this may be helpful in maximizing the stamina of both interviewer and

Allocation of Time in the Interview

interviewee. However, be sure to schedule additional interview sessions for the very near future, since plans often change, and you may end up with an awkward, uncompleted interview.

Concluding the Interview

Generally, for interviews that focus on the Holocaust era, the interview should be concluded after liberation, and preferably should cover some of the details of the first years after the war, including the experience of living in a displaced persons camp, if applicable, and emigration. If the interviewee has knowledge of, or participated in, postwar revenge killings or beatings, this too should be pursued. If the interviewee was a witness at war crimes trials, the interviewee should be encouraged to talk about that as well.

Before concluding the interview, you may wish to take a break and review your notes for any questions you may not have asked. *Some good final questions with which to conclude the interview are suggested in Chapter VI. See “Beyond the War/Life After the Holocaust.”*

Post- Holocaust Interviews

Ideally, you would have the opportunity to track the interviewee’s life after the war, and learn about his or her experiences with re-entering “normal” life. However, this is difficult to do in one interview session. If you have the opportunity to follow up with another interview session, in which life after the war would be explored, we encourage you to do so. Again, we recommend that you schedule any follow-up interviews to take place in the near future.

When exploring post-Holocaust life, it is important to learn how people put their lives back together, what sort of work they did, where they lived and with whom, and what effects the Holocaust had on their marriages and/or families, and/or other relationships. In other words, the post-Holocaust interview should explore ways in which lives were rebuilt after the war and what sort of impact, if any, the experiences and memories of the Holocaust had on the postwar lives of the interviewees. *See “Postwar Experiences” in Chapter VI for suggested questions to explore in a post-Holocaust interview.*

If the interviewee is a rescuer, liberator, war crimes prosecutor, perpetrator, or bystander, the emphasis of the interview should naturally focus on the impact of the Holocaust and the war on their lives.

After the interview is completed, you may wish to spend some time with the interviewee reviewing what will be done with the interview. It is a good idea to send the interviewee a personal copy of the interview within several weeks.

If a note taker was present at the interview, this would be a good time to take a few minutes to confirm spellings of personal names and obscure places that came up during the interview. If the interviewee is too exhausted, or if no note taker were present at the interview, it is highly recommended that the interviewee be contacted with questions about proper spellings soon after the interview is complete. If you plan to do this, ask the interviewee if he or she would mind if you called with a few questions about spellings after a summary or transcript of the interview has been written.

Before Leaving the Interview

You may wish to inform the interviewee that if he or she has any artifacts or documents related to the Holocaust, there are many archives and institutions that collect such items. The Museum often collects donations from individuals, and we encourage interviewees to contact us or another archive if they are interested in investigating the possibility of long-term preservation of their artifacts. *Contact the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Director of Curatorial Affairs for more information about donating artifacts or documents.*

Donation of Artifacts

page 46 blank

VIII. TECHNICAL GUIDELINES FOR AUDIO INTERVIEWS

Chapter Overview

Cassette Tapes and Batteries, 48

Labeling Tapes, 48

Recording Equipment, 49

Location/Setup, 51

Recording Level, 52

Starting to Record, 52

Tape Slating, 52

Monitoring the Recording, 53

Technical Troubleshooting, 53

The choice of whether to interview on audio or on video involves several factors, such as the budget of the project, the planned use of the interviews, and the preference of the interviewee. While audio interviews do not have as broad an appeal or potential audience as do video interviews, they are much less expensive to produce and are more archivally sound than their video counterparts. Additionally, audio interviews are sufficient for most scholarly inquiries, where the emphasis is on the interview transcript rather than the interview itself.

We have specifically tailored these guidelines for the professional cassette recorders that the Oral History Branch uses for its audiotaped interviews. However, much of the advice outlined here will be helpful for conducting audio interviews, no matter what type of equipment you use.

Our audio interviewers are trained to operate their own equipment. We have found it best for the interviewer to operate the audio equipment so as to avoid the added complication of using an audio technician. It is most often advantageous to have as few people in the room as possible during the interview, so that the intimacy of the interview process may be maintained.

**Cassette
Tapes and
Batteries**

Use only 60 minute tapes. Shorter tapes are best for archival purposes, because the tape itself is thicker and less likely to break than longer tapes. Be sure to come to each interview with plenty of tapes, and with brand-new batteries. “High” bias tapes are preferred over “normal” bias tapes.

**Labeling
Tapes**

Be sure to unwrap and label your tapes (preferably using a pencil so you can re-label if you do not use all of the tapes) before you arrive at the interview. You may wish to create professional labels at a later time. Each cassette case should be labeled consistently. Below is our suggestion for information to include on each tape case (you also may wish to include an internal cataloging or tracking number for each interview):

[name of organization responsible for producing the interview]
 Interview with [name of interviewee]
 [your name], Interviewer
 [date of interview], Tape [number] of [number].

On each tape, label at least one side as follows:

[name of interviewee], Tape [number] of [number].

Recording Equipment

The Oral History Branch uses stereo or mono cassette tape recorders for its interviews. The difference between a stereo and a mono recorder is that a stereo recorder has two channels, which record sound from the left and from the right, while a mono recorder only has one channel. The mono recorder and microphone are simpler to use, while the stereo recorder has the potential advantage of providing you with the option of using two microphones, one for the interviewer and one for the interviewee. It is advantageous to purchase a recorder that has the capability of monitoring tape while recording, but that is a luxury, and not necessary for a good recording.

Digital recording devices may well provide superior sound quality over analogue records. This is a decision you will have to make after discussions with experts. As of 2007, the Museum is still using analogue tape recorders. No matter what type of equipment you use, be sure to experiment with your recording equipment before you arrive at the interview.

Tape Recorder

There are only a few features on most tape recorders that you will be using and referring to during the interview. These include the buttons that operate the tape (*stop/eject*, *record*, *play*, *rewind* (<<), *fast forward* (>>), *pause*); the features that allow you to monitor what you are recording (the *monitor* button and the *monitor volume* dial); and the features that allow you to control and observe the level at which you are recording (*recording volume* dials and *VU* meters). If you have a *limiter* button on your recorder, we recommend that it remain off. To record, the *play* and *record* buttons on many recorders must be pressed simultaneously.

Before you begin recording, and especially if you are not getting a high enough recording volume on your recording, check the microphone *attenuation* switch (may be labeled “MIC ATT” if you have one on your recorder) to be sure that it is set at “0.”

Microphone

A good microphone is essential to the creation of a quality recording. Do not use a machine with an internal microphone, as these microphones will record the sound of the machine’s operation. Look for a good quality microphone with a large (phono) plug that will be less likely to slip out during the course of an interview.

Every microphone has a “field”—a distance around it where it picks up sound best. If the microphone is too close, the recording will be distorted. If it is too far away, the voice will sound too faint.

If you have stereo capability and are using a stereo microphone, be aware that one side of the microphone will pick up sound on the left channel, and the other on the right channel. Stereo microphones are actually two microphones in one; therefore, they have two jacks—a left and a right. Most stereo microphones come with the left and the right jacks color-coded for easy identification. For example, the right jack may be marked with a red piece of tape, and the left jack with a gray piece of tape. Be sure that the microphone jacks are plugged into the correct channels on your recorder (if you have any doubt about whether or not your microphone is plugged in correctly, test it by speaking into the left side of the microphone while wearing your headphones and making sure that you are hearing your voice primarily in your left ear). Hold the microphone at an angle toward the interviewee, so the interviewee speaks into the middle of it, and the microphone picks up sound from the left and the right sides evenly.

If you have stereo capability and are using a mono microphone, plug the microphone into the left channel for the sake of consistency. The *mic mode* switch should then be set to mono.

Clip-on or lavalier microphones may be used for both the interviewer and the interviewee, if you are using a machine with stereo capacity. These microphones are very convenient but can be problematic if, for example, the interviewee forgets that he or she is wearing it and habitually fiddles with his or her collar. The interviewer should make sure that the interviewee is aware of the microphone, and does not touch it during the interview. If you are using a mono recorder, lavalier microphones are problematic because they will only record one person’s voice. The interviewer’s questions would thus be lost if the lavalier were clipped on to the interviewee.

If using a hand-held microphone, we recommend that you avoid the use of microphone stands. We ask our interviewers to hand-hold the microphone. Holding the microphone allows the interviewer to move with the interviewee and thus achieve a consistent sound quality throughout the interview. Additionally, microphone stands may absorb sounds from the surfaces on which they are set. Be aware that the microphone also will pick up the slight sounds that you make while handling it, so try to keep your handling of the microphone to a minimum. See “*Location/Setup*” in this chapter for more information about positioning yourself and your equipment.

Headphones

You should wear headphones throughout the interview. This allows you to monitor the sound quality and be sure that you are recording. Be aware that headphones have a left and a right side. They should be marked with an “R” and an “L” above each earphone. We recommend that you purchase a good-quality, comfortable set of headphones, as the cheaper ones can become quite uncomfortable after long periods.

If you are conducting an audio interview, it will probably be in the interviewee’s home. The interviewee will most likely have a favorite place to sit—probably a sofa, and probably not at the kitchen table. As far as sound is concerned, a sofa is a good place to conduct the interview. You want to be close to the interviewee, without having a table between you, which would reflect the sound and cause echoes. Ideally, you will have a coffee table next to the sofa where you can put your equipment.

**Location/
Setup**

When considering where the interviewee should sit, pay attention to what is behind the interviewee. Is there a door that may open during the interview? Is there an open window? Both of these may create ambient noise that can be avoided by seating the interviewee with his or her back to the most quiet side of the room.

It is preferable that windows be closed and air conditioners turned off during the interview. The ringer on the telephone should be turned off, if possible. Remember that refrigerators and air conditioners turn on and off automatically, and cause unnecessary noise—a good argument not to conduct the interview in a kitchen. Use your best judgment as to whether or not it is advisable to stop the interview for a loud noise, such as a passing airplane. It might be more important at that moment to let the person continue talking.

The interviewer must always balance the sound quality of the interview with the general comfort and ease of the interviewee. Too much fussing can make a person feel nervous and inhibited when it is finally time to start talking. However, keep in mind that for historical purposes, the tape must be listenable.

**Recording
Level**

Once you are seated and ready to start, get a recording “level” on the interviewee’s voice. As you record, talk about the weather or a favorite subject of chitchat. As your interviewee is speaking, adjust the *recording volume* dials so the needle on the *VU* meters stays mostly below zero, only occasionally pointing into the “red zone” above zero.

Note that if you are using a stereo recorder, there will be two dials that control the recording level, one for the left channel and one for the right channel. If you are using a single point stereo microphone, these two dials should stay together at the same level. If you are using two microphones (one for the interviewer and one for the interviewee), adjust each meter individually according to the voice levels.

As you record, the needle on your *VU* meter will bob back and forth with the fluctuations in the level of the voice being recorded, but it should generally stay between “0” and “-10” on the meter. The average level, in most cases, should be at about “-4.” Occasional peaking into the red zone is fine. However, if the recording level is too high, the voice will become distorted, and there is nothing you can do about that after the interview. It is better to have the recording level too low than too high. If in doubt, turn down the *recording volume* dials a little bit.

If you use digital equipment, different features may pertain.

**Starting to
Record**

After you have a recording level on the interviewee’s voice, rewind the tape to the beginning, and be sure to leave a few seconds blank at the beginning of the tape before speaking. One of the most common mistakes that audio interviewers make is to begin talking right at the beginning of the tape. The tape will not actually record for about five to seven seconds from the beginning.

Tape Slating

We recommend that you slate the beginning of the interview and side A of each tape by stating the following:

“This is a [name of interviewing organization or project] interview with [name of interviewee] conducted by [your name] on [date] in [location]. This is tape number [1, 2, etc.], side A.”

The beginning of side B of each tape should be slated as follows:

“This is tape number [1, 2, etc.], side B of an interview with [name of interviewee].”

After the interview is completed, state the following:

“This concludes the [name of interviewing organization or project] interview with [name of interviewee].”

This is very important information should the label come off the tape or become illegible.

For the majority of the interview, the *monitor* button (if applicable) on your recorder should be set on “Source.” About four to five times an hour, set the *monitor* button to “Tape” to check how the recording sounds. This will cause you to hear a time delay in sound; therefore, it is best to check the tape this way when the interviewee is speaking, not when you are speaking.

Additionally, you should glance at the *VU* meters four to five times an hour to be sure that the recording level is right. During the interview, the level of the interviewee’s voice may change—occasionally he or she may speak loudly, and occasionally very quietly. Rather than adjusting the *recording volume* dials throughout these fluctuations, you can move the microphone away from or toward the interviewee to control the recording level.

Be aware that, if you follow our recommendation, each side of tape will be about 30 minutes or less. Therefore, you will want to wear a watch or bring a clock and glance at it occasionally to see how much time is left on each side of the tape. Try to anticipate the best time to flip the tape with minimal interruption of the flow of the interview. If a digital recording device is used, different rules will apply.

If you are recording on tape and cannot hear any sound going into the tape:

1. Check that the microphone is plugged in (and turned on, if applicable).
2. Check that the headphones are plugged in.

Monitoring the Recording

Technical Trouble- shooting

3. Adjust the *recording volume* dials (only if *VU* meters are staying below -20).
4. Adjust the monitor volume.

If you are having trouble getting a high enough recording level:

1. Check that the “MIC ATT” switch is set at “0.”

If you cannot hear any sound when you play the tape back:

1. Check that the *monitor* button is set on “Tape,” not on “Source.”
2. Check that the headphones are plugged in.
3. Check that the monitor volume is turned high enough (clockwise).

If the tape is not moving:

1. Check that the tape is rewound (bulk of reel on the left).
2. Check that the *pause* button is not depressed.
3. Check that there are batteries in the machine.

If you are hearing excessive background noise:

1. Turn down the *recording volume* dials.

IX. TECHNICAL GUIDELINES FOR VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Chapter Overview

Studio/Location Setup, 55

Composition, 56

Lighting, 56

Sound, 56

Other Technical Considerations, 56

Tape Slating, 57

The Interviewee, 58

The Interviewer, 58

The decision to interview on video should be a carefully considered one, especially if the oral history project conducting the interviews has a limited budget. *See the introduction to Chapter VIII, Technical Guidelines for Audio Interviews, for some notes on the advantages and disadvantages of recording an interview on video versus audio.*

Ideally, there should be a large interview space so there is enough room for the video equipment, technical crew, interviewer, and interviewee. There should be enough distance between the interviewee and the background for depth of field. Most importantly, the site should be free, inside and outside, of noise interference.

In a studio, the set should be very simple. A cyc (backdrop screen) is needed that can be lit in a variety of ways. Mottled gray, brown, or blue are suggested colors for the cyc, without too much chroma or color intensity.

**Studio/
Location
Setup**

Composition Composition for on-location interviews should not include any distracting objects. The Museum prefers an out-of-focus, soft background with nothing definable behind the interviewee. The background should never intrude.

All Museum interviews are shot from the shoulder up, or in some cases, starting from a few inches below the shoulder, depending on the interviewee. In most cases, the interview is shot in a locked-down position, while attention is paid to accommodating the interviewee's body movements. On rare occasions, one might come in closer than the shoulder shot.

Lighting A soft 750 watt light should be used as the key with a back light as a kick for good separation from the background. There must be adequate light in the interviewee's eyes, and for the Museum's interviews, some shading is created on one side of the interviewee's face and shoulder. The lighting should not be flat. (Diffusion gels or light are sometimes used to warm up the look—not to add color.)

Sound We recommend that you use both a directional boom microphone and a lavalier (clip-on microphone) for the interviewee. Microphone the interviewer with a lavalier. The boom should be near the interviewee. The interviewer should speak clearly and at a normal, audible level (not too softly), or it will be difficult to hear him or her. There should be two channels for audio—one for the lavalier microphones and one for the boom microphone.

During the interview, if unavoidable sound interference occurs (such as an airplane flying overhead), stop the interview when it becomes too loud and distracting, then continue when the sound has abated.

Other Technical Considerations

1. We recommend Betacam-SP NTSC equipment and tape stock for interviews in the United States and Canada, and prefer them if the interview is being shot in another country. Betacam-SP PAL or SECAM is acceptable if NTSC (standard in North America, Japan, and Brazil) is not available.

2. We recommend that if you cannot use Betacam-SP equipment and want to use VHS equipment and tape, that you record the interview simultaneously on audiotape. Audio cassettes last much longer than VHS tapes, and the sound quality usually will be much better than if recorded solely on VHS.
3. Lay down one minute of color bars and tone at the beginning of each tape.
4. Set the time code at hour 1 for tape 1, hour 2 for tape 2, etc.
5. Do not use any diffusion on the camera.
6. Do not cut the camera without the producer's direction.
7. If photographs, documents, or artifacts are to be shown, a stand or table should be set up so the interviewee can explain off-camera what is on the screen. The stand should have a black background so the artifact, document, or photo can be easily seen. Under no circumstances should you have someone hold the picture in his or her hands when it is being filmed.
8. If using a digital videorecorder, consult with experts as to proper use.

The visual slate on each tape should show the name of the organization, the name of the interviewee, the date of the interview, the place of the interview if you wish, and the tape number (for example, Tape 1 of 3). You should ask the interviewee exactly how he or she wants his or her name on the screen—with or without a maiden name or name at birth, if different from what is used now. It is easiest to do the slating after the interview is complete.

If you do not have the capacity to create a visual slate after the interview, you can write or type out the slate information and have the camera shoot it, while simultaneously verbally stating all of the above information before commencing the interview. *See "Tape Slating" in Chapter VIII for more information.*

Tape Slating

The Interviewee The camera in the Museum's interviews is on the interviewee at all times (except when viewing photographs or artifacts). We recommend that the interviewee look at the interviewer, not the camera.

If the interviewee wears glasses, ask him or her if they are required for comfort. If not, it is preferable not to wear glasses during the interview. In addition, use a small amount of face powder to prevent face and head shine, only when necessary.

The Interviewer The interviewer should sit as close to the camera lens as possible and at eye level with the camera.

X. AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Chapter Overview

Thanking the Interviewee, 59

Creating Interview Finding Aids, 59

Use and Storage of Tapes, 60

Donating the Interview to the Museum, 60

A day or two after the interview, you may wish to call the interviewee, find out how he or she is doing, and thank him or her for the interview. Often, the period immediately following the interview is a painful one for Holocaust survivors—or survivors and witnesses of other traumatic events—especially if they have seldom spoken in detail about their experiences. You also may send a personal thank you letter to the interviewee.

Thanking the Interviewee

Perhaps the most time-consuming part of the interview process comes after the interview itself is completed. Although it demands time, the creation of finding aids for the interview (such as transcript and/or summary) is one of the most important aspects of the process. A transcribed and/or summarized interview is one that will be most accessible to scholars, researchers, and educators. Be sure to include important dates, place names, personal names, and events that are mentioned in the interview. Once a group of interviews has been created, a catalog and index of the interviews are of great importance in providing access to the interviews. *For further reading on creating interview finding aids, see “Oral History Methodology, Management, and Preservation” in Appendix 5.*

Creating Interview Finding Aids

The Oral History Branch often creates both a transcript and a brief summary for each of the taped interviews that it produces; for a number of projects, we only create detailed summaries. Creating transcripts is time consuming and, if the help of a paid transcriber is required, expensive. Many inter-

viewers transcribe their own interviews, which provides an excellent opportunity for the interviewer to revisit the details and reflect upon the content of the interview. *See Appendices 7–10 for the Oral History Branch’s written guidelines for creating certain interview finding aids, such as transcribing the interview, copy checking the transcript, authenticating the transcript, and writing summaries.*

**Use and
Storage of
Tapes**

Do not listen to the master tapes after the interview has been completed. Three or more copies of the interview should be made as soon as possible—a “protection copy” (also known as “protection master” or “sub-master”), one or two “user copies” (also known as “reference copies”), and a copy for the interviewee. The original “master” tape should be kept in a climate-controlled room and should be used only on rare occasions (such as to create additional protection copies). The protection copy should be used to make additional copies of the tape if requested by researchers or needed for other purposes. It also should be kept in a climate-controlled (approximately 60 degrees F; 35 percent relative humidity) room. The user copy should be made available for common use. You may also wish to make a special copy for a transcriber or summarizer.

**Donating the
Interview to
the Museum**

If you wish to donate the interview(s) that you conduct to the Museum, contact the Chief Archivist of the Archives for more information.

APPENDIX 1*Sample Preliminary Interview Survivor Questionnaire*

INTERVIEWER NAME _____ DATE _____

General InformationName: _____
(Last) (First) (Middle and/or Maiden)*See the second to last page of questionnaire for address and phone information (CONFIDENTIAL).*

Occupation: _____ Date of birth: _____

Category of experience (*Check as many as apply*):

- Survivor Witness
 Rescuer Other _____
 Liberator

Category of survivor (*Check as many as apply*):

- Jewish Handicapped
 Sinti/Roma (Gypsy) Jehovah's Witness
 POW Homosexual
 Political Prisoner Other _____

Have you ever been interviewed about your experiences during the Holocaust? Yes NoWas your testimony ever recorded? Yes NoRecorded on: Audio Video

Date of interview(s): _____

Organization(s) that conducted interview(s) (Include address[es], if possible):

Do you wish to be included in the Benjamin and Vladka Meed Registry of Holocaust Survivors?

-
- Yes
-
- No

May this preliminary interview questionnaire and the summary to be written based on it be used for research purposes?

-
- Yes
-
- No

Prewar Life

Childhood

Place of birth: _____
 (City/Town) (Country)

Name at birth (if different from current name): _____

Other names used between 1933–1945: _____

Where did you grow up?: _____
 (City/Town) (Country)

 (City/Town) (Country)

Suggested questions/topics of discussion:

1. Occupations of parents, family life, special occasions, holidays.
2. School, friends, hobbies.
3. Nature of religious life within family and community.
4. Recollections of city or town before the war.
5. Presence of antisemitism before war; incidents in town, school.
6. When did Nazis come to power in your country, in your town?
7. When did *you* personally become aware of Nazi presence? Recollections of seeing Nazis, feelings.
8. Recollections of escalation of Nazi power:
 - a. If in Germany—April 1933 boycott, book burnings, Nuremberg race laws, *Kristallnacht* (“Night of Broken Glass”).
 - b. Elsewhere—Jews prohibited from public places, forced labor, imposition of Star of David, destruction of Jewish property, forced out of homes and businesses.

Notes:

Prewar Life (*continued*)

Family Background

Father's name: _____

Place of birth: _____ Date of birth: _____
 (City/Town) (Country)

Did he survive? Yes No

Mother's name: _____

Place of birth: _____ Date of birth: _____
 (City/Town) (Country)

Did she survive? Yes No

Names of siblings, if any: _____

Names and addresses of family members who survived the Holocaust:

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Notes:

Holocaust/Wartime Experiences

Ghettos and Transit Camps

1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
	(Ghetto/Camp)	(Location)	(Dates)	(Work Group)
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
	(Ghetto/Camp)	(Location)	(Dates)	(Work Group)
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
	(Ghetto/Camp)	(Location)	(Dates)	(Work Group)
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
	(Ghetto/Camp)	(Location)	(Dates)	(Work Group)
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
	(Ghetto/Camp)	(Location)	(Dates)	(Work Group)

Suggested questions/topics of discussion:

1. Deportation to ghetto/transit camp:
 - a. How were you notified that you would be leaving?
 - b. What did you bring? What do you remember feeling about leaving?
 - c. Describe deportation; how did you travel?
 - d. Recollections of arrival in the new place; first impressions.
2. Recollections about getting adjusted; did you find people from your town?
3. Living conditions, food, how many people living together?
4. Work, daily life.
5. Any cultural or social activities; friends, recreation.
6. Was deportation out of ghetto/camp a threat? Did you hear about it? How?
7. Communication with loved ones outside of ghetto/camp, with people in ghetto/camp.
8. News of the outside world.

Notes:

Holocaust/Wartime Experiences (*continued*)

Labor Camps, Prisons, Concentration/Extermination Camps

1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
	(Ghetto/Camp)	(Location)	(Dates)	(Work Group)
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
	(Ghetto/Camp)	(Location)	(Dates)	(Work Group)
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
	(Ghetto/Camp)	(Location)	(Dates)	(Work Group)
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
	(Ghetto/Camp)	(Location)	(Dates)	(Work Group)
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
	(Ghetto/Camp)	(Location)	(Dates)	(Work Group)

Suggested questions/topics of discussion:

1. Deportation to camp:
 - a. How did you get to camp?
 - b. Conditions during travel; specific recollections.
2. Describe arrival, first impressions of camp/prison (Did you know where you were?).
3. Specific living conditions, food, sanitation.
4. Slave labor, work, daily life.
5. Illness, physical problems.
6. Contact with family, friends, people from home, from ghetto.
7. Recollections of SS officers, Nazi perpetrators.
8. Specific events that stand out in memory.

Notes:

Holocaust/Wartime Experiences (*continued*)

Hiding

Location: _____
(City/Town) (Country)

By whom? _____

With whom? _____

Dates: _____

If multiple experiences in hiding:

Location: _____
(City/Town) (Country)

By whom? _____

With whom? _____

Dates: _____

Are you still in contact with the person(s) who hid you? Yes No

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Suggested questions/topics of discussion:

1. How did you come to be hidden? Recollections about going into hiding, specific circumstances.
2. Describe people who hid you; what was your relationship with them?
3. What kind of hiding? Were you literally hidden from the world or did you have a false identity?
4. Describe place where you hid, how much movement, what did you do all day?
5. Feelings, recollections about being hidden.
6. How did you emerge from hiding?

Notes:

Holocaust/Wartime Experiences (*continued*)**Escape**

Escape from: _____

Escape to: _____

Date of escape: _____

If multiple escapes:

Escape from: _____

Escape to: _____

Date of escape: _____

Suggested questions/topics of discussion:

1. Describe preparations, if any, for escape.
2. How did you decide to escape?
3. Describe others who escaped with you; if alone, how did you decide to go on your own?
4. Describe specific circumstances of escape; did it go as planned?
5. What happened after escape?
6. Emotions? Did you think about getting caught; what made you do it?

Notes:

Holocaust/Wartime Experiences (*continued*)

Resistance

1. _____
(Name of group) (Location)
2. _____
(Name of group) (Location)
3. _____
(Name of group) (Location)

If you were involved in resistance, but not part of an organized movement, how did you find ways to oppose the Nazis?

Suggested questions/topics of discussion:

If you were part of an organized resistance movement:

1. Describe how you got involved in the resistance.
2. Recollections of specific people with whom you worked; do you know what happened to any of them?
3. What kind of resistance activities took place, what tasks did you do?
4. Name and nature of resistance group; how was it organized?
5. How did the group live; where were you located?
6. Specific recollections of events, such as sabotage.
7. Was the group armed?

Notes:

Holocaust/Wartime Experiences (*continued*)**Liberation**

Location: _____

Date: _____ By whom: _____

Suggested questions/topics of discussion:

1. Describe circumstances leading up to and just prior to liberation.
2. First impressions of liberators.
3. What do you recall about the moment when you realized you were “free?”
4. What did you do during first few days after liberation?
5. What was condition of camp and prisoners at the time of liberation?
6. What happened to perpetrators?
7. Recollections of cleanup of camp (ghetto or town if applicable); Allied presence.
8. Emotions, thoughts during this time.

Notes:

Postwar Experiences

Displaced Persons Camps

1. _____
 (Name) (City/Town) (Country) (Dates)
2. _____
 (Name) (City/Town) (Country) (Dates)
3. _____
 (Name) (City/Town) (Country) (Dates)

Suggested questions/topics of discussion:

1. When and how did you get to the displaced persons camp?
2. What happened while you were in the displaced persons camp? Illness, recovery?
3. Did you find members of family, old friends?
4. When did you leave the displaced persons camp, and how?
5. Where did you go? Describe journey.
6. How did you adjust to “normal” life after the Holocaust? What were problems you faced?

Notes:

Postwar Experiences (*continued*)**Emigration**

To: _____
 (City) (Country) (Date)

To: _____
 (City) (Country) (Date)

To: _____
 (City) (Country) (Date)

Suggested questions/topics of discussion:

1. When, how, why did you decide to emigrate?
2. How did you choose where to go?
3. What were actual circumstances of emigration?
4. How did you adjust to life in the new country?
5. Describe living conditions, work, family in the new country.

Notes:

Objects

Do you have objects from before, during, or immediately after the war period (for example, personal memorabilia, documents, photographs, correspondence, stamps, coins, diaries, works of art, books, magazines, family papers, music)? Yes No

Donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum?

Yes Date: _____ No

Would you be willing to have someone from the Collections or Photo Archive Departments contact you about a donation to the Museum? Yes No

If yes, please complete the following:

Object name(s): _____

Place of origin: _____

Date of origin: _____

Ownership: _____

Description: _____

Object name(s): _____

Place of origin: _____

Date of origin: _____

Ownership: _____

Description: _____

This page of the questionnaire is CONFIDENTIAL and to be reviewed only by USHMM staff.

Interviewee Contact Information

Address: _____
 (Street)

 (City) (State) (Zip)

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Second Address: _____
 (Street)

 (City) (State) (Zip)

Phone: _____

Personal Contacts

Name of spouse or companion, if applicable: _____

Is he or she a survivor or witness of the Holocaust? Yes No

If yes, would he or she be willing to be contacted regarding his/her Holocaust experiences? Yes No

Any other friends or acquaintances with Holocaust experiences whom you feel we should contact for a potential interview? If yes:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Relation to interviewee: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Relation to interviewee: _____

Record any additional information below:

This page of the questionnaire is CONFIDENTIAL and to be reviewed only by USHMM staff.

Comments on Preliminary Interview

If interview conducted in person, check here

How was person referred to us? _____

Clarity of memory: _____

Clarity of description: _____

Fluency of spoken English: _____

Explain in a paragraph your opinion of the interviewee's ability to tell his or her story. For example, was speaking overly difficult or painful? Was the interviewee able to contextualize his/her experiences? Could you understand and follow the sequence of events?

If interviewee indicates that he or she would like to be interviewed in a language other than English, tell him or her that we usually do not do this, but we will try to be accommodating.

Language of preference: _____

APPENDIX 2*Sample Preliminary Interview Summary***Interviewee: Marthe Cohn****Conducted via telephone on December 10, 1993****Interviewer and summarizer: Edith Black**

Marthe Cohn (hereafter referred to as MC) was born in the northeast corner of France, in Metz, just below the German border, on April 13, 1920. Her name at birth was Marthe Hoffnung. In 1939, before the war began, the government requested that all families with financial means move out of Metz. MC's family moved to Poitiers, where her uncle lived. From September 1939 until June 1940, "nothing really happened"—one couldn't tell that there was a war. Then, Jewish refugees started pouring in. Poitiers was in occupied territory—restrictions, yellow star imposed. Yet the French population was helpful. While in Poitiers, MC went to the Red Cross nursing school.

In the summer of 1942, the family escaped from Poitiers to the unoccupied side. They all had forged ID cards. MC's sister had been arrested because it was discovered that she was helping French POWs coming back from the East escape to unoccupied side. MC also was involved in these operations. They knew a family of farmers who helped them get the POWs through.

MC finished school with the Red Cross in Marseilles. She had met an Alsatian woman, Mrs. Kelly, who was the Director of the Red Cross for the entire region. MC told Mrs. Kelly that she was Jewish, and she wanted to finish school. Mrs. Kelly accepted her and sent her to a local office. When she arrived, she was rejected because she was Jewish. Upon hearing this news, Mrs. Kelly told the local office that they must accept her. They did, but made MC miserable for the first several months that she worked there.

From Marseilles, MC moved to Paris, where she lived in an apartment with her sister, and found a job with a family who did not know that she was Jewish.

MC went to Alsace and joined the French army as soon as Paris was liberated. It was General de Lattre de Tassigny's First Army. Was in Alsace until the campaign of Alsace in 1944, before the war had ended. At that

point, the colonel found out that she could speak and read German, and she was asked to do intelligence work for France. She was trained, then sent to Germany. Swiss intelligence helped her cross over through Switzerland. MC was in Germany for three weeks working under cover as a German nurse. She tried to build a radio and give information to the French army about what was happening. She was able to find out when the Germans had left the Siegfried line, and gave the information to France when they came into Freiburg. MC received two Croix de Guerre medals for her work, signed by de Lattre and de Gaulle. After the war, MC went to Vietnam with the French army.

MC was chief of department in French headquarters in a German town near the Austrian border for a year after the war ended. No German could travel without her authorization. She refused to be paid for what she had done.

MC met her husband in Geneva in 1953. She was in school there with the Red Cross studying to become a Swiss certified nurse. In 1956, they came to the United States.

APPENDIX 3

Sample Interviewee Overview

Overview of Experiences

In preparation for taped interview; written July 14, 1996

Mrs. Marthe Cohn

Rescuer, Resistance

- Born: April 13, 1920, in Metz, France (NE corner of France)
- Name at birth: Hoffnung
- Names: Marthe Ulrich (when a spy in Germany); Jacquelyn Lenotre (her name if captured, so as not to endanger her family)
- Eight children in her family; one died at Auschwitz
- In 1939, government requested that families with financial means move out of Metz.
- Her family moved to Poitiers in June '40. Jewish refugees started pouring in.
- Poitiers was in occupied territory (restrictions, yellow star).
- MC went to Red Cross nursing school.
- Summer '42, family escaped from Poitiers to unoccupied side. They all had forged ID cards.
- Sister arrested because helping French POWs coming back from East; MC also involved with these activities.
- MC finished schooling in Marseilles; had difficulties because she was Jewish.
- Went to Paris, lived with her sister, through an agency found a job with a family who did not know she was Jewish.
- Joined French army as soon as Paris was liberated: Gen de Lattre De Tassigny's First Army; joined in Alsace.
- Nurse and spy for the French army
- When they learned she could read/speak German, she was asked to do intelligence work (during campaign of Alsace in 1944).

- Sent to Germany; Swiss intelligence helped her cross into Switzerland.
- Was in Germany for three weeks, under cover as a German nurse.
- Able to find out when the Germans had left the Siegfried line and gave info to France when they came into Friburg (info she gave made it easier for them to invade).
- Helped POWs escape to French unoccupied zone and did same for her family.
- Two of her brothers also active in French resistance; Frederick was in charge of French resistance and communicated with London. Brother Arnold also very active.
- Spoke German; sent to Germany to retrieve info about German underground for French army.
- Received two Croix de Guerre medals for her work, signed by Generals de Lattre and de Gaulle.
- Others involved: Jack Deleunay (shot by Germans) was MC's fiancé, helped her to rescue her family; Stephanie Hoffnung (deported and died in Auschwitz); Marc Deleunay (shot by Germans).
- MC rescued: Sipurah Bleitrach (grandmother, France); Regine Hoffnung (mother); Ephrain Hoffnung (father); Helene Hoffnung (sister); Rosy Hoffnung (sister); Jackie Farber (cousin).

After war:

- After war, MC went to Vietnam with the French army.
- Was chief of dept. in French headquarters in German town near Austrian border for a year after war ended. (No German could travel without her authorization.)
- 1953 Met husband in Geneva; MC was in school there with Red Cross studying to become a Swiss certified nurse.
- 1956 Came to U.S.

APPENDIX 4*Sample Interview Research List***Oral History Branch****Interview with Mrs. Marthe Cohn****Research List**

1. Maps depicting France: Paris, Metz, Alsace, Poitiers, Marseilles; Switzerland (from *National Geographic Atlas of the World*); Unoccupied and occupied zones of France; Freiburg, France (*Historical Atlas of the Holocaust*).
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compiled 7/22/96

APPENDIX 5

Selected Bibliography

This bibliography does not attempt to be comprehensive, rather it offers a starting point for those doing oral histories about the Holocaust. For a more detailed bibliography on the Holocaust, check the Museum Web site; go to “Education” and view the resource book entitled Teaching about the Holocaust.

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APPENDIX 6

Guidelines for Note Taking

The guidelines below are used by note takers during videotaped interviews. These guidelines can be adapted for use by other individuals and organizations producing oral history interviews.

Guidelines for Note Taking at Oral History Interviews Recorded on Video

Overview of Note Taking

If a video interview is being conducted in a studio, it is helpful to have someone attend the interview to assist with note taking and other tasks. In this scenario, the assistant sits in the greenroom, a separate room from the studio, where he or she views the interview on a television monitor as it is being conducted. There, the assistant can take notes as the interview transpires without distracting the interviewee and interviewer.

While viewing the interview, the assistant writes down phonetic spellings of those names, geographic places, words, acronyms, and phrases that may be difficult to spell later when the interview is being transcribed. Such difficulties most commonly arise with respect to foreign geographic places, words, phrases, and the names of the interviewee's friends and relations.

When the interview is concluded, the assistant asks the interviewee to spend a few minutes correcting or verifying spellings.

After the transcript of an interview is produced, someone does the copy checking (checking the accuracy of the transcript against the interview itself). Next, a research assistant may authenticate the transcript by verifying facts and spellings, and possibly adding footnotes where necessary. Notes that were taken at the interview help make the copy checking and authentication procedures run more smoothly.

While these guidelines pertain only to note taking, the interviewer may ask the assistant to help with other matters, such as helping to make the interviewee feel comfortable or by photocopying any materials that the interviewee may have brought to the interview. Also, if an interviewee is accompanied by a spouse or companion, that person can sit in the greenroom with the assistant to watch the interview on the monitor.

The Importance of Note Taking

After an interview has been conducted, a copy of the tapes is sent out to be transcribed. Because transcribers usually are not specialists in Holocaust studies, there are frequent misspellings or phonetic spellings in the transcript that is produced.

When an assistant takes notes during the interview and the interviewee verifies spellings, the process of correcting misspellings and phonetic spellings goes much more quickly and can save one or two workdays of tracking down words and phrases.

Bring to Interview

1. Geographic Authority List (This list of the most common foreign geographic places pertaining to Holocaust history is available from the Museum's Oral History Branch.)
2. Lined paper
3. Pen or pencil
4. Copies of pertinent documents from the interviewee's file

Before the Interview Starts

Introduce yourself to the interviewee and explain that you will be viewing the interview from a room that is separate from the studio where the interview will take place. Verify ahead of time if it will be OK to ask some questions about spellings once the interview is concluded. (Remind the interviewer to bring the interviewee back to the greenroom after the interview is concluded.)

Review the documents from the interviewee's file to familiarize yourself with his or her experiences.

Write at the top of the first piece of paper:

Page _____

Notes taken at interview with: _____

Notes taken by: _____

Date: _____

Sounds like:

Verified by interviewee:

For subsequent pages, write the following at the top:

Page _____

_____ (Name of interviewee)

Sounds like:

Verified by interviewee:

During the Interview

Listen for any words or phrases that may be unclearly spoken or difficult to spell. These may include English words, but most often they will be foreign words and phrases. Focus on:

1. Geographic places (street names, cities/towns, etc.)
2. Names, such as friends and relations, organizations, schools, buildings, etc.
3. Acronyms
4. Words and phrases (especially foreign)

In the left column, write down how you think the word(s) is spelled (that is, a phonetic spelling). It also is helpful to write a keyword or two next to the unclear word to remind yourself of the context in which the word was used. (Print so others will be able to read your notes when reviewing the transcript of the interview.) If you cannot make out a phonetic spelling of something you hear, jot down the few words that the interviewee said before saying the unclear word, or jot down what you thought was the gist of what the interviewee said. Later, you can ask the interviewee for a clarification. For example, “What was the Polish phrase you said right after you talked about your father coming home from work?”

You may be able to identify a word as a geographic place and then verify the spelling by using the Geographic Authority List or by referring to documents in the interviewee’s file. In such a scenario, under “Verified by interviewee,” write what you believe is the correct spelling. Later, after the interview, show the spellings to the interviewee to double-check that they are spelled correctly.

At the end of each hour of the interview, it is necessary for the camera technician(s) to stop the interview and put in a new videotape because each videotape is only one hour in length. Make a notation when the second hour of tape begins, when the third hour of tape begins, and so on. You should be able to see time codes on the TV screen as you view the interview. The first two digits represent the hour (01:15:45 is in the first hour of tape).

(Occasionally, during the breaks from one hour of taping to the next, the interviewer may ask for your help with other matters.)

After the Interview

In the right column, write the spellings of difficult or unclear words, as verified by the interviewee. Be sure to include accent or other diacritical marks as necessary. There will be occasions when the interviewee will not be able to remember exactly what he or she said. In these instances, simply write “could not verify” in the right-hand column. If, for some reason, there is insufficient time to verify spellings with the interviewee on the day of the interview, arrange to contact the interviewee within the next day or two. It is preferable to verify spellings with the interviewee immediately after the interview, because, as time passes, the interviewee may forget specific words or phrases used during the interview.

See the attached example of notes that were taken at an interview for elaboration on the above guidelines.

The following is an example of notes taken at an interview.

Page 1

Notes taken at interview with: Renata Laqueur

Notes taken by: Sara Eigenberg

Date: 7/16/96

TAPE 1

Sounds like:

Grieg/Silesea (where born)

Heflapisium (near Lutheran church)

Bosch (nicknames)

Muffa

Arganome – Harshaminf (company)

Lilo (sister)

Seramount (mountains)

Westerbork

Hamburg

NSB

Fodemman (old clothes)

Hague

Bizavatus (until further notice)

Stampal (stamp)

TAPE 2

Ga-ga (Renata's nickname)

Rasia (roundup)

personaferma (fake papers)

Mauthausen

Professor Edel

Fught

Burkalestach (civil authority)

Birkenau

rampa (train ramp)

nixon (nothing)

Verified by interviewee:

Brieg/Silesia

Hervormd Lyceum

Boches

Moffen

Organon Hoffman La Roche

Lilo

Zermatt

Westerbork

Hamburg

NSB = Nationaal Socialistische

Beweging

Voddeman = old clothes

Hague

Bis auf Weiteres = until further
notice (German)

Stempel

Gacka

Razzia

Persoonsbewijs = fake papers (Dutch)

Mauthausen

Professor Leon Edel (NYU)

Vught

Burgerlijkstand

Birkenau

Rampe

Niksen = to do nothing (Dutch)

page 90 blank

APPENDIX 7

Style Guidelines for Transcripts

The guidelines below are sent to transcribers before they begin work on an interview. These guidelines can be adapted for use by other individuals and organizations producing oral history interviews.

Style Guidelines for Transcripts of Oral History Interviews

Overview of Transcribing

To expedite the production and authentication of transcripts for eventual use in the Museum's Archives, the Oral History Branch has developed guidelines to encourage consistency among transcribed testimonies.

Save the electronic version of the transcript onto a 3.5 inch, IBM-compatible diskette. If possible, use the latest version of Microsoft Word. If necessary, use WordPerfect. If you do not have either software application, save the document as an ASCII text file. Send the diskette and a printout of the transcript to the Museum.

Formatting the Document

All transcripts should be double spaced.

The heading on the first page of the transcript should be centered in **bold** type, as follows:

**Interview with [name of interviewee]
[month, date, year]**

The headings on subsequent pages of the transcript should be in **bold** with the name of the interviewee and date aligned to the left margin and the page number aligned to the right margin as follows:

[name of interviewee] **[page number]**
[date of interview]

Identify the first question and the first answer as "Question:" and "Answer:". Subsequently, identify questions and answers simply as "Q:" and "A:".

Example:

Question: Good morning.

Answer: Good morning.

Q: Dr. Freud, please tell me about your mother.

A: Vell, lemme tell you....

Any other identifications, such as “Interviewer” or “Mrs. X” are unnecessary unless there is a second interviewee, in which case the first answer, instead of being identified by the word “Answer:”, should be identified by the interviewee’s full name. Each subsequent answer should be identified only by that person’s initials. Similarly, the first response by the other interviewee should be identified by that interviewee’s full name, and each subsequent response should be identified by that interviewee’s initials.

Insert only one space between sentences.

Do not use indentations or separate any continuous passages of testimony into different paragraphs, even if there is a significant pause. This often creates a mistaken impression that the testimony given is highly structured or even rehearsed. The only breaks in the text should occur when there is a change of speaker. All other text should be treated as one paragraph.

Do not tab-indent after the identifier prompt (Q: or A:). Use a single space. When changing a tape, insert the following on the left side of the page in **bold** type:

End of Tape [number of tape]

Then proceed to a new page and center the following before proceeding to transcribe the next tape:

Tape [number of tape]

The end of an interview should be noted in **bold** type:

Conclusion of interview.

Contents of Interview

- Include in the transcript:
Exactly what the interviewee said, including grammatical mistakes and false starts.
- Do not include in the transcript:
“uhs” or “ums”
- For words that are somewhat decipherable:
Spell words phonetically as best you can. Indicate that it is a phonetic spelling by typing “(ph)” after the word.
- For words that are indecipherable:
Type a blank line to indicate where those words are spoken.
Example: A: I was born on August 13th, 1925, in _____, Poland.
- When an interviewee recounts a quote of what was said:
Place the appropriate open and closed quotation marks.
Example: ...and then I said to him, “What time is it?”
- Punctuation:
Use what appears to be the appropriate punctuation for each sentence in accordance with how the interviewee speaks.
- When there is a pause in mid-sentence:
Use ellipses (...).
- When a statement is cut off, a thought quickly changes, or sentence structure abruptly shifts:
Use two dashes (--).
Example: Will he--can he--open a door?
- Numbers:
Spell out one through nine, and use numerals for 10 and above. Likewise, spell out first through ninth, and use numerals for 10th and above.

- Abbreviations:

In general, spell out words in full. Abbreviations, however, should be used for these common titles: Mr., Mrs., Dr. But spell out names of currency (dollars, cents, pounds), percent, and number (as in “number 14,” not “#14”). Do not use ampersands (&). Spell out the word “and.”

- Interviewee’s motions or gestures:

Only include when a motion or gesture is in place of spoken words or affects the content of the interview. Use brackets.

Example: A: [Coughs]--Excuse me.

APPENDIX 8

Guidelines for Copy Checking Transcripts

The guidelines below are used by copy checkers (often volunteers) to review a transcript after it is returned from the transcriber. These guidelines can be adapted for use by other individuals and organizations producing oral history interviews.

Copy Checking Transcripts of Oral History Interviews

Recorded on Video

(Similar guidelines are available for oral history interviews recorded on audio.)

Overview of Copy Checking

After an interview has been conducted, a copy of the tapes is sent to a transcriber. Because transcribers are not necessarily specialists in Holocaust studies, nor in the variety of languages that an interviewee may use in an interview, it is necessary to have someone review the transcript closely to thoroughly “copy check” it.

The purpose of copy checking is to ensure that the written transcript represents exactly what was said in the interview. Copy checkers compare what was recorded on the video with what was written in the transcript. Often there are discrepancies between the two.

When copy checking is complete, a research assistant may “authenticate” the transcript by verifying the spelling of names and possibly add footnotes when necessary. After a transcript has been copy checked and authenticated, it is ready to be accessioned into the Museum’s Archives.

The following are some examples of discrepancies that have occurred in transcripts. These examples illustrate how a transcriber can unintentionally alter the interviewee’s statements and thus the ability of a researcher to comprehend the larger context of the interview:

Transcriber wrote:

bums, not bums

hit somebody in the pots

through a zoom in your life

Copy checker’s correction:

bombs, not bombs

hid some money in the pots

to resume a new life

Transcriber wrote:

assessed
the clothes is
pain in the neck

Copy checker's correction:

SS
the SS was the closest
aim at the neck

To Get Started

Obtain the transcript of the interview to be copy checked.

Obtain headphones and the videotapes of the interview.

Arrange to use a video monitor/VCR, computer, or other device.

Use a pencil with eraser for the changes you will make to the transcript.

Time Codes

It is important to insert time codes into the transcript so anyone who subsequently reviews it can easily find specific portions of the video interview. Not only do time codes make it easier for a research assistant to authenticate the transcript, they also are a useful interview-finding aid once the transcript is placed in the Archives and made available for scholars, researchers, and the public.

You will need to view the videotape or other format to find the time codes that appear on the screen. Put a time code in the text of the transcript at least every three minutes. It is best to insert a time code after the completion of an interviewee's thought. When possible, insert one after an answer and before the next question. If it is necessary to insert one within the interviewee's response to a question, do so when the interviewee has completed a sentence or changed from one thought to the next.

When viewing the videotape or other format, you will see the time code changing as the machine plays. (It either will be on the top half of the screen or at the bottom.) An example of a time code is "01:01:09:26." Starting with the first number in the series, the time code displays the hour, then the minutes, then seconds, then frame number. Write down all but the frame number on the transcript: 01:01:09.

Put the first time code at the beginning of the interview, before anyone has spoken. *See attached transcript as an example.* In the above example, 01:01:09 is the first time code; the second time code (01:04:17) came about three minutes later after the interviewee had completed a thought. Do not worry about inserting the time code at the exact three-minute mark; a few

seconds more or less is fine. Do not use a watch to determine when three minutes have elapsed; rather watch the time code on the screen as it changes. Press the pause button to capture the time code for that place in the interview.

You may find it helpful to write down the numbers (in terms of minutes) that you will be looking for on the screen. Then you can check off each number when you insert the time code in the transcript. For example, write “3, 6, 9, 12, 15” and so on to remind yourself of the three-minute intervals. Place a final time code at the end of the interview.

Copy Checking

With the transcript in hand, start viewing the interview to begin the copy checking process. It is best to assume that there will be many discrepancies between what is written and what is spoken. To copy check properly, it is crucial to listen carefully and attentively to the entire interview. Be sure to take breaks, as listening with such concentration can be exhausting and nearly nonstop listening over a few hours can wear down one’s ability to decipher words that are unclear.

Often in trying to determine if the spoken words have been accurately written in the transcript, it may be necessary to listen again to what the interviewee said. If speech is rapid or mumbled, you may need to listen again (and maybe again and again) to decipher the words.

When you can decipher the interviewee’s speech, write down exactly what was said, including grammatical errors. If the transcriber corrected grammatical mistakes, put the mistakes back in the transcript. Do not include “uhs” and “ums” in the transcript. In general, include any word that was spoken and can be deciphered, even false starts and word repetitions (for example, “I, I, I went to--actually, I saw him again later that day.”). If the interviewee said “pots *of* pans” and you believe the person intended to say “pots *and* pans,” write in the former, adhering to the practice of writing what was spoken. In such a scenario, it is helpful to write in the margin what you believe the interviewee intended to say.

If you are unsure of the spelling of a foreign word or name (such as a foreign city, ghetto, camp, or phrase), spell it phonetically, as it sounds. When you spell a word phonetically, write “(ph)” after the word.

Stylistic Standards

When an interviewee recounts a quote, insert the appropriate open and closed quotation marks. (Recently, we included this preference in our guidelines to transcribers; however, for earlier transcripts, it will be necessary to insert them.)

Look for confusing punctuation. For example, if it is clear from listening to the videotape that a comma should be inserted where there is none, insert one. The transcriber should have made most of these judgment calls, but be aware of the occasional need to correct or complete punctuation.

When there is a pause in mid-sentence, use ellipses (...).

If a statement is cut off, a thought quickly changes, or sentence structure abruptly shifts, use two dashes (--). For example, “Will he--can he--open a door?”

Regarding numbers, spell out one through nine, and use numerals for 10 and above. Likewise, spell out first through ninth, and use numerals for 10th and above.

Regarding abbreviations, the general rule is to spell out words in full. Some abbreviations should be used: Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr. But spell out the names of currency (dollars, cents, pounds), percent, and number (as in “number 14” not “#14”). Do not use ampersands (&); always spell out “and.”

Usually, we do not include the motions or physical gestures of an interviewee in the transcript. However, it is necessary to do so when the motion was used in place of spoken words. For example, an interviewee may answer a question by nodding to indicate a “yes” answer without actually saying anything. In this instance, write in brackets “[Nods head yes.]” If the interviewee’s motion or action affects the content of the interview, note that motion in brackets. For example, if the interviewee coughed and said, “Excuse me,” the transcript should read “[Coughs]--Excuse me.” *See attached transcript as an example.* However, if the interviewee coughed, but continued speaking without making a reference to the cough, there is no need to note the cough in the transcript.

If there are technical difficulties with the camera or sound equipment, the tape may include a conversation between the interviewer and technician(s). If this happens, make an indication in the transcript in brackets to represent editorializing, for example “[Technical conversation].”

Challenges

If you cannot determine what the interviewee is saying, place a “?” in the transcript where the uncertainty lies. Remember that this is a last resort—a phonetic spelling is always preferred. Also, write the time code for that portion in the interview (regardless of whether or not three minutes have elapsed) so that a research assistant can return to that section and try to determine what was said.

Check to see if there is information in the interviewee’s original file that may be especially useful in the copy checking process. There may be instances when a volunteer or staff member attended the interview and verified the spelling of personal or geographic names directly with the interviewee. If so, keep the list of verified spellings nearby as you do the copy checking.

Writing Down Corrections

- Write corrections as clearly as possible so the research assistant who reviews the transcript can benefit from all of your work. *See attached transcript for examples.*
- Print (rather than use cursive writing) all corrections you make to the transcript. Distinguish which letters are lower and upper case.
- Write the corrected text above the incorrect text, and cross out the text that your correction replaces.

Example: ...but life was very ^{harsh}hard

- If something was left out of the transcript, indicate where to insert the letter(s) or word(s) and then print the inserted material clearly above the sentence.

Example: ...to prepare it for ^{regular}^ wood

- If there is not enough room to write the revisions/additions above the sentence, draw an arrow to the margin and print the new wording there.
- If the transcriber left a blank line (_____) with no words, and you have determined what text belongs there, write the word(s) on that line.
- When you spell word(s) phonetically and are unsure of the correct spelling, write “(ph)” after the word(s).

Example: Martimorish (ph)

Checklist for Copy Checking Transcripts

- Time Codes
 1. There should be a time code at least every three minutes throughout the interview. It is appropriate to include more if the interviewee's thoughts change more frequently.
 2. Put the first time code at the start of the interview and a final time code at the end.

- Copy Checking
 1. You will need to make changes to the transcript:
 - a. Where the transcriber left a blank line.
 - b. Where there is a discrepancy between what the transcriber wrote and what was said.
 - c. Where there are words that you hear on the tape that the transcriber left out of the transcript.
 2. Include in the transcript:
Exactly what the interviewee said, including grammatical errors, false starts, and word repetitions.
 3. Do not include in the transcript:
“uhs” or “ums”
 4. If you are unsure of the spelling:
Place a “(ph)” after the phonetic spelling.

- Stylistic Standards
 1. Interviewee recounts a quote: Insert appropriate open and closed quotation marks.
 2. Punctuation is very confusing: Amend punctuation to clarify.
 3. Mid-sentence pauses: Insert ellipses (...).
 4. Statement is cut off: Insert dashes (--).
 5. Numbers: Spell out one through nine; use numerals for 10 and above.
 6. Abbreviations: Review the specifics in the guidelines.
 7. Interviewee's motion or gesture: Include when the motion or gesture is in place of spoken words or affects the content of the interview.

- Challenges

Cannot determine what interviewee says (including incomplete words):
Place a “?” and write the time code in the transcript.

- Three common scenarios
 1. You know the correct spelling and write the word as such.
 2. You are unsure of the correct spelling, spell it as it sounds, and write “(ph)” after the word to indicate that it is spelled phonetically.
 3. You cannot make out a phonetic spelling and write a “?” and the time code so that someone else will be able to return to that point in the tape easily.

The following are the first four pages from a copy checked transcript.

Interview with Irene Fleming

May 16, 1996

01:01:09

Question: Good morning, Irene.

Answer: Good morning.

Q: Can you tell me what your name is and spell your original last name and where and when you were born?

A: ^{am, I am} I was born in Poland and my maiden name is hard to spell. ^w Salomonowicz. ~~SALOMOWICZ~~. ^{And now} Now I am Irene Fleming.

Q: ^{And w} What year were you born? [^] When were you born?

A: '21.

Q: And the date?

A: February 5, ⁽²¹⁾ 1921.

Q: ^{And y} You were born in Lodz?

A: ~~Yes.~~ Yeah.

Q: ^{And c} Can you tell us something about your family, what life was like? ^{[coughs]-- excuse me.}

A: It was a traditional family, [^] We had a very good life. My father owned a factory. It was in the family for ^{gen--} a few generations. My grandmother ⁻⁻ and then my grandmother took her two ^{sons--} sons-in-law [^] into the business. We went to private schools. We had governesses at home. We had a good life.

Irene Fleming
May 16, 1996

2

Q: ^{And w} what kind of business was this?
^

A: Manufacturing textiles. You came into our ^{factory} ~~family~~ naked,
^y You got out dressed up from ^{toe to head--from} head to toe, ^y yeah.

Q: So, it was ^{it was} clothes ^{and shoes?} and shoes?
^

A: It was ^{it was} underwear, ^{yeah} and fabrics and sweaters and bathing suits.
^ You were dressed when you left the place.

Q: Did you go there very often?

A: Quite often I sneaked in, ^{you know} and picked up what I liked and then went--
^{brought} were it home and gave it to my friends, ^y yeah.

Q: ^{And y} You had a brother?
^

A: I had a brother, ~~yes~~. yeah.

Q: ^{And h} How much younger was he than you?
^

A: Four years, ^{four years} younger than I was ^A and ^{his dream--} my father wanted him to eventually take over the factory, but since he was a little boy he was signing his name Dr. Salomonowicz. He wanted to be a physician and he became one after the war. He studied in Germany and became a physician.

Q: You said ^{--you--that} this was a traditional family. Were you very, were you very religious?
^

Q: No. ^{A:} Just traditional. Very Jewish-conscious, ^{you know.} My father
^Z was a ~~x~~ionist and he was in very good company with a lot of very nice people.

Irene Fleming

May 16, 1996

3

Q: ^{And w} ^{what} ⁻⁻ ^{g d} What sort of friends did you ^{have} [?] Did you have a lot of friends?

A: ^{And w} ^{you know.} Oh, yes. ^{the} We had a family, [?] When I was growing up, [?] life was different. People were caring and people cared about each other. If somebody got sick, the whole neighborhood would come to see if they ^{can} ~~could~~ help. It was different. Now, ^{01:04:17} everything is gone

Q: So, you enjoyed your childhood?

A: Oh, yes, I ^{I did} [?] did [?] have a wonderful childhood.

Q: Did you like school?

A: Yes and no. If I liked the teacher I liked the school. [?] I, I would be a good pupil in ^{her} ~~his~~ or ^{his} ~~her~~ class. If I didn't like the teacher because I didn't like math. I was lousy at it. I just didn't do it. I was very bad at it. I had to have always tutor ^A ~~a~~ tutor to tutor me math so I can go from one grade to another.

Q: ^{And w} [?] What classes did you like?

A: ^{Oh, I liked} [?] I liked humanistic. I liked history, nature and languages. This I liked. I was good at it.

Q: Can you describe for us what a private school would have been like in ⁱⁿ [?] Poland. Was ^{was} [?] this Jewish and non-Jewish?

Irene Fleming
May 16, 1996

4

A: No, this was ^{this was} a Jewish school and the name of the school was
The Friends ^{Friends} of the Jerusalem University. The Friends
organization still exists. They were the first ones to
build on Mount Scopus (ph) ^{and t} this was the school. ^{what was--you--} We had to
wear uniforms so you didn't have jealousy because there
were quite a lot of kids that were from poor houses and they
came to school for free and ^{we didn't-- --} they didn't [^] want distinctions.

^{And w} We had wonderful teachers. The faculty, most of them, had
[^] Ph.Ds. ^{we had wond--} The teachers were different. They were so committed to
their pupils. Even if you were a dumbbell they just wanted to, to
get it into your brain, to ^{to} get something out of you. They tried
to get something out of you. ^{they t} They cared. Today, ^{you know,} it's just another
salary. ^{another}

^{Did you--}
Q: [^] Were you part of any youth groups growing up?

A: In school we had all kinds of youth groups that we belonged.
As I said, it was a Jewish Hebrew school, ^{really, a Hebrew school.} We had wonderful
teachers. ^{Probably you know--} You heard about ^{Itzhak (ph)} Katzenelson and Max--what was his--Max ^(ph)
^{Braude--} Braude was the director of our schools. There was one girls' school
and two boys' schools. ^{And w} We had wonderful teachers, ^{we had--} and [^] it was
like a family. The whole school, everybody knew each other.

Q: Can you describe your mother?, your mother?

01:07:12

page 106 blank

APPENDIX 9

Guidelines for Authenticating Transcripts

The guidelines below are used by the research assistants to review a transcript after it has been copy checked and to finalize it for accession into the Museum's Archives. These guidelines can be adapted for use by other individuals and organizations producing oral history interviews.

Authenticating Transcripts of Oral History Interviews

Overview of Authentication

After a transcript of an interview has been produced, a copy checker reviews it to compare what the interviewee said on audio or videotape with what the transcriber wrote in the transcript. If the copy checker does not know how to spell a word or geographic place, he or she will spell it phonetically and place a “(ph)” after the word.

After the transcript has been copy checked, it is ready to be “authenticated.” The main objective of the authentication process is to verify all names and dates, where possible, with an emphasis on verifying geographic place names. It may be unrealistic to track down the spelling of each person mentioned by the interviewee, however, when possible, verify those spellings as well. In verifying dates, examine the general chronology of events mentioned by the interviewee and verify specific dates when feasible.

In carrying out the authentication process, it may become evident that footnotes are warranted. We recommend inserting footnotes *only* when it is absolutely necessary. Although the Museum originally used footnotes in the examples below, it no longer uses footnotes.

- Translate non-English words or phrases (that is, only when the interviewee did not translate them in the interview)
- Spell out an acronym
- Clarify an unclear statement
- Correct obvious slips of the tongue, such as a misspoken date, word, or phrase
- Provide the full name and a brief description of a well-known person or notable figure if it cannot be assumed that most readers would know

- Provide information on the larger historical context when it is essential to comprehending the interviewee's account

To Get Started

Obtain a transcript that has been copy checked and awaits authentication.

Obtain the interviewee's original file. Review the materials in the file to find those pertinent to the authentication of names, places, and dates in the transcript. Such materials may include a questionnaire, a preliminary interview summary, and notes that were taken at the taped interview. Keep in mind that spellings in the preliminary interview summary may not have been verified.

Check to see if a draft summary was written for the taped interview. *See guidelines on Writing Summaries*. If so, keep a copy of the summary on hand. As you authenticate the transcript, it may become evident that the summary is incomplete or inaccurate, and that you will need to revise it. If a summary was not written, you will need to write one after completing the authentication process.

Obtain headphones and the video or audiotape(s) or other formats of the interview.

Arrange to use a video monitor/VCR, or other format.

Use a pencil with eraser for the changes you will make to the transcript.

Set Up for Authentication

Scan the pages of the transcript to take note of the changes already made by the copy checker. It is useful to review the guidelines on *Copy Checking Transcripts* to get a sense of what the copy checker was asked to do, and the kinds of notations he or she most likely made. If it is difficult to interpret the copy checker's notations, you may need to listen to that portion of the interview yourself when doing authentication. Initially, simply review the types of notations that can be interpreted easily. As a reminder for later, you may want to write the word "Listen" in the margin next to unclear notations or words and phrases that the copy checker could not decipher.

Either simultaneous to the above activity or after a quick glance at the copy checker's notations, review the transcript more closely to get an understanding of the general flow of the interview. Depending on your familiarity with the subject matter, you may want to actually read (rather than just skim)

some of the transcript at the outset, especially those portions that include geographic places and dates that need authentication. The goal is to begin the authentication process with a basic level of familiarity with the interview. The best sources for achieving this level are the summary (if written), the interviewee's file, and the transcript of the recorded interview.

Familiarize yourself with the preferred references (books and other published works) that you will use to authenticate most of the geographic places and dates. See the following section for a listing of them.

Preferred References

Use the following sources to verify the existence and spelling of geographic places. When possible, start your search by checking the first two sources listed below. The subsequent sources are listed in alphabetical order by title.

Library of Congress subject heading books

The Museum's Archives controlled vocabulary list

Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer

Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem (also known as Arolsen List)

Encyclopaedia Judaica

Encyclopedia of the Holocaust

The Ghetto Anthology

Historical Atlas of the Holocaust

National Geographic Atlas of the World (If you cannot find a place in the *Atlas*, look in a detailed travel/road map of the country.)

Where Once We Walked

Use the following sources (listed alphabetically by title) to verify chronology, dates, topical terms, and foreign words. For foreign words, use a dictionary for that particular language. Otherwise, consult one of the resident experts at the Museum who is willing to help when you can't find the information you need in published sources.

Raul Hilberg's *Destruction of the European Jews*

Encyclopaedia Judaica

Encyclopedia of the Holocaust

Encyclopedia of the Third Reich

Edelheits' *Handbook and Dictionary on the Holocaust* (good for terms and foreign words, especially German)

Time Codes

Check to see if there are time codes already written onto the transcript at least every three minutes. (Older transcripts may not have these time codes.) If time codes are not there, you will need to insert them as you authenticate the transcript. *See guidelines on Copy Checking Transcripts for detailed instructions on how to insert time codes.*

Authenticating

Now you are ready to authenticate the transcript. Working through it, identify the places, names, dates, terms, and foreign words that need verification. If there is a question as to whether or not something needs to be verified, consult your supervisor on a case-by-case basis. You may want to underline or otherwise clearly mark those items in the transcript that need authentication. Using the sources listed above and others when necessary, verify the existence, chronology, spelling, location, etc., of those names, places, dates, and words that need to be authenticated. As you begin the process, take note of the interview research list (in the interviewee's file) that was prepared for the interview. Often there will be sources listed in the file that will prove useful during the authentication process. (Note that for older interviews, a research list may not have been prepared.)

There will be instances when it is nearly impossible to verify something. Therefore, the realistic goal of the authentication process is to do the best job possible by using the Museum's resources to verify places, names, dates, or words in the transcript. The following disclaimer is included in the introduction of each authenticated transcript in the Archives:

The reader should bear in mind that she or he is reading a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. Insofar as possible, this transcript tries to represent the spoken word. Thus, it should be read as a personal memoir and not as either a researched monograph or edited account.

When appropriate and possible, include diacritical marks (á, é, ö, ü, etc.). Computer software technology presently limits our use of diacritics, but be sure to include them in the transcript when possible. Note that not all of the above preferred references provide diacritical marks for geographic places.

(The Library of Congress subject heading books, *National Geographic Atlas of the World*, and *Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer* do include them.)

Footnotes should be used only when they are absolutely necessary. Attach a footnote to a word, phrase, or term only on the first reference in the transcript. When a footnote is the English translation of a non-English word or phrase, it is useful to indicate the language from which the word is translated. Examples of translation footnotes:

<u>Reads in the transcript:</u>	<u>Footnote:</u>
Schmelz ¹	¹ melted material (German)
Rohstoff ²	² raw material (German)
Pass' mal auf ³	³ colloquial translation = "Hold on" (German)
Katyúsha ⁴	⁴ lorry-mounted multiple rocket launcher (Russian)

Because a staff member or an outside researcher may want to follow up on footnote information, be sure to include the source for that footnote if you found the information in an article, book, publication, or even an unpublished work. The source is especially essential when a footnote is used to clarify or elaborate on the historical context or significance of something or someone. These types of footnotes should be used even more sparingly than translation footnotes.

It is not intended that you do extensive background research on all topics raised in the transcript, but rather to clarify points when necessary to understand the interviewee's account. In citing a source, follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Some of the most common styles are shown below. For those not listed here, refer to the *Manual* for guidance.

- Substantive Notes:

The footnotes we use in the transcripts are called "substantive" or "discursive" notes. These are discussed in the "Notes and Bibliographies" chapter in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Below is an example of a typical substantive note with a citation of a standard book with a single author. Note that the page number is given at the end of the citation.

Example:

Between 1939 and 1940, Le Vernet was used as a detention camp for political prisoners. Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 35.

- Citing a Work with Two or More Authors:

The *Manual* states, “When a work has two [or more] authors, their names are listed in the order in which they appear on the title page.”

Example:

Gary Mokotoff and Sallyann Amdur Sack, *Where Once We Walked: A Guide to the Jewish Communities Destroyed in the Holocaust* (Teaneck, NJ: Avotaynu, 1991).

- Citing a Work with an Editor, Translator, or Compiler:

The *Manual* states, “The name of the editor, translator, or compiler takes the place of the author when no author appears on the title page...the abbreviation ed./eds., comp./comps., or trans. follows the name and is preceded by a comma.”

Example:

Israel Gutman, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1990).

- Citing a Work with Corporate Authors:

The *Manual* states, “If a publication issued by an organization carries no personal author’s name on the title page, the organization is listed as the author, even if its name is repeated in the title or in the series title or as the publisher...”

Example:

Encyclopaedia Judaica Research Foundation, *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica, corrected ed.).

- Citing an Encyclopedia:

When citing information from encyclopedias, conclude the citation with the title of the encyclopedia entry, preceded by s.v., in place of the page number.

Example:

Amy Hackett, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Third Reich* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1991), s.v. “genocide.”

- Citing an Article from a Journal:

When citing an article from a journal, the author’s name is followed by the title of the article in quotations, then the title of the journal in italics. The volume and series numbers are placed between the journal title and the date of publication.

Example:

Józef Adelson, “The Expulsion of Jews with Polish Citizenship from Bavaria in 1923,” *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies* 5 (1990).

- Citing an Essay within a Collection:

The style for citing an essay within a collection is similar to that for journal citations with the following exceptions: The collection title is preceded by the preposition “in” and followed by the editor’s name, and the complete publication information is given in parentheses.

Example:

Konstanty Gebert, “Jewish Identities in Poland: New, Old and Imaginary,” in *Jewish Identities in the New Europe*, ed. Jonathan Weber (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994).

- Citing Foreign Language Titles:

The *Manual* states, “Titles of works in languages other than English are treated the same as English titles except that capitalization follows the conventions of the language of the work....”

Example:

Martin Weinmann, ed., *Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem* (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1990), 135.

- Previously Cited Sources:

Because portions of the transcripts may be used or presented outside of the context of the full document, we do not use standard abbreviation devices (*ibid.*, *idem*, *op. cit.*, etc.) when referring to previously cited sources. Instead, abbreviate successive entries by omitting the author and publication information.

Examples:

¹German forces occupied Paris, June 14, 1940. *The Chronological Atlas of World War Two*, 35.

²Statut des Juifs issued October 1940. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, s.v. “statut des Juifs.”

Another example of the need for a footnote is if the interviewee said, “pots of pans” but, from the context, you are fairly certain that the person intended to say “pots *and* pans.” Keep the actual spoken words in the text of the interview, then use a footnote to indicate what you believe the interviewee intended to say.

Reads in the transcript:

pots of pans¹

Footnote:

¹It appears that the interviewee intended to say “pots and pans.”

See attached sample pages from an authenticated transcript for additional examples of footnotes. Although the Museum no longer uses footnotes, we have kept this section in the text for those seeking guidance.

Challenges

Expect to find a number of challenging names and words in any given transcript. Ideally, as you proceed with the authentication process, you will develop strategies for approaching such challenges. Sometimes, you can rely on resources that you have used in the past; other times, it may be necessary to find new resources. The best place to start is the Museum’s Library. You also may learn of individuals at the Museum who can provide information and leads. It is important to achieve some sort of balance when it comes to searching for obscure words, phrases, or places, since there will be occasions when it is unrealistic to expect to find verification.

With challenging words, etc., it is especially helpful to listen again to the portion of the tape where the words were spoken. If it is very difficult to understand after listening several times, ask someone else to listen. Often a second set of ears simply hears the word or phrase differently and can offer a different perspective. For non-English words or phrases, consider asking someone at the Museum who is a resident expert with that particular language. It is best to save your queries, then ask the person to listen to the segments in one sitting. Remember that there will be occasions when it is not possible to understand what an interviewee is saying; and in some cases, what may sound like a word may actually just be some mumbling. In other words, do not obsess over one word.

If you have questions that you believe the interviewee can answer, consider contacting him or her directly. It can prove especially fruitful to ask the interviewee for name spellings of family members and other close relations. We recommend that you wait until you are near the end of the authentication process before calling because 1) you may find the answer to one or more of your questions as you continue the authentication process, 2) you may discover additional questions to ask the interviewee, 3) it is best to call the interviewee once rather than several times.

Writing Down Corrections

Print all corrections you make to the transcript, distinguishing which letters are lower and upper case. Write the corrected text above the incorrect text, and cross out the text that your correction replaces. Even if you will be putting the corrections into the computer yourself, it is preferable to print and make very clear notations. This is useful when you ask others to review segments of the transcript, and necessary when you cannot complete the authentication on that transcript, and must leave it for someone else to pick up where you left off.

- If you cannot verify the spelling of a place, name, or term, place a “(ph)” after it each time it occurs in the transcript.
- If you cannot understand what the interviewee said after using different strategies and asking for a second person to listen, write either “[Indecipherable]” or “[Inaudible]” in the transcript. Use “[Indecipherable]” when you think it was a word or phrase, but were not able to comprehend the actual word(s). Use “[Inaudible]” when it sounds more like mumbling than words.

Examples:

...so we hired a Polish [Indecipherable], a horse and carriage...

Would you--I mean, she was so [Inaudible].

- When you add an editorial comment, put it in brackets as shown above.
- If time codes are not already in the transcript, clearly write the hour, minute, and seconds (01:10:33) at the appropriate places, at least every three minutes throughout the interview.

Stylistic Standards

For purposes of consistency and clarity, it is important to maintain a standard for style preferences in each transcript. *See guidelines on Copy Checking Transcripts for style preferences.*

Writing the Summary

If the summary has not been written, use the transcript and the interviewee's file to write one, following the established guidelines. *See guidelines on Writing Summaries.*

If the summary has been written, read it carefully to see how it can be revised or completed. Many of the summaries that were written in the past are incomplete. The guidelines on *Writing Summaries* have changed over time, and some summaries were based on unauthenticated transcripts. Therefore, the information in the summary may be incomplete or, in some cases, inaccurate. Use your familiarity with the transcript and the interviewee's file to revise the summary as necessary to make it conform to the current guidelines on writing summaries.

Checklist for Authenticating Transcripts

- To get started
 1. Obtain copy-checked transcript.
 2. Obtain interviewee's original file and summary (if already written).
 3. Obtain tape(s) or other formats and headphones.
 4. Arrange to use a video monitor/VCR, or other devices.
 5. Use pencil with eraser.
- Set up for authentication
 1. Review copy checker's notations; mark "Listen" in the margins when necessary.

2. Review the transcript closely for general flow of interview. Review other items (original file, summary) for familiarity.
 3. Familiarize yourself with preferred references. Make sure they are easily accessible.
- Authenticating
 1. Check to see if time codes are written onto the transcript. If not, insert the first one at the beginning of the interview and then at least every three minutes thereafter.
 2. Identify names, dates, terms, foreign words that need verification. Clearly mark these items in the transcript by underlining them.
 3. Use the resources available and follow up on realistic leads to verify as many of the items as possible.
 4. When appropriate and when possible, use diacritics (á, é, ö, ü, etc.).
 5. Clearly mark items that need to be footnoted, and write out the footnote text at the bottom of the page.
 - Challenges
 1. Develop strategies for addressing challenges along the way.
 2. Listen again to the challenging portions of the interview. Ask someone else to listen as well if the spoken words are still difficult to decipher.
 3. Consider calling the interviewee directly with specific questions.
 - Writing down corrections
 1. Print all corrections, distinguishing which letters are lower and upper case. Cross out the text that your corrections replace.
 2. When you have verified something, place a check mark next to it.
 3. If you cannot verify the spelling of a word, write “(ph)” after it.
 4. If you cannot understand what the interviewee is saying, write either “[Indecipherable]” or “[Inaudible]” in the transcript.
 - Stylistic Standards

Adhere to the style preferences in the *Copy Checking Transcripts* guidelines.
 - Writing the summary

Either revise an existing one or write a new one. Refer to the *Writing Summaries* guidelines.

The following are a few sample pages from an authenticated transcript: the title page, preface, and three pages of testimony (pages 11, 12, 32).

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Irene Fleming

May 16, 1996

RG-50.030*0366

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Irene Fleming, conducted by Joan Ringelheim on May 16, 1996, on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Arlington, VA, and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies.

The interview was transcribed and processed by the Department of Oral History. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that she or he is reading a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. Insofar as possible, this transcript tries to represent the spoken word. Thus, it should be read as a personal memoir and not as either a researched monograph or edited account.

To the extent possible, the spelling of place names, foreign words, and personal names have been verified, either by reference resources within the Museum or directly by the interviewee. In some cases, a footnote has been added to the transcript in order to provide a translation of foreign words or to clarify a statement. Some uncertainties will inevitably remain regarding some words and their spellings. In these scenarios, a (ph) follows a word or name that is spelled phonetically.

RG-50.030*0366

11

A: It was premonition. We knew if people can be so cruel, anything can happen. There was no consciousness anymore left in people. Cruelty and brutality. We lived every moment and we didn't know what the next moment will bring. Nobody knew.

Q: When, when you went into the closed ghetto, when the ghetto was closed, were you in that apartment sharing it with this other person or--

A: No, you mean if I lived with him before that? No, no such a thing didn't happen before when I was growing up. No, we--after I got married I lived with my parents. After I got married, he lived with us.

Q: And, and when the ghetto was closed, did your father get a job and you got a job and your brother?

A: Everybody had to. Everybody had to work. And as I told you my brother was graduated high school in, in the ghetto was a group of, a lot of young people went to school and he got a very good position in a, this food distribution store. And they called it Kooperative¹, and Rumkowski² gave it all his pupils. As I told you he's very fond of his children.

Q: And you knew Rumkowski?

¹cooperative (German).

²Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski (1877–1944), chairman of the *Judenrat* in the Lodz ghetto. Gutman, Israel, editor. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: MacMillan, 1990), s.v. "Rumkowski, Chaim Mordechai."

RG-50.030*0366

12

A: Oh, I knew him since I was a little child because he used to come to us all the time to our house.

Q: And how do you remember him prior to the ghetto? Do you have strong recollections?

A: Yes, he was a very benevolent man.

02:21:00

He was an--he loved the children. It was a model orphanage. The kids were doing all kinds of works, you know, crafts and arts. And for every holy day we would get a little gift that the kids made. My father was supporting him so we knew, we knew, we knew him and he knew us.

Q: Did you have some relationship with him? Did you talk politics with him?

A: Yes, I did, because I belonged to this Revisionistic/Jabotinsky³ organization and he was just the opposite. So, every time he would come to, to us and he would say, "Are you still Zionists?" I said yes. Even in the ghetto he remembered that.

Q: Did you actually talk about it or he simply, he simply knew you were a Revisionistic?

³The Revisionists, a group consisting of maximist political Zionists, was founded by Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880–1940). Encyclopaedia Judaica Research Foundation, *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica, corrected ed.) s.v. "Jabotinski, Vladimir."

RG-50.030*0366

32

A: We tried, we tried to get people from the same cultures, from the same background. It was, it was a humiliating time, a humiliating experience. Beautiful people, we had Professor Caspari⁴ that was one of the first cancer researcher. He lost his life, too.

03:03:08

Q: Did you have a, a card file of where people were living?

A: Oh, yes. It was very, very orderly. Everything was just like clockwork, unbelievable how everything worked the way it's supposed to. Yeah, we had, we had--everybody was registered.

Q: And they couldn't move unless--

A: No, no where could they move? They needed space where to live, and space was precious.

Q: In that kind of a situation where people are living under such tension, yeah, with so little food and under difficult apartment situations, was there a lot of fighting and arguments?

A: Not really, not really, because we all were in the same situation and we all had to do our best to get along. Life was miserable enough without having any kind of fights, you know,

⁴Professor Wilhelm Caspari (1872–1944), renown cancer researcher and bacteriologist. Dobroszycki, Lucjan. *The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1984), 435.

APPENDIX 10

Guidelines for Writing Summaries

The guidelines below are used by the research assistants and interns to write one-page summaries of interviews. These guidelines can be adapted for use by other individuals and organizations producing oral history interviews.

Writing Summaries of Oral History Interviews

Overview of Writing Summaries

The purpose of a summary is to help researchers and others focus on specific experiences about which they seek to learn more. Summaries help them find that information without spending a great deal of time reviewing irrelevant material. Therefore, it is important that the information in the summary be concise and accurate, and provide an overview of the interviewee's experiences. Each sentence in the summary should answer a question—who, where, what, when, or how.

The summary should focus on the interviewee's life, and only include the fates of family members or friends when they are central to understanding the progression of the interviewee's own experiences. Broad experiences should be included, whereas details, however interesting, should be omitted. For example, noting that Mr. X went on a death march from Auschwitz on January 18, 1945, is important information. The fact that he only had one shoe is not important for the summary (unless, for example, he lost his foot as a result).

Geographic place names and dates are of greatest importance. They must be exact and as detailed as possible. For example, if a survivor was interned in Auschwitz, try to specify which camp (Auschwitz I, Auschwitz-Birkenau, or a subcamp) and the dates interned.

It is best to summarize the interviewee's experiences chronologically in three parts: pre-Holocaust, Holocaust, and post-Holocaust. The second part should be the largest and most detailed section. The third part will usually end with liberation and/or, where applicable, leaving a displaced persons camp for the United States, Palestine, etc.

An interviewee's experiences can usually be put into one of four categories: survivor, rescuer, liberator, or witness. In some cases, a person's

experiences will bridge two categories (for example, someone may be both a survivor and rescuer). The majority of summaries will be of survivors' experiences. In some ways, the summaries for each of the categories will follow the same format. In other ways, they will differ.

Writing a Draft Version of a Summary

Because it may take several weeks before the transcript of an interview is available, a draft version of the summary should be written as soon as possible so researchers can know at least the basics of the interview's content. Later, when the transcript is written, the draft version, or "summary in progress," can be revised and finalized.

Obtain the interviewee's file. Included in the file should be preliminary interview information and a brief "Personal Data Form" (filled out by the interviewer at the conclusion of the interview). These items, along with any other pertinent documents in the file, such as notes taken at the interview, articles about the interviewee, written memoirs, etc., will be instrumental in writing a draft version of the summary.

When typing the summary into the computer, type "[SUMMARY IN PROGRESS] Place names not yet verified" at the top of the page (under the interviewee's name and the identification code of the interview, known as the record group number). *See attached sample of a "summary in progress" that provides only a basic outline of the interview.*

Writing the Final Version of a Summary

When writing the final version of the summary, refer to the "summary in progress" and the transcript. If the "summary in progress" has not been written, write the final version by referring to the transcript, if available. If the transcript has not been produced and will not be in the foreseeable future, you may have to write the final version of the summary by consulting the documents in the interviewee's file and, when necessary, reviewing portions of the interview itself.

Ideally, the transcript will have been produced, copy checked, and authenticated before you attempt to write the final version of a summary. *See guidelines for Copy Checking Transcripts and Authenticating Transcripts.* If you are consulting a transcript that has not been authenticated, write "[SUMMARY IN PROGRESS] Place names not yet verified" at the top. While such

a summary will be considered closer to a final version than a draft version, it will need to be checked for accuracy once the transcript has been authenticated. *See attached sample of a “summary in progress” that provides a detailed account of the interview, yet whose place names are not yet verified.*

Format for summary according to type of experience

SURVIVORS

Pre-Holocaust

In general, the interviewee’s pre-Holocaust life will be limited to one or two sentences in the summary, unless it is of particular importance. Do not include details of the interviewee moving from town to town before the war began, unless it is an important part of the interview. The first sentence should always include:

1. Interviewee’s name, date and place of birth (city or town followed by country).

Other possible subjects of the interviewee’s prewar life that may be important to include:

1. Interviewee’s religion/ethnic background.
2. Occupation, if the interviewee was an adult before the war began.
3. Marriage and children, if any.
4. If in Germany, mention of *Kristallnacht* or Nuremberg laws, if significant to the interviewee’s experiences. If in other countries, mention relevant events related to the Nazi rise to power.

Holocaust

The beginning of the interviewee’s wartime persecution should be one or perhaps two sentences. Where was the interviewee at the time when significant persecution began? What was the date? This will be different for different geographic areas and experiences.

It is likely that the interviewee was transported to one or more of the following:

1. *A ghetto*. Include location (city/country), date of entry and exit, and work group, if possible.
2. *A transit camp*. Include name, location (city/country), date of entry and exit.

Another possibility is that the interviewee went into:

1. *Hiding*. If the interviewee went into hiding, include the name of the city and the country in which he or she hid, conditions of hiding and specific locations (for example, a barn or attic), as well as dates that hiding began and ended. Mention the person who hid the interviewee, if applicable. Note that living under a false identity can be considered hiding.

Next, outline the continuation of wartime experiences. Possible experiences:

1. *Internment*. Name any labor camps, prisons, or concentration camps in which the interviewee was interned. Include names, locations, work group(s), and dates.
2. *Escape*. Include location, date, and method of escape.
3. *Resistance efforts*. Mention forms of organized resistance with which the interviewee was involved. Name the resistance group, the location, form of resistance, and dates involved.

In the next section, outline the interviewee's experience of liberation/end of war.

1. If the interviewee was in a camp or prison at the time of liberation, give the nationality of the liberating army (and the division where applicable), and the date and location. If the interviewee was not in a camp, explain the interviewee's liberation (date, location, and army, if applicable and available).

Post-Holocaust

1. Displaced persons camps (name, city/country, dates)
2. Emigration (from where, where to, date)

See sample of a summary written for an interview with a survivor at the end of these Writing Summaries guidelines.

LIBERATORS

Summaries for liberators will differ from others in that they will focus on the brief time period at the end of the war. In some cases they will focus on events following actual liberation.

Pre-encounter with camps

For liberators, “pre-Holocaust experiences” usually include most of the years of the Holocaust (1939–1945), because it was near the end of the war when most liberators had their first encounters with the camps.

The first sentence should always include:

1. Interviewee’s name, date and place of birth (city/country).

It is essential to include:

1. In what country’s military the interviewee served.
2. When the interviewee joined the military.
3. Branch, unit, division, and rank.

Other possible subjects of the interviewee’s life that may be important to include are:

1. Religion/ethnic background.
2. Occupation (if the interviewee was an adult before the war began).

Encounter with camps

In terms of an interviewee’s encounter with the camps or prisons, or with prisoners on forced marches, give location (town or nearest town/country), date, amount of time in the camp, and a brief overview of what was done and seen while there.

Post-Holocaust

If the information is available, briefly describe when the interviewee returned to country of origin; occupation.

See sample of a summary written for an interview with a liberator at the end of these Writing Summaries guidelines.

RESCUERS***Pre-Holocaust***

1. Interviewee’s name, date and place of birth.
2. Religion/ethnic background, if known.
3. Occupation before the war, if applicable.

Holocaust

1. Occupation during the war.
2. Dates, locations, and basic nature of rescue operations.
3. Names of affiliations of wartime rescue operations, if applicable.
4. Descriptions and names of those rescued, if known.

Post-Holocaust

1. Include a sentence about the post-Holocaust experiences of a rescuer especially if they relate to the rescue operations in which the interviewee was engaged during the Holocaust.

See sample of a summary written for an interview with a rescuer at the end of these Writing Summaries guidelines.

WITNESSES

The term “witness” is a broad category that we use to include bystanders, war crimes prosecutors, military personnel who were not present during the actual liberation, and others. Therefore, this template is very basic.

Pre-Holocaust

1. Interviewee’s name, date and place of birth.
2. Religion/ethnic background, if known.
3. Occupation before the war, if applicable.

Holocaust

1. Occupation during the war.
2. What the interviewee witnessed during the Holocaust, including dates and locations in a brief outline format.

Post-Holocaust

1. If the interviewee was a witness, include a sentence about the post-Holocaust experiences, especially if they relate to the events witnessed during the Holocaust.
2. If the interviewee was a prosecutor, include names of trials.

See sample of a summary written for an interview with a witness at the end of these Writing Summaries guidelines.

Stylistic Standards

For consistency and clarity, certain information should be included in every summary. But some important information may be missing from some interviews. For example, some interviewees do not state their date of birth in the interview. In such cases, it may be necessary to rely on the other documents in the interviewee's file. If it is impossible to find this or other basic, important information in the transcript or file, discuss the situation with your supervisor, who will determine if the situation warrants a phone call to the interviewee.

In the final analysis, if crucial information is still missing, it may be appropriate to make a note in brackets in the summary regarding that omission. Such decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with your supervisor.

Consider including the family background of the interviewee, especially if the interviewee is a survivor. For instance, it is usually of interest to researchers whether the survivor is Jewish, Catholic, Roma/Sinti (Gypsy), or Jehovah's Witness. This information should be interwoven in a tasteful way; it does not have to be stated in the first or second sentence, but instead wherever it is most appropriate. In other words, it should exist as part of the larger information about someone's childhood and background. *See the attached examples to note how religion/ethnic background can be interwoven into the narrative.*

If the interview is not in English, note the language of the interview immediately under the record group number of the interview, in bold type, flush right, in parentheses.

Example:

(Polish language interview)

Be sure to maintain consistency of spelling, capitalization, and abbreviations for terms that commonly are used in the summaries. For example, "ghetto" in "Warsaw ghetto" is *not* capitalized. Use "ghettos" rather than "ghettoes" for the plural. *Refer to the "Preferred Spelling, Capitalization, and Abbreviations" section of these guidelines for more examples.* If you have any questions about these or other instances not covered in these guidelines, ask your supervisor.

For geographic places, use the following sources to verify the existence and spelling of each. When beginning your search, first check the top two sources listed, if possible. The subsequent sources are listed in alphabetical order by title.

Library of Congress subject heading books

The Museum's Archives controlled vocabulary list

Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer

Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem (also known as Arolsen List)

Encyclopaedia Judaica

Encyclopedia of the Holocaust

The Ghetto Anthology

Historical Atlas of the Holocaust

National Geographic Atlas of the World (If a geographic place is not in the *Atlas*, try a detailed travel/road map of the specific country where the place is located.)

Where Once We Walked

On the first occasion that you refer to a town or city in the summary, be sure to include the country immediately following the reference, for example, "Berlin, Germany." On subsequent references in the summary, write only "Berlin."

There will be times when an interviewee refers to a geographic place (both city and country) with different names from what is used today. We honor the interviewee's reference, but also include the present-day name. Wherever possible, the present-day name should be consistent with the Library of Congress' approved terms. On the first occasion that such a place is mentioned in a summary, write the name used by the interviewee, followed by the Library of Congress' preferred name in parentheses. Three common scenarios where the city name, country name, or both were different from what they are today:

Danzig (Gdansk), Poland

Brno, Moravia (Czech Republic)

Lvov, Poland (Lviv, Ukraine)

Check the Oral History Branch's index of summaries in the Museum's Archives reading room to see if a place had a different name during the Holocaust. For example, the listing for "Lvov, Poland" has "*See Lviv, Ukraine*" to the right of the entry. The latter is the Library of Congress' term. If you cannot find a geographic place in the index, turn to the Library of Congress subject heading books or the Museum's Archives controlled vocabulary list for the Museum's most commonly used terms.

On subsequent references (for example, with “Danzig (Gdansk), Poland”), use the name of the town or city preferred by the interviewee. In this example: “Danzig.”

On the first occasion that you refer to a camp in the summary, include the type of camp and country in which it was located. For example, “Mr. X was in Auschwitz, a concentration camp in Poland.” On subsequent references, write: “Auschwitz.” Other types of camps may include, but are not limited to: labor, transit, and displaced persons. A camp may be defined primarily as a subcamp of another camp. For example, “...in Ebensee, a subcamp of Mauthausen in Austria.” To determine the type of camp, use *Das national-sozialistische Lagersystem* (also known as Arolsen List).

When appropriate and when possible, use diacritics (á, é, ö, ü, etc.). We are presently limited by computer software technology in the diacritics that we can use, but after determining those diacritics that are supported by the present technology, include them in the transcript when appropriate. Note that not all of the above sources provide the diacritical marks when they list geographic places. (The Library of Congress subject heading books, *National Geographic Atlas of the World*, and *Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer* do include them.)

Note that a summary should not be longer than one page (otherwise, it is no longer truly a summary). If a summary is about a full page in length, choose one or two appropriate places to start a new paragraph. A full page of text without any paragraph breaks can be uninviting to read. *Refer to the attached sample summaries for the preferred text formatting.*

Checklist for Writing Summaries

- Writing a draft version
 1. If there is no transcript available or if the transcript has not been authenticated, designate the summary as a “[SUMMARY IN PROGRESS] Place names not yet verified.”
 2. Review the interviewee’s file for other documents that may be helpful in the summary-writing process.

- Writing a final version
 1. If the transcript is not going to be produced in the foreseeable future, you will need to write the final version of the summary by consulting the interviewee’s file and, when necessary, portions of the interview itself.

2. If an authenticated transcript is available, you can write the final version of the summary without writing a [SUMMARY IN PROGRESS].
 3. When a [SUMMARY IN PROGRESS] has been written, use the information in it along with the transcript to write the final version.
- Summary format
There is a different format for each of the following categories of interviewees. In some cases, someone's experiences will bridge two categories.
SURVIVORS
LIBERATORS
RESCUERS
WITNESSES
 - Stylistic Standards
 1. Incomplete information from the transcript/interview:
Consult other documents in interviewee's file; discuss the situation with your supervisor if information is still missing.
 2. Religion/ethnic background:
Interweave in a tasteful way.
 3. Non-English interviews:
Note the language of the interview at the top of the summary.
 4. Spelling, capitalization, abbreviations:
See the following section entitled "Preferred Spelling, Capitalization, and Abbreviations."
 5. Check spellings for ghettos, camps, towns:
Use Library of Congress subject headings, Museum's Archives controlled vocabulary list, and other sources.
 6. First reference to a city or town:
Write out city and country, as in "Berlin, Germany." On subsequent references, write "Berlin."

7. First reference to a city/town that had a different name than is used presently:
 Include interviewee's reference, followed by Library of Congress' present-day name in parentheses. Common scenarios:
 Danzig (Gdansk), Poland
 Brno, Moravia (Czech Republic)
 Lvov, Poland (Lviv, Ukraine)
 On subsequent references, use name preferred by interviewee.
8. First reference to a camp:
 Write out type of camp and country in which it was located, for example, "Auschwitz, a concentration camp in Poland." On subsequent references, write: "Auschwitz."
9. To determine the type of camp:
 Refer to *Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem* (also known as Arolsen List).

Preferred Spelling, Capitalization, and Abbreviations

General Rule:

Never use abbreviations that are not immediately apparent to the reader.

For words not on this short list, check with the Library of Congress subject heading books or the Museum's Archives controlled vocabulary list.

Do:

antisemitism
 displaced persons camp
 displaced persons
 Gentile
 ghetto
 ghettos
 United States
 United States Army
 World War II

Don't:

anti-Semitism, Antisemitism
 DP camp
 DPs
 gentile
 Ghetto
 ghettos
 U.S. or U.S.A. or America
 U.S. Army
 Second World War

On first reference in each summary:

United Nations Relief and
Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA)

American Jewish Joint
Distribution Committee (JDC)

[First and last name of inter-
viewee, and name at birth
(if different from now)]

On subsequent references:

UNRRA

JDC

[present-day, first name only]

Commonly used foreign terms:

Aktion

Kindertransport

Kristallnacht

Schutzpässe

Approved abbreviations:

Mr.

Mrs.

Ms.

Dr.

Spell out the following:

percent (not %)

number (not #)

and (not &)

Style rules for numbers:

Spell out one through nine / use numerals for 10 and above

Spell out first through ninth / use numerals for 10th and above

Sample of summary in progress that provides only a basic outline of the interview.

HANS HEIMANN

RG-50.030*091

[SUMMARY IN PROGRESS]

Place names not yet verified

Hans Heimann was born on May 28, 1920, in Vienna, Austria. He emigrated to Hungary in 1938 and to Italy in 1939. He was placed in an internment camp in Torotoreto, Italy, during the war, where he remained until liberation by the British in 1943. Hans later worked for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and emigrated to the United States in 1951.

Sample of summary in progress that provides details of the interview, but place names have not yet been verified.

GEORGE HAVAS

RG-50.030*378

[SUMMARY IN PROGRESS]

Place names not yet verified

George Havas (nee György Havas) was born in 1929 in Mukachevo (Mukachevo), Czechoslovakia. The town was occupied by Hungarians after Germany took over Sudetenland. George's father, a doctor, was no longer allowed to practice medicine. In March of 1944, the Germans took over. On May 15, 1944, George was transported to Auschwitz, a concentration camp in Poland. George's father was separated from his sons. (After the war, George learned that his father died in the *Sonderkommando* uprising in Auschwitz.) After eight days in Auschwitz, George was sent to Mauthausen, a concentration camp in Austria. From there he was sent on to Ebensee, a subcamp of Mauthausen in Austria, where he stayed for one year, until liberation. George worked in the tunnels at Ebensee where he was able to make contacts and bring back news. George's brother died in Ebensee. The few friends he made in the camp also perished before liberation. George was liberated on May 6, 1945. He left on June 7 for Prague, Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic). In 1947 George came to the United States.

Sample of summary written for an interview with a survivor.

CAROLA STEINHARDT

RG-50.030*368

[SUMMARY IN PROGRESS]

Place names not yet verified

Carola Steinhardt (nee Stern) was born on March 8, 1925, in Nieder Ohmen, Germany. Carola remembers that before 1933 non-Jews and Jews interacted together in her village. Once Hitler rose to power, Carola's non-Jewish friends ceased speaking to her. Carola was sent to attend and be a boarder at a Jewish school in Bad Nauheim, Germany. Carola vividly recalls *Kristallnacht* in November 1938. At her school, storm troopers burst in, cut feather beds, harassed students and others. Meanwhile, Carola's father was sent to Buchenwald, a concentration camp in Germany. Her mother and sister fled to Bad Nauheim and the three were reunited there. Carola's father was able to leave Buchenwald and the family moved to Frankfurt, Germany. Soon her father was taken away again to a labor camp. Carola herself was taken away in early 1941 to do hard labor in Berlin, Germany. She worked at an airplane factory in Berlin until early 1943 when she was removed for "resettlement" in the east.

Carola arrived in the first week of March 1943 at Auschwitz, a concentration camp in Poland. She remembers her clothes being taken away, her hair being cut, and dogs barking. She was given old clothes that were too small. Carola was allowed to keep her shoes, but when they broke she went barefoot. Seven "beauticians" were selected from among the female prisoners. Another prisoner volunteered Carola as one of the seven. The job was to cut off the hair of incoming female prisoners. She was then sent to clean the clothes taken from prisoners. Carola knew her parents had been taken to the Lodz ghetto in Poland and asked to look in the transports arriving at Auschwitz for her family. In August 1944, she was reunited with her sister in Auschwitz, but soon they were separated again. From her sister, Carola learned her parents were dead.

In January of 1945, Carola was taken on a march to Ravensbrück, a concentration camp in Germany. She stayed in Ravensbrück for four weeks, then she was sent on a march to Malchow, a subcamp of Ravensbrück in Germany. On the way, Carola had to go to the bathroom and risked leaving the line to run into a barn and relieve herself. As she was entering the barn, her sister emerged from it. She too had run in there to use it as a bathroom. From then on, the two stayed together. At Malchow, a subcamp of Ravensbrück in Germany, Carola worked in the kitchen. In May of 1945, Malchow was liberated by Americans. Carola and her sister made their way first to Czechoslovakia and then to Austria. They were interned in Kammer Schorfling, a displaced persons camp in Austria, until July 1946 when they took an army transport to the United States.

Sample of summary written for an interview with a liberator.

JOE FRIEDMAN

RG-50.030*380

Joe Friedman was born on March 10, 1921, in St. Joseph, Missouri. After Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941), Joe tried to enlist in the navy, but was encouraged to finish school first. Then, during his finals, he got a notice from the draft board. In July of 1942, Joe went into the army. Joe moved up the ranks from Private to Corporal, and then Sergeant. After attending officer's training school, Joe became a Second Lieutenant and went overseas in 1944. He was attached to the Third Army and became a member of the 91st Evacuation Hospital.

Joe's company was the first to enter the gates of Ohrdruf, a subcamp of Buchenwald in Germany, in early April 1945. The bodies were still burning. There were no guards around. Joe's company was involved with getting food and helping the former prisoners in whatever ways they could. Before the war ended, Joe volunteered for work in displaced persons camps. Wildflecken in Germany was his first placement; he was there for about a week. He was also in Baumberg, Germany, for several months.

Joe ended up as commander of the camp Coburg, a displaced persons camp in Germany, which held 15,000 Eastern Europeans, mostly Poles. Joe was the only American officer in the camp with six enlisted men. The internees were fed and clothed, and there was a hospital, schools, and entertainment. Joe received a letter of commendation in September 1945 from Major General Robinson for his administration of the camp. Joe was raised to Captain on orders from Robinson. Joe was later at Ansbach, Germany, where he was commissioned to oversee all displaced persons camps and German repatriation in American-occupied Bavaria. While exchanging Germans across the Russian/American lines, Joe worked with the Jewish underground getting Jews across the border from the Russian zone into the American zone of Germany. He used false papers that declared the Jews to be German nationals. Members of the Palestinian Brigade involved Joe in underground work while he was commander at Coburg. The goal was to get Jews out of Russia and Poland where there were still pogroms.

In early 1946, 125 of these Jews were caught and Joe's activities with the underground revealed. Joe was able to smuggle the Jews across the border anyway, with help from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). Joe was arrested and going to be sent home. He was to be taken via Frankfurt, Germany, and Paris, France, to Camp Philip Morris. When the train stopped in Paris, Joe went AWOL. He was able to make it back to the United States. After three days back, Joe was given an Army Commendation Medal. There was nothing in his record about his work with the underground or going AWOL.

Sample of summary written for an interview with a rescuer.

FATHER FRANCIS CEGIELKA

RG-50.030*052

Father Francis Cegielka was born in 1908 in Grabow, Poland. He was ordained into the priesthood and served as Director of the Polish Catholic Mission. He aided Jews by finding Polish families that the Jews could live with temporarily during the beginning of German occupation of Paris, France. Father Cegielka gave radio sermons denouncing Nazism and in October 1940, he was arrested and imprisoned in Paris. He was transferred to prison in Berlin, Germany. Then he was taken to Sachsenhausen, a concentration camp in Germany, and from there to Dachau, also a concentration camp in Germany. Within the camps, he secretly brought people religious comfort. After liberation in April 1945, he took back his office of Director of the Polish Catholic Mission where he tried to purify Polish parishes in France from Communist influences. He was forced to resign, and he came to the United States where he has conducted many retreats. In 1972 and 1974 he was nominated as an Outstanding Educator of America. He is now Director of Infant Jesus Shrine.

Sample of summary written for an interview with a witness.

BENJAMIN B. FERENCZ

RG-50.030*269

[SUMMARY IN PROGRESS]

Place names not yet verified

Benjamin B. Ferencz was born in 1920 in the Carpathian Mountains of Transylvania, Romania. He grew up in the Hell's Kitchen section of New York City and was educated at the City College of New York and Harvard Law School. In World War II, he enlisted in the United States Army and served as an anti-aircraft gunner. He later was a member of the war crimes investigating teams and was charged with recovering evidence for war crimes trials in German towns and in Nazi concentration camps. In 1945, he was asked by General Telford Taylor to act as prosecutor in the Nuremberg trial of *U.S. v. Ohlendorf*, the so-called "Einsatzgruppen Case." After Nuremberg, he became involved in the issue of restitution of the victims of Nazi atrocities. He was appointed Director-General of the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization, where he served until 1956. He also served as Director of the United Restitution Organization from 1951 until 1993. Additionally, he has published a number of legal texts on subjects of world peace and international criminal law; his book *Less Than Slaves* documents the effort to gain restitution for slave laborers used by the Nazi regime. He remains an advocate of an international criminal court and is a proponent of the United Nations and world peace.

record
life stories

testimony

understand

memory
history

listen

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW
Washington, DC 20024-2126

recollect