Heritage Project Interview Questions

Name_____________________

Date__________  Per________

The following is a list of questions that can act as a guide for your interview. Feel free to add to them or delete questions when appropriate. Leave the questions open-ended when possible so that the person who is being interviewed can expand upon their answers. It is important that you ask follow up questions to bring out all the important details. Remember, stories told by your subject will make your paper rich.

BE SURE TO READ THE INTERVIEW GUIDELINES BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR INTERVIEW

I. Subject being interviewed

1. Who is the person being interviewed and how are they related to you?
2. Why did you choose them to interview?
3. From what nation/s did their family emigrate? What were some of the names of their ancestors?
4. When did their ancestors leave their homeland and why? If you don’t know why, make an educated guess.
5. Where did their ancestors first live when they came to America?
6. What kind of work did they do when they first came here? Describe the work.
7. Do they have any famous ancestors?
8. What kinds of things do they remember most about their parents and grandparents? (character, personality, attitudes, experiences they had with them, family stories, etc.)
9. How did your family end up here in Oregon?

II. Questions about themselves

Early Years:

1. When and where were you born? Who are your parents, siblings, children, grandchildren, etc.?
2. Where did you grow up? Describe the place.
3. Who or what was the most important to you in your early childhood?
4. What kinds of chores did you do? Describe any unusual chores. Did you get paid for doing chores?
5. When and where did you go to school? What were the names of the schools that you attended? Do you have any special memories of grade/grammar school? Describe the classroom, teachers, rules, lunch, report cards, recess, etc.
6. What do you recall about the holidays in your early childhood?
7. Is there anything else about your early childhood that you would like to share? (stories, memories, friends, etc.)
8. What is the most important thing that your parents or elders taught you?

Teenage Years:

1. What was the name of your high school? Were there many changes in school for you? Describe any special memories you have including school activities (plays, sports, clubs, music, etc.) academic classes, teachers, discipline, and appearance of the school or classrooms.
2. Tell about dating, coming of age rituals (hope chests, coming out parties, fishing/hunting trips, Bat Mitzvah or Bar Mitzvah, etc.)
3. Did you have any jobs when you were a teenager? If so, describe them.
4. Describe what you did on a typical summer day (chores, free time, games, activities).
5. What kind of clothes did you wear? What were some of the fads? What kinds of cars did people drive?
6. How would you compare your teen-age years to those of today? How is your life different from mine when you were the same age? How are things different? How are things the same?
7. What things worried you? Of what were you afraid?
8. Was there someone that you looked up to or had as a hero? Who were they and why were they important?
9. What “wounds” (taunts, harassments, hurts) did you experience that have turned into strengths?

Adult, Marriage, Family
1. How did you meet your spouse? What first attracted you to him/her? Was your marriage to each other your first? What age were you when you married? What was your spouse’s age?
2. What was going on in the world when you first married? How did this affect your life?
3. What places did you live? How many children did you have? (give names and dates of birth)
4. Who “wore the pants” when it came to raising the children? What do you believe it was important for your children to learn? Did your children follow your advice?
5. What family and cultural traditions are important to you?
6. What kind of behavior is considered best? What is not okay to do?
7. What were your biggest challenges in raising your family?
8. What was the hardest decision you ever made while raising your family?

III. Earning a Living
1. How did you and your spouse choose the job(s) you have or had? Did you get help from you family or the government? Did one or both of you work outside the home? Did you move because of your job?
2. What were some of the occupations where women were not common? What were some occupations where men were not common?
3. Did you like the work you chose? What was the hardest thing about it? What was the most enjoyable part? If you could start over, would you do the same thing?
4. What can you tell me about the Great Depression? If you were not alive then, do you recall hearing any family stories about that time in our history? What hardships were there? What lessons were learned? Did it have an affect on you or your family?

IV. Wartime
1. Did any of your family members serve in the Armed Forces? Did any wars impact your life? (WWII, Korea, Viet Nam, etc.) How did the war influence your life? What were your attitudes about the war? Are there any special stories you wish to share?
2. If you were not alive during WWII, are there any stories you heard about the war that you can share?
3. If you did not live in the U.S. during a time of conflict, can you either share any information that you heard about our involvement in a war, or can you tell about any that occurred in your home country?

V. Other Activities
1. What other activities were you involved with other than your regular job? (church, community groups, fraternal organizations, Rotary, theater, bowling, political associations, golf, boating, fishing, travel, etc.)
2. Many times regular activities are not associated with a group—yearly hunting and fishing trips, trips to the coast, family reunions, to name a few. Are there any activities you do to “unwind” or “get away from it all”? If you are retired, what do you do now that you have more time?

VI. Conclusion
1. How has life changed for you during your lifetime? What are the good things? What are the bad things?
2. What words of wisdom or advice would you like to pass on to me?
3. What expectations do you feel our cultural community has for its young people regarding responsibility toward the community?
4. What were your biggest challenges in your life? Have you overcome them? How?
5. What was the hardest decision you ever made in your life?