

## **Interviewee Name**

### **Historians Speak Interview Outline**

The following outline is meant to serve as a guide to those conducting interviews for the Historians Speak Oral History project. The outline should be adapted to make it relevant for your particular interview subject. Please contact the director of Oral History to obtain an electronic copy of this outline, from which you can then craft an outline for your specific interviewee. [Mark DePue at (217) 555-8949 or email at mark.depue@illinois.gov]

**Introductory Information:** State at the beginning of the interview:

- Interviewer's name (as interviewer)
- Date and place of interview
- Name of the person being interviewed
- "This interview is part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Historians Speak* Oral History project"

#### I. Background Information:

- a. Parent's background?
  - i. Father?
  - ii. Mother?
- b. Parents' occupation(s)?
- c. Other sibling & immediate family?

#### II. Growing up:

- A. Family life
- B. School(s)?
- C. Religious activities?
- D. Career aspirations? When did you become interested in history, and why?

### III. College Years:

#### A. Choosing a college?

1. Your major(s)/minor(s) in college?
2. Your influential teachers & courses?

#### B. Masters Degree? Institution?

1. Your major(s)/minor(s) in college?
2. Your influential teachers & courses?

#### C. PhD: Institution?

1. Your major(s) in college?
2. Your influential teachers & courses?
3. Working on your dissertation?
  - a. Researching & writing the dissertation?
  - b. Major findings?

#### D. Financing your education?

#### E. Other outside activities?

### IV. Family / Private Life:

#### A. How did you meet your spouse?

#### B. Activities and interests outside academics?

### V. Early career:

VI. **Writing Career:** *The remainder of the interview outline should be based on the individual's particular career & experiences. The interviewee's individual career and historical contributions will often lend itself to you taking either a chronological approach or thematic approach for the rest of the outline.* The focus for the rest of the interview should be on the narrator's career as a historian and academician, especially on their historiographical contributions in their chosen area of research, to include their published writings.

How was the discipline of writing historical biographies different from your experiences as a journalist? Did you take any training, do anything consciously to help facilitate that change?

VI. Career, cont.

VII. Institutional / Professional environment:

A. Discuss your relationship with your particular institution, and how that institution, and your relationship with it, has evolved over time.

B. How has teaching/academia/historical research, etc. changed over your career? Are there positive or negative aspects to this evolution?

VIII. Sample questions for conclusion of interview:

Colleagues you respect?

What do you think your most important contribution to the historical record?

What has been your most surprising discovery/revelation over the years?

Your biggest disappointment, professionally?

Your concerns for the future?

Your hopes/vision for the future?

Advice to the next generation of historians/scholars?