



# The Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Archival Project

◆ *Preserving Peace Corps History* ◆

## **Project Guide**

The Archival Project acts in cooperation with the John F. Kennedy Library to afford former Peace Corps Volunteers the opportunity to include their stories in the National Archives. It is an informal network of RPCVs who work directly with the RPCV Archivist at the John F Kennedy Library to preserve the Peace Corps' legacy through oral history interviews and the collection of archival materials. In the five years of its existence, more than 40 RPCV interviewers have completed approximately 300 interviews. The Project's basic resource is the unpaid voluntary efforts of those RPCVs who have participated, operating mainly through NPCA Affiliate groups.

Now, as we approach the 50th Anniversary, the Project plans a special effort (before it's too late) to interview those who served in the 1960s as volunteers. A modest goal is to add 3000 1960s interviews to the RPCV Collection before the year 2011; that would be about 10% of those who served during that period.

This Guide provides the information needed to conduct oral history interviews as a participant in the Archival Project. After orientation and training, the Interviewer works directly with the RPCV Archivist at the Kennedy Library. At present all expenses for equipment, supplies, and shipping are borne by the individual; some NPCA Affiliates provide funds.

Jaimie M. Quaglino, Archivist  
The RPCV Collection  
The John F. Kennedy Library  
Columbia Point  
Boston, MA 02125  
<jaimie.quaglino@nara.gov>

Bob Klein (Ghana 1961-1963)  
Project Organizer  
2424 Oakridge Ave  
Madison, WI 53704  
(608) 241-9569  
<rpcvarchivalproject@gmail.com>

# **C H E C K L I S T for Interviewers**

## **ARCHIVIST'S NOTE ABOUT PAPERWORK:**

If paperwork is incomplete, the interview can not be accessioned and paperwork will be returned to you. Be sure that both copies of the Deed of Gift are signed in full and that you've included the interview abstract with the Basic Data Form. Following procedures exactly facilitates the accessioning of interviews by the RPCV Archivist.

## **Before the interview**

- Check equipment and supplies to bring:
  - Tape Recorder (with extension cord if not using batteries)
  - Audio tapes (60 min./30 min. per side); more than 2
  - Batteries for tape recorder, including extra set
  - Copies of:   Basic Data Form  
                  Deed of Gift  
                  Memo to Interviewee
  - Project Guide with Interview Suggestions
  - Notepad and pens

## **Note re: privacy ( Discuss with interviewee BEFORE interview )**

Interviewees should understand that the contents of the interview tape become part of the National Archives and thus available, without restriction, to the public. To try to exclude portions of or to screen tapes is just not possible.

However, interviewees can still describe and comment on unpleasant, difficult, or personal situations without naming names. It is also possible to interrupt the taping for a personal aside and then continue.

## **After the interview**

- Give Interviewee Memo re: Interview
- Label/number tapes and cassette cases
- Interviewer and Interviewee complete and sign the following:
  - Deed of Gift (**2 copies**)
  - Basic Data Form

## **Shipping the tapes**

- Complete abstract of interview on back of Basic Data Form
- Package tapes with Basic Data Form and Deeds of Gift
- After mailing, e-mail the RPCV Archivist with the following information (jaimie.quaglino@nara.gov):
  - Name(s) of Interviewee, Country of Service, Dates (yrs.)
  - Number of tapes per Interview
  - Your name and contact information

## **FINDING INTERVIEWEES**

Although the Project is emphasizing interviews with 1960 s era RPCVs, Project RPCVs are welcome to conduct interviews with others.

1. The simplest starting point is those RPCVs you personally know. Doing initial interviews with friends may make it easier to develop interviewing skills.
2. A good source of Interviewees is the National Peace Corps Association Affiliate in your area. If you are not active in the local Affiliate, you can still contact them and attend a meeting or post a notice in the local newsletter. Affiliates' information can be found at the NPCA website <rpcv.org> .
3. Interviewees can also be found through the NPCA Country of Service Affiliates, also at <rpcv.org> .
4. After you identify an Interview subject, describe the Archival Project and explain the interview process. Interviews usually run 1 1/2 to 3 hours and need to be conducted in a comfortable, quiet environment, free of interruptions.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

### **1. Equipment and materials**

- a. According to RPCV Collection guidelines, all interviews are recorded on audio cassette tape; use 60 min. tapes only (30 min. x 2).
- b. Use a cassette tape recorder (not a mini-cassette; not digital audio); all have built-in microphones. It can be a basic desk type recorder (approx. \$30) or a smaller personal cassette recorder (\$40 - \$200). All have a mic input slot if you wish to use an external mic set-up. Using battery power gives greater flexibility.
- c. In using the built-in mic, test placement of the recorder to best pick up the voices of both Interviewee and Interviewer (usually seated catty-corner).

### **2. Facilitating the interview**

- a. Have a pad and pen with you to jot down notes or follow-up ideas arising in the interview. Be sure to have additional blank copies of **The Basic Data Form** and **The Deed of Gift** (will be completed after interview).
- b. Familiarize yourself with the Interview Suggestions (see below).
- c. Let Interviewee do the talking. Silences are OK; it takes time to remember. Encourage Interviewee to tell anecdotal stories, expand responses.

d. Avoid questions that simply require a Yes/No answer. Use “How”, “Why”, “Describe”, “Compare”, “the best”, “the worst”; “What happened before/during/after [an event]?”

e. If possible before the interview, suggest Interviewee look over letters, diaries, photos, etc. to jog/provoke memories.

f. It’s best to conduct interview with no one else present. Mates, friends, partners sometimes jump in and begin commenting before Interviewee can talk. A third party is a distraction and breaks the conversational flow.

### 3. Starting the interview

a. Be sure there is a blank tape in the recorder and that the recorder is **on**. Arrange comfortable seating (catty-corner) with the recorder midway between. Get the information needed for your introduction ( b., below).

b. Let the tape run 10-15 seconds. Start, “Today is (Mo/Day/Yr). This is (your name) and I am interviewing (Interviewee) who was a Peace Corps Volunteer in (Country) from (Mo/Yr) to (Mo/Yr) as (Project --- teacher/coop developer/business advisor/etc.). **THEN**, start the interview.

### 4. After the interview

a. Complete **The Basic Data Form** and two (2) copies of **The Deed of Gift**, signed by Interviewee and Interviewer.

b. Number each cassette (1/2, 2/2). On the tape itself, number, date, name of Interviewee. On cassette case, number, date, Interviewee, and Interviewer.

c. Mail the interview tapes and forms to:

Jaimie M.Quaglino

RPCV Archivist

<jaimie.quaglino@nara.gov>

John F. Kennedy Library

Columbia Point

Boston, MA 02125

**[NOTE: When mailing interviews, also send an e-mail to the Archivist with the following information:**

**- names of interviewees;**

**- country and dates of service;**

**- number of tapes mailed.]**

d. Give Interviewee a copy of **Memo Re: Information about Interview**

## **PERSONAL PAPERS**

1. Either before or after the interview, discuss the donation of personal papers to the RPCV Collection. Personal papers are primarily contemporary accounts (letters, diaries, journals) written by the RPCV at the time of volunteer service; also representative sets of photos or slides (carefully captioned).
2. RPCVs wishing to donate papers should first send a list of such items, with a brief description of contents to the RPCV Archivist by post or a <jaimie.quaglino@nara.gov>. Also refer to the Archivist if there are any questions as to suitability of materials.
3. **DO NOT SEND** anything until approval has been given by Archivist.

## **INTERVIEW SUGGESTIONS**

For many of us what distinguishes our Peace Corps service is its uniqueness in our lives, so it is not easy to develop a simple list of questions for all interviews. It is hoped that the interviewer can evoke that special quality of each RPCV's experience, which should emerge in a wide-ranging discussion of their service. Keep the focus on the individual's experiences, not on the 'bigger' picture. Try to get specifics and descriptions of people, events, and environments; encourage anecdotes rather than generalizations. When interviewee talks of 'we' or 'they', request the specific identity of who is being referred to.

1. Start interview by letting interviewee describe present family, work, current residence, interests. Then ask interviewee to think back to the year before joining Peace Corps, talk about life then (can include childhood, education, other experiences relevant to becoming a PCV).
2. The most common question, from 1961 to the present, is, of course, 'Why did you join the Peace Corps?' It can appear at various places in the interview and may stimulate memories of the contemporary social and political milieu.
3. How did you hear about the Peace Corps and what made you decide to apply? Describe the process and timing. Did you have a specific country or project in mind?
4. What were your/friends'/family's reactions when you were accepted? Was there any hesitation or reservations? On your part? On their part?
5. What project were you invited to join? How did you prepare yourself and others for dislocation of entering into 2 years of Peace Corps service?

6. Training: Where, faculty, syllabus, technical studies; reaction to other trainees. Language training. The selection process: Surprises, disappointments, enjoyments. Hindsight: Did training prepare you, was it useful to PC service?

7. Initial entry into and reaction to country to which you were assigned: Describe project, PC staff, impression of local people, physical environment.

8. Assignment: Specifics of job assigned, living conditions, typical day, relations with people of country (if possible, speak about individuals encountered there), other PCVs, PC staff; Role of language; Work time vs. leisure time ---- describe both. How life and work changed over the months.

9. End of first year: notable events, reflections after one year, joys and woes, unexpected events, relationships. Health problems? Vacation? Any travel?

10. End of tour: sense of achievement/failure, pluses and minuses in relations and work with people of country; regrets and satisfactions; plans for future.

11. Overall: evaluate your service in light of 3 goals of the Peace Corps:

a. To provide technical assistance where requested.

b. To promote better understanding of the U.S..

c. To promote better understanding of other peoples by Americans.

12. Through the years have you continued any kind of involvement with your country of service and/or contact with people from that country? Any continuing Peace Corps involvement? Have you been involved with Third Goal activities? Describe over time to present.

13. Effect on you of your PC service: immediate (change in self, career plans), long term.

***Add your own questions***

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**NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION  
JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY**

**DEED OF GIFT**

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I \_\_\_\_\_ (Interviewee), and I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Interviewer), do hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recording of personal interviews conducted on \_\_\_\_\_ (date), at \_\_\_\_\_ (city, state) and prepared for deposit in the John F. Kennedy Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (1) The tape recording shall be made available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the John F. Kennedy Library.
- (2) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview tape.
- (3) Copies of the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.
- (4) Copies of the tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the John F. Kennedy Library.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewee (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

John F. Kennedy Library  
Columbia Point  
Boston, MA 02125

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant Archivist for  
Presidential Libraries

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**The Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Collection**

**The John F. Kennedy Library**

**BASIC DATA FORM - The RPCV Archival Project Oral History Interview**

Place of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

**INTERVIEWER :** \_\_\_\_\_

Address (include E-mail and telephone):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Peace Corps Service (country; dates [mo./yr.]; project):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**INTERVIEWEE :** \_\_\_\_\_

Address (include E-mail and telephone):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Peace Corps Service (country; dates [mo./yr.]; project):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List and explain unfamiliar names, locations, etc. mentioned in interview:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer: Write brief abstract of interview on reverse side.**

*[For examples of interview abstracts, see <jfklibrary.org>, The RPCV Collection; search through the Finding Aid to Oral History Interviews.]*

## MEMO

**To: RPCV Interviewee**  
**From: The RPCV Archival Project <rpcvarchivalproject@gmail.com>**  
**Re: Information about your interview**

## ARCHIVING YOUR INTERVIEW

Your interview will be forwarded to The RPCV Archivist at The John F. Kennedy Library and will be logged into The Collection as part of The National Archives. You will receive a signed copy of The Deed of Gift that you completed after the interview. The Deed of Gift provides for unrestricted transfer of title to the United States, a guarantee to the donor that the materials will be preserved in an appropriate depository and that the donor (and the public) will have access to these materials. SEE the RPCV Collection, <jfklibrary.org >; search: The RPCV Collection.

## PERSONAL PAPERS

Personal papers are primarily contemporary accounts (letters, diaries, journals) **written by you** at the time of volunteer service; also representative sets of photos or slides (carefully captioned). They're as important to the Archives as interviews.

To donate papers, you should first send a list of such items with a brief description of contents; also indicate your country of service, dates, and project to the RPCV Archivist at <jaimie.quaglino@nara.gov> or by postal mail:

Jaimie M. Quaglino, RPCV Archivist,  
The John F. Kennedy Library  
Columbia Point, Boston, MA 02125

Contact the Archivist if you have any questions as to suitability of materials or about the procedures of The RPCV Collection. **DO NOT SEND** anything until approval has been given by the RPCV Archivist.

## REQUESTING A COPY OF YOUR INTERVIEW TAPE

To request a copy of your interview tape:

1. Wait until you receive a letter from the Archives with a co-signed copy of the Deed of Gift. This means that the tape has been received and processed into the RPCV Collection.
2. Then, contact the RPCV Archivist and make a formal request.