

UMSL Life Review Project



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<http://www.umsl.edu/~meusert/LifeReview/index.html>

Questions? Call Zyra Apugan, Project Assistant (314-516-5497; zag3@mail.umsl.edu).

About the Project

The UMSL Life Review Project is an educational and community outreach effort sponsored by the Gerontology Graduate Program. *One of the best ways to learn about the aging process is through narrative gerontology – the telling and review of personal life stories!*

The Project was initiated in 2007 with formation of a new graduate course, entitled *Interviewing Older Adults & Life Review* (GER 6130, 3 credits). This course combines training in life review interviewing with the development of video editing and production skills. Students are assigned to interview senior adult volunteers who tell their life stories on camera and for educational purposes. Students edit these stories into "Keepsake" DVDs that are presented to each volunteer as a token of appreciation. Many ask for multiple copies to give to family members. GER 6130 is offered each Spring and open for enrollment by community professionals.

With support from the School of Social Work and the Des Lee Collaborative Vision, the Project will is now interviewing seniors year-round in a **Video Studio** located on the lower level of Bellerive Hall on the South Campus of UMSL. Interview footage from these interviews will be edited to support a **Gerontology Video Clip Library** available for UMSL faculty to access and show to enrich their teaching on various topics, including retirement, health, caregiving, driving and mobility, widowhood, etc.

In October, 2008, the Project co-sponsored a full-day workshop on the *Tapestries Model of Life Review*. Over 25 students and community professionals attended. Mary Jones, MSG, a graduate of UMSL, received a grant from the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis in support of this event. These funds allowed us to bring in *Tapestries* expert and journalist, Elizabeth Vega, to give the workshop. A video of the workshop may be viewed on the Project website (address above).

In 2009, 2010 and 2012, the Project partnered with the Apartment Community at the Shrine of our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, IL, on an **Interview Blitz Day**. Students from 6130 traveled to the Community and, following an orientation, interviewed residents in their apartments. Students and interviewees ate lunch together, and we debriefed the experience as a group. It was a valuable experience for all! A similar partnership with the **Shepherd Center** in Kirkwood, MO, was equally successful.

Ways to Get Involved

- Those wishing to learn life review interviewing may enroll in GER 6130. This course is open to graduate students from UMSL and neighboring institutions (when approved). Community professionals may enroll as a non-degree student. Certain restrictions apply, so it is best to contact Dr. Meuser first to discuss your interests and objectives. The next class starts in January, 2014.
- Adults, age 60 years and older, may volunteer to be interviewed and join our waiting list. There is no charge to participate and volunteers receive a DVD Keepsake video 4-8 weeks after being interviewed. As noted above, education is an important emphasis and volunteers are asked to allow de-identified clips from their interviews to be used for teaching purposes. A consent form is involved. A detailed packet is mailed to and reviewed with all volunteers ahead of their interview date.
- Community organizations may get involved by hosting a life review presentation at their location and/or by linking their clients/residents as potential volunteer interviewees. Call Stacy Beckenholdt to learn more.
- *The Project does not have dedicated funding at this time and relies on voluntary participation and other in-kind assistance (e.g., transportation for volunteers).*

UMSL Life Review Project

I wish to volunteer to be interviewed on camera as part of the UMSL Life Review Project. I understand that I will be contacted about the Project and provided with an informational packet to review, including a Consent Form. Interviews are conducted by graduate students.

Questions? Contact Dr. Tom Meuser at 314-516-5421 (meusert@umsl.edu).



Name: _____ Age: _____

Living Arrangement: ☐House ☐Condo ☐Apartment ☐Retirement Community

Address: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

How did you hear about the Life Review Project? _____

Other comments? _____

UMSL Life Review Project

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Address: _____ Zip: _____

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How did you hear about the Life Review Project? _____

Other comments? _____



Gerontology Graduate Program
School of Social Work
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One University Blvd
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LIFE REVIEW ORIENTATION LETTER

Summer 2013

Dear volunteer interviewee:

Thank you for your interest in being interviewed through the UMSL Life Review Project. This letter and the attached documents describe the Project and what your participation will involve. Be sure to read through each document carefully. Feel free to contact me by telephone or e-mail if you have any questions or concerns.

Interviews are conducted year-round by faculty and/or graduate student interviewers. Most are scheduled on weekday mornings (typically 9:30 - Noon), and video recorded in a studio space in Bellerive Hall on the South Campus. Interviews may also be conducted in the volunteer's home (or other private location) upon request. There is no cost to participate. Interviewees receive an edited "Keepsake DVD" of 4-8 weeks after participation. Three copies of the DVD are provided at no charge; additional copies are \$15 each.

Interviews recorded through the Project serve three purposes: (1) *education* of graduate students (i.e., through the experience of conducting the interview, by viewing de-identified interview segments in class); (2) *community service* through the Keepsake DVD given to the participant; and (3) *qualitative research* on common life issues and concerns associated with advancing age (e.g., life lessons and wisdom, experiences with forgiveness, retirement from driving and personal mobility, end of life preparation).

You are under no obligation to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable in any way; *you can say no to any question and still participate fully in the Project and receive your Keepsake DVD.*

Three documents are enclosed for your review: video consent form (2 copies, you keep one), the life review interview guide, and qualitative research summary.

VIDEO CONSENT FORM: The consent form is a modified version of the standard University consent for video recording. By signing the consent, you agree participate in a video recorded interview concerning your life story, personal values and beliefs.

There are three issues with respect to consent and confidentiality that are important for you to understand and consider:

- A. An objective of the UMSL Life Review Project is to provide an opportunity for students to learn about life story interviewing and the aging process through firsthand experience. One way this is accomplished is by having students play the role of interviewer. *Another way is by showing short segments (clips) from past interviews to educate students about specific aspects of aging (e.g., retirement, illness, care giving).* The Project maintains a Gerontology Video Library (GLV) of de-identified clips for teaching purposes. "De-identified" means that the interviewee's last name, address, and other obvious spoken identifiers are edited out and not shown. The video library is maintained in a password-protected system and only available for use by University of Missouri faculty for teaching purposes. **By signing the Video Consent Form, you agree that clips from your interview may be used for teaching purposes as part of the GLV.**
- B. Your name and address will be kept confidential in the Project office (i.e., via a password-protected spreadsheet). Others will not know that you participated unless you choose to tell them. *The video recording of your interview is not fully confidential, however.* The video recording will show your face and voice. It is possible that a student viewing a clip from your interview might recognize you. The likelihood that this would occur and be problematic may be low, but it is something you need to be aware of. **By signing the Video Consent Form, you acknowledge and understand these limits to confidentiality.**
- C. **Research Component:** Another objective of the Project is to support the qualitative research of Dr. Meuser, the Project Coordinator. "Qualitative research" is the study of what people say in response to specific questions and follow-up questions on a topic. The questions that interest Dr. Meuser are listed in the attached *Qualitative Research & Consent Script*. At an appropriate time during your interview, the interviewer will go over this document with you and ask if you are open to responding to these questions. If interested, you will choose which questions are appropriate for you in cooperation with your interviewer. You can choose to say "no" to the research questions altogether, or you may choose to answer just some or all of them. These are common life review questions, and your responses may become part of your Keepsake DVD. Your answers to research questions will be transcribed in text form and a code number will be assigned for analysis. Your name will be kept separate and confidential from your specific answers.

If you are comfortable telling your life story on camera with these limitations concerning confidentiality, then please sign this form, and return it in the enclosed stamped/addressed envelope. Your name will be added to the wait list for the Project, and you will be contacted by telephone to schedule your interview in the coming few months. If we call you to schedule and you are away or cannot participate for another reason, you will have the option to remain on the wait list for another time.

INTERVIEW GUIDE: The enclosed life review interview guide provides an overview of the interview process, as well possible topics and questions to discuss during your life review. This will be helpful for you to start thinking about your life story before the actual day of the interview.

A Life Review interview can be both an enjoyable and challenging process. A full life story cannot be covered in single 2-hour interview, so our goal is to tell the basics of your life story from birth to present, including important relationships, events and achievements. Despite the time limitations, you may be surprised and pleased by how much can be covered.

As the interviewee, your comfort is of utmost importance. You don't have to share anything that makes you uncomfortable, and you can ask to stop the interview at any time. Recalling difficult or painful memories is, however, an important part of the life review process, and you may shed a few tears. This is normal. There are sure to be some laughs, too, as you recall joyful times. Be open to what happens, but also know that you are in control of how you respond. *If you find yourself getting into something that is too deep for a brief interview, just say so and you can move on to something else.*

Much of the life review interview is open and flexible in structure. The interviewer and the volunteer interviewee decide, together, where to focus and what stories are important. As noted above, there is a 10-15 minute research component to the Project. The interviewer will orient you to this when it seems appropriate during the flow of your interview. Responding to the research questions is optional; you may decline and still complete a full life review interview and receive our Keepsake DVD. If you do agree to answer some or all of the research questions, your verbal consent will be recorded by the interviewer. There is not a separate consent form for you to sign.

Persons suffering from depression or other serious mental health issue may find the life review process to be very challenging. Some may choose to delay their life review until a later time when feeling better. If you are having emotional difficulty and participate in the life review interview, what you say could indicate a need for professional assistance (e.g., if risk for suicide is suggested; threat to harm another is indicated). Dr. Meuser supervises the interview process and he may contact you afterwards to discuss serious concerns about your well-being.

Sometimes unexpected memories may materialize during a life review interview. Please understand that this Project is intended to be educational in nature, and your interview is not a counseling session. If something comes up that is better addressed in a professional context, the interviewer will address this and may ask Dr. Meuser to join the session. You may also choose to call Dr. Meuser later to discuss a past trauma and options for assistance and care (support groups, formal counseling, etc.).

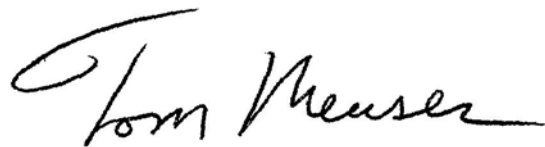
You will receive your edited Keepsake DVD 4-8 weeks after your interview. Three copies are provided at no charge; additional cost \$15 each. If you have any pictures of your family, yourself, newspaper or magazine clippings, awards, artwork, etc., that you would like to be included in your DVD, that's fine. *You may bring up to 15 items with you to be scanned or photographed at the time of your interview appointment.* The items will be returned at the end of your interview. These will be shown in your DVD at an appropriate moment.

This is a long letter, and it may be beneficial for you to read it over 2-3 times before proceeding. Is everything clear and acceptable to you? Feel free to call Dr. Meuser if you have any questions or concerns.

If you are comfortable with what is presented in this letter and packet, please complete the Video Consent Form and mail it back. This will make you official on the wait list for the Project. You always have the option to withdraw without penalty at a later date.

Your next contact with the Project will be to schedule your life review interview. You are welcome to bring notes with you, but do not script out everything you are going to say. Part of the process is to speak and respond in the moment! I look forward to meeting you in the near future.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Meuser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

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Director, Gerontology Graduate Program
Associate Professor of Social Work & Gerontology
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Cell: 314-402-8638

VIDEO RELEASE FORM



Please print:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____ Phone #: (_____) _____

Event at which photos or video were taken: Pursuant to the UMSL Life Review Project

Interview Date: _____ (list year if unknown) **Location:** Video Studio in Bellerive Hall OR Personal Home Setting

UMSL may quote me as follows: Utilize video clips from my interview to further Gerontology education through the Univ. of Missouri.

I want my name to appear as: Only my first name will be used as an identifier.

I want my company name to appear as: No company name will be used.

I hereby consent that the photographs, audio, or video taken of me by a representative of the University of Missouri and/or any comments that I have provided on this form may be used by that University, without further consideration, in courses and other educational offerings to further student learning about life review and the aging process. De-identified (i.e., no last name) clips from my interview will become part of a *Gerontology Video Library* to be accessed and shown by instructors to educate students in live (in person) and on-line classroom settings. Clips may be retained and utilized for the duration of the project.

Interviewee Signature

Date

____ Spouse or ____ Adult Child Name (printed)

Signature in Support (in case of cognitive impairment only)

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Interviewee Signature

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UMSL Life Review Project:

Orientation Guide for Volunteers

Tom Meuser, PhD, Project Coordinator

Gerontology Program, School of Social Work, University of Missouri - St. Louis

314-516-5421; meusert@umsl.edu

<http://www.umsl.edu/~meusert/LifeReview/index.html>

The UMSL Life Review Project provides opportunities for students to learn about aging in a personal way (i.e., by talking to people about their experiences, values, hopes, etc.) and for area seniors to record their life stories for future generations. Volunteer interviewees receive an edited DVD "Keepsake" Video after taking part in an interview. There is no charge to participate. Those wishing more than 3 copies of the DVD are asked to pay a nominal fee to cover the cost of reproduction.

The basic interview protocol (below) serves as a starting point for the process. The student interviewer and the volunteer interviewee discuss the interview ahead of time and develop a general plan of what to cover. Most interviews last 1-2 hours. Much can be covered in this time, and an important goal is to develop an outline of a person's whole life story.

The Project maintains a *Gerontology Video Library* (GLV) of brief clips highlighting different aspects aging and life experience (e.g., career and retirement, volunteerism, health and caregiving, personal values and beliefs, children and family life, attitudes about death and afterlife). It is normal for older adults to consider and reflect on such issues; this is the essence of doing a life review interview. Volunteer interviewees are asked to give consent for de-identified video clips (i.e., 2-5 minute segments, first name only) to be included in a password-protected electronic library for instructor use. Only University of Missouri faculty and teaching assistants have access to the GLV. Clips are shown to supplement lecture material and otherwise enrich the learning of undergraduate and graduate students.

The volunteer's support of the educational mission of the project makes it a win-win for both parties. Volunteer interviewees may ask that certain topics or segments not be included in the video library - that's absolutely fine and welcome. The student interviewer edits the Keepsake DVD and clips for the GVL, so he or she can be responsive to such requests. An important objective of the Project is that all benefit and feel comfortable in their participation. Dr. Meuser supervises the interview process, and questions about this requirement may be directed to him at the number listed above.

Interview Protocol

A Life Review Interview can be both an enjoyable and a challenging experience. Many questions may be considered, but rarely would all be answered in a single sitting. Your comfort is of utmost importance. You don't have to answer any question or delve into any area which causes you discomfort. You can expect your interview to last about 1-2 hours.

As you prepare for the interview, consider how you have grown over the course of your life and the many things you have learned. This interview is an opportunity to learn about yourself, share your perspectives and values, and teach others at the same time.

The interview begins with three standard items (in italics below) that appear early in the edited Keepsake DVD:

- Looking at the camera, please say your *first name* (My name is _____), where you were *born/year* (I was born in _____ in 19____), your *age* (I am _____ years old), and where you *live now* (and I live in an apartment (house, etc.) in _____).
- What 3-5 characteristics or adjectives describe you the best? (*Example: I like to think of myself as honest, hard-working, caring, and inquisitive.*)
- Why did you volunteer to participate in this interview today? What do you hope to gain from this experience?

The remainder of the interview is loosely structured around the themes and questions listed below. Over the course of the interview, we *do* want to capture the general story of your life (birth, early life, school, work, etc.), and the interviewer will help structure this. The rest will depend on you and what's important to you.

Most interviewees cover many/all of the themes below, but some in more depth than others. It is sometimes helpful to come prepared to your interview with notes (on this page is fine) or a listing of topics. The interviewer will ask you about important topics to cover (or not cover) at the start of the interview process. Since the interview is being video recorded, you can stop at any time and negotiate how to proceed

- **Your Current Life**
 - Tell me about your current life and activities.
 - Who are the 2-3 *most important* people in your life now?
 - What is your daily routine like? What brings you joy?
 - What are the most challenging aspects of your life today?
- **About You / Past Life**
 - Tell me about your family of origin - parents, siblings.
 - What stands out in your memory about growing up?
 - Who were the 2-3 *most important* people in your life when you were young?
 - (If married or widowed) How did you and your spouse meet? What was your early relationship like?
 - What joys and/or challenges occurred during your married life?

- (If you had children) Tell me about your child or children. What stands out in your memory about their growing up? What is your relationship(s) like today?
- (If applicable) What did it mean for you personally to become a parent? How did parenthood mold you as a person?
- We all experience losses in our life. Looking back at the first half of your life, what losses (deaths, other losses) stand out in your memory? What has grief meant in your life?
- **Career & Service**
 - What paying jobs did you hold in the past?
 - Did you consider any as a career or vocation?
 - Was volunteerism a part of your experience, then or now? How so?
 - Did you serve in the military? If so, what branch and position? What was your experience like? How did it mold you as a person?
 - (If applicable) What impact did retirement have on your sense of yourself and personal security?
- **Health**
 - How would you describe your health today? Do you function in handling daily life tasks much as in the past, or are there limitations now?
 - Have health problems been challenges at other times during your life?
 - Have you ever experienced a period of significant anxiety or depression? If so, would you be willing to share a bit about this experience? What helped you through it?
- **Caregiving**
 - Have you served as a caregiver, now or in the past?
 - For whom did you provide care? For what reasons?
 - How does/did serving as a caregiver enrich your life?
 - What challenges do/did you face as a caregiver? What is/was the hardest part for you?
- **Spirituality**
 - What role has faith played in your life?
 - What are the roots of your faith? Has your faith changed over time.
 - What values do you hold especially dear or meaningful?
 - Has your faith helped you to overcome challenges and/or get through some difficult times?

- **Death & End of Life**
 - How as death impacted the second half of your life?
 - What losses stand out as particularly meaningful or challenging?
 - What do you believe about death and what may come after?
 - Does death frighten you?
 - **Life Review**
 - On balance, are you satisfied with how you have lived your life?
 - Are there any significant regrets?
 - What 2-3 accomplishments are you most proud of? Why?
 - **Looking to the Future**
 - What do you expect the next 5-10 years to bring in your life?
 - What are your hopes for yourself and those closest to you?
 - If you could share just one piece of advice to enrich the life of a young person, what would it be?
 - **Other Thoughts & Comments**
-

A Note Concerning Interviewees with Dementia:

Life review can be challenging for persons with dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease, especially those with more than mild memory loss. It is often helpful to have 1-2 co-interviewees involved in such cases. A spouse and/or adult child may observe the interview and contribute when reasonable to support accurate recall and processing. The focus remains on the primary interviewee's story, but this process is helped along by the presence and involvement of loved ones.

Participants in the UMSL Life Review Project may be offered this form of joint interviewing. Discuss any questions or concerns with the student interviewer and/or Dr. Meuser (314-516-5421).

Qualitative Research & Consent Script

UMSL Life Review Project

Dr. Tom Meuser, coordinator of the UMSL Life Review Project, also conducts research on various topics associated with aging. He is interested in mobility and transportation in aging, how older adults think about and prepare for the end of life, the role of forgiveness in people's lives, and important values and personal wisdom about life.

We are likely to touch on some of these topics informally in your life review interview today. People often discuss some of these topics in the course of a usual life review session. On behalf of Dr. Meuser, I would like to ask that you consider responding to some of his formal questions on these topics. These are listed on this paper (hand large print copy to participant).

You may say no to any question during this interview. It is totally up to you whether you choose to respond to the research questions or not. You are under no obligation to do so, and what you decide on this will have no impact on your life review today or your keepsake DVD. Either way, we will work together to do a complete life review interview to meet your goals.

If you choose to participate, you may feel some mild emotional discomfort when discussing some of these questions (e.g., those focusing on the end of life). We can talk about any discomfort and what this may mean to you. Dr. Meuser is available to talk to you, too, if you have strong feelings or concerns. Your comfort is of utmost importance to us.

As with other life review issues we will discuss today, you may benefit from answering the research questions by learning something about yourself. You may clarify something that has bothered you or that you care about, for example.

You may express something that you would like to be part of your keepsake DVD. I will be editing your interview, and so we can decide together what parts of your research-related responses you would like to include. You may choose to include all, part or none.

Do you have any questions about what I have just described? Are you open to answering some of Dr. Meuser's research questions now or at an appropriate time as we go through your interview today?

Document Verbal Consent Status

Interviewee Name: _____ Date: _____

___ Positive/Affirmative verbal consent given and documented on video.

___ Interviewee wishes not to participate in the research component.

Research Questions for Life Review Participants

- i. All people move from place to place via various means: walking, driving, riding, etc. What does “mobility” mean to you in your daily life now?
 - a. Do you worry about losing some or all of your mobility as you grow older? If so, what are your concerns?
 - b. (For Current Drivers Only) Have you considered the possibility that you will have to “hang up the keys” and stop driving someday? What thoughts or feelings does this bring up?
 - c. (For Former/Past Drivers Only) What has it meant for you to stop driving? How have you been able to maintain your mobility?
- ii. As you look back, what is the single *most important* life lesson or advice-for-living you have learned?
 - a. How important is it for you pass on such advice to others in your family or community?
 - b. Are there certain things you do in your life today that provide a sense of “giving back” to others? If so, please describe them and what they mean to you.
- iii. In your experience, what does the concept of “forgiveness” mean? How do *you* define it?
 - a. Is it *necessary* for two people to agree and talk openly for forgiveness to occur? Why or why not in your opinion?
 - b. Is there a time or event in your life when an act of forgiveness was especially important or meaningful? If so, please describe this experience and what it has meant for your life.
- iv. We all die eventually. How does the reality of death influence how you approach your daily life?
 - a. Do you feel prepared for your death? What helps (or might help) you to feel more prepared?

- b. Is there something especially important or meaningful that you would like to accomplish before you die? If so, please describe this activity and what it means to you.
- v. **(For Active Caregivers Only)** How has your life changed since you started providing care to your _____ (spouse, other) who was diagnosed with _____ (dementia, cancer, other)?
 - a. Does one of your care giving roles involve providing transportation for this person?
 - i. If no: How does the person you provide care for get to appointments and other places?
 - 1. Is this person still driving? If yes, how many driving car trips over the past 14 days?
 - 2. Do you have any concerns about this person's ability to drive safely?
 - ii. If yes, to what places do you provide transportation and how frequently?
 - 1. Has your role of transportation provider changed or grown over time?
 - 2. What, if anything, could be done to make your role of transportation provider more comfortable or easier?
 - 3. What alternative modes of transportation are available in your community? Have you used any and what was your experience like?