



Gerontology Graduate Program
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SAMPLE PARTICIPANT LETTER

Re: Participation as an Interviewee in the UMSL Life Review Project

Dear _____

Thank you for volunteering to be interviewed through the UMSL Life Review Project. I am the student assistant working with Dr. Tom Meuser, the Project Coordinator, and I will be conducting your life story interview. Your interview is scheduled for _____, in Bellerive Hall on the South Campus of UMSL. Driving directions are attached, along with the consent form. A dated parking pass is also included with instructions for placement on the inside of your rear car window.

You may park in any student-designated space around or near Bellerive Hall. Enter the building via rear patio entrance. There's a long walkway from the parking lot with two large flower pots on either side. Follow this up past the picnic tables and enter through the double doors in the corner. Have a seat in the student lounge to your left, and I will meet you there.

A Life Review interview can be both an enjoyable and challenging process. The attached interview guide provides a general structure for the experience. 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 will be surprised and pleased by how much can be covered in this time.

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 Life Review, 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 we'll move on to something else.*

Please be aware that your confidentiality cannot be protected, as you will be participating in a videotaped interview, parts of which will be shown for educational

purposes. Students will see your image and hear what you have to say. We will use first names only to allow some anonymity. Any specific identifiers or sensitive material may be edited from clips used for educational purposes. Please feel free to tell me if you would prefer that something you said not be used, and I will be sure to exclude it from the teaching clips.

Sometimes unexpected memories may materialize during a Life Review interview. Please understand that this project is intended to be educational in nature and not clinical/therapeutic. Most who participate in Life Review, however, do find the process to be personally beneficial and enjoyable. If a past trauma or other difficult memory comes up, and you would like to discuss this more and learn about options for care (support groups, counseling, etc.), I will direct you to speak with Dr. Meuser. You may also contact Dr. Meuser yourself by calling him at 314-516-5421 during business hours.

If you remain open to being interviewed after reading this letter and attachments, please complete the consent form and bring it to the interview. I will have extra blank copies, too, if you forget it. Feel free to call me at 636-236-9297 if you have any questions or concerns in the meanwhile.

I look forward to meeting you on the 5th and talking about your life story!

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Yates
Graduate Student in Gerontology
Student Interviewer, UMSL Life Review Project