

Why Conduct Veterinary Oral History Interviews?

Veterinarians who have been in practice most of their lives possess considerable knowledge, experience, and perspectives concerning the ways things were back when, what they did, how they handled changing situations, and much more.

Those who practiced between the 1930s and 1980s have experienced some of the greatest changes in the veterinary profession, including:

- Introduction of effective veterinary drugs and antibiotics.
- Vaccines to prevent viral and bacterial diseases.
- Narcotics and controlled substance restrictions.
- Shift from rural practices emphasizing large animals and agriculture to production medicine.
- Evolution of small animal medicine and surgery.
- Changing diagnostics, techniques and equipment.
- Revised veterinary education requirements.
- Gender shift toward more women in the field.
- Public health and human disease prevention



What Is Oral History?

According to the Oral History Association, oral history is “...a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events. Oral history is the oldest type of historical inquiry, predating the written word, and one of the most modern, initiated with tape recorders in the 1940s and now using the 21st century digital technologies.”

Others have defined oral history as “the systematic collection of living people’s testimony about their own experiences.”

Each oral history interview is unique composed of a person’s recollections of personal events, experiences, and reflections which can serve as a primary historical information resource.



American Veterinary Medical History Society, Inc.

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Oral Histories of Veterinary Medicine

Recalling the Past Practice of Veterinary Medicine for the Future



American Veterinary Medical History Society

<http://www.avmhs.org>

Oral Histories of Veterinary Medicine

The American Veterinary Medical History Society (AVMHS) strongly encourages the compilation of oral history interviews of senior or not-so old veterinarians who have stories to tell across the country as a means of capturing and preserving precious recollections of significant changes that have taken place in the practice of veterinary medicine since the 1930s.

Who Should Be Interviewed?

Choose any veterinarian who is retired, including former associates, colleagues, or partners in your practice, or any older practitioner who would love to share their experiences. Talk to them NOW... before it is too late!



The **AVMHS Guide to Conducting Veterinary Oral History Interviews** details the oral interview process, offers practical suggestions, and provides questions suitable for veterinary medicine.

See the AVMHS roster of past and present veterinary oral history programs and collections.

How to Get Started

Successful oral histories can be sponsored by state veterinary medical associations and/or conducted by one or more interested individuals. For example,

- Request your state veterinary medical association or specialty board establish a State Historical or Oral History Committee,
- Assemble a small group of colleagues interested in oral history and the heritage of the profession.
- Send out information to recruit members who would be interested in conducting interviews of senior veterinarians.
- Develop a realist plan of action and time line, which may include a specific theme or focus,

How To Conduct Oral Histories

The oral history process typically involves:

- Identifying and selecting potential interviewees.
- Making appointments and gathering biographical and other background information.
- Developing a set of questions related to the person being interviewed..
- Conducting the interview while recording one or more short sessions.
- Transcribing the verbal dialog into a written document for easy reading.
- Preserving the document and its voice recording in a safe repository.
- Keeping records and doing appropriate follow-up.

Preserving & Using Oral Histories

Once completed, sponsoring organizations maintain ownership of these valuable oral histories and should preserve them in one or more safe repositories.

In sharing the insightful content with others, the full



interviews, excerpts, or summaries might be compiled into publications, articles, exhibits, talks, or posted on Web sites..

See **AVMHS Oral Histories of Veterinary Medicine Catalog** online for locating known interviews.

Creating an oral history is an amazing and very rewarding experience for interviewee, interviewers, and readers—for having contributed to the recording of eye-witness descriptions of veterinary medicine's advancements and milestones.

For more information, questions, and consultation, please contact:

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