

# OAK PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT CONVERSATION PROMPTS

[OPPL.ORG/ORAL-HISTORY](http://OPPL.ORG/ORAL-HISTORY)

## Want to record an oral history, but not sure how to get the conversation started?

Try some of these prompts to help open up conversation.

### LIFE IN OAK PARK

- Were you born in Oak Park? When?
- What was it like growing up in Oak Park?
- What has changed? What has stayed the same?
- How has living in Oak Park shaped or affected your life?
- What's your favorite Oak Park memory?
- What kind of community do you want to live in?

### WORLD PERSPECTIVE

- What invention has had the most impact on your life?
- What changes in the world have surprised you the most?
- Is there a day in history that you remember exactly where you were when you heard the news?

### GROWING UP

- How large was your family?
- What was your first job?
- What are you proudest of?
- What was your childhood like?
- Who has been the biggest influence on your life? What lessons did that person teach you?
- What is your favorite memory of me (interviewer)?
- How would you like to be remembered?
- How would you describe yourself as a child? Were you happy?
- How would you describe a perfect day when you were young?

- What did you think your life would be like when you were older?
- Do you have any favorite stories from your childhood?

### GENERAL QUESTIONS

- When in life have you felt most alone?
- If you could hold on to one memory from your life forever, what would that be?
- Do you have any regrets?
- For your great great grandchildren listening to this years from now: is there any wisdom you'd want to pass on to them? What would you want them to know?
- Is there anything that you've never told me but want to tell me now?
- Do you regret anything?
- What have you learned from life? The most important things?
- How do you want to be remembered?

### FAMILY

- Who were your favorite relatives? Do you remember any of the stories they used to tell you?
- What were your parents like?
- How was your relationship with your parents?
- What were your grandparents like?
- Did you get into trouble? What was the worst thing you did?
- Do you have any siblings? What were they like growing up?

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## SCHOOL

- Did you enjoy school?
- What kind of student were you?
- What would you do for fun?
- How would your classmates remember you?
- Are you still friends with anyone from that time in your life?
- What are your best memories of grade school/high school/college/graduate school? Worst memories?
- Was there a teacher or teachers who had a particularly strong influence on your life? Tell me about them.
- Do you have any favorite stories from school?

## RELATIONSHIPS

- Do you have a love of your life?
- When did you first fall in love?
- Can you tell me about your first kiss?
- What was your first serious relationship?
- Do you believe in love at first sight?
- What lessons have you learned from your relationships?
- How did you meet your spouse/partner?
- How did you propose?
- What were the best times? The most difficult times?
- What advice do you have for young couples?
- Do you have any favorite stories from your marriage or about your spouse/partner?

## WORKING LIFE

- What do you do for a living?
- Tell me about how you got into your line of work.
- Do you like your job?
- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- What lessons has your work life taught you?

- If you could do anything now, what would you do? Why?
- Do you have any favorite stories from your work life?

## RELIGION

- Can you tell me about your religious beliefs/spiritual beliefs? What is your religion?
- Have you experienced any miracles?
- What was the most profound spiritual moment of your life?
- Do you believe in God?
- Do you believe in the after-life? What do you think it will be like?
- Do you think about dying? Are you scared?
- How do you imagine your death?
- Do you believe in an after-life?

## FAMILY HERITAGE

- What is your ethnic background?
- Where is your mom's family from? Where is your dad's family from?
- Have you ever been there? What was that experience like?
- What traditions have been passed down in your family?
- What are the classic family stories? Jokes? Songs?