

## GUIDELINES FOR TRANSCRIPTIONS

### I. Format

- Margins: Top - 1.0"; Bottom - 1.0"; Right - 1.0"; Left - 1.25".
- Page numbers should be located in the upper right hand corner starting on the second actual page of the interview, after title page and index. (No number should be printed on the first page of the interview.)
- Starting on the second page of the interview, the name of the interviewee should appear in the top left hand corner of each successive page in bold face.
- Indent each time a new speaker enters in. Use the whole name the first time the speaker appears; then use initials each time thereafter.
- Indicate the beginning of a new side of tape or new reel by starting a new page and typing "START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B" (or whatever is appropriate). Indicate the end of the side of a tape by typing "END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B" (or whatever is appropriate).
- Indicate when the interview is finished with "END OF INTERVIEW."

### II. Content

NOTE: The interviewer has the responsibility for supplying transcribers with an accurate list (on the Proper Word Form) of proper names that occur in the interview.

- The transcriber is expected to proofread each page of manuscript for mistakes in spelling and/or typing.
- Where a word or a phrase is inaudible, type ( ). Do not type "inaudible" or (?).
- When a speaker fails to complete a sentence, indicate this by using two dashes, the first dash flush with the last letter of the last word spoken. The second dash should be followed by some form of end punctuation (period, question mark, etc.), as in "Well, you see there was nothing more I could--."
- To indicate interruptions use two dashes flush with the last word spoken. For example, "He had planned to go to Yale and--." (Speaker breaks off because another speaker enters, etc.).
- When a speaker interrupts him or herself in mid-sentence to add a supplementary or clarifying remark--a strong parenthetical digression--the remark is set off by dashes as shown in this sentence, with the dashes flush with the preceding and following words. Weaker parenthetical expressions may be set off with commas.
- Interruptions such as telephone calls or laughter--or moments when the tape recorder is turned off--should be indicated by brackets containing an appropriate explanation: [Interruption] or [Laughter] or [Recorder is turned off and then back on].
- Noticeable pauses in conversation should be indicated by [pause].
- Common verbal lapses, such as the dropping of the "g" sound in "ing" endings, or the omission of the "a" and "d" sounds in "and," should usually be written in their proper form. The meaningless guttural sound "uh" should not be transcribed unless it indicates some sort of emotion or real quandary on the part of the interviewee.
- Use lower case for state legislative bodies, upper case for national; lower for public officials; capitalize Democratic but not party; when in doubt, use lower case.
- Numbers one through one hundred and large round numbers should be spelled out, as should fractions.
- Large complex numbers should be written numerically, as should numbers in a series, percentages, ratios, and times. The word "percent" should be used rather than the symbol %. The days of the month are written numerically, as are years and series of years, except for such expressions as "the fifties," or "the roaring twenties." Expressions such as 50s or 60s should not

contain an apostrophe before the “s.”

\* Please note: As will be further explained in the guidelines for editing, overuse of dashes only weakens a transcript. One must judge that it is important to the context of the interview for the reader to know that the speaker paused, was in a quandary, and therefore did not speak straightforwardly. Where the pauses are not this significant, simply end the sentence with a period or a question mark.

### III. Editing

Editing is the most challenging aspect of transcribing, demanding the full attention of the transcriber to what is being said, and how--by the interviewer as well as the interviewee. When one is aware of the context of an interview, and also of the rhythms and mannerisms of speech of the persons involved, one is ready to edit in a sensitive and intelligent way. Habitual false starts or unnecessary and repetitive phrases can be cleaned up; “run-on” sentences can be broken with appropriate punctuation; the context of the interview can provide clues when a word or phrase is inaudible. The following are instances that most frequently seem to require a transcriber’s editing:

- Difficult to anticipate, but important to catch, are long run-on sentences or questions that can, for clarity's sake, be broken up into separate sentences. In other words, one should not type long sentences with many commas separating thoughts. Rather, the transcriber should--whether the voice of the person speaking indicates it or not--use periods or semi-colons to make for easier reading and comprehension. When possible in long interviewee sections, paragraphing can also assist the reader.
- The transcriber may use, sparingly, exclamation marks and underlining where the emphasis seems called for in the context of the interview.
- Obviously implied in the above is the fact that speed is not the highest priority in the transcribing process. Rather, care and accuracy require that the tape be played over again when necessary to catch a phrase or anticipate the need for editing; a dictionary or atlas may be required to look up an unfamiliar proper name or geographical location. The transcriber must be satisfied that the manuscript is readable, makes sense as it is typed, and is free from typing and spelling errors. When there are questions, the interviewer may always be consulted.
- The transcriber will find standard dictionaries, almanacs, and atlases useful when questions about the spelling of proper names and locations occur. Local libraries can help identify reference books that might be helpful.
- The transcriber is not expected to double check historical information, dates, book titles, etc. However, one quick telephone call to the local library can often provide the correct spelling of an unfamiliar person or place.