

SAVING YESTERDAY TODAY FOR TOMORROW:
A GUIDE TO ORAL HISTORY
FOR THE BENCH AND BAR

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NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Pasadena

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OUTLINE OF TOPICS FOR INTERVIEWING LAWYERS

Full name

Date and place (city, county, state) of birth

1. BACKGROUND

A. *Family*

Grandparents

Parents: names; place and dates of birth; business, political, and community activities and interests

Siblings

Most influential relatives

B. *Childhood*

Community: home, friends, recreation, travel, hobbies, reading

Grammar school and high school: teachers, classes, special events

Part-time work experiences

C. *College*

How chosen

Influential teachers and courses; study habits

Friends

Extracurricular activities; part-time work

D. *Community*

Military or social service

Impact of major social, economic, and political events: wars, depressions, civil disturbances

E. *Law School*

How your interest in the law began

Choice of law school

Professors, courses

Friends, activities, work

Assessment of value of law school

2. CAREER AS LAWYER (include anecdotes and examples)

A. *Early experience*

Looking for a job

Bar examination

Beginning salary; comparison with other professions

First clients, cases

Daily routine: working hours, lunch, office location

Description of surrounding community

B. *Evolving career*

Practice specialty: how developed, changes
Professional and political outlook and affiliations
Work habits
Local bar and bench
Strong influences on early career: people, events; influence of state bar association

Other lawyers, business people, and colleagues with whom you worked
Professional, economic, and social atmosphere of the local community
Your involvement in local, state, national politics
Impact of major events: World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, civil rights movement
Impact of legislation on your specialty
Changes in office technology

C. *If private practitioner*

Beginning practice
Major cases and clients
Special challenges of private practice
Financial and technological aspects
Growth: how business comes in

D. *If member of law firm*

First day at the office
Responsibilities as an associate
Partners and other associates
Becoming a partner
Major firm clients, matters, and cases
Changes in law-firm administration: leadership and decision making;
recruiting and hiring; committee system
Newly developing practice areas
Recollections of judges and other lawyers
Trial strategies; business practice and counseling strategies
How corporate culture is passed down
Retirement and pension plans
Business development and future planning; geographical expansion

E. *If general counsel of a corporation*

How appointed
Responsibilities
Firm services/product
Major matters and cases
Relationship with senior management
Counseling; supervisory responsibilities

3. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND OVERVIEW

Professional and other organizations; membership in community groups
Impact of career as lawyer on family life and social activities
Rewards and advantages of career; hardships and pitfalls
Major contributions to society and legal history
Role of today's lawyers and law firms