General comments on oral history

DOUBLE SPACE! Make enough room for me to comment.

I’m going to suggest to almost everyone that they try to spend a little time working on a more interesting title.

*My Father* and *Interview Writing* are is pretty dry. Can you think of something better that gives your readers a hint about what’s in the story? Look at the essays in the book for ideas about how to create titles.

Don’t take too much time writing about yourself or telling us about you and what you were doing and thinking before asking the questions. Your reactions are only important if they reveal something about the subject of the interview. The interesting part is the subject and his or her answers, not the questions.

Also, don’t use up too much space introducing the questions. Make things go faster by just quoting the answer and combining it with the subject of the question.

For example, instead of writing:

Make sure to tell your reader who says what, and I strongly suggest a new paragraph for each quote. Don’t worry about making it too long. Break things up so it is clear and easy to understand who says what.

Add lots of description of the surroundings and physical characteristics and movements, gestures, etc. of the subject of your writing.

**Quotation mini-lesson**

Which is more dramatic?

With shock on his face, he said, “I can hardly believe that is the truth. It simply cannot be so.”

“I can hardly believe that is the truth,” he said, shock on his face. “It simply cannot be so.”

It should be clearly understood why you are using every quotation and it should be crystal clear who said those words. Use commas, not periods.

Five years

Two years

52 years old