

Oral History Schedule of Questions

June 09

The following is a schematic list of both specific issues and general areas that I would normally wish to broach in each interview. Clearly, the relevance of particular topics will vary with the individual (their age, gender, background and experiences). In addition, the oral history interview is not being treated as a formulaic experience. The interviewer will be sensitive and responsive to answers and the interesting issues the respondent raises. There will, in addition, be sensitivity on issues the respondent does not wish to answer. With Informed Consent granted before the interview starts, the respondent will be asked to sign a Copyright Release Form at the end. At this juncture, anonymity may be requested, and any particular issues may be requested to be deleted from both sound and transcribed copies.

Informed Consent Form

1. Respondent's name, date of birth, and place of birth.
2. Where were you brought up? Describe the culture of your country / district / neighbourhood / friends. What religious character would you describe it as having?
3. Did the neighbourhood experience have any impact upon you in your childhood or adolescence in terms of your view of religious, ethical or moral issues?
4. What was your family's religious background? Grandparents, parents. Were you brought up in a 'strongly religious' context, a more liberal religious one, or a secular / humanist / socialist one? What did you feel about your family's religious atmosphere? Was this an emotionally charged experience, leading to family dispute?
5. Did you go to church / Sunday school as a child? How often did you go? What kind of activities occurred? How did you perceive that experience at the time / since? At what juncture did you leave / drift away from church activities, and why? Do you regret doing so?
6. Special religious events: did you attend special religious events — e.g. religious revival / crusade meetings (such as Billy Graham, Luis Palau, or papal visits)?
7. School / College / University: describe the religious atmosphere (if any) at school? Were there any religious organisations that you encountered (e.g. Christian fellowship groups, Moral Rearmament (MRA), Scripture Union)? How did you react to any of these?
8. Friends in childhood and youth: were your own feelings on religious issues shared or objected to by your friends and peers? Did this cause any unease or dispute?
9. Can you describe a point at which you sensed you were developing a humanist outlook? When was this, and what were the circumstances?
10. Could you describe your humanist outlook / philosophy? How was it different from the environment in which you grew up and were educated/

11. What factors influenced you in this direction? Was it friends, joining an organisation, reading, or reflection? Can you weight these different factors in importance?
12. Was there a strong intellectual element to your humanism? What influenced you here? Were teachers, classes, or organisations important? Was studying in humanist / philosophical books or journals important? Has the web been important? Describe the authors and books, and the issues they raised.
13. Were there things in public life and politics that affected your outlook? For example, did you object to the power of the churches, or religious people, in policy and moral issues of the day? Was there an element of protest in your outlook and motivation?
14. Has humanism changed the way you have led your life, and your work?
15. Morality and relationships: did humanism affect your attitude to sexual morality (e.g. sex before marriage, and sexuality — homosexuality, lesbianism, transgender/people)? Did it change your approach to contraception or abortion issues? Has it influenced your attitude towards euthanasia and assisted suicide, or to any other moral issues?
16. Marriage, family, children, funerals. Did the way you organised your family life and development relate to your humanism? Did you for example have religious / state / humanist ceremonies? Are you planning a humanist funeral?
17. Has humanism related to other political or moral beliefs — e.g. feminism, a woman's right to choose, liberalism/socialism/conservatism/radicalism, pacifism, race issues (civil rights and apartheid), and the green/eco movement? Have you campaigned on any of these issues?
18. Humanist organisations: Describe your part in any of these organisations? What part have they played in your life?

Questions here for office bearers on the development of the organisation: these questions may be posed now, or separately. A particular interest is in the modus operandi of the organisation, its activities (e.g. discussion groups, celebration of rites of passage) and its presence in the public sphere (politics and national press)
19. How important would you place your humanism in your life and your future? Has it been, and will it be, a marginal or significant or vital part of your life experience?
20. Are there any other aspects of your humanism / secularism / freethinking / skepticism you wish to comment on

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