

Oral History Manual – Part II

Creating Your Primary Document

What is a transcript?

A transcript or transcription is a word-for-word written copy of a taped interview. “Oral history is the tape-recorded recollections of participants in and/or eyewitnesses to historical events. The purpose of oral history is scholarly research; the audiotape or the videotape of an oral history memoir, or interview, is itself a research document. When transcribed from the tape, the transcript represents in type the words and extraneous sounds present in a tape-recorded oral history interview. The tape and its transcript – which is then edited – are primary historical sources. The sources are useful to scholars in many fields. . . [and] a good transcript is very valuable.” Your job as a transcriber “is to render as close a replica to the actual event as possible. Accuracy, not speed, is the transcriber's goal.”¹

Why make transcripts?

Transcripts offer several important benefits:

- Aids researchers: they are able to quickly skim and assess the relevance of an interview
- Saves wear-and-tear of the audiotapes and videocassettes
- Helps researchers comprehend voices on the tapes that are difficult to hear or understand
- Provides, in the case of transcripts submitted on disk or as e-attachments, the means to search via computer for specific words and phrases mentioned in the interview
- Our student-generated transcripts provide 1) the resource materials for the student essay, 2) a resource for the Legacy Initiative project & its related publications, and 3) the transcript will also include metadata and be uploaded on IUPUI's Digital Database.

What is the relationship between the transcript and the recording?

More recently, archivists and oral historians began preserving both the original recording and its accompanying transcript as complementary documentation of the same event. No matter how thorough and accurate transcripts may be, they are never able to capture all the details in an audio recording such as the *tone of voice* and *emotion* expressed in the spoken word, nor can they convey the facial expressions and mannerisms that come through in a video recording. They are, however, excellent access tools. They provide an easily accessible reference substitute for the recordings, and they require no special play-back equipment or listening booth. The Legacy Initiative retains a copy of each recording. The recordings are saved as MP3 files for future use.

¹The Institute for Oral History at Baylor University. See their website for a complete style guide to transcribing oral history documents. Use this site when you start editing your transcript. It is invaluable and will help you with correct terminology, grammar, spelling, etc.: http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral_History/Styleguide.htm Included in this manual are also detailed tips from the Library of Congress Oral History Project.

How much time does it take to make a transcript?

Creating a transcript is time consuming but extremely valuable. This may take you 12-15 hours!!! DO NOT PROCRASTINATE! Word processing software and other computer programs have made the task easier than before, but oral historians and folklorists estimate that it takes between six and twelve hours to transcribe one hour of an interview, plus additional time if you edit the transcript afterwards. GUARD your tape [or the digital recorder]. If you used an audio tape, punch out the little tabs so that someone else does not record over your tape (this has happened and the interview had to be redone!) When is this due? Put date in your planner and allow an extra week to finish!

How thorough should the transcript be?

The goal is to create a transcript that is both accurate and understandable to the reader. It need not include every utterance or describe every background noise, but it should reproduce as closely as possible the speaker's words. It should also be consistent in the stylistic approach and level of detail throughout.

What are some tips for creating and editing transcripts?

- [If you recorded on an audio tape] After you have completed the interview, run the tape back to the start position on side A. Punch out the little tabs. **Label your tape and case with your name & veteran's full name.** Then, ASAP give Mrs. Gaughan [in Media Center] your original tape and she will make a digital copy for you to use for transcribing purposes. The tape or digital recorder MUST be delivered to her ASAP after the interview is completed. If she is not in her office, you may leave your digital recorder, but you must also include the following information: your name AND the full name of the veteran/civilian interviewee. She will make 3 CDs (one for you, one for Library of Congress, and one for PT). As soon as she has your CD ready, you may begin transcribing—do not wait!
- Many oral historians use transcribing machines which they say are well worth it. PT has a couple of these, but we recommend the Express Scribe system.
- At the beginning of the transcript, identify who transcribed the tape, who edited the transcript, and the date(s) these tasks were done. [Go to the Lerch HW Conference folder and download a transcript template.]
- The transcript template is already formatted as follows: all pages have one-inch margins; pages must be numbered and headers include interviewee's name at the top right side. Space text at 1.5 for ease of editing—do not single-space.
- Identify all participants in the interview in the introduction. At the start of their comments type their full name in bold letters, followed by a colon, e.g., **Frank Smith:** After the first example, use initials only: **FS:** This applies to your name as well.

- Create a verbatim transcript, but omit such expressions as "um" or "ah." Include expressions such as "um hum" or "huh-huh" when used to mean "yes" or "no" in response to specific questions. Note, you do not need to put ellipses in for these deleted expressions.
- Do not revise the interviewee's words to force them into standard written prose. Leave untouched any sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and incorrect grammar. Commas and a large hyphen [–] may be used to reflect pauses in the spoken words.
- If changes are made, clearly indicate when and how the transcript differs from the original tape recording.
- Put in brackets explanations about why the interview was interrupted or why the tape recorder was turned off, e.g., [Interview interrupted by a telephone call]. Also in brackets are the meter times for the recording: [00:5:00] for five minutes. This would be for 1 hour, ten minutes, 15 seconds: [01:05:15].
- Place a question mark before and after a word or phrase to indicate any uncertainty about it, e.g., (?destroyed?).
- Indicate the end of a side of the tape in capital letters, e.g., END OF SIDE ONE, BEGIN SIDE TWO
- Identify garbled or inaudible portions of the tape. If one word is inaudible, indicate the gap with a _____. When multiple words are inaudible, insert ____+ or estimate the elapsed time using the indicator ____.... (____seconds).
- The last step is to rewind tape to beginning and to set the counter button (if available) to 000. Next, print out a copy of the transcript and figure out which sections should have 'counter marks'. It is most important to mark some of the main or most interesting topics. These counter marks help researchers locate items more quickly. You must insert counter marks at the beginning, for example [004] and at the conclusion of the interview [652]. Fast forward through your tape until you find the beginning of the important sections, handwrite the numbers on the draft. These numbers will then be typed into the final version of the transcript. Put the numbers within brackets on the line immediately above the sentence.

Sample Transcript

The following is an abridged excerpt from a longer eleven-page transcript. The format is already set up for you as a template and this may be found in the Lerch HW Conference Folder on FirstClass. In order to make sure you include all components, also read through the transcript evaluation checklist which follows this sample. As soon as you open the template, save it as follows: 'your last name-interviewee's last name trans.doc' Note, ALL transcripts must be written and saved as Word documents and the suffix 'doc' included. It MUST be saved as a Word document (not WordPerfect, not .ink, or any other word processing program so it can be used here at school! **Every few minutes SAVE** your document. **Also, save a backup copy on another disk**, on a flash stick, or send it to your school email account as an attachment. You do not want to redo all your work if you lose it. You cannot afford wasted time & effort, or the tears that may result! If you have not taken precautions, I will not be sympathetic - I will say, "I told you so!"

Interview with Mr. Kyle Miller

[b. 12/29/82]

Recorded on 11/15/03 & 12/9/03

[Interview starts at 001 on counter]

Student's Name: Today is November 15, 2003, and I am interviewing Kyle Miller, who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom in the Marines as a Lance Corporal. He was born on December 29, 1982, and currently lives at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina. [Include, too, names of anyone else participating in the interview.]

Student initials: What influenced you to enlist?

Kyle Miller: Um—to enlist, I don't know, just to get away go see some new places, you know I wasn't really ready for college yet. So, I don't know—just to try something new.

SI: Why did you pick the service branch you did?

KM: Uh—because I heard it was the hardest, and just wanted to see what it was like.

SI: How was the boot camp training experience?

KM: It, at first it—was kind of hard cause you don't know what to expect and your all nervous, but—towards the end it wasn't as bad because you were used to it—so.

SI: What were your feelings about leaving your family?

[016]

KM: Um—leaving my family, I mean I missed them and stuff but I was just ready just to get out of my town and just go do something.

SI: Did you question your choice to go?

KM: No, no, I just went, I didn't really question it.

SI: Did you discuss your decision with your family?

KM: Yeah, my dad was with me to sign up, but I just called him and we went and then we just came home and I told my mom and step-dad.

SI: What war did you serve in?

[023]

KM: Operation: Iraqi Freedom.

SI: And what were the main places that you went to?

KM: Uh, Nasiriyah, Numinayah.

SI: What happened upon your arrival in Kuwait?

KM: Well, as soon as we got to Kuwait we really trained a lot, we did a lot of training. Basically all we did over there was train. Getting used to the environment—

SI: Did you see combat?

[032]

KM: Yeah, we did in Nasiriyah.

SI: What were the living conditions like in Iraq? [There was more transcript obviously, but it was cut here to show tape switch and end of interview.]

[190] END OF SIDE ONE [If using a tape, pause interview if close to end of tape, then finish running tape until it stops. Turn over tape, advance for 3-4 seconds and push PLAY-RECORD. Resume interview. Just keep recording if using a digital recorder.]

SIDE TWO

[199]

SI: You began to talk about living conditions in Iraq. Can you give details?

KM: Oh, the living conditions, uh, not too good, I didn't shower for about 53 days. I lived in a fighting hole, and another thing called a skirmisher trench, where it's just a little six-inch hole as long as you are, you know, your height, and you sleep in that. There was no bathrooms, no running water anywhere everywhere, anything that I needed water for, like brushing my teeth, shaving, stuff like that—I had to use the canteen of water. It was hot, so you're always sweating. It was just dirty. . . .

[465] End of Interview

Don't forget to review the transcript evaluation checklist which follows in order to get the most points for your transcript! SAVE responsibly!

Student _____ Period ____ Interviewee _____

Transcript Evaluation Checklist

Shoot for perfection the first time! It is imperative that everyone attempt to produce a high quality interview and transcript (using Word only). The tape and transcript need to be as complete as possible in order to be sent immediately following completion to the Library of Congress or other institution. One or two late or poorly done projects hold up the process for everyone! (Each transcript, tape, and permission form, for example, must be copied, labeled and packaged together into an envelope for delivery to Senator Lugar's office.)** A high quality interview will also save you time in starting your research and writing your essay.

If all parts of the transcript and tape are completed as nearly as perfectly as possible, then 150 points will be awarded. High scores will be awarded to students who asked relevant questions, if the recording is of very good quality and transcribed with particular care. Deductions will automatically occur if the interview is less than the required 45 minute minimum, and if it lacks questions which really define this individual's service. (You will be asked to extend the interview or re-interview as a result.) Required permission forms must also be completed and turned in as soon as the interview is completed! For those transcripts receiving 140-150 points, a revised transcript is optional, but minor corrections may be done and the transcript resent electronically to me for bonus points. Otherwise, all students should anticipate completing a final polished transcript with little delay.

This checklist will be attached to your transcript when it is turned in - so be sure you have followed all the directions and do not lose points needlessly!

Transcript on time: yes ☐
no ☐ [10 points deducted for each day late beyond announced deadline (this applies to any extensions, too)]
or
extension granted ☐ until ____

Accompanied by CD in case & in good condition: yes ☐ no ☐ [deduct 5 points]
E-copy sent to Mrs. Lerch yes ☐ no ☐ [deduct 5 points]

A. Formatting of transcript: complete ☐
partial ☐ [deduct 5 points each omission]
not done ☐ [deduct 30 points]
Format must include the following:
correct title format ☐
page numbering (bottom rt) ☐
inserted header (top rt) ☐
use 1.5 or double space for large sections ☐
interviewer's questions in bold ☐
use bold initials to ID interviewer/interviewee ☐

Content: includes many suggested L of C / Holocaust type questions, including required introduction:
relevant questions: 90-100% ☐
has irrelevant questions ☐ [deduct 1 point]
significant questions missing ☐ [deduct 5 points]

Research done on unusual names / spelling (see selected word sheets in manual, for example)

yes ☐
no ☐ [deduct 5 points]
Spell-check and punctuation accurate: virtually 100% ☐
some corrections need to be made ☐ [deduct 2 points]
extensive corrections (proper numbers, etc.) ☐ [deduct 10 points]

Transcript "proofed" against original tape: yes ☐
no ☐ [deduct 5 points]

Accuracy of transcript when compared to tape:
very good to excellent ☐
weak ☐ [deduct 2 points]
needs numerous revisions ☐ [deduct 5 points]
major revisions necessary ☐ [deduct 10 points]

B. Tape type (if audio): 90 minutes size as prescribed ☐
wrong format ☐ [deduct 15 points]

Quality of recording excellent ☐

okay ☐ [deduct 1 point]
 poor ☐ [deduct 5 points]
 (volume level, distracting noises)
 parts of recording missing** ☐ [deduct 2 points]

**tape start may need to be re-recorded

Permission forms received

PT permission required ☐ [deduct 5 points]

L of C sheets (3) required ☐ [deduct 5 points]

or

Holocaust sheets required ☐ [deduct 5 points]

*50% of deducted points will be added back into initial score when corrections are made and turned in by the last deadline. The two transcript scores will be averaged for final grade. The only deadline for the revised draft is:

No transcripts will be accepted after this date.

Additional points will be deducted if these components are still missing when transcript is turned in:
Initial score: _____ **/100 = letter grade:** _____

NOTE: ALL CORRECTED TRANSCRIPTS ARE DUE [Electronically] no later than

On this same date, also turn in during class this evaluation sheet & original draft of the transcript, and your research plan of action. (see plan sheet in manual)

If any of these items are not received, an additional 10 points will be deducted from transcript score. You will need a corrected transcript to send to interviewee and to complete final paper properly!

Additional comments:

How do I transcribe using the computer?

This is the coolest NEW feature—especially if you have a PC at home (or can locate one at school)

Requirements: Windows 95/98/NT/2000/Me/XP/2003/Vista. **A Mac version** is also available. The first step is to download the free software program. Go to: <http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/>

Express Scribe - Digital Transcription Playback System and Transcription Pedal Software - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/

Most Visited Getting Started Latest Headlines Atlas Curriculum Map... FirstClass Login MyBackPack - Login CompuServe.com Citibank Account Sum... JSTOR - The Scholarly ...


Express Scribe Transcription Playback Software

Digital Transcription Audio Player Software

Express Scribe is a professional audio player software for PC, Mac or Linux designed to assist the transcription of audio recordings. It is installed on the typist's computer and can be controlled using a transcription foot pedal or using the keyboard (with 'hot' keys). This computer transcriber application also offers valuable features for typists including variable speed playback, multi-channel control, file management and more. This program is free.

The full features list of Express Scribe transcription playback software follows but a quick way to test is to simply download and install it. You don't need to purchase anything and it only takes a couple of minutes to complete downloading and installation. [Click here to install.](#)

Express Scribe is a completely free program that is one component of our digital dictation and transcription suite. For all full list of all our dictation related software please see below, or visit our [Dictation Software](#) page.



Download for Windows
Free

Purchase Footpedal
To use with Express Scribe

Purchase Headset
To use with Express Scribe

Features

- Variable speed playback (constant pitch).
- Supports many professional foot pedals which connect to the game, serial or USB port to control playback. [More info.](#)
- Uses 'hot' keys to control playback when using other software (eg. Word).
- Ability to dock both analog and digital portable recorders to load recordings.
- Works with Microsoft Word and all major word-processor applications.
- Automatically receives and loads files by internet (FTP), email or over a local computer network.
- Automatically sends typing to the person who dictated the work.
- Works with speech recognition software such as Dragon Naturally Speaking to automatically convert speech to text.
- Loads CD audio directly - listen as it loads in the background.
- Integrate with dictation management systems using the [Express Scribe SDK](#).
- Works with FastFox typing utility to turn difficult medical/legal phrases and common terms into mere shortcuts from your keyboard.
- Express Scribe is free.

[See Screenshots >>>](#)


Professional Foot Pedals

Increase your words per minute by giving your feet control of playback leaving your fingers free to type.

Transcription foot pedals are suitable for both Windows and Mac OS X.

The pedals are "plug and play" which make them easy to install and use. There are three controls which are usually setup for rewind (right), play/pause (center) and fast-forward (left).

- [Purchase a foot pedal](#)
- [DIY foot pedal solutions](#)



Supported File Formats

Ability to play most audio file formats (including encrypted dictation files) including:

- wav, mp3, au, aif, vox,
- dol (encrypted dictation)
- Windows Media, Voiceit (srt)
- RealAudio (ra and rm)
- Olympus, Lanier & Grundig (dss)
- Sony Recorder formats (mav, dvf)
- Philips Digital Recorder format
- Sanyo Digital Recorder format
- DSP TrueSpeech*, GSM 6.10,
- mp2, vox, PCM, uLaw,
- ALaw, ADPCM, CELP, SBC,
- and many [more formats](#).

Related Software

- [Computer Dictation](#)
- [Web Dictation](#)
- [Pocket Dictation](#)
- [Phone Dictation](#)
- [Court Recorder](#)
- [Typing Expander](#)
- [Workflow Manager](#)
- [File Splitter](#)
- [CD Ripper](#)
- [Video Converter](#)
- [More Dictation Software...](#)
- [More Audio Software...](#)

Recommended Hardware

- [Foot Pedal Controllers](#)
- [Buy Pedals](#)
- [DIY Pedals](#)
- [Headsets](#)
- [Microphones](#)

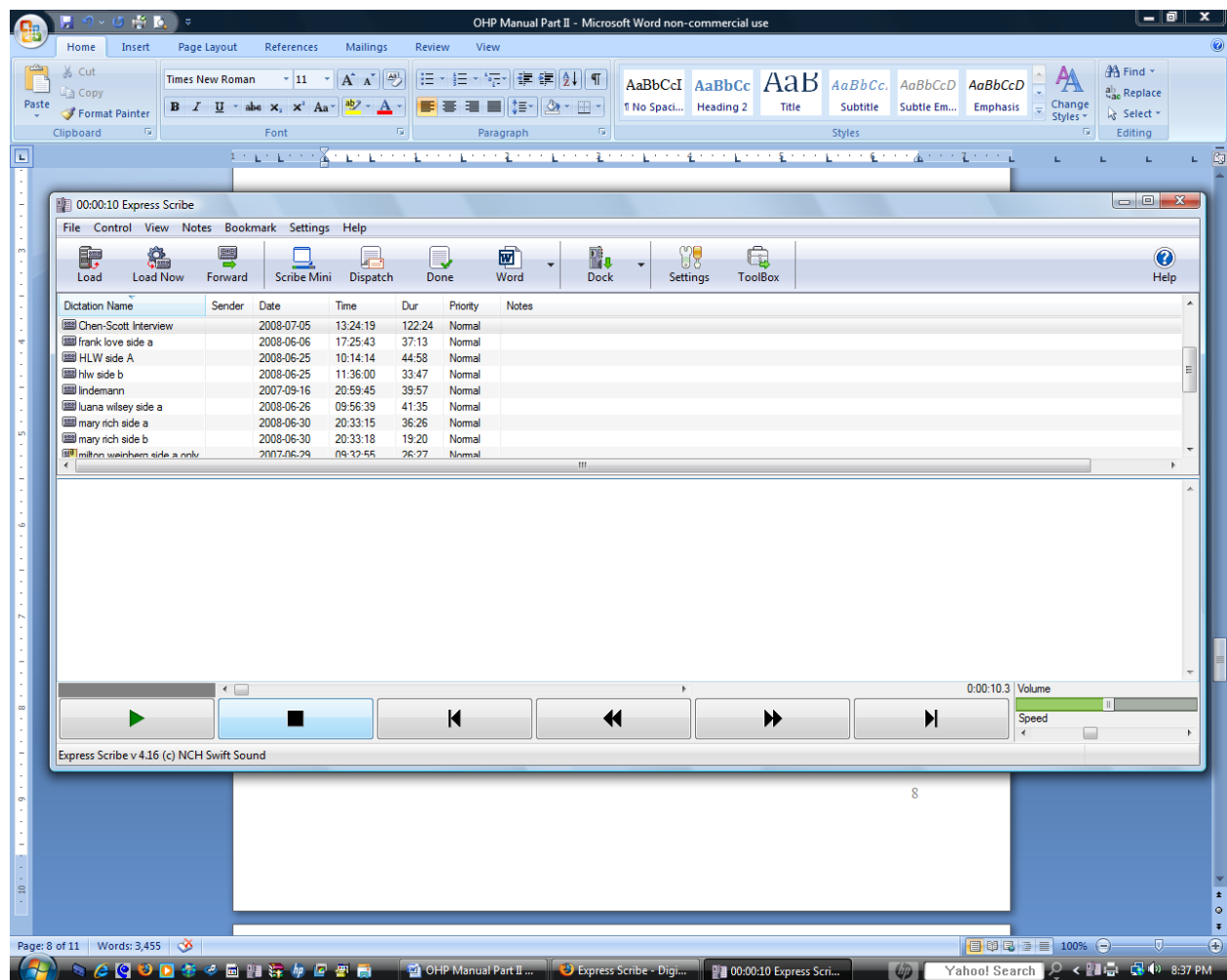
Done

OHP Manual Part B... Express Scribe - Digi... Yahoo! Search 8:32 PM

Step Two: Once Express Scribe has been downloaded, go to the help page and read all the instructions. You will discover you can select your own “hot” keys to reverse the recording so you can re-listen to the individual. You can also slow down the speed, and vary the volume. My instructions are short here because Express Scribe has a help section that is much better!

Step Three: Load your CD and copy the sound file onto your hard drive and save in your documents folder. Remove the CD and save until finished in a safe place.

Step Four: Headphones are helpful, but not essential if you have a quiet place to work. Open Express Scribe and open your Word document template for the transcript (go to Lerch HW folder). Open the sound file with Express Scribe (wherever you saved it). Now, you may either type in the white field (see below), or on the Word template. Create two screens so you can type in one while the other is playing.



I found that the left and right arrow keys to the right of the Ctrl button on the keyboard are easier to use than their recommended hot keys—hitting one of these can reverse the recording 5 or so words or speed it ahead. You will become more and more proficient with this as you practice. If I can do it, you can too! SAVE as you go along!

Preparing the Transcript

Now that the transcript is word processed, what's next? Mark all unusual terms or phrases with a highlighter. Read through the "Researching History - Selected Words" sheets for assistance. Call your interviewee, if you need some clarification. Have another member of the family, if necessary listen to parts of the tape if there are words you are unsure of. Spell check!! Cross-check your transcript with the evaluation checklist. See Mrs. Lerch ASAP if you still have questions.

Saving & Sending Your Transcript

Save your initial transcript as follows: Your last name-Interviewee last name trans.doc [Lerch-Marks trans.doc]. **Do not label it "my transcript" - can you imagine receiving a dozen copies and not knowing to whom they belong?!** Turn in an electronic copy of the transcript by the due date. When this transcript has been reviewed and graded, I will return it to you for corrections. Once these corrections have been done, then send it to me as an E-Copy attachment that is labeled as follows (Lerch-Marks **final** trans.doc) AND give/mail a hard copy with approval form to your interviewee for their final approval. I must have an E-Copy in order to print out final copies for the Library of Congress and for Legacy Initiative files. You will need an E-Copy for cutting and pasting section into your final essay project. Be sure to save a backup copy in another location! If your computer crashes and you have no backup copy, you are in trouble! As a last resort, if you have an unmarked hard copy, this can be scanned as OCR and re-saved as a Word document, but you might have to bribe me to do this for you. Let's avoid this scenario at all costs – this will delay your project.

Send your final transcript to Mrs. Lerch as a properly formatted attachment and NEVER paste it into an email. The email heading should say "(your last name) transcript.doc"; you must include the .doc suffix, otherwise I will not be able to open it. I will file your transcript (and any digital photos, etc) in your own personal folder on my computer.

Revising the Transcript & Interviewee Approval

Should the interviewer review and edit the transcript?

The degree to which transcripts are edited, including the number of revisions made by the interviewer and the person being interviewed (i.e., the interviewee), has been debated. The Veterans History Project recommends that whenever possible the transcripts should be edited by the interviewer to:

- Catch misspellings
- Fill in those portions of the dialog which the transcriber found incomprehensible
- Supply in brackets the full name, title, or other identification of a person the first time he or she is mentioned
- Correct any other glaring errors by the transcriber, once foreign names, military terms, or other unknown words have been identified through reference checks.

Bring any questions you may have to Mrs. Lerch ASAP, this includes questions about how to deal with inaudible sections or phrases that are not clear.

Should the narrator review and edit the transcript?

Mrs. Lerch **MUST** review all transcripts **BEFORE** they are sent to the interviewee. Our interviewees are then given the opportunity to review their transcripts. They can usually fill in any gaps and spot more easily than anyone else the errors in the transcript. . . . For the purposes of our project, they are only to correct *errors of fact* and *misspelled words*, not content..

Note, when the interviewee reads the transcript, this may also spark additional memories that they would like to include. They may add additional comments or notes at the end of the transcript. You may then add these comments in brackets in the final version of the document.

Please be aware that the interviewees may be inclined to "clean up" their slang expressions and spoken language. **Do not let them do this.** This will "sacrifice the tone and rhythm of the interview and make less compelling what they said." Clean up of the transcript is not to be done, since this will no longer be accurate with the original tape. If a "cleaned up" transcript is received, it will be used only for Legacy Initiative publication purposes, and the original transcript will be sent (with correction only where necessary) to the Library of Congress.

See below a sample form for the interviewee to sign once they have had an opportunity to review the transcript. Pick up a form from me and send this along with a hard copy of your transcript, and a stamped and self-address return envelope. Explain the importance of returning this to you ASAP and that they are not to revise the content of their transcript, only correct errors in transcribing!

Sample Final Agreement

Western Civilization History 2008-2009

Dear Interviewee:

Thank you for taking the time to complete an interview with a Park Tudor student this year. Attached is a copy of your transcript based on the recording made earlier. We would appreciate it if you could review this copy for accuracy. Note, please *do not* make editorial changes, which will not reflect what was said so that it will "sound" better. We are looking for accuracy of interpretation of what *was said* – such as correct names for events, places or personal names. In some cases, the tape was unintelligible. If possible, please add what you think might have been the word or phrase.

Also, if you think of any additional material, which you would like to add in writing as an appendix to this, please feel free to do so. Sometimes memories are jogged a bit when reading through such a transcript and there may be something else you would like to add. We would be happy to include this at the end of your transcript.

Please sign below and return this sheet (along with the transcript only if corrected) *as soon as possible*. As soon as we receive approval, students can begin their research and complete their essay part of the project.

Your interviewer was: _____ Date of interview: _____

Interviewee please check appropriate boxes and sign:

I approve of the transcript of my interview & there are no corrections ☐

OR

I approve of the transcript with the following corrections as marked
And have enclosed the transcript along with this sheet ☐

I have included additional information in writing:

☐ yes

☐ no

Print your name: _____ Signature _____

Date: _____

Please return the transcript directly to your interviewer, or if more convenient, mail this permission sheet and any edited materials directly to:

Kathryn Lerch, Director of the Park Tudor Legacy Initiative
Park Tudor School,
7200 N. College Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46240

Thank you for your assistance, Kathryn Lerch (klerch@parktudor.org)