
FIFTH EPOCHAL FELLOWSHIP

Dedicated to the study and dissemination of the teachings of *The Urantia Book*

August 12, 1990

Mrs. Ruth Renn
1615 Hinman Avenue
Evanston, Illinois 60201

Dear Ruth,

GREETINGS! No, this is not a draft notice. But we would like you to volunteer to help us. By us, I'm referring to the Special Projects Committee. We have been given the assignment of gathering information from people who participated in the Forum and/or the Seventy.

Background:

Our task was originally established by the delegates of the 1988 Triennial Delegate Assembly. They passed a resolution which recommended "...compilation of an oral history from early readers, to the end that a sense of the problems and excitement of those days can be preserved." The General Council accepted the resolution and the Executive Committee assigned the task to us.

Our Request:

It is now 35 years since *The Urantia Book* was first published and made available to the planet. Many things have changed since those early days when everything about this amazing revelation had to be kept in the strictest confidence. Our charge is not to uncover secrets but rather to get a sense of your personal experience. You are not being asked to betray a trust but to continue to build on a very important dimension of the Urantia Movement -- shared personal experience.

The Urantia Book itself gives us an important lesson about the perspective we seek. It says on page 215:

"The true perspective of any reality problem -- human or divine, terrestrial or cosmic -- can be had only by the full and unprejudiced study and correlation of three phases of universe reality: origin, history, and destiny. The proper understanding of these three experiential realities affords the basis for a wise estimate of the current status."

We hope that you will share the benefits of your experience!

What is an Oral History?

An oral history is a narrative of the events and experiences of the people who participated in the activities of the time. This kind of personal information is much different than what can be found in organizational records, minutes of meetings, and memos.

During the coming week, Barbara Kulieke, a member of Special Projects Committee, will be calling you to discuss this project. There are two important ways in which you can help.

Interview:

We very much want to speak with you in person, so we hope to set up an interview. We will be asking for your permission to make a recording of the conversation so that we can focus on talking with you rather than on taking notes. A recording would also allow others to better share your experiences.

Listed below are some of the topics that we hope to discuss with you:

1. Personal Background:
2. Introduction to the Urantia Papers:
3. Meetings:
4. People:
5. The Urantia Book and You:
6. The Urantia Book, itself:
7. The Fifties:
8. The Future:

Finding Others:

We would also like your help in finding others who participated in the Forum and/or Seventy and who might still be available to share their stories. Enclosed is a list of the people who are being contacted for this project. Can you think of anyone else? If so, we would appreciate it if you please let us know.

Questions?

If you have any questions, jot them down so you can inquire when we call. Barbara Kulieke can be reached at 3200 County EE, Bailey's Harbor, Wisconsin, 54202. Phone: (414) 839-2548. Or feel free to contact Bob Bruyn, 5129 NW Walden Drive, Kansas City, Missouri, 64151. Phone: (816) 741-3849. We will be calling you shortly.

In Our Father's Service,

Special Projects Committee:

Bob Bruyn, Chair
Tony Finstad, Member
Cece Forrester, Secretary
Barbara Kulieke, Member

Jim McNelly, Member
Mike Wood, Member
Ken Raveill, Adjunct
Scott Forsythe, Office Liaison

April 1990 - draft

ORAL HISTORY: INTERVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

The following information has been adapted from "The Life Stories Interview: CREATING A PORTRAIT ON TAPE" a handbook written by Paul G. Friedman, Ph.D., professor in Communications at The University of Kansas.

PURPOSE:

Our purpose is to compile "...an oral history from early readers, to the end that a sense of the problems and excitement of those days can be preserved."

GOAL:

Our goal is to obtain a sampling of the personal experience of the people interviewed. Thus, we want to foster reminiscing and story telling. Tellers convey those things that are meaningful and important to their lives.

PHILOSOPHY:

Our philosophy about this project is that communication between generations provides continuity across time and strengthens ties. Not only do we learn from our elders, but their life experience becomes increasingly justified if someone else listens to them and benefits from learning about them. People leave material possessions to others in a "will." This is an opportunity for them to transmit their personal possessions (life story and insights) to future generations -- their feelings, thoughts, and personal perspectives. The teller benefits! The listener benefits!

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Gaining Involvement -- The person to be interviewed (the Source) is usually flattered but somewhat hesitant. We need to explain to them how the value of the interview outweighs their concerns or fears.

If they are concerned about the authenticity of this project:

- a. The project was initiated and the resolution passed at the 1988 Triennial Delegate Assembly.
- b. The General Council authorized the gathering of this information.

If they are concerned about betraying an oath of silence/secretcy:

- a. The Urantia Book has been published and available now for 35 years.
- b. Our goal is not to uncover secrets but to have them share their own personal experience.
- c. Ask the Source if there are any issues off-limits.

If they are concerned about having enough worthwhile or interesting things to say:

- a. Let them know that you have a list of many questions and that you will assume responsibility for moving the interview along. There will be no problem finding things to say.
- b. Emphasize that they will be talking about the special people they have known as well as themselves. It is not just self-oriented.
- c. Let them know that another person can be invited along to participate, so they don't feel excessively pressured.
- d. Let them know of some of the questions you will be asking so that they can mentally prepare and think back of those times.

2. Time and Place -- The Source should participate fully in the decisions of when and where the interview takes place, so it is comfortable and convenient for them to talk.

The place should be quiet, where you won't be interrupted. It should be comfortable and familiar -- where they talk to friends (kitchen or dining room table or family room). The spot should provide an easy access to pictures and memorabilia that might be used.

The time should be when the Source would feel most energetic and free from pressure. Allow at least an hour for each interview. Be prepared to have several interviews. People tire after an hour or hour and a half. Many stories will take longer than this. A second session allows time to recollect stories that may have been omitted due to excitement or fear. OR Schedule one long session with a break in the middle.

3. Be Prepared -- Think through each step of the interview process and get your materials and equipment ready. (We will learn much from each new interview experience.)
4. Set Up -- Please refer to the attached chapter called "HOW DO I START THE FIRST SESSION?" It provides some valuable tips about getting started in a positive manner.
5. Content -- Please refer to the attached list entitled "ORAL HISTORY: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS." This outline is intended to provide you and the interview with some structure and to get you oriented about the kinds of information that the Source may be able to give us. The Source has been notified of the topics (headings on the list) to be covered.

Be flexible. Allow the Source the freedom to go into areas that are important to him/her. Try not to overwhelm the Source and always allow him/her the option to "pass" on a question.

Our priorities for information are to get the facts, then the reminiscences, before getting into the area of opinion.

ORAL HISTORY: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Personal Background:
 - * What is your name?
 - * When were you born?
 - * Where were you born?
 - * How did you come to live in Chicago, at the time you first found out about the Papers?
2. Introduction to the Urantia Papers:
 - * How and When did you first learn of the Urantia Papers?
 - * Who introduced you?
 - * What was your first reaction to the material? (How did you feel?)
 - * What convinced you of the authenticity of the Papers?
 - * When did the significance of the revelatory phenomenon sink in to you?
3. Meetings:
 - * What was the process that you went through to become a member of the group?
 - * What were you told about membership in the group?
 - * What was the group called?
 - * When did you meet? (day, time of day, for how long, & how often)
 - * Where did you meet? (location, how was it set up, recollections)
 - * About how many people participated? (each week, in total)
 - * Describe how the meetings were conducted. (What occurred?)
 - * What was it like? (How did you experience it?)
 - * How long did you participate? (From when to when?)
 - * Were you able to read the Papers separate from the group meetings?
 - * Was it difficult to keep your participation a secret from others?
 - * What else can you share about the early years of your involvement with the Urantia Papers?
4. People:
 - * What was your first impression of Dr. Sadler?
 - * Who in the group made the greatest impression on you? In what way?
 - * What are your impressions or outstanding recollections of any of the early leaders or readers? (Emma Chistensen, Dr. Sadler Jr., Clyde Bedell, Marion Rowley, Julia Fenderson, anyone else...)
 - * How many people did you get to know?
 - * Did you gather socially or become friends with others?
5. The Urantia Book and You:
 - * What is your favorite part of *The Urantia Book*?
 - * In what way has it changed your life?
 - * Did it cause you to change the material circumstances of your life?
 - * Has it affected you mentally? Emotionally? Spiritually?
 - * Have you shared *The Urantia Book* with your family?
 - * What has been your experience in sharing *The Urantia Book* with friends, relatives, and associates?
6. The Urantia Book, itself:
 - * What is the purpose of *The Urantia Book*?
 - * In your opinion, why was *The Urantia Book* sent here at this time?
 - * What do you think is the religion of *The Urantia Book*?
 - * Is *The Book* better understood individually or through a group?
 - * What did you think would happen after *The Book* came to print?

7. The Fifties:

- * Were you active in Brotherhood activities in the 1950's?
- * What were some memorable experiences or insights from the 1950's?
- * What went on in your life during the years 1955 through 1959?
- * Did you participate in Brotherhood committees?
- * Did you participate in the Brotherhood School?
- * What were your feelings about the School?

8. The Future:

- * Have the past 35 years since the Book was published been as you expected?
- * Is there anything that you would like to have changed?
- * What is your vision for the next decade or 25 year period?
- * What is your greatest hope for the future?
- * What message would you leave to be read by future generations?
- * Would you be willing to donate any of your personal notes, files, and papers to an archives or library sponsored by Fifth Epochal Fellowship?

Optional? No longer Historical?

9. The Urantia Movement:

- * What is the importance of study groups?
- * What are your thoughts concerning Societies?
- * What do you think about regional, national, and international conferences?
- * What are your thoughts about fund raising, tithes, dues, etc.?
- * What do you feel about group prayer and worship?
- * Should there be translations of *The Urantia Book*?
- * Do you believe that "The world is not ready for *The Urantia Book*?"
- * Do you believe that instructions given to early readers by the contact commission have validity in the post 1955 era?
- * Should the Urantia Movement be controlled, guided, or fostered by official Urantia organizations or by readers themselves?

10. The Organizations:

- * What is the purpose of URANTIA Foundation?
- * What is the purpose of URANTIA Brotherhood (now known as Fifth Epochal Fellowship)?
- * Is either organization a religion?
- * Did the purpose of URANTIA Brotherhood change or evolve in the 1960's, 1970's, or 1980's?
- * What is your reaction to the suggestion that URANTIA Brotherhood should be spiritual, not political?
- * Should there be more democratic participation in its activities?
- * What are your thoughts regarding the current realignment between the Foundation and the Fifth Epochal Fellowship?
- * What is the most important insight you can pass on to the current leaders?

11. Opinions: What are your comments about:

- * Printing *The Book*
- * Book Distribution
- * Book Dissemination
- * Spreading the Teachings
- * Living the Teachings
- * Protecting the Copyright
- * Use of the word "Urantia"
- * Use of the three concentric circles symbol
- * "Official" study aides and secondary works

III. HOW DO I START THE FIRST SESSION?

When you get together for the first interview, it is best to talk about it a bit before starting. Let the Source know how you feel about beginning the experience and check out how he/she is feeling. You might share whatever anxiety or excitement you feel, as well as why the value of the interview and the tape overrides your concerns. (e.g., "I'm looking forward to talking with you, although I feel a little funny, too, about asking you questions. But I think doing this is so worthwhile, and I'm sure it will go pretty smoothly once we get started.") Encourage the Source to say whatever is uppermost in his/her mind, e.g., by asking, "How are things going today?" or "How are you feeling about our spending this time together?"

If the Source feels uneasy about the upcoming session, you can provide reassurance in several ways. For example, if the Source is concerned about not having enough to say or still feels unworthy of being the subject of a tape, mention that this is a very common, understandable concern. Many other people have felt the same way at the start and virtually all ended up feeling very satisfied with the results. You might provide a "no-risk guarantee" by stating that at the end, if the Source doesn't like the tape, you will erase it.

Some people are rather independent and feel assured by being reminded that they themselves really are in charge of the taping and that you are there only to assist them in making it turn out as they wish. Others prefer more support, they feel assured if told that you will take responsibility for the flow of topics and material, and that all they need to do is answer the questions posed as naturally and freely as possible.

Emphasize that a tape turns out best when the Interviewer and the Source enjoy making it, rather than when either is striving to put on a performance. Above all, communicate your caring and interest in the Source. Although a tape is being made, the session essentially should be a warm conversation between the two of you. If you are a confident and attentive listener, the Source will open up to you and his/her fears at the start will evaporate quickly.

Another preliminary step is setting up the tape recorder. Position the recorder off to the side, where you can see it at a glance and where you can hear the click when a side of tape runs out. Keep it out of the direct sight of the Source. The microphone, however, should be placed wherever all voices, including yours, can be picked up.

Run a brief test to be sure the volume control is set properly. Each of you should say a few words in your normal speaking voice and then check to see how well that was recorded. Eliminate any extraneous noise by closing the window, for example, or by moving away from the fan. Explain that when you first turn the recorder on, you will begin with a brief introduction and that you will be turning the tape over in the middle of the interview.

Ask the Source if he/she would like to have a beverage available (such as water, juice, tea, coffee, beer, or a glass of wine) during the interview. Sometimes a Source will want to knit or smoke or otherwise occupy his/her hands while speaking. This prop, too, should be provided. Finally, keep close by any pictures or possessions that you might use as a stimulus for remembering events from the past.

Review with the Source any ideas about the content of the interview that came to mind since you first talked about doing it. Jot down those

ideas at the point(s) on your outline where they might be introduced most appropriately. Ask about any limits or taboo topics, events or people that the Source would rather avoid. Agree to eliminate them and make note of them or cross them off your outline.

Let the Source know the first thing you will ask. Check to see whether he/she has a sense of how to respond to that question. It should be one that is readily answered. If the Source doesn't seem to have an answer immediately available, reword the question or shift to another more familiar topic. The Source should enter the interview feeling confident about how it will begin.

Preview, too, the general order of the major themes (e.g., family, childhood, locales, education, etc.) that you will be bringing up during the course of the interview. Anything you do to reduce the Source's sense of uncertainty will be beneficial.

You might work out a way for the Source to stop the recorder should an awkward moment be reached. For example, you could ask the Source to point at the recorder whenever he/she wishes to stop it for a rest break, to tell you something that shouldn't be recorded, or to provide a few moments to sort out some thoughts before proceeding.

If the Source still seems tense about starting at this point, you might do one of two things: (1) Chat about the first topic area for a while to "warm up" the Source and to get him/her accustomed to reminiscing with you, and (2) Suggest that the Source get more physically comfortable in the chair, look at you (not at the microphone), relax his/her muscles (especially around the face, neck, and shoulders), take a few deep breaths, and try to anticipate an enjoyable experience.

Turn on the recorder and begin your introduction. You might start by providing your name, the Source's name, the date and place, and the purpose of this interview. (For example, "My name is John Doe. I am here with my father, William Doe, in the living room of his home. He is seated in his favorite recliner chair and I am on the brown couch. It is a cloudy Saturday afternoon, June 1, 1983. We are taking the time to talk today about our family, so that Dad's memories always will be available to myself, to my wife, and to our children, Tom and Alice. I'd like us to begin, Dad, by asking you. . . ."). Then launch into the first question you have prepared.

On the next page is an outline of the preliminary steps mentioned in this chapter. You might refer to it when you make your tape.

FORUM and SEVENTY
Participants

05/21/92

<u>FIRST NAME</u>	<u>LAST NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>CITY</u>	<u>STATE</u>	<u>ZIP</u>	<u>HOME PHONE</u>
Mrs. Inez	Burch	4306 Grand Ave.	Western Springs	IL	60558	312-246-0488
Mrs. Florence	Burton	25571 Slocum Road	Wauconda	IL	60084	312-526-3107
Mrs. Helen	Carlson	533 Diversey Parkway	Chicago	IL	60614	312-327-3629
Donald & Jeannette	Carter	10901 Johnson Blvd, Apt. J617	Seminole	FL	34642	813-398-6996
Mrs. Agatha	Cook	502 N. Main Street	Brighton	IL	62012	?
Mr. Benjamin	Copenhaver	437 Normandie Lane	Round Lake Beach	IL	60073	?
Mr. Philip A.	Copenhaver Jr.	858 Catherine Court	Grayslake	IL	60030	312-295-2114
Ms. Merret	Culbertson	2025 E. Lincoln, Apt. 1113	Bloomington	IL	61701	309-663-5448
Mrs. Edna	Farwell	450 Fulton Street	Paxton	IL	60957	217-379-4018
Mrs. Geraldine K.	Hahn	3365 Old Mill Road N.	Highland Park	IL	60035	312-432-4377
Mr. & Mrs. William	Hales	815 Sumac Lane	Winnetka	IL	60093	312-446-6585
Mr. John W.	Hales	422 Woodstock Avenue	Kenilworth	IL	60043	708-327-0424
Miss Rose	Harding	1700 SW 20th Street	Ft. Lauderdale	FL	33315	?
Mrs. Katharine J.	Harries	235 Thornbush Lane	Lawrenceville	GA	30245	404-513-8340
Florine	Hewings	333 N. Michigan Ave, Suite 707	Chicago	IL	60601	312-263-1607
Thomas & Carolyn	Kendall	1400 W. Salvington Place	Wheeling	IL	60090	708-537-1078
Mr. Edmond	Kulieke Jr.	2833 Troy Street	Chicago	IL	60618	312-539-4021
Mrs. Alice	Leverenz	3539 Vinecrest Drive	Dallas	TX	75229	?
Miss Virginia	Mellencamp	529 Juniper Drive	Santa Fe	NH	87501	505-982-5382
Dr. & Mrs. James	Mills	6115 N. Davis Hwy, Apt. 42-A	Pensacola	FL	32504	904-476-6458
Mrs. Ruth	Renn	1615 Hinman Avenue	Evanston	IL	60201	312-492-7635
Miss Marian	Rowley	1555 N. Main St.	Frankfort	IN	46041	317-659-2867
Mrs. Edna E.	Schell	PO Box 1322	Glendale	AZ	85311	?
Miss Nola	Smith	2705 E. Glenrosa	Phoenix	AZ	85016	602-956-4078
Dr. Kenton E.	Stephens	6 Carleton Street	N. Billerica	MA	01862	508-663-6501
Mrs. Grace	Walker	620 E. Benton	Naperville	IL	60540	312-355-2088

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05/21/92