



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHO: Columbia College and Columbia College Foundation
WHAT: **Columbia College Oral History Project**
WHERE: Columbia College Library
WHEN: November 2, 9:00 a.m. to Noon

Columbia College Offers Oral History Training

The Columbia College Library is pleased to announce a new chapter for its Columbia College Oral History Series and is inviting volunteers to get involved and help build the collection of recorded and transcribed interviews.

Do you know someone who has an interesting personal story or history that should be preserved for future generations? The college will be offering a workshop to teach the art and science of oral history interviews on November 2nd, at the Columbia College Library. The workshop is open to all.

Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events. Oral history is both the oldest type of historical inquiry, predating the written word, and one of the most modern, initiated with tape recorders in the 1940s and now using 21st-century digital technologies.

The Columbia College Library is looking for both interviewers and subjects. Ideally, subjects will represent a wide range of voices in the Columbia College service area (roughly Tuolumne, southern Calaveras and northern Mariposa counties). Subjects may range from elders who have experienced changes in the community over their lives, to citizens who have experienced political upheavals, natural disasters, the pandemic, major events or organizational change.

“Conducting Oral History Interviews may seem intimidating at first, but it is immensely satisfying” says Kim Baker of Columbia, who is helping to facilitate the project. “Conducting interviews like this can change your perspective on your community and give you a new outlook.”

Volunteers will receive support and training to conduct their own interviews, and are welcome to attend the training without making a commitment.

“We encourage volunteers to come see what Oral History is all about,” Baker said. “You may not want to be an interviewer but decide you can help in other ways, like identifying subjects, transcribing, or editing.”

The workshop and ongoing work on the project have been funded over many years by grants from the Columbia College Foundation. The *Columbia College Oral History Series* was originated by History Professor Dick Dyer in the 1970s. He had students and community members assist with interviews and cataloging. Years later, the Columbia College Library staff, with support from the Columbia College Foundation and the Wise Family Charitable Trust, later took on the task of digitizing and transcribing the collection, adding photos and other materials and posting it on the library’s website. The collection currently includes almost 200 interviews recorded between 1940 and 2017.

The recordings, transcripts and related documents may be accessed at <http://apps.gocolumbia.edu/oralhistory/> .

With Baker’s efforts, Columbia Librarian Brian Greene said the focus now is on continuing to build the collection with new local history interviews.

“The Oral History Series is a valuable resource for helping to preserve a unique part of Motherlode history,” Greene said. “Hundreds of recorded interviews in the collection are already available to the public via the Columbia College Library’s website and we look forward to adding many more through this renewed effort.”

For further information, contact Brian Greene at (209) 588-5119.