

## ARCHIVE PROJECT GUIDELINES

### *Introduction*

When film editor Thelma Schoonmaker received her second Academy Award in 2005, her achievement underscored the importance of New York Women In Film & Television's Archive Project. Making up the core of the Archive are videotaped interviews with women who have worked in film, television and new media in New York City at any time during the last 40 years, and in particular, since NYWIFT was founded in 1977. How has film and television production evolved during those years? How have opportunities for women changed? What has NYWIFT contributed to its members' careers and how has the organization grown? For decades to come, these video interviews will be available to historians, students, researchers, NYWIFT members, and the general public – an invaluable record of women's contributions to vital New York industries.

The Archive Committee encourages all NYWIFT members to record interviews of their colleagues and themselves, and offers this handbook to guide the interview process. To help us manage our growing archive, please clear your interview prospects in advance by sending their names to **Ellen Zalk** at [ellen@ellenzalk.com](mailto:ellen@ellenzalk.com). It is important that you follow the protocol questions as closely as possible to assist with future topic indexing, although some questions should be adapted for accomplished women who are not NYWIFT members. If you are the person being interviewed, follow the same protocol to prepare, and offer specific follow-up questions that reflect your career.

### *The Pre-Interview*

Talking to the person you plan to interview a few days prior to the taping is an essential part of the process. This is the time to learn the background that will enable you to ask questions specific to your interviewee's career. The pre-interview also allows you to explain the procedures and lay out the general outline of your questions. It gives the interviewee time to refresh her memory, look up dates and names and recall relevant anecdotes. Do not, however, ask specific questions or let the subject give lengthy answers. You want the taped interview to feel fresh and spontaneous.

If the pre-interview takes place at the home or office where you plan to tape, this will be a good opportunity to scout the location. If more convenient, the pre-interview can be conducted over the telephone.

Ask the interviewee to supply a current resume, and, if desired, to gather photos and significant artifacts from her career to be recorded at the end of the interview with her own narration. Ask her to please check the names of others in a picture with her, what the project was, and its importance to her career.

### *Equipment*

NYWIFT currently owns a small shooting package that may be used by members once they have been trained and/or checked out on the equipment. Please contact **Elizabeth Estrada, Executive Assistant in the NYWIFT office (212-679-0870 x39 or info@nywift.com)** for camera check-out information.

The package includes the following pieces:

- Camera: Sony HVR-V1U HDV camcorder recording HD tapes
- Tripod: Manfrotto Model 3221WN
- Lights: 3 Lowell Omni lights with barn doors & lamps & stands

Although there are no microphones in this kit, NYWIFT members have access to free microphone equipment from Hello World. For further information please contact Elizabeth Estrada (212-679-0870 x39 or info@nywift.com).

In addition NYWIFT has a LaCie 2gig Quadra 2 disk RAID hard drive to backup/upload your recording. Please contact Terry Lawler, Executive Director (212-679-0870 x24) to arrange to have your material uploaded by one of the interns. If you are familiar with Final Cut Pro you may be instructed on this uploading process as well.

If using your own camera & don't have an HD camera, mini DV tapes are acceptable. All interview materials must be brought to the NYWIFT office upon completion of shooting and given to **Elizabeth Estrada** for the Archive Committee. A DVD should be made if possible as a backup.

### *Setting Up*

- Try to limit your team to no more than three people: the producer/interviewer, videographer and an assistant.

- Unless you are participating in an Archive Committee day of shooting, the videotaping should take place in the interviewee's home or office. Allow 45 minutes for setup.
- Ask the interviewee to do her own light make-up for the interview. The Producer/Interviewer should bring some translucent powder to be applied as needed at the time of the shoot.
- The interview should be taped with a digital video camera or mini DV. Many people have digital cameras that are fine for this use. If you take any still pictures, please use a digital camera as well.
- Record on blank 60-minute DVs or onto a P2 card that can be downloaded at the NYWIFT office.
- Ideally shoot specifications are 16:9, 1080 at 30 frames. If your camera has a non-drop setting, please use it.
- A simple lighting setup (2 instruments on stands) should suffice. Audio is very important – particularly as it will be compressed for the Web. Use good external microphones, not the camera microphone; ideally, a boom microphone or a lavalier for the interviewee, and a lavalier on the interviewer. Make sure the interviewee has the better mic so her voice comes through strong and clear.
- Record the audio on separate channels – interviewee on channel 1 (one) and interviewer on channel 2 (two). Only the interviewee should be seen on camera.
- Choose a comfortable and uncluttered location for the interview. Avoid large windows with changing outdoor light.
- Turn off telephones, TV and radio. Advise others at the location that you are conducting an interview.
- The interviewer should sit as close as possible to the side of the camera so that the interviewee's eye line will be slightly off axis from the camera lens. Interviewer's and interviewee's chairs should be the same height.
- Instruct the person you're interviewing to talk to you, not to the camera.

- Discuss and check shot composition and framing with the videographer. Try for a portrait look – a head and shoulders medium shot with room for the addition of lower third titles. Make sure there are no distracting objects directly behind the interviewee’s head. You, as producer, should approve the framing and picture before shooting begins.
- Work out signals with the videographer, such as a tap on the shoulder if it’s time to change tapes, or for any other needed pauses in the questioning. It’s best not to stop the camera unnecessarily during the interview, but you should stop the camera if you have to have a conversation that’s not part of the interview.
- Make sure the videographer knows there’ll be no editing, so the first and only take should be as good as possible.
- Be sure the person you are interviewing is comfortable and relaxed. A glass of water and any notes she may need should be accessible. Provide water for yourself as well.
- Perform a sound check for both microphones.
- Begin the interview as soon as the setup is complete.

### *General Guidelines for the Interviewer*

- Ask the person you are interviewing to sign the release form.
- Interviews will enter the archive unedited. Nonetheless, the person being interviewed should feel free to restate or amend an answer.
- Tell the interviewee that the conversation will last approximately one hour, but is not limited to that length. Ask the videographer to signal you when you are near the one-hour mark.
- The interviewer should begin taping by clearly stating her own name, the date, and saying: “I am conducting an interview with (name) in (city and state of interview) for the New York Women in Film & Television Archive.” The camera should be on the person being interviewed at this time.
- The interviewer should be off-mic for everything but asking questions. Try not to make any extraneous comments or sounds, especially while the

interviewee is talking. Avoid unnecessary sounds, such as rustling paper or tapping your pen or comments such as “yeah,” “uh huh” and “great.” Alert the interviewee before the conversation begins that you will be trying to keep your own voice off the tape as much as possible, and that you will be responding to her statements with nods and smiles to make sure she knows you are following her. Also, make sure that no one in the room talks during shooting except you and the interviewee.

- Follow the provided protocol questions, though they need not be asked verbatim. Questions have been researched by the Archive Committee and prepared for the purposes of this archive.
- Ask questions clearly and concisely. Do not interrupt the person being interviewed unless absolutely necessary. Do not include your own observations or digressions. We encourage a conversational interview, but the emphasis is definitely on the interviewee.
- Because the archive is an historical record, try to have the subject establish names, positions, dates and significance.
- Encourage descriptions and illustrative anecdotes. Avoid questions that lead to “yes/no” answers. Instead say, “Tell me about...” or “Can you describe...”
- Listen to the answers and ask follow-up questions to clarify or elaborate. If the interviewee digresses broadly from the question posed, try to guide her back.
- Consult your own notes as necessary, but be sure to maintain eye contact with the person you are interviewing, particularly while she responds to questions.
- When it is time to change tapes, find a good place to pause the conversation and verbally acknowledge that you are changing tapes. Remember to pick up a story where you left off when you resume recording.
- Try to gauge the mood and energy of the person you’re interviewing. Use your own best judgment to eliminate or edit questions if she is getting tired.
- Have fun!

*After the Interview*

- Fill out the NYWIFT production report form.
- Thank the interviewee for giving her time and her story to the NYWIFT Archive.
- Be sure that all items moved for the interview are put back in place.
- We will try to provide the interviewee with a DVD of her interview, but make no promises.
- Please label each DV tape with interviewee's name; the date; videographer's name and contact number, and tape number (i.e. 1 of 1, or 1 of 3.) If possible, please make a backup of your interview tape. Either another DV tape or a DVD copy of your interview would be best.
- Please put the following in an envelope and bring or submit to the NYWIFT office, labeled **Attention: Elizabeth Estrada** for the Archive Committee: 1) your original DV tape; 2) the back-up DV tape (keep the tapes together); 3) production report form; 4) signed release form; 5) copy of interviewee's current resume.

NYWIFT RELEASE FORM

By signing below and for good and valuable consideration the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, I agree that my name, likeness, voice, statements and other information supplied by me may be recorded by New York Women in Film & Television (NYWIFT) and used by NYWIFT in its Archive Project and in materials promoting such programs in summary and/or edited from, for unlimited dissemination by broadcast, videocassette, DVD, internet and any other media now know or hereafter devised in perpetuity throughout the world. I hereby release and discharge NYWIFT and its assignees from any claims in connection with said uses and certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

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Name (please print)

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Signature

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Telephone

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Address

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Date

**Date:**

**Interviewee:**

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Job Category/Profession:

Location of interview:

Member of NYWIFT      yes \_\_\_\_\_      no \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer:**

Address:

Phone:

Email:

**Videographer:**

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Crew names and emails:

**PRODUCTION COMMENTS:**

Camera model: \_\_\_\_\_ HD   SD   (circle one)

Were any production stills shot at the end of the interview? \_\_\_\_\_

Were they recorded with narration/description by the interviewee? \_\_\_\_\_

Aspect ratio: \_\_\_\_\_      Frame rate: \_\_\_\_\_

Sound Report: (any audio problems to note?) \_\_\_\_\_

Signed release form      yes \_\_\_\_\_      no \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee's Resume      yes \_\_\_\_\_      no \_\_\_\_\_



## New York Women in Film & Television Archive Interview Questions

SLATE:

My Name is \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date is \_\_\_\_\_

We are at \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewing \_\_\_\_\_ for the New York Women in Film & Television Archive.

1. For the purpose of our archive we're going to start with some basic information:  
Please tell me your name, when and where you were born – city, state.
2. Is this the name you were born with? Do you go by any other name?
3. We're going to talk a little about your background — What did you study in school?
4. Do you have an advanced degree or professional license?
5. What kind of work are you doing now?
6. Did you have professional training in this field? If not, how did you learn?
7. Are you a member of a union or guild?
8. Let's turn to a little about your work biography: Tell us about your first job in the business.
9. Where did you go from there?
10. How did you get to your current position?
11. When did you first realize that this was what you wanted to do as a career?
12. What was your most memorable experience on the job?
13. We all know that film and television is collaborative business. Do you have any particular colleagues that were rewarding to work with? *(If needed, follow up with: What was the project? What was particularly rewarding about working with \_\_\_\_\_?)*
14. Did you have any mentors or people who inspired you? How?
15. What was your greatest achievement?
16. Did you ever change direction in your career?
17. Why did you decide to work in New York rather than go to Hollywood or in another major production center?
18. *(If applicable)* If you did work outside New York, how was that experience different from working in New York?

19. Did that decision affect your career? And if so, how?
20. Do you have a favorite story from your work experience that you'd like to share?
  
21. What lessons has your work life taught you?
22. How have you balanced family and work roles? What tradeoffs or sacrifices did you make?
23. What are some of your goals for the future? Professionally and personally.
24. What advice would you give to young, aspiring women entering the industry?

**As the NYWIFT Archive's mission is in part to document the history of women in our industry in New York, please tell me:**

25. How did the world of work exist for women when you started out? Did you try to change it?
26. Has the work world changed over the years?
27. When you started out, did finding work in the industry differ for racial and ethnic minorities?
28. How has that changed since 1977, when NYWIFT was founded, or since you started out in the industry?

*(If interviewee is a member, ask these)*

29. When and why did you join NYWIFT?
30. Has it met your expectations? In what ways?
31. Can you sum up your feelings about NYWIFT in a word or phrase?