



## RSS Oral History Project

The RSS Oral History Project is a collective effort to capture the memories, recollections, and insights of members of the Rural Sociological Society. In particular, three goals form the focus of the project:

- 1) To develop a sense of where rural sociology has been, what progress it has made, and where it is heading.
- 2) To compare past challenges/ issues/opportunities with those of today.
- 3) To develop a better understanding of the relationship between sociology and rural sociology.

The initial focus of the project was on interviewing past presidents, but all interviews are welcome.

### Project Overview

- Interviews are conducted by volunteers, likely from within the RSS membership, but anyone is welcome.
- The interviews follow a semi-structured format with 5 questions common to all interviews. Beyond those 5 common questions, interviewers and interviewees are encouraged to follow whatever path they prefer as their time available allows.
- Persons living close to the interviewees are particularly encouraged to conduct an interview. Other ideas such as incorporating conducting an interview as part of a graduate course are welcome. Graduate students are also encouraged to consider conducting an interview.
- All interviews are to be recorded and a copy sent to the RSS Historian. While video recording is preferable, audio-only is also acceptable. Interviewers are encouraged to use the technology they feel most comfortable with. When choosing digital recording (ie. DVD/CD, etc), select a format that does not require specialized programs. And, if at all feasible, please use an external microphone. This will help ensure the highest quality recording possible.
- Recorded interviews over Zoom are also encouraged. Zoom can also produce a transcript, but it will need to be reviewed carefully as it is very imprecise.
- All interviewers are expected to provide basic biographical information for their interviewee: degrees, jobs, major works, and positions in RSS. This can be gathered either in the interview or through a vita.
- Interviewers are encouraged to provide transcripts of the interviewee's responses to the 5 common questions. Still, should an interviewer be able to secure a transcription of the entire interview – that would ensure its longevity as technology rapidly changes.
- A copy of the recorded interview and any transcripts, vita, and photographs should be sent to the RSS Historian to be deposited in the RSS archives and the RSS Historian files.

### Questions Common to all Interviews

- How did you become interested in rural sociology?
- What led you to decide to become active in (or run for President of) RSS??
- What were some of the dominant issues or challenges confronting RSS/rural sociology or rural society when you first joined RSS and when you were active or President?
- If you were involved in other associations (e.g. ASA, PAA, regional associations), based on that experience, how was rural sociology/RSS seen by those within that association?
- What do you see as the future issues or challenges for RSS as an organization or rural sociology as a field?

### Background

The RSS Oral History Project was initiated by Joachim Singelmann, President of the Rural Sociological Society (2009-2010) to capture the memories and recollections of past presidents of the Society, their contributions, as well as the context in which the scholars worked.

A key aim in developing the project was Joachim's interest in the evolution and development of rural sociology as a specialty area of sociology, but also the development of rural sociology as an organization – particularly for past presidents who worked in the South since rural sociology there often was the vanguard of the establishment of general sociology at land-grant institutions.

### How can I be involved?

Everyone is encouraged to participate in the RSS Oral History Project – be it as an interviewer or an interviewee.

In addition to past presidents of RSS, those in other leadership positions should also be interviewed (ie. Treasurer/Executive Director, Editors of *Rural Sociology*, Editors of *The Rural Sociologist*, etc.)

Anyone interested in conducting one of the oral history interviews should contact the RSS Historian, Julie N. Zimmerman. She will coordinate the project and provide additional informational resources.

#### **For more information, contact:**

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