

THE WAY WE WORKED

AN ESSAY CONTEST FOR STUDENTS

This contest is sponsored in conjunction with the presentation of “The Way We Worked: Photographs from the National Archives,” a highly-acclaimed photo exhibition focusing on the history of work in America.

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THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
SOUTHEAST REGION



GENERAL OVERVIEW

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

The memories and stories of people grow out of firsthand knowledge and experience. A person's job is usually one of the most important aspects of their life. We all spend the major part of our day at our job. It often defines who we are as people. Stories about work are important sources of information because they tell us about attitudes and beliefs, wisdom and knowledge, and personal interests that lie at the heart of a person's identity and experience.

This contest consists of two parts: an interview and an essay based on the interview. The theme of the contest is "The Way We Worked." It is designed to educate students about how the workplace has changed over the past fifty years. Major changes to profile include technology, clothing, women in the workplace, etc.

The contest has three categories: elementary school (up to grade 5), middle school (grades 6 – 8), and high school (grades 9 – 12).

Points-of-contact at the National Archives Southeast Region follow:

Mary Evelyn Tomlin, Public Programs Specialist, 770-968-2555, mary.tomlin@nara.gov

James McSweeney, Regional Administrator, 770-968-2505, james.mcsweeney@nara.gov

Please contact Ms. Tomlin or Mr. McSweeney to schedule special exhibit viewings and class field trips during the run of "The Way We Worked" (March 9, 2007 to May 20, 2007).

CONTEST DEADLINES

Students must submit essays to their teacher by **close of the school day on Friday, March 15, 2007.**

Teachers will forward the top three essays to the National Archives Southeast Region by **close of business on Friday, April 6, 2007.** In addition, the teachers will submit a list containing the names of all students that participated in the essay contest. Please mail the essays and the listing to the attention of *Mary Evelyn Tomlin, National Archives Southeast Region, 5780 Jonesboro Road, Morrow, GA, 30260.*

AWARDS

First, second, and third place winners will be selected from each of the categories: elementary, middle, and high school. Winners will receive awards of \$150, \$75, and \$25, respectively. Each student who submits an essay will receive a certificate and be recognized at the awards ceremony.

A recognition and awards ceremony for all participating students will be held at the National Archives on **Saturday, April 28, 2007**. Students, teachers, and family members are encouraged to attend.

The winning essays will be posted to the National Archives Southeast Region's website.

WHO SHOULD I INTERVIEW?

Students should select a person who was in the workforce before 1975. Potential subjects for the interview include grandparents and other older family members, teachers and others who work at your school, people in your neighborhood and church, etc. Students should consider individuals who worked in various types of jobs—professional jobs which required college degrees (doctors and nurses, lawyers, teachers, etc.) as well as “blue-color” workers (welders, deliverymen, factory works, waitresses, etc.). The student's charge is to interview the person and gather as much information as possible about that person's job and how he or she worked.

PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW

Oral history gives students the advantage of learning about history from the people who lived through it. It's history in the first person—the way they lived it, their experiences and feelings. In addition to learning about history firsthand, students learn valuable research, writing, thinking, and interviewing skills.

INTERVIEWING A WORKER

Students should select a person who was in the workforce before 1975. It is a good idea to prepare as much as possible before the interview by reading about the occupation or job on the Internet or in books.

Begin by asking the subject what years they worked, for what company, and how long they worked at that job, what their beginning salary was, and what hours they worked. It is also essential to have a list of prepared questions about the job to ask your subject. Some examples are listed below. These sample questions are for your consideration: Feel free to develop and use other questions.

- Q: How did you get this job? What interested you about it?
- Q: How did you learn how to do this job? Who trained you? What was the hardest part to learn? Why?
- Q: What was your beginning salary? Was it by the hour or week or month? How many hours a day did you work?
- Q: Can you tell me exactly what you did?
- Q: What special knowledge, skills, and abilities were needed for this job?
- Q: What tools and equipment were involved? How and when were they used?
- Q: What has changed about this job over the years? How is it different today?
- Q: Did you enjoy this work?
- Q: Can you tell me about some interesting people that you worked with? Do you have interesting or funny stories about people or events that took place when you were working?
- Q: Do you still have contact with people that you worked with (reunions, Internet web site, or video record)?

A good place to find more information on conducting an oral history interview is on the website of the Library of Congress at:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/oralhist/ohhome.html>

If the person is agreeable and if you have the equipment, you may want to tape record the interview. Be sure to ask the person's permission before you do this.

Thank the person for taking the time to talk to you. It's also a good idea to send a written thank-you note.

WRITING THE ESSAY

The second part of the contest is to write an essay based on the information gathered in the interview. The essay should include the name of the person interviewed, the type of

work that person did, when the person worked, where he/she worked, the date of the interview, and the interviewer's name.

The essay should describe the person's experiences in their job. It should be between 750 and 1250 words and should be approximately 3 – 5 pages.

The essay must be typed on a computer and adhere to the following format:

Page margins (top, bottom, and sides): One inch

Spacing: Double spaced

Font size: 12" pitch

Font style: Times New Roman

Use the attached cover sheet, **THE WAY WE WORKED Essay Form**, for submitting the essay. (Make three copies of your essay. Turn in two copies to your teacher and keep one for yourself.)

Complete your essay and turn it in to your teacher by the **close of the school day on Friday, March 15, 2007.**

“The Way We Worked: Photographs from the National Archives” was created by the National Archives with the support of the Foundation for the National Archives, and is organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES). It is presented locally with the support of the Georgia Humanities Council and Barnes & Noble.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES SOUTHEAST REGION

THE WAY WE WORKED Essay Form

All requested information on this form must be completed. Please attach two copies of your essay to this form (and keep one for yourself).

Student Name:

Grade:

School:

Teacher:

Title of Essay:

Name of person interviewed:

His/her occupation:

Date of interview:

Date of Submission: