

celebrating **extraordinary stories**
from **everyday people**



The Next Voice You Hear:

oklahoma voices

by Dana Morrow

In time, both voices and memories fade. That is why the Metropolitan Library System and our partner the Arts Council of Oklahoma City believe the 2007 Oklahoma Centennial is the perfect time to preserve the unique voices and stories of Oklahoma's first 100 years as a state. We are doing this through a program we call Oklahoma Voices.

Oklahoma Voices is a project that encourages residents of Oklahoma County to interview someone they love: a family member, a friend or a neighbor, and leave a legacy not only for themselves and their families, but for the entire community. Think how wonderful it will be to have hundreds of these personal stories, forming an oral history of the large and small moments of Oklahoma history, collected together and available for generations to come. And since listeners will hear the actual voices of the people who lived the moments or knew those who did, the experience will be even more meaningful.

Every person has a story to tell. Where were you born? Who were your parents? What did the house that you grew up in look like? Did you have any brothers and sisters? What were their names? Where did you go to school? What did it look like? What subject did you enjoy the most? These are the seemingly mundane facts that accumulate into extraordinary stories of everyday people.

This project is an official Oklahoma Centennial Project. The concept of Oklahoma Voices is taken from the National StoryCorps Project (www.storycorps.net), the mission of which

is to instruct and inspire people to record the memories of friends, relatives, and neighbors in their own voices. StoryCorps is modeled—in spirit and in scope—after the oral history project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of the 1930s, which recorded interviews with everyday Americans across the country. Those recordings remain the single most important collection of American voices gathered to date. StoryCorps hopes to build and expand on that work, becoming a WPA for the 21st Century.

StoryCorps and Oklahoma Voices seek to celebrate our shared humanity and collective identity by capturing the stories that bind us. We have found that the process can have a profound impact on both the interviewer and interviewee. The personnel of StoryCorps have seen people change, friendships grow, families walk away feeling closer and with a profound understanding of what being a family means.

David Isay, founder of StoryCorps, states "It is a kind of collective wisdom being captured and this is a concept that can continue the library's legacy as a place where people gather and have human connections with one another."

One copy of each interview will be housed in Metropolitan Library System's Oklahoma Room and one copy will be given to the participants. The interviews, with permission of the participants, will be accessible to the public.

To set up an interview time call 414-9977.