

## **Oral History Interview Questions: Media, Pennsylvania**

### **Personal Background and Origins**

When and where were you born? Can you describe the circumstances of your birth—the hospital, the neighborhood, or any family stories about that day?

When did you move to Media, if you were not born here? What brought you or your family to this area?

What are your earliest memories of Media? Are there particular sights, sounds, or smells that come to mind when you think of the town during your childhood?

How would you describe Media to someone who has never visited? What makes this place distinct from other towns you have known?

### **Family History**

Tell me about your parents. Where did they come from, and how did they meet?

What did your parents do for work? How did their occupations shape your family's daily life?

Did your grandparents or extended family live in or near Media? What role did they play in your upbringing?

What values or traditions did your family emphasize? Are there any customs or practices that have been passed down through generations?

How did your family handle difficult times—whether economic hardship, illness, or loss? Are there particular stories of resilience that stand out to you?

What languages were spoken in your home? Were there cultural or ethnic traditions that shaped your household?

### **Neighborhood and Community Life**

What neighborhood did you grow up in? Can you describe what it looked like—the houses, the streets, the yards?

Who were your neighbors? Were there families you were particularly close to, and what do you remember about them?

Where did people in your neighborhood gather? Were there porches, corner stores, parks, or other places where the community came together?

How did neighbors help one another? Can you recall specific instances of people looking out for each other?

Were there divisions or boundaries within Media—whether racial, economic, or social—that affected where people lived or how they interacted?

How diverse was your neighborhood? Did different groups of people live alongside one another, and how did they get along?

## **Education**

What schools did you attend? Can you describe the buildings, the classrooms, and the general atmosphere?

Who were some of your most memorable teachers, and what impact did they have on you?

What subjects interested you most? Were there particular lessons or moments in school that stayed with you?

Did you attend school with students from different backgrounds? How did students of different races, religions, or economic circumstances interact?

Were there educational opportunities you wished you had, or barriers that prevented you from pursuing certain paths?

Did you continue your education after high school? If so, where did you go, and what did you study? If not, what factors influenced that decision?

## **Work and Career**

What was your first job, and how did you get it?

What kind of work did you do after finishing school? How did you find employment in or around Media?

What were the major employers in Media during your working years? How did local businesses and industries shape the town?

Did you face any obstacles in your career because of your race, gender, background, or other factors? How did you navigate those challenges?

How did your work shape your identity and your place in the community?

Did you own or operate a business in Media? If so, tell me about that experience.

## **Social Life and Recreation**

What did you and your friends do for fun as children and teenagers? Where did young people spend their time?

Were there local gathering spots—restaurants, theaters, clubs, or recreational facilities—that were important to the social life of the community?

Did you participate in any sports, either organized or informal? What role did athletics play in the community?

Were there social events, festivals, or traditions that brought people together? Can you describe what those occasions were like?

How did you meet your spouse or partner, if applicable? What was courtship like in Media during that time?

Were there places or activities that were off-limits to certain groups of people? How did segregation or exclusion affect social life in Media?

### **Faith and Spirituality**

Did you attend a church, synagogue, mosque, or other place of worship? Which one, and what role did it play in your life?

How did your faith community contribute to the broader life of Media? Were religious institutions involved in social services, civil rights, or other causes?

Were there religious leaders who made a significant impact on you or on the community?

How has your spiritual life evolved over the years? Has your relationship with faith or religious institutions changed?

### **Civic Engagement and Local Issues**

Have you been involved in local government, community organizations, or civic groups? In what capacity?

Were there particular causes or movements that you supported or participated in? This might include civil rights, labor organizing, environmental concerns, or other issues.

How have local politics and government affected your life and the lives of people you know?

What, in your opinion, has Media struggled with over the years? What challenges has the community faced?

Have you witnessed or experienced discrimination, injustice, or conflict in Media? How did you and others respond?

### **Reflections on Change**

What are the most significant changes you have seen in Media over your lifetime? Consider changes in the population, the economy, the built environment, or the culture.

Are there places, businesses, or institutions that no longer exist but were once important to you? What do you miss about them?

How has the character or feel of Media changed? Is it the same place you remember, or does it feel different now?

What changes do you view as positive, and which do you regret?

How have relationships between different groups of people—across lines of race, class, or background—changed over time?

## **Values and Appreciation**

What do you appreciate and value most about Media? What has kept you here, or what draws you back?

Are there people in Media's history who deserve to be remembered and honored? Who are they, and what did they contribute?

What lessons do you hope younger generations will take from the history of this community?

## **Legacy and Closing Reflections**

Is there anything we have not discussed that you would like to share? Are there stories, memories, or perspectives that you feel are important to preserve?

What do you hope people will understand about your life and the lives of people like you when they listen to this interview?

If you could speak directly to future residents of Media, what would you want them to know?