

For immediate Release

Contact: Lettice Stuart
212-586-1533
letticestuart@verizon.net

More Than 200 Personal Historians Volunteer to Preserve Life Stories in May "Saving Lives" Program

Volunteers in 42 states and overseas to record elders' and veterans' memories in "Personal History Awareness Month"

Houston, TX—More than 200 volunteers in 42 states will be interviewing people in nursing homes, hospices, veterans' centers and other facilities and videotaping or writing stories from their subjects' lives throughout May as part of the Association of Personal Historians "Saving Lives" program.

The 265 members of the nine-year-old Association of Personal Historians (throughout the U.S. and in Canada, Australia, the U.K. and Switzerland) are professionals who help individuals, families, communities, groups and businesses capture their histories as a lasting legacy. APH members do this either by audio taping or videotaping clients' life stories, printing them in books or teaching people how to write their own or their relatives' life stories.

"Most of our members have volunteered to spend 2-30 hours in May interviewing people in nursing homes and residential facilities and writing short summaries of their lives," explains APH president Lettice Stuart, who has captured the life stories of dozens of older people through her Houston firm Portraits in Words. "Some will be laminated with photos of the residents in their younger days and placed in their rooms or on their doors to share their stories with others."

APH vice president Paula Yost of Yantis, TX, Judy Fischer of Crestwood, KY and Jenny McPherson of Ashville, NC will be capturing life highlights in nearby nursing homes. Amber Dahlin of Idaho Springs, CO and Marion Johnson of Sedona, AZ will be helping Alzheimer's patients remember and record cherished memories while they are still accessible.

-more-

APH members universally report that the benefits of capturing the stories of people in nursing homes and other facilities around the country are tremendous. "The activity coordinator of St. Dominic Village in Houston told me that nursing home residents know they have a limited amount of time left, so they are all so eager to tell their stories—but the staff doesn't have time to hear them," Stuart added. "So what we are doing is considered a precious gift."

APH member Bruce Washburn, president of Goose Wings Passages, in Greensboro, NC, stated, "These written legacies add new life to individuals who so often seem to have little of it left. It gives them energy and pride, reminding them of who they were, what they accomplished and how they overcame adversity. In his last weeks of life in a nursing home, one old gentleman would cradle in his arms the book we'd done about him and offer it like a newborn child to each visitor and staff member. He couldn't talk much anymore, so his book spoke for him."

In addition to these volunteer efforts, many APH members will be conducting a number of public events during May to raise awareness of personal history as a profession and help people record their own and their parents' life stories. Dave Oxley of Green Bay, WI, Valerie Metzler of Altoona, PA, Laurie Salame of Amherst, MA and Iris Wagner of Montreal, Canada will be speaking to local groups. Sheri Roberts of Yorba Linda, CA will be conducting a workshop on ethical wills. Carlyn Saltman, of Turners Falls, MA, will be leading a women's storytelling event.

Doris Kinsley, of San Ramon, CA, Anita Hecht of Madison, WI, Jeanne Archer of Amarillo, TX and Lauren Dunbar of Lafayette, CA will be conducting workshops on how to capture life histories. Audrey Galex, of Atlanta, GA will be helping lead an Arab-Jewish friendship event, featuring storytelling, ethnic foods, music and dance.

"Everyone's life story is worth preserving," summarized Sharon Waldman, an APH member in Encino, CA, who operates Family Chronicles. "Wouldn't you be thrilled to know what your great-grandparents lives were like, in their own words: the challenges they overcame and their talents, beliefs and key decisions? Your great-grandchildren would like to know these things about you—regardless of how ordinary you might consider your life to be."

Additional information on personal historians can be found at the APH Website: <http://www.personalhistorians.org>

-end-