

Students Connect with History "Insiders"

by Dr. Benjamin Filene
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UNC Greensboro

Twenty-three-year-old Lisa Zevorich came to graduate school with a talent for historical research—seeking out documents, weighing interpretations, crafting arguments. This semester she has been honing a new skill: listening. Zevorich and seven classmates in UNCG's Museum Studies program conducted twenty-five interviews with seniors at the Greensboro Senior Center. Every week students came downtown to the Center to sit with seniors and hear stories about the events of their lifetimes—from the moon landing to their favorite Thanksgiving meal to their reflections on whether the dishwasher represents technological progress or just a frill for the lazy.

The stories the seniors shared are the centerpieces of a new exhibition at the Historical Museum: "Hear's My Story: Senior Voices in Greensboro," which showcases photographs, quotations, and audio excerpts and invites visitors to explore their own memories of the big and small events of their lifetimes. "It has been fascinating to develop relationships with people whose life experiences are so different from my own," says Zevorich. "It has

been exciting to discover how much we share, despite our differences."

The students devised three lines of questioning. One group asked the seniors about their memories and the traditions they associate with food and cooking. Some talked about how they were raised not to waste food, as Maggie Townsend told student Katherine Steiner in one conversation, "I was staying with a cousin one time and she would tell me that I had to eat the oatmeal before I go to school. And when she'd go out the kitchen I'd take it and throw it out in the yard to her chickens. When I come home she said, 'You didn't eat that oatmeal.' And I said, 'How did you know?' She said, 'The chickens didn't eat it.' I said, 'Well, what I want with it if the chicken didn't eat it!'"

Another group of students showed famous historical photographs—of the flag-raising at Iwo Jima or Neil Armstrong on the moon, for example—and asked for personal memories of those events. Talking about World War II with student Allyson Atwood took Mary Powers back to the living with wartime rations while her father served as a military cook: "He used to send candy home and I would meet the mailman and I would get the candy

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Shop
Stop

by Dawn Kouba
Museum Shop Manager

Mother's Day, graduations, Father's Day, weddings: these special events present opportunities for gift-giving. There is a varied jewelry selection, including handmade sterling-and-pottery creations from Jennie Keats of Seagrove. Venetian glass beads are available in necklaces, bracelets and earrings. The amber is Baltic in origin set in sterling silver and comes with documentation of authenticity. As you look around the Shop you'll see a substantial selection of North Carolina pottery, including new selections from Wil McCanless who creates in both traditional and contemporary styles. Local watercolor artist Stephen Costello has created six scenes from the UNC campus in note card format that are also perfect for framing. A new publication, *The Civil War Ends: Greensboro, April 1865*, details the events that occurred in Greensboro during the last days of conflict. Complimentary gift wrap is available.



UNCG graduate student Lisa Zevorich (right) interviewed Betty Taylor about Taylor's memories of food. Photo by Sarah Cunningham

Greensboro Seniors Share Their Stories

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and I would hide behind the house and I'd eat that candy until I got sick."

A third group asked seniors about how new technologies—from cake mixes to washing machines to TVs—shaped the routines of everyday life. Evelyn Dorsey marveled to student Leda Wilkins about the changes she has seen in her lifetime, explaining, "I read Buck Rogers, which is a comic strip, as a little kid. All that was things of the future, you know. And the future's kind of here."

"Hear's My Story" involved a collaboration between UNCG, Senior Resources of Guilford and the Historical Museum. The students planned the project, won a North Carolina Humanities Council grant

to support it, and planned the design, construction, and installation. They attended several workshops led by museum exhibits curator Martin Kane, impressing director Fred Goss with their energy, who commented, "It's great to see students so engaged in this partnership." Renee Griffin with Senior Resources also welcomed the project. "We live in such a youth-centered society that we often neglect to think about what older adults have experienced and lived through. Some seniors have never had the chance to tell their stories. It's a respectful and empowering thing to have their stories listened to by young people in the community. And I think it has been a great opportunity for the young people to build relationships with older adults."

"Hear's My Story: Senior Voices in Greensboro" opens May 6 and will run through through August 31. Please join us for an opening celebration featuring the students and seniors on Tuesday, May 6 from 10:00-11:00 a.m.

This project was made possible in part by the North Carolina Humanities Council, a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities; UNCG Office of Leadership and Service-Learning; and UNCG Department of History.



Event Calendar

May

**HEAR'S MY STORY:
SENIOR VOICES IN GREENSBORO**
On exhibit May 6–August 31
Opening Reception
Tuesday, May 6 at 10 a.m.
FREE

BICENTENNIAL PARADE OF DECADES
Saturday, May 17 at 11 a.m.
Museum volunteers portray 1880s

GUIDED CEMETERY TOURS
May 17, 18, 19 & 25 from 1-5 p.m.
Led by First Presbyterian members
Call 375-0600 for more information
FREE; DONATIONS ACCEPTED



May

GUILD PROGRAM WITH BOX LUNCH
Monday, May 19 at 10:30 a.m.
David Caldwell Interpretive Center, Hobbs Road
Speaker: Gary Brown
Reservations required -
Call Sara Stuart at 545-9440

DOLLEY MADISON'S BIRTHDAY
Sunday, May 20

MEMORIAL DAY
Monday, May 26
Offices Closed

July

4TH OF JULY
Museum Open

September

FIVE BY O. HENRY
September 12, 13, 18, 19, 20 at 8 p.m.
September 13, 14, 20, 21 at 3 p.m.
Tickets: \$12 General Admission,
\$10 Members, Seniors and Students
Tickets to go on sale *August 1*

In Memoriam

**MRS. MARJORIE MCNAIRY
SMITH**
gift from
Mrs. Merle C. Frazier

MR. GENE LASHLEY
gift from
Mrs. Merle C. Frazier

Honorarium

MRS. JOANNE BLUETHENTHAL
gift in honor of her birthday from
Mrs. Betty C. Roth