Life Story Interview

Student’s Name
Institutional Affiliation
Life story is a story that a person tells of his or her life, and which is told with as much honesty and completeness as possible to the listener who is an interviewer. Conducting such an interview is important for gathering information on individuals, which can be utilized in policy formation and also in other administrative areas. The purpose of this project is to assess how well life story interviews can source information from the interviewee and how the information collected can be used in understanding the interviewee and his experience in society during his lifetime. Below, I present the life story interview of my grandfather. The interview took place at his home in Chicago. I had requested a special audience with him, which he agreed to given that he is retired now with little activities going on in his life. He is 70 years old, born in Bolingbrook, Chicago. He is Catholic by faith of Hispanic descent. At the time of the interview, he looked strong and happy as we were sitting outside his house. His name is Peter Tosh.

**Me (M) –** Grandpa, could you tell where and when you were born. This book aims at giving a detailed analysis of the ethical issues that affect an everyday human resource function. The author’s central ideas is that employee ethics is the main cause of critical problems that preset themselves in an organization. The book presents the various models and theories that help to understand employee behaviors and the reasons why people act in the ways they act. The book in crucial in my topic because it enables one to understand what factor influence employee behaviors and how a human resource professional across the world can offer support to people who behave unethically in the organization. The only weakness with the book is that it does not address all human resource issues like recruitment and selection.

**Grand Pa (GP) –** I was born here in Bolingbrook on the 30th of August, 1944. It was not as populated then as it is now, but we had a large neighborhood. As far as I remember, we used to play with many friends, but my parents
M – Now if you mentioned your parents, could you tell me more about them?

GP – Of course I will. My father’s name was Richard Tosh, and my mother’s name was Armanda Jones. They were children of immigrants from Spain. Am not sure when my grandparents migrated into the United States because I never got to meet them and ask such questions as you are doing now. Anyway, my father was a plumber by profession. My mother was a housewife. She used to do weaving sometimes to occupy her free time. She was very concerned about the influence of the friends I played with, to an extent I had to sneak and go playing. My father was a fan of basketball. He took me to watch the matches sometimes.

M – What was your parent’s education and marriage in general?

GP – My father had studied in high school and then joined a community college to become a plumber. As far as I could tell, he was happy with this job. My mother had dropped out in junior high school and had never pursued any profession. They were in a monogamous marriage. Sometimes they used to fight because of money, but they were generally comfortable with each other. They had a wedding in a catholic church, which is what I can remember.

M – Do you have any siblings? Are they older or younger than you?

GP – I have three siblings, two sisters and one brother. The sisters are older than me by 6 and 3 years respectively. I am older than my brother by four years. All of them studied in college. The eldest sister was a nurse; she is dead for ten years now. The second born was a teacher. She is retired and staying with her husband in Maryland, it is long since we met. My younger brother
was a teacher also, but he is retired now. He is living here in Bolingbrook. We meet very often.

M – Describe for me the house and compound you lived in as a child.

GP – It was a three bedroom house made of timber. Mum and dad used one bedroom, the sisters another, and my brother and me the remaining one. It had a sailing, but was warm most of the time. There was piped water, and we used gas to cook. There were two tables in the sitting room with two sofas and six arm chairs. The kitchen was small with a window that faced to the back of the house. It had two doors, one facing the gate and the other to the left of the wall, facing the store. The store is where dad stored broken and old things. There was a small field in front of the house, the size of a tennis court. There were two large trees, one in the backyard and the other near the gate. The house was painted cream on the inside and brown on the outside with blue doors and windows. There was a flash toilet, which was shared by all. My mother kept a small garden behind the house where she planted onions and some other vegetables. That is what I can recall.

M – How did your home compare with those of many of your neighbors?

GP – There were only a couple of houses, which were made of timber in our neighborhood. These were the lowest quality houses around. Many of my friends had homes made of brick with a well-maintained lawn and a garage.

M – How does that house compare with the house that you are living in now?

GP – I would say that it is better by a large degree. I have a well-maintained lawn, piped water with a hot water system, a bathroom with a bathtub, six
bedrooms, a garage and my own study, which dad did not have. As you can see, it is not made of timber (he laughs).

M – I see you improved a lot. What was life as a child in terms of chores, health, and relationship with your parents?

GP – I can say it was the best childhood despite many problems. My parents were keen on ensuring we knew how to do the house chores, irrespective of gender. So, it was common for me to cook or clean the house if it was my turn. I used to accompany my dad to church on Sunday, but it was my mother who used to escort me to Independence Elementary school. Except for common cold, it was rare for a family member to fall sick. Mum used to insist on eating fresh foods from the market as opposed to processed foods. She was especially against consuming meat more than once a week. She said it caused problems in the heart, but you can see I am strong still. My sisters used to go for dancing in their free time and sometimes could allow me to accompany them and watch.

M – Are there periods in your early life that you regard as difficult times?

GP – Yes. It was my second year in college. Dad lost his job when the people he worked for moved to New York. It was hard to get another job as a plumber, so it took a long time. Life was really tough because it was hard doing even shopping for food. This meant I had to stay home for one year before going back to college since my elder sister was in her final year in college and my brother had joined junior high school the same year. I had to do manual jobs to help foot the bills. That was my first experience in the job world. Some of my mother’s friends from church offered to help sometimes, but the help could not solve our financial problems. Up to now, I still remember the moment and wonder why my parents died earlier. I would have allowed them to feel the luxury of not worrying about
food.

M – Are there any positive events when you look back at your childhood life?

GP – Yes. While I was working as a manual laborer, I came to work for a certain engineer who was very upset that I had to work to support my family at such an age. He promised to help me get a good job after finishing college if I showed great commitment and resilience. I was surprised, but he kept his promise. He recommended me to his former high school board, and I got my first job as a teacher there. I still kept contact with him until he passed away seventeen years ago. In stressed on always striving to excel and achieve higher, something I found encouraging. It actually made me leave teaching to go and study engineering. He offered me a job in his company and later insisted on forming my own firm and establishing my own practice. It was the best advice I ever received.

M – Tell me about your marriage. How did you meet before you married?

GP – That is the biggest story I have to tell. I met my wife while I was working for John Learner, which is the engineer I just told you about. She was his niece. He had offered her a job as an assistant clerk in his firm as she waited to join college. She was a great friend then because we were the only people under twenty working there; and her uncle kept insisting we should avoid company of married people. We could go for lunch together most of the days. After work, it was very common to walk home together. I would escort her to her home before coming back. The biggest surprise came when she was admitted to our college the year I was to resume school. Because we already knew each other, she was comfortable spending most of her free time in my room while she made new friends. I had regarded her as just a friend until I saw one of my friends trying to seduce her. At first I was not concerned, but when she went to lunch with
him, it became clear I needed to act. That was when I declared my intentions and to my surprise realized that she had been waiting for me to act. Can you imagine that she had gone to lunch with the guy just to make me jealous? We stayed for three more years until she finished college before we announced to our families that we were getting married. She had graduated as a nurse. Engineer John had talked to her parents and told them I was a hardworking and responsible young man. This made it easier when I visited her home for the first time. Her parents said I had to be ready to ask for advice when necessary, and thus, they blessed our union. They did not demand for any payment at the time. My mother was especially pleased when I brought her home, the reason being she never thought I would get married that soon. I was only 23 years and she was 21. I rented my own room seven blocks from home, and thus, we started our life. Her siblings could visit us on weekends and sometimes could meet with my sisters and brother. They made a big family. Funnily, we never had to cook for them because we could not afford it.

M – Did you ever move to a larger house?

GP – At first, the house was enough for the two of us. We stayed in it for two years as I worked as a teacher. On the third year, we had decided to get a child, so we moved to a larger house in the same block. It was more spacious than the first one. That is where your father, David, was born. After two years, we got your aunties and decided they were enough. They both went to the same elementary school that I had attended as a child. It was my duty to take them for walks on weekends together with your grandmother.

M – What is the most important thing about your family so far?

GP – I am very grateful to my wife Jane. She stood by me when I had to leave
teaching and go study engineering. She had to keep up with the children alone throughout the day while am away. The effort she put into bringing up our child made up for the time I missed spending with them. Above all, the two children we bore have been close even during this old age. That makes me feel I have accomplished all I needed to do, now I have grandchildren like you to succeed me.

M – What was your work life like?

GP – Ah. My first job was manual labor in engineer John’s firm. Later, I worked for four years as a high school teacher after graduation. Then I changed profession and went back to study structural engineering. I studied for four years, got certified, and went back working with and for engineer John. I was with his firm for eight years, after which he advised me to establish my own engineering firm and enter the market. I still continued working with him part-time for three years before I finally moved to New York to start my firm. It took me one year to get started, after which I moved my family to stay there with me. I almost went bankrupt in 1982, but again, engineer John came to my rescue. I would say that John had played the main role in my career development. I practiced for 30 years and retired at the age of sixty. I had done many real estate investments here in Bolingbrook by buying apartments and also building my home not far from the home of my childhood. Hence, when I retired, I moved back home.

M – What is your net worth? Are you satisfied with your achievements?

GP – I think I am roughly 15 million dollars’ worth in assets. I have four apartments, 3 million in the bank, and machinery in my firm worth 8 million. I feel satisfied with my achievements because I live in my own house, all my children have gone to school and attained qualifications in
their chosen careers, and my wife and I are still healthy.

M – Don’t you ever consider working at your age?

GP – I think of it sometimes. It is common to get attached to a job you have done for a long time. But it is good I have not gone back. I cannot imagine staggering into my office at this age when young people like you can do the same job. If advice is needed, am ready to give it anytime to anybody in need of it. As for money, I don’t think I need to make any more than I have. I want to spend the time with my wife at home, she is retired too, remember.

M – Do you have many friends at this time?

GP – Yes. I have many work-associated who have retired too. We meet sometimes as old friends, sometimes as often as once a month to drink coffee and ridicule each other on how old and useless we have become. I have some friends from college too who sometimes visit when not very busy. Currently, I have made friends among my neighbors since I last moved back here. We sometimes meet in my house to watch football and eat cookies that my wife prepares; they are the best cookies in town (laughs).

M – Are all your friends rich like you?

GP – Not really. Only those who live in this area are that rich. I have many friends in church who are poor, but we have a good rapport. Some of them have invited me to their home for lunch, only for them to be surprised when I invited them to my house for lunch. I enjoy having friends from both divides because we were once poor, and I know what it is like.
M – Do you have a close relationship with your relatives?

GP – Family is what has brought me up this far. Am sad my parents are dead, but they are heroes. I meet my brother very often for tea. My in-laws from my wife’s side visit often, and we do visit them on holidays, they are a great support when one is down. I do visit the extended family of my grandfather when possible to catch up on their wellbeing and development and help when necessary, that is what family means to me. If I should isolate myself, I have a feeling that all my achievements will be nothing.

M – What is your opinion of the government, politics, and administration over the years? Has it helped you in any way?

GP – Many strides have been made by the government in improving the condition of its people, but there is much more to be done. Politics is not very important to those who want to move out of poverty, so it did not help me. It only made me realize I needed to work harder to earn a living. However, the government made it possible for me to go to college, thanks to the college funds. That is the main contribution a government can make in your early life, the rest depends on your effort.

M – Which is your happiest moment in life?

GP – It is when we got our first child. I had never imagined how it would feel being a father. But when the news came that he had been born, and I saw him in the nursery with your grandmother, I realized I had gotten the inspiration I needed to do more in life. It was the happiest moment to date.

M – Do you have any wish as you are growing old?
GP – I wish all our relatives would stay in one location where I could walk across and say high at sunset. It is what I admire most, to live and die among those who love you. But as it is, I am glad people still come to visit, and we make visits to our relatives whenever possible.

M – Thanks very much.

GP – You are welcome any time again.