



FAIRFIELD CITIZEN~NEWS

Visit of Project Reveals Stories Worth Telling

Over the weekend, the nationally known oral history project StoryCorps came to the Fairfield Museum and History Center. In the museum's classroom, memories were shared between mothers and daughters, fathers and sons and friends and relatives and were professionally recorded by a StoryCorps facilitator.

Adair Heitmann of Fairfield interviewed her mother, Mary-Starke Wilson of Stamford, and heard about her mother's move from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia to Boston, Mass., in the early 1940s. "I've loved StoryCorps for years

and said that if it ever came to Fairfield I want to interview my mom," said Heitmann. "I helped my mom move this year and had the privilege of seeing her life in a different way. We had time to talk and saw pictures from places she had lived. I learned about a part of her life I don't know very much about."

"For me," said Wilson, "it was going north of the Mason-Dixon Line. Nobody in my family had ever done that and couldn't understand why I would."

Some of the stories recorded this weekend capture important parts of Fairfield's

history. First Selectman Ken Flatto participated in the project. "I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to discuss the government of Fairfield's amazing history and to talk about my experiences with other historic town leaders such as the great John Sullivan."

Town Clerk Betsy Browne interviewed Bill Lee, former resident of the Sun Tavern on Fairfield's Historic Town Green. "We talked about the history of the tavern up to the jewel it is today," said Browne.

"I was very much involved with John Sullivan in the town's purchase of the Sun

Tavern," said Lee. "John would be so proud that I've told this story. It was a wonderful part of my life, and I never dreamed that I would live there." Lee resided in the Sun Tavern from 1980 to 1995.

"We are so proud to have StoryCorps here," said Regine Heberlein, the museum's librarian. "Fairfield Museum is the place Fairfield's stories are gathered and preserved for generations to come. While the museum also collects and preserves artifacts, documents and other material that tell our collective story, it is the oral histo-

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Stories to Tell

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ries passed down between people and through generations that help create our rich understanding of our community's history."

Each StoryCorps recording will be preserved in the museum's collection, providing a tool for learning for future generations.

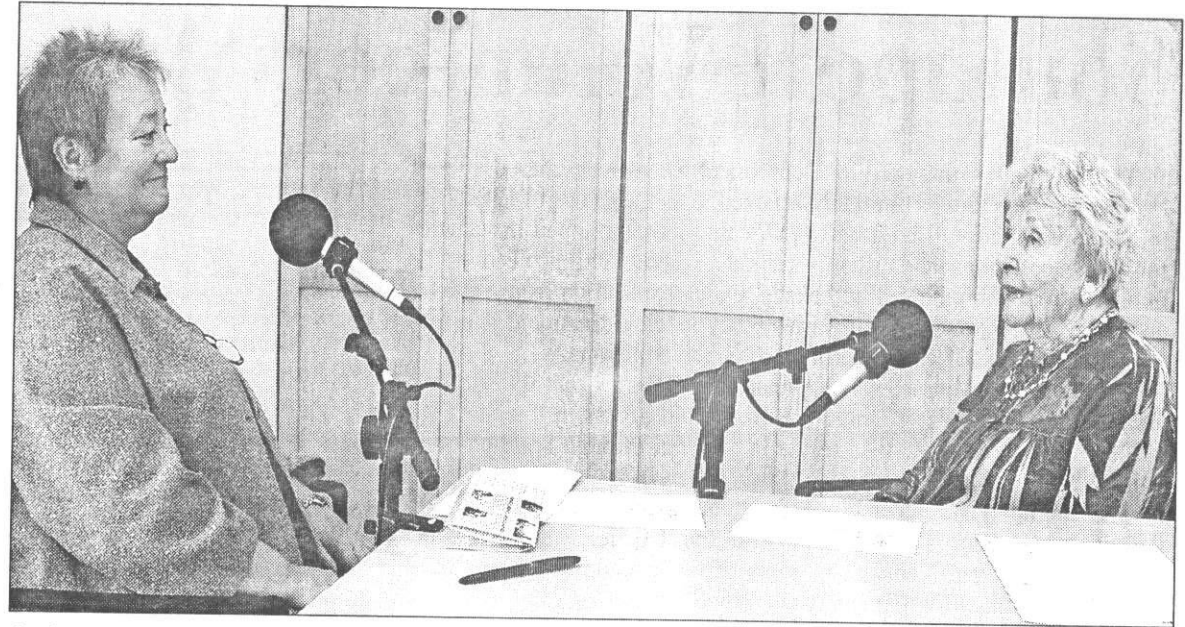
Sharing stories with someone is intimate; you learn things that you didn't know, have a chance to understand a point of view and come away with a new appreciation for the person who has shared their story. Gayle Turton Seirup interviewed her father-in-law, Robert Lee Seirup. "StoryCorps is a very worthwhile production, and the effort to record people's stories is very good for the country as a whole. In preparing for the inter-



view, I actually found myself becoming closer to my father in law."

Elise Harrison, assistant director of counseling services at Fairfield University, interviewed her mother, Margaret Rendl, and had a similar experience. "My mother had always spoken about her childhood, so it wasn't that I hadn't heard the stories. But recording her story with StoryCorps was this wonderful experience of affirming her life. At one point, the facilitator asked her: How did you become such an independent woman? I had always taken her independence for granted and wouldn't have thought to ask her that question. It was a wonderful way of affirming her life and who she is."

StoryCorps will be at the Fairfield Public Library on today and tomorrow. Due to the overwhelming response to the project, the Fairfield Museum will be con-



tinuing to collect and record oral histories every month as part of its Family First Sundays program, sponsored by Tauck Tours. An interview form can be downloaded from www.fairfieldhs.org or picked up at the museum.

StoryCorps' visit to the museum was made possible through the support of Fairfield University.

Contributed photos

During the StoryCorps' visit to the Fairfield Museum and History Center last weekend, clockwise from left, Elise Harrison, assistant director of counseling services at Fairfield University, interviews her mother, Margaret Rendl, gaining a new appreciation of her mother's independence. Adair Heitmann interviews her mother, Mary-Starke Wilson, and learns about moving across the Mason-Dixon Line as a single woman in the 1940s. Gail Turton Seirup interviews her father-in-law, Robert Lee Seirup, about his experiences growing up in Fairfield.

