Want to record an oral history, but not sure how to get the conversation started?  
Try some of these prompts to help open up conversation.

LIFE IN OAK PARK

• Were you born in Oak Park? When?  
• What was it like growing up in Oak Park?  
• What has changed? What has stayed the same?  
• How has living in Oak Park shaped or affected your life?  
• What’s your favorite Oak Park memory?  
• What kind of community do you want to live in?

WORLD PERSPECTIVE

• What invention has had the most impact on your life?  
• What changes in the world have surprised you the most?  
• Is there a day in history that you remember exactly where you were when you heard the news?

GROWING UP

• How large was your family?  
• What was your first job?  
• What are you proudest of?  
• What was your childhood like?  
• Who has been the biggest influence on your life? What lessons did that person teach you?  
• What is your favorite memory of me (interviewer)?  
• How would you like to be remembered?  
• How would you describe yourself as a child?  
• Were you happy?  
• How would you describe a perfect day when you were young?

• What did you think your life would be like when you were older?  
• Do you have any favorite stories from your childhood?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

• When in life have you felt most alone?  
• If you could hold on to one memory from your life forever, what would that be?  
• Do you have any regrets?  
• For your great great grandchildren listening to this years from now: is there any wisdom you’d want to pass on to them? What would you want them to know?  
• Is there anything that you’ve never told me but want to tell me now?  
• Do you regret anything?  
• What have you learned from life? The most important things?  
• How do you want to be remembered?

FAMILY

• Who were your favorite relatives? Do you remember any of the stories they used to tell you?  
• What were your parents like?  
• How was your relationship with your parents?  
• What were your grandparents like?  
• Did you get into trouble? What was the worst thing you did?  
• Do you have any siblings? What were they like growing up?
SCHOOL
• Did you enjoy school?
• What kind of student were you?
• What would you do for fun?
• How would your classmates remember you?
• Are you still friends with anyone from that time in your life?
• What are your best memories of grade school/high school/college/graduate school? Worst memories?
• Was there a teacher or teachers who had a particularly strong influence on your life? Tell me about them.
• Do you have any favorite stories from school?

RELATIONSHIPS
• Do you have a love of your life?
• When did you first fall in love?
• Can you tell me about your first kiss?
• What was your first serious relationship?
• Do you believe in love at first sight?
• What lessons have you learned from your relationships?
• How did you meet your spouse/partner?
• How did you propose?
• What were the best times? The most difficult times?
• What advice do you have for young couples?
• Do you have any favorite stories from your marriage or about your spouse/partner?

REligion
• Can you tell me about your religious beliefs/spiritual beliefs? What is your religion?
• Have you experienced any miracles?
• What was the most profound spiritual moment of your life?
• Do you believe in God?
• Do you believe in the after-life? What do you think it will be like?
• Do you think about dying? Are you scared?
• How do you imagine your death?
• Do you believe in an after-life?

FAMILY HERITAGE
• What is your ethnic background?
• Where is your mom’s family from? Where is your dad’s family from?
• Have you ever been there? What was that experience like?
• What traditions have been passed down in your family?
• What are the classic family stories? Jokes? Songs?

WORKING LIFE
• What do you do for a living?
• Tell me about how you got into your line of work.
• Do you like your job?
• What did you want to be when you grew up?
• What lessons has your work life taught you?