



Mary Sheridan

Recording of Local History Through Events and Personalities

The video program has initiated a series of videotaped interviews with residents of the Port Washington community. This series is known as Port Profiles. Volunteers have acted as interviewers and selected their subjects. Historical information, personal reminiscence, and individual profiles are the general areas of inquiry. These profiles have included long-time residents, newcomers, the well-known personality and the unknown. These tapes have engendered varied responses.

One young person, born and educated in the community, has commented: "After looking at a tape I saw another aspect of this man. He was more than just a local merchant I thought I knew. I saw him in a different light."

Videotaping of issues, events, and activities has been another diverse and rich source for community profiles. The informality of people dealing with ideas, and pursuing their activities has produced candid overviews of the community.

This is only the beginning of gathering a wealth of information for Library Archives. Such video tape probes have helped people to see and understand themselves and others better. Certainly, such an oral-visual history should prove fruitful in the not-so-distant future.

Citizens of the community are becoming increasingly aware of the medium of video tape and its community ramifications. An ever growing number of people are seeing video as a tool for local community utilization.

Video, used in an illuminatory manner can provide amplification of the views of the seemingly less articulate. Individuals in conversation, speaking of their local concerns, can be transported via video into a formal setting where normally their informal articulate quality would be lost.

We have seen video become a means in which local organizations could better understand themselves. It also has been the medium in which organizations can provide others with some indication of their purpose. Video has provided an informal excursion into the activities of many people, perhaps a greater understanding and respect for the difference and similarities among people of this diverse community.

Community groups have made extensive use of video as a catalyst. Individuals and organizations have found that informal video taping of people in relaxed situations which are then played back to a more formal group will elicit more open response. Such tapes become true discussion and action stimuli. Over 74 Port Washington organizations have utilized video as a source of information, as a catalyst, or as a means to provide others with knowledge of their activities and views.