A Crowd-Sourced Cheat-Sheet for Career-Spanning Profile Interviews

By Alla Katsnelson. © The Open Notebook, Inc.
(For more suggested questions and the related story, visit http://bit.ly/profile_interviews)

Early Years
• What were you like as a kid?
• When did you first realize you were interested in science?
• How did you get started in science? In this field? This topic?

Turning Points
• How did you discover the problems that led to your most important work?
• What have been some challenging or discouraging moments in your career?
• What were the big surprises along your career path?
• What do you wish you had done differently?

The Work
• What is a typical day like when you're working on [X]?
• What aspects of your research are you most proud of?
• Who has influenced your work?
• If you could alter one aspect of your field, what would it be?

Setting
• What does your lab or field site look like, smell like, and/or sound like?
• What's hanging on the walls of your office?
• What do the tools you use look like?

Life Outside Work
• What would you have done for your career if not this, and why?
• When you go out with scientist friends, what do you talk about?
• What are some surprising things that people might not know about you?

Context
• What are some of the main changes you've seen in your field during your career?
• How does the academic culture differ between the institution where you work now and where you worked before?
• What are you looking forward to seeing in your field in the next 10 years? What are you looking forward to that you couldn't have predicted a decade ago?
• What big mysteries in your field remain?