



Feature Issue: Inside the 2012 OHA Conference

OHA pays tribute to Cleveland civil rights activist

ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION members paid tribute to a Cleveland civil rights leader, the late Harold B. Williams, at a wide-ranging plenary session in which his widow and son Marvin recalled experiences with school desegregation and neighborhood integration in the 1960s.

Williams, who died in March at age 90, was executive director of the Cleveland branch of the NAACP from 1956 to 1966 and later served for more than a decade as director of the Federal Transit Administration's Office of Civil Rights.

Williams, his wife, Eula Gomes Williams, and their children, Marvin, Gerald and Annetta, were pioneers in the school desegregation efforts in Cleveland. At one point, the children were escorted to school by federal marshals after crosses were burned on the family's yard.



Marvin Williams shares memories of his father, the late Harold B. Williams, Cleveland civil rights leader.

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Oral History Review seeks book review editor

By Kathryn Nasstrom, OHR Editor

THE *ORAL HISTORY Review*, the official journal of the Oral History Association, is accepting applications for the position of book review editor. The book review editor is responsible for procuring and editing book reviews for two issues of the *Review* per year, averaging 30 book reviews per issue.

The book review editor will join the six-member editorial team of the *Review* and will participate actively in the development of the journal, which includes an ongoing multimedia initiative. The editorial team—a creative and dedicated band of editors/oral historians—is motivated by a commitment to the journal and its place in the life of the Oral History Association and the broader oral history community. Together, we seek to make the *Review* a lively site in which to experience, discuss and debate oral history.

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President's letter

By Mary Larson

WE HAVE JUST wrapped up another annual meeting, and I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the conference in Cleveland. I am particularly grateful for the hard work done by the program committee, co-chaired by Chuck Bolton and Elinor Mazé with Jeff Corrigan as workshop chair, and the local arrangements committee, chaired by Mark Tebeau, as well as by OHA's executive secretary, Madelyn Campbell. Thanks also to our speakers, workshop leaders, chairs and commentators and to those who performed at the special events. You all pitched in to make the Cleveland meetings memorable for those who attended.

If you were not able to make it to the conference this year, I hope you will consider joining us in Oklahoma City next fall, where more exciting sessions, keynotes and plenaries await. Please see the call for proposals in this newsletter for more details.

One of the high points of the 2012 meeting was being able to thank Madelyn Campbell for her years of service before she retires as executive secretary at the end of December. While it is difficult to keep celebratory tributes a secret from someone like Madelyn, who is so thoroughly involved in every aspect of planning the conference, we believe that there were no breaks in security and that we actually managed to surprise her at the Presidential Reception on Thursday evening. In Sammy's Metropolitan Ballroom, which afforded wonderful views of downtown Cleveland from the 21st floor of the 925 Building, the membership presented Madelyn with an engraved crystal

award and a commemorative embroidered blanket signed by the many attendees. I was also privileged to read aloud the following resolution, which had been approved by Council in Madelyn's honor:

Whereas, Madelyn Campbell has diligently and tirelessly served the Oral History Association as its executive secretary since 1999; and

Whereas, during those years OHA has thrived, with Madelyn playing a significant role in that success; and

Whereas, Madelyn has encouraged and exercised wise stewardship of the resources of the organization, allowing the finances of the OHA to flourish; and

Whereas, she has expended significant effort in the organization and arrangement of many successful annual meetings;

Therefore, the Council of the Oral History Association, on behalf of the organization and oral historians past and present, does hereby extend to Madelyn Campbell its sincere thanks and appreciation for a job well done, and



Mary Larson, OHA president

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Executive Director's Report

By Cliff Kuhn

THE PLANS TO move the Oral History Association executive offices to Georgia State University are proceeding apace. We have placed furniture, cabinets and shelving, a computer, and a phone into the office, acquired an email address (oha@gsu.edu) and a phone number (404-413-5751), and are in the process of hiring a program associate. Madelyn Campbell will come to Atlanta in January to do training and assist with the processing of submissions for the 2013 meeting in Oklahoma City, which promises to be great.

In addition to getting the new office up and running, there are three primary objectives for the executive office in 2013. The first is enhancement of the OHA website to become the real "go-to" place for the field. One of the two graduate student assistants assigned to the executive office will be dedicated to the site—staying in touch with OHA committee chairs and others for regular news reports and features; mounting content of direct interest to various constituencies within the field; and otherwise considering how the site can be most fruitfully utilized. We encourage OHA members to regularly, actively and creatively employ the site.

Second, OHA Council will initiate and implement a strategic planning process to better assess the current state of the organization, where we hope to be in five years, and how best

to get there. The end product will include a mission statement, a vision statement, a set of broad goals and a series of specific initiatives that will help achieve these goals. This process will include multiple stakeholders from diverse vantage points from both within and outside the OHA; as with the website it is imperative to have widespread investment in this process, so as to best serve the organization and oral history more generally.

Finally, we will begin a process to apply for membership in the American Council of Learned Societies. ACLS membership would enhance the OHA's visibility and stature, offer a range of organizational development resources and provide cross-fertilization and exchange with our colleagues in other professional organizations.

I was tremendously buoyed by the enthusiasm expressed at the Cleveland meeting for the new executive structure, and I look forward to working with all of you as together we move the OHA into a new era of the organization's history. ❖



Cliff Kuhn, OHA executive director

PHOTO: MICHELLE LACOSS

Inside the 2012 OHA Conference

OHA presents awards for outstanding oral history work

ORAL HISTORY WORK focused on women, neighborhoods and school desegregation were among the recipients of awards at the 2012 OHA conference in Cleveland. The awards for outstanding work were:



BOOK AWARD

Casino Women: Courage in Unexpected Places

by Susan Chandler and Jill Jones



BOOK AWARD (INTERNATIONAL)

Moving Stories: An Intimate History of Four Women Across Two Countries

by Alistair Thomson



BOOK AWARD HONORABLE MENTION

Patriot Acts: Narratives of Post 9/11 Injustice and Inside This Place and Not of It: Narratives from Women's Prisons

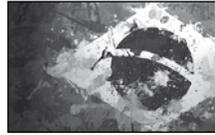
by Voice of Witness



NONPRINT MEDIA AWARD

Lost Neighborhoods

by Centre d'histoire de Montreal



ARTICLE AWARD

"The Dissonant Lives of Brazilian Black Non-Samba Singers"

by Ricardo Santhiago



ARTICLE AWARD HONORABLE MENTION

"Blacks on Brown: Intra-Community Debates over School Desegregation in Topeka, Kansas 1941-1955"

by Charise Cheney



ELIZABETH B. MASON PROJECT AWARD:

George Mitchell Oral History Project

Bowdoin College, Maine

Thank you,

OHA sponsors

The Oral History Association wishes to thank the following organizations that provided generous support for the annual meeting in Cleveland.

American University

Center for Oral and Public History
California State University, Fullerton

Oklahoma Oral History Research Program
Oklahoma State University

Oxford University Press

Palgrave Macmillan

Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
University of Florida

University of Akron Press

University Products

Vox Populi Award recognizes Sherna Berger Gluck's lifetime of social justice work

SHERNA BERGER GLUCK received the Oral History Association's Stetson Kennedy Vox Populi Award almost 40 years to the day of her first oral history interview. That was with 102-year-old suffragist and birth control activist Sylvie Thygeson, the first of countless interviews in her lifetime of oral history work committed to furthering social justice.

In a presentation to an OHA conference session showcasing the work of award recipients, Gluck said that from the start of her community-based Feminist Oral History Project, co-founded in 1972, she considered herself an advocacy oral historian whose aim was to challenge conventional ways of thinking and motivate people to act.

Gluck recalled that while she valued the foundations laid by the first generation of oral historians, she also chafed at the decidedly un-feminist tone of an old boys' network that routinely passed a necktie at the annual change of leadership. She recalled she "had bones to pick" with them on some oral history practices. And one of those bones was an insistence on transcribing interviews, because she viewed transcripts as highly mediated oral history rather than direct "voices of the people."

The digital revolution, however, opened new, easier avenues to make the voices of people widely accessible, which she and her colleagues at California



Sherna Berger Gluck

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President's letter

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Wishes her and her husband a most rewarding and pleasant retirement.

Adopted the 8th day of October 2012 by the Council of the Oral History Association at its annual meeting in Cleveland, Ohio.

As we are saying goodbye to Madelyn and our old headquarters at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pa., however, we are gaining our first executive director, Cliff Kuhn, and a new

home at Georgia State University. Cliff will be writing more about the transition elsewhere in this issue of the *Newsletter*, but please let him know how glad we are to have him continue his involvement with OHA in this way. This is an exciting time for OHA as we make this transition to a new organizational structure, and while there will be a lot of work involved (indeed, there has been already!), I am very enthusiastic about what all of these changes will mean for our association. ❖

Good-bye from the OHA executive secretary

WHEN MY MOTHER died in 1998, I realized that I had lost the stories of our family, the stories told and not remembered and the ones untold. A year later I saw the opportunity to work for an association whose main task was to support those who were preserving history through personal recollection.

I have learned much over the past 13 years. I've learned that oral historians believe in the basic worth of every human being no matter what their viewpoint. I've learned that everyone has an incredible story to share if given the opportunity to be heard. I've admired the courage you have to listen to those who are so very different from yourselves.

After returning home after my final meeting as executive secretary, I will be spending much of my time helping to create an environment that values equality and justice, that is committed to equal pay for equal work, that supports education from pre-K through college and beyond, that provides health care for all, and that works to provide opportunities and support for those who have little, so that they may begin to see a more prosperous future.

My life has been tremendously enriched by serving an incredible organization whose members are so passionate about documenting the stories of extraordinarily ordinary people—people whose lives, struggles, joys and tears help us to understand our own humanity. These stories, which you record and make accessible, help all of us to erase the fear we might harbor deep in our hearts of someone else, someone we do not know. By preserving the past, you help us imagine a better future. By insuring that small voices become a larger collective voice, you help plant the seeds of change.

I'm delighted to pass the reins to Cliff Kuhn, our first OHA executive director. And I believe that those of us who worked so diligently to find a new host institution for OHA are all very pleased with the result. The association will thrive and grow and I'll be out there rooting from the sidelines. I want to thank everyone whom I have worked with over the years. I especially want to thank Dickinson College for hosting OHA and for those individuals who provided technical and logistic support for the office. Each one has a special place in my heart and I will remember all the



Outgoing Executive Secretary Madelyn Campbell with her thank-you gifts from OHA.

passion and hard work that they have given to help OHA fulfill its mission.

I'm fired up and ready to go. I hope you are, too. Keep listening, keep recording, keep connecting each of us to one another. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to serve this association.

With love,
Madelyn Campbell
OHA Executive Secretary, 1999–2012 ❖



Congratulations to new OHA leaders

The following OHA members were elected to serve on the Council and Nominating Committee:

1ST VICE PRESIDENT

Paul Ortiz, University of Florida

COUNCIL

Jeff Friedman, Rutgers University

Regennia Williams, Cleveland State University

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Erin McCarthy, Columbia College Chicago

Todd Moyer, University of North Texas

Sady Sullivan, Brooklyn Historical Society

Oral history interviews explore African-American teachers' experiences after *Brown v. Board of Education*

INTERVIEWS WITH AFRICAN-AMERICAN teachers whose careers spanned years before and after the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision suggest their classroom experiences may be more varied than previous research has indicated.

That was among the conclusions that emerged from interviews conducted by Kent State University professor and two students who are seeking classroom teaching careers. Professor Martha Lash and two of her education students, Tonisha Glover and Monica Ratcliffe, described their project at an OHA conference panel presentation.

Research on the effects of the 1954 school desegregation decision generally has found that African-American teachers, particularly in the South, were often displaced, demoted or dismissed when schools were forced to desegregate. Schools often were consolidated and some teachers lost their jobs because of culturally biased standards for teacher certification and licensing, the panelists said.

African-American teachers in all-black schools tended to have a strict teaching style and were demanding, influential role models for African-American children, Ratcliffe said.

The three women conducted extensive interviews with three African-American teachers whose experiences did not reflect the prevailing narrative.

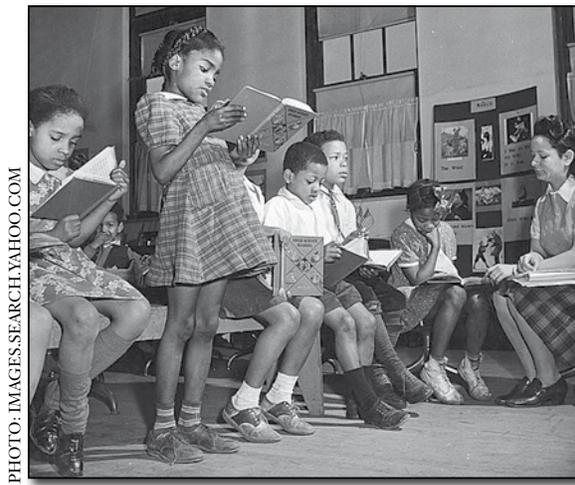


Miss Eileen Miller, Lash's eighth grade English teacher in Wheeling, W. Va., recalled in her oral history interview that when Wheeling schools were integrated, she was excited for the children to have an opportunity to attend different schools.

Miss Miller, as she was always called, was 87 years old at the time of the interview in 2008, said she had to take two buses to get to her new junior high school. She was certified in both elementary and secondary education, but some African-American teachers in Wheeling were assigned to positions that didn't necessarily match their academic background. She credited two white students with helping her succeed at her new integrated school.

"I could teach anywhere," Miss Miller said in the interview. "It didn't matter to me who I taught."

The Kent State project also interviewed Mrs. Arcenia Hines, 92, by telephone from North Carolina. Lash called Mrs. Hines "a strong-minded teacher" who took her job seriously. But she said she didn't experience any discrimination



In 1954 the supreme court decided that segregation was dehumanizing.

after school desegregation in her community, where she later became involved in politics and civic leadership.

Lash said that in reviewing that interview, she thought of questions they should have asked. "I should have probed more," Lash said, reflecting the learning curve of many people who embark on oral history projects.

Charles Payne, a professor at Ball State University, the panel's third interviewee, grew up in Mississippi and taught in schools that were still segregated there in the 1960s. Payne told the interviewers that African-American teachers were expected by others in the black community to be activists, while "white people expected us to calm things."

Payne also expressed concerns about the negative impact of school desegregation, which resulted in a loss of black teachers as respected professionals serving as role models in the African-American community.

Lash noted that while African-American teachers left the classroom, the civil rights movement meant that many other opportunities opened that previously were unavailable to them.

For Glover and Ratcliffe, who aspire to teaching careers, the interviews were eye-opening.

Glover, who said she is a first-generation African-American college student who has sometimes had to justify her desire to succeed in school, said the interviews made her wonder whether a more successful history of school integration, in which black teachers remained in the classrooms, would have led to a higher success rate for African-American children today.

Ratcliffe, a first-year kindergarten teacher in an all-black, inner-city school, said she is "trying to model Mrs. Hines, Miss Miller and Mr. Payne in this day and age."

"My mom calls me mean," she said, laughing. "She says you need to stop being so strict with these babies."

But Ratcliffe said she is convinced that if she sets high expectations and holds them to it, insisting, for example, that they exhibit self-control in the classroom, "I know I'm making a better student."

Ratcliffe also echoed the passion for teaching, which the oral history interviewees, an earlier generation of African-American teachers, exhibited. "You do have to love who you teach," she said. "If you don't love them, it'll just be a paycheck." ❖

Oral History Review promotes social media involvement

By Caitlin Tyler-Richards, OHR Social Media Coordinator



BY NOW, WE hope most of you have read (either in print or online) Volume 39, Issue 2 of the *Oral History Review*, the first issue to be completely produced by the OHR's new editorial team. As you might have noticed, this group of editors and oral historians has made changes to better embrace technology and the Web, working to put the "oral"—and "aural"—into the *Oral History Review*.



As part of this transition we have launched a significant social media campaign.



Those already imbued in social media and those invested in or curious about the practice of oral history can follow us on **Twitter at @Oralhistreview**, **like us on Facebook**, and **join our group on LinkedIn**. We have also started **blogging**. You can read our first article, "Intersections of Sister Fields: Folklore and Oral History" by Sarah Milligan at the Oxford University Press Blog. Through these various social media platforms we aim to create a more vibrant network of everyone interested in oral history and related fields. We hope to facilitate discussion around the ideas put forth in the *Oral History Review*, as well as concerns and questions circulating within the larger discipline.



Of course, we cannot succeed in fostering the boisterous discourse we envision without input from our readers. Message us on Facebook, direct message us on Twitter or e-mail us at ohreview@gmail.com. As those who make up the oral history community, we welcome your comments on how to best connect with it. ❖

Book Review Editor

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This position is a wonderful opportunity for national visibility and service to a well-established scholarly journal. It is a chance to network with established and emerging scholars in the field and to stay abreast of the latest oral history scholarship.

Specific duties of the book review editor include:

1. collecting and soliciting books for review, especially by contacting publishers and keeping up with seasonal catalogs
2. identifying reviewers for the books to be reviewed and working with book review authors as they prepare their reviews
3. initial editing of the book reviews
4. attendance at the annual meeting of the Oral History Association and management of the book table (many reviews are solicited at the annual meeting).

Prospective applicants should, first and foremost, be familiar with the literature on oral history, so as to be able to identify appropriate books for review in the journal and select appropriate reviewers. Almost as important, the applicant should love books. Applicants should also possess: strong writing and editing skills (although no formal editorial training is required), solid organizational skills to manage the volume of book reviews and to maintain publishers' contact information, interpersonal skills to work with review authors from many backgrounds and fields and flexible technological abilities in order to work with both computer software applications (such as Word and Excel) and emerging Web-based applications.

The honorarium for this position is \$1,000 per year. Additionally, the Oral History Association provides financial support to attend the annual meeting (in the form of airfare, three nights of conference accommodations, and complimentary registration for the conference), in the event that the book review editor does not have institutional support to cover those expenses.

For more information, contact Kathryn Nasstrom, Editor, *The Oral History Review*, at nasstromk@usfca.edu. ❖

To apply, please submit the following by Jan. 31, 2013:

1. a letter of application, stating interest in the position and describing relevant editorial experience or other relevant experience
2. a c.v. or resume
3. (optional, but recommended) a short writing or editing sample, on the order of the scope and length of a book review.

Applications should be directed to:

Troy Reeves

Managing Editor, *The Oral History Review*
Head, Oral History Program
University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives
430 Steenbock Library
550 Babcock Drive
Madison, WI 53706

Emailed applications are acceptable.
Send to treeves@library.wisc.edu.

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS JAN. 31, 2013

Interviews will be conducted in **February 2013**, with an expectation that the new book review editor will be selected no later than **March 31, 2013**. The official start date for the position will be **July 1, 2013**.

The incoming book review editor will work with, and be trained by, the outgoing Book Review Editor (working together as co-editors) to deliver the issue of the journal that is due to the publisher on **July 3, 2013**.

Plenary session explores musical oral history projects

CLASSICAL, FOLK, ROCK and roll and the Grateful Dead were on stage, figuratively, at least, at an OHA conference plenary session that explored oral history projects involving musicians and their music.

Nicholas G. Meriwether, Grateful Dead archivist at the University of California-Santa Cruz, said oral history plays a critical role in documenting the Grateful Dead's long career, largely because the band's performances relied on an actively engaged audience. Indeed many fans enthusiastically recorded Dead concerts.

Meriwether said his archive records new oral history interviews with fans from various eras, but also engages in what he called "forensic oral history," curating collections of extant interviews by journalists, broadcasters, authors and scholars that were not intended as oral history interviews but that nonetheless contain important information.

At the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, archivist Lauren Onkey said the oral history project that involves interviews with Hall of Fame inductees faces unique challenges.

"The stories they want to tell have been told, often interminably," she said. So the challenge is to get them "off script." Particularly challenging, she said, is getting the musicians to talk about periods when they didn't have hits, which are often omitted from their published memoirs.

David Dunaway, who has worked in radio, folklore and oral history for 40 years and has documented the life of Pete Seeger in the award-winning biography *How Can I Keep From Singing? The Ballad of Pete Seeger*, recalled how Seeger repeat-



Oral historians Forrest Larson and David Dunaway share their experiences with an OHA audience about interviewing musicians.

edly told a story describing how he first heard a five-string banjo in 1935, despite ample documentary evidence that it actually was in 1936.

But that didn't alter Seeger's story, which he had told thousands of times, Dunaway said.

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Keynote speaker describes Jazz Loft Project

W. EUGENE SMITH, considered to be one of the greatest 20th century documentary photographers, lived and worked in a loft in New York City's

THE PROJECT DOCUMENTS
PERSONAL TRAGEDIES OF SOME
OF THE MUSICIANS AND DRUG
OVERDOSING BY MANY

wholesale flower district, where no nearby neighbors could complain about the late-night rehearsals of jazz musicians who frequented the loft in the 1950s and '60s.

The thousands of photos and hundreds of hours of audio tapes Smith made of the men and women who lived, played, sang, drank and did drugs at the loft were bequeathed to the University of Arizona, where they were unearthed in 1998 and became the genesis of the Jazz Loft Project, directed by Sam

Stephenson at the Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies.

Stephenson, a self-described jazz fanatic, said he was intrigued with the 1,740 reels of tapes bearing the names of people he'd never heard of. Some of the musicians on the tapes were great, but couldn't sustain their work, many were junkies, and others simply had stage fright and couldn't make it to the big time.

Stephenson, who described the Jazz Loft Project in his keynote speech at the OHA Saturday awards dinner, started his documentation effort by jotting down the 138 names noted on the tapes boxes and then tracking them down. The result, he said, was more than 500 interviews, because each interview led to five more.

"Oral histories were essential to this project," he said, because for the most part, the history of jazz has been told from the perspective of those at the pinnacle of the jazz world. But in some



ways, "the least productive interview is the person who's been interviewed the most."

Not so the jazz musicians from Smith's loft, who mostly weren't aware they were being recorded. "There is bad music all over these tapes," Stephenson said.

Smith's loft contained four tuned pianos, several drum kits, and considerable human misery. The project documents personal tragedies of some of the musicians and drug overdosing by many, Stephenson said. "There were a lot of terrible stories." ❖

Court refuses to grant access to President Clinton's oral histories

By John A. Neuenschwander, Ph.D. & J.D.

FOR THE PAST year, many oral historians have been keeping an eye on the court battle between the U.S. Attorney's Office and Boston College over whether the latter will have to turn over more than 20 interviews with former members of paramilitary groups that were involved in the Irish "Troubles" during the 1970s. According to the protocol established by the founders of the Dublin Project, all participants were assured that their interviews would be sealed until their deaths.

While the question of whether the subpoenas seeking access to these

interviews will be upheld, limited or quashed is currently before the First Circuit Court of Appeals; this is not the only recent high profile case in which a court has been asked to grant access to closed interviews. In March a federal district judge refused to allow a conservative watchdog group to access the oral histories that President Bill Clinton recorded with historian Taylor Branch between 1992-2001.

Before delving into the court's decision in *Judicial Watch, Inc. v. National Archives and Records Admin.*, F. Supp. 2d 2012 WL662166, some background

is in order. Shortly after being elected president in 1992, Clinton contacted Taylor Branch, an old friend and Pulitzer Prize winning historian, about becoming a part of his White House team. Although Branch declined, he agreed to interview Clinton monthly to help him periodically assess what was going on in his presidency. Pursuant to their agreement all of the tapes were retained by Clinton. Branch was, however, allowed to take notes while conducting the interviews, and he also dictated his post-interview recollections as he drove home from the White House.

The existence of the 79 interviews with Clinton only came to light after Branch published *The Clinton Tapes: Wrestling History With The President* in

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Remembering Sam Hand, 1931-2012

By Bruce M. Stave

I FIRST MET Sam Hand at the Second National Colloquium of the Oral History Association at Arden House during the waning years of the 1960s. The OHA was in its infancy and Sam stood as a pioneer in the field. He shared the excitement of oral history and encouraged it with his enthusiasm and good humor—always good humor, always with a story, often one that brought a smile to his listeners.

His levity did not diminish Sam's high standards and serious pursuit of historical scholarship. As the first editor of the *Oral History Review*, he set the journal on its path to becoming a distinguished publication. In what might seem dissonant to many of today's digitally oriented oral historians, he labeled himself a "POB," a print-oriented bastard, and worked impressively to bring the best of oral history to the written page. As a New York City native who became a dedicated Vermonter and chronicler of that state's history, he lent his talents to the organization of the New England Association of Oral History where it was a pleasure to work with him and other stalwarts. Sam, however, transcended region and went on to become president of the OHA in 1986.

To my family, he was remembered for "Foo Foo, the rabbit." On a visit to Connecticut, he stayed at our home and regaled us with stories and jokes. One was about "Foo Foo, the rabbit." We remembered the Foo Foo story long after his stay, although we disagreed about the punch line. (Someone recently suggested it was "Hare today, gone tomorrow.") But it doesn't matter. Our memory is of a good and kind human being who made us laugh and made the oral history world a better place as a result of his many contributions. ❖

By Charles T. Morrissey

VERMONT OBITUARIES AND remembrances of Sam Hand, following his death at age 80 on June 29, 2012, rightfully stressed his kindness, his generosity and his eccentric mannerisms. "Hand had his quirks" is how one Vermont historian, Mark Bushnell, depicted him in Vermont's Rutland Herald. This candor will not surprise oral historians who fondly got to know Sam at OHA meetings, starting with Arden House in 1967.

Within Vermont, Sam's conversational style was labeled "Same-se," in case some OHA members recall his anecdotes as implying a point without actually stating it, and often leaving unsaid the crucial clinch sentence.

One colleague at the University of Vermont, Nick Muller, recalled Sam absent-mindedly putting his lighted pipe into a coat pocket. "I don't know how many sports coats he burned by putting a lit pipe in there." Another former university graduate student, Greg Sanford, who recently retired as Vermont's state archivist, recalled Sam, who was a demanding and meticulous scholar, dumping pipe ashes, still glowing, into trash cans as if they were ash trays. "I would regularly find myself surrounded by burning wastepaper baskets," Sanford recalled.

Sam loved to puncture pretentiousness. "Historians are not good at predicting the future," he warned about his own profession. "They are good at predicting the past." When a University of Vermont official declared a just-chosen president was an excellent selection because his spouse sparkled with personality, Sam published a letter saying Abraham Lincoln would not have become U.S. president if Mary Todd Lincoln, a daffy spouse, had figured in the 1860 selection process.

I can add one story Sam shared with me, his eyes twinkling. An unexpected and unseasonably hot summer-like day occurred early one year on a Sunday when Sam drove to Burlington's Ohavi Zedek Synagogue to pick up one of his daughters, Sally, Marci or Ilana, after a Hebrew School session. A traffic jam caused all cars to stop, in both directions, with frustrated youngsters and parents trying to spot and wave signals to each other. A man in the stopped car next to Sam's, wiping perspiration from his sweaty face and surveying the gridlock and confusion, said to Sam through their lowered windows, "This is a real mess." Replied Sam, philosophically, "Well, this is just a cross we all have to bear." ❖

OHA Conference at a Glance

When OHA conference planners announced the 2012 conference theme “Sing It Out, Shout It Out, Say It Out Loud: Giving Voice through Oral History,” the Presidential String Band took them at their word. Former presidents Charlie Hardy and Michael Frisch joined incumbent President Mary Larson and fellow musicians to entertain conference-goers at Sammy’s Metropolitan Ballroom in Cleveland at the annual Presidential Reception and Community Showcase.



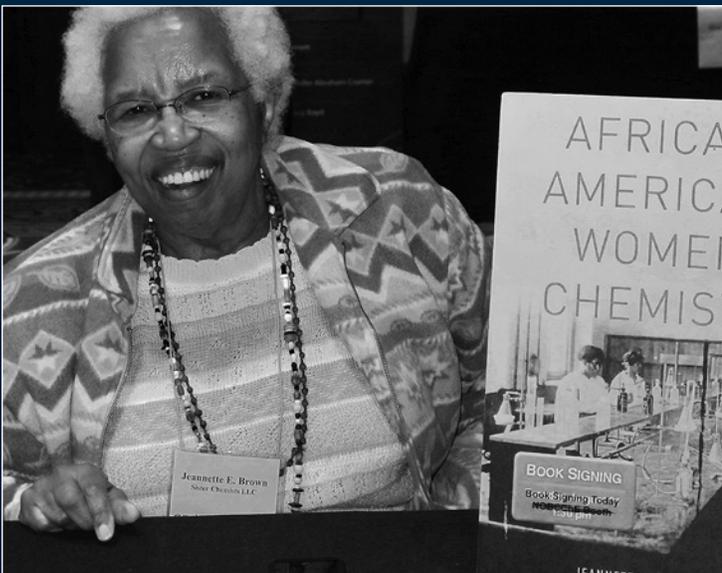
◀ Pictured here are: Mary Larson, bass; Charlie Hardy, mandolin; and Michael Frisch, fiddle, with guitarist Douglas Lambert.



▲ Cleveland State University’s Regennia Williams conducts the Spiritual Gifts Gospel Choir and is a newly elected member of the OHA Council.



▲ The Spiritual Gifts Gospel Choir entertains OHA members at the Committee on Diversity’s Saturday night reception.



▲ Jeannette E. Brown greets conference attendees at the author book signing. Brown’s new book is African American Women Chemists.



▲ Books galore await conference goers during coffee breaks.

Selling consumption: The G. Fox Department Store Oral History Project

By Sondra Astor Stave

IT IS USUAL for department stores to purchase advertising in the local press; it is less likely for a city's newspaper to run a series of six full-page articles on one of its downtown stores. However, for more than a century, G. Fox and Company was so iconic in Hartford, Conn., that the city's two newspapers did just that.



PHOTO: RACHEL HILL

Memorabilia from G. Fox Department store.

In 1955, such articles ran in *The Hartford Times* and *The Hartford Courant*; but by 1993, G. Fox was no more, a victim of suburbanization and its accompanying shopping malls. In 2007, two of the granddaughters of Beatrice Fox Auerbach, the store's incomparable president from 1938 to 1968, asked the Connecticut Historical Society if it could assist them in creating an oral history project to capture their heritage. The Stave Group was contracted to conduct the interviews.

The almost three dozen recorded one-to two-hour conversations were

composed of people who had worked in the store and those who had shopped there. Obviously, we could not meet with those from G. Fox's inception in 1847, but employees' and customers' memories went back as far as the mid-20th century. We spoke with vice-presidents, buyers and young men who started by stocking shelves during the Christmas rush and rose to positions of greater responsibility.

Whether it was from employees or loyal customers, the recollections about Mrs. Auerbach maintained a similar theme: she was a hands-on manager with strict standards who at the same time was much respected and beloved. We heard about how she would pass through the store wearing white gloves, the better to be sure the shelves were dust-free. Salesmen were always to be dressed in suits; saleswomen had a choice of black or navy dresses, except in the summer when some lighter colors were permitted. In the spirit of her friend Eleanor Roosevelt, Mrs. Auerbach pioneered in hiring African-American salespersons and encouraged female employees to achieve positions of significance.

The motto of the store was that "the customer is always right," and items were accepted for return weeks and months after their purchase. We could not ascertain whether the story was apocryphal, but we were told by more than one person that Christmas trees were refunded in January, with traces of aluminum

icicles still attached. One could order a spool of thread and have it delivered free by one of the fleet of trucks that made daily stops throughout the state.

Christmas was the highpoint of the year and everyone remembered the store decorations. Former customers in particular would recall their annual visit to enjoy the display within and outside the store. Surely nostalgia exaggerated the immensity of the effect, but it is hard to discount the collective positive memories that were recounted.

To celebrate the conclusion of the project, the Connecticut Historical Society hosted a tea for interview participants. Among the refreshments was date and nut bread with cream cheese, the recipe from the very popular tea room in the store. One of the historical society development officers has been crisscrossing the state for the past year giving talks to standing-room-only audiences based on the interviews as well as the historical society's collection of G. Fox memorabilia. Further information is available on the G. Fox website (www.CHS.org/finding_aides/fox/oralhistory.html).

Beatrice Fox Auerbach's granddaughters' desire to capture their family's heritage served as a catalyst for a project that helps to document many facets of consumer culture in mid-20th century America. ❖

Editor's Note: *People in many communities can recall prominent local department stores in the days before shopping malls and national chains. Oral historians might take inspiration from the G. Fox project to explore similar efforts to document their local stores' stories.*

American oral historians conduct workshop in Slovenia

By Bruce M. and Sondra Astor Stave

AT THE REQUEST of the U.S. State Department, we conducted an oral history workshop from June 11-15 in Ljubljana, the capital city of Slovenia, the most western nation split off from the former Yugoslavia. The workshop met three hours a day at the country's Museum of Ethnography and was attended by a dozen professors, doctoral students, museum professionals and a journalist, most of whom had experience with oral history with several quite accomplished practitioners.

Sessions covered the theory and practice of oral history. The issue of memory resonated throughout most of the sessions and brought forth lively and useful discussion of contested memory within Slovenia since World War II. A remembering exercise we devised regarding the period 1989-92, before, during and immediately after Slovenia achieved independence, elicited a great deal of participant comment reflecting personal and political memory.

We also met separately with Croatian representatives of Documenta, a group conducting oral histories of the traumatic memories in their nation during World War II, the Yugoslav period and the wars of the 1990s.

At the concluding session, workshop participants discussed formalizing oral history in their nation by establishing a Slovenian Society of Oral History. What the outcome of this will be was uncertain when we departed, but to demonstrate the many subjects that can be covered by the method, we left behind a set of volumes in the Palgrave Studies in Oral History series co-edited by Bruce Stave and Linda Shopes. Clearly, the Slovenian practitioners had the interest and expertise to continue their already impressive efforts. ❖

Inside the 2012 OHA Conference

Musical Oral History Projects

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"It never hurts to collect the set piece as it was told," he said. "Sometimes the telling is as much the point as the facts themselves." But it's the role of oral historians to interrogate further, he said.

Onkey said the challenge is to not ask the kinds of questions that prompt the set piece as a response.

Meriwether recalled an interview with the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia in which he repeatedly said, "I've told this story before."

Dunaway noted that the esthetic formula of storytelling shapes the often-told tale, particularly with an eye toward the intended audience. Moreover, he added, many performers are never off stage.

Without appropriate training, "it's possible to be taken in by these highly polished performances," he said, cautioning the audience that "just because someone says something doesn't make it true."

Dunaway said oral historians need to recognize that they, too, are being interviewed by their interviewees and thus need to be "exquisitely prepared" when interviewees test them to see if they've done their homework.

To that end, Forrest Larson, who created the Music at MIT Oral History Project in 1999 to document the history of music at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said he is particularly conscious of the differences between musicians interviewing other musicians and non-musicians interviewing musicians.

"Because music is a creative and subjective art, its concepts are not easily definable," Larson said. Plus, the personal nature of the music experience also makes it hard for some musicians to talk about it, he noted, citing the adage that "talking about music is like dancing about architecture."

Larson, who is himself a composer, violist and music historian, said people are sometimes surprised to learn that MIT has an oral history project focused on music and musicians. But there are longstanding ties between music and science, he said, noting that Albert Einstein was a violinist, composer Aleksandr Borodin was a chemist, and composer John Harbison is on the MIT faculty, along with computer music pioneer Barry Vercoe. What's more, the creator of the wildly popular video game Rock Band is an MIT grad, he said.

Larson emphasized the importance of establishing trust with interviewees. He said a pre-interview visit helps him understand a musician's communications style and helps him formulate questions. A pre-interview visit also allows him to explain the nature of an oral history interview, emphasizing that it's distinct from a journalistic interview targeted at a general audience. He said he lets his interviewees know that "it's really OK for them to talk in depth."

'THERE'S GOING TO BE A FEW WHO AREN'T GOING TO LIKE WHAT THEY REMEMBERED.'

While Larson said his own experience as a musician and composer helps him relate to his interviewees, it's also valuable for non-musicians to interview musicians because "they may ask questions about the musical process that I may take for granted."

The music oral historians agreed it is useful for the interviewees to have their instruments handy, "so they can noodle around," Dunaway said.

Larson recalled interviewing a jazz trombonist, whose interview includes three short musical selections. He said interviewees often will tap out rhythms on the table or hum, which becomes an important part of the interview.

Libby Van Cleve, director of the Oral History of American Music Archive at Yale University, who moderated the panel discussion and has interviewed numerous prominent figures in American music, added, "I think musicians like to erupt in song."

Sometimes, though, they erupt in anger.

Dunaway recalled an episode in which singer-songwriter Judy Collins threatened to sue in connection with an interview excerpt about her involvement with what Dunaway called the "dreadful TV show 'Hootenanny.'"

When reminded that she'd seen a copy of the transcript, Collins replied, "I guess I said everything you wrote down, but I didn't mean it," Dunaway said, adding:

"There's going to be a few who aren't going to like what they remembered." ❖

Vox Populi Award

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State University-Long Beach accomplished with their Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive, which features full audio recordings of hundreds of oral history interviews.

But from the beginning, she said, "I was concerned not only about the ethical, but also the political implications of what I call the quantum leap in distribution of oral histories." And that, she added, "was even before the current increased snooping and scrutiny engaged in by our government."

She cited as an example how an excerpt from a 1973 interview with a former resident of the Japanese fishing village on California's Terminal Island could have been used by people opposed to the redress and reparation movement.

Likewise, she said, her experiences interviewing Palestinians has led her to re-think her earlier practice of recording as much personal information from narrators as possible.

"I would argue that advance expectation of Web access should be a serious consideration in how we conduct our interviews," she said. But the tradeoff might well be less spontaneity and a more cautionary approach in oral history interviews.

"Unfortunately," she added, "that might be one of the tradeoffs that we have to live with if we want to make oral histories available on the Web." ❖

Clinton's oral histories

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2009. The book provides readers with a unique insight into how Clinton perceived important foreign and domestic issues as they were unfolding. Branch accomplished this in part by including many intriguing anecdotes from his conversations with Clinton.

degree of judicial review available to the court, and whether a lawsuit to try and remedy an unsuccessful FOIA request could even be filed.

On the first issue the court held that the Presidential Records Act operates on the assumption that presidents and

lawsuit following the denial of a FOIA request to compel an agency to retrieve records it did not hold even if there was an assumption the records in question were being wrongfully withheld.

Tom Fitton, president of Judicial Watch, publicly decried the court's decision. According to Fitton: "It is ironic that a law passed in response to the Nixon tapes controversy would allow Bill Clinton to keep tapes of his official actions secret and unavailable to the American people...We are considering an appeal."

Obviously this case involves the oral histories of a former president and is not likely to trigger any sudden upswing in FOIA requests for access to interviews of far less prominent interviewees. Nevertheless, the case does underscore a continuing question for oral historians who allow interviewees to limit access or seal their interviews: namely, what type of defense would you raise in response to a subpoena or FOIA request for closed or restricted interviews.

According to the Oral History Association's *Best Practices for Oral History* (#6), "Institutions charged with the preservation and access to oral history interviews should honor the stipulations of prior agreements made with the interviewers or sponsoring institutions including restrictions on access and methods of distribution." While the word "honor" is not defined, it would appear at the very least to envision a vigorous legal defense to preserve the pledge made to any interviewee that his or her interview would only be accessed in the manner that was mutually agreed upon. ❖

IT IS IRONIC THAT A LAW PASSED IN RESPONSE TO THE NIXON TAPES CONTROVERSY WOULD ALLOW BILL CLINTON TO KEEP TAPES OF HIS OFFICIAL ACTIONS SECRET AND UNAVAILABLE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE...WE ARE CONSIDERING AN APPEAL.

—TOM FITTON, PRESIDENT OF JUDICIAL WATCH

When Judicial Watch Inc., a tenacious antagonist of the president during his years in the White House, learned of the tapes the group initially filed a Freedom of Information request (FOIA) with the Clinton Library. When this request was denied because the tapes were not in the custody of the library and were not classified as presidential records, Judicial Watch took the matter to court.

The lawsuit filed by Judicial Watch against the National Archives sought to have the Clinton oral histories reclassified as presidential records and to require the archives to obtain custody of the tapes and deposit them in the Clinton Library. The National Archives in turn filed a motion to dismiss.

The central issues in the case were the amount of latitude that the Presidential Records Act granted the chief executive in the classification of records, the role that the National Archives played in monitoring such determinations, the

vice presidents will act in good faith when determining which records are personal and not presidential records. The court also determined in response to the second issue that National Archives could not be compelled by an outside group like Judicial Watch to review a president's decision to classify records (the tapes) as personal. Any authority that NARA had to initiate such a challenge was purely within its discretion. On the third issue the court relied on a recent decision in a lawsuit filed by a group of historians and archivists who challenged certain record classifications made by Vice President Dick Cheney, *CREW v. Cheney*, 593 F. Supp. 2nd 194, 198 (D. D.C. 2009). In this case the court held that the Presidential Records Act allowed courts very limited judicial review of such decisions. Finally a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Kissinger v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 445 U.S. 136 (1980) clearly barred the filing of a

OHA member's diaries become young adult history book

JOAN WEHLEN MORRISON, a longtime member of the Oral History Association and author of two books based on oral history interviews, kept diaries as a young girl growing up in Chicago. Now, they are a young adult history book, *Home Front Girl: A Diary of Love, Literature, and Growing up in Wartime America*. Edited by her daughter, Susan S. Morrison, the book traces her experiences from 1937 to 1943, when she was 14 to 20 years old.

Susan Morrison, an English professor at Texas State University-San Marcos, said her mother and father, married for nearly 67 years, died within two months of each other in 2010, and the diaries, with only a few volumes missing, surfaced while their house was being cleaned out.

"She had always told us that there were diaries in a file cabinet," Susan said in an email. "But that cabinet was inaccessible due to all sorts of other papers in front of it...In a way, it is her own oral history, found 70 years after they were first expressed."

In her diaries, Joan Morrison chronicled her observations of handsome boys in ROTC uniforms, her love for the Chicago Art Institute and Lake Michigan, drawings of the latest fashions and hairstyles and her comments on headlines of the day, including the Lindbergh kidnapping, FDR on the radio, Churchill, Hitler, Garbo, war work and Red Cross meetings, a collection one reviewer called "reminiscent of Anne Frank."

Along with the diaries, the Morrisons found poems and short stories, which they also hope to publish.

For more information, contact Susan Morrison at: homefrontgirl diary@yahoo.com. ❖

Inside the 2012 OHA Conference

Radio documentarian, author and oral historian shares tales from life of listening

NEENAH ELLIS LISTENS to stories.

As an NPR radio documentary producer, oral history interviewer for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and author of the best-selling book *If I Live to be 100: Lessons from the Centenarians*, Ellis has spent untold hours and traveled around the world listening.

And after she listens to stories, she tells them to anyone else who will listen.

Ellis shared some of her favorites as keynote speaker for the OHA conference Friday luncheon.

Ellis' parents owned a radio station in northern Indiana. "I grew up thinking everybody's father was on the air."

She recalled her earliest days on the air, giving the market report, all about cattle on feed and hog bellies. "I always hoped I could do something that would be longer than 30 seconds," she said.

In the late 1970s, Ellis landed a gig at WAMU, a Washington, D.C., public radio station that offered bluegrass, opera, barbershop quartets, avant garde jazz—and lots and lots of hours to fill, ideal for long-form interviews, like the Studs Terkel interviews she remembered growing up.

In the years since then, she discovered the value of archival research as preparation for her listening sojourns, which have included a series on American nuclear preparedness, the D-Day invasion of Normandy, a film for the National Park Service about Lady Bird Johnson, interviews in Sarajevo with a tape recorder hidden under her coat, a lavalier mic pinned to her lapel and shelling audible in the background. "You can imagine what my mother thought," she said.



Neenah Ellis, oral historian, journalist, documentarian and radio station manager, recounts some of her favorite stories for OHA members.

She also interviewed Holocaust survivors, focusing on the years since 1945 and how being a survivor affected the rest of their lives.

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OHA newcomer finds no 'stuffy academics'

By Rose Chiango, Millersville University

AS AN UNDERGRADUATE student working in Millersville University's Archives and Special Collections, I was used to helping patrons, transcribing documents and checking out audio and video equipment for oral history projects. Although I was familiar with oral history as a field, I had never done any work in it on my own. So when Marilyn Parrish, the head of Archives and Special Collections, mentioned the Oral History Association conference to me, I was intrigued.

At that time, I had been working on processing the Richard Gehman manuscript collection, which had lately been the source of several inquiries to the archives. Marilyn suggested that we look into the Gehman collection for use as an oral history project. Soon enough, we were on a train to New York City to interview Maggie Condon, the daughter of jazz musician Eddie Condon. Eddie and Richard had worked closely together over the years, and Maggie knew him as a family friend. The interview went wonderfully—and it was the first oral history interview I had ever done.

Back at Millersville, I began to prepare for the conference. As the date drew closer, I got increasingly excited. I would be driving to Cleveland on my own and staying in the Cleveland Hostel. When I got to the hostel, I checked in and decided to take a look around the city. I walked across the Lorain-Carnegie bridge from the Ohio City area to downtown, where the Marriot was located, and took in some of Cleveland's famous sites.

After a delicious breakfast at the West Side Market, I became immersed in the conference, starting with the Wednesday workshops. At first, I was nervous about being at an academic conference. I did not know what to expect.

However, I soon started talking to people and making friends—I even found others who were staying at the hostel. I expected everyone to be a stuffy academic but I found it to be completely the opposite. *This* was the reason Marilyn had told me it was her favorite conference to attend.

THE DIVERSE AND FASCINATING TOPICS OF EACH SESSION I SELECTED PROVIDED ME WITH MANY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE FIELD OF ORAL HISTORY.

The people here were genuine, interested in my work and enjoyed talking about the field. I had long, thought-provoking conversations over lunches and I felt like I was among people who enjoyed the type of work I could see myself doing in the future. I went to numerous sessions over the next few days. I was often overwhelmed by the options available—but in the end there were no wrong choices. The diverse and fascinating topics of each session I selected provided me with many different perspectives on the field of oral history. I was so happy to be a part of the conference and felt proud after I gave my presentation on Friday morning.

In the very near future, I plan to go to graduate school for library science with a concentration in archives. I know that my experiences as a student at the Oral History Association conference will help me professionally and academically, and I'm so pleased that I was given the opportunity to attend. ❖

2013 OHA Annual Meeting Call for Proposals

Hidden Stories, Contested Truths: The Craft of Oral History

2013 OHA Annual Meeting, Oct. 9–13, 2013 • The Skirvin Hilton Hotel, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

The 2013 annual meeting of the Oral History Association will offer an opportunity to showcase the ways in which oral history has been used to unearth hidden stories and contest accepted truths. Through work to address silences, oral history provides a method by which unknown experiences and fresh perspectives can come to light and provide scholars and communities a more robust understanding of the past. It holds the power to defy stereotypes and challenge simple generalizations.

Conference organizers invite proposals for panels or individual papers exploring the ways in which oral history has recorded and presented critical counter narratives, bringing needed diversity and enhanced complexity to the study of events, ideas or issues. Our hope is that oral historians from a wide range of settings and disciplines will contribute to this discussion of how their work has uncovered new stories or defied popular notions.

For 2013, Oklahoma City offers an ideal setting to host this discussion. Since its instant founding during the Land Run of 1889, Oklahoma City's rich history runs from great triumph to profound tragedy. OKC now stands as a key metropolitan center among the Plains States of Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South

Dakota and North Dakota. It is a place where the distinctive regional influences of the South and Midwest mix with the conventions of the American West.

The location for our 2013 meeting is the city's grand Skirvin Hilton Hotel. Opened in 1911, the hotel is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and stands in the heart of a downtown that has undergone a dramatic renaissance in the past 20 years, centered on a revitalized river district.

As with all previous OHA meetings, the Program Committee welcomes broad and diverse interpretations of the conference theme as reflected in proposals for panels, individual papers, performances, exhibits and roundtables. In the spirit of the theme, we especially encourage presenters to think about nontraditional delivery models, such as interactive sessions, dialogic formats that engage audiences and use of digital media.

Presenters are reminded to incorporate voice and image in their presentations. OHA is open to proposals from the variety of fields traditionally represented in our meetings, including, but not limited to, history, folklore, literature, sociology, anthropology, American and ethnic studies, cultural studies, gender studies, political science, information science and technology, communications and urban studies.

In recognition of the important work occurring outside the United States, we also hope to have a significant international presence at the meeting. And, as always, OHA welcomes proposals from independent scholars, community activists and organizers, archivists, librarians, museum curators, Web designers, documentary producers, media artists, ethnographers, public historians and all practitioners whose work is relevant to this meeting's focus on the craft of oral history.

If accepted, international presenters may apply for partial scholarships. Please note that OHA's resources allow for limited support.

Proposal queries may be directed to:

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**For details on how to submit proposals electronically, go to:
www.oralhistory.org and click on the 2013 conference.**

The deadline for submission of all proposals is January 18, 2013.

Cleveland civil rights activist

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Mrs. Williams and her son described the school boycott in which children were asked not to go to school, but instead to attend the Freedom Schools civil rights activists organized “so everyone had a place to go for the day,” Mrs. Williams said.

Almost the entire school system shut down, Marvin Williams recalled, with virtually 98 percent participation in the boycott.

“Doctors wrote notes saying the children had been sick,” he said. “They were sick of segregation.”

In those days, Marvin said, the three major civil rights organizations collaborated effectively because each had their own roles to play. The NAACP was strong on legal issues; the Congress on Racial Equality created drama but tended not to follow through; and the Urban League was effective in pushing for job training. Together they fought the civil rights battles in Cleveland.

“Dad was always about direct action,” Marvin said. He believed government “could be the handmaiden of the movement,” but it required people to vote in order to get city hall to listen.

Voter registration “was a big, big, big deal” to the NAACP, Marvin said, adding that to his dad, “it was all about pursuing the American dream.”

To that end, the Williamses recalled, the NAACP, which boasted 20,000 members, and middle-class Cleveland blacks in general worked to improve housing access for black newcomers from the South, many of whom saw Cleveland as a mecca.

“People were fighting for their lives” in the South, Marvin Williams said. “We weren’t fighting for our lives in Cleveland.”

But many in Cleveland’s African-American community still had ties to the South and thus advocated for newcomers, helping them find churches, housing and schools for their kids.

Alphine W. Jefferson, past OHA president and moderator of the panel presentation, noted that the story of the black experience is often seen as one of poor people scratching their way up. But in fact, he said, there has always been a black middle class, which the Williams family exemplifies.

In Cleveland, Marvin Williams said, the black middle class was decidedly upwardly mobile. That meant black doctors, lawyers and teachers moved next door to blue collar whites with considerably less education.

As the civil rights movement evolved, he noted, class distinctions in the white community took on a bigger role. Catholic nuns and the Jewish community were important civil rights partners, while the Italian and Irish communities were most intolerant.

Audience member Timuel Black, who noted that all of his grandparents were slaves, stressed the importance of class, not just racial, distinctions. “We were poor but we weren’t poverty stricken,” he said of his upbringing in Chicago. The difference, he said, is between “a fact and a mental attitude.”

Marvin Williams stressed the value of oral history in keeping alive those stories. “There’s no substitute for doing the teaching,” he said, so younger generations—black, white and across all class lines—understand what the civil rights movement was all about and what it means to “care about each others’ children.”

“Dad’s basic philosophy was if it’s the right thing to do, then you have to do it.” ❖

Neenah Ellis

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These days, she manages public radio station WYSO-FM, licensed to Antioch University in Yellow Springs, Ohio, which has embarked on an ambitious effort to digitize the station’s tape archives going back to the station’s founding in 1958. The station is also conducting contemporary interviews to complement ones than were done 50 years ago.

Ellis said that her years of interviewing changed her life. “It feels like a gift from heaven.”

Among those gifts that she shared with the OHA audience was an excerpt of an interview with one of the centenarians she found. Ellis said that when she started that project, she expected all the people she interviewed not to remember what they had for breakfast. Instead of the first five people she found, two were living in their own homes, one was driving and two were still working.

One of the most memorable, she said, was Anna Wilmot, 102, who lived alone in a cabin on a lake in western Massachusetts. She had been alone for 35 years, Ellis said, and was “perfectly happy.”

“You can come out here and skinny dip,” Wilmot told her.

“Do you do that?” Ellis asked.

“Yep, I do,” Wilmot replied, then paused and added: “Only if it’s foggy.” ❖

CLOSING NOTE

The Oral History Association remains financially sound, Executive Secretary Madelyn Campbell reported at the annual meeting in Cleveland. She said she expects to end the year with some **\$162,000 in reserves**, compared to \$13,000 in reserves when she started her job in 1999. The OHA Endowment Fund totals approximately \$221,000, and the annual meeting is expected at least to break even, she said.

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NEWSLETTER
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Do you have colleagues who use oral history in their classrooms? Or in their ongoing research projects?

Do you know of community groups exploring the use of oral history to document their work? Or local museums eager to engage area residents?

Chances are you do. And there's also a chance those people are not members of the Oral History Association. But you can fix that. Share this **Newsletter** with them. Brag about the *Oral History Review* online. Tell them about the workshops and thought-provoking sessions and like-minded new friends they'll find at an OHA conference.

And then encourage them to join OHA. They'll be glad they did.

Visit www.oralhistory.org for more information