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ALLAN NEVINS, HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF OHA, DIES AT 80

Historian Allan Nevins, twice the winner of the Pulitzer Prize and one of America's most prolific biographers, died in Menlo Park, California on Friday, March 5. A memorial service was held on Friday afternoon, March 12 at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Pasadena. Professor Nevins will also be remembered as the "father" of modern oral history. He served as Honorary Chairman of OHA from its inception in 1967. The following reflections have been contributed by Professor Louis M. Starr, a student of Nevins and his successor as director of the Oral History Research Office at Columbia University.

SOME THOUGHTS ON ALLAN NEVINS

Louis M. Starr

I did a personal sketch of Allan Nevins for "Columbia Library Columns" a few months before he died, and before I realized how ill he was. It was therefore done with more gusto than I can master now. Though it makes only passing reference to oral history, I will gladly send a copy to any member of our Association who would like one. For the *Newsletter*, I will add a few observations about A.N. and oral history.

Many assessments, including some made in his own lifetime, have suggested that his greatest monument would prove to be oral history—the idea itself, the great collection he started at Columbia University, the movement he inspired, here and abroad. That may well be the case, but to be candid about it, I don't think Allan Nevins particularly relished that notion. And oral historians should be large-minded enough to comprehend why. A man who could bring Grover Cleveland to life, stir thousands to rediscover Fremont, portray in fascinating detail the origins and growth of the auto industry, seize all of Civil War America for his canvas, and win recognition as perhaps the foremost historian of his generation might hope to be remembered for these attainments, rather than what he accounted a lucky incident.

"Let us begin by disposing of the myth that I had anything to do with



Professor Allan Nevins in his office at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California listens to a tape recording of the resolutions appointing him honorary Chairman of OHA, unanimously adopted at its first official business meeting, Second National Colloquium on Oral History, November 21, 1967. This photograph was taken in January, 1968.

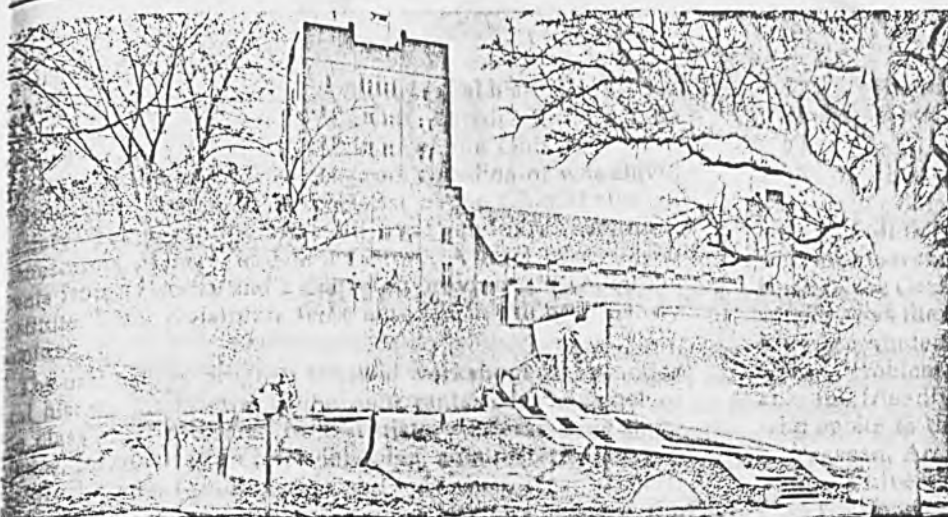
the founding of oral history," he told us at our first national meeting. "It founded itself. It had become a patent necessity, and would have sprung into life in a dozen places, under any cir-

cumstances." He went on to compare himself with Jacques, the Swiss guide who became a folk hero by stumbling over a rock that set off an avalanche that, in turn, made fertile a hitherto

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PLANS FOR THE 1971 COLLOQUIUM AT BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA ARE TAKING SHAPE

Historian James McGregor Burns Will Speak



Indiana Memorial Union on the Bloomington campus of Indiana University is the site of OHA's Sixth National Colloquium on Oral History, October 8-10, 1971.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BLOOMINGTON MEETING FROM THE LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

Workshop on Basic Oral History Methods

Precedes Weekend Program Again This Year

According to David Larson, Ohio Historical Society, and Martin Ridge, Indiana University, cochairmen of the Sixth National Colloquium, a top-notch program combined with the best of Hoosier hospitality awaits OHA members when they meet at the Indiana Memorial Union on IU's Bloomington campus, October 8-10. Registration will begin Friday, October 8, at 1 pm, and during the afternoon a series of tours will be offered to various points on the campus, including the Folklore Archives, the Lilly Library, the new Main Library and nearby Brown County State Park. Members wishing to do so may attend the afternoon sessions of the basic oral history workshop at no extra charge. On Friday evening, following an official welcome by IU's Chancellor Byrum E. Carter and OHA President Forrest C. Pogue, there will be a plenary session designed to explore the potential of oral history in documenting contemporary social movements.

Program highlights for Saturday will include a series of five morning group sessions to examine advanced oral history projects which have instituted innovative and specialized subject series. Each of these sessions will be presented twice during the morning, and members will attend two. In the afternoon there will be a plenary session, coordinated by Professor Richard M. Dorson, Director of IU's distinguished Folklore Institute, to consider the relationships of the folklorist and the oral historian. This

will be followed by a second plenary session on the problems of securing sensitive personal information during an interview, chaired by Professor Paul H. Gebhard, Director of the IU Institute for Sex Research. After a reception at the home of Chancellor Carter, dinner will be served in the Union's Tudor Room and conclude with an address by James McGregor Burns, Professor of Government at Williams College.

On Sunday morning from 9 to 10 am, there will be a business meeting of OHA and election of officers to serve in 1972. During the remainder of the morning, a final plenary session will be held to examine the relevance of personality theories to autobiographical interviews. After lunch there will be ample time to pack before the Union's 3 pm check-out deadline.

The arrangements committee wishes to announce that before-dinner and late-evening social hours are being planned for Friday and Saturday.

Bloomington Colloquium and Workshop Registration Fees

The Executive Council has set the registration fee for the Colloquium at \$100. The registration fee for the Workshop will be \$30. Fees cover all meals and lodging in the Indiana Memorial Union.

PRECOLLOQUIUM WORKSHOP SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 7-8

For the second year, OHA will sponsor a basic oral history workshop on Thursday and Friday, October 7-8, immediately preceding its annual colloquium. According to David J. Rosenblatt, Head of Ohio Historical Society's Oral History Program and this year's workshop chairman, its purpose will be "to introduce librarians, archivists, manuscript curators and historians to the oral history profession through a short survey of oral history techniques, problems and successes." He expects a record attendance from a large variety of grassroots programs located within easy driving distance from the Bloomington campus, where participants will register in the Indiana Memorial Union between 10 am and 2 pm, Thursday, October 7. It is expected that most of the workshop participants will plan to remain and attend the weekend program of the Colloquium.

Afternoon and evening activities on the first day have been planned to introduce registrants to the field of oral history and the purposes of OHA, and will include group discussions on the various types of oral history projects located in universities, colleges, historical societies and special libraries. There will be a chance for everyone to become acquainted at a social mixer before dinner. In the evening OHA Vice President and President-Elect, Charles T. Morrissey, Director of the Vermont Historical Society, will speak on the topic *Why Oral History*, and OHA President Forrest C. Pogue, Director of the George C. Marshall Research Foundation, will discuss research use of oral history.

The morning sessions on Friday will consider the basic problems of administering a new oral history program and the techniques for conducting oral history interviews. Participants will have a chance to hear from a number of individuals who are experienced in these areas, and to raise questions related to their own projects. After lunch a series of four workshops will be conducted to provide additional opportunity for discussion of problems related to particular phases of the oral history technique. Each registrant will be able to attend two of the following workshop discussion sessions which will be given twice during the afternoon: *Legal and Ethical Aspects of Oral History*, *Transcription and Editing*, *Equipment and Supplies*, and *Project Plan*.

ORAL HISTORY RECEIVES EQUAL TIME WITH ARCHIVES, MANUSCRIPTS AND LIBRARIES AT OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY INSTITUTE

David Rosenblatt

The Ohio Historical Society's Archives - Library Institute on Historical Research Materials, held February 1-12, 1971 at Columbus, Ohio, included a ten-session oral history program. The institute director was David R. Larson, Chief of the Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Ohio Historical Society, and the oral history program coordinator was David J. Rosenblatt, oral history specialist at the Ohio Historical Society. The institute included four seminars: archives, manuscripts, library, and oral history. A total of 40 registrants from 17 states and 2 Canadian provinces attended the institute. Eight registrants were enrolled in the oral history seminar.

The oral history program stressed workshops and practice oral history interviews by the registrants. Each member of the class was instructed in oral history interviewing techniques, formulating an interview plan, administering an oral history program, finding aids and reference, legal aspects, transcribing, and the reliability of interviews. During the two weeks the students conducted an oral history interview for the Ohio Historical Society's series on *Black Senior Citizens in Columbus*.

The respondents were selected beforehand by Mr. Rosenblatt based on their varied backgrounds and years in Columbus, Ohio. Topics and questions for the interviews were discussed during the sessions, although the shortage of time made intensive study of each respondent's life or black history in Columbus impossible.

The students had varied experiences during the interviews, including: trouble finding the respondent's home; too many people in the supposedly quiet room; a faulty recorder; fair to excellent rapport with the respondent; rambling remembrances and valuable insights; obvious boredom during the interview to intense excitement for the interviewer and respondent. The general consensus was that the interview experience was extremely valuable in pointing out the problems and excitement of oral history.

All students transcribed part of their tapes in order to better understand the problems of the transcriber and to give

them hints on how they could have recorded clearer interviews. The interviews will be transcribed in their entirety by the Ohio Historical Society and made a part of our Black History project.

The Ohio Historical Society staff was given excellent help in the oral history program by two resident instructors who were each available for one week of lectures and discussions. James V. Mink, Director of the UCLA Oral History Program, was the instructor the first week; while Alice M. Hoffman, Head of the Oral History Program of Pennsylvania State University, was the resident instructor for the second week. This gave the students a chance to discuss at great length oral history problems and techniques with two very knowledgeable and friendly oral history practitioners. Guest instructors who spoke to the class for one day each included: Thomas K. Krasean, Archivist for the Lewis Memorial Library, Vincennes University; John F. Stewart, Acting Director of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library; and Charles T. Morrissey, Director of the Vermont Historical Society.

Two general conclusions can be drawn from our experiences during the institute. The first one is that the actual oral history interview is invaluable as a teaching aid for budding oral historians. An instructor can talk all week about the problems involved in research, rapport, and techniques of interviewing, but without the interview taking place, much will be forgotten. Experience is a good teacher. The second thing learned from the institute is that with co-operative resident and guest instructors, oral history can be approached as something that can be rewarding and exciting for the newcomer to oral history. One can still convey the excitement of oral history along with explaining standard operating procedures.

The institute will be sponsored every year and oral history will be included as one of the seminars. The dates for the second institute are March 13 - 24, 1972. Tuition will be \$150, and registration will be limited to 50 persons, with 10 to 15 enrolled in the oral history seminar.



Oral History Seminar at the Ohio Historical Society's First Annual Archives-Library Institute on Historical Research Materials, February 1-12, 1971. Left to right: Thomas K. Krasean, Archivist, Lewis Memorial Library, Vincennes University, Vincennes, Indiana; David J. Rosenblatt, Oral History Seminar Coordinator and Oral History Specialist, Ohio Historical Society; James V. Mink, Resident Instructor and Director, UCLA Oral History Program; Susanne Z. Stafford, Oral History Interviewer, Ohio Historical Society; Anna Mae

Cummings, Archives Assistant, University of Akron; John Webb, Information Consultant and Specialist, Wright State University; Penelope Allum, Records Librarian, Insurance Company of North America; Mary Walters, Assistant Professor of Library Administration, Ohio State University; and Clarencetta Jelks, Assistant Archivist, Fisk University Library. Not present for photograph: Kenneth E. Davidson, Oral History Seminar member and Chairman, American Studies Department, Heidelberg College.

SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS

IN ITS

ORAL HISTORY

MICROPUBLICATION PLAN

Responses from Columbia's memoirists to the Columbia-New York Times micropublication plan are running 10 to 1 in favor, according to Louis M. Starr, Director of Columbia University's Oral History Research Office. Although a lengthy description of the plan appeared in the last issue of the OHA Newsletter, there have still been quite a few inquiries, Starr said. "Other institutions are awaiting our results before deciding whether to go ahead," he feels. The Times offered to make similar arrangements with selected oral history projects across the country immediately after the announcement of its Columbia contract at the Fifth National Colloquium last November, but they have adopted a "watch-and-wait" policy.

Since January, the Columbia office has been mailing 2-page letters to selected authors of "open" memoirs or their heirs, explaining the micropublication plan and requesting that copyright and royalties be assigned to the University. Each mailing includes a copy of *The Oral History Collection*, Columbia's catalogue, and its annual report describing the micropublication plan in detail. By 25 March, 146 persons had been approached. Sixty-two authors or their heirs had returned signed copyright assignments by that date, covering a total of 17,004 pages of transcript. Ten others had been in touch with the office to give assurance that proper executors would sign. Of the 6 negatives, Starr said, none opposed the plan in principle. "Indeed, the No letters end by wishing us well with the plan. There are special reasons — usually a book one of the heirs hopes to write — why they don't want to sign at this time," he said.

Starr thinks the response proved the plan would pass its first crucial test with ease. There had been some question, he admitted, whether copyright assignments would prove difficult to obtain. The only real difficulty so far has been in running down the names and addresses of the heirs, since approaches are being made at present only to those interviewed by the Columbia office from 8 to 23 years ago. Those interviewed as recently as 5 years ago may also be approached, but no decision has been reached about including more recent contributors.

"We're inclined to feel our way along rather cautiously," said Starr. "It's never been done before, and we do not want to do anything that could in any way jeopardize future interviewer-interviewee relationships. I am simply delighted with the way it has been going thus far. Our contributors have proved wonderfully responsive — generous, too, in assigning us royalties — and I'm sure this will be the experience of other projects. Oral history builds lasting reservoirs of good will, not only in those it interviews, but in grateful heirs."

Columbia estimates that a steady stream of about 10,000 pages per month will be moving toward the cameras of Microfilming Corporation of America, the Times subsidiary, over the next several months.

Plans to record the "inside" history of Congress by an oral history project were unveiled this February in Washington, D.C. Former Representatives Brooks Hays (D-Ark.) and Walter H. Judd (R-Minn.), cochairs of Former Members of Congress, spoke to newsmen about the plans of their new organization. According to Hays, the group has determined that there are more than 700 former congressmen alive and 346 have already joined their organization, including President Nixon, former President Lyndon B. Johnson and former House Speaker John W. McCormack.

The organization, made up of former senators and representatives, plans to record for history some of the inside stories, maneuverings and deals that influenced important legislative decisions of the past. "Just think what it would have meant to historians if we could have had on tape accounts by former Speaker Sam Rayburn, giving his view of the events in which he participated," said former Representative Judd. "It would be valuable," he said, "to have former Representative Carl Vinson (D-Ga.) recite the history of matters affecting the military, such as unification of the armed forces."

This taped legislative history will be deposited in some central repository, possibly the Library of Congress. Future historians will be able to study the interviews in conjunction with more formal, written accounts and "get a picture of what went on in the smoked-filled rooms, behind closed doors and in the lobbies," Judd said.

MULTIPLE USE CONCEPT IN NATIONAL FORESTS TO BE STUDIED BY THE FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY

In a joint release with the U.S. Forest Service on March 9, Elwood R. Maunder, Director of the Forest History Society, Santa Cruz, California, and Edward P. Cliff, Chief of the Forest Service, USDA, announced that a cooperative agreement has been concluded between their respective organizations for the study of the multiple use concept in the management of national forests. Under this agreement the Forest History Society, a non-profit educational institution dedicated to the collection and preservation of the history of forests in North America, will explore how the multiple use concept began and emerged over the years until, by June 1960, it became law. This will be done by means of tape-recorded oral history interviews to be conducted by the Society with a selected number of former Forest Service officials who played a key role in the concept's development and application.



Cooperative agreement to trace origin and development of multiple use management concept on national forests is signed by E. W. Schultz (right), Deputy Chief for Forest Service Administration, and Elwood R. Maunder, Executive Director, Forest History Society. The Society will make a series of oral history interviews with retired Forest Service officials.

A GLIMPSE AT BRITISH ORAL HISTORY

Exploratory Meeting Held

On December 13, 1970, scholars from British universities with on-going oral history programs met in London with representatives from the British Institute of Recorded Sound and the British Broadcasting Company. The purpose of the 1-day meeting was to exchange information and determine whether any future liaison would be worthwhile. The morning session was occupied with a series of show-and-tell sessions, in which those present gave short accounts of their projects and "exchanged much useful information." During the afternoon, Patrick Saul, director of BIRS described the work of the Institute and suggested ways in which it might be of general help to scholars engaged in oral history research. Saul said the Institute could maintain a central register of local history recordings in other archives and act as a general information center by providing technical advice, assisting in acquisition of recording equipment, and arranging meetings to discuss oral history problems of mutual interest. It could also acquire duplicate copies of interviews of national interest, housed in local repositories, and make them available at the London BIRS headquarters, subject to terms specified by the local archives.

The meeting also identified a number of areas of general concern. The British scholars thought that guidelines were needed for beginners on such specifics as recording techniques, interviewing procedures, and the kinds of subject matter that could be most usefully covered in an interview. They felt that a national archive of tapes of historical value, together with transcripts of their contents, should be established. "The present situation in which individual scholars keep their tapes, without technical advice on preservation and without full transcripts, is most unsatisfactory" was the consensus of the meeting. Tapes were considered to be source materials as valuable as manuscripts, yet several scholars cited instances where tapes had been destroyed once the research was completed and published.

Another concern was "the disturbing lack of standards" in the way in which interviews are quoted. Such questions as: How far was it legitimate to insert punctuation, take out mistakes and repetitions in order to make sense of a quotation? How should the extent of change be indicated? Should quotations from interviews be treated exactly as those from manuscripts? came before the meeting.

Some of the scholars thought that there should be further discussion on the use of tapes in teaching. Other questions raised included the problems of copyright and whether students should be encouraged to do oral history interviews. Everyone agreed that information was needed on oral history work in progress and on tapes acquired by the central archive, if one were established.

These are some of the questions — all too familiar to many OHA members — now plaguing British oral historians. They have appointed a committee to explore their problems and organize future meetings and activities. Its membership includes Professors T. C. Barker and George Ewart Evans of Exeter University, Stewart Sanderson, Leeds University, and Paul Thompson, Essex University. An immediate charge to the committee was the publication of a newsletter.

Newsletter Published

Number 1 of *Oral History: An Occasional News Sheet* was issued by the committee, under the auspices of BIRS, in December, 1970. The format is mimeograph on legal cap, consisting of 4 sheets duplicated on both sides for a total of 8 pages of informative news about the present state of oral history in Britain. The issue contains a summary of the exploratory meeting that gave birth to this new publication, and there is a brief but instructive essay on problems and techniques of interviewing in agricultural history by Professor George E. Evans of Exeter University. The rest of the issue is devoted to listings of current work in British oral history, including several dozen projects now under way in England, Scotland and Wales.

The variety of projects reported, ranging from sound archives, folklore and linguistic studies to local history and antiquarian pursuits, suggests that the British definition of oral history is still quite broad and open-ended. Here are a few examples "Essex University: Department of Sociology. Interview survey of family life and work experience before 1918, supported by Social Science Research Council and directed by Dr. Paul Thompson. A quota sample of about 500 respondents are being interviewed. The sample is derived from the 1911 Census of Occupations and distributed regionally through England, Wales and Scotland. All respondents were born before 1905, and the oldest before 1880. The interviews normally require two or three visits, with three or more hours of recording. The interview schedule covers the occupations of the respondent and his family, domestic routine, meals, relationship with parents, punishment, family activities and leisure, neighbouring and the community, politics, education, work and marriage. All the tapes are being transcribed and copies are to be deposited in the BIRS. Kent University Faculty of Social Sciences: Oral History Project. Directed by Professor Theo Barkepe and John Whyman, interviewing for memories before 1900. Interviewers are partly staff and partly school teachers, and one purpose is to produce a demonstration tape of excerpts as an aid to teaching in schools. Four conferences of teachers and University staff have been held and 18 tapes collected to date. A brief questionnaire is now used, covering food, clothes, the home, health, school, shopping, leisure, attitude of parents, etc. A few tapes have been transcribed. Ronald Blyth: author of *Akenfield*, Allen Lane, 1969. The tapes have not been preserved[1]."

Reliability of Oral History Interviews:

A British Scholar's Point of View

American critics of oral history have frequently zeroed in on the defects of the interview as a vehicle for getting at historical truth. The memory is faulty, they say, and there may be a tendency on the part of respondents to distort the truth and deceive the interviewer, if it suits their purpose to do so. Here is another point of view from a British historian, George E. Evans, telling of his first experiences with oral history research in agricultural history and the conclusions he reached about the reliability of interviews:

"My first experience of collecting historical information

from men and women was in a remote Suffolk village [in 1953]. At that time this village was still in the nineteenth century, and in many ways it had the atmosphere of an even earlier period. My interest was kindled when I heard the older generation using words that I had seen only in the Elizabethan poets. The culture of this small village was closely linked to the arable farming that up to the first world war had been comparatively unchanged for centuries; and it became clear to me that a study of this culture required a detailed knowledge of the history of farming. The older men and women knew intimately the old farm processes — glean- ing, threshing, winnowing, and so on — that went back to biblical times: indeed they also heard about them on a Sun- day or read about them in the Bible, and they could describe them in a language that was half as old as the processes themselves.

"But one problem pricked at the back of my mind all the time: is oral information accurate? Can the accounts of these

old people be classed as historical information? I soon found out that I was asking the wrong question. After reading fairly extensively and researching in record offices I realized that, for the era I was living in, the material I was getting from the old people was more accurate than the printed sources. And it was clear why this was so. To a man who had spent his whole life at a certain work or craft it was a point of honor to describe its details fully and without distortion: the work had become a part of him and to give a wrong descrip- tion would have been an offense against his own person. After this I talked with the old people not simply out of a mild interest in their memories, as I'd done before, but with the intention of writing down anything that would help to light up a historical period that was ending in their own life- time."

Excerpts from "Flesh and Blood Archives: Some Early Ex- periences," *Oral History: An Occasional News Sheet*, Lon- don: British Institute of Recorded Sound, December, 1970.

NEWS IN BRIEF...

Professor Kenneth E. Davison, Chairman of the Depart- ment of American Studies at Heidelberg College, has re- ceived a matching grant of \$3000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities for his research. He is optimistic about raising the other

The George C. Marshall Research Library's oral history facilities were used recently by the Virginia Military Insti- tute. Two VMI English classes visited the Library for special sessions to hear selected tape recordings dealing with Gen- eral Marshall's career. The object was not only to provide them an opportunity to learn more about General Marshall but also to acquaint them with the broad possibilities in- herent in this relatively new method of recorded interviews, a Library spokesman said.

The UCLA Oral History Program has received \$7000 in grant support for its interview series on UCLA history. Funds amounting to \$3000 were presented by Gold Shield, a UCLA women's alumni support group, and a matching grant was secured from the UCLA Alumni Foundation. An additional \$1000 has been allocated from research funds by Professor Niel H. Jacoby, former Dean of the UCLA Graduate School of Business Administration, for the preparation of an oral history of the School. Gold Shield has formulated plans for con- tinuing support of oral history at UCLA. A committee has been organized to raise funds in the Southern California community for support of interview series in fine arts and local history. The group will also provide volunteer assist- ance in transcription, editing and occasional interviewing.

In 1969 the Edward G. Miner Library began a program to assemble oral history records pertinent to the history and development of the University of Rochester School of Medi- cine and Dentistry and Strong Memorial Hospital. Inter- views have been conducted with several members of the original faculty of the School of Medicine and Dentistry and of the School of Nursing, including eight hours of interviews with Dr. George H. Whipple, Dean Emeritus, which were conducted by Dr. Roger Terry, then Acting Chairman of the Department of Pathology. In the future the program will be expanded to include interviews with physicians and others who have taken part in the development of the practice of medicine and public health in the Rochester — Monroe Coun-

ty area. The program is being directed by the History of Medicine Section of the Miner Library.

According to Mrs. Willa Baum, Director of the Regional Oral History Office on the Berkeley campus of the University of California, the Zellerbach Family Fund has approved a grant to ROHO for funding the initial interviews in a new series to be entitled, "The Arts and the Community — The San Francisco Bay Area." Its purpose will be to gather mate- rial on the state of the arts in the Bay Area, the public support and private patronage it has received in the past, and pos- sibly to trace newer developments in federal, state and local government support by the establishment of the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities and the develop- ment of state and local arts councils and commissions. The new series will supplement collections of interviews already produced by ROHO in such fields as books and fine print- ing, arts, architecture, photography, the social history of Northern California and University of California history.

Paige E. Mulhollan, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Kansas State University, has conducted in- terviews for the Lyndon B. Johnson Oral History Project, based at the University of Texas. He discussed his experi- ences with the Johnson Project recently in a paper entitled, "Oral History: Impressions and Problems by a Contemporary Practitioner" which he presented at the 75th annual meeting of the Texas State Historical Association, held in Austin, March 11-13. Appearing on the same program was OHA member Ronald E. Marcello of North Texas State University who described the oral history project and collection he ad- ministers at that institution.

The Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., has received 14 tapes recorded by Lou Blachley in the early 1930's. These contain a rich amount of pioneer folklore and oral history of New Mexico.

NEWS IN BRIEF... (continued)

The John F. Kennedy Library has accessioned one linear foot of transcripts of interviews conducted by the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University with news broadcasters regarding their coverage of President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

The Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum has received a collection of sound tapes that constitute an oral history of space flights from the theoretical beginnings early in this century through the moonshot of Apollo 11. The completely catalogued library of 647 reels was donated by Michael Kapp, Vice President of Capitol Records. He began the collection of historic tapes from private and government sources after receiving encouragement from astronauts Alan Shepard and Wally Schirra.

Professor Kenneth E. Davison, Chairman of the Department of American Studies at Heidelberg College, Tiffin, Ohio, recently received a matching NEH grant of \$15,000 for oral history research. He is optimistic about raising the other half and hopes to offer an oral history seminar this fall.

Elizabeth Mason, from Columbia University's Oral History Research Office, has been on the road for oral history recently. She conducted a one-day workshop on interviewing in Providence, Rhode Island, sponsored by the Department of State Library Services. Those attending came from a number of areas of interest: junior and community colleges, Brown University, the Rhode Island Historical Society, and several specialized libraries. The pilot project in Rhode Island, already begun, is a study of the textile mills in the early part of this century. In April, Betty Mason was one of the lecturers in a course on oral history given by the Department of Continuing Education for Women at George Washington University which is further described in the item following.

An enthusiastic group of 15 students are working this spring under the guidance of OHA members Martha Ross and Maida Armstrong in a ten-week, non-credit workshop on oral history at the Department of Continuing Education for Women, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. Professors Ross and Armstrong, participants at last year's Asilomar Colloquium, report that their students are learning the basics of oral history, including research, interviewing, transcribing and handling transcripts. They are also getting an overall view of the many uses to which oral history can be put. Drawing on the ample resources of the Washington area, the course is featuring a wide variety of field trips and guest lecturers.

Evidence that the search for unknown oral history projects is being conducted at the grassroots is found in the following item appearing in the December, 1970 issue of *Stripes*, Texas State Genealogical Society Quarterly: "NOTE

TO GENEALOGISTS: If you know of any oral history project in your area, please advise any of the following members of the Society of American Archivists:" There follows a listing of the names and addresses of SAA's Committee on Oral History. Since most of the members of this committee are also members of OHA, including the chairman, John Stewart, Acting Director, John F. Kennedy Library, it would be helpful if they would forward any new discoveries to Louis M. Starr, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, who is doing the final editing of the OHA "Compendium" of oral history projects.

OHA member, Samuel B. Hand, University of Vermont, is the coauthor of an article entitled, "Nicholas Copernicus and the Inception of Bread-Buttering," which appeared in the December 28, 1970 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Alice Roosevelt Longworth has squelched eager publishers with a firm decision to keep her memoirs out of print during her lifetime, according to the *Boston Globe*. She has been talking into a tape recorder almost daily, but the candid reminiscences she is stock-piling are definitely for posthumous publication.

Despite the apparent frankness of most of the interviewees, there is still a certain amount of controversy or even startlingly new. Many of the interview passages are on the edge of the known, and some are obviously new.

Gould P. Colman, Director, Cornell Program on Oral History, and Samuel Proctor, University of Florida Oral History Program, spoke on the "Potential in Oral History" at the Fourth Library History Seminar, sponsored by the School of Library Science, Florida State University, Tallahassee, February 25-27. Very political scenes that closely, some sections will probably seem strangely vague and missing an essential point.

American Journey has been criticized for its shallowness. David Rosenblatt, Oral History Specialist, Ohio Historical Society, conducted a workshop on oral history at the Third Annual Meeting of the Society of Ohio Archivists, held at the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, May 7-8.

Nevertheless, they say something about the nagging doubts that apparently surround the value of oral history, particularly oral history concerned with very recent political events.

Alden Whitman, obituary writer of the *New York Times*, has been appointed consultant to the Oral History Research Office of Columbia University. Director Louis M. Starr said that in this unpaid position Mr. Whitman will advise the Office on notable Americans whose memoirs might be worthy of inclusion in their oral history collection. He will also interview some of these prominent men and women for the Columbia Program.

On Friday, April 2, a group of Indiana oral historians met in Indianapolis to organize the Indiana Oral History Association. Temporary officers were elected, and Professor Martin Ridge, Director of Indiana University's Oral History Program and cochairman of OHA's Sixth National Colloquium, was named temporary president of the newly formed association.

BOOK REVIEW:

American Journey: The Times of Robert Kennedy. Interviews by Jean Stein. Edited by George Plimpton. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970. 372 pp. Index. \$8.95.

Reviewed by John F. Stewart, Acting Director,
John F. Kennedy Library

American Journey is another example of the variety of forms and formats crowding, without apologies, under the umbrella of oral history. The book consists of a series of excerpts from tape-recorded interviews woven together to tell two stories: the journey of the funeral train of Robert Kennedy from New York to Washington; and the journey of the living Robert Kennedy from "a rather small kid with a lot of spunk" (FDR, Jr.) to a man "much older in some ways than his maturity," and "wise beyond his years in other ways" (Robert Lowell).

The use of oral history as a literary form, the authors point out, is not new. Rather, the innovative aspect of the book lies in its attempt to "subject oral history to the narrative process"—to weave together a succession of voices in a format that results in a readable and informative account of the two dramatic and historic journeys.

The number and mixture of people interviewed by Mrs. Stein is impressive. The 347 include members of Robert Kennedy's Senate and campaign staffs; political advisors and associates (real and imagined); personal friends; journalists; Justice Department officials; Senatorial colleagues; and such non-public figures as the engineers, firemen, and electricians on the train, a bandmaster from New Brunswick, New Jersey, and a sampling of the mourners who lined the tracks on that solemn June day to pay their respects to the slain candidate. Among the 144 interviewees whose recollections were not used in the book are: Walter Cronkite, Cardinal Cushing, Justice William Douglas, Colonel John Glenn, Senator Jacob Javits, Dean Rusk, Walt Rostow, Theodore Sorensen, Benjamin Spock, Stewart Udall, Gore Vidal, and Justice Byron White. This is an indication of the wealth of material Mr. Plimpton had to work with in editing the book, and is also proof that no attempt was made to include prominent people merely because of their prominence.

The organization and editing of the interviews in *American Journey* is both extremely imaginative and, at times, tedious. The book is divided into 23 chapters, beginning with a 25-page prologue which provides a setting for the book through discussions of the funeral preparations, the funeral itself, and the departure from St. Patrick's Cathedral. The railroad journey is described through a series of from three to six short interview excerpts at the beginning of each chapter. (Chapter 1 is entitled "June 8, 1968, Penn Station, New York City... 1:03 p.m." and Chapter 23, "Union Station, Washington, D.C. ... 9:10 p.m.") The rest of each chapter is devoted to discussions of two or three of the leading events or themes in Robert Kennedy's life (RFK's childhood, RFK and Joseph McCarthy, RFK on Vietnam, RFK's sense of fatalism, etc.). Thus, the two chronologies eventually converge in the last pages of the book as the interviewees relate their thoughts

on the end of each journey—the murder in Los Angeles and the burial in Arlington. The effect, overall, is a good one. The somber recollections of the train ride are not thrown together in one chapter; hence, their impact is heightened. Also, one never loses sight of the book's intended image of this conglomeration of people, most of whom knew Robert Kennedy well, passing their time on the train by swapping stories about his life, career, and death.

The interview excerpts vary in length from three lines to three pages. Obviously, the longer the excerpt the more difficult it was to achieve a smooth continuity and a strict adherence to the topic at hand. The result is an occasional choppyness that is somewhat difficult to contend with, although certainly not harsh enough to mar seriously the worth of the book.

Despite the apparent frankness of most of the interviewees, there is little in the book that is very controversial or even startlingly new. Many of the interview passages are on the light side and in others the words have obviously been weighed very carefully. The book will certainly be appreciated by people who enjoy political gossip and who know enough about the personalities and situations involved to really understand it. For those who do not follow the Washington and New York political scenes that closely, some sections will probably seem strangely vague and missing an essential point.

American Journey has been criticized for its shallowness and its concentration on minor irrelevancies. ("Transcript of Trivia and Tragedy" headlines Benjamin Bradlee's review in *Life*.) Such criticisms are, of course, familiar reactions to those of us involved in the wonderful world of oral history. Nevertheless, they say something about the nagging doubts that apparently still exist regarding the value of oral history, particularly oral history concerned with very recent political events and personalities.

There is, naturally, no escaping the fact that the book, and almost all collections of oral history, contains a certain amount of so-called trivia, especially when compared to a polished piece of organized writing. Most people, when confronted with a tape recorder and an interviewer intent on getting at the whole truth, almost always react by throwing in relatively unimportant anecdotes and descriptions of people, places, and objects that are more detailed than the point of the story actually demands. Hopefully, much material can be used with great effectiveness to humanize events and, indeed, personalities which otherwise might be presented as cold and lifeless pieces of "factual data." Indeed it is this which, in substantial part, makes *American Journey* such a valuable book, and its characters (including Robert Kennedy) so real and believable.

ORAL HISTORY IN PRINT

A 4-page section on oral history is included in *The Administration of Modern Archives: A Select Bibliographic Guide*, compiled by Frank B. Evans and published in 1970 by the National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. Divided into "Recommended Reading," "Suggested Readings," and "Additional Readings," these bibliographical entries provide a capsule summary of the literature of the field.

"Local History Collection and Services in a Small Public Library," by Sam A. Suhler, Local History Librarian at the Fresno County (Calif.) Free Library is number 19 in a series of pamphlets in the "Small Libraries Project" of the Library Administration Division, American Library Association, 1970. Under the heading: "Recordings and Their Transcripts," Suhler discusses ways of developing and preserving an oral history collection. He points out that "to carry out such activities will necessitate, ordinarily, the library's seeking out from among the community's local history buffs, volunteers to tape and transcribe the interviews and other phenomena selected for inclusion in the oral history collection." But in the long run, this will be well worth the effort because "one of the most valuable kinds of material that a community library can own are tape recordings of interviews, particularly those effectively conducted among older residents of the area."

Shumway will serve as a ministerial committee with the of the Newsletter serving ex-officio.

A session on oral history and public relations at the 1970 Colloquium made some mentions that OHA he-
"Building Community Identity Through Oral History," by Willa K. Baum, in the October, 1970 issue of the *California Librarian* (pp. 271-284) is a why and how-to-do-it article in response to many requests she has received from local libraries for advice based on the experiences of the Regional Oral History Office she heads at the University of California, Berkeley. Mrs. Baum urges local libraries to set up volunteer oral history committees as part of their responsibility to conserve the history and local traditions of their community. Because of the consistently low budgets of libraries, she maps out ways for local libraries to marshal historical societies and friends of the library groups to do the tape recording, transcribing and indexing of interviews with the community's old-timers and leaders at a minimum cost in equipment and staff time. Descriptions of local library oral history projects now actively under way are given together with examples of how these programs have already benefited their communities.

The New York *Sunday News* for April 4 carried a 1-page story (p. 21) that describes oral history as definitely on the march. According to the *News*, oral history "is getting to be the biggest and most far-reaching academic subject in the country. Everybody's getting into the act... Antioch, Colgate, Eastern Michigan and Ohio State have oral history projects in the works. So do Brandeis, Illinois, Marquette and the University of Hawaii. And it wouldn't surprise anyone if a few more went in for the new, on-the-spot history by the time this [story] reaches print." The *News* said that there are now more than 280 operative oral history projects in the United States, most of them having been started within the past 5 years.

Articles about the general process of conducting interviews are numerous, and not all are pertinent to interviewing for oral history, but Omer Henry in "Interviewing For Trade Journals," published in the February, 1971 issue of *The Writer*, touches upon items that may interest oral historians. After outlining such essentials as defining the purpose of the interview, preparing for it, and assuring cooperation from the interviewees, Henry comments on his reliance on a tape recorder. "Do interviewees object to having their comments taped?" he asks. The answer: "In my experience, almost no one objects. More businessmen appreciate the fact that the writer is working in such a professional manner." He adds: "Then I can quote him accurately, and — if I like — at length. And the quotes sound like him!" *The Writer* is a monthly magazine for free-lance writers. It is published at 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116.

Those who take an interest in oral history as a classroom device and a teaching technique may be interested to learn of a recent publication prepared by the Indiana Junior Historical Society: *A Guide for Making an Oral History Survey*. Directed mainly to high school students interested in initiating oral history projects, this 6-page pamphlet introduces student groups to oral history, defines the term, gives hints on whom to interview, the techniques of conducting oral history interviews, and the legal considerations to be observed in making the materials collected available for research. In conclusion the young authors state: "This is a simplified guide to oral history, but deliberately so. We want to give each club as much freedom in 'doing their thing' as is possible. Your own interest and abilities will dictate the success of your venture. Good luck!" The pamphlet is published by IJHS, Oral History Committee, Indiana State Library & Historical Building, 140 North Senate Ave., Indianapolis, Indiana 46204.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HOLDS WINTER MEETING AT BLOOMINGTON: THE MEETING IN BRIEF

On February 5 and 6, the Executive Council met at Indiana University in Bloomington, site of the Sixth OHA Colloquium, scheduled for October 8-10, 1971. President Forrest Pogue presided and council members attending were: Vice President Charles Morrissey, Secretary Amelia Fry, Treasurer Knox Mellon, Charles Crawford, Sam Proctor and James Mink, Editor, OHA Newsletter (ex-officio). Saul Benison was unable to attend due to illness. Invited guests included Martin Ridge, Indiana University, and David Larson, Ohio Historical Society, cochairmen of the Sixth Colloquium, who were present to discuss program plans. Dr. Peter Olch attended to discuss concluding business of the Asilomar Colloquium and the editing of its proceedings, which will be his responsibility as last year's OHA president.

David Larson presented the tentative program schedule for the Bloomington Colloquium. This was the basis for a brainstorming session on possible speakers and topics. The Council also inspected the Indiana Memorial Union and expressed high satisfaction with its conference facilities. The registration fee for the Colloquium was set at \$100, and \$30 for the preceding Workshop, with the stipulation that there will be no refunds for no-shows or early departures.

The treasurer's report was accepted by the Council, and it was agreed that future annual reports of the treasurer, together with a summary of the Council's winter business meeting, will be published in the Newsletter.

There was lengthy discussion of OHA publications, and it was decided to create a publications committee to consider guidelines for future publications, including proceedings of workshops and colloquia, and advise the Council on specific proposed publications. Sam Hand was named chairman, and Elizabeth Mason, John Wickman, Martha Jane Zachert and Gary Shumway will serve as committee members, with the editor of the Newsletter serving ex-officio.

A session on oral history and public relations at the 1970 Asilomar Colloquium made recommendations that OHA become more active in the area of public relations. After a short discussion, the Council voted to form a public information committee which will handle notices of OHA activities and publications for insertion into scholarly journals, develop a mailing list of journals, and execute such other publicity functions as the Council may recommend. Charles Morrissey will serve as chairman of the committee, with Louis Starr, Richard Arena and Jeanne Spiegel. The secretary of OHA will be an ex-officio member.

David Larson reported on the preliminary results of a questionnaire concerning OHA functions and colloquia programs which he recently circulated to the membership. Statistics, so far, indicate overwhelming support for current activities. The final results will be published in the Newsletter.

MOVING FROM A TO B IN THE OHA

So far, OHA members have met each year in such isolated and esoteric places as Arrowhead, Arden, Airlie and Asilomar (lest we forget Lincoln!). But this year it's Bloomington at the Indiana University Memorial Union, October 8-10. Mark the dates on your calendar now and watch for further program details.

Recently released a fourth revision of its catalogue, which includes all other views compiled or in progress as of March 1971. The revised bibliography has been compiled by Mary Ellen Glass, project supervisor, and describes 57

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 1972 OHA OFFICERS SOUGHT

Dr. Albert Lyons, M.D., Mt. Sinai Hospital, 111 East 10th St., New York, New York 10029 is chairman of this year's nominating committee which will be submitting its nominations for next year's officers at the business meeting of the Bloomington Colloquium next October. He asks that members send their suggestions to him. Nominations are to be made for vice president/president-elect, secretary, treasurer and one member of the Executive Council.

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vada and the West from persons who
have witnessed significant events of
the region's past. The project has con-
centrated on gathering data to aid
scholars in placing Nevada and
its adjacent areas in perspective in
Western American history. Emphasis
on Nevada has produced material on a

range from Nevada politics, mining, a-
ranching to business, the profession
and social life. Respondents are chosen
by a committee of the University

Membership in the Oral History Association is open to all who are interested in oral history. Dues for individuals are \$7.50 per year, and for institutions and associations they are \$25.00 per year. Non-voting student and library memberships are \$5.00 annually (these members receive all publications but do not participate in the selection of OHA officers). Life memberships are available at \$150. Institutions which generously decide to become Sustaining Members pay between \$10 and \$150 each year. All checks for membership dues should be sent to OHA Treasurer Knox Mellon, Dept. of History, Immaculate Heart College, 2021 North Western Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90027.

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The disclaimer is a joke to those of us who knew how long Nevins had dreamed of oral history, how he had worked — sweating it out in the little courthouse towns of Texas all one summer, doing interviews with oil wildcaters to earn money that would keep the office alive; or again cooling his heels in the anterooms of bank presidents in hopes of another life-saving grant. Some accident!

Nevins played much the same role in the formation of our association. He urged me to form some such organization, and when he found me skeptical, he encouraged Jim Mink to try, and agreed to speak at the exploratory meeting Jim planned. With Nevins as the drawing card, the First National Colloquium on Oral History came off beautifully at Lake Arrowhead, UCLA's conference center in the San Bernardino Mountains, in September 1966. Health never permitted his attending another of our meetings, though A.N. became Honorary Chairman from the day OHA was formed. He delighted to hear of its progress.

Don Schippers, Louis Shores and I called on A.N. at his spacious home in Pasadena to escort him in a UCLA car up to the conference center. We were greeted by his lovely lady, and by the faint clatter of a typewriter upstairs. Mrs. Nevins invited us to sit down and chat and have some refreshments, assuring us the Professor would be right along. Minutes passed agreeably in the living room (book-littered, as always), with our smiling hostess regaling us with the latest news of the busy Nevins family — and calling "Allan!" upstairs with mounting insistence. The clatter continued without interruption, punctuated only by grunts of "just a minute," or "I'm coming." At this, Mrs. Nevins would look at us with a wry grin that seemed to say, "What an exasperatingly bad boy he is!" Finally she went to the foot of the stairs with a more urgent summons. The clatter went on minutes longer, then abruptly stopped. A.N. sailed downstairs with his MS tucked in his bulging briefcase, greeted us warmly as if he were only now aware

of our arrival, turned to Mary and assured her he'd be home the following night and said, "Well, we must be off!" The clatter we had heard, I think, turned into a speech he gave at Arrowhead.

Returning to Pasadena immediately after delivering it (A.N. would rarely allow himself more than a day away from work), he chatted with me about oral history matters and managed to get around to one of his favorite anecdotes. It concerned the poor fellow who had accosted the Duke of Wellington on Pall Mall, at a time when the Duke was easily the most celebrated personage in Europe. "Pardon me, Sir," said the stranger. "Aren't you John Simon of Nottinghamshire?" The Duke drew himself up and shot back, "Sir, a man who would believe that would believe anything." A.N.'s manner of relating this, with the hoarseness and slight falsetto that would alter his voice as he came to a punchline he particularly relished, made one feel he must surely have known the Duke in person.

I'd like to quote an editorial about him because I think it beautiful and true. It told of his oral history contribution, and concluded: "...His idea was to enrich the source material available to future scholars. Indeed, enrichment of others was what Mr. Nevins was all about, for histories (and his biographies were history, too) were aimed at making Americans more intimately knowledgeable about themselves. No one could leave a better testament."

Oral History Association Newsletter

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Editorial Office

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James V. Mink, Editor

Bernard L. Galm, Associate Editor

The editors invite contributions in the form of articles or news items related to any aspect of the field of oral history.

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA AND NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY ISSUE ORAL HISTORY CATALOGUES

University of Nevada's Oral History Program on the Reno campus has recently released a fourth revision of its catalogue, which includes all interviews completed or in process, as of March 1971. The revised bibliography has been compiled by Mary Ellen Glass, project supervisor, and describes 57 interviews (44 complete and 13 in process) undertaken since the establishment of the program in 1965.

Catalogue entries include: name of respondent and terminal dates; respondent's profession or vocation; official title of transcript and total number of pages; brief description of the interview, including name of interviewer, recording dates, use restrictions, location of additional copies, and the presence of any supporting materials in the form of personal papers and/or memorabilia.

UN's program was first established in its Desert Research Institute's Western Studies Center and became a regular department of the University Library in 1969. Its primary aim is to collect useful information about Nevada and the West from persons who have witnessed significant events of the region's past. The project has concentrated on gathering data to aid scholars in helping to place Nevada and its adjacent areas in perspective in Western American history. Emphasis on Nevada has produced material on a wide variety of topics appropriate to the region. Areas of specialization range from Nevada politics, mining, and ranching to business, the professions, and social life. Respondents are chosen by a committee of the University's faculty in consultation with the project supervisor. Final copies of the transcripts are made available for research in the libraries on the Reno and Las Vegas campuses.

The catalogue of North Texas State University's oral history collection appears as number 420 of the University's *Bulletin* for December 1970. This well-designed pamphlet contains not only a listing of interviews completed and in process, but also a number of full-page photographs of some of the project's respondents and detailed descriptions of its activities, objectives and procedures. Thus the catalogue serves as an excellent public relations tool as well as a useful compendium for researchers in the field of Texas history.

The data provided for the interviews in the collection to date is the same as

that given in the Nevada project, except that the presence of supporting materials, in the form of memorabilia or personal papers, is not indicated. [If such exist, it would be worthwhile to include this in a future revision.] Interviews in process are listed in a separate section of the catalogue. At present, interviews are in process with Daniel Price and Coke R. Stevenson, both former governors of Texas.

There is an interesting description of the circumstances which gave birth to the North Texas State project. One evening in the late 1930's, Professor Sam B. McAlister, chairman of the University's political science department, had an extensive conversation with former Texas governor, Miriam A. Ferguson, the first elected woman governor in the United States. She spoke long and frankly about her tumultuous political career. Some years later, McAlister's colleague, Professor H. W. Kamp, heard about the conversation and was disheartened that no-

body had been there to record it in shorthand. Mrs. Ferguson died in 1961, and her personal reminiscences were lost to scholars forever. Kamp could not forget this lost opportunity, and when he heard about the work of Professor Allan Nevins, he wrote to Columbia and received a great deal of information on developing an oral history program. In February 1963, he called the initial meeting to lay the groundwork for establishing an oral history collection at North Texas State.

Since its establishment, the purpose of the project has been "to preserve, in tape-recorded interviews, the memoirs of Texans who have made significant contributions to society in recent times." Project researchers are interested in gathering the experiences of people who have occupied key points of decision-making, who have been instrumental in setting taste or opinion, or who have been witnesses to significant events by chance or position. In recent

years the program has initiated special projects, including: the Ex-Governor Project, to obtain oral histories from all former Texas governors; the Legislative Project, to interview members of the Texas State Legislature after each session; the New Deal Project, to interview Texans who played prominent roles in the administrations of Franklin D. Roosevelt; and the Banking and Finance Project, to obtain memoirs from Texans associated with the banking and insurance industry.

According to OHA member Dr. Ronald E. Marcello, project coordinator, the State of Texas and its citizens benefit in various ways from the project's activities: it provides source material for scholars writing books, articles and monographs dealing with Texas history and government; it provides technical assistance to members of the North Texas State faculty; it helps train graduate students and selected undergraduates; and it will contribute toward the preservation of the Texas heritage.

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