

# ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION newsletter

Volume IV, Number 3, July, 1970

## OSCAR O. WINTER, PRESIDENT OF ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION, DIES AT 66

On May 22, 1970, Dr. Oscar O. Winther, President of the Oral History Association and Professor of History at Indiana University in Bloomington, died in Bloomington Hospital. His age was 66.

Dr. Winther was elected Vice President of the OHA at its 3rd National Colloquium, held at the University of Nebraska Conference Center, in the fall of 1968. He automatically became President at the 1969 Colloquium held at Airlie House in Virginia. Due to illness, however, he was not able to attend the meeting of OHA officers and councilmembers this past February at the Asilomar Conference Center on California's Monterey Peninsula. That meeting was concerned primarily with plans for the forthcoming 1970 oral history colloquium to be held from November 13 to 16.

As a result of Dr. Winther's death the Vice President of the OHA, Dr. Peter Olch of the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, Maryland, has advanced to President of the Association. Dr. Olch was elected to the Vice Presidency last fall at the Airlie House Colloquium, and the OHA by-laws call for the Vice President to succeed the President when the latter is unable to serve.

Dr. Olch led OHA officials in expressing sorrow at Professor Winther's passing. Survivors include his wife, Mrs. Mary Winther; a daughter, Mrs. James R. Scobie of Bloomington; a son, Eric Anton Winther, a graduate student at Indiana University who is now serving in the U.S. Army; and four brothers.

Born in 1903 on a farm located five miles west of Weeping Water, Nebraska, Mr. Winther was the son of Danish immigrants who had come to the United States, via Ellis Island, in 1895. When he was nine the family moved to a dairy farm in Oregon, and Oscar attended the University of Oregon. Subsequently he received his M.A. from Harvard University and his Ph.D. in 1934 from Stanford. He joined the faculty at Indiana University in 1937.

A specialist in the history of the American West, he wrote several books on this subject, including *The Great Northwest*, *The Old Oregon Country*, *The Trans-Mississippi West*, and *Via Western Express And Stagecoach*. In addition to his Presidency of the Oral History Association he had served as President of the Indiana History Teachers Association and in 1963-1964 as President of the Western History Association. He had been abroad as a Fulbright scholar and had received a Guggenheim grant and a fellowship from the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

Fortunately he completed a 10-page reminiscence for the *Western Historical Quarterly* that was published shortly before his death. This article, entitled "Strictly Personal," is a warm account of how he chose to become a specialist in western Americana and a teacher of history, and it is characterized by ample examples of his pleasant sense of

Continued on page 6, 1st Column

## FINAL PLANS TAKING SHAPE FOR 5th NATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON ORAL HISTORY

Oral historians and others interested in oral history interviewing will converge on the Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove, California, for the 5th national meeting of the Oral History Association from November 13 to 16, 1970. Preceding this year's colloquium will be a one day session for beginning oral historians who need assistance in launching their projects. Entitled a "Workshop in Basic Oral History Methods," this intensive series of talks and discussions will begin at 4:30 p.m. on November 12 and conclude by 5:00 p.m. on November 13 when the regular colloquium will start.

Headlining the list of speakers at the Friday-through-Monday colloquium is Professor T. Harry Williams of Louisiana State University, the prize-winning biographer of Huey Long who used oral history interviewing as a major research technique in preparing his book. Another highlight of the weekend will be a panel on "Oral History and Black Studies" featuring Paul Bullock of UCLA, author of a recent book about the Watts section of Los Angeles; Vincent J. Browne of Howard University, Director of the Civil Rights Documentation Project; and Clarence M. Simmons, Director of the Oral History Program at Mary Holmes College in Mississippi.

Other sessions already scheduled include "Oral History In The West," "Oral History And Information Retrieval," "Ethnic Research," "Considerations In Publishing Oral History," and "Legal And Ethical Considerations." Making their first appearances at a national oral history colloquium are such historians as Moses Rischin of San Francisco State College (an adviser to the Jewish Community Oral History Project at the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Berkeley), and Francis C. Schruben of Pierce State College in Woodland Hills, California (author of *Kansas In Turmoil, 1930-1936*, a study published last year by the University of Missouri Press that utilized oral history findings). Some sessions will continue discussions found helpful in previous OHA meetings, and some speakers are familiar figures in the oral history field. The concluding speaker at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, November 16, for example, will be Director Louis Starr of the Columbia Oral History Research Office discussing "Is Current Oral History Relevant To Ongoing Research In The Social Sciences?"

Joining the OHA as sponsors of this colloquium are the University of California at Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Santa Cruz, and the Forest History Society in Santa Cruz. The Asilomar Conference Center is located in 60 acres of tall pines on the tip of the Monterey Peninsula and offers views of cypress, surf, and sand dunes along the Pacific shore. Included in the November meeting is a Saturday bus tour of scenic and historic attractions in the area, with a picnic lunch at Point Lobos State Park, and a Sunday afternoon wine tasting party.

Since accommodations are limited at Asilomar you are urged to make reservations promptly by writing to Mrs.

Continued on page 6, 2nd Column





Pictured here is one section of the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove, California. The Oral History Association will hold its 1970 Colloquium at this site from November 13 to 16.

## URBAN HISTORY: A REPORT ABOUT INTERVIEWS IN BOSTON

Submitted by Francis X. Maloney, Assistant Director,  
Boston Public Library

The chief purpose of the Boston Public Library's oral history program is to supplement the Library's program for the collection of material relating to the twentieth century history of Boston and of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. That program, so far, has focused chiefly on political and governmental history, but it has also been concerned with urban rail transportation, the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, and the Boston tradition in the field of sports.

Our two most recent subjects have been extraordinarily interesting ones — Elijah Adlow, Chief Justice of the Boston Municipal Court and Miss Harriet Curtis, one of the pioneers of women's golf in America. The Chief Justice, with whom we had four sessions at his chambers in the Suffolk County Court House, is one of the favorites of local newsmen. Vigorous, despite his advancing age, he is wise, witty, salty and, at times, quite controversial. Our interest was primarily in the Judge's early days as a rising star in the Massachusetts State Legislature, back in the 1920's, when he knew all the prominent public figures of the times, but we devoted one of the interviews to his observations on the courts and on the parade of cases — many of them sordid or hopeless — that come before his busy downtown court every day.

The session with Miss Curtis was conducted with the active — and major — participation of a Boston *Globe* sportswriter, who is very knowledgeable about the history of golf and who turned out to be a first-rate interviewer, too. The lady, 88 years old and a Beacon Hill aristocrat, was sharp mentally, good-humored, and hospitable. We talked with her in the upstairs sitting room of a lovely old house at the top of Mt. Vernon Street. She and her sister Margaret, the ninth and tenth children of the family, were both fine golfers. Harriet was the U.S. Women's Amateur Tournament winner in 1906. Margaret, now dead, defeated Harriet for the title in 1907, won again in 1911 and 1912 and, with Evelyn Sears, won the Women's National Doubles Tennis Championship in 1908! Together, the two sisters donated the Curtis International Cup in 1932.

Our list of potential subjects for interviews is always long — former governors and mayors, former legislative leaders and administrators, old-time politicians, political columnists, the occasional and rare person who can contribute something to the lore of the Sacco-Vanzetti case, urban transit experts, and, now sports stars. We've done quite a few, but wish we had the time to do more. (That's the chief problem — finding the time to do the intensive preparation that is needed for a useful interview.) We're looking forward now to an interview with a distinguished gentleman who was for 40 years the top man in the Boston

Continued at bottom of next column

## SHOULD INTERVIEWS BE RECORDED ON VIDEO-TAPE?

### A Note About Facial Expressions, Gestures, and Tone of Voice

Some people with an interest in the oral history movement point out that the transcript of an interview often does not equal the tape of the same interview in conveying the sense and flavor of what the interviewee tried to express. Similarly, some oral history practitioners feel that interviews will soon be recorded on video-tape, if this becomes feasible, because an opportunity to see an interviewee as well as hear his commentary would permit a researcher to grasp more fully the reminiscences that interest him. The extent to which communication is enhanced by facial expression, gestures, and tone of voice is illustrated by the research experience of Ezra Vogel of the East Asian Research Center at Harvard University.

Writing in his book *Japan's New Middle Class: The Salaried Man And His Family In A Tokyo Suburb* (University of California Press, 1967), Vogel notes that he and his wife "conducted our field work in Japanese from the beginning, regardless of communication problems. However, we tape-recorded many interviews in order to go over the material later with Japanese assistants to insure accurate understanding. Even when our command of Japanese was elementary, most people made an effort to talk in simple Japanese and to elaborate when we did not understand.

Although the process was sometimes time-consuming, it is our feeling that much was communicated even when our language ability was minimal. Language difficulties made it difficult for us to catch subtleties of meaning, but it also caused us to be more sensitive to nuances of facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice. When studying taped interviews with assistants we learned we had frequently misunderstood words and phrases, or at times even entire sentences, but we rarely had misunderstood a person's feelings or the general import of the conversation."

## MORE INTERVIEWS RECORDED ON EISENHOWER'S CAREER IN EUROPE

John E. Wickman, Director of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas, was in Europe this past spring to continue interviews started in 1968. Persons interviewed included Brigadier Sir James Gault, General Eisenhower's British Military Aide during both the SHAEF and SHAPE periods, and Major General Vernon Walters, translator for General Eisenhower before and during his presidential period. Both these interviews are currently closed. Also recently concluded were interviews with Colonel Ford Trimble, who worked under General Walter Bedell Smith and was in charge of the SHAEF secretariat in 1944-1945.

## BROCHURES ABOUT THE ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Willa Baum has prepared a brochure giving information about the Oral History Association and explaining to prospective members how they can join this organization. Copies of this brochure will be sent to any OHA member who feels that effective use can be made of them. For copies write to Mrs. Baum at the Regional Oral History Office, Room 486, General Library, University of California, Berkeley, Calif., 94720.

## INTERVIEWS IN BOSTON, Continued from 1st Column:

transit system and a nationally recognized expert. Then, according to our new sportswriter friend, we might be able to swing an interview with the great hockey superstar, Bobby Orr.



## 600 INTERVIEWS ALREADY TAPED ABOUT EUGENE McCARTHY'S 1968 CAMPAIGN

Werner Peters discusses oral history interviews about Senator Eugene McCarthy's 1968 presidential campaign in an article entitled "The McCarthy Historical Project" in *The American Archivist* for April, 1970 (Volume 33, Number 2). Peters is currently the Director of the McCarthy Project; he reports that more than 600 interviews have been recorded in every state that was important politically in 1968. Most of the people interviewed were McCarthy supporters and campaign workers, but also included were supporters of other candidates and independent observers (newsmen especially). He writes: "Wherever written material was insufficient or nonexistent the project staff interviewed people who had been personally involved. The project consistently tried to interview the important participants in the major departments of the campaign organization. But clarification and supplementation of written material were not the only purposes of the interviews. The project also attempted to document the personal motivation of the campaign worker; why he participated in the campaign, why he supported McCarthy, his political background, his views of the candidate, his afterthoughts about his participation in the campaign, the value of it, and his judgment of the campaign's success or failure. It is fair to say that the success of the McCarthy campaign depended to a large degree on the new type of political activists it was able to attract (students, middle-class housewives, party members who were opposed to Viet Nam policy). These interviews constitute an invaluable background for the understanding of the special features and impact of the McCarthy campaign."

## ACROSS THE PACIFIC: NEWS THAT ORAL HISTORY IS POPULAR

Professor D. C. Ellinwood, now returned to the Albany campus of the State University of New York after a tour at Nanyang University in Singapore, reports that the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New Delhi has recorded about 250 interviews on the Indian nationalist movement and Indian government since independence, and also about the personal history of the Nehrus. Most of these interviews are open to researchers. More information can be obtained from Mr. V. C. Joshi, Director of Research, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti House, New Delhi II, India.

At the Columbia University Oral History Research Office this past spring a visitor, Mrs. Patricia Lim Pui Huen, Librarian at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, reported keen interest in the concept of oral history and hoped to be able to launch a project at the Institute.

Dr. Jim Boutlier, Lecturer in History at the University of South Pacific at Laucala Bay, Suva, Fiji, reports that since the spring of 1969 he has been recording interviews with long-time European residents in Fiji and neighboring islands. "These men and women," he notes, "in their seventies and eighties, can often recall significant details concerning the history of the Western Pacific, and for this reason their recollections, when properly handled, are valuable." He predicts that "the next decade will witness the virtual disappearance of the last generation with roots deep in the early colonial period of the island."

**Tape It, The Writer's Concise Guide to Creative Tape Recorder Techniques** is a 62-page "how to do it" booklet available for \$2.00 from Writers Craft Systems Inc., Box 247, Narbeth, Penna. 19072. Although primarily designed to help the writer add "hours" to his time and "perhaps tens of thousands of words" to his lifetime output, it does include some tips for incipient oral historians. **Tape It** extols the virtues of the cassette while persisting in the misimpression that cassette tapes cannot be transcribed by machines equipped with footpower reverse mechanisms.

## VIEWING ORAL HISTORY FROM THE RESPONDENT'S POSITION:

### BERNARD BOUTIN OFFERS COMMENTS

Bernard Boutin a former high official in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations and now President of St. Michael's College in Winooski Park, Vermont was asked this past spring to discuss oral history with a group of undergraduates from St. Michael's and neighboring Trinity College in Burlington, Vt. Boutin had been interviewed for both the Kennedy and Johnson Oral History Projects, and he spoke about the oral history process as seen by a person **being interviewed**. At the request of St. Michael's Librarian Joseph Popecki and Professor Samuel Hand of the University of Vermont (Assistant Editor of this **Newsletter**), both of whom were present for the discussion with students, President Boutin enlarged upon his off-the-cuff remarks about oral history interviewing in this memo written subsequently for this **Newsletter**:

Being the interviewee for an oral history project can either be fun or torture, depending upon a number of factors.

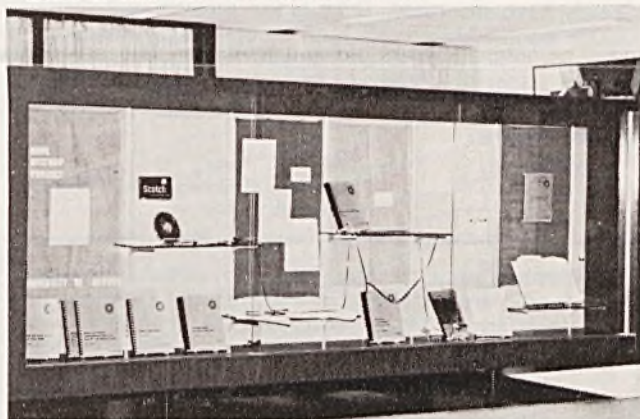
First of all, the interviewee must be comfortable with and have an attitude of trust toward the person or persons doing the interview. Secondly, the interviewee must be completely familiar with the subject matters to be discussed, including an opportunity to review at least the principal questions to be asked. Thirdly, there must be a clear understanding that the interviewee will have an opportunity to correct the transcript after the interview, to rectify any errors such as dates, people's names, et cetera, that he may have made during the interview.

Of these three points, the first is the most important. Unless the interviewee has a high regard for the person doing the interview he is likely to be inarticulate, ill at ease, and perhaps even less than thorough in his answers.

On the second point, it is important that the interviewee have an opportunity to think about what he is going to say in advance of the interview itself.

On the third point, if the interviewee is confident that he can correct any errors in the transcript he will be more likely to be fully at ease during the interview and not be too worried about specific dates, the full name or names of the people he is going to be talking about, and other details that can be filled in when the transcript is reviewed.

If all of these conditions apply, participating as the subject in an oral history interview can actually be enjoyable. Having done a number of these as the subject, I can speak from experience when I say that these conditions must in fact exist for the best result.



When the University of Nevada Oral History Project became a department of the University Library recently (it had formerly been in the Western Studies Center), a display in the library lobby marked the occasion. The oral history process is explained step by step in this exhibit, with tape providing continuity from the outset to the transcribed product. Also shown, near the lower right corner, are some publications of the Oral History Association (photo by Alton E. Glass).



## A NEW MANUAL FOR INTERVIEWERS THAT SHOULD OFFER SOME HELPFUL ADVICE FOR ORAL HISTORIANS

Lewis Anthony Dexter: *Elite and Specialized Interviewing*, Northwestern University Press: Evanston, Illinois (1970), 205 pages, \$5.75 cloth; \$2.95 paper.

Off hand, one might hold some hope that this volume, despite its offensive title, would prove to be the very manual for interviewers that oral historians have been seeking for longer than I care to think. It isn't. Nevertheless, until the happy day someone produces one, this work merits attention. It has a valuable bibliography, with notes that help to guide one through the vast literature of interviewing. It has, as Chapter IV, "On Oral History Interviewing," a slightly adumbrated version of Charles T. Morrissey's memorable talk at our First National Colloquium. It has a long chapter titled "Suggestions for Getting, Conducting, and Recording the Interview" which presents practical information of value under headings like, "On Actually Arranging for the Interview," and "On Introducing Yourself and Starting the Interview"—just what one would hope to find in the manual we seek.

The trouble is that Dr. Dexter lacks focus, as is clear from the opening: "This book was initially designed for **political scientists and sociologists** and also for **professional journalists and other reporters** . . . As I worked on it, I came to see that it has especial relevances for **oral historians**. It is pertinent, also, to **literary history and criticism, for the history of science, and military history**." [Bold face, so help us, are Dexter's.] As the quotation suggests, the style also leaves a good deal to be desired. Most of the strictures Ronald Grele wrote in these columns [*Newsletter*, October 1969] regarding Raymond L. Gorden's *Interviewing: Strategy, Techniques, and Tactics* apply. The man has made a lively subject excruciatingly dull, and his penchant for digression results in footnotes that go on at times for paragraphs. (To indulge in a slight digression myself, Dexter reviewed the Gorden volume in the February *American Sociological Review*, giving him only slightly higher marks than did our Mr. Grele.) Query: What is there about interviewing that induces such dull writing?

To conclude on a more positive note, a patient reader—particularly an interviewer striving to improve himself—will find Dexter rewarding, even (at times) stimulating. His exploration of interviewing as a social relationship has several facets of interest. His idea of comparing interviews with the same person by different interviewers, an undertaking that will be possible in many instances, I might add, with the proliferation of oral history in public affairs, has intriguing possibilities, as some of us already have suspected. If he is too esoteric and scattered, Dexter knows his subject both at first hand and from his extensive exploration of the literature. Exasperating as he is (with asides like "See my second paragraph, above") he has come closer to giving us the manual we need than anyone I know.

Next?

—Louis M. Starr  
Director, Columbia Oral History  
Research Office

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 \$100 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.

## NEW AL SMITH BIOGRAPHY DRAWS FROM COLUMBIA'S ORAL HISTORY HOLDINGS

*Al Smith: Hero Of The Cities*, A political portrait drawing on the papers of Frances Perkins. By Matthew and Hannah Josephson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969, \$7.95.

As the first Catholic to run for President, Al Smith's place in American political hagiolatry is as secure as Orville Wright's in aviation or Allen Nevins' in the Oral History Association. A partial inventory of Smith memorabilia includes one autobiography, seven biographies, an entire volume devoted exclusively to the four-time New York State Governor's political thought, numerous monographs, and a three cent postage stamp. All of this constitutes an impressive monument to a Democrat who never held federal office and failed to carry the solid south or his own state in the 1928 presidential campaign.

While not entirely satisfactory, Matthew and Hannah Josephson's *Al Smith: Hero of the Cities*, is the most thorough Smith biography yet available. Properly emphasizing Smith's singularly productive legislative and gubernatorial pursuits, it is also the best published source for details of former Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins' pre-New Deal career. And there hangs a tale of special interest to oral historians.

Researchers have been unable to locate any large corpus of Smith personal papers, and it is widely assumed that he destroyed all but his official correspondence before leaving office as Governor. His daughter, Emily Warner, who authored a 1956 biography of her father, has some scrapbooks of Smith's early years, but aside from these and correspondence scattered in various libraries the yield in Smith personal papers has been meager.

Almost from the outset of its operations, however, the Columbia Oral History people have been interviewing persons associated with Smith. The collection currently includes 144 memoirs mentioning the Governor in a total of almost 1700 pages. The largest single such memoir is Dean Albertson's interviews with Frances Perkins. Miss Perkins, who first met Smith in 1911 and subsequently held official posts in his gubernatorial administrations, devoted almost 1000 of her over 5000 pages of interviews to the "happy warrior." Intending to write a biography of Governor Smith, she worked from the completion of *The Roosevelt I Knew* almost until her death in 1965 upon the project. Completing rough drafts of only three chapters, her notes were deposited along with her memoirs in the Columbia collection.

Miss Perkins stipulated that her memoir remain closed until 10 years after her death. Her daughter, Susanna Coggeshall, however, exercising her prerogatives as literary executor and anxious to "accomplish the task which she [her mother] could not," invited the Josephsons to complete the Smith biography. Since Miss Perkins' manuscript did not bring the subject much beyond 1900 they wrote largely from her notes and tape recorded recollections. "Obligated to verify and correct many of her reminiscences, recorded when she was almost eighty years old," they also consulted Smith's official papers, newspaper files, and conducted some of their own interviews. Because of the heavy reliance on the Perkins Oral History Memoir, the final result is a posthumous collaboration almost as useful for those interested in Miss Perkins as those concerned with Smith.

Since Columbia cannot open the Perkins memoir until 1975, a definitive judgment as to its thoroughness and accuracy is not yet possible. The Josephson volume is indexed but not footnoted, and despite bibliographic notes one is uncertain when they are citing from the Perkins memoir and which other oral histories they consulted. The authors share the urban bias of their subject, but theirs and Miss Perkins' partisanship help make *Hero of the Cities* a moving narrative.

—Samuel Hand  
University of Vermont



## COLUMBIA'S INTERVIEWS ALSO USED FOR BOOK ABOUT SOCIALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

*Utopia and Reality: A Collective Portrait of American Socialists.* Betty Yorburg. New York: Columbia University Press, 1969. Pp. x, 198. \$7.50.

Betty Yorburg's study of 34 American Socialist leaders will probably be of greater value to sociologists (as is Mrs. Yorburg) or psychologists than to historians of the Socialist Party of the United States. Her contribution to oral history, reflected in the Socialist reminiscences on file at the Columbia University Oral History Research office, is much greater than her own synthesis would lead one to believe.

The 34 interviews conducted over a 16-month period during 1965 and 1966 with present and past leaders of the Socialist Party attempted to discover the meaning of Socialism for the participants in the movement. Analysis of long quotes concerning attitudes, values, experiences and world views of the respondents comprise the bulk of the book, which is structured along the lines of the major questions in the interviews. Aside from introductory and concluding portions, chapters are devoted to self image, the decision to join the party, the failure of Socialism, and the future of Socialism.

The 34 party leaders represent three generational groups: the World War I Generation, composed of 17 persons who joined the party before, during, or within a few years after World War I; the nine members of the Interwar Generation, who joined the party in the late 1920s and 1930s and spent most of their active and influential years in the party during the depression; and the World War II generation, composed of eight leaders who joined the Socialist Party shortly before, during, or after World War II. Yorburg's main thesis centers around the belief "that points of view and ideological conflicts would be patterned along generational lines, because people who are born and grow up during a particular time in history share certain common life experiences."

Her findings support her original assumption. For instance, the younger leaders see themselves as much more pragmatic than the idealistic World War I Generation. Over half of the World War I Generation believe Socialism or the Socialist movement did not fail in America, while very few of the Interwar Generation believe this and none of the World War II leaders do. Mrs. Yorburg justifiably attributes this difference in attitude to the relationship between the strength of one's initial belief in inevitable success and the need to claim success. This belief was much stronger among the early Socialists.

The reasons given for the failure of Socialism reflect the social conditions existing when the different generations first joined the party. Those of the World War I Generation, who were born in Europe, compared the American experience to that of their native lands and emphasized the fluidity of America's class structure as a reason for failure; the Interwar Generation, which was active during the depression, assigned the blame for failure largely to Franklin Roosevelt's reformist New Deal coopting the Socialist program, as well as to the enormous problem of a third party operating within the traditional two party system; the World War II Generation, coming of age in an allegedly "affluent society" attributed Socialism's failure to the economic wealth of the United States.

The author is at her best when transposing the spoken to the written word. Her editing is exemplary; the quotes she uses to illustrate her points are well chosen. The sensitivity to human suffering of her respondents is well illustrated by the story of the young World War I soldier who stepped out of line during a march to pick up a flower thrown by one of the watching crowd. A Socialist leader reminisced, "And the sergeant pushed him back in a way that, for me, was disturbing and destroying . . . his face changed immediately. There was anxiety and the fear of death . . . He was in the machinery of the army where he was nothing else any more than someone who is ordered

around and pushed around by a sergeant. And from then on, I started to be interested in Socialism . . ."

The attitude of the old left toward the New Left is captured well in the description by one Socialist leader of a young radical attending a YPSL (Young People's Socialist League) convention in 1965: "First of all, his hair was combed in the center of his forehead, like Bakunin, coming down on either side, down to about his ear lobes. He was wearing a red bandana kerchief around his neck. He had on a Levi work jacket. Well, that wasn't too bad. But dangling around his neck, and right in the middle of his chest (I swear, in the middle of his chest), he had a **salami!** And from time to time, during the convention, this incredible creep would take out his imitation eighteenth-century knife and slice off a piece of the salami — chopping away at it, you know, and nodding pensively all the while."

The Socialist leader's incredulity increased when he explained how one third of the convention refused to wish Norman Thomas a happy birthday when such a motion was made. "Why? Who knows? Because Norman Thomas is old and they were young. Norman Thomas is from New York and they were mostly from Chicago. Who knows?" But, perhaps, he did know, when he earlier remarked: "I think we're irrelevant to the New Left."

Mrs. Yorburg's generalizations appear to be justified by her evidence. But, is her evidence firm enough to support any generalization? Her generational samples of 17, nine and eight seem scanty. Moreover, she interviewed only leaders because "it was felt they would be more articulate, more informed about Socialist Party history, and more apt to demonstrate in crystallized form the values and attitudes of membership of the Socialist Party in this country." It is the grassroots worker, however, upon whom the foundation of any social or political movement is built. By omitting the story of the rank and file, Mrs. Yorburg leaves a great void in the study of the values and attitudes of American Socialists. Are the attitudes and values of the rank and file Socialists the same as their leaders? Are they different? The reader is left to ponder these unanswered and unasked questions.

Although it is easier to seek out leadership and to interview articulate individuals, if the oral history technique is to be used to maximum advantage, its practitioners would do well to concentrate less on leadership and more on rank and filers, who do not leave papers, write books, or have their stories told in the daily newspapers. The oral historian should spin new threads out of which the fabric of history can be woven. He can do this best by beginning his investigations at the grassroots.

The value of *Utopia and Realty*, thus, is limited. It deals in generalities rather than specifics and devotes itself to recording the attitudes of leadership to the exclusion of the rank and file. Mrs. Yorburg is true to the limited goals she assigned herself. One can only agree with her comment that a historian, a political scientist, or an economist using the same interview materials would select and organize the data differently and write a different book. To achieve this possibility it is important that oral history interview transcripts be kept on file in a readily available place, even after the researcher has synthesized his own work, so that other scholars can use the newly created source material to reinterpret the same subject.

In Mrs. Yorburg's own words: "This inquiry into the lives and times of three generations of political dissenters should be regarded as suggestive rather than definitive."

—Bruce M. Stave  
Department of History  
The University of Connecticut

---

The Business and Professional Women's Foundation is expanding its oral history program by interviewing past presidents and members who joined in 1919, the year of its founding.



## ITEMS WANTED FOR ORAL HISTORY BIBLIOGRAPHY

In order that the revised Oral History Bibliography now being prepared will be as complete as possible, it is requested that reprints of articles dealing with oral history which were published after September, 1967 (or which were inadvertently omitted from the OHA bibliography) be sent to:

Manfred J. Wasserman  
History of Medicine Division  
National Library of Medicine  
8600 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, Maryland 20014

Institutions which issue regular newsletters, reports, bulletins, etc. relating to oral history are requested to forward a copy of their last publication together with any other relevant bibliographical data for inclusion in the Institutional Publications listing.

### Circle the Dates on Your Calendar:

The **5th National Colloquium on Oral History** is scheduled for **November 13 to 16, 1970**, at the Asilomar Conference Grounds on the Monterey Peninsula in California. Housing is being reserved for 175 persons. Details about the program and local arrangements will be forthcoming in this **Newsletter**.

### OSCAR WINTHER DEAD AT 66

(Continued from page one)

humor and relaxed approach to professional concerns. OHA members will miss his friendly conversations and deep interest in affairs of the Association.

A participant in each of the four OHA national colloquia held since 1966, Professor Winther had looked forward to welcoming the OHA to Bloomington for its 1971 meeting. His colleagues at Indiana University are continuing with the plans he started to host the 1971 conference.

Expressions of sympathy may take the form of contributions to an Oscar O. Winther Memorial Fund, already established by the IU Foundation at Indiana University.

## News in Brief...

The Maryland Historical Society has started an oral history project by relying on volunteer interviewers to tape the recollections of prominent Baltimore residents and leading citizens elsewhere in Maryland.

The Archive of Medical Visual Resources, located in the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine at the Harvard Medical School in Boston, was founded a year ago to preserve the work of notable illustrators. At present it is contacting hundreds of medical illustrators to solicit examples of their work and also obtain oral history memoirs about their careers.

Oral history was utilized in preparing the 1968/1969 Annual Report of the Boston University Medical Center. Entitled **Voices of the Medical Center**, this report explains how "something different" was tried in order to meet the problem of enlivening an annual report by avoiding the usual format in which they appear. The Introduction says: "We have let a random group of people, actively involved with the Center, express their own thoughts about what the Center means to them. To obtain these opinions, each person recorded in this report was interviewed by means of a tape-recorder. None of the actual responses has been edited, although certain portions of each transcript have been omitted in order to keep the format as concise as possible. We have copies of each complete transcript and will be happy to let anyone interested in reading them do so."

### ASILOMAR PLANS TAKING SHAPE

(Continued from page one)

Willa Baum, Regional Oral History Office, 486 Library, University of California, Berkeley 94720. Mrs. Baum and James Mink of UCLA's Oral History Program are Colloquium Co-Chairmen.

The all-inclusive fee for this colloquium is \$100. Those attending the one day "Workshop In Basic Oral History Methods" on November 12 will be charged a separate \$25.00 all-inclusive fee.

More details about the Colloquium and Workshop will appear in the next issue of the **Newsletter**, scheduled for publication in October.