

ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION



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OHA MEMBERS UNDERTAKE A VARIETY OF NEW PROJECTS

FIISK UNIVERSITY'S BLACK ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM AWARDED NEH GRANT

The Fisk University Library at Nashville, Tennessee, has received a grant of \$86,377 from the National Endowment for the Humanities to strengthen and support its Black Oral History Program. Fisk's program is a logical extension of the library's longstanding mission to collect material concerning the history of blacks in America.

The library contains one of the oldest and most distinguished collections of Afro-Americana in the United States. Although it is difficult to fix in time the date of the actual founding of the collection, the presumption is that when Fisk was founded in 1866 the library received its first acquisitions in the area of black history. It was not until 1928, however, that the library made the first systematic efforts to collect materials on this subject. Since then, remarkable strides have been made in the development of its special collections which are presently housed in the Erastus Milo

Cravath Memorial Library.

The Black Oral History Program, under the direction of Ann Allen Shockley, associate librarian and professor of library science, is located in the library's Department of Special Collections, which she also heads. The project is designed to bridge gaps in black history and culture through taped interviews with persons from all walks of life who can give fresh and different information germane to the black experience in America. This is a cooperative undertaking with other departments of the university as well as with the local community. Fisk is the first major black university to mount a full-scale oral history effort to supplement existing primary and secondary sources, and as the material collected is made available for scholarly research, its experience should serve as a model for future black oral history projects.



Ms. Rhonda Mealy, transcribes an interview.



Left to right: Ms. Veronica E. Tucker, Cataloger, Ms. Rhonda Mealy, Clerk, and Mr. Richard Moore, Researcher, discuss program finances.



Mr. Richard Moore, prepares background materials for an interview.



Mrs. Kingsley A. Taft, wife of the late Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court, and David J. Rosenblatt, Project Coordinator and Interviewer, talk about the Kingsley A. Taft oral history series.

The Ohio Historical Society's Archives and Manuscripts Division has recently undertaken a new project concerned with the life and work of the late chief justice of the Ohio Supreme Court, Kingsley A. Taft (1903-1970). The purposes of this program, funded by gifts in the amount of \$4,400 from the friends and family of Judge Taft, are two-fold. The first goal is to publish a guide to the Kingsley A. Taft Collection, a collection including both manuscript material and oral history interviews. This guide will be made available for distribution to the public in the fall of 1972 at a reasonable cost.

The second purpose of the project entails the recording of twenty to thirty oral history interviews with persons knowledgeable about Judge Taft's life and the Ohio Supreme Court. The Kingsley A. Taft manuscript collection contains judicial case notes, case opinions, personal and business correspondence, campaign materials, photographs, books, and newspaper clippings. These papers are of great potential value to the researcher, but they lack clarification so far as Judge Taft's personal life, decision-making processes, private and judicial philosophies, impact on his associates, and the inner workings of the Ohio Supreme Court are concerned. Kingsley A. Taft was involved in Ohio politics from 1933 to 1970. He was a member of the Ohio House of Representatives from 1933-1934; ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the Ohio Senate in 1934, 1936, 1938, and 1940; served as a member and president of the Shaker Heights Board of Education from 1940-1942; was elected United States senator from Ohio in 1946 to fill

the unexpired term of Harold H. Burton (November 6, 1946, to January 3, 1947); served as a judge on the Ohio Supreme Court from 1949-1962; and was chief justice of Ohio's highest court from 1963-1970.

The oral history portion of the project will be a unique attempt to offer the researcher a solid basis for an in-depth study of the role of a judge and the chief justice in Ohio's supreme court. Topics such as how a judge perceives the basic goals or purposes of the judicial post, an analysis of political and legal values, a discussion of law making vs. law interpreting, group relations vs. individuality on the bench, use of precedent to decide cases, background necessary to become a judge, group interaction on the court, the function of dissents, the influence of a chief justice, the role of political parties, and the relationship between the supreme court and other Ohio courts will be studied from the vantage point of those who knew Judge Taft's feelings on these subjects. Not only will the interview series clarify Judge Taft's judicial philosophy, but also it will offer answers to such questions as why Taft ran for the offices he did, what influence his family background or personal life had on his career, what his outside activities and hobbies were, and what the political situation was like in Ohio. The only way that these areas of Judge Taft's life and career can be thoroughly researched is through the use of both the papers and the oral history interviews. By means of this new and complete approach to the study of an important figure in the state's judicial and political history, we will be able to

JOINT PROJECT ON THE HISTORY

OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles, and the Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, have announced a joint oral history project on women in politics. Plans call for tape-recording the experiences of California women who have been elected or appointed to public offices or who have had years of active association with their political parties. Women represent only a minor fraction of the total number of officeholders in California; in party politics they serve more frequently in clerical staff positions than as policy makers.

The plan is to interview women in taping sessions lasting from two to four hours in order to learn firsthand what factors in their backgrounds contributed to their interest in politics, what kinds of prejudices they may have encountered campaigning and working in public office, their methods of functioning in the political arena, and their responses to their dual roles as housewives and political activists. Typed transcripts of the tapes will be placed in the Bancroft Library, the Immaculate Heart College Library, and in other libraries collecting resource materials on women.

Malca Chall, staff interviewer of the Berkeley Regional Oral History Office, and Knox Mellon, director of the Immaculate Heart College Oral History Office, will coordinate the project. Interviewing for the southern part of the state will be done by IHC students enrolled in a special class taught by Knox Mellon devoted to training in oral history techniques. In 1971, Mellon guided a similar class that recorded approximately 130 research interviews with working women in Southern California.

According to Professor Mellon, the unique thing about the Women in Politics Project is the utilization of students in a serious oral history effort. If the experiment is successful, other colleges may be encouraged to join with established oral history offices in local research efforts, thereby opening the door for the smaller schools to do more oral history.

better understand the importance of the court in the lives of Ohioans.

The interviews have already begun and will be completed by July 1972. Like the Kingsley A. Taft Collection, these interviews will be closed to researchers until 1985 unless written permission is received from the donors.

Dr. Henry S. Tropp has been appointed principal investigator of the Computer History Project, a joint undertaking of the Smithsonian Museum of History and Technology, Washington, D.C., and the American Federation of Information Processing Societies (AFIPS). The project's objective is to collect, house, and publish comprehensive source material surrounding the birth and development of computer technology.

The project originated in 1967 at the Smithsonian Institution with the purpose of collecting taped oral history interviews with individuals who figured prominently in the development and advancement of the computer. Additional goals were the collection of

written materials, such as working papers, unpublished reports, manuals, and drawings; the location and/or acquisition of commercial hardware, components, and other significant artifacts; and the preparation of bibliographic materials for computer history to 1950.

Although the project's oral history interviews have tended to focus on a specific machine or mathematical topic, other considerations, such as age and geographic locale, have played a role in the selection of persons whose recollections are being recorded. As of May 1, 1971, seventy-five individuals have been interviewed, yielding 280 hours of recorded discussion. Topics covered have included the Stibitz relay machine, ENIAC, Whirlwind, SEAC, JOHNIAC

(the Princeton IAS machine), and SWAC.

During the fiscal year 1972 AFIPS will provide "seed" money to support the project and to supplement the Smithsonian's expenditures. AFIPS is seeking additional funds from industry and foundations to expedite the acquisition of source material covering the emergence of general purpose analog and digital electronic computers in the 1930-50 era. In the area of oral history, the project will extend interviewing coverage not only geographically and to other early machines — ORACLE, ILLIAC, analog machines — but also to topics such as the development of numerical analysis and machine languages.

ORAL HISTORY TO RECEIVE MAJOR EMPHASIS AT MONTH-LONG INSTITUTE

Oral history will be a major part of a four-weeks American Studies Institute to be held from June 26 to July 22, 1972, at Carthage College, Kenosha, Wisconsin. Designed for twenty high school teachers who hold bachelor's degrees and teach either American history, American literature, or the social sciences, the institute is financed by a grant from the Texas Educational Association and the Johnson Foundation of Racine, Wisconsin.

An announcement of the American Studies Institute from Carthage College explains that "the proposed class of teachers will intensely study the decade of the 1960s under the guidance of four professors drawn from three distinct social science disciplines: a contemporary American historian, an oral historian, an urban sociologist, and a professor of contemporary American literature. By concentrating on the 1960s in the Carthage institute, the teacher will gain a better understanding of recent America and thus be prompted to refocus and update his or her teaching emphasis."

The announcement adds that "an innovative part of the institute will introduce to the participating high school teachers the methods and materials of oral history."

Faculty for this institute includes Professor Samuel Hand, a historian from the University of Vermont who is writing a biography of Samuel Rosenman and also is chairman of the Publications Committee of the Oral History Association; Charles Morrissey, director of the Ford Foundation Oral History Project and president of the Oral History Association; Thomas Johnson, an urban sociologist who has worked with inner city minority groups and for a time was associated with Saul Alinsky; and Jerry Musich, assistant professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside who specializes in contemporary British and American fiction.

A fifth member of this teaching team is the director of the institute, Professor John Neuenschwander. Information about the four-weeks program can be obtained by writing to him at the American Studies Institute, Carthage College, Kenosha, Wisconsin 53140.

Foundation support of this institute allows all twenty participants to be provided with tuition and a room and book allowance. A series of films in the evenings will complement the daytime class and discussion sessions about American society in the 1960s.

7TH NATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON ORAL HISTORY

The 1972 national colloquium will be held in Austin, Texas, from November 9 to 12. Headquarters will be at the Villa Capri Motel, located one block from the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, the Texas State Historical Association, and the University of Texas campus. Dr. Ronald Marcello, North Texas State University, is colloquium program chairman, and Kenneth Ragsdale, director of Educational Services, Texas State Historical Association, is in charge of local arrangements. A workshop preceding the colloquium will be held November 9-10 under the chairmanship of Truett Latimer, executive director of the Texas State Historical Survey Commission. The colloquium is scheduled from November 10 to 12. Details concerning the program will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The National Archives and Records Service has undertaken an oral history project concentrating initially on the institution when it was an independent agency, 1935-49. Philip C. Brooks, who recently retired as director of the Truman Library, will head the project. An active member of the Oral History Association, Mr. Brooks conducted interviews relating to the Marshall Plan in nine European countries and generally supervised the Truman Library's oral history program from its inception in 1961.

Continued on page 4

Oral History Association Newsletter

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The Shaker Museum, Sabbathday Lake, Poland Spring, Maine, has for some time been endeavoring to record through oral history the hundreds of people who have had first-hand contact with the Shaker experience. This religious sect originated in England in 1747 and came to the United States in 1774 under the leadership of Mother Ann Lee. They are sometimes nicknamed Shaking Quakers, but they differ from Quakers in doctrine and practice.

According to Theodore E. Johnson, director of the Shaker Museum, there are not only countless older people who were brought up in one or another of the Shaker villages, but also a significant number of covenanted Shakers who chose to leave the sect during the earlier part of this century. And there are many men who have worked for the Shakers in a great variety of business enterprises in which their communities were engaged. "Our aim," Johnson said, "is to record as much as possible of their personal recollections.

We are interested, of course, in those who have had connection with any Shaker Society, but are particularly interested in those who by reason of their age are among the last to have any direct knowledge of some of the Shaker village long closed."

Several new oral history projects are now in the planning stages. The U.S. Office of Education is planning a series of oral history interviews with former commissioners. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, under the direction of its historian Alfred Mongin, plans an oral history project on the Alaska pipeline controversy. The American Truck Historical Society plans an extensive oral history program designed to document the history of the American trucking industry. The Columbia University Oral History Research Office will assist the society in structuring the work of the program and serve in a consulting capacity.

TWO CALIFORNIA PROGRAMS STUDY EARTHQUAKES

Two projects dealing with earthquakes in the Southern California area have been completed recently. The Long Beach Public Library and Friends of the Library Oral History Program has conducted interviews with local citizens, officials in city government, and U.S. Navy personnel who experienced the Long Beach earthquake of 1933. The interviews have covered the subjects of death and destruction of property, emergency planning, and even humor, within the framework of the Depression, Prohibition, California tourism, and the U.S. Navy, whose home base was then Long Beach. The interviews are well through the transcription and indexing stages, and the program is now embarking on a new, special project to document Long Beach's civic project of acquiring and converting the former Cunard liner *Queen Mary* into a floating museum and convention center.

The UCLA Oral History Program, Los Angeles, has completed a series of in-


terviews with key eyewitnesses to various phases of the February 9, 1971, Soledad - Newhall - Sylmar earthquake and its aftermath. In over 30 hours of recorded interview time, a carefully selected group of residents, firemen, sheriffs, marshals, highway patrolmen, and businessmen have provided a cross section of firsthand accounts of their experiences with the "killer quake."

The following interview sample is from a highway patrolman who was among the first to arrive at the giant freeway interchange in the northern end of the San Fernando Valley after the earthquake struck: "As we crested a rise . . . the only thing that I could say that can be compared to it would be looking at a glacier field, the upheavals, the cracks and fissures, cars stacked up all over the southbound lanes. We got four or five people out of their cars into ambulances. One car went head on into an upheaval. One of these things had risen up and torn the bottom of his front end off, and when it came

down, it smashed things up and rolled him over a couple of times. We had to lift a woman out of a car, over a fence and into an ambulance. While we were doing that, we actually got the first aftershock. I was looking toward the (Owens Valley Aqueduct) cascades and you could actually see the ground shift and these upheavals occurring. It was a little awesome to watch. You could see that all of the interchange had fallen down. There were people standing on top of the westbound-to-southbound abutment, and they were shouting down at us that there was a pickup truck underneath the (fallen) overcrossing. I managed to make my way over to the overcrossing. . . . You could see at least one person killed in it. . . . I started back across the overcrossing, and we had another little aftershock and it caught me hanging onto the middle of a piece of guardrail and trying to figure whether I should stay put, run, jump. . . . That was something that was a little bit frightening!"

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