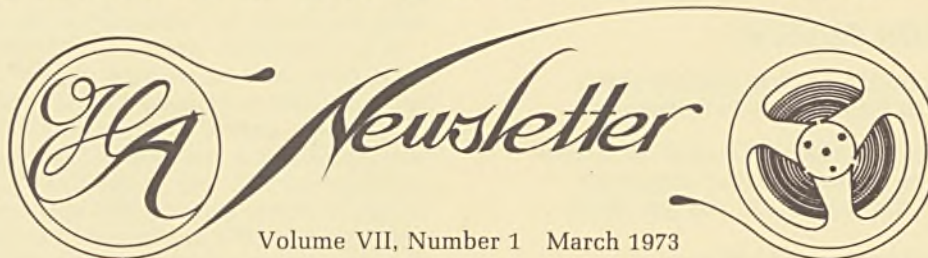


ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION



Volume VII, Number 1 March 1973



Left to right: Edward T. Quevedo, Director, Chicano Studies Center; Egambi F. K. Dalize, Director, Black Studies Center; Enid H. Douglass, Director, Claremont Graduate School Oral History Program; Alonzo Smith, Instructor, Black Studies Center.

CLAREMONT COLLEGES WIN NEH GRANT FOR BLACK-CHICANO PROJECT

The National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded the Claremont Colleges \$41,955 toward the \$53,504 first-year cost of a project to record the history of blacks and Chicanos in Southern California. This two-year project is a joint undertaking of the colleges' Black Studies Center and Chicano Studies Center and the Claremont Graduate School Oral History Program. Program director Mrs. Enid Douglass will coordinate the project, with Edward T. Quevedo, director of the Chicano Studies Center, and Alonzo N. Smith, instructor at the Black Studies Center, serving as codirectors.

In describing the purpose of the project, Mrs. Douglass said: "A large black community was established in the greater Los Angeles area relatively recently by people from varied geographic origins. The area has a native Chicano population. Neither group has systematically documented its history. Rather, they have principally an oral tradition, especially individual people and families of long standing. This project would provide systematic recording before pri-

mary sources are lost through the deaths of those who retain the oral tradition."

The plan calls for about 30 black and Chicano students to conduct taped interviews with old-timers and leaders of both ethnic groups. Before beginning their field work, the students will learn interview techniques in a special class and in tutorial sessions and also examine family records, newspaper accounts, and other documents. The interviewers will be upperclassmen from the five undergraduate colleges.

The black segment of the project will attempt to document the migration westward that began during World War II and the black community that existed in Southern California before that event, with a special emphasis on the involvement of blacks in the movie, radio and television industries.

The Chicano portion will focus on areas of Southern California with high concentrations of older families and organizations, such as the Wilmington-San Pedro community where, according

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WORKSHOPS

APPALACHIA IS THEME OF 4-COLLEGE CONFERENCE

The use of oral history in the documentation of the historical and cultural life of the Appalachian region was the central topic of a conference at Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina, in February.

The meeting, sponsored by the university's College of Continuing Education, was presided over by Mrs. Joy Lamm, director of ASU's participation in the Appalachian Oral History Project, a four-college project that includes, in addition to Appalachian, Alice Lloyd College (Kentucky), Lees College (Kentucky), and Emory and Henry College (Virginia).

Bill Weinberg, social sciences chairman at Alice Lloyd, is chairman of the joint project. Students and staff from the four colleges are collecting person-to-person data, primarily by taped interviews with old-time mountain residents, for use in a book on mountain life of the early twentieth century, to be published by the Alfred A. Knopf Company.

"There's never been a comprehensive oral history of this Appalachian region," said Mrs. Lamm. "We're about at the same point as black history."

Borden Mace, director of an Appalachian Consortium project studying the effects of urbanization on the people of Appalachia, and Dr. Jim Noel, executive director of the North Carolina Committee for Continuing Education in the Humanities, also spoke to the conference participants.

SHASTA COLLEGE HOSTS LOCAL ORAL HISTORIANS

On January 13, over 60 persons—high school students, college professors, and senior citizens—gathered in Redding, California to participate in an oral history workshop sponsored by the Shasta College Museum and Research Center. Grenville Gibbs, museum director and professor of history, organized the program to provide the seven historical so-

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BOOK REVIEW:

By Myself, I'm a Book! An Oral History of the Immigrant Jewish Experience in Pittsburgh.

The Pittsburgh Section, National Council of Jewish Women, Waltham, Massachusetts: American Jewish Historical Society, 1972. 166 pp. \$6.50.

*Reviewed by Bruce M. Stave
Associate Professor of History
The University of Connecticut*

One need not have experienced the Sunday morning traffic jams created by seekers after bagels, lox, assorted other gastronomic delicacies, and weekend newspapers on Squirrel Hill's Murray Avenue to appreciate the value of *By Myself, I'm a Book! An Oral History of the Immigrant Jewish Experience in Pittsburgh*. It is a valuable source for historians interested in immigration, for practitioners of oral history, and for those who learned about their own history by conducting the interviews and bringing them together into book form.

The uniqueness of the book stems from the effort in oral history by amateur volunteers, who, with hardly any budget but under the direction of Ailon Shiloh of the University of Pittsburgh's Department of Anthropology, produced a professional achievement. Proceeding from the notion that "the son [in this case, more appropriately, the daughter] wants to remember what the father wishes to forget," the members of the Pittsburgh Section of the National Council of Jewish Women set out to celebrate their 75th anniversary by recapturing the history of their ethno-religious group in the Steel City.

Between the fall of 1968 and the spring of 1969 they interviewed 250 foreign-born senior citizens who had immigrated to the United States during the peak years, 1890-1924. Lists of respondents were derived from personal acquaintances, family, friends, organizations, etc.; local newspapers publicized the project and eased the way for the interviewers; training sessions and open-ended questionnaires set certain guidelines and produced uniformity among interviews. In sum, the Pittsburgh project seems an excellent example of how oral history can be used by amateurs if intelligent individuals are willing to volunteer their time; it demonstrates how the technique need not be expensive. Moreover, it reflects what to this reviewer is the most significant aspect of oral history—its ability to retrieve and record information about individuals who do not "make history" in the sense that presidents, cabinet officers, generals, and their

like, "make history." It is truly the instrument which captures the history of "anonymous Americans."

In a substantive sense, the Pittsburgh study provides information about immigrants in a particular city which has been available to historians for immigrants generally. In Pittsburgh, Jews arrived in large numbers in the city's Hill District, spread from the third to fifth wards, into the fourteenth and Squirrel Hill, out to the East End, the South Side, and finally to newer suburbs like Monroeville; the population of 2,000 Jews in 1877 mushroomed to 60,000 in 1920 and since that time has declined by about one-sixth. The book chronicles the Jewish experience in the city with ten chapters moving from such topics as "Life in the Old Country" to "Americanization;" these are composed primarily of direct quotes dealing with the themes and tied together by generally useful connective statements and explanations. A historical summary concludes the work and, while interesting, it is somewhat amateurish and ethnocentric.

The book is at its best—and this is to the credit of the interviewers—when respondents speak for themselves. The Yiddish idiom translates colorfully into English in such phrases as the one dealing with the immigrant's Atlantic crossing under steerage conditions: "Oy! Was that an ocean cruise!" The title reflects the same idiom. When an old man was told about the project, he replied, "By myself, I'm a book." Diverging immigrant experiences are well related when someone remarks, "My father was a teacher, but in America he became a peddler." And a second respondent remembers, "We lived near the railroad tracks . . . for eight years. Later my grandmother bought the entire block of houses." Ethnic conflict is exposed: "It was very important that we learn to defend ourselves. The Italian kids were our friends, but the Irish kids on the Hill would accuse the Jews of putting blood in the matzos and we had to fight. Knowing how to box was vital." Finally the angst of Jewish history is summed up by the respondent who remarked, "One brother was a judge in Pinsk, one brother is in Moscow, one brother was a rabbi in the Baltic states and was killed in the Holocaust, one brother was killed in the First World War, one brother died in the United States, one sister is in the United States, one sister was killed by the Nazis, two sisters are living in the Caucasus, I don't hear from them. How many is that? We were twelve children in all."

Perhaps the most interesting and paradoxical aspect of *By Myself, I'm a Book* is that when the National Council of Jewish Women was founded in 1893, its purpose was to Americanize Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. The book, on the other hand, a product of the efforts of descendants of the Eastern European Jews, is another example of the increasing attempts to retrieve and maintain ethnic and cultural heritage within American society. The women of Pittsburgh's NCJW impressively used oral history to go beyond the mythical melting pot.

Oral History Association Newsletter

Published quarterly by the Oral History Association, Inc., a nonprofit, international organization of institutions and individuals interested in advancing the practice and use of oral history.

Editorial Office
136 Powell Library, University of California, Los Angeles, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90024

Bernard Galm, Editor
Joel Gardner, Associate Editor

WORKSHOPS *Continued from page 1*

cieties and museums in the Shasta tri-county area with an introduction to oral history.

Ann Campbell, OHA member and chief of the Archives Branch, Federal Archives and Records Center in San Francisco, was the principal speaker, and instructed the group in the basic techniques—and pitfalls—of collecting and preserving oral history.

The possibility of the Shasta College center serving as a clearing house and central depository for the area's oral history projects was also explored.

POGUE ADDRESSES USMC HISTORICAL GROUP

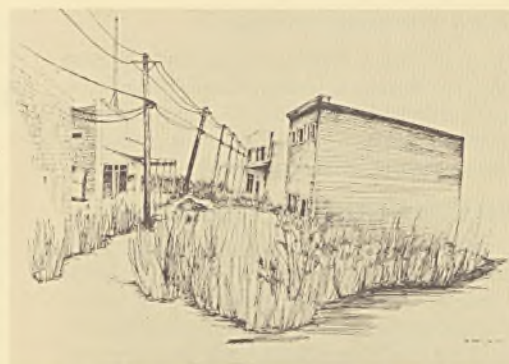
Dr. Forrest C. Pogue, head of the George C. Marshall Research Foundation and past president of the OHA, was a featured speaker at a six-session oral history workshop conducted by Benis M. Frank, head of the Marine Corps Oral History Program, Washington, D.C.

Historians and museum personnel in the Historical Division of the Marine Corps as well as the heads of the historical agencies of the other services were in attendance.



Japanese-Canadian Rintaro Hayashi (left) shares his reminiscences with an interviewer for the British Columbia project.

ORAL HISTORY IN CANADA



Staff artist's sketch of the Japanese fishing community of Steveston, B.C.

The international scope of oral history and oral history programs has been greatly widened over the past few years, spreading from its American foundations to nearly all parts of the world.

It is not surprising, then, that Canada, closest neighbor to the United States, has established and augmented oral history programs covering a broad area of subject matter at a number of institutions.

The impetus for the use of oral history in Canada originated with a 1971 report issued by the Standing Committee on Oral History of the Public Archive of Canada.

At that time, Georges Delisle, chairman of the committee, wrote, "Oral history interviews and transcriptions represent an important body of information as they have been used in the publishing of 121 books. It is shocking to realize that Canadians are not more aware of their usefulness."

The report was based on information from surveys conducted in 1968, 1969, and 1970. Questionnaires were sent to governmental, university, archival, and historical institutions and societies. Although the compilation showed that oral history projects existed in all parts of Canada, covering a wide variety of topics, the report revealed that most oral history interviews existed on tape only. The standing committee recommended that programs organize and index their collections; preserve tape recordings; prepare typescripts; observe high standards in taping; and seek financial assistance from the Canada Council.

The most ambitious program undertaken to date is located at the University of British Columbia, funded by the government of Canada under its Local Initiatives Program.

Among subjects for research within the project are the Japanese-Canadian, the French-Canadian community of

Maillardville, the role of women in British Columbia, the labor movement in British Columbia, Ugandan Asians, the University of British Columbia, Vancouver General Hospital, and the province of British Columbia.

The program is administered by Reynoldston Research and Studies, under the direction of W. J. Langlois, and currently employs 24 full-time and 6 part-time staff members, including interviewers, photographers, an artist, creative writers, and transcribers.

In the past year, more than 700 hours of interviews have been collected, transcribed, and translated where necessary. Tapes and transcripts are stored in the library of the University of British Columbia and are available for research purposes.

The core of the program is in collecting taped interviews for archival purposes, but the materials are also brought into active use by means of workshops, audio-visual presentations for classroom use, publication of booklets using interview material, and exhibition of photographs and drawings.

At the other end of the country, in Montreal, McGill University has initiated an oral history program supervised by Mrs. H. Jean Morrison.

Mrs. Morrison was previously research assistant and French and English interviewer for the Institute of Entrepreneurial History, which deposited some 120 tapes at McGill to form the nucleus of its oral history library. The institute is headed by Dr. J. J. Brown.

Subject matter covered by the McGill program includes the history of Canadian invention and technology, McGill professors of international reputation, social histories of the Quebec area, and personalities involved in the "Quiet Revolution" in Quebec.

CLAREMONT WINS GRANT

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to codirector Quevedo, "there are 10 Chicano families... who have the advantage — from the historian's point of view — of having a very old leader. He could trace the history of the family, when people moved to the area, where they came from, what problems they encountered and how they solved them, what organizations were founded. We'll get the family story from the perspective of the oldest member."

The Claremont Graduate School Oral History Program will preserve the tapes and transcripts for regional research use. Copies of the transcripts will be deposited in major institutions conducting black and Chicano studies.

NEWS

INDIANA ROUNDTABLE

On March 27, 1971, representatives from libraries, historical societies, colleges, universities and other institutions and organizations met in Indianapolis to consider the status of oral history in

Indiana. The group formed an organization, the Indiana Oral History Roundtable, which meets periodically to compare programs, share ideas, and discuss means of furthering the oral history cause in the state.

The latest meeting took place on February 17 at Purdue University, Lafayette. History Professor J. Paul Mitchell of Ball State University, Muncie, discussed his oral history experiences in the study of Negroes in Muncie.

The first issue of *The Recorder*, a quarterly newsletter published by the organization, appeared in January. Information about Roundtable member-

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The OHA Executive Council met on February 2-3 in New Orleans and will meet in partial session on April 2 in Los Angeles. A report of major council actions since the Austin colloquium will be published in the June Newsletter.

ship and/or a listing of all known oral history tapes in Indiana collections are available from Randall W. Jehs, Indiana State Library, 140 N. Senate Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204.

FOXFIRE CONCEPT SPREADS

Foxfire, the quarterly magazine published by high school students in rural Georgia under the guidance of Eliot Wiggington, will be the prototype for similar folklore publication projects for eleven other student groups from a variety of cultural backgrounds thanks to a \$196,000 grant from the Ford Foundation.

The two-year grant will be administered through the Institutional Development and Economic Affairs Service with the assistance of Mr. Wiggington. American Indians, Eskimos and Alaskan natives, blacks in South Carolina, rural whites in Maryland and the Ozarks, Hawaiian natives, and Louisiana Cajuns will be represented.

At the 1972 OHA colloquium, Mr. Wiggington described the *Foxfire* project and his students' use of oral history techniques.

DEPRESSION DOCUMENTED

The Byron R. Lewis Historical Library, Vincennes University, Vincennes, Indiana, has recently received a two-year federal grant of \$13,670 to conduct an Oral History Program on the Great Depression Era. Individuals throughout southwestern Indiana will be interviewed as to their personal experiences in this period of hard times.

The federal grant came from Title III Library Services and Construction Act through the Indiana State Library. OHA

member Thomas Krasean is director of the project.

PANELS

A session on "Oral History Interviews and Speech Communication" was presented on March 9 at the annual meeting of the **Speech Association of the Eastern States**, held in New York City. Dr. Peter Olch chaired a panel comprised of fellow OHA members William W. Moss, Courtney Brown, and Alice M. Hoffman. Charles T. Morrissey and Donald E. Williams, assistant professor of speech, University of Florida, Gainesville, were respondents.

Peter Olch discussed oral history at a history workshop of the **Association for Professional Broadcasting Education** in Washington, D.C., on March 24.

The **American Society for Public Administration** will hear three OHA council members at its annual meeting April 2-4 in Los Angeles. Chairperson Carlotta Mellon will introduce Amelia Fry, speaking on "The Earl Warren Era in California State Government," John Wickman on "Perishable Resources on the Eisenhower Presidency," and Charles Crawford on "Oral History Interviews about the Tennessee Valley Authority."

The American Medical Association Archive-Library is offering **free magnetic tapes** to needy oral history programs. The tapes (1/4" x 1.5m) have been used and spliced, but are of good quality. Contact: Warren Albert, AMA Archive-Library, 535 N. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60610.

PUBLICATIONS

OH DIRECTORY PLANNED

The R.R. Bowker Company is planning to publish in 1973 a *Directory of Oral History Collections*. The volume will include an alphabetical listing of oral history centers, a listing by subject of each collection in existence at each center, and a comprehensive index which, in addition to pinpointing subject collections, will list every individual mentioned in each collection. The volume will serve as a companion to Bowker's *Subject Collections: A Guide to Special Book Collections in Libraries*.

At the February meeting of the Executive Council, Charles Morrissey agreed to confer with the project's editor, Alan M. Meckler, as to OHA's potential relationship to the publication.

The **Oral History Project** of the **University of Nevada, Reno**, has just published its *Project Bibliography*, a list of interviews completed or in progress as of March 1, 1973.

The **Historical Division of the Marine Corps** has just published a revised and updated *Marine Corps Oral History Catalog*. Copies may be obtained by writing to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (Code HD), Washington, D.C. 20380.

The third volume of **Forrest C. Pogue's** biography of General George C. Marshall was a selection of the History Book-club in February.

1973 COLLOQUIUM — NOVEMBER 1-4 — WEST POINT, NEW YORK

Oral History Association Newsletter

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