

# ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION



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## NEWS

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### BURG ESTABLISHES TIES IN EUROPE

Dr. Maclyn P. Burg, head of the Eisenhower Oral History Project at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, returned recently from a four-week European trip, during which he visited oral historians in the USSR, France, England, and Scotland.

Dr. Burg's stay in Moscow was supported by a grant from the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). Dr. Robert F. Ivanov, a historian and member of the Institute of General History of the Academy of Sciences, acted as his host, and with his aid, Burg was able to consult on oral history matters with Professor Nicolai Sivachev, deputy dean of the Historical Faculty, Moscow University. He also lectured on oral history techniques to the World History Section of the Institute.

In Paris, Dr. Burg learned of the oral history efforts of the French Committee of the International Committee for the Study of the Second World War from its international president, Professor Henri Michel. He also exchanged ideas with Michel Cazenave, director of the newly formed Institut Charles de Gaulle.

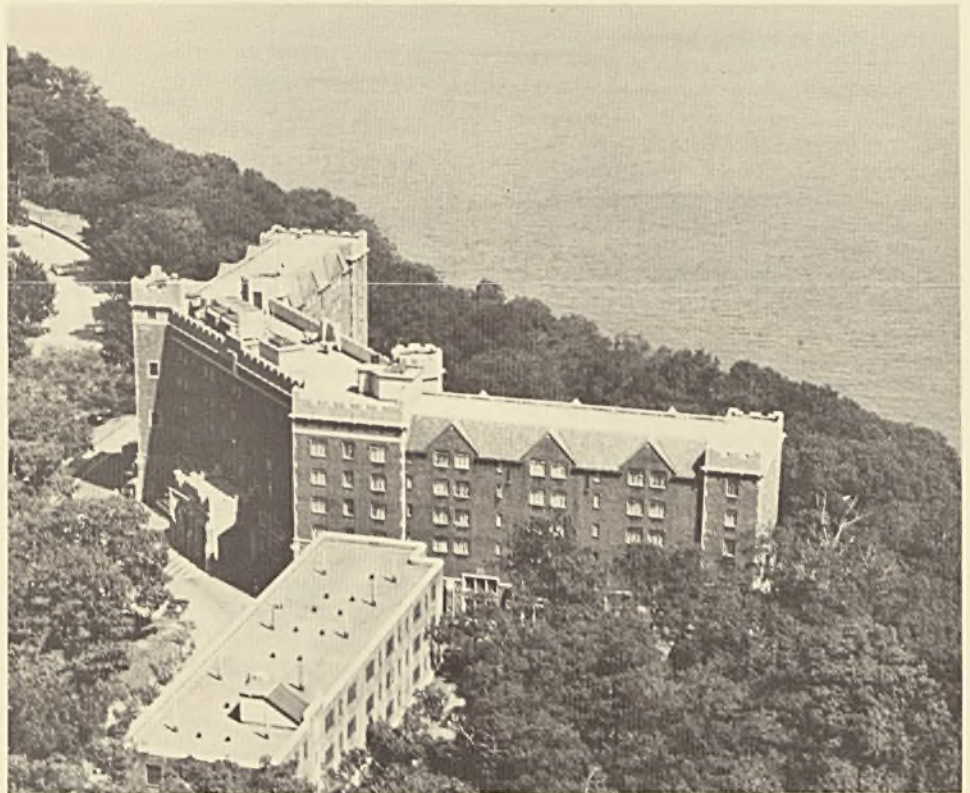
At the Imperial War Museum in London, he conferred with David Lance, keeper of Sound Archives and head of a young oral history program. He also carried on oral history discussions and work in Edinburgh and Maybole, Scotland, with staff members of the National Trust for Scotland.

### JFK LIBRARY TAPES POVERTY EXPERTS

Former government officials and advisors met with members of the academic community May 16 and 17 at Brandeis University for tape-recorded discussions on "The Federal Government and Urban Poverty." The conference, cosponsored by the Kennedy Library and the Florence Heller School of Social Work at Brandeis University, was organized by Larry Hackman of the library and Professor David Austin of the Heller School.

The conference brought together twenty participants—some who had been planners for a Kennedy administration "poverty" program, some who were in-

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*The Hotel Thayer, overlooking the Hudson River at West Point, New York, where oral historians will gather for the 1973 Colloquium.*

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## IN SEARCH OF THE RECENT PAST: THE EIGHTH ANNUAL COLLOQUIUM OF THE ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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Planning for this year's colloquium is proceeding on schedule. In recent weeks, commitments to participate have been received from Joseph Lash, author of the definitive two-volume biography of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt; Herbert Parmet, author of *Eisenhower and the American Crusades*; Charles Guggenheim, president of Guggenheim Film Productions and media advisor to George McGovern and Robert Kennedy; and Generals Brian Gunderson, Chief of Air Force History, and James Collins, Chief of Military History. In addition, Theodore White, noted chronicler of political campaigns, has tentatively agreed to join the colloquium discussions.

John Wickman, president of the Oral

History Association, would like to urge all members of the association to attend and to extend invitations to the colloquium to those who are not directly involved in the production of oral history interviews, but who are interested in the subject either from the perspective of a user of completed interviews or a scholar concerned generally with research techniques in recent American history.

The colloquium will begin on the afternoon of November 2 and conclude at about 2:00 p.m. on November 4. Program chairman John F. Stewart requests oral history project directors to send him samples of their release forms and legal agreements for exhibit at the colloquium.



# REPORT ON EQUIPMENT USED BY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMS

by Lila M. Johnson

## PART I

One hundred of the larger and more experienced oral history programs across the continent were asked to comment on their equipment and evaluate their tape recorders. Fifty-six oral historians, averaging just under seven years experience, responded to the two-page questionnaire.

One point that became very evident from the survey is the variety of requirements of oral history programs. Certain machines are better suited to some programs than others. For example, those programs concerned with music or speech dialects need equipment with superior fidelity, while those conducting interviews in remote areas may find weight to be a major factor. This should be kept in mind when deciding on equipment.

Although over thirty different brands were included in the survey responses, many were listed by only one or two programs and will not be discussed here because there was not information from which to make even generalizations. Tape recorder manufacturers change models almost as fast as prices and many of those listed in the survey are no longer made. Only those machines currently available will be discussed in this report. Most programs use monaural reel-to-reel or cassette recorders.

### Cassette vs reel-to-reel:

This is a question that has long been argued by oral historians—and is the first decision a new program will have to make regarding equipment. Of the fifty-two who responded to the question, thirty-two indicated a preference for reel-to-reel, eleven for cassettes, and nine listed favorable reasons for both. Some programs record on one type and transfer it to the other for transcribing.

Reel-to-reel recorders were favored mainly for sound fidelity, superior preservation qualities of the tape, and less likelihood of tape breakage. Other reasons included the longer recording time available on reel tapes and the ease of transcribing and editing.

Cassettes were favored for their convenience, light weight, and portability. Other advantages mentioned were that cassettes are more economical, easier for amateurs to use, and less obtrusive during the interview. Criticisms of cassettes included a high rate of tape breakage and jams, especially with heavy use, and lack of voice fidelity.

### Reel-to-reel recorders:

SONY tape recorders were listed forty-seven times in the survey. Sony, a Japanese company, now makes only three monaural reel recorders.

The TC-800B was mentioned by eleven programs. "Excellent," "infrequent repairs," "easy to carry," and "durable" were among the positive comments; there were no strong negative comments. It has four speeds, a built-in microphone, 5" reel maximum, AC or battery-powered, VariSpeed tuning, counter, and optional foot control (FS-6, about \$10, stop/start but no reverse). \$279.95.

The TC-105A is an electrically powered, quarter-track, three-speed recorder with pause control, counter, VU meter, and 7" reel capacity. It was called "durable" by two programs that used it; "heavy" was listed as its main fault. \$219.95.

Not mentioned in the survey was the new TC-106AV, a half-track, three-speed, electric recorder with VU meter, pause control, counter, and 7" reel capacity. \$199.95.



TANDBERG reel-to-reel recorders, Norwegian products, are very popular with oral historians. Fifteen different models were mentioned in the survey. The Tandberg Corporation of America did not respond to a request for an up-to-date listing of their equipment and prices.

In general, Tandbergs were listed as having excellent sound qualities. The response on the repair rate was mixed. Those mentioning the need for repair also mentioned the difficulty and expense of the repairs. Heavy weight was listed as a liability. Most of the programs listing Tandbergs used them extensively—many over thirty hours a week—usually for transcribing and editing.

The Tandberg 15-21 is a three-speed, half-track transcribing unit for about

\$399. Its durability under heavy use was mentioned by several programs.

The Tandberg foot pedal control, an optional accessory available on some models, will stop, start, and reverse for easy transcribing.

UHER tape recorders, made in Germany, were mentioned by many programs. The Uher 5000, used by five programs, was described as "very good" and having "consistently good performance." Only one of the five programs was dissatisfied with it, indicating poor sound and poor service. The 5000 accepts a stop/start/reverse foot control.

Uher 4000, 4000L, and Report-L were mentioned by fourteen programs. Most rated the recording sound as excellent, with only a few unfavorable comments. Reaction on repair rate was mixed, with four programs mentioning difficulty of repair or poor service.

The Uher 4000 Report-L is a four-speed, half-track, 17½ pound electric or battery-powered unit with 5" reel maximum. About \$399.

WOLLENSAK tape recorders were mentioned the most often in the survey. Fifty-two machines, seven different models, were listed.

The most popular reel-to-reel model, the 1500 (also called the T-1500) has been discontinued and replaced by the 1500SS and the 1520AV. The earlier model was labeled reliable and its performance and fidelity rated from adequate to excellent.

The 1500SS is a two-speed (7½ and 3¼ i.p.s.), half-track, solid state, 18½ pound all-metal construction recorder with a VU meter, counter, and automatic head demagnetization. \$194.95. It accepts the TF-404 foot control, a stop/start control with no reverse, \$17.50.

The 1520 AV is a half-track, two-speed, 17½ pound solid state recorder with VU meter, counter, and pause control. It is especially suited for heavy use, according to its manufacturer, 3M. It accepts the TF-404 foot control. \$199.95. The sound quality was rated good and it was described as durable and easy to repair.

The other Wollensak reel models mentioned in the survey are no longer manufactured. Currently on the market are the 6020AV, a compact 15 pound, three-speed, half-track recorder which sells for \$169.95; and the 6024AV, a quarter-track, three-speed recorder for \$189.95. Neither was listed in the survey.

### Conclusion:

The Tandberg transcribing unit seems to be the backbone of programs using reel tapes. It meets the need for a heavy duty, rugged transcribing recorder with stop/start/reverse foot control. The good fidelity of this machine is another asset for transcribing.

For recording, the Sony TC-800B is a popular machine and it brought very few

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### Oral History Association Newsletter

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Bernard Galm, Editor  
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## BOOK REVIEW:

### *The Oral History Collection of Columbia University, 1973.*

Edited by Elizabeth B. Mason and Louis M. Starr.  
New York: New York Times Company  
Publication, 1973. 460 pp. Hardbound \$12.50;  
Softcover \$7.50.

*Reviewed by Donald C. Swain*

Published on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Columbia University Oral History Research Office, this new edition of the *Oral History Collection of Columbia University* stands as a milestone in the development of oral history. The first edition of the catalogue, published in 1960, was a modest but useful volume listing the oral history transcripts available for scholarly use at Columbia. The second edition, which appeared in 1964, described the collection, now grown to 200,000 transcript pages, with greater precision and added typographical style.

The present catalogue—the third edition—is both more handsome and more useful than its predecessors. There are now 2,697 names listed in the catalogue. Each entry is annotated or cross-referenced. The brief summaries of individual memoirs accurately suggest the main topics covered. Instead of four separate sections (Biographical, Special Projects, Lec-

tures, and Persons Represented) as in previous editions, there is a single alphabetical list including all the various kinds of entries. Thorough cross-referencing allows ready access to all categories of source materials. The new format is easy to use and will lend itself to convenient updating in the future.

The third edition celebrates the increasing sophistication of oral history as practiced at Columbia. Thumbing through the catalogue, one quickly perceives the breadth and richness of the historical sources in the collection. What Allan Nevins initiated has turned out to be, after a quarter century, quite remarkable.

A certain self-congratulatory style permeates the introduction. The unstated assumption that Columbia is the true fountainhead of oral history runs throughout. Professor Starr, who heads the Oral History Research Office, may perhaps be pardoned for his occasional expressions of enthusiasm and paternal pride. The Columbia group has broken ground for all of us.

This will be a very useful tool for researchers interested in using the oral history source materials at Columbia University Library. It will also facilitate interlibrary loans and the purchase of microfiche copies of Columbia transcripts. The catalogue's third edition is a fitting memorial for twenty-five years of hard work in oral history.

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and vice chancellor—academic affairs,  
University of California, Davis.*

## WORKSHOPS

### **EQUIPMENT REPORT** *Continued from page 2*

criticisms from those familiar with it. The 5" reel maximum is a drawback. The Wollensak 1520AV was also highly rated and is somewhat less expensive. It has only two speeds and is fairly heavy, however.

The more economical quarter-track recorders are not as popular as the half-track, but are available from the leading manufacturers.

[The conclusion of this report, analyzing cassette recorders, tape, and other equipment, will appear in the December *Newsletter*. The retail prices quoted by Ms. Johnson were current in early summer. She advises that imported items are subject to sudden and drastic changes.—Ed.]

*Lila Johnson is head of the  
Audio-Visual Library, Minnesota  
Historical Society.*

### **NEW JERSEY ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS**

The New Jersey Historical Commission is seeking information about oral history projects in New Jersey. Send title of project, name and address of project chairman and of sponsoring institution to the Commission at State Library, 185 West State St., Trenton, N.J. 08625, attn: Richard Waldron, Programs Assistant.

### **HAND KEYNOTES WISCONSIN MEETING**

"Oral History in Wisconsin" was the theme of a symposium cosponsored by the Johnson Foundation and Carthage College, August 1, at the Wingspread Conference Center, Racine. More than sixty educators, local historical society representatives, and historical agency staff members attended the one-day conference. Dr. Samuel Hand of the University of Vermont spoke on oral history as a teaching tool. Professors Howard Fredericks (University of Wisconsin, La-Crosse), Patrick Nolan (University of Wisconsin, River Falls), and John Neuenschwander (Carthage College) described the oral history programs they direct at their respective institutions.

### **OHIO INSTITUTE OFFERS SEMINARS**

Four seminar sessions on oral history were included in the program of the Third Annual Archives-Library Institute sponsored by the Ohio Historical Society, held in Columbus, July 9-20.

David Rosenblatt, oral history specialist of the Ohio Historical Society, conducted an introductory session on oral history and a session on interviewing techniques. Helen Davidson, archivist for Eli Lilly Company, led discussion on "Oral History for Business Archives;" and Willie Harriford, director of Afro-American Studies at the University of South Carolina, spoke on "Using Oral History to Record Black History."

The **Pioneer America Society** will hold its annual meeting at the Mount Vernon Motor Inn, Charlottesville, Virginia on November 9-11. The theme of the meeting will be "Pioneer Life Styles." A session, chaired by Gene Wilhelm, Jr., Slippery Rock State College, Pennsylvania, will feature eleven papers by folklorists, geographers, historians, and sociologists, many of which will draw upon oral history. Preregistration forms may be obtained from the Pioneer American Society, 626 S. Washington Street, Falls Church, Virginia 22046.

Oral history received major emphasis at the annual conference on Western history and writing, June 11-15, hosted by **Utah State University, Logan**. OHA President John Wickman introduced participants to the association and described oral history activity in the West. Executive Council member Gary Shumway spoke on the use of oral history in the classroom.

The **District of Columbia Public Library** and Bicentennial Commission sponsored a convocation on oral history July 18, in the Martin Luther King Memorial Library Auditorium.

## PUBLICATIONS

"William E. Brown, Dean of UVM's Medical College, 1942-52: An Oral History Interview" is a 14-page article in the Summer, 1973 (Volume 41, Number 3)

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volved later in Johnson administration efforts, and some whose field of scholarly concentration has been federal programs and urban poverty.

Prior to the meeting, participants were sent several reference documents, a chronology of the 1961-64 period, and copies of three central texts treating the conference theme. A prepared agenda was followed loosely during the weekend.

The conference focussed most heavily on the programs and plans of the Kennedy administration, but Johnson programs and subsequent developments were also discussed. What has been learned from the programs of the sixties, what is still not known, and what research is needed to understand past developments were among the questions participants sought to answer.

Discussions were recorded using a Sony 650 and fourteen individual microphones, including a voice-over monitor to aid the transcriber in identifying speakers. The tapes are being transcribed in the same format as the library's oral history interviews; transcripts will be available at the Kennedy Library, the Heller School, and other interested institutions. The library has also acquired pertinent papers from several of the participants.

Hackman expressed the hope that a series of conferences will ensue, bringing together former government officials, nongovernment figures who played important roles in programs and policies, and scholars who have researched the subject area. The group will attempt to reach more explicit retrospective conclusions on the medium- and long-range meaning of developments during the Kennedy years than the library's regular oral history approach attempts.



Left to right: Sanford Kravitz, dean of the School of Social Work, SUNY, Stony Brook; William Capron, assistant dean of the School of Government, Harvard University; William Cannon, assistant dean, University of Chicago; and Adam Yarmolinsky, University of Massachusetts. These former government officials were among twenty scholars, administrators, and advisors who discussed Kennedy and Johnson era poverty programs at a conference at Brandeis University.

## ARKANSAS NURSING HISTORY PROJECT

The American Nurses Foundation, New York, has awarded a developmental grant for an oral history of available past presidents of the Arkansas State Nurses Association. The study, sponsored by the Special Gifts Fund of ASNA and the State College of Arkansas Oral History Office, will emphasize the history of the association, health care, and nursing education and practice in Arkansas.

Principal investigator for the project will be Waddy L. Moore, director of the Arkansas State College Oral History Office. Interview typescripts will be deposited with the Special Gifts Fund of the ASNA and Torreyson Library, State College of Arkansas, Conway.

*PUBLICATIONS Continued from page 3*  
issue of *Vermont History*, the quarterly of the Vermont Historical Society.

John T. Mason, director of the Office of Oral History of the U.S. Naval Institute, described the history and workings of the program in an interview published in the *Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute*, July, 1973. A listing of the office's projects—bound volumes produced since its establishment in 1969, as well as interviews in progress—accompanied the article.

In the Oral History column of *History News* (July 1973), Charles Morrissey offered the following advice for amateur and professional interviewers alike—"Don't be intimidated. Enjoy!"

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