



# ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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## THE FOUNDING OF THE ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

### "It Never Hurts To Give Things A Little Nudge"



*Listening to the proceedings of the Second National Colloquium on Oral History, James V. Mink (1) and Allan Nevins, 1967 meeting at the Huntington Library.*

*By James V. Mink*

At our first national meeting on oral history Dr. Allan Nevins began his address by "disposing of the myth" that he had anything to do with the founding of oral history. "It founded itself. It had become a patent necessity, and would have sprung into life in a dozen places, under any circumstances," he said. I believe the same is true of the Oral History Association. If I had not started this organization, someone else would have done so within a very short time, I am sure. Its time had come. By the mid 1960s there were enough of us exclusively involved in oral history to form an interest group. The time had come to start talking to one another and comparing notes. Nearly two decades later, we are still doing just that. We have never lost momentum.

At UCLA we were aware of a need for

closer association with other programs that were producing oral history. I was concerned about the validity of our methodology. Perhaps our isolation in the Far West made us feel this need more acutely and prompted us to take the initiative. I remember in early 1966 I agreed to host a regional symposium on archives. These symposia were sponsored jointly by the National Archives and Records Service and the Society of American Archivists. Hosting included planning the program and finding the speakers. In addition to the usual archival fare, I decided to include a session on oral history. It was remarkable. This one oral history session generated more enthusiasm than anything else on the program. This set me to thinking: if just one oral history session at a local meeting could create such interest, what would

happen at a national meeting entirely devoted to the subject? I said to our staff, let's sponsor a national meeting on oral history. We can hold it at the university's Lake Arrowhead Conference Center. They thought I had taken leave of my senses, but the more we discussed it, the more interested they became.

Why were we so motivated? I think it was a basic conviction that such a meeting would be timely. The idea of using it as a forum to organize a national association came along a little later as we started to plan program content and choose the speakers. We met with Nevins to tell him about our plans. He was most enthusiastic and encouraging. He agreed to come and speak, and he told us he also thought the idea of a national organization was one of the most important benefits that could be derived from the meeting.

There is a great deal in the Oral History Association's archives about Arrowhead, so I do not need to say much about it, just a few things that stand out in my memory. The spring and summer of 1966 were busy days, days of worry, hope, and anticipation. No one at UCLA seemed to object to our holding this meeting. They simply told us that if we could not operate it in the black, the deficit would have to come out of our program's budget. It was a gamble, and I felt that only total success could justify the amount of time we spent on planning and local arrangements at work and frequently in the evenings. First, I thought total success meant staging a memorable meeting that paid its way, but when it became clear it would do so and more, I decided then that unqualified success would be the establishment of a national organization as a direct result of the meeting.

We were able to do just that, although at times I was skeptical. After the meeting started, it was apparent there was not unanimous support for organizing. Even though we did succeed in obtaining a

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Elizabeth  
B. Mason



Dear Fellow Members:

I very much appreciate the opportunity to address all of you through the *Oral History Association Newsletter*. The San Antonio colloquium and the OHA business meeting allowed me to thank some of you in person for your confidence in your new slate of officers and Council members; this column gives me the chance to assure those of you who could not be there that we will serve you to the best of our various abilities.

To that end, there are two main points I would like to discuss here. The first has to do with the report of the Long-Range Planning Committee. That group was chosen to be broadly representative of the membership and charged with examining such major concerns, as organization, membership, publications, the Workshop and Colloquium and the question of accreditation. Your officers and Council will devote a large part of their time at the midwinter Council meeting early in February to a consideration of the report and its recommendations. But this is only the beginning of our attempt to look beyond the next Colloquium or budget crisis. We very much hope that members of the association will write and tell us what they would like to consider as together we look to the future. I hope there will be time at Seattle for further discussion on all levels, and I invite each of you to share your concerns. As an organization we are in a time where we need to keep both immediate steps and future goals in clear focus, and we would welcome word from you as we open the discussion.

My second point is an attempt to make the trip which Ron Marcello and I will make to Seattle this spring more useful. We will meet there for the final arrangements for the Colloquium next fall at the Edgewater Hotel, and I have offered to break my return trip to New York with a series of stops in various cities to meet with groups interested in oral history. At the moment my schedule calls for stops in Boise, Minneapolis, Chicago, and Detroit during the last days of April and the first days of May. If I can be of help to other groups en route, please let me know. I hope to meet, listen to, and speak with many members and potential members of the

association we all serve.

My best to every one of you in this New Year.

Betty Mason

## RUNDELL DIES IN MARYLAND

Walter Rundell, Jr., 53, died October 25 in College Park, Maryland. Rundell, a professor of history at the University of Maryland, was a supporter of oral history in the Middle Atlantic states. He formerly taught at the University of Oklahoma and Iowa State University.

Active in many historical associations and, at the time of his death, president of the Western History Association, Rundell was keynote speaker at the tenth OHA Colloquium at Asheville, North Carolina, in 1975. *The Oral History Review* 1975 published his paper. As chairman of the history department at College Park, he appointed Martha Ross to teach the university's first oral history course.

## HOUSE HISTORICAL OFFICE CREATED

During the last days of the lame-duck session of the 97th Congress House Resolution 621 was passed creating the Office of the House Bicentennial. By a December 17 vote of 230-97, House members decided to sponsor research on the history of the lower house of Congress in preparation for the two-hundredth anniversary of the organization of Congress in 1789.

Modeled in part after the U.S. Senate Historical Office, the office will be led by a House Historian who will be appointed by the Speaker. The activities of the historian and the staff, some of which is expected to be oral history research, will be funded by the Speaker's Contingent Fund.

## SURVEY

John Neuenschwander, immediate past OHA president, is conducting a survey of release agreements used by oral history projects and programs. He requests sample copies of releases and forms by May 1, 1983. Address: Department of History, Carthage College, Kenosha, WI 53140.

## NEW OH DIRECTORY PUBLISHED

The most recent directory describing oral history collections and programs in the United States, which appeared in late fall 1982, supersedes earlier similar finding aids used by oral historians.

The *Directory for Oral History Programs in the United States* is published in cooperation with OHA by the Microfilming Corporation of America, an affiliate of the *New York Times*. Edited by Patsy Cook, the directory contains 500 entries indexed in three ways: program name, director's name, and subject. The 150-page book also contains information such as location of collections, who may use them, the size of each collection, interlibrary loan policies, and availability of duplication service. Each entry reveals the number of interviews, tape hours, and pages of transcribed memoirs in the collection. Names of cooperating institutions add to the wealth of information.

A twenty percent discount from the list price of \$59.95 is available to OHA members. Address: MCA, P.O. Box 10, Sanford, NC 27330.

April 6-9	Organization of American Historians	Cincinnati
15-16	Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region	Bryn Mawr, Pa.
24-27	American Culture, and Popular Culture Associations, joint meeting	Wichita, Kans.
30	New England Assn. of Oral History	Newport, R.I.
May TBA	Southwest Oral History Association	Santa Barbara
June 2-3	Canadian Oral History Association	Vancouver, B.C.
Sept. 28-Oct. 1	Oral History Association	Seattle



## FOCUS —

### Montana Oral History Association

by Laurie K. Mercier

The Montana Oral History Association held its second annual meeting October 30 at the Ninth Annual Montana History Conference in Great Falls. Formed in 1981, the MOHA is the result of several years of discussion among librarians, historians, archivists and folklorists who recognized the need to create a support group for the promotion of oral history in the state.

One hundred and fifty people came to the breakfast meeting which featured a program on the use of oral histories on radio. Bill Yaeger, news director of Inter-mountain Network News, and Mike Korn, folklorist for the Montana Arts Council, spoke on how to organize interviews and tape excerpts for broadcast. Speakers played excerpts of radio programs that had been produced and played on several area stations, including a series on Montana folklife heard on KUFM, western Montana's public radio station.

Also on the program of the state history conference was a session on oral history interviewing techniques. Of special interest to the audience was a live interview with Vivian A. Paladin, former editor of *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*. Interviewer and MOHA board member Diane Sands queried Mrs. Paladin about her life in the publishing and printing business, from her earliest days in Glasgow as a young linotype operator to her years with the *Magazine*.

Pleased with the turnout at the oral history sessions, the MOHA plans to hold a one-day conference in conjunction with next year's Montana History Conference.

One of the primary objectives of the MOHA has been to establish regional oral history centers to serve as area repositories for oral history interviews, since the two major institutions serving as collection centers are in the western third of the state. Association officers are currently working with representatives from six local institutions on formulating guidelines for storage and processing procedures. With regional centers housing the tapes produced in that area, researchers and the general public will have easier access to an important resource of their own communities.

By systematizing storage and retrieval procedures, the centers will report periodically on materials being generated, contributing to an efficient network of communication that would end duplication of projects, make it easier to recognize topics requiring exploration, and allow for coordination of oral history activities in the state.

Another priority of the MOHA has been to update the 1980 Montana Directory of Oral History. Many questionnaires were

completed by participants at the spring workshops (sponsored jointly by the MOHA and the Montana Committee for the Humanities) and an effort has begun to identify other institutions and individuals with oral history collections. An expanded directory will be printed in the summer.

Future issues of the now quarterly newsletter will discuss specifics of the regional repository plan and will explore the activities of Native American oral history programs on the state's seven reservations. Anyone wishing to subscribe to the newsletter or become a member of the Montana Oral History Association should send \$5.00 to Dale Johnson, Treasurer, Mansfield Library Archives, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812.

### OHMAR SPRING MEETING SET

The 1983 spring meeting of Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region is scheduled for April 15-16 at the American College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. A workshop will be held the first day, with the second day devoted to issues in oral history. Theme of the conference will be urban history with folklorist Henry Glassie (U. of Pennsylvania) as featured speaker. Alice Hoffman (Pennsylvania State U.) and William Cutler (Temple U.) are cochairs.

### REGIONAL CONFERENCES DRAW IDAHO HISTORIANS

Interpreting Local Culture and History was the focus of two, two-day regional conferences and exhibitions sponsored by the Idaho State Historical Society and Association for the Humanities in Idaho. The events were held in Boise in September and Coeur d'Alene in November and were designed for community groups and interested individuals.

The first day of both programs emphasized New Perspectives in Interpretation, Evaluating Oral Materials, and Reconsidering Our Cultural Stereotypes. The second day focused on exhibits, publications, and folklife presentations. All activities were free. Boise speakers included Thomas Schlereth (U. of Notre Dame), Jan Brunvand (U. of Utah), William Lang (Montana Hist. Soc.), Thomas Edwards (Whitman C.), Jeff Simmonds (Utah State U.), Susan Armitage (Washington State U.), and Patricia Ourada (Boise State U.). In Coeur d'Alene the participants were: Barre Toelken (U. of Oregon); Allen Comp (Natl. Park Ser.); LeRoy Ashby, John Jameson, Paul Barkley, and Clifford Trafzer (all of Washington State U.); Laurie Mercier (Montana Historical Soc.); Sherry Boswell (N. Idaho C.); and Alan Marshall (Lewis-Clark State C.).

### UT-EL PASO COMPLETES BORDER LABOR HISTORY

The Institute of Oral History (IOH) (U. of Texas-El Paso), supported by a NEH grant, has completed a major project on border labor history. The interviews, taped in the twin cities of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez, focused on union and non-union workers (active and retired), management, and community leaders involved in three significant strikes; the 1946 strike at El Paso's American Smelting and Refining Company; the 1959-62 strike at the Peyton Packing Company, also in El Paso; and the 1978-79 dispute at the Spring City Knitting Company in nearby Deming, New Mexico. Interviewees included Chicanos, Mexican nationals, Anglo Americans, undocumented workers, and immigration and naturalization service personnel. Graduate students Gail Hershatter and Emily Honing (both Stanford U.) and San Franciscan Laurie Coyle, a former news reporter, conducted extensive interviews with female strikers in the famous Farah Strike of 1972-74. The project also yielded information about the Mexican Revolution and the Great Depression.

An adjunct to the labor history is the recently acquired set of thirty interviews with women employed in assembly plants in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Tape donor Maria Patricia Fernandez Kelly (U. of Calif.-Berkeley) conducted an anthropological study of the composition of the female labor force in 1978-79. Funded by the Social Science Research Council, her study sought to document the impact of industrialization on working women.

Sarah E. John is acting director of IOH.

### CANADIAN ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION CALL FOR PAPERS

The 1983 conference of the Canadian Oral History Association will be held at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., June 2-3. The program committee invites proposals for papers and sessions from members of OHA and others on the use of oral history in the following areas: regional studies, urban studies, women's studies, and biography. Suggestions and proposals for short workshops are also solicited. Contact: Allen Specht, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Legislative Buildings, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4, or Richard Lohead, Public Archives of Canada, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N3.

# ROHO COMPLETES EARL WARREN PROJECT



Mrs. Earl Warren receives her copy of the late Chief Justice's oral history from Prof. I. M. Heyman, principal investigator for the Earl Warren Project, former law clerk for Earl Warren, and now chancellor of the University of California-Berkeley.

Fifty-three bound volumes of interviews with significant persons in California's Earl Warren Era, 1925-1953, have been completed by the Regional Oral History Office (ROHO), University of California-Berkeley, the final volume being that of Warren himself. The project,

requiring thirteen years to complete, included interviews with 121 heads of government departments, assistants to the governor, legislators, leaders of political parties and factions, and twenty-eight friends and family members.

During Warren's own interview, held in three marathon sessions, two of his close associates sat in at his request to check the accuracy of his recall. The interviewers questioned him on water resources, public administration, political history, the legislature, the black political community, and public health.

Twenty-five volumes are full-length autobiographical manuscripts of major figures from Warren's California years. Twenty-eight volumes each contain several individual memoirs, such as one volume of the Warren children's recollections, two volumes on the decision to evacuate the Japanese-Americans in World War II, three volumes on Warren's district attorney office, a volume of Richard Nixon's campaign heads, and a series on both Republican and Democratic leaders. All volumes contain introductions, some by leaders in the research field of the volume.

The entire series is available for research at The Bancroft Library, University of California-Berkeley, UCLA Library's Department of Special Collections, and the State Archives in Sacramento. The law libraries of the College of William and Mary, and New York University have complete sets.

Bound, indexed copies of the volumes may be purchased at cost for deposit in noncirculating collections. There is a ten percent discount for libraries purchasing the full 53-volume set. Write ROHO, Room 486, The Bancroft Library, University of Calif., Berkeley, CA 94720.

## STILLWELL NEW OH DIRECTOR AT NAVAL INSTITUTE

Paul Stillwell assumed directorship of the U.S. Naval Institute (USNI) oral history program in mid-1982. He edits USNI *Naval Review*; his *Air Raid: Pearl Harbor!*, reminiscences of the 1941 event, was published on the fortieth anniversary of the attack. Stillwell's current oral history research is on Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., Navy commander in Vietnam, and his staff. The USNI collection of 135 volumes is housed at the Naval Academy's Nimitz Library in Annapolis; the Naval Historical Center in Washington, D.C.; and the Naval Institute; parts are at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I. A card catalog with 20,000 subject entries serves researchers, and a brochure listing each volume by title is forthcoming.

## RURAL CHANGE STUDIED IN VIRGINIA

The Oral History Forum of the Virginia Library Association (VLA) presented a program, The Patrick County Project: Continuity and Change in a Rural Community, at VLA's annual meeting last fall. The two-year project was sponsored by the Blue Ridge Regional Library, Martinsville. Participants were: Jean Speer, Elizabeth Fine and Dorothy McCombs (Va. Tech.); and Donald Walsh (Patrick County Branch Library [PCBL], Stuart, Va.). Funded by a \$220,000 NEH grant, the study brought together Virginia Tech's Reynolds Homestead Continuing Education Center; the PCBL, which is a branch of the Blue Ridge Regional Library; and the nonstudent adults of the county. Continuity and change in a rural county were the topics of the study which resulted in six slide-tape

shows, one of which was "Leaving a Little Old-Time Stuff" and a thirty-minute film, *Up and Down These Roads: A Rural County in Transition*. A project van carried books, records, and a dulcimer performance throughout the county. Copies of over 100 interviews (over 300 hours) and transcripts for half of these will be available at PCBL and at the Virginia Tech University Libraries in Blacksburg. Copies of the slide-tape programs will be available, as well as a project bibliography (*The Appalachian Region of Virginia: A Guide to Library Materials* by Dorothy McCombs, 102 pp. \$5.) Write: Ann H. Eastman, Director of Public Information, Patrick County Project, 2095 Deering Hall, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061.

## FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

by Harry Goldman

The fourth International Oral History Conference assembled September 24-26 at Aix-en-Provence, France. Approximately 200 oral historians from more than twenty countries attended the three-day meeting in the beautiful city north of Marseilles.

The papers to be presented were published in a journal and mailed to attendees. They were printed in the language of the presenter, however, and this coupled with receiving them only a week or two before the conference, prevented many people from reading them beforehand.

Presentations were divided into ten categories: archives, oral history and education, work memories and memories collective, autobiographies and life stories, oral traditions, memories of years 1930-50, social movements, work, Jews, and women.

One of the more interesting sessions was in the social-movements symposium where Kim Howells and R. Merfyn Jones presented a paper titled, "Oral History and Contemporary History." They told of how they went to a coalfield in south Wales to conduct an oral history of the area. During their research, the National Union of Mineworkers struck for the first time since 1926. The research team was faced with a major contemporary event—and decided to record it. Argument mounted at the convention as to whether their material was indeed oral history or *cinéma vérité* (they had video equipment) or simply news.

Most of the rest of the time, participants tried in vain to find their way around the campus and tried to find sessions in their native tongue. Most of the participants were from Europe and spoke French but that did not seem to help the communication very much since not everyone understood other's attempts at French. Much of the conference seemed like being at the Tower of Babel.



## MAGAZINE FEATURES ORAL HISTORY OF ILLINOIS GOVERNORS

The feature article of the December 1982 issue of *Illinois Issues* is a section entitled "Stories of the Governorship." The segment is based on excerpts from the Eyewitness Illinois Oral History project, funded by the Illinois Humanities Council in cooperation with NEH, and conducted by the oral history office at Sangamon State University. The project's purposes are to produce the memoirs of former governors and their key aides and agency directors and to provide a model oral history project for the Illinois Humanities Council. Cullom Davis and Marilyn H. Immel (both Sangamon State U.) conducted the interviews.

The *Illinois Issues* article is the first opportunity for broad dissemination of a portion of the Eyewitness Illinois project. Reprints of "Stories of the Governorship" are free from the Illinois Humanities Council, 201 W. Springfield, Champaign, IL 61820, or from the Oral History Office, Brookens 377, Sangamon State U., Shepherd Rd., Springfield, IL 62708. The memoirs will soon be available in selected Illinois libraries and archives.

## KENTUCKY LEGISLATURE REDEFINES ORAL HISTORY COMMISSION

Recent action of the Kentucky Senate (Bill 353) establishes the autonomy of the Kentucky Oral History Commission and clarifies its relationship with the Kentucky Historical Society. The commission, which was created in March 1976 as a state agency, plays an advisory role and consists of interested persons as well as representatives of institutions involved in oral history. An eight-member executive committee is charged with policy making, promoting and coordinating the work of existing oral history programs, and initiating new ones. The goals and purposes of the commission remain the same. The governor, who formerly appointed the entire commission, will appoint five commissioners; and the legislative research commission will appoint five, with the state librarian and the director of the state historical society ex officio members. An advisory board was also established. Kim Lady, formerly coordinator, is executive director of the new commission. Enoch Harned continues as before with the new title of assistant to the executive director. Forrest Pogue (Eisenhower Institute for Historical Research), native Kentuckian and pioneer oral historian and a former member of the commission, has been designated national advisor to the commission.

## LIBRARIANS' MEMOIRS PRESERVED

Wayne A. Wiegand, Rosemary DuMont (both of U. of Kentucky), and Edward R. Johnson (N. Texas State U.) have done oral history research on three academic librarians for Leaders in American Academic Librarianship, 1925-75. The work will lead to a 1983 anthology to be published by Beta Phi Mu, the International Library Science Honor Society. For the book, fifteen researchers under Wiegand are writing fifteen essays, each of which will assess the impact of a prominent U.S. academic librarian. With a \$10,000 grant, the Council on Library Resources sponsored the endeavor which started in 1980.

Oral history transcripts for the three memoirists are now in repositories. The memoir of Lawrence C. Powell (UCLA and U. of Arizona), interview conducted by Wiegand, is located at the Special Collections Department, University Library, U. of California-Los Angeles, as well as at the American Library Association Archives, U. of Illinois-Urbana. The memoirs of Ralph Ellsworth (U. of Iowa, U. of Colorado) and Jerrold Orne (Knox C., Washington U., Air U., and U. of N. Carolina-Chapel Hill) are being administered at the American Library Association Archives, U. of Illinois-Urbana. Edward R. Johnson interviewed Ellsworth, and Rosemary Du Mont interviewed Orne.

## AASLH PRESENTS ORAL HISTORY AWARDS

The 1982 winner of AASLH's Award of Merit of Junior Historical Societies was Rushville Consolidated High School History Club, Rushville, Indiana, for its use of oral history as a resource tool in the collection and preservation of the history of Rush County.

Maria Brooks, Anchorage, Alaska, received the Certificate of Commendation for her Oral History of Pioneer Women of Alaska.

## BLACK RELIGIOUS LIFE DOCUMENTED

The Institute for Black Religious Research (IBRR) at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois, has completed 115 interviews on black worship and devotional practices in the twentieth century. The field research was conducted in metropolitan Chicago and in rural and urban areas of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. A catalog and index of holdings are nearing completion. Supplementing the interviews are over sixty hours of videotape, some 300 hours of audiotape, and hundreds of photographs. Funding is being sought for transcribing the interviews. Write: Larry Murphy, Director, IBRR, 2121 Sheridan Rd., Evanston, IL 60201.

## TERKEL ADDRESSES ORAL HISTORIANS AT KENTUCKY CONFERENCE

Studs Terkel, critically acclaimed author and radio personality, was the featured speaker at the fourth Kentucky Conference on Oral History. The conference, sponsored by the Kentucky Oral History Commission, took place February 24-26 at the historic Seelbach Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky.

Activities began Thursday evening with the showing of the Appalshop film *The Big Lever: Party Politics in Leslie County, Kentucky*. Leslie County, located in the mountains of southern Appalachia, received national attention in 1978 when Richard Nixon made his first public appearance after resigning the presidency.

Friday's sessions began with Carl Ryant and Barbara Bishop (both U. of Louisville) and George Wright (U. of Texas-Austin) addressing Oral History and Community History: The Louisville Experience. Other sessions included Multi-Image and Oral History with Bruce Smith (U. of Kentucky); Women and Oral History with F. Gerald Handfield (Indiana State Historical Soc.) and William Berge (Eastern Kentucky U.); and Education and Oral History

with James Gifford and Kristina Campbell (both Morehead State U.) and Jim Wayne Miller (Western Kentucky U.). The sessions were moderated by Dwayne Cox (U. of Louisville) and Anne Campbell (U. of Kentucky). Donald Ritchie (U.S. Senate Historical Office) was the featured luncheon speaker. His presentation was "When Does an Interview Become Oral History?"

Terkel spoke Friday evening to an enthusiastic dinner crowd. His creative use of interviews has resulted in five best-selling books including *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression*; *Working*; and *American Dreams: Lost and Found*.

The annual meeting of the Kentucky Folklore Society was held in conjunction with the conference. On Saturday, the Society presented a session entitled Interpreting Kentucky Folklife with Jay Anderson, Robert Gates, Dale Jones, and Debra Bays (all Western Kentucky U.).

Carl Ryant and Kim Lady (both Kentucky Oral History Comm.) were co-chairs of the conference.

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mandate to do so, I felt some went along only with reservations. I find one statement in the unpublished transcript of the Arrowhead organizing session to illustrate this skepticism:

I don't think we've defined clearly enough just exactly what oral history is, to be brutally frank. . . . Seems to me there is adequate leadership to carry on a confederate type of assemblage for a year or two years until we have these metes and bounds that I've been arguing with Dr. Starr about better defined.

There was really no opposition to organizing, but there was argument about the kind of organization and the timing of its establishment. Some were saying, let's not have a formal organization immediately. Let's wait and see how we define oral history and then set up the organization. Others thought these definitions, standards and goals, or goals and guidelines, as they were later called, should not stand in the way of organization.

I had no idea what would come out of the organizing session, but I thought, it never hurts to give things a little nudge. The night before the session we asked a number of representatives of the major programs to come to our rooms for a talk. We discussed the benefits of organizing, and I asked those who could to pledge \$100 from their program budgets towards starting an organization. Columbia, Cornell, The Forest History Society, and UCLA made pledges. Then, at the appropriate time in our session the next day, I was able to make this known. It helped because the participants became aware that some of us were serious about having an organization and were willing to make commitments. Others followed our lead and pledged from the floor. We received a number of personal and institutional pledges and within minutes had raised a treasury of over \$1,000. It would be enough to get started.

All of us recognized that it was impossible to form an organization at Arrowhead in the short time allotted for discussion of the subject. We reached a compromise. We authorized the establishment of a steering committee to continue our discussions and plan a meeting for the following year when we would again consider the question of organization. I was elected chairman and authorized to appoint a committee and preside over its deliberations.

The names of those individuals who agreed to serve on the steering committee are published in the Arrowhead proceedings. We needed a name for this interim organization. The participants came up with "Oral History Conference." This was fine, but it did not last long, as we see shortly.

The largest job facing our committee was staging the second meeting in 1967. Louis Starr was willing and anxious to plan and host the meeting at Columbia University's Arden House Conference

Center. I also asked him to chair a subcommittee to draw up a constitution for our organization. It soon became evident that Louis had plenty to handle. He asked to be excused from this second assignment, but not before he had the Oral History Association incorporated under the laws of the State of New York with the corporate headquarters at the Oral History Research Office, Butler Library, Columbia University.

This created a little stir among some of the other steering committee members who thought this premature and beyond the committee's mandate. It did not bother me. I agreed with Louis. It never hurts to give things a little nudge. I thought we would succeed in organizing at the second meeting. If we did not, then OHA would be just one more defunct corporation. But to smooth a few ruffled feathers, I decided we would put the incorporation question to a vote by the membership right along with the constitution and the first slate of officers and council members.

The "hot potato" was the subcommittee on oral history goals and guidelines. This committee was charged with refining the discussions held at Arrowhead in the session on standards and goals for oral history. The committee was chaired by Gould P. Colman of Cornell University and included Philip Brooks of the Harry Truman Library. Gould had cochaired the Arrowhead session along with Elizabeth I. Dixon of UCLA, who was vice chairman of the Arrowhead Colloquium. There was a great deal of discussion about how oral history should be conducted to make the results acceptable to scholars. It looked to me as though this was developing into one of those academic hassles that seldom are resolved to everyone's satisfaction. I did not want this committee to become the tail that was wagging the dog, and I did not want its failure to come up with a set of definitions that were not acceptable to everyone to become a barrier to organization; neither did Starr.

Meanwhile, Elwood Maunder of The Forest History Society had agreed to become the editor of the association's newsletter. He had published several issues. Our UCLA program had published the proceedings of the Arrowhead Colloquium, and two of our staff members, Adelaide Tusler and Donald Schippers, had compiled a bibliography of oral history which had been published as OHA's Miscellaneous Publications, No. 1. Our membership was growing. The plans for the second meeting were impressive, and Philip Mason of Wayne State University had agreed to take on the assignment of drafting the constitution. Things were looking good, and I did not want this goals and guidelines situation to get out of hand.

This is when Louis played his trump card. He scheduled the Arden House business sessions in such a way that the goals and guidelines business was neutralized.

Actually, we had two business meetings. At the first meeting we approved the constitution and passed a motion to send it, along with the articles of incorporation by mail ballot, to the membership. Then we had a progress report from the goals and guidelines committee followed by some discussion and a motion to continue the deliberations to the next meeting of the association. Everyone seemed agreeable to this because by that time we had approached the cocktail hour!

There were a few anxious moments the night before the final business meeting on the last day. The nominating committee I had appointed to draw up the slate of officers and council members was concluding its deliberations. Dr. Albert Lyons (Mt. Sinai Medical Center, N.Y.), the chairman, reported to me that the committee had come up with Starr as candidate for president and Colman for vice president/president elect. Apparently Louis was unwilling to accept. Al had a way of cutting right through things, and he got the nominees together for some plain talking. It was to Starr's credit that he put the future of the organization and its importance to oral history above his personal feelings and went on to serve as OHA's first president.

At the final business meeting the nominating committee's report was accepted. After further nominations from the floor the report was sent by a mail ballot to the membership. A resolution was offered and passed whereby Allan Nevins became honorary chairman of OHA. Offers were then tendered for the site of the next meeting. The record shows that the first council decided on the Kellogg Conference Center at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

Starr's format for the business meeting at Arden House made it easier to get through organization.

Another reason organization came off so well was the way we decided to limit admission to OHA members. I had a roster of those who paid dues between Arrowhead and Arden House. We set up a table at the door and checked people into the meeting. Anyone whose name was not on my roster was asked if he or she wanted to join OHA. Those who did not were not admitted to the meeting; those who did paid me their dues and were admitted. This way our business sessions were limited to paid-up members of OHA. This made it much easier for me to conduct the meetings because I did not have to take flak or stonewalling from those who had no interest in organizing but loved to hear themselves talk. We had a number of those at Arrowhead.

With organization finished, the future of OHA seemed assured. However, there is another anecdote that Louis liked to tell, and it is true. The Arden House resolution mandating the mail ballot called for counting by mid-January 1968. I had appointed an election committee composed of

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## Founding of OHA from page 6

members from the Los Angeles area. On the appointed day I drove out to the Claremont University Center's oral history office where the ballots were to be opened and counted by the committee. Everything proceeded on schedule. The constitution and articles of incorporation were approved and the first officers and council members duly elected, except for the three-year council seat. This was tied. What to do? The only answer seemed to be a runoff election for this council seat. The very next day, I was cleaning out the boot of my TR-4, and I found a ballot that had not been mailed. I recall I had taken the box of ballots to the post office after work on the day they were to be mailed out. It was dark and I did not notice that one had slipped out as I took the box from the car. Now, we had two options: declare the council race void and hold a runoff election, or contact the individual to whom the ballot should have been mailed and have him give us his choices. We chose the latter. The individual in question was most indulgent of my oversight and delighted to give me his choices. The tie was broken so we were able to announce that the three-year council post had been filled. None of the other election results was changed by this individual's votes. This was a dubious way out of our dilemma and certainly not according to Roberts, but at the time we could ill afford the expense of a runoff election and we were anxious to get on with the business of the organization.

One last and most agreeable duty remained for me as OHA's founding chairman. The resolutions adopted at Arden House naming Nevins honorary chairman were tape-recorded for me to bring to Los Angeles. It was my pleasure to take this tape to the Huntington Library and play it for him. He was most gratified and touched by our gesture. Later I lunched with him and his wife, Mary, and he spoke of his delight in the reality of OHA. I felt that I had come full circle. Nearly two years before I had gone to him and said, here is what I want to do. Now I had come back to tell him the job was done. I believe it was a great source of satisfaction to him that oral history had come of age in his lifetime.

There were still those who did not think so. One was the late Herman Kahn of the National Archives. His review of the Arrowhead proceedings in the *American Historical Review* says as much, and it is worth quoting in part:

Those who now call themselves oral historians obviously have many worries about the nature and validity of what they are doing. Reading these introspections and self-questionings, one is reminded of an adolescent peering into a mirror, worrying about what he sees there, and asking himself, "What am I?" "Why am I not better known and more popular with my fellows?" and "Where will I be ten years

from now?" . . . The rehashing of the questions discussed at this meeting is still going on, but oral historians should proceed with their job, which is, in my opinion, valuable and important. They will need to cultivate patience, acquire self-assurance, and be content to leave the proof of their pudding to the scholars who are its ultimate consumers.\*

I wonder what Kahn would have thought about Wingspread. He probably would have said, Why are they still agonizing about their image and their work? Why can't they get on with their job? I do agree with Kahn about the ultimate test for the value of oral history. This is not to imply that I reject or discount the value of Wingspread. I believe it did contribute to our efforts to improve the methodology of oral history. I also think it helped us to continue to mature and put behind us some of these self-questionings Kahn mentions. They were often evident in the dialogues at our earlier colloquiums.

We have continued to call our annual meetings colloquiums. We used to number them, but now we seem to have lost track, so just use the year. One OHA member told me it is fine to call our annual meetings colloquiums because it sets us apart and makes us distinctive. Most other organizations just use "annual meeting." The Arrowhead meeting was called a colloquium because we regarded it as a first coming together for the purposes of discussion. It implied that the participants would work, not just sit back and listen to a series of papers. We still follow this tradition and do a lot of work at our colloquiums, so I believe the use of this word continues to be a most appropriate term to describe our annual gatherings.

Another member told me I ought to mention the spirit of Arrowhead that had prevailed in OHA. I cannot say that there is anything you can put your finger on, but I can say that there was a great deal of excitement and intensity in the first colloquium. That electric energy created by the excitement of people coming together for the first time to talk about oral history was predictable. What seems to have lingered on in the colloquiums is a feeling among members that they can discourse on an equal footing with the prominent members in the field, knowing their problems and their hopes for the work they are undertaking will receive a sympathetic ear. There never seems to be any reluctance to approach the leadership, and the leadership, in turn, has tended to make itself openly available to the newer members of the organization. I believe this continues to be the case, and it is one of the characteristics of OHA that distinguishes it from so many other professional organizations. People have often spoken about this to me in the most favorable terms. I think we should cherish and nurture this spirit. We should not allow OHA to lose it because it is one of our strengths, but I cannot say

that it should be called the spirit of Arrowhead. We have had our critics over the years and probably still do. Perhaps this fact has tended to make us more forthcoming towards newcomers to the fold. Possibly this has made us more willing to go that extra mile, to be more helpful, and to treat our younger members as equals, be more friendly, and get them involved in the work of the organization. Whatever the reason, this spirit has paid off and will continue to do so. We should never lose sight of it.

Before I close, I should say that I do not want to leave you with the impression that I founded OHA all by myself. I had strong support from my staff at UCLA and from those in the association who wanted to see it succeed just as much as I did. I shall always be grateful to all of those who supported my efforts. I think we have come a long way from that adolescent that Professor Kahn saw peering into the mirror and wondering what he would become. Along the way we have had strong leadership and devotion to the cause of oral history, and this continued in our present leadership and in our excellent Executive Secretary Ron Marcello, who learned something about oral history at UCLA. But now my best advice to all of you in OHA is to stick around, my friends. The best is yet to come!

\**American Historical Review*, 73 (June 1968): 1471.

*Ed. note: The above was originally scheduled as a luncheon address during the OHA Colloquium in October 1982. James V. Mink, founding chairman of the association, is university archivist and head of the Department of Special Collections, UCLA Library.*

## NEWS

The Southwest Oral History Association will hold its spring workshop and meeting on a weekend in mid-May at Santa Barbara, California. Cohost will be the Santa Barbara Regional Oral History Program (U. of Calif.-Santa Barbara). Contact: Ava F. Kahn, Public History Program, Dept. of History, U. of Calif., Santa Barbara, CA 93106.

The New England Association of Oral History is planning its spring meeting for April 30 at the Newport (R.I.) Historical Society. The sessions will address Work and Technology in 20th-Century New England and Political Power in 20th-Century New England. Cohost for the event is the University of Rhode Island. Contact: John F. Sutherland, Institute of Local History, Manchester Community College, Manchester, CN 06040.

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## OHA OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Ronald E.  
Marcello  
Executive  
Secretary

By the time this column goes to print, everybody should have received a dues renewal notice for 1983. As a follow-up, I would like to remind you of OHA's policies concerning membership status.

OHA operates on a calendar year. Those who join *before* November 1 are considered members for that entire year and receive all publications to which they are entitled — four *Newsletters*, the annual *Review*, the *Evaluation Guidelines*, and the *Membership Directory*. A person joining *after* November 1 is considered a member in good standing for the *next* calendar year, and he/she receives no publications until the new calendar year begins. A person who purchased a membership on October 15, 1982, for example, would have received all the publications for that year and will then get a dues renewal notice for 1983.

These policies are generally explained in the OHA Constitution and are outlined in a letter of acknowledgment sent by the executive secretary to each new member. From time to time, Council will determine which incidental publications a member receives. Such is the case with regard to the *Evaluation Guidelines* and the *Membership Directory*.

The membership expiration date is April 30. After that time those who have not paid are removed from the rolls. Work immediately begins on putting together the new *Membership Directory*. The addresses and telephone numbers are taken from the latest dues renewal notice returned to this office, and we use *only* that information. If no telephone number is forwarded, we assume the person does not want it listed, and it is subsequently not published, even though we may have a number from the previous year. Information in the "Addenda" section of the *Mem-*

bership Directory was received after April 30 but before publication started.

## NEWS

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The Michigan Oral History Council met February 24-25 at the annual conference of the Michigan Council for the Social Studies. Council members presented a program on using oral history in the secondary-school classroom.

The 1983 officers of the Indiana Oral History Roundtable are: George Dingley (Wabash County Library volunteer), president; and Dorothy Marshall (Mitchell, Ind., Library), vice president. Elections were held at the August meeting in Marion.

The University of Essex (Colchester) has led the development of oral history in Britain and annually offers a graduate course in which students carry out and interpret interviews through actual projects. A few undergraduates are admitted on a special basis.

Elizabeth B. Mason (Columbia U.) taught an oral history course at Mt. Holyoke College during the January term. The first alumna to be invited to teach in the college's winter term, Mason also led alumnae seminars and gave an open lecture on January 24.

During the Texas Association of Museums annual conference in January at Austin, a session on Oral History: Recording Life through Personal Statements was videotaped for statewide use. Speakers were Curtis Tunnell (Texas Historical Comm.), chairman; Michael Gillette (Lyndon B. Johnson Lib.); Thomas L. Charlton (Baylor U.); and Thad Sitton (Texas Sesquicentennial Comm.). Funding came from the Texas Committee for the Humanities

which will disseminate the videotapes through its collection at The University of Texas-Arlington.

Joel Gardner (Louisiana State Archives), Ronald E. Marcello (N. Texas State U.), and J. Vincenza Scarpaci will discuss oral history and American Italians (A-I) March 12, in the A-I Renaissance Foundation study center, New Orleans. The session will be the last of a series funded by the Louisiana Committee for the Humanities. In its five-year history, the foundation's oral history program has collected over 100 tapes. Joseph Maselli is director.

Scarpaci, known for her work in Baltimore's ethnic communities, is the author of *Italian Immigrants in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes*.

A series of lectures and media presentations explored Using the Tapes: Presenting and Interpreting Oral History, October 2, 1982, in Baton Rouge, thanks to a grant from the Louisiana Committee for the Humanities. Joel Gardner (Louisiana State Archives) directed the series.

Speakers were: Edward D. Ives (U. of Maine-Orono), Dale L. Treleven (UCLA), and Richard B. Allen (Hogan Archive of New Orleans Jazz). Media presentations were by: Nick Spitzer (Louisiana State folklorist), Zodico, Black Creole music; Andy Kolker, a videotape, *Ends of the Earth*, a winner at the 1982 New York Film Festival; and Gardner, slide-tape and video productions he worked on with Bruce Morgan and Al Godoy of the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism.

The session was part of the Second Annual State Archives Workshop.

Wabash College is sponsoring an oral history project to document the contributions of blacks to the college and the Crawfordsville community. Write: Eileen McGrath, Staff Librarian, Wabash C., P.O. Box 352 Crawfordsville, IN 47933.

Oral History Association Newsletter  
Baylor University, Box 228  
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Address Correction Requested

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