



NEWSLETTER

OHA Links with H-Net to Create H-Oralhist

By Jeff Charnley
Michigan State University

The Oral History Association announces its affiliation with H-Net, Humanities & Social Sciences OnLine, to create the new scholarly electronic discussion list, H-Oralhist. This new list builds on the original OHA discussion list started in 1993 as OHA-L under the auspices of Terry Birdwhistell at the University of Kentucky. The current list started with about 450 subscribers.

H-Net began as a small consortium of scholarly e-mail lists for historians. This has expanded to include more than 80 academic discussion networks covering a wide

variety of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. The computing center of H-Net is at Michigan State University, which provides major funding for H-Net along with the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The main H-Net Website can be found on the Internet at <http://www.h-net.msu.edu>. Their lists reach more than 60,000 subscribers in more than 90 countries.

According to H-Net Executive Director Mark Kornbluh of Michigan State, "H-Net's efforts on the World Wide Web are animated by the same goals that drive its discussion lists: a commitment to pioneer the use of new communication technology to aid both

scholarly research and teaching."

The H-Oralhist Website (<http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~oralhist>) provides links to many oral history resources around the world. It is an ideal gateway to access these sources easily and quickly.

H-Oralhist invites subscriptions from people with a broad range of backgrounds and interests in oral history. Public historians, students, teachers, local historians, transcribers and university faculty are encouraged to subscribe. As with all H-Net discussion lists, there are no fees or charges for subscriptions.

OHA President Linda Shopes said, "Like oral history, electronic forms of
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Editor's Note

By Mary Kay Quinlan

Copy deadline for the next issue of the **Newsletter** is April 1. It will include a larger Bulletin Board than space permitted in this issue, so please send any announcements, meeting notices or personal information to share. Stories and pictures about oral history projects are always welcome.

Send to: 7524 S. 35th St., Lincoln, NE 68516. Phone: 402-420-1473. Fax: 402-420-1770. E-mail: OHAEditor@aol.com.

"Project 30" Surpasses Goals

Project 30, the Oral History Association's three-year campaign to celebrate the OHA's 30th anniversary by increasing its endowment to \$50,000, surpassed its fund-raising goal and has established some healthy habits among OHA members, Endowment Committee Chair Cullom Davis announced at the 1997 annual meeting.

As a result of the campaign, begun in 1995, the OHA endowment totalled \$72,000 by October 1997. More than

100 OHA members have contributed to the endowment campaign, Davis said. In addition to contributions and pledges from individuals, the endowment benefitted from the annual silent auction at OHA meetings and from Council contributions of operating surpluses, Davis said.

The endowment will serve as an emergency fund and a way to finance special projects, and continued contributions to it are encouraged.

Davis said the campaign created a new OHA tradition of making memorial contributions in recognition of living and deceased members.

He thanked the Project 30
(Continued on page 3)



From Your President

By Linda Shopes
OHA President

Historians have been in a reflective mood the past couple of years. The dispute over the National History Standards, the cancellation of the planned Enola Gay exhibition at the National Air and Space Museum in the face of enormous political pressure and the controversy over Disney's proposed history theme park in Northern Virginia have been only the most well known of recent public challenges to history as practiced by historians.

Similar difficulties confront many of us as we go about our day-to-day working lives. Here in Pennsylvania, for example, professionals struggle to include experiences of workers in heritage development projects in other than nostalgic or sentimental ways and to present critical analyses of deindustrialization in museums.

For many of us these controversies have illustrated not only the gulf between ways we and ordinary citizens think about and make sense of the past, but also our isolation, as historians, from public life. Hence the mood of introspection and efforts to open up dialogue between scholars and citizens, professionals and the public through such programs as the National Endowment for the Humanities conversation project and, more generally, through a growing interest in public history. I have often thought that oral history can--indeed does--play an important role in mediating between professional and popular views of the past, and in bringing historians into dialogue with communities.

For the defining act of oral history is dialogue, dialogue between two people who often have different views of the past. We ask people not only what happened, but what significance they attach to the events of the past. We ask them not only to describe change, but to give us their

explanation of it. And if our rapport is good, we make explicit our differences with narrators, using our questions as a foil against which they can articulate their points of view. Moreover, the "product" of oral history provides opportunities for turning this private conversation into a more public one. Oral history is used in exhibits and films to present multiple points of view about the past. I'm thinking, for example, of the creative use of oral history in programs at the Museum of Chinese in the Americas or George Stoney and Judith Helfand's marvelous film, "The Uprising of '34," which won OHA's first non-print media award. Similarly, publications like Milton Rogovin's and Michael Frisch's "Portraits in Steel," also an OHA award-winner, give workers the opportunity to present their own powerful understandings of social change as it has played out within their lives.

Of course, sometimes we don't measure up to oral history's potential. We "make nice" and deftly turn an interview away from difficult subjects. We mentally roll our eyes when narrators "go on" about the state of the world, rather than probe the source of their discontent. We create a community archival collection and think our work is done. And we've all seen oral history publications that are tidy celebrations of a benign past and exhibits that use history quotes to confirm curatorial authority. It doesn't take a Ph.D. in history to avoid these sorts of problems. It does, however, take careful attention to the principles of our craft, as outlined in OHA's **Evaluation Guidelines**. To cite only two: "Interviewers should strive to prompt informative dialogue through challenging and perceptive inquiry" and "Interviewers...should make every effort to make the interviews accessible to the communities [from which they have collected their oral histories]."

For me, the challenge is how to use oral history as the basis for informed, respectful dialogue about the really difficult questions of our history, questions that resonate deeply with our problematic present as well.

Questions about ethnic and racial relations, about changes in family life, about the economic shifts that are as profound as the industrial revolution a century ago. Questions that bedevil all of us. The challenge is how to turn these questions outward, from a private interview to a public discussion. I welcome your thoughts about this. Contact me at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, P.O.Box 1026, Harrisburg, PA 17108; or via e-mail at LSHOPES@LLPPTN.PALL.ORG.

Make Plans Now For Buffalo '98

By Cliff Kuhn
OHA Program Co-Chair

While final details won't be in place until spring, both the program and local arrangements committees have been busy making plans for what promises to be a very exciting annual meeting in Buffalo, N.Y., Oct. 15-18.

Barbara Garson, the author of "Macbird," "All the Livelong Day" and "The Electronic Sweatshop," will be one of the program's featured speakers. Other featured sessions currently in the works will highlight Native American/First Nation issues and U.S. and Canadian governmental policies and practices concerning oral history.

In addition, the Buffalo meeting will include extensive time and space for "affinity groups"--whether arranged by subject of research, type of media or setting of the oral history practitioner--to get together and discuss common concerns.

The local arrangements committee is planning various activities to make your Buffalo trip a memorable one, possibly including visits to Niagara Falls and mini-tours of downtown Buffalo's distinctive architecture.

We look forward to seeing you in Buffalo!

Visit OHA on the Web at:
www.baylor.edu/~OHA

H-Oralhist

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communication are democratic, interactive and shaped by the interests of their participants. I hope members will take advantage of the opportunity H-Oralhist affords to tell others about ongoing oral history projects, share resources and information and participate in discussions about method, ethics and a range of other topics."

The new list is moderated by three OHA members: Jeff Charnley, Michigan State University; Gene Preuss, Texas Tech University and Cheryl Oakes, Forest History Society in North Carolina. The editorial board of H-Oralhist includes: OHA President Linda Shopes; Rebecca Sharpless, OHA executive secretary; Marjorie McLellan, Miami University; Stephen Fox, Humboldt State University; Alphine Jefferson, College of Wooster; Mary Larson, University of Alaska-Fairbanks; James Fogerty, Minnesota Historical Society; Rob Perks, National Sound Archives of the British Library; President Ken Clavette, Canadian Oral History Association.

Active editing on H-Oralhist stimulates discussions reflecting theory as well as the practice of oral history interviewing. Editors screen out extraneous messages like subscription requests, sign-ons and sign-offs and person-to-person messages clearly not intended for the entire list of subscribers. They also reduce the number of commercial messages unrelated to oral history and electronic junk mail.

The moderated discussion list allows topical discussion threads to be developed and helps reduce redundancy. For instance, if 10 subscribers post messages on a single topic in a single day, the moderator may consolidate the posts in one message and distribute that to subscribers rather than sending out 10 separate messages to the H-Oralhist list.

H-Oralhist also commissions and solicits book and oral history Website

reviews to expand the scholarly offerings formerly available on the unmoderated lists. In an actively moderated list, the editors stimulate discussions on oral history in areas not covered by regular postings or overlooked by regular subscribers in normal queries.

To subscribe to H-Oralhist, go to the H-Net Website at <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/lists/> and follow the instructions on that screen or send the following e-mail message to listserv@h-net.msu.edu (with no subject and the following text):
SUBSCRIBE H_ORALHIST
firstname lastname affiliation
[Note: In the subscription message, you will need to delete your automatic signature file temporarily if you include one (these are sometimes used in programs like Eudora, Netscape Mail or Microsoft Internet Mail). The listserv tries to read your name and address listed below the message as additional listserv commands.]

If you have any difficulties in subscribing, please contact Jeff Charnley at Michigan State University at charnle2@pilot.msu.edu or by phone at 517-432-2566. Any message or oral history announcement you are encouraged to send directly to: h-oralhist@h-net.msu.edu

We hope to see you on the Internet at H-Oralhist!

Project 30

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committee, which will now be disbanded: Enid Douglas, Lila Goff, Ron Marcello, Jim Mink and Charles Morrissey. He also thanked former OHA presidents Dale Treleven, Anne Ritchie and Richard Candida Smith and Executive Secretary Rebecca Sharpless and her predecessor, Jan Barnhart, for their support.

Silent Auction Donors

The Oral History Association thanks the following, whose donations for the silent auction in New Orleans netted \$1,357 for the endowment:

Dan Arden Productions; Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi; Choctaw Museum, Philadelphia, Miss.; Cultural Crossroads, Port Gibson, Miss.; Michael Frisch; Greater Buffalo Convention and Visitors Bureau; Vicki Haas; Sam and Harriet Hand; Historic New Orleans Collection; Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University; Hyatt Regency Buffalo; Kentucky Historical Society; Deborah Lattimore; Master Digital Corp.; Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience; National Geographic Society; Newcomb College Center for Research on Women; Tulane University Bookstore; University Press of Mississippi.



OHA officers and Council members at the annual business meeting in New Orleans are, front row from left: Executive Secretary Rebecca Sharpless, President Linda Shopes, Council members Kim Lacy Rogers and Rose Diaz. Back row from left: Vice President Howard Green and Council member James Fogerty. Not pictured: First Vice President Laurie Mercier and Council member Alva Moore Stevenson. In the 1997 elections, OHA members elected to the Nominating Committee Valerie Yow, Suellen Cheng and Arthur A. Hansen. Photo by Donald M. Ross.

Crossing Borders: Australian Oral Historians Meet In Remote Alice Springs, "Behind the Back of Beyond"

By Donald A. Ritchie
U.S. Senate Historical Office

Alice Springs lies near the geographic center of Australia, a small town in the middle of a vast territory described as "Behind the Back of Beyond." In that remote setting gathered an audience twice as large as any previous meeting of the Oral History Association of Australia, Sept. 3-7, 1997. Jointly hosted by oral historians from the Northern Territory and South Australia, and chaired by Beth Robertson and Francis Good, the conference focused largely on relations between white and Aboriginal Australians.

Speakers blamed traditional historians for erasing Aboriginal people from Australian history, and described the ways that oral history was reintroducing them into the national historical narrative. Too often 20th-century historians ignored the bloody conflicts and destructive results of colonization and emphasized instead its heroic nature. Since the 1970s, historians have reassessed this portrait, but their work made little inroad into the public's historical consciousness.

During Australia's Bicentennial celebrations in 1988, Aboriginal people seized the opportunity to call colonization an invasion. Oral history has served to strengthen their position in the courts, in one case preserving an area reserved for "sacred women's business" from development and in other cases playing a key role in legal battles over native title (the reclaiming of Aboriginal ownership of their traditional lands). Oral history is also helping the "stolen children" (a generation of mixed race children removed from their Aboriginal parents) to reestablish their identities.

Keynoter Pat Mamanyjun Torres, a storyteller and writer of children's books, described the "Great Australian Silence" on Aboriginal people in formal history and encouraged all

Australians to share each other's stories as a way of bringing previously excluded people into the inclusive "us."

Another keynoter, Bill Gammage, a professor of Australian history, encouraged Western-trained researchers to try to share native perceptions when researching across cultures. In this way the native becomes teacher, while the researcher becomes the trainee. Drawing on the conference's theme of "Crossing Borders," Gammage identified culture, age, gender and ways of thinking as borders that researchers must cross in oral history interviewing. Borders can be barriers or bridges, he asserted. They make us consider whom we are talking to and how to respect what they are saying.

Other speakers referred to "electronic borders" and demonstrated the potential of digital archives to preserve recorded sound, transcripts, photographs and other forms of documentation on interactive video or the Internet. These tools would help return the material to the people from whom it originated. Yet this raised ethical problems, since Aboriginal culture generally prohibits its people from looking at photos or identifying the names of the dead.

Anthropologist Steve Hemming explained that Aborigines were often taught not to tell white people about their culture and had developed a suspicion of anthropologists. When Aboriginal women came forward to stop the construction of a bridge that would have infringed on land reserved for "sacred women's business," some dismissed the story as a cultural fabrication, because no records existed to support their claim. But Hemming pointed out that written records are not always reliable for matters of native title. Aboriginal people felt reluctant to put black history on white paper and tried to keep oral tradition secret from the outside world. In this case, however, Aboriginal women



Ambrose Chalarimeri of the Kwinj people is working on a history of Aboriginal people and has done oral history interviews with his own family. Photo provided by the Oral History Association of Australia.

broke their silence to protect sacred land from development.

The current movement to establish native title has required Aboriginal people who lived on land for generations to be able to describe it thoroughly to prove their ownership. Aborigines were long barred from their own land—including Alice Springs from 1928 to 1964. In such cases, oral history is being presented as direct evidence in courts as well as being incorporated into formal reports. Opponents have raised questions about the authenticity, legitimacy and accuracy of oral traditions, especially where they confront white ownership and official history. Speakers talked of the need to expose the legal community to new ways of looking at history, since lawyers and judges tend to hold what the speakers called old-fashioned and inappropriate views of what constitutes history. Nor has the legal system weighed Aboriginal testimony equally with white testimony.

Some conference participants had served as expert witnesses for the Aboriginal Legal Services. Others had worked on contract for the government, arguing that the

government was also a party to the native title cases and needed help from formally trained researchers. Government-sponsored research offered them access to official records that might not otherwise be available. They added that the question of who had the best claim was not always between white and Aborigines, but was often between different groups of Aboriginal claimants.

Aboriginal people described using oral history themselves. Ambrose Chalarimeri, who with his wife, Traudi Tan, is writing a history of Aboriginal people, told of doing an oral history with his own family. Taken from his family as a child and raised at a mission, Chalarimeri now conducts interviews with family members "to bring back the memory."

Noting that different cultures view the same places differently, archaeologists Keryne Walshe and Sue Anderson studied people's reminiscences of rockholes--or watering holes--in the Outback. For Aboriginal people the rockholes represented places where they hunted, whereas whites remembered them as places for picnics. Their project

collects folktales from both groups.

Ann Curthoys, a professor of history, recounted her work on the Australian "Freedom Ride of 1965." Modeling their protest movement after the American freedom rides, Student Action for Aborigines at the University of Sydney organized a two-week bus tour through New South Wales. Violent acts against them brought journalists to cover them, and they gained considerable publicity for their cause. Curthoys is now refollowing the bus route. But since she herself was a freedom rider, she has hired a younger interviewer to avoid the complications of peer interviewing.

Besides Aboriginal studies, presenters offered work on a wide spectrum of subjects, such as oral histories of the Australian women who went abroad on "working holidays" after the Second World War, a practice that dislodged the notion of overseas travel being exclusively for the wealthy few.

Oral historians studied the engineers who designed Sydney's first skyscrapers and those who

constructed the Snowy Mountain hydroelectric projects, which involved repeated clashes between safety and speed in construction.

A particularly creative project paired oral historians and textile designers to help people create banners that recorded aspects of their lives and community.

The highlight of the conference was a barbecue under the stars at the Alice Springs telegraph station. Australian folklorist and folksinger Ted Egan entertained, after which various conference participants rose spontaneously to sing, ranging from New Zealand Maoris' rendition of the Italian love songs they learned while stationed in Italy during World War II to Irish ballads and an Aboriginal children's tune.

The OHAA will next meet in Melbourne in September 1999, when the conference theme will be "Tales of the Century," reflecting back on 20th-century narrative and storytelling. For further information contact OHAA President Stuart Reid, c/o Battye Library Oral History Unit, Alexander Library Building, Perth Cultural Center, Perth, WA 6000 Australia.

Florida State Seeks Memorabilia from World War II

Florida State University has established the Institute on World War II and the Human Experience and is seeking the donation of privately-owned memorabilia to preserve the legacy of the aging World War II generation.

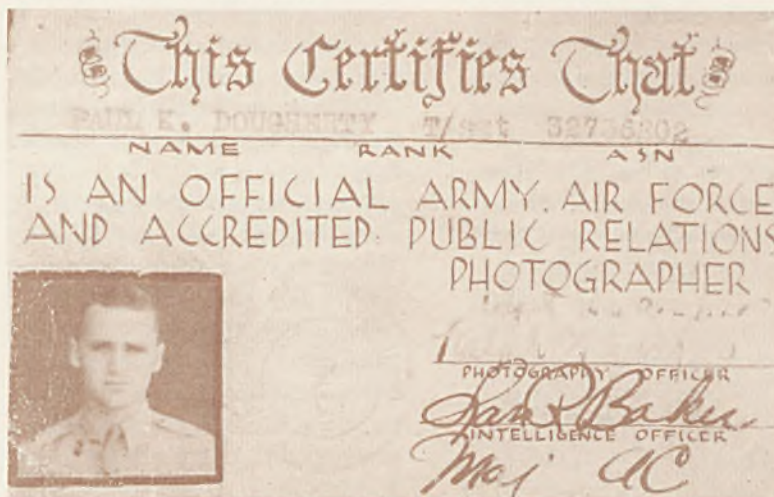
The institute, under the direction of William Oldson, FSU history professor, is concerned with the loss of irreplaceable materials related to the Second World War.

"We are interested in personal papers, letters, photos and other memorabilia," Oldson said. "We find it all too common that items of this type are either hidden away or discarded. More of this valuable material is ending up in county dumps than in university libraries. So we are appealing directly to veterans, defense workers and their families to help us collect, preserve and display those items, which will tell generations to

come what was at stake and the sacrifices made during those years."

The institute's goal is research and teaching based on the average serviceman's and defense worker's experiences to allow for a more

complete, personal history of World War II. For information, contact Oldson at the FSU History Department, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2029. Phone: 850-644-9541; fax: 850-644-6402.



Identification card of Paul K. Dougherty, a photographer with Gen. George Patton's Third Army, is part of the FSU collection. Photo provided by FSU.

Revised Rules Could Affect Oral Historians

The Department of Health and Human Services has proposed changes in rules governing research on human subjects that could affect how academic oral historians get their projects approved.

The Office for Protection from Research Risks (OPRR) in HHS' National Institutes of Health has asked for written comments by March 10 on the proposed rule changes outlined in the Nov. 10, 1997, Federal Register. The proposal on which OPRR is seeking public comment deals with federal rules that protect human research subjects from unreasonable risks.

The proposed rule change does not mention oral history specifically, but it

lists categories of research that would be eligible for "expedited review" by a university's Institutional Review Board because they involve minimal risk to human subjects.

Under federal law, institutions that receive federal money must certify that they protect people against possible risks from research. While intended primarily to deal with biomedical and behavioral research, the rules increasingly have been applied to historians, Richard Candida Smith, former OHA president, reported at the annual meeting in New Orleans.

Smith, current OHA President Linda Shopes and Vice President Howard Green met last year with OPRR officials to describe oral historians' concerns about interpreting rules meant for medical research as applicable to oral history interviews.

Smith said the officials "had not ever really talked to historians before."

The OHA representatives talked about "things they had never thought of," Smith said. With the backgrounds of a genetic biologist, experimental psychologist and attorney, the federal officials "had never really thought about what historians do," Smith said.

He said the OHA officers urged the use of OHA's **Evaluation Guidelines** as a standard by which to judge ethical performance of oral history work. The OPRR officials, Smith said, indicated that the **Guidelines** seem to be consistent with the federal intent to protect human subjects from harm.

Shopes said the OHA is formulating comments on the proposal, which it will send to OPRR.

"Oral history projects that involve minimal risk and that conform with the **Evaluation Guidelines** should be eligible for expedited review," she said.

New Orleans Meeting Feast for Mind and Body

More than 470 Oral History Association members and guests soaked up the sights, sounds--and food--at the 1997 OHA meeting at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in the heart of New Orleans' French Quarter in September.

The program, put together by Alpine Jefferson of Wooster College and Steven J. Novak of the University of California, Los Angeles, included an array of thought-provoking, dramatic and humorous speakers and varied panels highlighting numerous oral history applications and issues. The local arrangements committee, chaired by Pamela Dean of Louisiana State University, arranged Cajun music, food and off-site tours that spotlighted the region's history and culture.

Louisiana political columnist and author John Maginnis told a luncheon audience that Louisiana has had "a tradition of roguery and thievery and malfeasance" in government that is like New Orleans' chicory-flavored coffee, "deeper, richer and more flavorful" than anywhere else.

One highlight of the meeting was the presentation of the 1997 OHA awards for outstanding book, non-print media and pre-collegiate teaching using oral history.

Winner of the 1997 book award was "Talk About Trouble: A New Deal Portrait of Virginians in the Great Depression," edited by Nancy J. Martin-Perdue and Charles L. Perdue Jr., published by the University of North Carolina Press.

The book is a compendium of interviews originally collected by the Virginia Writers Project, a division of the Depression-Era Federal Writers Project.

Teresa Barnet, book award committee chair, said the book "returns us to one of oral history's great legacies, to a project that, however its methods may have differed from contemporary oral history standards, did record a vast amount of information about a crucial time period in American history and introduced the notion of 'history from the bottom up' long before the phrase itself came into vogue."

Winner of the non-print award was "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" a 26-part radio documentary about the civil rights movement produced by the Southern Regional Council, an Atlanta-based civil rights organization, with funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Ford Foundation.

Ruth Hill, non-print media award committee chair, said the series blends narration, storytelling and popular music in an exemplary way. "Listening to this program one can truly understand why there had to be a civil rights movement," she said.

Winner of the pre-collegiate teaching award was Glenn Whitman of Blair Academy, a boarding school for grades 9-12 in Blairstown, N.J. Whitman used oral history in his advanced placement U.S. history class. He said the project grew out of his own "dislike for textbook-centered history." His students interviewed an array of political and business leaders, and the tapes and transcriptions are available in the Academy's library.

Executive Secretary's Report

By Rebecca Sharpless

(With thanks to Jackie Esposito of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, whose column in *MAA XXVI*, pp. 3-4, provided the inspiration for this column.)

Another year, another annual meeting. By most accounts, the New Orleans meeting was a huge success, with thoughtful concurrent sessions, stellar plenary speakers and, of course, the French Quarter right outside the door. We do our best to make annual meetings look effortless, and you can be the judges of how well we succeed. In reality, the annual meeting is the result of extensive effort on the part of the program and local arrangements committees, the executive committee and the executive secretary's office.

OHA meetings rotate on an eight-region cycle. In each region we rely on the support of the local oral history community to help make our meetings successful. As Jackie Esposito of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference observes, meetings are opportunities for members to serve the organization. Our members tell us they gain much from our annual meeting. The meetings that work best are the result of professionals coming together intentionally to facilitate a valuable experience. They fail, Esposito says, "when attendees expect to get and not give in return."

Almost everyone involved in putting on an OHA annual meeting is a volunteer. Because we are a small organization, our paid staff consists of one half-time person. That's it. Everyone else serves as a volunteer either on his or her own or as a representative of his or her institution. You can make their jobs more palatable by offering assistance. If you have attended numerous OHA meetings and have not volunteered to help, perhaps it's time you did. While local arrangements people need to be from the geographic region of the meeting, program committee people can be anywhere in the continent. Our next meetings are in Buffalo in 1998,

Anchorage in 1999, somewhere in the southern Great Lakes-Ohio Valley region in 2000 and in the Southeast in 2001.

OHA members have numerous expectations of their annual meetings. We expect sessions with stimulating presentations and discussions. In addition, our attendees want wonderful food at low-to-moderate prices, cheap but adequate hotels, outstanding speakers, interesting tours and great weather. We work within certain constraints, however, some of which we control and many of which we cannot.

We hold our meetings at large hotels. We use 100 to 150 sleeping rooms per night, and most hotels will only "block" a third of their rooms. So we have to go to properties with at least 300 sleeping rooms. We require as many as seven breakout rooms, which puts us beyond the size of many small properties. The hotel is expected to provide sleeping rooms, meeting rooms, banquet areas, service personnel, security, parking and a wide variety of other services. The room rate at a convention hotel reflects all of these services, which is why a convention hotel costs more than a motel. We have looked repeatedly at other types of properties, but most simply are not large enough. Because we meet during the academic year, university properties and dorms are not an option. We are working hard to maintain room rates in the \$100-per-night range, but we may not be able to maintain those rates in the future. Hotel rates in smaller cities tend to be lower than in bigger cities, but airfare is often more to travel away from the hubs. It's a Catch-22 situation.

Registration fees cover many of the background costs of holding a meeting, costs that are not readily apparent and include: printing and mailing the printed program; handouts at the meeting; receptions and breaks, sometimes with transportation to the reception site; audio-visual equipment; supplies,

including nametags; speaker honoraria and travel.

The audio-visual component has become increasingly expensive, more than \$9,000 for each of the 1996 and 1997 meetings. An LCD panel for a computer-based presentation is several hundred dollars each time it used, and a VCR with a large monitor is almost that much. As Esposito observes, Presenter X is doing a paper on digital technologies. To illustrate the project, she needs a computer terminal and peripherals, connector panel, modem hook-up, telecommunications tie-in and LCD panel/screen. Then after all of this, the telephone lines break down and the presenter is forced to rely on overheads and slides. As Esposito observes, if you have four of these types of presentations, you have just spent \$4,000 dollars.

We can continue to absorb these costs, perhaps by raising registration fees. We can ask speakers to bring their own equipment. Or we may have to ask that speakers reconsider their presentations to ensure that they are using only the equipment that is absolutely impossible to present without and not that which is merely nice to have.

You can assist in improving our annual meeting in several ways. One is by your thoughtful participation in proposing papers and sessions. Another is by volunteering to help with local arrangements or the program. A third is by making your presentations as cost-effective as possible.

The OHA is committed to its annual meeting. We hope that you will get more out of attending the annual meeting by putting more into it.

OHA Thanks Donors

OHA thanks the following contributors to the OHA Endowment Fund from July 1-Dec. 1, 1997: Michaelyn Chou, in honor of Hiram L. Fong; Lila Johnson Goff; Alphine Jefferson; Anne and Don Ritchie; Bruce M. Stave.

STATE AND REGIONAL REPORT



TOHA Names New Board Members

By Lois E. Myers
Texas Oral History Association

Serving on the Texas Oral History Association's 1997-1999 board of directors are several new directors--George Gause, Tai Kreidler (vice president), Dawn Letson and Ann Morris--along with experienced TOHA leaders--James H. Conrad (president), Michelle Mears and Stewart Caffey. The new board met in September and established a life membership category to create an endowment for the support of our journal, *Sound Historian*.

The spring brings two meetings for TOHA. In March we will meet in joint session with the Texas State Historical Association in Austin for papers by Lewis Smith and Fred Allison focusing on "Texans at War: Using Oral History to Document the World Wars," with James H. Conrad presiding and Ronald E. Marcello commenting. Then in April, TOHA will meet in joint session with the Southwest Oral History Association in Albuquerque, N.M.

In the interest of promoting professional oral history standards, TOHA is reaching out with introductory and advanced workshops. In 1998 TOHA will sponsor an all-day workshop for public historians, local historians, archivists and family historians as part of the National Council on Public History annual meeting, which will be held in Austin in April.

Chicago Roundtable Plans Varied Sessions

The Chicago Oral History Roundtable reports a varied line-up planned for this spring. The programs are:

- + "Mustache Pete: Italian-American Oral Histories" on Jan. 20 at Columbia College;
- + "Paul Robeson Lives!" a roundtable discussion commemorating Black History Month on Feb. 9;
- + "Women and Labor Oral History Project" March 9 at the Roosevelt University Center for New Deal Studies;
- + "The Terkel Tapes and Archives" April 30 in conjunction with the Midwest Archives Conference, featuring COHR members Archie Motley and Alan H. Stein.

OHAM to Consider Contemporary Issues

The Oral History Association of Minnesota will hold its annual conference April 4 at the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn., with the theme "Capturing the Current: Oral History of Contemporary Issues."

OHA member Joe Todd of the Oklahoma Historical Society is scheduled to present a session on interviewing Desert Storm participants in the Middle East and Kurdish refugees. The 1997 flood in the Red River Valley also will be featured.

Last year, OHAM co-sponsored with the North Star Chapter of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia a program funded by the Minnesota Humanities Commission. The program featured Sally Roesch Wagner, a German-Russian descendant and women's studies scholar at the University of California, Davis, whose presentation about German-Russian women is based on oral history and traditions.

MOHA Sponsors Oral History Workshops

By Geneva Kebler Wiskemann
Michigan Oral History Association

The Michigan Oral History Association has local oral history workshops planned for March, April and May as part of its ongoing effort to work with libraries, historical societies and institutions like the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village.

MOHA also works with the German-American Conference and Book Fair, the Lansing Capital Sesquicentennial Commission, the Huron Shores Writing Institute, Michigan Humanities Council, the Michigan Women's Studies Association and the Bureau of Michigan History.

Jim Campbell, social science professor at Mott Community College in Flint, Mich., is the new president of MOHA.

UC Press Transition Nears Completion

The transition of the publication of the *Oral History Review* and membership records to the University of California Press is almost complete. You will receive your 1998 OHA membership renewal notice from UCP in January. Please note that they will be far less lenient than the OHA has been in honoring lapsed memberships. You will need to pay your dues promptly to continue to receive your OHA materials in a timely fashion.

Other than the return address on the dues notice, you should see no other change in your OHA service. If you have feedback on the new arrangement, please contact the office of the executive secretary at 254-710-2764 or e-mail OHA_Support@Baylor.edu.

UCLA Documents Los Angeles' Central Avenue

By Alva Moore Stevenson
UCLA Oral History Program

The UCLA Oral History Program's Central Avenue Sounds Oral History Project was inaugurated eight years ago to gather and preserve recollections of individuals who were raised in or near and played on Los Angeles' Central Avenue from the late-1920s on.

At the same time, the project is but one facet of the program's major collection development efforts to employ oral history as the method to preserve several aspects of African-American life, society and culture in Los Angeles at a time when restrictive housing covenants resulted in a geographical concentration of its African-American citizens in South Central Los Angeles.

UCLA's Central Avenue Sounds series is unique because no one has ever made a systematic, sustained effort to collect and preserve one-on-one audiotape interviews with the men and women who were part of L.A.'s most significant jazz and blues era.

By November 1997, program



Three of the Central Avenue Sounds interviewees, Coney, William and Britt Woodman, whose musical careers began in Watts in their father's "Woodman Brothers Biggest Little Band in the World." Photo by Joe Wilder.

researcher-interviewer Steven L. Isoardi had taped interviews with: Joe Bihari, Hadda Brooks, Buddy Collette, Gerald Wiggins, Cecil "Big Jay" McNeely, Ernie Andrews, William Douglass, Clara Bryant, Jackie Kelso, Lee Young, William Green, Fletcher Smith, Art Farmer, Frank Morgan, Gerald Wilson, John Ewing, David Bryant, Melba Liston, Marshal Royal, Coney Woodman, Britt Woodman, William Woodman, Marl Young, Horace Tapscott, Anthony Ortega, Johnny Otis, Minor Robinson, Leroy Hurte,

Rene Bloch, Larence Marable, Ruben Leon and Paul Lopez.

Researchers may read these and other transcripts in the UCLA Oral History Collection at the University Research Library from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, at the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley and at the UCLA Center for African American Studies Library. You may also purchase copies of transcripts by contacting Alva Moore Stevenson, UCLA Oral History Program, 310-825-4932 or by e-mail at: oral-history@library.ucla.edu.

OHA Sends Information To History Departments

By Rebecca Sharpless
OHA Executive Secretary

Several years ago, Dan Carter called me and asked for help for his graduate students at Emory University. "Every one of them is using oral history in their dissertation," he said, "and not a one of them has had any training."

Anecdotal evidence indicates that this is the situation across the nation. Hundreds, maybe thousands, of graduate students are using oral history research without training, and they are producing hundreds and thousands of interviews of dubious quality.

In an effort to educate departments of history, the OHA Council

authorized an outreach project. In December, the OHA mailed to the 360 U.S. history departments with master's or Ph.D. programs listed in the American Historical Association's directory the following: a letter from OHA President Linda Shopes explaining the need for students to know about standards in oral history research; a Xeroxed copy of the **Evaluation Guidelines**; a copy of the statement on historical interviewing that appeared in **AHA Perspectives**, Fall 1997; and two sample legal release forms from **Oral History and the Law**.

If you are in a history department with a graduate program, please contact your director of graduate studies to reinforce this mailing. I have long believed that doing oral history well is not much more difficult than doing it poorly. Please help the OHA in its efforts to increase the

quality of interviewing done by graduate students.

April 1 Deadline Set For 1998 OHA Awards

April 1 is the deadline to submit nominations for the OHA's 1998 awards for postsecondary teaching, article and project. The awards, which will be presented at the annual meeting in Buffalo in October, are for work published or completed between April 1, 1996, and March 31, 1998.

For detailed criteria and information on submitting nominations, contact the OHA Executive Secretary, Baylor University, P.O. Box 97234, Waco, TX 78798.

Ellis Island Project Captures Unique Slice of American History

**By Paul E. Sigrist Jr., Director
Ellis Island Oral History Project**

The Ellis Island Oral History Project is dedicated to preserving the first-hand recollections of people who were processed as immigrants at Ellis Island, former Ellis Island and Statue of Liberty employees and military personnel who were stationed there. Begun in 1973 by the National Park Service, the project staff continues to conduct interviews as well as provide a significant research resource to the public.

More than 1,600 interviews comprise the collection, with about 1,000 of those conducted since the Ellis Island Immigration Museum opened in 1990. Most of these are accessible as audio recordings as well as transcripts using specially designed computers in the Oral History Listening Room on the third floor of the museum, which is open during museum hours.

The interviews average about one hour in length, although some are shorter and many are much longer. Most are rich with detailed anecdotal information about everyday life in the country of origin, the reasons for leaving, the journey to America, processing at Ellis Island and adjustment to life in the United States. The employee and military interviews cover topics applicable to those specific experiences. Interviewees range in age from their mid-80s to over 100 years old. The oldest to date was 107 at the time of her interview.

For years the interviews were used by researchers with the help of a staff member using printed transcripts bound in large notebooks and individual cassette tapes. To make the material more accessible, the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, the private fund-raising organization that helped finance restoration of both the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, gave money for a unique computer system. It allows interviews to be accessed by interviewee's name, by their country of origin, by their ship of passage or by

the year they arrived in America. The audio recording and transcript can be accessed separately or used simultaneously, depending on the researcher's needs (audio can be fast forwarded or reversed). Transcripts appear on a screen and can be scrolled through at the researcher's pace using a computer mouse at the work station. Although the system works slowly, especially between commands, it offers easy access to 1,200 of the project's interviews. The computerized interviews are not presently available via the Internet, but cassette tapes and paper copies can be ordered for a fee. People are encouraged not to ask the staff to choose interviews for them, but to come to the museum to survey what's available before ordering materials.

Because all of the interviews are in the public domain, they have been used in a variety of ways over the years.

Many of the exhibits throughout the Ellis Island Immigration Museum incorporate extracted audio quotes to compliment the displays. Audio quotes also are used in the 30-minute Charles Guggenheim documentary film shown at the museum. Indeed, documentary filmmakers discovered this resource early on, with interviews being used for projects done by the History Channel, the BBC, PBS and the Arts and Entertainment Network, among others.

Selections from the transcripts have appeared world wide in newspapers, periodicals and books of all kinds. It has proved a particularly popular resource for writers of children's books.

Theatrical productions have been adapted from the interviews, and artists have often used them as inspiration for works in photography, sculpture, music, dance, painting, drawing and textiles.

But it is the academic community from around the world that makes the greatest use of this resource. Students and teachers from grammar school to graduate level have used the collection

for classroom activities and for personal research. The 1940s Japanese internment at Ellis Island, medical practices at Ellis Island and European childhood games are among the recent subjects for which the collection has been mined.

The project conducts about 130 interviews annually in the museum's recording studio or in the interviewee's home, budget permitting. Each interviewee receives a complimentary copy of the cassette tape, and multiple tape copies are stored at the museum.

The staff consists of two full-time employees who conduct interviews and assist researchers, one part-time recording engineer, one transcriber, an undergraduate student intern and several reliable volunteers. There are no plans to increase staff, so please don't send employment inquiries!

But if someone you know is a potential interviewee and is alive and willing to be interviewed, please do send for an Oral History Form from: Paul Sigrist, Director of Oral History, Ellis Island Immigration Museum, New York, NY 10004 or e-mail: Paul_Sigrist_Jr.@nps.gov.



Paul Sigrist, oral history director at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, with Concettina Garrone, who was 107 years old at the time of her interview in 1996 at the South Windsor, Conn., Nursing Center. Photo provided by Ellis Island Oral History Project.

BULLETIN BOARD

Meetings

Mark Your Calendars!

The 1998 OHA meeting will be in Buffalo, N.Y., Oct. 15-18.

And after Buffalo, set aside Oct 6-10, 1999, for the annual meeting in Anchorage, Alaska.

Living History of the Everyday

The 1998 conference of the Association for Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums will be held June 21-25 in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, and will focus on the minutiae and rhythms of everyday life in the past. For information, contact: Tom Reitz, Doon Heritage Crossroads, RR #2, KITCHENER, Ontario, Canada N2G 3W5

Announcements

New Multiculturality Co-chairs

Dawn Hinton of Saginaw (Mich.) State University and Karen Hirsch of Paraquid have succeeded Alva Moore Stevenson as co-chairs of the OHA Multiculturality Committee. Stevenson was elected to the OHA Council and will serve as committee liaison.

Media Review Editor Named

Mary Ann Larson of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks has been named media review editor for the **Oral History Review**.

OHR Editor Bruce M. Stave said the new position will permit the **Review** to deal more effectively with non-print resources in a new media review section of the journal.

The section will be patterned after the book review section, but will offer information on computer applications and multimedia productions, CD-ROMs, Websites, films, videos, audio productions, radio programs and other media that may be less traditional than print.

Send suggestions for material to review to Larson at fmml@uaf.edu or to the Oral History Program at the

University of Alaska-Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775.

Special Thanks from OHA

The following institutions provided essential support for the program and local arrangements at the 1997 OHA conference in New Orleans:

Historic New Orleans Collection, Hogan Jazz Archives, Tulane University; Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities; Louisiana State Museum; Louisiana State University Libraries; Louisiana State University Press; Southern Oral History Organization; University of California Press; University of Southern Mississippi; Williams Center for Oral History, Louisiana State University.

Morrissey Workshop Set

The fourth annual Charles T. Morrissey Oral History Workshop is scheduled for Feb. 27-March 1 at the Fort Mason Center in San Francisco. A former OHA president, Morrissey's workshop covers a wide array of oral history topics. For information call Elizabeth Wright, 415-928-3417, or Gail Kurtz, 510-525-7050.

Opportunities

Columbia University Oral History Research Office

The Columbia University Oral History Research Office invites applicants for two annual Rockefeller Foundation fellows and two shorter-term fellows of six months or less for multidisciplinary, cross-cultural study at Columbia.

For detailed information on fellowship criteria, contact Mary Marshall Clark and Ronald J. Grele, Oral History Research office, Box 20, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027. Phone: 212-854-2273. Fax: 212-854-5378. www.columbia.edu/cu/libraries/indiv/oral/

The application deadline is Feb. 15.

Marshall University Invites Fellowship Applicants

Marshall University in Huntington, W. Va., has received a Rockefeller Foundation for the Humanities grant to establish a Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia and invites scholars to apply for resident fellowships funded by the center.

For detailed information on fellowship criteria, or for more information about the center, write to Carl P. Burrowes or Lynda Ann Ewen, co-directors, at Marshall University, 400 Hal Greer Blvd., 349 Old Main, Huntington, W. Va. 25755.

Deadline for the fellowship application is Feb. 15.

Calls for Papers

New England Historical Association

Jan. 15 is the deadline for proposals for the New England Historical Association spring meeting April 17-18 at the University of Vermont in Burlington.

The association does not focus on the history of New England but welcomes proposals on any subject, period or geographical area.

Send proposals to: Borden W. Painter Jr., History Department, Trinity College, 300 Summit St., Hartford, CT 06106.

American Military in Asia

March 1 is the deadline for proposals for a conference on "The American Military Experience in Asia, 1898-1998" scheduled for Oct. 23-25, 1998, in Madison, Wis. It is sponsored by the Wisconsin Veterans Museum and the Big Ten Consortium of the Society of Military History.

Send proposals to Brian Linn, History Department, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-4220. Fax: 409-862-4314. E-mail: blinn@acs.tamu.edu.

Opportunity or Burden?

Oral History, the Digital Revolution and Cyberspace

By Sherna Berger Gluck, Chair
Committee on New Technologies

This is not actually how the charge to our committee was formulated, but as we begin to debate some of the complicated issues surrounding new technology, it seems an appropriate question. Indeed, the incredible opportunities opened up by new technology impose new obligations on us as oral historians--and some might view these as burdens.

The digital revolution, but especially the potential to "broadcast" oral history to the global community, on the one hand, enables us to fulfill one of our professional responsibilities to the max--access. On the other hand, it also forces us to pay more attention to our role as aural historians and to the new responsibilities archivists will face. Above all, it raises new ethical questions.

Listing our holdings on Web-sites is one thing, but actually putting the voices of our narrators on a site is something else--or is it? What kind of consent forms/releases should we be creating? What does informed consent mean in this new context, i.e. do we have an obligation to demonstrate the World Wide Web to our narrators who are unfamiliar with it? How can/should we prevent others from downloading narrators' voices or texts? Is there something qualitatively different about transmitting someone's words in print and in their "authentic" vocal form? What are the implications and new responsibilities for an archive as it transfers analog tapes to digital? Are new issues raised for us now as we seek to honor our obligation to get the best possible sound recording?

These are only a few of the questions our committee (Terry

Birdwhistell, Charlie Hardy, Pam Henson, Marjorie McLellan, Roy Rosenzweig and myself) will be considering as we review the OHA's **Evaluation Guidelines**. What are your concerns? Do you have suggestions for revisions of the Principles and Standards or of the Evaluation Guidelines? We will be making recommendations for revision at the next annual meeting. Although we will have an opportunity before then (through the **Newsletter**) to share our suggested revisions with you, to help us during our electronic deliberations, we urge you to share your thoughts and suggestions NOW. Please send them to me via e-mail (sbgluck@csulb.edu), by snail mail (S.B. Gluck, Department of History, California State University, Long Beach, CA 90840) or fax (562-985-5431).

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