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PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Connect, Support, Inspire.

By Troy Reeves

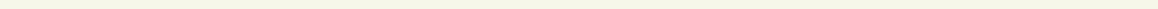
There's so much going on that I have struggled to find a topic to focus on since my last message. It reminds me of the bit that The Daily Show did during Trevor Noah's run as host, which was titled "Ain't Nobody Got Time for That." I also got to a point where I thought I would send Mary Kay something like this: "Please just put, 'This space is intentionally left blank,' for my presidential message." Seriously.

But that's a cop out. These are tough times everywhere, from the enhanced-by-climate-change natural disasters to war and genocide on several continents to the current chaotic political climate, which here in the U.S. has direct and indirect effects on our members and sister organizations. (For example, literally as I typed that last sentence, I just found out our National Archivist was fired.) So, it didn't surprise me when the groundhog saw its shadow and descended back into its den; I feel that way, too.

So, where to turn in these times? Well, I have turned to our mission statement, which was written as part of our 2020-23 Strategic Plan and enacted by a previous Council—during COVID—and extended in late 2023 to run through 2026. For those without easy access to it, here it is:

*The Oral History Association(OHA) is a dynamic crossroads of ideas and people, **connecting** and **inspiring** practitioners, and **supporting** their work to ethically collect, preserve, share and interpret memories which foster knowledge and respect.*

This statement appears on each Council meeting agenda, and this year I bolded the words: **connecting, inspiring and supporting**. As your president and as a member of OHA's Council, I will do all I can to lead through these words. By this I mean to connect, inspire and support anyone—whether they be current members or, hopefully, future members—interested in learning about or doing the work of the oral historian. So, as you read the wonderful content in this newsletter, I hope you see examples of one or all those verbs in the articles. And if you feel we are not helping you or your group with your oral history work, let me know. While I cannot guarantee what I can do, I promise I won't say that I don't have time for it.





DIRECTORS' COLUMN



Executive Director's Report

By Stephen Sloan

As I enter into my third year as executive director, I am glad for the scale and scope of the initiatives that OHA leadership has accomplished recently and for the current momentum in the community. We are a creative, passionate, bright and dedicated group, and there are great things going on.

Off the success of the Cincinnati conference, planning is underway for a great meeting in Atlanta. I am grateful for the leadership of Sarah Milligan and program co-chairs Alissa Rae Funderburk and Autumn Brown for the ongoing effort there. You will not want to miss Atlanta 2025, so get those proposals to participate in by the upcoming deadline. This month we also opened the call for proposals for the inaugural recipient of support through the Indigenous Initiative Research Fund. Please share this new opportunity far and wide to support an Indigenous oral historian working on a community-based project. It is our second

initiative, along with the Emerging Crises Oral History Research Fund, that offers regular and direct funding to an oral history to do groundbreaking work.

Along with launching the call for Indigenous Initiative Research Fund proposals, we opened our award cycle for 2025. Each year, I have the privilege of seeing all the nominees for great work that our community is doing in the areas of teaching, publishing and programming with oral history. If you know a distinguished primary or secondary school teacher or other educator at the precollegiate level who has incorporated the practice of oral history in the classroom in an exemplary way, nominate them for our Martha Ross Teaching Award. It will draw attention to their impressive efforts and now includes a \$500 monetary award. I am also excited about the prospects of the Oral History and the Law Task Force, which is on the front end of its effort to explore the landscape of legal and ethical challenges in oral history, especially regarding U.S. and Indigenous law. They will help OHA leadership identify key issues, offer support strategies for members and suggest needed resources. I am confident of a host of positive outcomes from their service.

Off the success of the 2024 AI and Oral History Symposium, we will begin to look toward another virtual offering next summer. These meetings answer the call for more virtual events and offer a deeper dive into a topic of common concern among oral historians. As we add to our programing and expand our events, I like that this will become a fixture on the OHA member's calendar.

The new editorial team of The Oral History Review, with a year's worth of service behind them, are now making large strides in new initiatives for our flagship publication. Keep an eye out for the journal's new look, special editions and online content through OHA Extra! I'd also like to thank Sharon Raynor for her service as book review editor and welcome incoming editor in that role, Jacey Anderson.

Volunteer service is key to making our organization run as OHA has but one employee, our program associate. Hailey Rowe has served the membership with excellence over the past year, but we wish her best of luck as her family relocates to Florida with their newborn Emma. We could not have done all we have accomplished over the past year without her— thank you, Hailey!

Volunteer Spotlight

Rather than focusing on a longtime Oral History Association volunteer, this month's volunteer spotlight is on an experienced oral historian who is a newcomer to OHA and who signed up to volunteer for the 2025 conference planning committee after attending her first OHA conference.

Francena F.L. Turner is a member of the third cohort of National Park Service Mellon Humanities Postdoctoral Fellows whose project "Black Land Use and Migration in the Lowcountry, 1865-1965" is a collaborative effort among Fort Sumter, Fort Moultrie and the Reconstruction Era National Historical Parks and the Charles Pinckney National Historic Site. Turner also teaches African American history and oral history as an adjunct professor at Fayetteville State University.



Among her oral history experiences, Turner served as project manager and principal interviewer for the Black Experience at the University of Maryland Oral History Project. She also has contributed to a number of scholarly journals, including the Oral History Review. Turner holds master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is a graduate of Fayetteville State University and holds a degree in respiratory care from Fayetteville Technical Community College.

How did you first get involved with oral history?

My entry into oral history stems from me being a nosy child who consistently found ways to get around being directed to get out of “grown folks’ business.” I have always been interested in what my elders and those older than me had to say. When I began working on my dissertation, oral history became my method of choice because I found needed voices missing from official accounts of Civil Rights and Black Power protests in my hometown and I wanted to fill that void in a way that was open and accessible to everyone. Oral history and the ethics around it resonate with me and I fully enjoyed the time I spent and continue to spend reading and listening around ethnography and oral history in a way that surpassed what my method courses introduced to me.

How did you go from a career in health care to oral history?

Prior to returning to college, I was a respiratory therapist for a decade. I left that field due to a level of burnout I have not experienced since and due to witnessing the ways nearly all the “-isms” show up in the hospital room. I did not have language for what I experienced and witnessed, but I now know it was systemic racism, classism, heterosexism, and misogyny among other concerns. As I write this, I realize that even that decade has prepared me for the kind of work I do now. There is something about facing one’s mortality both directly (patient) and by proxy (health care professional) that leads one to reflect on their lived experiences. I had quite a few conversations with patients that both empowered me to advocate for patients and myself but also empowered me to leave that field and do more with my life.

What made you decide to attend the OHA conference in Cincinnati? What were your reactions after you got there?

I attended the OHA conference in Cincinnati because I was asked to chair a panel, and I was honored to do so. I was accepted to present at the 2022 conference, but I did not attend due to the cost. I enjoyed the 2024 conference, and it felt good to attend as someone who had conducted a number of interviews and worked on projects from ideation to deposit. Unlike my time in graduate school, I did not feel any sense of insecurity, and I did not feel out of the loop at OHA. Certainly, this did not mean I was an expert, but it meant that I felt intellectually supported and that I was confident in what I could contribute to the intellectual and practical discussions that took place.

Was there a particularly memorable experience at OHA? If so, what?

I really enjoyed a panel I attended that featured career oral historians’ reflections on their experiences and on the field overall. There is something really powerful about hearing some of the people whose work you have engaged in and cited do that kind of reflection and share that kind of institutional and field knowledge.

What inspired you to volunteer on the program committee for the Atlanta conference this fall?

I was inspired to volunteer to be on the program committee for the Atlanta conference because I want to continue to be in this space and give a measure of what I felt like I received from the organization and its members.

What other experiences do you have with volunteering in other organizations? How has that informed your willingness to step up as an OHA volunteer?

I have volunteered in other organizations like the History of Education Society, the Society of American Archivists and the Society of North Carolina Archivists. Those experiences were and are positive and provided me with a measure of insight into how conferences are designed, and I want to continue that kind of work with OHA.

OHA News Updates

Mark your calendar for the fall OHA conference in Atlanta

Oral historians will gather Oct. 15-18 at the Crown Plaza Atlanta Midtown Hotel for the annual conference, this year featuring the theme: Exploring Our Stories.

Already scheduled on the conference program is Friday night keynote speaker [Bettina Love](#), a best-selling author about race in American education. Her most recent publication, *Punished for Dreaming: How School Reform Harms Black Children and How We Heal*, is based on a series of interviews with educators and families.

In addition to setting aside Oct. 15-18 for the OHA conference, be sure to let your colleagues in the American Folklore Society know that folklorists will begin their fall meeting at the same hotel the day the OHA conference ends. AFS members will be offered a special rate to attend the OHA conference, and oral historians can attend the AFS conference for a special rate as well, with details to be announced later.

Applications open for new OHA Indigenous Award

June 1 is the application deadline for project support from the new OHA Indigenous Initiative Research Fund. The fund supports an annual monetary award given to an Indigenous oral historian actively engaged in a collaborative, community-based oral history research project relating to Indigenous people. The award is intended to help support a project by offsetting some costs or otherwise helping to move the project toward completion.

The research fund is supported through the Oral History Association's "Indigenous Initiative," an ongoing fundraising effort for an endowment to promote the success of Indigenous oral historians, as well as meaningful and ethical oral historical projects within Indigenous communities. This ongoing project reflects the OHA's commitment to move beyond words and into action by utilizing our resources and standing to support oral history work by, of and for Indigenous peoples.

Find more details [here](#).

OHA Creates Google Group for Independent Practitioners

By Troy Reeves, OHA President

After meeting with some of our independent practitioners, OHA leadership is looking for new ways for that valued group of our members to connect with each other and to be heard. Therefore, we have created an **Independent Practitioners** Google Group. If you are interested in joining this group, please send an email to oha-independent-practitioners+subscribe@googlegroups.com. Google will respond to ask if you indeed want to join. After confirming, your request will be sent to group's moderator, who will add you to the group. You will receive a final email from Google once you officially join the group.

If you have any questions about this group or have issues joining it, please email oha@oralhistory.org, using the subject line Independent Practitioners Google Group.

Oral History Review Updates

By Holly Werner-Thomas, *OHR* Editor

The **Oral History Review** seeks book and media reviewers. If you are interested, please contact our new book review editor, Jacey Anderson, at ohrbookrevieweditor@gmail.com, or for media reviews, Bud Kliment, media review editor, at ohrmedia@outlook.com. For more information on what kind of reviews we like to read, please visit the OHA website, [Some Book Reviews We Like and Why](#), where you will also see our guidelines.

The OHR also is eager for submissions for an upcoming special issue on Indigenous Oral History. June 1 is the submission deadline. [Click Here for the Call for Papers PDF](#), which includes contact information for special issue co-editors Sara Sinclair and Winona Wheeler.

Also, please watch for the upcoming spring issue, which will feature a special section dedicated to Oral History and Disability with contributions from Brian Greenwald and Jannelle Legg from Gallaudet University, oral historian Nicki Pombier, our first "From the Archives" article, this one from Shanna Farrell at Berkeley, as well as a piece from Shuko Tamao at the National Science Foundation and an article from the UK on policy and disability as viewed through the school meals service by Isabelle Carter and Heather Ellis.

OHA Newsletter Editor's note

By Mary Kay Quinlan

Since 1993, it has been my honor and privilege to serve as editor of the **OHA Newsletter**. But have decided to retire at the end of 2025.

I have enjoyed tremendously the opportunity to become acquainted with so many oral historians over the years, and I stand in awe of the remarkable work you do. What I've learned through all these years has been the equivalent of several advanced degrees in this dynamic world of oral history. It will seem odd to attend OHA conferences without filling a reporter's notebook with information to share in upcoming newsletters. But as someone who retired almost five years ago from my day job as associate dean of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's journalism college, I've had the experience of just knowing when it's time to move on.

I've told OHA President Troy Reeves, I stand ready to help in any way I can as OHA leaders determine the next steps for the organization to keep in touch with itself and its members and to share the remarkable and increasingly important work oral historians undertake to document times, places, events and ways of life that otherwise might be lost to history.

Panelists describe challenges in using oral history to document American Indian boarding schools in Oklahoma

With an increased focus on telling the stories of Native children's boarding school experiences, University of Oklahoma oral historian Farina King organized a panel of scholars at the Cincinnati conference to discuss their work exploring Oklahoma boarding schools.

Two of the presenters—Cheyenne Widdecke and Lisa Lynn Brooks—shared texts of their presentations, which, lightly edited, are published below.

First, **Cheyenne Widdecke**, a University of Oklahoma master's student in anthropology with a focus on archaeology, describes the origins of an oral history project focusing on the Sac and Fox Mission School near Stroud, Oklahoma:

My journey with oral histories has been shaped by a strong emphasis on community-based research, particularly through my role as a teaching assistant with the Oklahoma Public Archaeological Network, or OKPAN. Through OKPAN, I work with Voices of Oklahoma, a summer internship program designed to engage rising high school juniors and seniors from communities traditionally excluded from archaeology. This for-credit program introduces students to archaeology as a tool that complements other ways that communities understand their heritage, such as historical documents and oral traditions.

Each summer, the curriculum centers around a theme selected to resonate with students and their backgrounds. In 2024, we focused on Indigenous boarding schools, exploring their complex histories and legacies. The first half of the course highlights careers in archaeology, while the second half delves into Native American boarding schools through lectures and Q&A sessions with survivors and alumni. These stories reveal both shared and unique experiences, emphasizing the emotional and historical significance of these institutions.

The program's goal extends beyond academic engagement—it aims to create networks that encourage students to consider higher education and archaeology as viable career paths while demonstrating how archaeology can be leveraged for social justice in marginalized communities. By fostering interdisciplinary conversations, Voices of Oklahoma helps students critically reflect on heritage, memory and the transformative power of storytelling.

This experience with Voices of Oklahoma inspired my current thesis project and partnership with the Sac and Fox Nation, where community archaeology has been a guiding principle. Community archaeology involves collaboration that prioritizes the voices, knowledge and leadership of community members. This approach ensures that research is not only relevant and respectful but also meaningful and lasting. It seeks to create research that benefits the community by fostering connections and preserving their heritage for future generations.

A central focus of my thesis is the Sac and Fox Mission School, a site of profound historical and cultural significance. Through initial discussions with community members, it became evident that collecting oral histories from the descendants of those who attended the Mission School—and others who experienced similar boarding schools—would provide invaluable insight into this complex history. For this project, community members are more than contributors; they are partners in shaping how their history is recorded.

This past summer, I had the privilege of visiting the school site with Voices of Oklahoma students and Sac and Fox Nation members, listening to stories that underscored how meaningful place can be in recounting memories. The physical environment can evoke emotions and memories that may not surface in other settings, making it essential to conduct part of the project at the school site itself. With the support of the Sac and Fox Nation, we are organizing two public events to invite community members to share their stories, memories and perspectives on the Mission School. To accommodate those unable to attend, especially those living out of state, I am also available for individual meetings to ensure everyone's voices are heard and valued.

As an archaeologist, I am equally interested in the material record. We have encouraged participants to bring items connected to the school, not for permanent collection but to share their stories and explain how these objects tie into their personal and community narratives. I recognize that material culture serves as a powerful link to memory, helping people express and preserve the significance of their experiences.

I've already held preliminary discussions with the Sac and Fox Business Committee to gather feedback and ensure that my approach aligns with community standards. I have emphasized that part of my commitment is ensuring that this research, including my thesis, the oral histories and any archaeological or archival materials I uncover in my work, is preserved in the tribal archive. This emphasis on creating longevity reflects a core tenet of community archaeology: research should remain a living resource for future generations.

Throughout this process, ethical considerations have been central. We are adhering to IRB [Institutional Review Board] protocols, and I have requested a letter template to secure permissions for photographing individuals and any material culture they share. Importantly, I am committed to community ownership over what is publicly shared and archived, respecting the personal and cultural significance of their stories and artifacts.

Since I am just beginning my research, my primary goal has been ensuring that all community members see value in this project. To that end, I have taken deliberate steps to engage in conversations that build trust and respect, starting with presenting my initial plans to the Business Committee. This outreach is not because they have final say over the project but to demonstrate transparency and dedication to community partnership. Next week, I will be meeting with the Elders Officers Committee to further this dialogue and gather their insights, ensuring that my work meets community standards and reflects their needs.

Thank you again for this opportunity to share my work. I look forward to discussing how oral histories can be powerful tools for healing, education, and honoring the people behind the stories that shape our understanding of history.

Next, **Lisa Lynn Brooks** of Montclair State University describes serious challenges she encountered in her work on the Oklahoma Catholic Native Schools Project: Success of projects focused on Native American boarding school experiences depend on their intrinsic sensitivity and collaborative nature to develop trusting relationships with participants. However, the political landscape that provides the backdrop to this type of oral history collection can have an indelible mark on the collection process and the ultimate success of the project.

In 2021, the Catholic Archdiocese of Oklahoma City funded the Oklahoma Catholic Native Schools project to determine the effect of Catholic Indian boarding schools on the assimilation of the Native people in Oklahoma. Missteps in the early stages involving listening sessions at parishes near historic boarding school sites and negative press coverage diverted early attempts at participant recruitment for oral histories that focused on individual and family experiences with Catholic boarding schools.

This talk navigates the impact of cultural narratives in Oklahoma, including implicit bias, Catholic triumphalism and wokeness, that stoked fear in religious and political entities to prevent an expansive investigation. Participant recruitment, public perception and press coverage were ultimately impacted by fear and collective reframing of harm done to Native people in Oklahoma.

Native American oral histories that focus on survivance give us an opportunity to address the invisibility of Native experiences in the media and scholarship. However good the intention of the project, collaboration and trust are a must and depend upon the relationships among the tribes, Native participants and the entities engaged in oral history collection.

I had the unique opportunity to be a part of the “... first and only diocesan-sanctioned investigation into Catholic schools” [according to Marquette University history professor Bryan C. Rindfleisch]. Specifically, I was invited to participate as the oral historian in the Catholic Native Schools project sanctioned by the archbishop and bishop in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa Archdiocese. This project developed in the wake of media coverage of the discovery of the 215 unmarked graves at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia in 2021. The Catholic Native Schools project was designed “to seek and present an accurate and transparent history of Catholic boarding schools in Oklahoma” [Rindfleisch] without the interference of the church.

During my time on this project, I was told to collect oral histories to find the truth regarding the role the Catholic Church played in the assimilation of Native students who attended the Catholic Native Boarding Schools from 1880-1965. Other times, I was told by organizers that the oral history collection should be a place where people could heal from trauma inflicted by boarding schools.

After more than a year that experienced several manifestations and resets, I realized there are three ways to analyze this project:

1. Explore the inherent ethical problems of conducting oral histories for the Catholic Church, which seemed to operate more for their own benefit rather than benefit of the participants.
2. Examine the diverse responses of Native people to boarding school experiences, which can range from neutral to empowering to highly traumatizing based on personal circumstance, time and location and type of school attended.
3. Examine the erasure of specific Native identity in non-Native responses to attending Catholic Native boarding schools with Native students.

Due to the brevity of our time together, I will focus mainly on the ongoing ethical consideration that plagued my participation.

Before I was hired, the majority of project effort fell to a deacon and his wife who worked for years on Catholic Indian outreach. They had spent years in the OKC diocese going to churches and powwows to provide support and encouragement to Native American Catholics in Oklahoma. This project kicked off with listening sessions that the team conducted "...in the hopes of building space where Native peoples might come to terms with the church schools and its legacies," according to Rindfleisch.

The project began with the barest of organization and a minimum of input from historians or scholars used to working in this area. The archivist at the archdiocese who oversaw the project eventually saw the conflict of interest in holding listening sessions regarding Catholic schools in Catholic churches, mostly after mass, with both Native and non-Native attendees. These sessions began and ended in prayer with no thought to the potential psychological and emotional harm that might be inflicted on communities that endured an almost endless onslaught of religious education, particularly since the Indian Civilization Act of 1819.

Attendees in mixed company were asked specifically to relate their experiences of trauma while steeped in Catholic ritual. There was a stunning lack of reflection when offering victims or families of victims a chance to list harms endured while non-Native priests acted like gatekeepers of the conversation. This was certainly a sign of the dedication of all to "the faith" rather than the participants.

Almost as soon as it began, the listening sessions damaged public perception through media reports that a priest ended a listening session in Konowa, Oklahoma, and kicked out three Mvuskoke [also sometimes spelled Muscogee] women who had come to support elders and spoke of the harm endured while at boarding schools in their own families. The blow of bad press led to a reworking of the project and with a new focus on oral history collection.

Over the course of meetings from early 2023 to today, I have heard only a few people at the center of this project express a desire for atonement. In fact, when pressed about the role of the church upon uncovering wrongdoing or assimilation, I found there had been no discussion on how the church could engage with their roles in boarding schools. The mechanism for accountability was not there. In fact, there was never any intention on church officials attending community events or interactions related to this project.

An air of secrecy in the project was compounded by the knowledge that this project was not shared with NABS [National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition] or mentioned at the Road to Healing listening session with [U.S. Interior Secretary] Deb Haaland in Anadarko, Oklahoma, in July of 2022. In fact, rather than cooperation with Native communities or organizations like NABS, the church chose an internal route for evidence collection.

The outside historian on the project was granted rare access to the archives in Oklahoma and at Marquette University. The historian would later experience ongoing resistance from the church related to his writing and forthcoming book. In line with this, and to the detriment of the project, [an archdiocesan official]...released a statement to the media ahead of the book all but claiming Catholic Indian boarding schools to have caused the least amount of damage as compared to other boarding schools. In fact, the media was used to navigate not only the visibility of the project, but also criticism from the press and from those kicked out of the listening sessions in Konowa.

There was, at times, a sense that despite earnest and heartfelt intentions of the project managers, I was asked to provide the church with a chance at self-reflection as long as they could control the outcome. The Catholic Church, which had participated so thoroughly in government sponsored and religiously justified policies of assimilation through education, should never have been the entity to collect information nor analyze what they could not process due to the inherent infallibility and triumphalism.

About halfway through the project, a good friend of mine who has written a good deal on Catholic boarding schools asked me to question my own ethics in working for the church on this project. He warned me several times to never forget that the church could never truly allow itself to fully embrace allegations of wrongdoing that were in direct opposition to the basic mission of the church.

I cannot call to mind any other project that has caused me such turmoil. This internal debate and sometimes strong conversations with my project managers kept me in limbo. Where was the manual for this? Specifically, a member of the team was a descendant of victims of boarding schools. Her story kept her pushing us to ask families to record, while she herself didn't feel comfortable recording, particularly because she had already been labeled as a troublemaker by asking the local parish and archdiocese to be accountable for the racism and stereotyping her own family experienced. In short, I stayed as long as I did for her.

The struggle within the project eventually became outwardly manifested at a community dinner on the eve of an oral history collection at the Osage Nation in Pawhuska. That evening one of NABS board of directors, Chief [Benjamin] Barnes as well as Margo Gray, the executive director of the United Indian Nations of Oklahoma, would forcibly condemn the church for not sending any of officials to the community dinners to acknowledge the pain inflicted on Native families by their schools. The conversation led the Catholic project representative, a Native woman, to defend the project while in tears.

In total, I traveled to Oklahoma City, Anadarko, Ardmore, Muskogee and Pawhuska and attended two community dinners (which I recommended) and hosted five open sessions to gather oral histories. By the end of the project, there had only been....eight participants in total, five Native and three non-Native. The non-Native collection stopped after the first round at the direction of the project managers. Of these few Native participants, only one was favorable in regard to their time at boarding school. He described his tribe's acceptance of assimilation and the school's structure to be compatible with the aims and progress of his and his family's lives.

Three Native participants came primarily to solicit the help of the church, not to record their family's experience. There was evidence in several of the stories of physical abuse in the form of being hit by teachers as well as mentions of runaways.

There was also significant preliminary evidence from the non-Native school attendees that in some cases there was a minimal acknowledgement of Native culture upon occasion (lessons that relate to tribal customs, a historic arts and crafts teacher who taught all students how to make bows and arrows), as well as a legacy of a non-Native priest who dressed up in Native regalia and performed dances in his travels to the Northeast to solicit donations for his school.

In our limited time left I want to focus on what Native participants asked for but didn't receive and left unresolved for me:

- A chance to say nuanced and personally complicated stories that didn't fit traditional boarding school narratives as demonstrated in other collections. Especially since these stories are being filtered through the Catholic PR machine that fears the political consequences of being labeled "woke" (this was mentioned several times in our project meetings) in the conservative political climate in Oklahoma that limits the talking and teaching about racism, sexism and genocide. The result of this seems to put Native people at odds with each other when some stories are meant to reframe boarding school stories as one of resilience vs. one of stories that recount trauma. This binary is imposed and reinforced under the unique pressure of Oklahoma politics.
- A chance to speak directly to authorities in the church like the bishop or archbishop.
- A chance to find out more about their families (names, years attended) after trying and failing to get information from Marquette [archives]. One even produced a letter from Marquette that demonstrated a lack of willingness to be helpful in a search for family.
- An apology and a framework for reconciliation.
- A conversation about land stolen from Native occupants that the Catholic church has as the result of these schools and churches.
- Acknowledgement that Catholic schools reinforce the Catholic faith, which is inherently assimilative.
St. Louis Boarding School cemetery's cleaned and kept safe with the help of the local diocese.
- The location of St. John's cemetery previously located in Pawhuska appears to have been plowed over for power lines. The cemetery's location and preservation needs to be a commitment of the Tulsa Archdiocese.

The reality is this project requires analysis from multiple angles. The most pressing of these is the ethical consideration of whether this work should be undertaken while still being controlled by the entity accused of doing harm. The project failed to meet its own expectations through wrapping its process in the identity of Catholicism. Moving forward, I challenge myself and others to critically question the power dynamics in projects that could easily shift the usage and intention of the collection. The power in these complicated stories should remain with Native communities free from the politics outside of Indian country.

Longtime OHA leader named University of Kentucky distinguished alumnus

The late Terry L. Birdwhistell, who spent five decades as a leader of the University of Kentucky Libraries and was a longtime member and leader of the Oral History Association, will be inducted in September into the UK's Hall of Distinguished Alumni, the university has announced.

Birdwhistell, who is remembered in Kentucky as the state's keeper of stories, served as president of the Oral History Association in 1991-92 and was long active in the association. Birdwhistell died Jan. 29, 2023, at the age of 72.

A Kentucky native, Birdwhistell earned a degree in American studies at Georgetown and then returned to Kentucky where he earned graduate degrees in history, library and information science and higher education. He took a job in the UK Libraries while working on his master's degrees and never left, assuming increasing leadership positions and ultimately serving as Dean of Libraries and William T. Young Endowed Chair and the Founding Director of the [Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History](#).

"Dr. Birdwhistell shared the experiences of others in ways that remind us that the power of connections can better unite us," said UK President Eli Capilouto. "He told the stories of our university and our state in ways that made us one people, despite our differences. We are better for it."

As an oral historian, Birdwhistell conducted nearly 1,000 interviews documenting the lives of famous people, like Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Lady Bird Johnson, Kentucky political leaders and University of Kentucky presidents. But he also documented the lives of everyday Kentuckians, including many who were otherwise powerless or voiceless, preserving their histories and stories. He also taught scores of students how to do oral history.

To celebrate Birdwhistell's life work and build upon his remarkable contributions to the University of Kentucky and beyond, UK Libraries has established the Dr. Terry L. Birdwhistell Endowment. To further honor him and to support future growth of the Nunn Center, the university has set a goal of raising an additional \$500,000 for the Birdwhistell Endowment by the time he is officially inducted in September 2025.

By raising an overall amount of \$1 million for the endowment, the university said it aims to create the Terry L. Birdwhistell Distinguished Professorship at the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History. This professorship will help elevate and distinguish the Nunn Center as the leading oral history program in the nation and serve as a lasting legacy to Terry's remarkable contributions to the University of Kentucky and beyond, the university said.

Donations to the endowment can be made by mailing a check to: UK Philanthropy, PO Box 910628, Lexington KY 40591-0628. Checks should be made out to the "University of Kentucky," and use the check memo line to indicate your gift is for the Birdwhistell Endowment.

Reflecting on his long career in oral history, Birdwhistell once told an interviewer: "Being an archivist and an oral historian is like planting seeds and you don't know when they're going to germinate or what's going to grow, but it's fun."

Correction

A story in the November 2024 issue of the *OHA Newsletter* misstated details of an oral history project described by Kirsten Dilger, local history programmer for the Kenton County (Kentucky) Public Library, who participated on a panel about human subjects research. She described a project in which she worked with high school juniors from a local Catholic school who interviewed residents of a Catholic retirement home. In the project, they decided not to interview residents with Alzheimer's disease because they did not have the specialized training nor the understanding of how to gain informed consent from residents with Alzheimer's.

The original story incorrectly said the students were in junior high school and did not make clear that residents with Alzheimer's disease were not, in fact, interviewed for the project. The editor apologizes for the errors.



What would you like to see in the next OHA Newsletter?

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