



# NEWSLETTER

## Little Rock, Ark., OHA Meeting Offers Diverse Program for Everyone

**By David Stricklin**  
**Local Arrangements Committee**

Little Rock, Ark., will host the 2006 meeting of the Oral History Association Oct. 25-29, providing context for discussions of oral history as intersection of past, present and future.

Convening on the eve of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city's most famous event and featuring talks by three of the participants in that event, OHA's annual conference promises an intense, gratifying exploration of history's power to engage and to

require reassessment. It also promises an enjoyable time in a vibrant city riding a wave of new energy following the opening of the Clinton Presidential Center.

Most conference events will take place in Little Rock's River Market District, a cultural and entertainment center bounded on one end by the Clinton Center, pictured below, and on the other by the Peabody—the conference hotel—the 1836 Old State House and the New Deal-era Robinson Auditorium. The Arkansas River forms the backdrop for the entire setting.

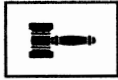
Numerous restaurants and bars are in walking distance of the Peabody, including the food court in the River Market center and Café 42 in the Clinton Center. Street cars connect the principal conference sites.

A self-guided walking tour of downtown historic venues will be available as well as a Saturday guided tour of Hot Springs, about an hour's bus ride from Little Rock, and behind-the-scenes tours of the Clinton Library Archives.

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*OHA conference attendees will be able to visit the new Clinton Center in Little Rock, Ark.*



## From Your President

By Rebecca Sharpless

By the time you read this, I will be a new member of the faculty of Texas Christian University, with an appointment teaching women's history. My official connection with the Baylor University Institute for Oral History will have ended just short of 29 years. While I will always be passionate about the value of personal narrative and recording people's stories, my new work will not entail thinking about oral history every single day. And so as I take my leave, I reflect on what I love most about oral history and what I will miss the most (besides my inestimably wonderful colleagues).

I came to oral history as a 19-year-old student worker, an English major enamored of the printed word. In the late 1970s, we transcribed on electric typewriters with carbon paper and correction fluid, and I found myself transfixed by the process of pulling the spoken word out of the air and putting it on paper. I knew the transcript wasn't the same as the oral record, but I found the process fascinating.

From there I advanced to audit-checking, verifying the transcript against the tape. I thoroughly enjoyed (and still do) listening carefully to difficult passages and tracking down the spellings of place names and proper nouns. At that point, it was still about the words, not the people or even the stories, although I learned an enormous amount of history by working with the transcripts.

It took me several years to make the transition from the words to the people behind the transcripts. As part of the requirements for Tom Charlton's graduate seminar, I conducted my first interview, on a hulking reel-to-reel recorder, in 1981. Now, almost 500 interviews later, I am still learning, both about the topics at hand and how to interview.

After 25 years I still get what we call the "interviewer's high," when you come out of an interview knowing that you truly have helped to create a unique primary source, that if you didn't do it the story would be lost. Interviewing has gotten easier for me with practice, but it is still not simple; if anything, it has grown more complicated as I think more about the dynamics between two individuals.

To my mind, the flexibility and adaptability of oral history continue to be among its great strengths. In my time at Baylor I have interviewed a wide range of people, from congressmen to world-renowned physicians to sharecroppers and the children of mill workers. I certainly have my favorites, and sometimes they surprise me. Given my general suspicion of wealth, I didn't expect to come away with the extremely high respect that I did for a powerful tax attorney, a man of strong ethics and thoughtful responses.

But I'm not surprised that one of my very fondest memories is that of interviewing together two very elderly Mexican immigrant women (with a student as translator) and listening to them swap stories of their mothers teaching them to make tortillas. This value of every individual is one of the chief tenets of oral history, and it remains as true for me now as it was in the beginning.

I also really like working with a range of age groups. As most of my new students are going to be young people, I am going to miss that variety. Recently, when an 80-something gentleman showed up for his interview two days early, someone commented that it was good that I was used to working with the elderly. And I am used to it, and it is good, and I will miss it very much. I can certainly find older people to talk to, but it won't be the same as having it as a part of my everyday duties.

I'm always fascinated in what makes us interested in the topics that we're interested in, and I have found myself challenged to move past my passion for research on life before World War II to more contemporary topics. If I concentrate more on archival sources and less on oral

ones, I will miss interacting with my sources.

One of my favorite interview questions has always been "Why?" I have pressed my interviewees to explain their views on why events occurred the way they did and have delighted at their articulation of things that matter to them. Flat pieces of paper have neither warmth nor the ability to respond to my questions. I may need to find a research topic that deals with something in the more recent past to get my interview fixes!

The Baylor oral history institute has been a wonderfully warm nest, and I want to end by paying tribute to my colleagues over the years: Tom Charlton, David Stricklin, Jaclyn Jeffrey, Kathryn Blakeman, Peggy Kinard, Carol Holcomb and now Lois Myers, Elinor Mazé, Becky Shulda and Leslie Ballard. I expect them to continue to do the amazing work in which has been my privilege to participate for the past three decades.

*Vaya con Dios*, BUIOH. I'll be watching closely and cheering you on.

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### Hotel Reservations Available Now For Little Rock Meet

OHA members planning to stay at the Little Rock Peabody Hotel, site of the 2006 conference, should make hotel reservations before Sept. 23.

The number to call is 800-PEABODY (732-2639). The cost for OHA members is \$122 a night for all occupancy categories.

Consult the conference program, available online as well as by mail, for information about alternate housing options in Little Rock.

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# Joint Meeting With Oral Historians, Ethnomusicologists, Folklorists Explores Their Role in Academia

By Rebecca Sharpless  
OHA President

In May, six Oral History Association members met in Nashville, Tenn., with representatives of the American Folklore Society and the Society of Ethnomusicologists to discuss the positions of their fields within the academy. Funded by the Mellon Foundation, the meeting took place at the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University.

Representing the OHA were past presidents Al Broussard, Tom Charlton, Laurie Mercier and Linda Shopes, executive secretary Madelyn Campbell and current president Rebecca Sharpless. Current AFS president Bill Ivey, former director of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Country Music Hall of Fame, hosted the meeting, which was coordinated by AFS executive director Tim Lloyd. AFS and SEM also sent six representatives each from their organizations.

To prepare for the meeting, OHA committee members conducted several informal but revealing surveys with members and subscribers to *H-Oralhist*. We received 190 responses.

Not surprisingly, the surveys revealed that oral history is everywhere in the academy, most typically in libraries, archives and history departments, but also in a wide variety of other departments.

Respondents said they believe that oral history is regarded about the same as other types of historical evidence by their department members. Although 89 percent of the respondents were familiar with the OHA **Evaluation Guidelines**, many faculty members consider their own training to be inadequate and that of their students very spotty.

The answers to open-ended questions were quite revealing. The question "What is your greatest concern about oral history?" elicited

the largest number of answers on issues of preservation and access, including transcription.

Respondents raised questions of definitions and identity—just what is and isn't oral history? Quality control and training were another significant area of concern. Institutional Review Board issues continue to worry oral historians.

In answer to the question, "What can OHA do to increase the quality of oral history at your institution?" most respondents mentioned training, workshops and general outreach. Coupled with this was the possibility of closer ties between OHA and the regional organizations.

A search of the syllabus finder at the History Matters Web site shows that literally thousands of courses in American universities have oral history components. A sample of those syllabi demonstrated that few of the instructors are OHA members or know about the **Evaluation Guidelines**.

Analyzing the prizes awarded by the American Historical Association and the Organization of the American Historians revealed that at least 22 winners of major prizes in recent years used oral history as a significant source of their evidence.

As the designated author for the group, Shopes took the data from the research and compiled a 40-page report. She concluded:

"Oral history is a well established practice within the academy, enjoying wide acceptance as an archival practice, research method, pedagogical tool and means of community service and public scholarship.

"Yet as a field it remains underdeveloped: interviews are undertaken too casually by scholars and students, theoretical discussions within oral history remain insulated from broader intellectual contexts, creative practice remains unrewarded.

"In addition, new technologies are

creating new challenges even as they open up new opportunities, funding remains inadequate and IRBs continue to review oral history research inappropriately."

Two days of discussion with AFS and SEM colleagues revealed many common interests among the three groups as well as significant differences.

The folklorists and musicologists were particularly interested at the disconnect between the extremely popular image of oral history, demonstrated by people such as Studs Terkel and David Isay, and the relatively small OHA membership. At the same time, oral history seems to be thriving as a field, as a pedagogy and as a means of gathering scholarly evidence.

At the close of the meeting, the OHA team compiled a draft report, "Strategies to Strengthen Oral History within the Academy." The strategies fall into eight categories:

- + information gathering, as in learning more about our members and their interests;
- + curriculum development and training;
- + collaboration with colleagues across disciplinary lines;
- + enhancement of rewards for community work and work involving technology;
- + increased visibility, leading to increased legitimacy;
- + recognition and ramping up of theoretical, interpretive and analytical practices;
- + technology and
- + external funding.

The committee will present a report to Council at the October meeting with action steps for consideration.

# Willa K. Baum, Oral History Pioneer

By Ann Lage  
Regional Oral History Office  
University of California, Berkeley

Willa Klug Baum, former director of the Regional Oral History Office, died May 18, 2006, following back surgery. She was 79.

Willa was present at the founding of ROHO in 1954, and she served as its director for 43 years until her retirement in 2000. During her career, she built and sustained one of the leading oral history programs in the country and became an internationally recognized figure in the field of oral history.

Born in Chicago on Oct. 4, 1926, Willa attended school in Germany, Switzerland and New York in the 1930s and '40s, before settling in Ramona, Calif., for high school. Her diverse interests ranged from tap dancing and skiing to playing trombone and piano. Her job experiences included a stint as a fruit picker and as a social reporter for a local newspaper. She was a star student at Whittier College and later enrolled at Berkeley as a graduate student in U.S. history, one of only two women in the program at the time. There she began work at ROHO, starting as a transcriber and research assistant and later as an interviewer and editor specializing in agriculture and water development.

Willa became director of ROHO in 1958, when oral history was just getting underway as a recognized research methodology. She immediately grasped the significance of the tape-recorded interview in creating new primary resources for scholars, much as Hubert Howe Bancroft did with his "Dictations" in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Over the years, she built a nationally acclaimed oral history office documenting subject areas such as the arts and agriculture, biotechnology and banking, higher education and engineering, music and mining, politics and printing, health care and health sciences and

community history.

When she retired, she left a loyal staff of 35 employees, still many part-timers, with an annual budget of \$500,000. The growth of the oral history office came by dint of Willa's leadership and entrepreneurial spirit, and the gifted and tenacious fundraising she and her staff pursued; every project and a good part of the office's administrative costs were supported by gifts and grants.

The Regional Oral History Office was the second university program in oral history in the country, and Willa was a pioneer in the development of the field nationwide. She was a founding member and leader in the Oral History Association, and her publications on oral history methods, processing, uses and theoretical approaches have guided several generations of oral historians. She mentored countless community historians as well as Berkeley faculty and students in the art and practice of oral history.

The procedures and practices she established at ROHO on matters from legal releases to nuances of transcribing and editing interviews to ethical treatment of interviewees have provided models for programs across the country. She was truly a founder of the field of oral history.

Never one to adopt new ways precipitously, Willa didn't enter the computer age herself, eschewing e-mail and word processing right up to (and beyond) the turn of the new century. Nevertheless, once cajoled into the digital age by her staff, she recognized Internet publication as a means to her longstanding mission to make ROHO oral histories widely available for scholarly research. Under her leadership, ROHO was the first major oral history program to begin placing its collection on the Internet.

Willa Baum was a woman of broad interests and many accomplishments, not least among



*Willa K. Baum*  
1926-2006

them raising six children, Mark, Eric, Rachel, Brandon, Noah and Anya, born between 1952 and 1972. For the "Who's Who of American Women," she listed her avocation as "child-rearing."

She loved theater and music, and as a former teacher of English as a foreign language, for many years she shared her home and made lasting friendships with scores of international students studying English in Berkeley. Her Monday evening dinners with family, students and array of friends and former interviewees were legendary.

To take the measure of a long and complex career is sometimes difficult, but in Willa Baum's case the evidence is tangible. Her most lasting and visible achievement was the collection she built at ROHO—more than 1,600 oral history interviews in 800 repositories worldwide, many of them now on the Internet, filled with first-hand accounts by significant participants in historical events.

Much of this record of the recent past would have been lost to future generations of historians had not Willa Baum recognized in 1954 the value of the fledgling discipline of oral history and for the next 45 years applied her unflagging energy and commitment to recording and preserving the history of California and the West.

# Remembering Willa....

By James E. Fogerty  
Minnesota Historical Society

I knew Willa for many years through the Oral History Association. I first met her in the mid-1970s when I invited her to be the keynote speaker at a statewide local history meeting in Minnesota. She was already famous as the author of the two most influential manuals in the field and drew a capacity crowd to the meeting.

While in Minnesota she also presented a workshop for journeymen oral historians, which was a remarkable opportunity to learn directly from the acknowledged leader in the field. That meeting, which was hugely successful, really launched my long acquaintance with Willa, who gave me advice and counsel through the years as I worked to create the Oral History Office at the Minnesota Historical Society.

I never ceased being amazed at her willingness, both individually and at meetings, to spend time with the merest beginners and answer basic questions with patience, good humor and real personal interest. She never, ever lost her genuine commitment to oral history at the local level.

In 1986, during a week I spent up at Lafayette in the desert hills above Oakland doing a series of interviews, I had the pleasure of attending dinner at her home and reveling in the wonderful food and conversation that made the evening flash by all too quickly. And I never missed the chance to spend an evening at dinner with her during OHA annual meetings, which she attended regularly for years. I last saw her in Durham, N.C., when she was my guest at the OHA banquet that honored OHA's founding members.

Willa's beliefs about oral history—the right way to do it and to produce it for wider use—were strong and certain. I enjoyed her ready sense of humor, but also her convictions and her unwavering

support for creating oral history that provides information while respecting each individual narrator's point of view.

She will be greatly missed indeed.

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By David K. Dunaway  
University of New Mexico

At Berkeley, I took Willa Baum's graduate seminar in oral history. I learned a lot, including that what I'd done for the last years had a name. I'd been researching and interviewing people for a biography of Pete Seeger. Out of that seminar came a life-long commitment and "Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology" (OHA/American Association for State and Local History, 1984), edited with Willa Klug Baum.

For years the OHA had tried to assemble such an anthology, by committee. Betty Key and Martha Ross had assembled a team of senior figures in the OHA, including Thomas Charlton, Sam Hand, William Moss and Enid Douglass. But the work had foundered, and as I studied for my doctoral orals, I repeatedly asked Willa where I could find the key readings in the field.

Her answer was to point a finger at the tattered set of clippings kept in a folder in ROHO's Library, never far from Willa's reach at the small desk in an office she shared equally with her colleagues.

I pointed out that these clippings were from obscure publications and no one—and probably no single library—had a set. Why not prepare an anthology, and in doing so shape the field by bringing together key works, I asked.

"Fine. You do that," she replied on a day when I had drifted up to the obscure, fourth floor of the Bancroft Library where the Regional Oral History Office was housed in a series of small and rickety rooms.

Not knowing how seriously to take her suggestions, I hurriedly wrote up a proposal listing the articles she had given me so far. She

went over the list, added a few, subtracted a few and handed it back.

"If you can do this, you may be doing oral history a favor." That was Willa's way, to speak straight but not long. For the next three years I worked with her to gather the permissions to reproduce these works—and many loyal OHA members gave their permission for the OHA-sponsored first edition of "Oral History."

Throughout these years, and my finishing my dissertation, Willa was by turn maternal, constructively critical and funny.

I remember the night the anthology was finally done. I had begun teaching full time but returned for Christmas break to Berkeley. We were writing up the headnotes describing each article and the short biographies of the authors.

It was about 8 o'clock on New Year's Eve, and I had plans to go out that evening; and so perhaps I hurried our work along. We sat at typewriters (how quaint) with the essay texts and background authors had provided. When we had a bunch we would pass them to each other and start rewriting each other's copy. It went smoothly.

Finally as the new year drew in, I pulled out the split of champagne I'd smuggled into the library and opened it right there, in ROHO's offices—just the two of us and a book.

I lost touch with Willa in the last few years, but at another occasion her work and mine intersected. It was when she retired from ROHO, and I was among those considered to take her place at Berkeley. Like anyone looking at continuing the work of his or her mentor, I was both ambitious and nervous at the prospect.

I remember standing in front of the considerable staff of the Bancroft Library and reminding them of Willa's role in running its oral history program for half a century.

"This is a woman who has molded the field (and here my eyes flicked towards Willa) of oral history for half a century. She is the senior figure in American oral history and though

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# Project Explores Historic Relationships Between First Nations and Scottish Fur Traders

By Alison Brown  
University of Aberdeen, Scotland

How do historic artifacts fit with how the past is talked about in the present?

In what ways can collections be used to recover hidden histories?

These questions are being explored by researchers at the Department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, in their new project *Material Histories: Social Relationships between Scots and Aboriginal People in the Canadian Fur Trade, c1870-1930*. Funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council the project focuses on artifacts in Scotland that are connected with the cross-cultural history of the fur trade and the stories people tell about these things today.

Scotland and Canada have strong historical connections. Many Scots emigrated to Canada during the past 300 years, and people – mostly men – from Scotland and the Orkney Islands were involved with all aspects of the Canadian fur trade from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the 1970s.

Many of these men sent home gifts to their families made by First Nations people, such as beadwork bags or moccasins, or brought

personal possessions like painted coats and snowshoes with them when they returned to Scotland following the end of their contracts.

Other items belonged to the children of fur trade marriages who were “placed” with relatives for several years while they received an education in Scottish schools. Some of these artifacts are now in museum collections, but others have been kept by the descendants of fur traders and their families and are displayed in their homes or tucked away in drawers.

Using the social history of the fur trade as a backdrop, the project explores how artifacts from the past are used in the present to evoke knowledge and social memories of diaspora relationships. It also considers how the stories told around them are used in the creation of forms of history that extend beyond those in the written record.

The project team, which consists of Tim Ingold, Nancy Wachowich and Alison Brown, is interested in the continued salience of fur trade history to people descended from fur trading families. We are interested in the stories people tell about objects from the fur trade, both what gets passed down as family stories and

also with what does not - the silences in family histories.

Can artifacts reduce these silences?

How are fur-trade relationships instantiated in material things?

Why are certain items treasured and others not?

How are sentimental histories and biographical memories bound together in artifacts?

Case studies emerging from museum and family archives are being used to explore these questions.

The project began with a preliminary survey of museum collections and a press appeal for Scottish families with fur trade artifacts in their homes to contact us.

From this initial foray we have chosen to focus on collections that had their origins with Omushkegowak or “Swampy Cree” people in the Hudson’s Bay and James Bay lowlands (in what today is part of northern Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec), though we are also doing some follow-up work on a small number of collections from other parts of Canada.

The oldest item of interest is a family portrait of John McNab, who worked for the Hudson Bay Company as a chief factor and a

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## Remembering Willa...

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someone may continue her job and her work, none will replace her.”

In my last letter to Willa, when she was in the hospital, I wrote the following: “I continue onward with the oral history projects which you have inspired in me. I now hope to inspire them in others, particularly with the National Park Service Route 66 Oral History Office, which I have set up to train citizen-historians in

collecting their own oral histories along Route 66.

“At last count, more than 200 interviews have been conducted, transcribed, and yes, deposited. You should take this as one more example of your graduate students carrying the flame forward to a new generation of interviewers. That day I wandered into your oral history seminar, and began learning oral history according to Baum, was a fateful one for me. I hope this gives you some satisfaction as perhaps passing the torch to a new generation of students will do for me. I only hope they remember to write.”

## Editor's Note:

The OHA Newsletter and the Oral History Review will include additional remembrances of Willa Baum in future issues. If you wish to contribute to either publication, please send your remembrances to:

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Oral History Review  
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or  
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## Fur Trade Research, cont.

surgeon between 1779 and 1810.

The most contemporary artifacts are several pairs of Cree moccasins, jackets and beadwork collected in the 1960s in northern Manitoba by a Hudson Bay Company employee and sent to his family in Scotland after he died in a canoe accident.

We have also been contacted by a number of people with documentary collections that belonged to their parents or grandparents, which include photographs and memoirs.

While there is a fairly extensive literature on fur trade history prior to 1870 and rich documentary material in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg, academic interest in later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century experiences has been relatively recent.

Moreover, there has been very little emphasis on the perspectives of aboriginal people in fur trade history, and few researchers have had the opportunity to explore historical sources in Scotland, whatever form they may take, at any length. The *Material Histories* project thus attempts to bring together Scottish sources with First Nations readings of these sources to think about how fur trade history is remembered both in Scotland and in Canada.

Two recent oral history projects that address the experiences of the First Nations of the Hudson Bay and James Bay lowlands have been extremely influential for the *Material Histories* project.

The first is the *Voices from Hudson Bay* project, coordinated by Parks Canada in the early 1990s, which contributed first-person oral accounts to existing ethnographic and economic analyses (Beardy and Coutts, 1996).

The second is the recordings of Louis Bird, an Omushkego storyteller and historian from Peawanuck, Ontario, who since the 1960s has been recording stories from elders in his community. He recently worked with staff at the University of Winnipeg to produce a Web site – "Our Voices"



[<http://www.ourvoices.ca>] – and a book based on the recordings ("Telling Our Stories: Omushkego Legends and Histories from Hudson Bay," Peterborough, Broadview Press, 2005). Both these projects have been crucial in bringing to the fore the stories of aboriginal people whose lives intersected in different ways with those of fur traders from Scotland and elsewhere.

The *Material Histories* project attempts to add another dimension to this recorded history: the stories of descendants of fur traders and their families in Scotland. Through its focus on artifacts, one of the longer-term goals of the project is to bring together First Nations artists and historians with museum staff in Scotland to share knowledge and information about the collections and how they can be used in educational projects.

Our project has been running since October 2005 and draws on oral history interviews, artifact analysis and genealogical techniques.

Brown, who is currently based in Winnipeg, has already conducted a number of interviews with descendants of fur traders in Scotland and is about to begin interviewing in Canada.

The paucity of documentation for many Scottish museum collections has meant that in many cases, the Canadian interviews will be with cultural descendants, rather than direct descendants, of the artifact-makers. Some of the interviews, however, will be with people who are directly descended from fur trade marriages and are now in touch with relatives in Scotland.

Brown's interviews so far indicate that while there are tremendous gaps in knowledge on both sides of the Atlantic regarding the interconnected histories of Scots-First Nations relationships, there is a huge interest to learn more and intrigue in the possibilities of artifacts to contribute understanding of what these relationships may have been like.

By focusing on the stories that fur trade descendants tell about artifacts connected with their families, we hope to show how objects, through the sentiments and words invested in them, play a part in shaping the experience and identities of subsequent generations. They are not merely objects of exchange, but agents in the historical process of relationship building.

# Fall Conference Offers Something for Everyone

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Local volunteer guides will be available to take conference attendees to some of Bill Clinton's favorite eating establishments.

In addition to several wonderful plenary speakers, three of the famous Little Rock Nine will address the conference at the Saturday evening awards banquet.

Thelma Mothershed-Wair, Minnijean Brown Trickey and Elizabeth Eckford will tell of the courage and presence of mind it took to go against the system that denied their right to an equal education in the South of 1957 and of their experiences as reluctant icons of the civil rights movement.

Directions will be available to the Central High School National Historic Site and to the State Capitol, which features a moving tribute to the Little Rock Nine, statues of the nine students heading up the hill to the capitol building.

Whether your interests lean toward social justice movements, natural disasters or the history of oral history, you'll find engaging workshops, panels, performance pieces, films, multimedia projects and a chance to make new friends and reconnect with old ones at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary OHA conference.

Workshops will kick off the annual conference on Wednesday, Oct. 25. The scheduled sessions include workshops on:

- + an introduction to oral history interviewing;
- + an introduction to digital audio field recording;
- + preservation of digital materials;
- + oral history project planning and
- + oral history and the family historian.

Thursday's conference sessions focus on movements for social justice, with panels exploring disparate topics, including: African-American women in the Episcopalian

Church, farm co-operatives, artists with disabilities, gender barriers in the U.S. Congress, the Negro Baseball League and war brides in Arkansas.

A presidential reception at Arkansas' Old Statehouse will feature OHA past presidents recalling the association's past 40 years.

Friday, the conference theme features sessions devoted to exploring the many oral history projects that are documenting various aspects of Hurricane Katrina. Friday sessions also will explore developments in digital technology.

Two more workshops on Saturday will offer oral history training for teachers and a session on writing oral history.

Other Saturday sessions will turn the spotlight on desegregation in Little Rock, the history of oral history and new legal issues facing oral historians. A Sunday morning business meeting will round out the conference.



*Hot Springs, Ark., shown here at night, is just one of the many Little Rock-area spots to visit when you attend the 2006 annual Oral History Association conference.*



# Endowment Fund Drive Sets Anniversary \$\$\$ Goals

By James E. Fogerty  
OHA Finance Committee

More than a decade ago the Oral History Association announced the launch of "Project 30," a campaign to augment the OHA Endowment Funds in celebration of the organization's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. That campaign was highly successful and helped move the endowment closer to a level at which it could both stabilize and contribute to the OHA financial structure.

Ten years has elapsed since that important endowment campaign, and the endowment fund experienced steady growth in the years immediately following the successful conclusion of that effort. In more recent years, gifts to the endowment have slowed considerably, and it is time to reignite the vision that made the endowment possible in the first place.

In celebration of OHA's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Council and Finance Committee have agreed that it is a perfect moment for another campaign to increase the Endowment Fund. The fund currently has \$150,000, and the goal is to increase that amount to more than \$200,000 to mark the organization's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. That amount will finally establish the endowment with a funding base adequate to the generation of sufficient income to fund a variety of projects each year.

With income from that amount, OHA can take its activities to a new level, expanding the small scholarship program and the research grant program that is about to begin. Other initiatives also will be possible as Council has a reasonable stream of endowment income to devote to such projects.

OHA is fortunate to have a base of loyal and generous members

whose commitment to the organization is real and sustained. There is no better way to express such commitment than through a gift to the OHA Endowment Fund. The growth of the endowment to the projected level allows the organization a level of flexibility that is not possible with dependence on fluctuating annual income from such sources as the annual meeting.

Gifts to the Endowment Fund campaign may be made in honor or in memory of an individual, a device that generated great support in the previous campaign. A general endowment appeal will be sent to all OHA members this fall. Council and the Finance Committee are grateful for the strong support of the membership for the organization and look forward to a successful campaign and to the innovative project support it will make possible.

## OHA Launches Emerging Crises Grant Program

The Oral History Association has initiated an Emerging Crisis Oral History Research Fund, offering grants of up to \$3,000 to support oral history research in crisis situations in the United States and abroad.

Grants can be used for travel, per diem or transcription costs for research in places and situations in which a longer application time schedule may create problems.

"Such crisis situations include but are not limited to wars, natural disasters, political and or economic/ethnic repression or other currently emerging events of crisis proportions," according to the research fund committee.

Funds cannot be used for equipment purchase.

Applicants are required to submit five copies of a one-page proposal that explains the nature of the emerging crisis they intend to research and provide details about planned interviews and suggest arrangements for preserving the

interviews and making them available for future use.

According to the research fund committee, chaired by Charles Bolton, the committee will make recommendations within three weeks from receiving an application.

The committee said in its mission statement that scholars conducting oral history research on current crises "often begin interviewing informants within weeks or months of the crisis or even while the crisis event is unfolding. Obtaining funding for such research is generally difficult, because of the extended application time schedule of most funding organizations."

The mission statement says that the OHA Emerging Crises Oral History Research Fund will provide "a more expedient source of funding for these meaningful projects."

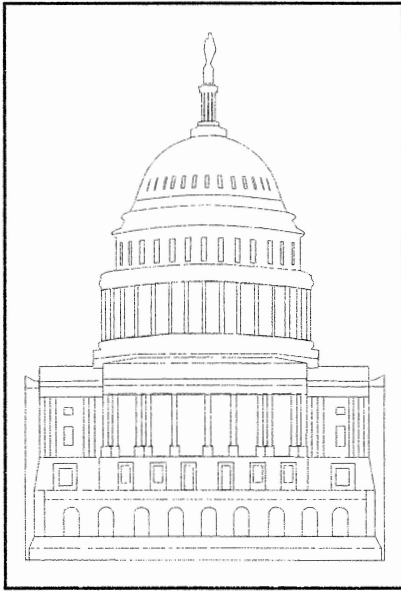
## OHA Directory Now Online

The OHA membership directory is now online on the OHA Web page and will no longer be available in print. We intend to update the directory monthly and to provide access only to current members of OHA. You will be able to sort and search the membership list to find particular members or members in your area.

In addition, you can see complete information about your own membership, including address information, amount paid, membership expiration date and any other biographical data that you provided to the University of California Press when you joined.

If you would like to make any changes, please e-mail UCPress at: [journals@ucpress.edu](mailto:journals@ucpress.edu). If you are unable to log in, this means your membership is not current and we encourage you to contact UCPress to renew.

To log into the directory, go to [http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/mem\\_dir.html](http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/mem_dir.html) and use your subscription number for both the log-in ID and Password. Your subscription number is on the label attached to this **Newsletter** or the **Oral History Review**.



## Washington Update

By Bruce Craig  
National Coalition for History

*[Editor's Note: The National Coalition for History is a nonprofit educational organization that serves as a national advocacy office in Washington, D.C., for historical and archival professions. It is a consortium of more than 50 organizations, including the Oral History Association. Here are selected excerpts from recent "NCH Washington Update" columns.]*

### Colorado House Member Introduces Human Subjects Research Legislation

U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette, D-Colo., has introduced the "Protection for Participants in Research Act of 2006," legislation seeking to insure that all human subject research poses minimal risk to research participants.

The bill also seeks to insure "informed consent" by all research participants.

Human subject research—including certain oral history research activities—has been interpreted by some federal officials in the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and some university

Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) to be governed by provisions in the Public Health Service Act. The law, which originally was designed to protect human subjects from abuse by biomedical researchers, remains vague if not totally mute with respect to oral history research.

This, however, has not prevented some university IRBs to "overreach" their authority, in the view of some critics, when applying OHRP regulations to oral history research. Some university IRBs grant an exemption to oral history research while others, especially those without historians or social scientists as members, demand that historians seek IRB approval for any oral history research.

In recent months there have been several new IRB horror stories relating to oral history.

For example, at one major research university, a doctoral dissertation that had been approved by the dean of the Graduate School was withdrawn just weeks before the student's anticipated graduation.

In what appears to have been a communication problem between the student's graduate adviser, the graduate school and the university IRB, the doctoral candidate was ordered to take back his dissertation, strike all references to his oral history interviewees and destroy the tapes he made, even though he had secured signed releases from all his oral history interviewees.

The student's graduation and future—including a job offer (his position is conditioned on having the Ph.D. in hand prior to appointment)—remain uncertain.

DeGette's bill does not speak directly to the issue of oral history research and would do little to address the specific concerns relating to such research activities.

A provision in the bill would direct the Health and Human Services secretary to consider whether the list of exemptions should be modified or whether "new categories of exemptions [should be] established."

The bill also mandates that local IRBs are to consist of at least two persons whose expertise is in

"nonscientific areas" and an additional two persons from outside the research institution.

While the DeGette bill does little to resolve the controversy over oral history, the American Historical Association, the Oral History Association and other history-related organizations have formally requested that the OHRP, which in the past has sent contradictory messages to the historical community, clarify its regulations and policies regarding the applicability of oral history in IRB review.

### NEH Announces Hurricane Recovery Grants For Humanities Groups

The National Endowment for the Humanities has announced it will designate \$750,000 for grants to stabilize humanities collections at libraries, museums, colleges, universities and other cultural and historical institutions in Gulf Coast areas affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

"These grants will support projects by cultural institutions in the Gulf Coast region to provide long-term protection and preservation of their significant humanities collections, many of which sustained major damage in the aftermath of last year's hurricanes," NEH Chairman Bruce Cole said.

He also announced that the NEH has awarded 20 recent emergency grants of up to \$30,000 each to preserve books, records, manuscripts, art and cultural artifacts damaged by the hurricanes and the flooding that followed.

Oct. 2 is the application deadline for hurricane-related NEH stabilization grants.

## STATE AND REGIONAL REPORT



### University of Florida Digitizes Thousands Of Oral Histories

More than 100,000 pages of digitized oral history interview transcripts from the University of Florida's Samuel Proctor Oral History Program are now available online through the university's Digital Library Collections at: [www.uflib.ufl.edu/ufdc](http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/ufdc).

Financial support from University of Florida alumni Caleb and Michele Grimes enabled the program to scan, edit and digitize the oral history collection. More than half of the program's approximately 4,500 transcribed interviews have been digitized.

The collection includes interviews on: Florida politics, business leaders, the election recount of 2000, newspapers, Everglades restoration, state water management districts and the Florida Highway Patrol.

The collection also includes more than 900 interviews with Native Americans, including Seminoles, Cherokees, Lumbees, Choctaws and Creeks.

Other oral history collections document community leaders and institutions in the state's 67 counties and extensive interviews with faculty staff and administrators of the University of Florida.

Only written transcripts are currently available in the online collection, but plans call for digitizing audio holdings and, ultimately, for videotaping interviews.

### Three-Year Grant Funds Digital Project In North Carolina

The University of North Carolina's Southern Oral History Program and the UNC Library have received a three-year, \$505,232 grant from the federal Institute for Museum and Library Services to digitize and publish online some 500 oral history interviews collected during the past 30 years.

"Oral Histories of the American South" will provide access to previously unheard voices and stories that make up the history of a unique and rapidly changing region.

Jacquelyn Hall, UNC's Southern Oral History Program director, said the project "will allow us to restore the power of the human voice to the heart of oral history research and use.

"Because it is so much easier to consult transcribed text, students and scholars often never listen to the tapes at all. Yet a transcript can't capture how the story is told—the tone, the inflection of words, the sound of laughter, the catch in the voice, the ironies, the personal interaction between interviewer and interviewee, the silences that sometimes speak louder than words.

"Now people will be able to search transcripts with ease and, at the same time, hear the many nuances of meaning in the spoken word," she said in a press release.

For more information, visit the program's Web site at: [www.sohp.org](http://www.sohp.org).

### University of Winnipeg Hosts Canadian Oral History Group

The Canadian Oral History Association has taken up residence at the University of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Alexander Freund, chair of German-Canadian Studies and

associate professor of history, and Nolan Reilly, chair and professor of history, are managing the association. For information, contact Reilly at: [n.reilly@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:n.reilly@uwinnipeg.ca)

### North Dakota Expands Germans from Russia Oral History Project

The North Dakota State University Libraries' Germans from Russia oral history project had plans to interview 50 more narrators this summer in its ongoing effort to preserve the history and heritage of Germans from Russia on the Northern Plains.

A second summer season of interviewing was scheduled to take interviewers and videographers to various communities in North Dakota and Saskatchewan, supported in part by a grant from the Canadian embassy and numerous other humanities and cultural preservation organizations.

### Oral History Projects Receive Recent Awards

The Mississippi Historical Society has awarded its first oral history award to Amy Evans for an oral history project on a Greenville, Miss.-based restaurant, Doe's Eat Place, the Southern Foodways Alliance has reported.

The National Book Critics Circle has awarded its general nonfiction recognition to "Voices From Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster," by Svetlana Alexievich. The book is published by the nonprofit Dalkey Archive Press.

# Japanese Oral Historians Learn from OHA Member

**By Ann Sado**  
**Japan Oral History Association**

Japan Women's University Mejiro campus was the site of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Japan Oral History Association's Workshop for Practitioners on March 11-12.

Sherna Berger Gluck of California State University's Long Beach oral history program, was the keynote speaker, who described the evolution of oral history in the United States.

She said the first generation of oral historians started with the hearing of elite white men's life stories after World War II, and the second generation was started during the '60s with the feminist movement and other social movements using

oral history methodology. The third generation was started by the Italian scholar, Alessandro Portelli, who raised the consciousness of the theory of social awareness among the recollections of the masses, she said, and the fourth generation is represented by those who build oral history archives on the Web. She explained the CSULB Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive and showed how it can be used.

On the second day of the workshop, Gluck and Ann Sado of Legacy Memoirs demonstrated an interviewing session. Three oral history practitioners also presented a family oral history, the oral history of a nonprofit organization and an oral

history project in a higher educational organization. Gluck gave specific advice and evaluation to each presenter.

A total of 95 people participated in the two-day conference, and the association hopes more new members will join.

The Japan Oral History Association appreciates the assistance of Tazuko Kobayashi of Japan Women's University and her graduate students who assisted with the conference.

An English summary of the workshop will appear in the next issue of the International Oral History Association newsletter.

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