



NEWS LETTER

February 2023

In this issue:

President's Letter

Executive Director's Column

Meet OHA's Program Associate

New guidelines in promotion, tenure process

Destination Baltimore

In Memoriam: Birdwhistell & Treleven



OHA's new home at Baylor University's Carroll Library



serve on Council as our OHA leadership—is done by unpaid volunteers.

And so, on behalf of all of us in the OHA, let me say THANK YOU to all our volunteers. Whether you've given a minute or many hours of your time and skills to the work of the organization, you have the gratitude of us all.

The OHA does what it does—and is what it is—because of all the people (present and past) who have given of themselves to the important work of promoting and supporting the practice of oral history and the people who do it. That work is sometimes hard and often time-consuming, but it is always appreciated. And, as important, it is impactful.

President's Letter

By Tomás Summers Sandoval

The OHA's operational year runs from one annual conference to the next. And so, while we might only be finishing the second month of 2023, we're already a third of the way through my time as OHA president. It's a great time—and an important time—for me to say thank you to all our OHA volunteers.

You may not know this, but the OHA is an all-volunteer organization. While we employ one full-time staff person for our main office, all the work we do—from the people who organize and plan our annual meeting, to the folks who chair our OHA committees and task forces, to the many more who serve on those bodies, to the people you elect to

This month's newsletter is filled with examples of this. So is the work we're doing in our committees and Council to provide resources and training; advocate for oral history and oral historians; oversee and administer grants; and foster community, both physically each fall and virtually every month in between.

I know you—as our members—join me in thanking our volunteers. I hope you'll also consider being a part of our volunteer tradition, if you aren't already. We're always eager to discover new members who'd like to join our committees or help with other facets of the OHA's work. Feel free to write me if you're interested.

And if you're already a part of our community of volunteers, thanks for making the OHA what it is!

Executive Director's Column

By Stephen Sloan

Here at Baylor University, we are excited to serve as the Executive Office of the Oral History Association. We have a strong team in place with Bethany McLemore Stewart serving as program associate and Steven Sielaff serving as assistant director. Founded in 1970, what became the Institute for Oral History has been a leading academic oral history program in the United States for decades now. You can read some of our history [here](#).

My predecessors in the BUIOH director's chair, Tom Charlton and Rebecca Sharpless, each had long records of service to the OHA. They both served as president of the association, and Charlton was editor of the quarterly Oral History Association Newsletter published out of Baylor for 18 years. As a program we have supported the development of oral history best practices and procedures in a host of ways.



president during an extensive strategic planning effort, organized a membership wide survey, and helped lead an extensive visioning process for OHA's future. In my time in OHA, I have also enjoyed the opportunity to contribute through several standing and award committees. I was chair of the Emerging Crises Oral History Research Fund Committee, the Membership Committee and the Development Task Force. I also served as a member of the Committees Task Force and the Article Award Committee.

As an oral historian, I have also benefitted from the work of OHA award committees through receiving two major awards from the organization. I received the 2015 OHA Book Award for *Listening on the Edge: Oral*

The publications from our faculty include *Oral History for Texans* (1985), *Handbook of Oral History* (2006), *Thinking about Oral History: Theories and Application* (2007), *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology* (2007), *Listening on the Edge: Oral History in the Aftermath of Crisis* (2014), *Tattooed on My Soul: Texas Veterans Remember World War II* (2015), and *Oral History and the Environment: Global Perspectives on Climate, Connection, and Catastrophe and Oral History at a Distance* (2022).

Besides these publications, our freely available “Introduction to Oral History Manual” and our widely used “Style Guide: A Quick Reference for Editing Oral History Transcripts” have made important contributions. You can see a bibliography of BUIOH scholarship [here](#).

As OHA executive director, I bring 20 years of experience with the Oral History Association and in the field. I have seen the ways in which the members of our organization work tirelessly to advance the methodology and ensure that the OHA attends to the needs and interests of the diverse practitioners who do excellent and important work with oral history.

I have held several executive positions within the OHA (president, vice president, and first vice present). During my years in leadership, I worked closely on the transition to the executive director model as the association moved to its inaugural host, Georgia State University. I was also

History in the Aftermath of Crisis (co-edited with Mark Cave) and the 2018 Elizabeth B. Mason Project Award for the “Texas Survivors of Genocide Oral History Project” sponsored Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission.

In my work directing programs here at Baylor University and the University of Southern Mississippi, I have taught oral history at the undergraduate and graduate levels, to hundreds of community groups and to investigators in a wide variety of settings. One of the training initiatives I developed was our program’s online *Getting Started with Oral History* that began in 2009. It has been rewarding to engage new practitioners with oral history from around the U.S. and the globe both through introductory and advanced instructional virtual offerings.

The Oral History Association has long been the nexus of my professional life, the place where both my passions and practice can be honed and energized. I am grateful for the community and guidance that the OHA has provided me in so many profound ways, and I relish the opportunity to do the same for other oral historians. I am confident that our leadership team is well suited to serve the OHA in this role and meet the challenges and opportunities of the next few years. I am grateful for the trust the OHA membership has placed in us with this partnership and anticipate many positive outcomes from the new relationship.

OHA welcomes new treasurer

By Troy Reeves, OHA first vice president and former treasurer

I start this update by welcoming Mary Larson into the role as OHA interim treasurer. As an organization, we are lucky Mary agreed to take over this role, which she will hold through 2023. I say lucky because Mary brings current knowledge

from her role as vice-chair of the Finance Committee and institutional knowledge from her years of OHA service, including being a past president.

This change has happened due to my election to our executive council. With my term starting after the 2022 annual meeting, I could not serve in both roles. As a member of our executive council, I will stay on the Finance Committee, serving as Mary's vice-chair this year.

Moving forward, Tomás, Stephen Sloan, and others--including me--will review the treasurer's role to determine how best to proceed. In the meantime, if anyone is interested in learning more about this position, the Finance Committee, or finances in general, don't hesitate to reach out to the new executive office or to Mary or me. And again: welcome (and thank you), Mary!



Meet OHA Program Associate Bethany McLemore Stewart

and culture of Baroque music. She also prepped and presented pre-performance talks for the Austin Opera for four years. Along the way, she also ran a freelance copyediting business and held what she called “a lot of side gigs.”

And some of those gigs she especially loved, Stewart said, including several that prepared her well for her new OHA job.

Before attending graduate school, she was an administrator at Abilene Christian University, serving as the music department's operations manager. And in graduate school, she became adept at event planning, including putting on conferences that involved not only arranging panels of papers but also reviewing composers' music manuscripts submitted for concerts, along with fundraising, inviting keynoters and handling the myriad chores associated with interdisciplinary conference planning.

When Bethany McLemore Stewart, the OHA's new program associate, was growing up in Azle, Texas, about 20 miles northwest of Fort Worth, the young flute and piccolo player decided she wanted to be a high school band director when she grew up.

For someone who envisioned a teaching career, it was an obvious choice. She looked around at all the teachers in her high school, she said, and decided the music teacher "seemed to be the happiest."

But after she got to college at Abilene Christian University, her plans changed. While she majored in music, she became much more interested in music history than being a high school band teacher and went on to earn master's and doctorate degrees in musicology at the University of Texas at Austin with an emphasis on the role of women in 19th century American music, including studying the impact of corset-wearing on women's bodies and voices.

At UT-Austin and later at Baylor University, the Oral History Association's new home, her teaching experiences ran the gamut from undergraduate courses in Introduction to Music to a graduate seminar in the history

"I've always loved conferences," she said.

Stewart and her family moved in October to Waco, Texas, when her husband, Jeremy, became a materials planner for SpaceX. Through a contact at Baylor, she learned of the OHA's search for a program associate and reached out to Executive Director Stephen Sloan to apply.

The job, it turned out, was a good match for Stewart's background and interests, and she's learning the ropes by, among other things, digging into boxes of archival materials sent to the new OHA Baylor office from the association's home at Middle Tennessee State University for the past five years.

When not mastering the intricacies of the OHA, Stewart devotes family time to her husband and their two young sons, Finn, aged 3-1/2, and Duncan, 20 months. She also spends time cooking and baking and is an avid runner.

And as for that flute and piccolo, she said, "I still pull out a Mozart concerto to play every once in a while just to prove I can."



New guidelines support oral historians in promotion, tenure process

By Amy Starecheski, OHA past president

Oral historians often work in in-between

available archives--including producing transcripts and metadata--is not just clerical. It is part of our intellectual work

spaces. We are librarians who do community-engaged fieldwork, teachers who bring their students out into the world, and researchers who are as likely to create podcasts as papers. We are often the only oral history practitioner in our sphere, working with colleagues who do not fully understand what we do. For all of these reasons, the work of oral history is not always legible to those who are charged with evaluating us and our work.

The Oral History Association now offers members a document they can use to explain what they do and advocate for themselves in tenure and promotion processes.

This project has been in the works for a long time. It was begun in 2015 but was put on hold due to the sudden death of OHA Executive Director Cliff Kuhn. Building on Cliff's work, Leslie McCartney, Mary Larson and Michael David Franklin worked together in the past year to draft a document, which they shared with members for feedback in a Zoom meeting and via Google docs. After incorporating significant feedback from members and OHA Council, the final version was approved by Council in our January 2023 meeting.

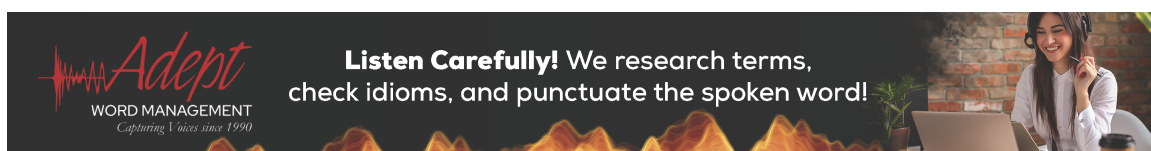
The new *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Professional or Academic Oral Historians for Promotion, Tenure, or Other Review* emphasize that oral historians' work is not confined to classrooms and archives. Our labor in leading public workshops, building relationships with the communities with which we collaborate, and practicing meaningful reciprocity must be seen and valued. The Guidelines argue that the huge amounts of work we do in creating publicly

and should be considered as part of our research and publication.

OHA's evolving suite of Best Practices documents are the foundation for this work. In particular, the task force was able to draw on the [Best Practices for Social Justice Oral History Work](#) and [Statement on Freelance, Independent, and Contract Labor](#) to explain the breadth and the demands of oral history practice.

In the years since this work was paused, the field and the priorities of the OHA have changed. Tenure-track jobs are increasingly rare, and the academy is no longer assumed to be the home base for most oral historians. However, it remains crucial for the OHA to provide guidance for members working in universities who can use these guidelines to advocate for themselves and their work, both as part of individual tenure and promotion processes as well as in other contexts. This document was created so that it would also be relevant to oral historians working in other institutions, such as libraries, museums, and historical societies. Moving forward, one possible area in which to build on the work of the task force would be to create more specific guidelines for librarians, archivists, or museum workers.

We are grateful to the members of this task force and to all the oral historians who shared valuable feedback. As you use this document within your institutions, please let us know how it works. Advocating for oral history workers and providing our members with tools to advocate for themselves is a core piece of OHA's mission, an ongoing project where we plan to continue to invest time and resources.





Destination Baltimore for fall OHA conference

By Kelly Elaine Navies, OHA vice president

It's not too soon to mark your calendar for the Oct. 18-21, 2023, Oral History Association conference at the Hyatt Regency Inner Harbor in Baltimore, Maryland. We are very excited to return to the city, as we were forced to cancel our in-person plans there and go virtual back in 2020. Program Committee co-chair team Zaheer Ali and Benji de la Piedra are leading us with the dynamic theme, "Oral History As/And Education."

To paraphrase the call for papers, we are looking for submissions that illuminate the role of oral history in classrooms from K-12 and beyond but also as an instrument of knowledge itself. One of the many questions we plan to explore--How might a learner's life be changed by an assignment of oral history work in college, high school, middle school, elementary school or even for adult learners outside the classroom?--really speaks to me, as I was first introduced to the practice of oral history in a middle school English class assignment.

Additionally, our Local Arrangements Committee, led by co-chairs Angela

more, a beautiful post-industrial, seaside town overflowing with artists, writers, oral historians and of course, educators and students.

Finally, we are pleased to welcome Freeman Hrabowski as our keynote speaker. Hrabowski is the former president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (1992-2022). Not only is he a renowned educator who was tapped by President Obama to lead the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for African-Americans, he was also a child activist in Birmingham, Alabama, and a personal friend of the four girls who were murdered at the 16th Street Baptist Church in 1963.



Rodgers-Koukoui and Tonika Berkley, are working hard to create experiences that allow OHA participants to immerse themselves in the rich and storied culture of Baltimore. It's a city that embodies a complicated and inspiring history that reflects the very heart of what it means to be American, from the controversial writing of the Star-Spangled Banner and the enslavement and radicalizing of Frederick Douglass to the Black Lives Matter protests that erupted in the wake of the murder of Freddie Gray. Baltimore is all of this and

[Freeman Hrabowski to be keynote speaker at 2023 OHA Annual Meeting](#)

His activist experiences were captured in an oral history interview featured in the Civil Rights History Project. [Freeman A. Hrabowski oral history interview conducted by Joseph Mosnier in Baltimore, Maryland, 2011 August 14 | Library of Congress \(.loc.gov\)](#).

We look forward to seeing ALL of you in October!

In memoriam—2 OHA past presidents served with distinction



[Terry Birdwhistell](#)

Terry L Birdwhistell, founder of the University of Kentucky Libraries' Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History Research and the 1991-92 OHA president, died Jan. 29, 2023, shortly after being diagnosed with cancer. He was 72 years old.

A native Kentuckian, Birdwhistell served as dean of libraries at UK and was widely respected for documenting the university's history as well for his interviews with numerous famous people, including Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Lady Bird Johnson, Kentucky governors, senators and other prominent leaders such as UK presidents.

Clements Abell, An Oral History, was published last year with co-author Donald A. Ritchie, retired U.S. Senate historian and also a former OHA president.

In reflecting on his career, 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."



[Dale Treleven](#)

But he also had a passion for documenting the lives of everyday Kentuckians and preserving their stories and was particularly involved with documenting the history of race relations in the state.

Birdwhistell earned a bachelor's degree in American studies at Georgetown College and then went to UK where he earned master's degrees in both history and library and information science. He later also earned a doctorate degree in higher education from the UK College of Education. It was while working on his master's degrees that he got a job at the UK Libraries in 1973, and he never left.

In his five decades at the university, he conducted nearly 1,000 oral history interviews and was highly regarded nationally and internationally in the oral history community.

"Typically, when Terry Birdwhistell conducted interviews with you, you became a friend, and so many of these friendships endured for life," said Doug Boyd, also an OHA past president and current director of the Nunn Center.

Birdwhistell was the author or co-author of several books, the last of which, *Washington's Iron Butterfly: Bess*

Dale Treleven, who served as the 1994-95 president of the Oral History Association, died Dec. 11, 2022, in his native Wisconsin. He was 84 years old.

Treleven grew up in the small town of Omro, Wisconsin, near Oshkosh, graduating from high school in 1956 and serving a stint in the U.S. Navy before returning to Wisconsin for college at UW-Oshkosh and graduate school at UW-Madison for a degree in U.S. history. As a graduate student, he worked on the Wisconsin State Historical Society's massive *History of Wisconsin* and later coordinated the society's oral history program until 1982.

He then left Wisconsin for the University of California, Los Angeles where he served as director of the UCLA Library's Center for Oral History Research until he retired in 2001 and returned to Wisconsin.

Treleven was proud of his Cornish heritage and upon his return to Wisconsin, he worked with his brother on genealogy research, including traveling to villages of Week St. Mary, Stratton and Poughill in Cornwall, their ancestral home.

Editor's note: If you have special memories of Birdwhistell or Treleven that you'd like to share in an upcoming OHA Newsletter, please email the editor at: ohaeditor@gmail.com.



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

OHA Newsletters are sent out five times per year. Have a suggestion for content for the newsletter? Email Mary Kay Quinlan at ohaeditor@gmail.com.

Interested in Advertising with the OHA?

Advertising space is available in 2023 OHA News Blasts and Newsletters. Reach out to oha@oralhistory.org for more information.

Connect With Us!



ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

615-624-2688

Copyright © 2023 Oral History Association

All rights reserved