



ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Independent oral historian wins dismissal of lawsuit

By *ohn A. Neuenschwander*

Lawsuits involving oral historians are quite rare. Whenever one does come to light, however, it is usually worthy of some discussion and analysis. In the case at hand this is especially true because the litigation centered on the interpretation of an oral understanding between the parties and some significant copyright ownership issues.

In 1997, Pat Burns, the defendant in this lawsuit, volunteered to begin interviewing Red Cross members who had served overseas. She began with those who had served during World War II and later conducted interviews with others who served either during the Korean conflict or the Vietnam War. To help her locate potential interviewees she contacted the American Red Cross Overseas Association, an organization devoted to maintaining and enhancing the ties among Red Cross workers who served overseas during wartime. The association agreed to provide her with its membership list and over the years also paid a portion of her travel expenses related to the conduct of interviews. The two par-

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commemorates 10th year

By *ason Steinbauer, Library of Congress*

This year the Veterans History Project (VHP) of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress marks the 10th anniversary of its congressional mandate to collect, preserve and make accessible the personal accounts of wartime veterans of the U.S. military. Since its creation, VHP has grown to be the largest oral history project in the nation, with more than 70,000 interviews in its collection.

The Veterans History Project relies on volunteers to record the oral histories of veterans, as well as collect original photographs, diaries, letters, memoirs and other wartime documents. The project has organized hundreds of community engagement programs nationwide with Congress; colleges, universities and schools, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, civic organizations, faith-based groups, veteran-service organizations and libraries.

To support these efforts, VHP produced new resources to help educate the public about oral history. A revised and updated Veterans History Project Field Kit was designed to provide step-by-step instructions on collecting and preserving veterans' stories. It can be downloaded from VHP's website:

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From the president

OHA embraces new initiatives

On Saturday afternoon during the Atlanta meeting, Mary Kay Quinlan snagged me in the hallway and informed me that the copy for my first presidential column in the Newsletter was due in one week! OMG—are you kidding?! All my predecessors had assured me that once the hard work of organizing the conference was done, being president would be a “piece of cake.” In that moment, the task of writing anything seemed herculean. After so many months of intense cross-country work—which could never have been accomplished without a dream team of co-chairs, the amazing Madelyn, the wonders of Skype, and two exciting and productive visits to Atlanta—I was pooped!

Flying back to California, I remember feeling suddenly cut off, bereft, wanting to continue savoring what I perceived as an exciting and successful conference. Perhaps the dreaded **Newsletter** deadline has a hidden benefit—giving me this chance to remember the energy of Atlanta, to relive some of the high points, acknowledge the lows and to appreciate all those who contributed so much to this meeting’s immense success.

While each of us has our favorite moments, for me one of the sweetest happened in the lobby on Friday, introducing the Mexican consul, Salvador de Lara, to our remarkable keynote speaker, Maria Hinojosa. As they exchanged greetings, I watched them discover that the consul’s father was indeed the Hinojosa family doctor in Mexico, and that they grew up on the very same street! To think that OHA enabled the reconnection of these two families!

Another high point was the beautiful and heartfelt remembrance of Brother Blue, with everyone’s testimonies and Melvin McCray’s moving film clips. Film brought back among us the man we had grown to know and love as our praise poet, our griot. We had intended to honor Brother Blue in Louisville, but that was not to be. I’m glad we were able to tell Ruth what her life partner has signified for us.

Throughout the conference we found ourselves in the presence of other giants. On Wednesday evening, Stetson Kennedy’s twinkling blue eyes, amazing lucidity and inspiring political clarity at 94, were inspiring. Having him there to present the first Vox Populi award, which he has endowed, was significant to us and to him. Appreciating and honoring our association’s elders is a practice I hope to promote this year, as we look ahead to our 50th anniversary.

Saturday evening was, of course, an event to remember. To listen to such courageous leaders and political elders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee as Connie Curry, Judy Richardson, Bernard LaFayette, and Lonnie King share their reflections and riveting memories with us was indeed an historic privilege, reminding me of why I love the world of oral history.

Because the conference unfolded so smoothly, I was actually able to attend many sessions over the course of the four days and want to mention a few that stood out for me. Witnessing SNCC veteran Judy Richardson and historian Emylie Crosbie perform a most amazing counterpoint of testimony and historical interpretation took everyone’s breath away. On Friday morning, Dr. Denise Johnson, Mr. Toussaint Webster, and Mr. Demetrius White, three narrators in D’Ann Penner and Keith Ferdinand’s book, *Overcoming Katrina*, shared their personal stories. As they bravely recounted the horror and the pain, they also relived the moment,

reminding us that one never fully overcomes such tragedies. And finally, set against the dramatic backdrop of the AIDS Memorial Quilt panels, the LGBT panel on the challenges of doing oral history in LGBT communities proved to be one of the most interesting and complex discussions of the entire conference.

There were, of course, a few glitches caused by the rainstorm that stranded many folks for hours on tarmacs, forced others to arrive the next day and a few not at all. Weathering the storm, however, the 198 St. String Band arrived breathless, in the nick of time on Wednesday evening to give a wonderful performance of songs and images of the Depression Era that livened up the evening and kicked off the conference with a twang!

The Atlanta conference was one of our largest and most diverse, with over 300 presenters and close to 500 registered attendees, including about 90 from the Atlanta region alone. Our wonderful program co-chairs, David Reichard and Tomás Summers Sandoval, had the daunting task of conceptualizing and generating a large and diverse program. Local arrangements co-chairs, Cliff Kuhn and Hermina Glass-Avery, with their extensive networks and high regard in the Atlanta community, proved invaluable. Particularly noteworthy was the Community Showcase, which has helped rekindle the local oral history network—one of the benefits to the local community of hosting an OHA meeting. The local arrangements team was involved in every aspect of the meeting, including substantial fundraising in one of the worst economic scenarios the country has seen. And, of course, at the center of it all is Madelyn. There’s no doubt that hiring her was the best decision OHA has ever made. Thank you all and congratulations on a memorable conference!

In the coming months, there are several items on Council’s agenda, including hiring a new editor for the **Oral History Review**, shepherding a new pamphlet on teaching oral history at the post-secondary level, developing training video materials, streamlining and filling out the website to make it more fully functional, working more closely with the various committees, instituting a database to track past and future service to the association and working to increase membership.

A propos of membership, OUP has added a new perk: a standing 20 percent discount on any OUP book. (Heads up: you’ll also be getting information from OUP elsewhere in this **Newsletter** about opting in/out of the new online membership directory). Over the course of the year, we’ll also be following up on revisions to the Best Practices document, doing some advanced planning for the 50th anniversary in 2016 and of course providing support for the Denver meeting.

Now that I’ve managed to fill my allotted space, amazingly enough, I’d like to thank you for honoring me with this opportunity to serve as OHA president. I invite you to please e-mail me with any ideas or concerns you may have. And, please remember to renew your membership if you haven’t already done so!



OHA president, Rina Benmayor

Survey explores digital technology practices in the oral history community

By Tom Clark, TA Consulting, and Robert E. Warren, Illinois State Museum

The Illinois State Museum's Oral History of Illinois Agriculture project used digitization, digital indexing and other technologies to create a searchable online database of audio and video oral-history recordings called the Audio-Video Barn at <http://avbarn.museum.state.il.us>.

One goal of the project was to create a procedural model that other oral historians could emulate or adapt when developing their own searchable oral-history websites.

During the course of our project we became curious about the baseline interest of the oral history community in digital technology practices. To measure this interest we developed a survey questionnaire and administered it to participants at the 43rd annual meeting of the Oral History Association in Louisville, Ky., Oct. 14-18, 2009. The survey was announced to participants at the welcome reception, and questionnaires were made available at the registration desk throughout the conference. We also distributed copies to those attending our Oct. 14 session, "Oral History of Illinois Agriculture: Building the Audio-Video Barn."

A total of 41 respondents submitted surveys. More than six in 10 were female, and nearly half were in the 45-54 age range. Most respondents held either a master's degree (44 percent) or a doctorate (36 percent). Commonly held positions included: college or university faculty, staff or administrator (39 percent), museum/library staff or administrator (22 percent) and self-employed or independent consultant (22 percent).

As might be expected, most respondents (97 percent) reported using a computer daily. Only one reported otherwise, saying she used a computer several times a week. When asked, "How important is a computer to you when you are working with oral history?" about three-fourths (76 percent) said it was "very important." None said that computers are not important at all.

As is shown in Figure 1, digital audio is the most frequently reported medium for recording oral history interviews (80 percent). More than one-fourth (27 percent) reported use of digital video. However, analog recordings are also well represented. Analog audio tape is used by about one-third of respondents (34 percent) and analog video tape by about one in five (22 percent).

Respondents reported using oral histories for many different kinds of projects, including websites (54 percent), archival records (51 percent), research papers (44 percent), multimedia presentations (41 percent) and documentaries (27 percent). Other listed responses included exhibits, books, performances, service-learning projects, community development and "whatever else occurs to us."

Figure 2 plots the frequencies of various activities associated with the recording and processing of oral history interviews. About one-fifth (21 percent) always or frequently use analog devices to record interviews, whereas about three-fourths (77 percent) use digital recorders. More than one-

third (37 percent) commonly digitize analog audio or video recordings. Half (50 percent) commonly transcribe interview recordings, and about one-fourth (26 percent) use digital indexing to make recordings content searchable.

Twenty respondents reported using one or more digital indexing tools. Of these, 70 percent use nonlinear audio editing software (Audacity, Sound Forge, etc.), 40 percent use nonlinear video editing software (Final Cut Pro, Adobe Premiere Pro, etc.), and 20 percent use software designed or adapted specifically for digital indexing (InterClipper, Stories Matter, etc.).

Virtually all respondents said that digitization of oral history collections is "moderately" or "very" important. Most also said that digital indexing of collections is "very important" (76 percent) or "moderately important" (19 percent). None felt that digital indexing is not important at all.

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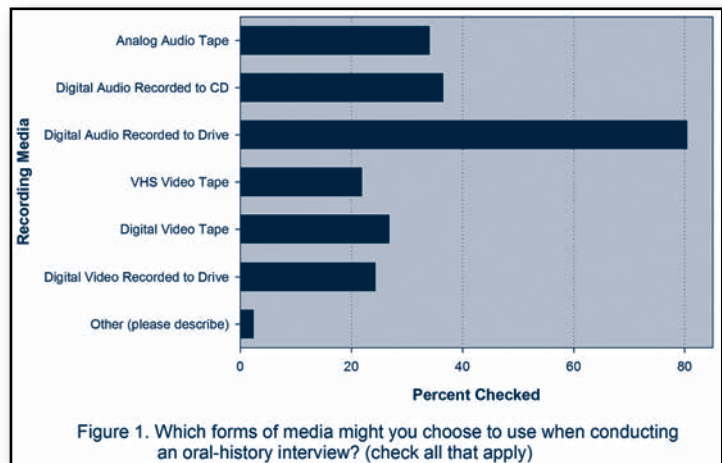


Figure 1. Which forms of media might you choose to use when conducting an oral-history interview? (check all that apply)

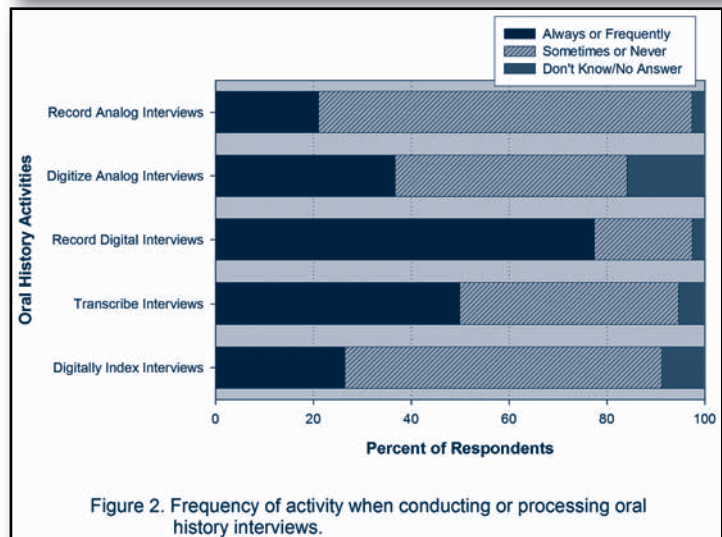


Figure 2. Frequency of activity when conducting or processing oral history interviews.

Independent oral historian wins dismissal of lawsuit

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ties never drafted an agreement that established their respective rights.

Over the next 11 years she conducted 80 interviews and with the assistance of a volunteer videographer, Damon Wood, produced two award winning documentaries: "In the Spirit of Clara Barton" and "Armed with a Smile." The first presented the faces and stories of Red Cross workers from World War II and the second covered the Vietnam War. All of the interviewees executed a deed of gift to Burns. Some of the interviewees also loaned her photos and memorabilia. Both documentaries were shown at association meetings, and Burns made editorial changes to more prominently feature the association.

In May of 2008 the cooperative relationship between Burns and the leadership of the association came to an abrupt end. The leadership informed Burns that she was to turn over all of the interviews she had conducted as well as the documentaries and working files related to the project. When she refused, the Red Cross association filed suit in Cobb County, Ga., for conversion, breach of contract and bad faith. Shortly after the lawsuit was filed, Burns and Wood, on the advice of their attorney, registered the interviews and documentaries with the Copyright Office.

Attorneys for both sides sent out interrogatories and requests for documents during the discovery phase of the proceedings. In July 2010, the attorney for Burns filed a motion for summary judgment. Such a motion is filed by defendants in civil proceedings to try and have a lawsuit dismissed before trial. To prevail on such a motion, the defendant must convince the court that the plaintiff, in this instance the American Red Cross Overseas Association, had failed to show that there was any genuine issue of material fact that would entitle them to judgment as a matter of law.

The centerpiece of the association's claim was that the interviews Burns conducted and all other work products related to the project, including the two documentaries, were owned by the association. As Burns' attorney pointed out in her memorandum of law, however, this claim was based solely

on an oral understanding. While oral agreements are sometimes upheld by courts, if the property at issue is a copyright, an oral agreement will not suffice. Since the interviews and documentaries constituted intellectual property, Burns' attorney sought to convince the court that her client was entitled to summary judgment as a matter of law.

In support of this position, Burns' attorney relied on two key provisions of the Copyright Act. As she noted, all copyrights vest in the creator unless the work is work-made-for-hire. To qualify as such the association had to be able to prove that Burns was either an employee or had signed a written agreement transferring her copyright interest. Since Burns was a volunteer and not an employee and the parties never had a written agreement, it was thus uncontroverted that the copyright ownership of the materials at issue resided with Patricia Burns.

In response to the motion for summary judgment, the plaintiff, American Red Cross Overseas Association, voluntarily dismissed its lawsuit against Burns. Although the reason for this decision is not known, it appears that the attorney for the association believed with some certainty that the judge would grant Burns' motion for summary judgment. By voluntarily dismissing the lawsuit, the plaintiff could still refile it whereas had there been an adverse decision from the court on the summary judgment motion the only recourse was an appeal.

The lessons of this case are obvious. Even volunteer interviewers need to have written agreements. As this author has persistently maintained, a strong legal argument can be made than an interviewer is a joint author for copyright purposes. Therefore, if the sponsoring program or project wishes to make sure that both the interviewee and interviewer's copyright interests are transferred, then a signed release is essential. Volunteer interviewers also deserve to be informed in writing about the future uses that will be made of the interviews they conduct. ❖

The author would like to thank Pat Burns for her assistance in the writing of this article.

Author chosen for teaching oral history pamphlet

Erin McCarthy, associate history professor at Columbia College Chicago, has been selected to write the Oral History Association's newest pamphlet on teaching oral history at the post-secondary level. Her selection was finalized during the fall OHA conference, according to Publications Committee chair Kathy Nasstrom.



Erin McCarthy

McCarthy, who has taught an oral history course at her college for the past decade, holds a master's degree in public history and a doctorate in U.S. history from Loyola University Chicago.

McCarthy is a regional workshop leader for the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project, to which her students have contributed more than 200 transcribed interviews. The Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center in Chicago also has received more than 100 transcribed interviews from her students.

In addition to her college teaching, McCarthy has conducted numerous oral history workshops locally and internationally, is a board member of the Consortium of Oral History Educators and in 2006 received the OHA's Postsecondary Teaching Award.

The pamphlet, which is tentatively set for completion late next year, will join the OHA's series that includes pamphlets on: oral history and community history, oral history for family historians, oral history for elementary and secondary teachers and oral history and the law.

OHA pamphlets can now be purchased through Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble. ❖

OHA Member Benefits Update

Take advantage of all these benefits by setting up a log-in at Oxford Journals registration site, MyAccount. Go to <http://www.oxfordjournals.org/register> to register as a new user. Once you're in the site, click "Manage your subscriptions" and enter your subscriber number. This number is on your renewal notice or on the mailing sheet that comes with your copy of OHR. If you cannot find either one of these, please call Customer Services at 1-800-852-7323, or e-mail jnlorders@oup.com to request it.

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Now available: the OAH membership directory!

Because of data protection laws, each member must actively agree to be included in the directory by "opting in." This can be done in one of the following ways:

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2. by clicking on the link provided in your subscription confirmation e-mail or letter, which will take you straight to the opt-in/out page:
http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/ohr_for_members/directory.html
3. by informing the OHA by mail or phone that you would

Benefits for current OHA members include:

- Online access to current issues
- Online access to the Digital Archive, which includes all issues of *The Oral History Review* back to Volume 1, Number 1
- NEW! OHA membership directory online
- NEW! 20 percent discount on OUP books through an OHA members-only website

like to opt-in. You will need to provide your subscriber number (which will be on your confirmation e-mail or letter, or on the mailing sheet carried with a journal issue).

You can view the online membership directory by clicking on the Membership Directory link on the OHR home page: http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/ohr/index.html. You will be prompted to log in using your MyAccount username, or asked to set up one. Only OHA members will be able to view the directory online or download it as an Excel spreadsheet.

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Follow this link to access your discount:
<http://www.oup.com/us/brochure/orhisoup/>

The discount prices will be shown for each book.

OHA offers heartfelt thanks to sponsors

Numerous regional and national organizations stepped forward to support the 2010 Oral History Association annual meeting, for which the OHA is deeply grateful. They are:

- Georgia Humanities Council
- National Center for Civil and Human Rights
- Instituto de Mexico, Atlanta
- Georgia State University, Department of African-American Studies
- Georgia State University, Department of History
- Georgia Tech Living History Program
- Georgia Institute of Technology, School of History, Technology and Society
- Kennesaw State University, Center for the Study of the Civil War Era
- Kennesaw State University, Department of History, Public History Program and Shaw Chair in History
- Emory University, Department of History
- Emory University James Weldon Johnson Institute
- Emory University, Transforming Community Project
- Oxford University Press
- Palgrave MacMillan
- Boehm Biography Group
- Baylor University, Institute for Oral History
- Charis Books and More
- University Products
- Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum
- Auburn Avenue Research Library
- The Stetson Kennedy Foundation
- The Names Project, AIDS Memorial Quilt
- Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site
- Atlanta Beltline Partnership
- The 198 String Band
- Kennesaw State University Museum of History and Holocaust Education

Veterans History Project

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Frank W. Buckles, the last surviving American veteran of World War I. Buckles, born in 1901, lied about his age and joined the Army when he was 16. He also was a POW during World War II. His oral history interview is digitized on the Veterans History Project website.

PHOTO CREDIT: FRANK W. BUCKLES (AFC 2001/001/1070), PHOTOGRAPHS (PH01), PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN, VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT COLLECTION, AMERICAN FOLKLIFF CENTER, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

For more information on the Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, call 1-888-371-5848 or email vohp@loc.gov. Sign up for news, tips, techniques and more through VHP's RSS at <http://www.loc.gov/rss/vhp/vhp.xml>.

www.loc.gov/vets. VHP workshops, led by some of the premier oral historians in the nation, including many OHA members, have trained the public on how to conduct oral histories with veterans in their families and communities.

Through a cooperative effort with the American Folklore Society, VHP has provided training for more than 7,000 volunteer participants through more than 300 workshops in 41 states since 2002. These workshops use the VHP process to bring concepts of oral history and folklore to local communities across the country.

During the past decade, VHP has hosted and sponsored many outreach efforts to the community. Last fall, VHP hosted a National Teach-in on Veterans History. It was held at the Library of Congress and webcast live to more than 2,000 schools. The program was hosted by VHP and the History cable network as part of the "Take a Veteran to School Day" initiative.

The VHP collection is a diverse representation of all races, conflicts, types of service, men and women. Among the collections in the VHP archive are interviews with more than 40,000 World War II veterans, 10,000 Vietnam veterans, 8,000 Korean War veterans, 300 World War I veterans, 2,000 Persian Gulf War veterans and 1,300 veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Each veteran receives a service history page on the VHP website, which gives a brief overview of the veteran's experience and lists the materials and formats available in the collection.

Nearly 9,000 of these collections are digitized and available to view on the VHP website. Any collection can be viewed in the American Folklife Center reading room at the Library of Congress by appointment. The stories have been used by authors, historians, educators, filmmakers and researchers. Included are the recollections of veterans from every congressional district in all 50 states, the U.S. territories and all branches of the U.S. military.

As part of its ever-growing online Experiencing War series, 32 Web presentations feature the stories of the diverse veterans who served the nation in wartime. Thematic presentations highlight the military achievements of women, African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, Jewish Americans, Asian Americans and disabled veterans, among others. Presentations also feature specific conflicts such as the two World Wars and the global war on terror and pivotal events like D-Day and Dec. 7, 1941. The current Experiencing War feature highlights the stories of 20 veterans who represent a cross section of the project's collections.

To commemorate its first decade, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington has urged all Americans to pledge to preserve the story of at least one veteran in their life or community for the Library of Congress. More than 17 million wartime veterans live in the United States, and more than 1,000 die every day. Billington has urged oral historians and everyday Americans to pledge to preserve important stories of American history before they disappear forever.

Learn more at www.youtube.com/loc and take the pledge at www.loc.gov/vets. As well, VHP has hosted several special events in 2010 and is in the process of launching new program initiatives. These include events to mark the 60th anniversary of the start of the Korean War and efforts to gather more stories of minority and women veterans. In addition, there have been book talks and new online presentations. ❖

Digital technology practices

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Survey respondents also shared written comments on the use of digital technology in oral history practice. One noted that "I am preparing to move from analog recording to digital recording & building an online database." Another offered the following caution: "Be careful not to get so involved in the pleasures of analysis, to ignore the gestalt—and the interview or collection. There are synthesizing issues which bear tremendously on the importance of the data collected."

Because of our ad-hoc sampling design and the small sample population, the results of this survey should be considered

exploratory and may not be representative of the views of Oral History Association members or the oral history community as a whole. Nevertheless, the results do shed some light on the current role of digital technology in oral history.

For a detailed report of our survey results, please contact Robert Warren at warren@museum.state.il.us. ❖

We would like to thank Mike Maniscalco for contributing to the survey design. The OHA project was generously supported by a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. ❖

HistoryMakers seeks science-knowledgeable oral historian

Chicago-based HistoryMakers, a non-profit organization dedicated to documenting African American's lives, is seeking an experienced, full-time oral historian knowledgeable about science, engineering, technology and math (STEM) to conduct interviews for a National Science Foundation ScienceMakers initiative.

The oral historian will work with a videographer to record three- to four-hour interviews with accomplished African-American scientists. HistoryMakers said it is looking for people literate in STEM fields and preferably with prior experience in science journalism and able to explain scientific concepts on laymen's terms.

The oral historian is expected to live in Chicago and work full time out of the HistoryMakers' office for the next two-and-a-half years.

Interested oral historians should send their resumes to:

The HistoryMakers
1900 S. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, IL 60616.

Power of stories motivates award-winning radio journalist

When Maria Hinojosa was growing up on the south side of Chicago, she said she felt invisible.

The Mexican immigrant who came with her family to the United States before she was 2 years old because of her father's medical career said she always knew she was from Mexico, "but I kind of thought I was Jewish" or maybe "a soul sister going to marches with Martin Luther King."

That was then.

Now, she's an award-winning journalist who describes herself as "profoundly, deeply moved by the stories we find"—at Lackland Air Force Base where Spanish-speaking enlistees, mostly from Puerto Rico, learn English; along the U.S.-Mexican border where human dramas like Sept. 11 happen every day; or pursuing untold stories in the Bronx.

Hinojosa regaled an OHA luncheon audience with behind-the-scenes accounts of her reporting adventures that were alternately hilarious and tragic.

Hinojosa is president of The Futuro Media Group and anchors NPR's weekly program "Latino USA," WGBH's "One on One with Maria Hinojosa" and V-me's "La Plaza: Conversaciones con Maria Hinojosa."

Hinojosa said she never believed she could be a journalist "because there was no one out there who looked like me."

"I have been accused so many times of having an agenda," she said. "All I want is to tell the stories of who we are."

Hinojosa said the element of trust that is essential for getting people's stories can be a problem for journalists because of widespread public distrust of media.

Responding to an audience member's question about the challenge of drawing a line between the detachment required of a journalist and a desire to reach out to help people, Hinojosa acknowledged that if a story is profound enough, "you do take off your journalist's hat and become something else."

"I think the reason I'm an effective journalist is because I have a heart," she said.

Hinojosa challenged the oral historians to listen to each other's stories. In so doing, she said, "we can create the country we already are." ❖



Award-winning journalist Maria Hinojosa greets OHA admirers after her luncheon keynote speech. Hinojosa is president of The Futuro Media Group and anchor of the weekly NPR program "Latino USA."

Vox Populi Award recognizes Dunaway

David K. Dunaway, center, was named the recipient of the first Vox Populi Award endowed by legendary folklorist and oral historian Stetson Kennedy, right. The award recognizes a lifetime of oral history activism aimed at bringing about a more democratic, just, peaceful and harmonious world.

Dunaway was honored in particular for documenting social protest in radio work and folksong through *How Can I Keep From Singing* and *Singing Out: An Oral History of America's Folk Music Revivals*.

Alan Stein, left, served as chairman of the Vox Populi Award Committee.

Kennedy announced the award at the OHA conference's opening event, "Times of Crisis, Times of Change: Voices from the Great Depression," which featured film clips from the documentary *Soul of a People* and Depression-era and New Deal music performed by the 198 String Band of Buffalo, N.Y., one of whose members is Michael Frisch, OHA president.

Kennedy was an interviewer for the Depression-era Federal Writer's Project, which formed the basis for *Soul of a People*.

"We were told to go out and record," Kennedy said, "put it all down." So that's what they did, he said, warts and all. "We put in Jim Crow...and not so nice things."

Kennedy contrasted conditions during the 1930s with the contemporary tea party movement and reactions to the current recession. "People are not accustomed to poverty," he said. "[They] don't know how to cope with it." ❖



PHOTO CREDIT: ALAN STEIN

Immigrant issues highlight concerns for rights of everyone

The Old South was black and white. The New South speaks Spanish, as immigrants from Central and South America have rewritten the demographics of the region and in so doing, have changed historic social and cultural dynamics.

That was the message from an Oral History Association plenary session that examined human rights, labor rights and migration politics in the 21st century.

Economic restructuring and changing immigration policies in the 1980s and '90s made the South one of the fastest-growing Latino areas of the country

Economic restructuring and changing immigration policies in the 1980s and '90s made the South one of the fastest-growing Latino areas of the country, according to Mary E. Odem, an Emory University history and women's studies professor.

A 1986 immigration law included a path to legalization for some immigrants, freeing many to move around the country, she said. They left California and Texas and came to the Southeast, a magnet because of available jobs in agriculture, in poultry, pork and seafood processing and in construction, she said.

The result was Latino population growth rates of 200 to 300 percent in some states of the Old South during that period, compared to 58 percent growth in the rest of the country.

The growing Latino population is highly diverse, Odem said, hailing from many Latin American countries and ethnic backgrounds, including mestizos, Afro-Caribbeans and indigenous people from different nations.

Key questions revolve around how they all are being incorporated into Southern society and how they will affect the historic black-white divide in Southern culture, she said.

Employers see Latinos as a flexible, low-cost labor pool that is "now a structural feature of the Southern economy," Odem said.

The rise of anti-immigrant rhetoric reflects public concern at the local level about immigrants taking jobs from native-born workers, she said, adding that policy experts disagree about the extent to which immigration has had such an impact.

Saket Soni, director of the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice, saw examples of such displacement in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Immigrant workers from Bolivia, Peru and the Dominican Republic were hired through immigrant labor contractors to

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Oral historians recount Hurricane Katrina projects

It has been five years since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf coast and since oral historians fanned out to document the aftermath.

And in so doing, oral historians managed to inject layers of complexity into otherwise oversimplified and sensationalized public discourse, Stephen Sloan of Baylor University told a Thursday afternoon plenary session at the Oral History Association conference.

"We like things simple and straightforward," Sloan said. "We didn't want things with texture."

But oral historians have added texture, he said, introducing panelists who recounted examples from several Hurricane Katrina interviewing projects.

Mark Cave, manuscript curator and oral historian at the Historic New Orleans Collection, described interviews with some 650 first responders in the immediate wake of the disaster.

Oral historians, he said, had trouble differentiating themselves from news media that had flocked to the region. The oral history project became a form of "alternative media," he said, in which people could indulge in conveying contextualized information without having to see snippets on the evening news.

Discrepancies in reports about conditions in the Superdome, meant to be a refuge for hurricane victims, were an ongoing controversy. Cave said the interviews revealed there were many unexplained murders and significantly more violence than top officials acknowledged. Communication

broke down and high-ranking officials had no idea what low-ranking people were doing, he said.

Cave played an excerpt of a recording of an interview with a chaplain for a disaster medical assistance team at the Superdome who contradicted published reports that only five people died there. "We have direct knowledge of 60 to 70 people who died there," the chaplain said, adding: "They said there weren't any gunshots. That's just a lie.... It was very disconcerting to see the spin put on this.... They just lied to us."

Jennifer Abraham, director of the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History at Louisiana State University, described the center's efforts to help communities engage in oral history documentation of the aftereffects of Katrina.

"Community groups really wanted to get into the field and start doing projects," she said.

Abraham said Louisiana is defined by natural and manmade disasters that play a significant role in the state's cultural and environmental history, citing as examples a 1927 flood when a levee burst and Hurricane Betsy in 1965.

She noted that interviews about Hurricane Betsy, conducted before Katrina, reflected a similar narrative, with tales of an overcrowded evacuation center and people being caught in attics of their homes.

Oral history has the capacity to heal a community, Abraham said. "People are willing to share their stories."

She noted, however, that too many projects are being done but not deposited in an archives for preservation.

(continued on page 10)

Call for Papers

“Memories of Conflict and Disaster: Oral History and the Politics of Truth, Trauma, and Reconciliation”

2011 OHA Annual Meeting, Oct. 12–26, 2011 • Renaissance Denver Hotel, Denver, Colo.

The Oral History Association invites proposals for papers, panels, roundtables and presentations for its 2011 annual meeting Oct. 12-16, 2011, at the Renaissance Hotel in Denver.

The meeting is a month after the 10th anniversary of 9/11/2001. The past century has spawned more than this one grave event; 9/11 was one of myriad natural and manmade conflicts and disasters that have occurred throughout the world in the recent and more distant past. So the theme of this meeting reflects these timely topics. And as the subtitle suggests, we have lent a particular ear to the interpretation and preservation of these events in light of the search for truth, the documentation of trauma and the quest for reconciliation.

Cataclysmic conflicts and disasters destroy people and property. They also, however, offer the prospect of change and rebirth. Leaders seemingly try but rarely succeed to learn lessons from such events; ordinary people tell, gather and preserve individual stories of loss, survival, resilience and renewal. The documentation of such recent events in human history in a way that adheres to the OHA's best practices and standards can be tricky to navigate. Conflict and disaster need not be explosive or ground-shaking to shape the cultural landscape, and as such, we welcome a wide interpretation of the call for papers.

Denver, on the front range of the Rocky Mountains, and the Renaissance Denver Hotel will serve as host to the 2011 meeting. This region showcases a rich history of mountaineering, environmentalism, migrant labor, mining, political activism and conservation and preservation through the state and national parks, as well through private and nonprofit entities. We encourage oral history practitioners in this western city and the surrounding region to submit papers and proposals, regardless of how directly their projects align with this year's theme.

As with all previous OHA meetings, the Program Committee welcomes broad and diverse interpretations of the conference theme as reflected in proposals for panels, individual papers, performances, exhibits and roundtables. We especially encourage presenters to think about nontraditional delivery models, such as interactive sessions, dialogic formats that engage the audience and use of digital media.

Presenters are reminded to incorporate voice and image in their presentations. OHA is open to proposals from the variety of fields traditionally represented in our meetings, including history, folklore, literature, sociology, anthropology, American and ethnic studies, cultural studies, political science, information science and technology, communications and urban studies.

We also hope to have a significant international presence at the meeting. And, as always, OHA welcomes proposals from independent scholars, community activists and organizers, archivists, librarians, museum curators, Web designers, documentary producers, media artists, ethnographers, public historians and all practitioners whose work is relevant to this meeting's focus.

Proposal format: For full sessions, submit a title, a session abstract of not more than two pages and a one-page vita or resume for each participant. For individual proposals, submit a one-page abstract and a one-page vita or resume of the presenter. Each submission must be accompanied by a cover sheet, which can be found on the OHA website.

The deadline for submission of all proposals is Friday, Jan. 21, 2011. All proposals should be submitted via e-mail to oha@dickinson.edu, or if available, through an online submission page to be determined later. The cover sheet, which can be downloaded from our website, and all proposal documents must be combined into one attachment in Microsoft Word format. Please do not send the documents as separate attachments. If you do not receive e-mail confirmation by Monday, Feb. 7, 2011, please contact the OHA office to make sure your submission has been received.

Proposal queries may be directed to:

Jennifer Abraham

Louisiana State University
2011 Program Co-Chair
jabrah1@lsu.edu

Troy Reeves

University of Wisconsin – Madison,
2011 Program Co-Chair
treeves@library.wisc.edu

Horacio Roque Ramirez

University of California – Santa
Barbara, 2011-12 OHA Vice
President/President-Elect
roqueramirez@chicst.ucsb.edu

For submission queries or more information, contact:

Madelyn Campbell, Executive Secretary

Oral History Association, Dickinson College • PO Box 1773 • Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013
Telephone: 717-245-1036 • Fax: 717-245-1046 • Email: oha@dickinson.edu

Please note: This call for papers is not identical to the announcement published in the 2010 OHA Annual Meeting program, so please review the above information before submitting a proposal.

Immigrant issues highlight concerns

continued from page 8

take jobs at \$6.09 an hour instead of the \$14 an hour prevailing wage. His organization was founded to organize African Americans and immigrants of all colors.

Soni called for “poor people across the color line” to organize to secure their rights. “If you don’t want to be a criminal, you have to be a guest worker tied to one employer,” which Soni said amounts to involuntary servitude.

Bruce Goldstein, executive director of Farmworker Justice, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that deals with issues affecting migrant and seasonal farmworkers, said efforts to improve conditions for such workers is complicated by the fact that no one knows exactly how many there are—perhaps 2 million, plus another million family members. Their median annual income is probably between \$12,000 and \$15,000, he said.

Goldstein said that while some migrant workers still make an annual trek from South Texas to Michigan as harvests move north, that pattern is not typical today. Instead, many large farms now raise a number of crops, which results in an elongated production season in one place.

Despite decades of effort to improve conditions for farmworkers, they still are excluded from overtime pay, and they

often are paid on piece rates computed to equate to the minimum wage.

Farmworkers also are exempt from certain federal occupational safety and health requirements and even some Environmental Protection Agency pesticide exposure rules., Goldstein said.

Additionally, federal legal aid programs are prohibited from representing undocumented workers, so many farmworkers have no meaningful access to the courts, he said, noting that the U.S. Department of Labor estimates 53 percent of farmworkers are undocumented.

In a departure from previous patterns, growers have increasingly turned to outsourcing their labor relations, hiring up to half of the nation’s farmworkers through farm labor contractors who often cheat the workers out of wages and benefits.

“People are afraid to put their head above water,” Goldstein said, adding that they’re afraid to join a union or even to report crimes.

Increasingly, Soni suggested, the fight to secure workers’ rights will take place at the state level, with efforts by his organization and others to fight Arizona-style anti-immigrant laws. ❖

Hurricane Katrina

continued from page 8

Sloan observed that oral historians in Mississippi documenting Katrina first had to hear interviewees’ stories about Hurricane Camille, which devastated the Gulf coast in August 1969, an indication that residents were contextualizing their understanding of their experiences.

Also at the plenary session, Dr. Keith C. Ferdinand, a cardiology professor at Emory University and director of cardiovascular health at the St. Thomas Health Center in New Orleans, and oral historian D’Ann Penner described some of the 270 interviews that went into their book *Overcoming Katrina: African American Voices from the Crescent City and Beyond*.

Ferdinand, who described himself as a fifth-generation resident of the Lower 9th Ward, which suffered some of the worst damage from the storm. Ferdinand’s connection with Katrina had personal overtones. He recalled trying to rescue his grandfather in the wake of Hurricane Betsy, which flooded New Orleans in September 1965.

Ferdinand noted that the official death toll in New Orleans from Katrina was put at 1,600, a number he called significantly underestimated. “I’m firmly convinced that many, more than 1,600 people died,” he said, attributing additional deaths to people who couldn’t get needed medications, dialysis or treatment of other chronic medical conditions.

Ferdinand noted that New Orleans used to be 70 percent African American but now is about half African American and half white. Many of the poor and disadvantaged have not returned to the city, he said.

Penner, Ferdinand’s co-author, said some of the several hundred people interviewed for their project believe their stories have been exploited. People “pretended to listen with interest and enthusiasm” to their stories but then left New Orleans and used the information to advance their own careers, she said. ❖

Exemplary projects, articles, teaching recognized at OHA conference

The Oral History Association’s awards for exemplary use of oral history went to:

- Gene B. Preuss and Alan Stein for their article “Oral History, Folklore and Katrina:”
- Jacob. J. Podber, an honorable mention for his article “Television’s Arrival in the Appalachian Mountains of the USA: An Oral History;”
- Jeremy Ball, Kim Rogers and Amy Wlodarski, all of Dickinson College, for postsecondary teaching of oral history;
- Reflections, An Oral History of the Monadnock Region of New Hampshire for the Elizabeth B. Mason Small Project Award;
- The Cambodian American Community of Oregon’s Oral History Project for the Elizabeth B. Mason Small Project Award honorable mention and
- Oral History of Illinois Agriculture for the Elizabeth B. Mason Major Project Award.

The OHA 2011 conference in Denver will feature presentation of awards for books, nonprint media and pre-collegiate teaching. Check the OHA website for details on how to submit nominations. The deadline is April 1, 2011.

LGBT community oral historians seek to document untold lives

Against a backdrop of panels from the AIDS Memorial Quilt, four LGBT activists described their experiences collecting oral histories in a sometimes hidden, ignored or reviled community, motivated in part by a desire to document lives before AIDS took its toll.

Glenne McElhinney, director of the Impact Stories Oral History Project in California, credited the Oral History Association with sparking her project. McElhinney attended the 2007 OHA conference in Oakland, Calif., and hatched the idea of documenting the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender movement's roots in California from the 1960s to 1980s.

"I decided to travel the state in my car with a tape recorder," she recalled, driving from San Diego and working her way north to Eureka and back again, gathering stories along the way from activists, politicians, writers, musicians and others involved in or affected by the LGBT movement.

She turned her interviews with gay senior citizens in Los Angeles into a documentary titled "On These Shoulders We Stand."

"The elders were amazed that anyone would be interested in their story," she said.

McElhinney said she has been especially gratified in showing the film to student groups where she discovered that teenagers made an instant connection with the older people whose experiences they could share.

Wesley Chenault, an archivist who was director of an LGBT oral history project at the Atlanta History Center, said oral history projects are an opportunity to collect more than stories.

The Atlanta History Center's project, he said, led to collection of photographs and other materials that otherwise wouldn't have ended up in a public collection. One result was a pictorial history publication based on the center's exhibit and collections.

Chenault, who also is involved in an African-American LGBT oral history project at the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, said the AIDS epidemic, issues of privacy and generational differences among LGBT people make oral histories with this population different from oral histories in general.

Dave Hayward, coordinator of Touching Up Our Roots Inc., which focuses on how LGBT people in Atlanta and

across Georgia have expanded civil rights for everyone, helped get the Atlanta History Center's LGBT history project off the ground in 1991. That's when AIDS "lowered the boom" on the LGBT community, Hayward said, recalling that he knew 20 people who died within six months.

Hayward cautioned the audience about the need to be particularly sensitive in the use of release forms when interviewing in the LGBT community, citing an example of a World War II veteran who was adamant that his interview never be used on television. The veteran declined to disclose names of some of his fellow gay soldiers, Hayward said, because he did not want to out them even though they were dead.

"He didn't want to hurt their families," Hayward said.

Responding to an audience question about whether a straight oral historian could effectively interview someone in the gay community, Hayward said straight people may lack information about

the gay community but they also are not part of the infighting that sometimes characterizes the gay community.

"They don't have a dog in this fight," he said, adding that he has often received more support from straight people than other LGBT people.

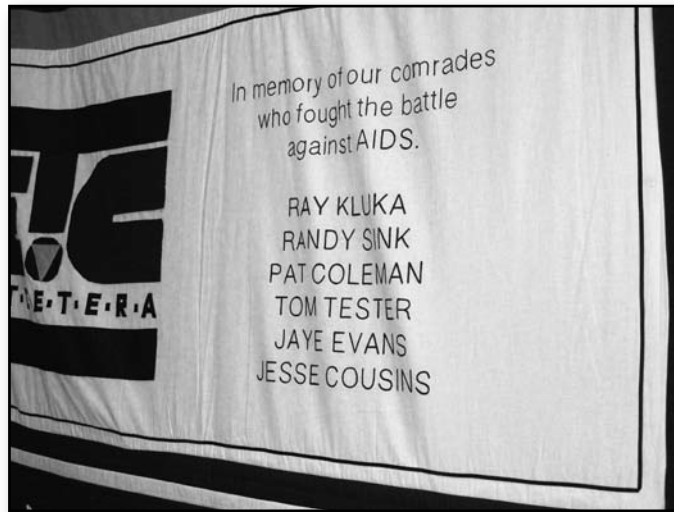
Tracy Baim, executive director of Chicago Gay History, a Web-based video history project, and publisher of Windy City Times, said she became passionate about telling people's stories "before we lost them."

Baim said she came from a journalism family but was frustrated by the lack of permanence of a newspaper. So she embarked on a story-collection blitz, conducting 200 hour-long interviews in three months, video recording up to five interviews a day.

"To me what was important was quick volume," she said. Creating video interviews also was important to Baim, who said the next generation is much more likely to learn from video than from other sources.

She launched her website, ChicagoGayHistory.org in 2008 as a way to make the information widely accessible, including interviews with people who had never previously talked about their experiences.

Baim suggested people interested in LGBT oral history projects should consider partnering with the local gay press in their communities. ❖



Panels from the AIDS Memorial Quilt formed the backdrop for a panel presentation by organizers of LGBT community-based oral history projects.

Civil rights veterans recall their roles in the movement

They were twenty-somethings then, half a century ago, when they signed on with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and joined the fight for civil rights, a fight that for many continues today.

Constance Curry, the first white woman on SNCC's executive committee, SNCC founding members Lonnie King and Bernard LaFayette Jr. and SNCC staffer Judy Richardson reflected on their experiences at the Oral History Association awards banquet, recalling the fears and victories of their youth.

*'Remember that we were you....
We were not exceptional in any way.'*

— Judy Richardson, when talking to young people today about SNCC and the civil rights movement.

Richardson, with flamboyant gestures and rapid-fire speech, said that as a student attending Swarthmore College, she attended her first SNCC meetings "because my mother was not there to stop me."

She had office work skills that were in demand for the organization, an ability to type 90 words a minute and take shorthand. "It's like texting with symbols," she quipped.

Curry brought an entirely different perspective. Curry's parents emigrated from Northern Ireland and settled in Greensboro, N.C. "My parents didn't have a clue what segregation was all about," she recalled. "Mother and Daddy treated everyone with respect."

Curry joined SNCC's executive committee in 1960, serving as a sort of "adult adviser" to the student group, she said, mainly because she had a mimeograph machine.

"It was just a matter of being at the right place at the right moment in history," she said.

For Lafayette, growing up across the street from a cigar factory in Tampa, Fla., put him in a multicultural community of Italians, Jews, Hispanics and African Americans. "Only when I used public facilities was I aware of segregation," he said.

Lafayette recalled always hustling for work: fetching early-morning coffee, working at a drugstore as a pharmacy delivery boy, driving at age 14 to deliver groceries.

"I always had a pocketful of money," he said. "That's what I've done for poverty; I've tried not to be poor."

Lafayette said his sense of self respect underlay his passion for civil rights. "You can't expect others to respect you unless you respect yourself," he said. "I've always felt that I did not deserve to be treated in a discriminatory way."

Lafayette said his real motivation for getting involved with the early sit-ins was not for his grandchildren. "I didn't know if I had any grandchildren," he quipped. But he did have a grandmother.

"I wanted my grandmother to be treated with dignity and respect," he said, adding:

"I wanted to know if it was possible to love someone who would hate me."

And that hate was real, recalled King, who helped start the Atlanta student sit-in movement. "We did not expect to sur-

vive this," he said, despite the movement's commitment to nonviolence.

"This country was founded on the idea of life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and certain guaranteed rights of freedom," King said. "When they mentioned freedom they weren't talking about freedom for everybody."

King recalled that the city of Atlanta billed itself in those days as "a city too busy to hate."

"They hated all the time," he said, especially "everyone who looked like me."

King credited his country preacher grandfather, who raised him, with instilling a sense of discipline and inspiring him "to look around and say not what you can't do, but what you must do."

"The forces we were battling had no rules," King said.

He quoted his grandfather as saying that blacks in the South were still slaves. They could just go home at night.

"The forces of evil left some of their grandchildren around here," said King, speaking just three days before the 2010 mid-term elections. "What do you think they mean when they say we're going to take our country back? Back from whom?"

President Barack Obama's election two years ago showed that a coalition of blacks, Hispanics and white women could accomplish something, he said.

Lafayette added that the success of SNCC and others in the civil rights movement decades ago showed what kind of a coalition is required to succeed. The nonviolent movement relied on religious organizations, organized labor, women ("that's how you get some work done"), youth and the media to accomplish its aims, he said.

In the decades since those tumultuous student movement years, all four have continued their dedication to social justice.

Curry, the co-author of several books on leading figures of the civil rights movement, worked for the American Friends Service Committee and was director of Atlanta's Office of Human Services. She now is focusing on issues related to resegregation of public education.

King is chairman of the board of PeachtreeHope Charter School Inc., which aims to eliminate the achievement gap between inner-city and suburban school children. And he is studying for a doctoral degree in history at Georgia State University.

LaFayette, an ordained minister, is highly regarded as an authority on the strategy of nonviolent social change. He is on the faculty of the Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, is a distinguished senior scholar-in-residence at Emory University and a distinguished visiting scholar at the University of Rhode Island Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies.

Richardson owned an African-American bookstore and worked for the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice before turning to a successful career as documentary filmmaker, creating works for PBS, the History Channel and the National Park Service.

Richardson said that when she talks to young people today about SNCC and the civil rights movement, she always tells them: "Remember that we were you.... We were not exceptional in any way." ❖

In Remembrance...

Oral historians pay tribute to Brother Blue

The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum was the site of the OHA conference presidential reception, which featured a tribute to longtime OHA participant Hugh Morgan Hill, a professional storyteller known as Brother Blue. OHA President Michael Frisch called him “an important fixture at every OHA meeting” until last year, when illness prevented him from attending the conference in Louisville.

The 88-year-old Cambridge, Mass., resident died Nov. 3, 2009.

Conference attendees in Atlanta viewed an excerpt from a documentary titled “Remembering Brother Blue, Storyteller,” by documentarian Melvin McCray, who called Brother Blue “an extraordinary man who has devoted his life to making the world a better place.”

“His ministry,” McCray said, “was to tell these stories.”

The documentary includes excerpts from interviews with Brother Blue, who observed in one of them: “There’s something inside us all that has no color, just light.”

His ability to see that light in everyone was a recurring theme when presidential reception attendees were invited to share their recollections of Brother Blue.

Rose Diaz, a past OHA president, recalled: “There was never a stranger in Brother Blue’s presence. The minute you met him, he was your friend.”

Esther Ehrlich of Story Lines Histories recalled being a teenager permitted to venture alone on the subway to Harvard Square where she encountered “this crazy man dressed in blue telling crazy stories.”

“Years and years went by and I came to my first OHA meeting, and there he was, making me feel beautiful and special,” she added.

OHA President-elect Rina Benmayor thanked Ruth Morgan Hill, Brother Blue’s wife and longtime OHA member, for bringing him to OHA meetings. “Thank you for sharing him,” Benmayor said. ❖

Atlanta conference showcases passions for oral history

Nearly 500 Oral History Association conference attendees shared their passion for oral history in numerous forms at the 2010 annual OHA conference in Atlanta.

The five-day conference was packed with workshops, panels, plenary sessions, keynotes, award presentations, film showings, local tours and informal conversations. And the conference theme, “Times of Crisis, Times of Change: Human Stories on the Edge of Transformation,” left participants with their own transformations as they learned something new about oral history, met new professional colleagues and greeted old friends.

This issue of the **OHA Newsletter** offers highlights of presentations about: Hurricane Katrina and LGBT community oral history projects; civil rights veterans’ experiences; immigration issues and keynote speaker Maria Hinojosa. It also includes other OHA news and information about oral history work around the country.

Look for additional conference news coverage in the spring issue of the **OHA Newsletter**.

OHA embarks on search for new *Oral History Review* editor

The Oral History Association invites statements of interest by year’s end from candidates who want to be considered as editor of the OHA’s scholarly journal, *The Oral History Review*.

Kimberly K. Porter of the University of North Dakota is completing six years as editor, the normal rotation for the editor and the journal’s editorial offices. Search Committee chair Michael Frisch praised Porter for “skillfully and effectively” managing the transition to publication by Oxford University Press.

The new editor, he suggested, will be able to expand on that relationship because the publisher is “well-attuned to the changing nature of journal publication and to the multimedia potential particularly germane to an oral history journal.”

Editor candidates’ home institutions or organizations are expected to provide support for the journal’s editorial offices in addition to receiving support from the OHA.

After the search committee receives statements of interest from potential candidates, it will invite more detailed proposals from those deemed viable. By late January, the committee expects to engage in detailed discussions and negotiations with up to three of the strongest candidates, with a recommendation to the OHA Council at its mid-winter meeting next March.

The new editor and editorial office will take over Jan. 1, 2012, but will spend the last four months of 2011 working informally with Porter and Oxford University Press to effect a smooth transition.

For more information, contact Frisch at mfrischj@buffalo.edu or 716-639-1047. You also may contact committee members: Porter at Kimberly.porter@und.edu or 701-777-3881, Daniel Kerr at kerrdx@jmu.edu or 202-365-5317 or Susan McCormick at smc-cormick@albany.edu or 518-442-5431. ❖

State & Regional News

Oklahoma centennial farm families interviewed

By Tanya Finchum, Oklahoma State University

The Oklahoma Oral History Research Program of the Oklahoma State University Library initiated an oral history project in the summer of 2008 focusing on 100-year-old farms.

As a way to help celebrate the centennial of the 1889 Oklahoma Land Run, then-Governor Henry Bellmon officially announced the establishment of the Oklahoma Centennial Farm and Ranch Program in March 1989. These families who have farmed the same land as their ancestors did 100 years ago or more have contributed greatly to the state's heritage and economy.

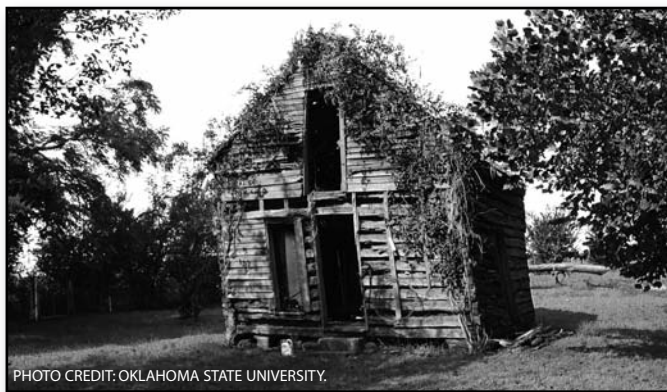


PHOTO CREDIT: OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY.
This original log cabin on the Brixey farm, about 5 miles from the Oklahoma State University campus, sheltered a large pioneer family.

Since the program began, more than 1,200 farm families have applied and received centennial farm designation. To qualify for the program the family must have occupied the land for at least 100 years, be working at least 40 acres and producing \$1,000 in annual sales, and the farm must be operated by or lived on by a family member or leased by a family member over age 65.

Oklahoma State University (OSU) is a land grant institution and as such has contributed to this agricultural history. About half of the 22 farm families interviewed have members who have attended OSU, and many have memories of attending the 4-H Roundup sometime during their high school days.

Our Oklahoma Centennial Farm Families oral history project seeks to help document the agricultural heritage of the state and the university as many of these farm families have strong ties not only to the land but to the university.

When beginning this project, we communicated with program managers at the Oklahoma Historical Society, who have shared copies of the applications filed by the farms that have been designated centennial farms. These applications include a very brief history of the land along with the name and address of the person completing the form.

With such a large pool of centennial farms to draw from, we decided to begin the oral history

project in the county where Oklahoma State is located and then proceed to the counties that border it. As time and resources permit, the project will expand in concentric circles. As to be expected, not all farm families wished to participate, not all farms are still owned by the original family and not all addresses are good.

As of November, 22 centennial farm families have participated in the project. As part of the interview we ask what they foresee for the farm in the next hundred years. Of the 22 families, 10 have grandchildren who may be interested in farming, six have no heirs interested in farming, four have no heirs and two have already sold the land.

Of the two that sold the land, one was an only child who had never married. The other family included nine siblings, and to settle the estate of the parents, the property was sold and the estate divided.

The interview question about the farm's future is understandably an emotional one, regardless of the answer, but even more so for the last heir who has been devoted to maintaining the family's connection to the land. Grandparents work at establishing a bond between their land and their grandchildren for future care of the farm.

Another aspect of this project is seeing the various methods used to preserve the older buildings. In two cases the owner has tried to keep the integrity of the building by reinforcing it or repairing it to look as it originally looked. In another case, the owner has literally wrapped the barns in tin and the farmhouse in roofing material.

For the owners who have interested heirs, barns and other structures have been maintained through the years with paint and necessary repairs. In a few cases, no effort has been made to retain the original structures and time has taken its toll on them.

You can enjoy spending a little time down on the farm by visiting www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/farms. ❖



PHOTO CREDIT: OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY.
The Duggan homestead's barn in Lincoln County was wrapped in aluminum to preserve it. The farm is now owned by the last Duggan heir. She never married, was an only child and has no children and no one to whom she can leave the land she loves.

New guidelines generate discussion

Participants in an Oral History Association roundtable raised questions about new guidelines the OHA approved last year, issues OHA President Michael Frisch said members should address in a free-wheeling online discussion the OHA website makes possible.

In a packed meeting room, longtime OHA activists as well as newer participants challenged aspects of the General Principles and Best Practices for Oral History approved at last year's annual meeting in Louisville, Ky.

Sherna Berger Gluck, who chaired an earlier revision of the OHA's Evaluation Guidelines said the new document seems to have excluded the interactivity and fluidity of the interview process and ignores the complicated relationship between interviewer and narrator.

Gene Preuss of the University of Houston suggested that the guidelines need to include more discussion of critical interpretation of oral history, focusing attention on how oral history is used.

Past president Charles Hardy III noted that discussions in the OHA Council focused on a need for a basic, simple summary document that was not intended to replace the previous guidelines but serve in addition to them.

Past president Linda Shopes suggested that no statement of basic principles could cover all possible situations encountered in executing the principles and should "make room for exceptions at the margins."

Independent oral historian Jessica Wiederhorn said the guidelines should include a recommendation that interview transcripts include information about interviewers as well as interviewees.

Frisch urged OHA members who were concerned about the new Best Practices document to participate in an online discussion board, available on the OHA website, www.oralhistory.org. Members should register to participate in the OHA Network to access the online discussion, which, so far, has been limited, he noted.

Frisch said people should offer specific suggestions of new language for further review and contribute to crowd-sourced editing to make the document more useful. Such tentative revisions would be considered for approval at the OHA conference next year. ❖

Travel scholarships plant seeds

International Committee chair Jessica Wiederhorn reported at the OHA annual meeting that \$3,500 in travel scholarships were awarded to nine scholars from six countries, seven of whom were able to attend, continuing an OHA effort to expand international participation at the conferences.

That participation, she noted, can sometimes have unanticipated benefits.

Recipients of the OHA's international scholarship support are asked to write a report assessing their experiences. One 2009 scholarship recipient, Pramod Kumar Srivastava of the University of Lucknow Department of Western History in Lucknow, India, submitted the following report:

"During all these years I was of the opinion that Oral History merely used as a primary source of fill-in-the gaps while writing history, and using it for the same purpose. However, my visit to OHA annual meeting at Louisville not only changed my total perception of the Oral History but equipped me with quite a large amount of Books, printed guides, brochures, pamphlets and journals etc. It also provided me some essential knowledge about conducting interviews, copyrights, indexing and cataloguing.

"After returning back to India I came into contact of many Indian scholars of North-East India working on the same line but without any guidance and right perception I witnessed in the Louisville conference. Since there is no Oral History Association in India, we are also thinking of founding an 'Oral History Association of India,' in near future.

"In this regard your support and assistance will be of immense help. No sooner we take first step towards initiating this Association in India, I will inform you accordingly. The international scholarships provided by you to serious and determined scholars outside USA may be fruitful in promoting interest, clarifying perception and correct procedure in them towards Oral History movement." ❖

OHA election results announced

Oral History Association members elected the following individuals to serve the organization:

- First Vice President Mary Larson of Oklahoma State University
- Council member Calinda Lee of Emory University
- Nominating Committee members Lu Ann Jones of the National Park Service, Julia Curry Rodriguez of the University of Texas at Austin and Tomas Summers Sandoval of Pomona College.

OHA finances reported strong

The Oral History Association is in strong financial condition, OHA Executive Secretary Madelyn Campbell reported at the annual meeting Oct. 31.

She said she expects the 2010 fiscal year to end with more than \$150,000 in reserves, and the OHA Endowment Fund to end with \$217,000. All the money is invested in conservative money market funds, she said.

The OHA welcomes tax deductible contributions to the endowment, which funds special projects for the association.

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Submit stories to Editor Mary Kay Quinlan, 7524 S. 35th St., Lincoln, NE 68516, or via e-mail at ohaeditor@aol.com

Submit photographs to Photo and Production Editor Alexandra Tzoumas at alexandratz@gmail.net

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News & Notes ...

Baylor collection featured on Central Texas NPR station

So just what was it like to survive before modern refrigeration and air conditioning? And what did people used to do for fun? How were school days different in days gone by?

Those are some of the many topics featured in three- to four-minute excerpts from Baylor University's Institute for Oral History collection being aired on a weekly radio program, "Living Stories," on NPR station KWBU-FM in Central Texas.

The program draws from the institute's interviews going back 40 years. You can hear aired radio segments and read program transcripts at www.baylor.edu/livingstories.

Turnpike history CDs released

Folklorists and musicians Michael and Carrie Kline have released three more CDs in their series "Voices of the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike," which documents the history of an early toll road through the Appalachian Mountains of Central West Virginia.

The CDs feature interviews with more than 100 local elders, plus local music and ambient sound that explore the history of the region. The recordings include old-timers' recollections of driving on the old turnpike in the earliest automobiles, of prison crews grading the toll road and of people who survived the Great Depression in this region by reaching out to help their neighbors.

You can find out more about the Klines' audio productions at www.folktalk.org.

Mark your calendars, make your plans

Oct. 12-16, 2011, are the dates for the next Oral History Association conference, scheduled for the Renaissance Denver Hotel in the beautiful setting of the Mile High City. If you're unlucky enough never to have seen the Rocky Mountains, this is your chance. Please see the call for papers elsewhere in this newsletter.

And be sure to make a note to mark your calendar for Oct. 10-14, 2012, the dates of the OHA conference planned for Cleveland, Ohio. It will be held at the Marriott Downtown at Key Center.

Visit www.oralhistory.org for more information