



Feature Issue: Inside the 2013 OHA Conference

OHA pays tribute to Martha Ross

ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION members paid tribute to past OHA president Martha Ross during a conference roundtable session, with memories and laughter along with a few tears. The oral history pioneer, died April 5, 2013. Her husband, Don, four of her six children and one of her 13 grandchildren attended the session held in her honor.

Humor characterized many of the reminiscences.

Panelist Ron Marcello of the University of North Texas, a former OHA executive secretary, and others recalled the disastrous 1985 OHA conference in Pensacola, Fla., when Martha was OHA president. A hurricane swept the coastal city, preventing speakers and panelists from getting to Pensacola. "If anything was going to go wrong, it did," Marcello recalled. But Martha retained her poise throughout and rustled up attendees willing to make



Martha Jackson Ross

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Little Rock high school students illustrate power of oral history

MOVE OVER, GROWNUPS.

A group of Arkansas teenagers from Little Rock Central High School will show you how to get something done.

Their school is already a bit unusual because it's also a National Historic Site recognizing the forced school desegregation there in 1957, a landmark of the civil rights movement. But the kids and their teachers are a bit unusual, too.

George West, one of three teachers who accompanied eight student members of the school's Memory Project to the OHA conference, said the project started as a one-time assignment before the 50th anniversary of Central High's forced desegregation. But the stories the students collected then "were so powerful, we couldn't stop the assignment," he said.

The cross-generational interviewing project that focuses on civil and human rights has since resulted in a website, two books and an ongoing partnership with the National Park Service, which relies extensively on oral history as part of its interpretive program at the site, said park ranger Jodi Morris, who chaired the students' roundtable session.

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President's letter

Stephen Sloan, Baylor University, Waco, Texas

IT IS WITH humble thanks and great enthusiasm that I greet you as the newly elected president of the Oral History Association. I would like to express appreciation to all my colleagues in the association for their support. I am passionate about oral history and look forward to serving our diverse group as your president over the next year. As members of the OHA, you have much to be excited about in regards to our organization—it is as vibrant and strong as it has ever been.

Just this fall, the 2013 meeting in Oklahoma City in October was an unqualified success! Participants from 12 countries and 36 states gathered for five days of informative workshops, compelling presentations, engaging speakers and general camaraderie in a historically rich setting on the southern Great Plains. The conference host, the historic Skirvin Hilton Hotel, centrally located in downtown Oklahoma City, enhanced the character of the 2013 meeting. Once again, I'd like to thank my stellar program co-chairs, Todd Moye and Beth Millwood, whose creativity and hard work made the meeting an outstanding one. Larry O'Dell and Tanya Finchum each provided fine service to our group as well as the co-chairs of local arrangements. The list of folks who assisted in planning the meeting is long, but a special thanks to database guru Elinor Mazé who assisted in organizing submissions. The peculiarities and chal-

lenges of such work has led OHA Council to invest in new conference planning software that will prove of great benefit to future program committees.

Since January 2013, it has been my great pleasure to work with our new executive office. Cliff Kuhn and our program associate Gayle Knight have quickly established a caliber of service that planners dreamed of when we envisioned a strengthened central office. As an association, we are now involved in more conversations about our methodology nationally and internationally and I look forward to the places we will go in the future.

Central to this vision is our current strategic planning process that has been in operation since our first brainstorming session in October 2012. As president, I invite you to provide feedback on the objectives/mission document that this process has produced to date; it is featured prominently on the OHA website, www.oralhistory.org. Your feedback on this

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Stephen Sloan, OHA president

Executive Director's report

By Cliff Kuhn

THE NEW OHA structure has enabled us to be in more active communication with our colleagues in kindred associations. The result has been both a deepened awareness on our part of the keen, far-ranging interest in oral history today and increased opportunities for OHA to help advance best practices in oral history in a variety of settings.

Nobody is intersecting with oral history in a more active and creative manner than members of the archival community. The proliferation of high-quality and affordable recording devices along with high-powered indexing tools have helped bring archivists out of the stacks to play a more commanding role in bringing together producers and users of oral history interviews. This was evident at the August meeting of the Society of American Archivists, where the SAA Oral History Section's brown bag lunch and sessions treating oral history in New Orleans repositories, oral history and digital and community archives, and oral history-related legal and ethical concerns all drew large, enthusiastic crowds. The same was true at the Tri-State Archivists Conference (Georgia, North and South Carolina) in October, where I gave a plenary

address on oral history and archives in the digital era.

Oral history is also centrally involved in the evolution of digital humanities. As reported on in a blog post for the American Historical Association by Seth Kotch of the University of North Carolina's Southern Oral History Project, the OHA 2013 meeting showcased numerous exciting digital initiatives, and the new digital humanities interest group attracted dozens of participants. The AHA's newsmagazine *Perspectives on History* recently included a piece from us on "The Digitization and Democratization of Oral History," which received additional attention through social media. (We strongly encourage members to connect with OHA via Facebook and Twitter.)

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Cliff Kuhn, OHA executive director

PHOTO: MICHELLE LACOSS

Newsletter editor has new email address

OHA Newsletter editor Mary Kay Quinlan can now be reached at ohaeditor@gmail.com and always welcomes story ideas and submitted articles about oral history matters of interest to OHA members. You may also reach her by phone at: 402-730-0473.

Inside the 2013 OHA Conference

OHA announces award winners

THE ORAL HISTORY Association congratulates the following winners of the awards for article, book, large and small projects, teaching, nonprint format and the Stetson Kennedy Vox Populi Award.

Article Award

EMILYE CROSBY

"White Privilege, Black Burden: Lost Opportunities and Deceptive Narratives in School Desegregation in Claiborne County, Mississippi," *Oral History Review* (Summer/Fall 2012)

Book Award (Tie)

YASMIN SAIKIA

Women, War, and the Making of Bangladesh: Remembering 1971 (Duke 2011)

SEAN FIELD

Oral History, Community, and Displacement: Imagining Memories in Post-Apartheid South Africa (Palgrave 2012)

Elizabeth B. Mason Project Award

LARGE PROJECT (\$50,000 AND ABOVE)

Reed College Oral History Project (Reed College, Gay Walker, coordinator)

SMALL PROJECT (LESS THAN \$50,000)

The "Big Top" Show Goes On (Oklahoma State University, Tanya Finchum and Juliana Nykolaiszyn, co-directors)

Martha Ross Teaching Award

FALANA MCDANIEL

McComb Legacies Project, McComb High School, McComb, Miss.

Nonprint Format Award

JOANNA HAY

Frankfort, Ky., Public Art Tour

Stetson Kennedy Vox Populi Award (Tie)

for use of oral history to create a more humane and just world

ROSALIE RIEGLE

independent oral historian

SAMUEL PROCTOR ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

University of Florida



Sean Field of the University of Cape Town, South Africa, was tied for the OHA Book Award for *Oral History, Community, and Displacement: Imagining Memories in Post-Apartheid South Africa*.



Falana McDaniel of McComb High School in McComb, Miss., won the Martha Ross Teaching Award for her McComb Legacies Project.



Independent oral historian Rosalie Riegler tied for the Stetson Kennedy Vox Populi Award. Her most recent work involved interviews with war resisters and resulted in *Doing Time for Peace: Resistance, Family, and Community* (Vanderbilt UP, October, 2012) and *Crossing the Line: Nonviolent Resisters Speak Out for Peace* (Wipf and Stock Cascade, 2013).

Thank you,

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The Oral History Association thanks the following sponsors for their generous support of the 2013 annual conference.

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Institute for Oral History, Baylor University

Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso

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Oklahoma Humanities Council

Oklahoma Oral History Research Program,
Oklahoma State University

Oral History Program, Department of History,
College of Arts & Sciences, University of North Texas

Oxford University Press

Palgrave Macmillan

Samuel Proctor Oral History Program,
University of Florida

Southern Oral History Program,
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Texas Oral History Association

University Products

Scholarship Committee supports diverse up-and-comers

By Calinda Lee, OHA Scholarship Committee Chair

THE ORAL HISTORY Association is committed to being a democratic and inclusive organization and to creating a supportive professional community for oral historians at every career stage, in many different settings.

To that end, the OHA scholarship committee provides funding for historians to present their work at the annual conference. The committee also offers limited assistance to people who are not presenting at the conference, but whose inclusion would prove beneficial to their local communities. These scholarships ensure that colleagues without institutional funding can participate in the association. In addition to general grants, the committee specifically earmarks scholarships for international applicants, students, pre-collegiate educators and community oral historians in an effort to diversify the association and to link experienced professionals with up-and-comers.

The scholarship program has been especially successful as a conduit into the organization. Each year, we gain members who first attended the OHA's conference as scholarship recipients. This is particularly so for students, who add welcome new energy to our association. Similarly, scholarships have been particularly meaningful for community oral historians who often move ground-breaking projects forward with very little funding. Receiving an OHA scholarship enables them to share their work with a large community of peers and affirms the value of their professional contributions.

Comprised of members of the OHA council, education, program and diversity committees, the 2013 selection panel included James Karmel (Harford Community College), Max

Krochmal (Texas Christian University), Regennia Williams (Cleveland State University) and Calinda Lee (Atlanta History Center). They awarded 13 presenter scholarships totaling more than \$6,800. Five non-presenters received a total of \$1,000.

In preparation for the Oklahoma City meeting, the committee reviewed a record number of applications, requesting more than three times the available funding. We saw exceptional candidates and the competition for awards was stiff. Selection is based on merits of the applicants' oral history projects, the potential for participation in OHA to bolster their work, financial need, past contributions to the field and the organization's dedication to nurturing a diversity of projects and colleagues.

By all accounts, the 2013 scholarship recipients had lots to offer in their sessions, the newcomers breakfast and beyond. They will be sharing their stories in the newsletter throughout the year, so please check back to get to know them better.

If you'd like to learn more about the scholarship program, visit the OHA website to see the application and selection criteria. And please consider making a gift to the OHA scholarship fund. Though the association is committed to continuing the program, resources are limited. Each year, allocations are dependent upon receipts from the preceding year's meeting. We need donations to bolster this project, to ensure that the OHA can continue support those with financial need, to grow in numbers and diversity and to represent the breadth of oral history practice. ❖

President's letter

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piece will inform our discussions at the mid-winter Council meeting as we move forward to finalizing our strategic plan at the Madison, Wis., gathering next fall.

Along with the work of strategic planning and other ongoing tasks, Council will introduce two new initiatives this next year. The first will be the creation and charge of a new committee to deal with a variety of membership issues, an important step in the development of the association. The Membership Committee will focus and advise OHA efforts to best recruit, retain and serve our diverse membership. The

second initiative will commence the planning effort for our 2016 annual meeting. Why start so early, you ask? 2016 represents the 50th anniversary of OHA and offers us as an organization a great opportunity to examine the past, present, and future of oral history. Circle October 2016 on your calendar now as we begin to plan special events, activities, and happenings for this important milestone.

I welcome your thoughts and input on our association as I work with you as president over the next year. I anticipate many positive results from our efforts! ❖

Executive Director's report

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Finally, we are in close communication with advocates for the humanities. At a time when federal support for the humanities is often under assault, there is a realization that there exists enthusiasm for oral history across the political spectrum. At the National Humanities Conference in November, I met with representatives from numerous state

humanities councils about how to best advance and sustain oral history practice at the grassroots level.

These conversations no doubt will continue and deepen in the years to come. I am extremely pleased that the new OHA structure enables us to be more frequently at the table. ❖

Varied menu greets oral historians at Oklahoma City conference

WHETHER THEIR TASTES ran to circus elephant tales, indigenous culture preservation, memorials created in the aftermath of tragedy or the legal standing of orphaned interviews, some 375 oral historians from around the world found something to sample at the 2013 Oral History Association annual conference in Oklahoma City.

Headquartered at the historic Skirvin Hotel, the conference featured a wide assortment of speakers, plenary sessions, workshops, panel presentations, films, roundtables and interest groups intended to explore and showcase the range of oral history work and its varied applications in classrooms, communities, museums, libraries and on the Web. Newcomers to oral history and to the OHA had a chance to meet one another at the annual newcomers breakfast. Attendees also congratulated OHA award winners and had a chance to rub shoulders with authors, booksellers and other vendors at the well-attended exhibits room displays.

This issue of the *OHA Newsletter* features reports on many of the events, which may inspire you to share it with your colleagues who aren't OHA members. Mark your calendars now for next year's OHA conference in Madison, Wis., Oct. 8-12, 2014.



Native languages critical to maintaining culture

NATIVE PEOPLE FROM New Zealand, Alaska and Oklahoma outlined tribal efforts to preserve language and culture through interviewing at an OHA conference plenary session.

The presenters were:

- Candessa Tehee, manager of the Cherokee Language Program for the Cherokee Nation.
- Annette Freiburger of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, who conducted a life history of her mother, Effie Kokrine, an Athabascan Indian woman who worked to bring Native history and culture to schools in the Alaskan interior, and
- Caren Fox, deputy chief judge for the Maori Land Court in New Zealand, an expert on international law who is the presiding officer for land claims cases on the Central North Island.

All three stressed the critical role of language in preserving Native heritage and lifeways.

Tehee described the forced migration of Cherokee people from the lowlands on the eastern seaboard to what became the State of Oklahoma and the sharp decline over decades in the number of Cherokee people who speak the Cherokee language, citing estimates that 64 percent don't speak it at all and only 10 percent could be considered highly fluent.

Efforts to retain Cherokee language have taken several forms, Tehee indicated. Northeastern State University's

Cherokee Language Program is the only indigenous language degree program in the country. And other efforts focus on language immersion programs, including a 40-hour-a-week immersion program for adults and language immersion classrooms for pre-kindergarten through sixth grade.

Tehee described a project in which 16 elders were interviewed by students attending the Cherokee immersion school.

"When people found out they were going to be interviewed by students using Cherokee, all I had to do was open the doors," she said. The elders were eager to answer questions about traditional foods, family stories and the importance of language.

The interviews exposed the children to verb forms and other vocabulary they otherwise wouldn't have encountered, she said, including references to the wild bean vine, a traditional plant food that the students had never seen. The food-related information also proved important to Cherokee diabetes prevention programs that aim to promote healthy eating.

The interviews also collected "Jack the Devil" stories about President Andrew Jackson, who forced the westward removal of the Cherokees. The stories represent a previously undocumented genre of Cherokee folktales, Tehee said.

Annette Freiburger also emphasized the importance of language, something both her mother and father lost when they started school. She described her parents' subsistence lifestyle along the



Annette Freiburger of the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Candessa Tehee, Cherokee Language Program manager for the Cherokee Nation, compare notes after their plenary session. Freiburger, Tehee and Deputy Chief Judge Caren Fox of the Maori Land Court in New Zealand described the role of oral history in sustaining Native communities.

Yukon River system and created a life history of her mother as a master's thesis. Effie Kokrine called herself "Grandma Effie" among all the children she worked with "because grandmas are very important people," Freiburger said.

Both of Effie's grandfathers were white prospectors and her grandmothers were Dene or Athabascan people, Freiburger said. Effie attended boarding school for three years where she improved her English, but came back to the subsistence lifestyle at the age of 15 to help her mother raise her siblings. At age 16, she married Andrew Kokrine, eight years her

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Inside the 2013 OHA Conference

Native languages

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senior, and lived a life of trapping, hunting and fishing. Andrew and Effie were both champion sled dog racers.

They eventually moved to Fairbanks, Freiburger said, where her father was a carpenter. Later, they returned to a traditional camp on the Yukon River, and Andrew died in 1978. Thereafter, Effie, who was a native speaker who knew all the traditional skills, became an active volunteer involved in numerous efforts to transmit the Dene culture to children, showing them the way their ancestors used plants and animals to sustain their subsistence lives.

Native traditions also play a critical role in New Zealand's Maori Land Court system, Deputy Chief Judge Caren Fox indicated. The court deals with the retention, use and development of Maori lands. It is part of a reconciliation effort between Maori tribes and the New Zealand state, which aims to leave behind grievances of the past, Fox said. Anthropologists, historians and legal experts are all involved. Maori people comprise about 15 percent of the nation's population.

Fox said the court makes land use and ownership determinations in part

on oral histories, genealogies, songs, dances and traditions in addition to written historical accounts based on highly detailed British colonial records. The land tribunals listen to stories as the claimants want to tell them rather than being dominated by the legal process. Since 1975, she said, the system has collected a massive amount of oral testimony, which has contributed to negotiated land settlements between the government and the tribes.

William Schneider, professor emeritus at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, moderated the plenary session. ❖

Circus legacy lives on in Hugo, Okla.

TIME WAS WHEN kids used to dream of running away to join the circus, perhaps envisioning a carefree life of adventure and stardom. But it was also a life of grueling work and treasured camaraderie.

The many faces of the circus world came to life for OHA conference-goers at a plenary session that mined the interviews conducted for an Oklahoma State University project titled "The 'Big Top' Show Goes On: An Oral History of Occupations Inside and Outside the Canvas Circus Tent." Project leaders Tanya Finchum and Juliana Nykolaiszyn shared audio, video and photo excerpts from interviews with circus people connected to Hugo, Okla., a small town in the southeastern corner of the state that was once the winter home for 17 circuses. Now there are three.

In interview excerpts, circus owners and circus workers told a delighted OHA plenary session about the rigors and rewards of circus life.

The circuses that called Hugo their winter home followed the wheat harvest from Texas to the Canadian border, getting to Michigan in the height of the tourist season. Then they'd head back south as corn and cotton were being harvested, setting up on large gravel lots around cotton gins.

People had money in their pockets after harvest time, one interviewee said. But agriculture has changed, and "you can't find a cotton gin anymore," he said.

John Frazier and his sister, Mary Frazier Rawls, were a high-wire-walking brother-sister circus act whose family started out in vaudeville, but as that died out, they turned to busking. It was during the Depression, and the family would travel from town to town, dad asking permission to do a show wherever they went. Mom juggled, younger brothers did a boxing act, dad did a chair-balancing act, and when the show was over, they'd pass that hat. Mary remembered a man who came up to thank them for putting on a show and apologizing for not putting money in the hat. At least, Mary said, it made the family feel they were doing something worthwhile.

Mary went on to spend her entire life in a circus. "I have to be truthful with you," she said. "I loved the applause."

Her son Bobby, a third-generation circus performer, trained as a tightwire walker and performed on a trampoline. He said that when he went to Vietnam with his brother, they were convinced they survived because of the skills they developed as circus performers.

Circus life, of course, is inherently dangerous, and interviewees described injuries and mishaps with animals that sometimes sidelined circus careers. Dolly Pirtle and her cousin Lucy Loyal, sixth-generation circus performers, noted the challenges of training animals. "Don't ever work a llama act," Dolly advised.

She said her mother married into the circus family and learned how to work with elephants, chimpanzees and bears. Cousin Lucy recalled getting her chimps "hand-me-down costumes" to wear.

Mike Moore recalled that his first circus job at age 11 was to graze Mabel the elephant and try to keep her out of people's gardens. "She was a gentle soul and a hard worker," he said. "And she was ticklish."

Another interviewee recalled an elephant named Barbara who was spooked at the sound of a car backfiring. She took off and ran through the plate glass windows of a nursing home in the Wisconsin town where the show was performing and ended up tromping through a cornfield before being captured.

In its heyday right after World War II, one Hugo-based circus boasted a five-ring show with 21 elephants. It took 60 trucks to put that show on the road.

Changes in agriculture and tastes in entertainment and difficulty in getting circus workers have all taken a toll on circuses, interviewees indicated. But it's nonetheless a life the interviewees all said they loved. Martha Moore likened it to nomadic Indian tribes, with a close-knit, family feeling.

Home life and work life blended together, Popcorn the Clown said. "It's a neat life. You either like it or you don't." ❖

Wade Goodwyn's stories



Wade Goodwyn

WHEN SOMETHING BIG happens in Texas or nearby states, National Public Radio's Wade Goodwyn likely will be there, telling the stories that make NPR—and Goodwyn—respected as a source of reporting that burrows beneath the surface looking for context other news outlets ignore.

Goodwyn shared some of those reporting experiences with OHA members as the luncheon keynote speaker.

Goodwyn is the son of Lawrence Goodwyn, who founded the Duke University Oral History Program and was a keynote speaker at the 1990 OHA conference. The senior Goodwyn died Sept. 29.

As reporting assignments go, some of Wade Goodwyn's are hard to match.

He detailed the 1993 raid by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms on a compound near Waco, Texas, held by the Branch Davidians, a group Goodwyn said "no one had ever heard of." After a stand-off that lasted for weeks, an FBI hostage rescue team got tired of waiting and tired of negotiating and commenced a raid on the compound, Goodwyn recalled. Branch Davidian leader David Koresh set the place on fire and 80 people perished, including about two dozen children.

Two years later, the Oklahoma City federal building was bombed, and Goodwyn covered the trials of Timothy McVeigh

and Terry Nichols, who were said to have bombed the Murrah Federal Building in retaliation for the FBI raid on the Branch Davidians. Both were convicted, and McVeigh was executed in 2001. Nichols remains in a federal prison in Colorado, serving a life sentence for conspiracy in the bombing.

Goodwyn said the FBI insisted from the beginning that the bombing was a two-man job. But numerous witnesses and questionable handling of fingerprint and other evidence by the FBI raise considerable doubt about the investigation and subsequent trial, he suggested.

Showing photos and playing audio excerpts from his reporting, Goodwyn also recounted to a hushed audience Texas cases involving district attorneys he characterized as often being "small-minded, vindictive" prosecutors willing to arrest young black people on drug charges and get them to plead guilty and accept probation just to keep federal drug-fighting money flowing to their counties.

Goodwyn noted that DNA testing has exonerated some four dozen Texas convicts, but even a confession by the actual perpetrator of a crime doesn't always help. He cited the case of a man convicted of rape and sentenced to life in prison. Fifteen years later, Goodwyn said, the real perpetrator wrote to the local district attorney and confessed to the crime. Meanwhile, the falsely accused man died in prison from an asthma attack, and the district attorney had gone on to become a state judge.

"I don't know what the moral to this story is," Goodwyn said. ❖

Stark reminder of Oklahoma City federal building bombing greets OHA members

ONE-HUNDRED-SIXTY-EIGHT CHAIRS OF bronze and stone up-lighted from their glass bases at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum greeted hushed OHA members who attended an evening presentation by Edward T. Linenthal, a leading historian who studies historical memory and memorialization.

The rows of chairs represent each person killed in the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building, including 19 small chairs for each of the children who died that April day. And the museum adjacent to the outdoor memorial documents the history and aftermath of a day marked by its very ordinariness, captured in a recording of a state water resources board hearing across the street before the bomb exploded and chaos ensued.

Linenthal, who has written a book about the bombing's aftermath, was a member of the Flight 93 Memorial Commission, and he reflected on similarities and differences in how communities and disaster survivors in Oklahoma City and New York dealt with the fallout of tragedy as they created public memorials.

In both places, he noted, the cities celebrated the heroism of rescue workers and the people who gave blood and perceived new life emerging out of death.

Memorial ideas emerged spontaneously and immediately, he said, giving rise to quilt-making, tree-planting, concerts and athletic events.



Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum

Until recent years, Linenthal said, sites where shameful events took place often were destroyed. Now, however, public memorials tend to serve as acts of protest as much as remembrance and reflect a conviction that by memorializing events "we call them over."

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Oklahoma City

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But the historian noted that the process of creating memorials is often fraught with tension. While bereavement trumps class, race and other conditions that tend to separate people, bringing them together at least temporarily, memorial planners often deal with conflicts that can be difficult to resolve.

In New York, for example, families of some of the Twin Towers victims objected to the attention paid to people acclaimed as heroes. In Oklahoma City, defining just who was a bombing survivor became an issue. What about the people who weren't at work that day? In the case of the Holocaust Museum, the subject of one of Linenthal's books, tension

over determining just who was a Holocaust victim remained throughout the course of the project. And family members involved in the Flight 93 Memorial in Shanksville, Pa., wrangle over who on the ill-fated flight should get recognized, not to mention anger over the tasteless creation of key rings, mugs, statues and other souvenirs.

"There is nothing in this culture that cannot be commodified," Linenthal said.

In the memorial planning process, "people become deeply invested in non-negotiables," he said, and ultimately they have to "practice democracy" to resolve their conflicts. ❖

Acclaimed Native storyteller keynotes awards banquet

AWARD-WINNING STORYTELLER Dovie Thomason learned a lot from her Kiowa Apache grandmother. She learned how to survive. She learned how to be resilient. And she learned how to listen to the rich oral traditions of her grandmother's heritage. And how to pass along the lessons that "my old people" taught whenever they told the stories.

"I'm of the feeling that this written language is a passing fad," Thomason told OHA members attending the Saturday awards banquet.

Thomason, who has won national and international acclaim as a cultural artist and scholar, lamented the increasing specialization of the scholarly world. American Indians have encountered that all too frequently, she suggested, noting that some reservations observe four seasons: "autumn, winter, spring and anthropologist."

Be careful about believing what you read if it's written by an anthropologist, Thomason warned. "The Indians would make up stuff 'cause they were getting \$10 a day," she said, adding—perhaps in jest—that she knew people who could afford new pick-ups after the anthropologists went home.

Thomason said her grandma believed that children never should be punished. Instead, they should be told stories. And through the stories, children would make sense of the lesson being imparted and learn how to restrain their behavior appropriately.

"She said, 'I taught you stories so you would be free,'" Thomason said. The message was that if you can't control yourself, other people will, and you'll give up your freedom.

Thomason told the oral historians that she considered them like storytellers because the best storytellers "don't talk that much; they listen."

"My grandma taught me never to ask questions" but to listen with respect and restraint to learn the lessons a speaker has to tell, she said.

The best question, she suggested, would be, "What would you tell me if I knew the right questions?"

Thomason reminded the audience that "all stories are true, whether they happened or not." And she commended oral historians for creating stories that otherwise wouldn't exist if they hadn't been willing "to just listen." ❖

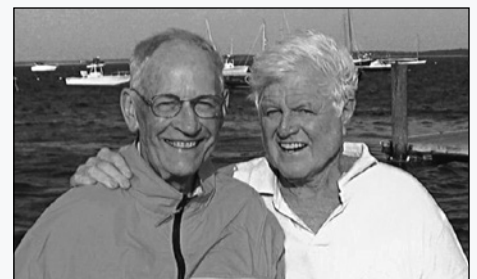
Oral historian of presidency dies

THE FOUNDER OF the University of Virginia's Presidential Oral History Program, James Sterling Young, has died. Young, 85, died at his home in rural Albemarle County, Va., on Aug. 8, the university announced.

Young had presented at OHA conferences about the Presidential Oral History Program, which he founded in 1981 at the university's Miller Center, which studies the presidency, public policy and political history. Young retired in 2006 as a professor emeritus of government and foreign affairs and previously had been a faculty member and administrator at Columbia University.

Young was recognized as a prize-winning historian of 19th century politics. But he also made a mark in oral history with the Presidential Oral History Program, which has conducted hundreds of interviews with presidential aides, advisers and adversaries. Former president Jimmy Carter is the only former occupant of the White House who has, himself, been interviewed, but oral history program officials hope other living former presidents also will agree to be interviewed. The project has, however, interviewed people associated with the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

In addition to the presidencies collections, the center also has hundreds of hours of interviews with the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy and many of his associates, documenting Kennedy's long public career. Young conducted some 90 hours of interviews with Kennedy, who relied on them in writing his memoir, *True Compass*.



James Sterling Young, left, and Senator Edward M. Kennedy in an undated photo.

Martha Ross as mentor

By Donald A. Ritchie, U.S. Senate Historian

MARTHA ROSS WAS someone you could turn to as a mentor, whenever you needed help. She would listen intently, commiserate or share a laugh, and then offer practical advice. Many of us either became oral historians or became better ones because of her.

Martha recruited me into oral history. In 1972 I was doing graduate work at the University of Maryland and had started researching my doctoral dissertation. The man I was writing about had left 200 boxes of correspondence, and in one of those boxes I came across a transcript of an interview he had given in the last months of his life, marked pages 650-700. The librarians had no idea where the first 650 pages might be, the transcript having been found with the rest of his papers when he died.

The faculty at Maryland recommended that I talk to Mrs. Ross, who had just started teaching an oral history seminar. That led me to Martha. When I described my dilemma, she said the transcript sounded like something Columbia University might have done and put me in touch with Elizabeth Mason. Sure enough, Columbia had the complete interview. Reading it was an eye-opening experience. Here was the person I was writing about telling me about his own life in his own words.

Back at Maryland, Martha wanted to hear about my experience. We talked about the validity of oral evidence, and how to get around my graduate advisor's skepticism about citing it. She also heard me complain about the interviewer's failure to ask all the questions I needed answered and encouraged me to start conducting my own interviews.

At the time, Martha was organizing an oral history conference in Baltimore and invited me to speak. I protested that I had never done an interview. "We hear from interviewers all the time," she assured me. "We need to hear from the users, too."

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A PIONEER IN SO MANY AREAS, MARTHA WAS AT HEART A TEACHER AND A MENTOR. SHE SET HIGH STANDARDS, KEPT INFORMED ON DEVELOPING ISSUES AND HELD STRONG OPINIONS ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE INTERVIEWER.

Remembering Martha as a role model

LINDA SHOPES, INDEPENDENT historian and past OHA president, organized the roundtable honoring Martha Ross and shared the following reflections:

MARTHA WAS A RAY OF HOPE: THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS SHE TOLD US A BIT ABOUT HER PERSONAL HISTORY, THAT SHE HAD GONE BACK TO SCHOOL WHEN HER SIXTH—SIXTH!—CHILD STARTED SCHOOL. WELL, THAT KNOWLEDGE WAS, QUITE SIMPLY, A RELIEF AND AN INSPIRATION TO ME.

"When I entered graduate school in 1974, I was what was then called a 'returning student.' I had been out of school for some years, was married and the mother of a young child. When I had married, I figured that was what I would 'do' with my life—be wife and mother.

"Then, along came the women's movement and with it a dim awareness that I could do and be something more; graduate school was a first halting step towards that something more. I was, however, a naïve and insecure—one might say panicked—graduate student that first year; I was not well prepared for the

rigors of graduate study and I was besieged with self-doubt. I had a panic attack that lasted from September to December.

"Martha was a ray of hope: the first day of class she told us a bit about her personal history, that she had gone back to school when her sixth—sixth!—child started school. And she was a good generation older than me. Well, that knowledge was, quite simply, a relief and an inspiration to me.

"So, thank you, Martha. You live on in all of us." ❖

PANELIST MARY KAY Quinlan, *OHA Newsletter* editor, also paid tribute to Martha Ross as a graduate school mentor who stressed the basics of oral history theory and methodology. But Martha taught another critical lesson as well:

"The third lesson I learned from Martha is one I don't think she knew she was teaching. It wasn't on the syllabus; there were no questions on a test.... And that's the lesson—or perhaps simply a personality trait—of being genuinely interested in everyone. Martha, like only a handful of other people I've known, seemed able to regard every encounter with someone new as an opportunity to learn something new.

"It reflects, I think, an ability to treat everyone with respect. And while the trait certainly goes beyond oral history, I think it explains why it was critical to this field that someone like Martha was one of its creators. Oral historians, as Martha demonstrated, don't have to *like* everyone they interview or every topic they encounter. But approaching an interviewee with respect is the first, critical step to achieving a successful oral history interview.

"And I have come to understand that that ability to take everyone for what they are and where they are in life—young children, a parent with dementia, an annoying neighbor, a needy student, a high-powered but insecure public figure—goes a long way toward enriching your days and rewarding your life and the lives of those around you. For that lesson, too, I have Martha to thank." ❖

MARTHA, LIKE ONLY A HANDFUL OF OTHER PEOPLE I'VE KNOWN, SEEMED ABLE TO REGARD EVERY ENCOUNTER WITH SOMEONE NEW AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW.

Inside the 2013 OHA Conference

Martha Ross tribute

continued from page 1

presentations about their work, even if they hadn't been scheduled to speak.

OHA Executive Director Cliff Kuhn recalled meeting Martha for the first time at that convention. "Martha was the eye in the hurricane," he remembered.

But it's her dedication to oral history education that lives on in conferences to this day, Kuhn said.

Panelist Barry Lanman of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, who engineered the establishment there of the Martha Ross Center for Oral History in her honor, emphasized her role as an educator. "We can't calculate her overall influence," he said.

Her effectiveness, Lanman said, was in part due to the supportive way in which she taught those she encountered. "She wouldn't tell you what to do," he said. "She would guide you to a conclusion."

Tom Charlton, the 1991 president of OHA, recalled the 1970 meeting in Asilomar, Calif., when the organization was in its infancy. Martha went to the piano in the lounge "and we sang Broadway tunes," he said. "Martha was very sure we were not going to be a stodgy group."

Widower Don Ross was asked to recount how he and Martha met. It was in about 1950, he said, when he was working as a chemist at Oak Ridge, Tenn. Martha was having lunch with a friend one day and asked who that man was sitting alone at a table. Would you like to meet him, the friend asked. Martha said yes. They met. "And six months later we were married," Don recalled.

John Neuenschwander, who served as OHA president in 1982, praised Martha for her leadership in OHA through the 1970s and '80s, a period when the organization grew and she encouraged a diversity of membership. "I just remember a spirit that never dimmed," Neuenschwander said. ❖

Martha Ross as mentor

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Martha was a gracious Southern lady. Anytime she asked a favor she always paid it back, and there was usually a meal involved. She invited me to a lunch that she and Mary Jo Dearing ran annually at George Washington University, where Martha had begun teaching oral history. At that luncheon, Martha announced the organization of a regional oral history group, OHMAR, and invited us all to its first meeting. Martha also encouraged us to attend the OHA meeting in Asheville, N.C. A national meeting was beyond my financial means as a graduate student, but she returned full of stories about what an outstanding meeting it had been and what a fun group of people oral historians were. She was right about that.

At the time, some friction existed between the Oral History Association and OHMAR. OHA's founding generation looked suspiciously on the upstart regional organizations as potential competitors rather than allies. Symbolizing the distant relationship, at one OHA meeting, the newly-formed committee on state-regional organizations had to meet in a stairwell for lack of other accommodations.

As a good oral historian, Martha knew how to establish rapport and win confidence. Whenever any OHA officer came through Washington, she made sure that OHMAR hosted them for dinner. We held many such social occasions and got to meet oral history leaders from around the nation. By the time Martha became president of the OHA in 1985, the icy walls had melted and a cooperative spirit had developed, so that when OHA came to Baltimore in 1988, OHMAR co-sponsored the meeting and helped with the local arrangements, as regional organizations have continued to do over the years.

Martha had been born in Alabama, but she was the type of white Southerner who marched in civil rights demonstrations. From the start, she pressed OHA and OHMAR to open their meetings to racial and ethnic diversity. She promoted the OHA's first committee on multiculturalism, recruited minorities to speak at meetings and warmly greeted newcomers to make everyone feel welcome.

While Martha served as OHA president in 1985, she attended the international oral history meeting that was held in Barcelona and came back to assure us that oral history had gone global. At that time, the international oral historians were having trouble creating a formal organization, and Martha reasoned that this left the OHA as the "preeminent professional association in oral history anywhere in the world," urging the organization to encourage international membership. She launched an OHA committee on internationalism and gave participants with international interests an opportunity to caucus.

A pioneer in so many areas, Martha was at heart a teacher and a mentor. She set high standards, kept informed on developing issues and held strong opinions about the role of the interviewer. Having raised six children, she knew when to be tolerant and when to be strict. My favorite memory of Martha involves a series of skits that she and Perry Blatz used to perform at OHMAR workshops on "How Not to Do an Oral History." Perry played the inept interviewer, arriving late, chewing gum, asking inappropriate questions, interrupting and breaking every other rule in the book. Martha played the interviewee, alternately long-suffering, confused and cantankerous. Periodically, they would halt the performance to poll the audience on what the interviewer had done wrong. This was a terrific way to teach new interviewers. The skits finally ended because Perry was afraid that people would think he really interviewed that way. Martha kept on teaching, however, and remained throughout her career the always reliable mentor. ❖



Montgomery, AL. March 25, 1965. This photo appeared in *Popular Photography's* 1965 Annual issue and in Davidson's book on the civil rights movement during 1961-65, "A Time for Change."

PHOTO: BRUCE DAVIDSON

Mom and oral history

By Kathryn Ross

Editor's Note: Katy Ross read the following message on behalf of the Ross family at the OHA tribute to her mother, Martha, who died April 5, 2013.

WAS THERE EVER a perfect union of person to career than our Mom and Oral History?

From the time we were kids she was always telling us stories of her relatives, her childhood, her college life and young adulthood, all the time helping us to understand our current situation--the civil rights movement, the turbulent '60s, Richard Nixon (!)--understanding it in context.

My kids, particularly Christopher, who is now an orchestral conductor, will always remember her description of meeting John Philip Sousa as well as seeing Rachmaninoff perform in concert.

Her inquisitive mind and interest in different peoples and cultures was fostered by her Dad, who took her along on cross-country trips of Selma (Ala.) public school teachers which he led in the '30s. Led her to study English and history in college and when she found she couldn't actually make a living wage in journalism, finally acquiesced to apply for a secretarial job at Oak Ridge (Tenn.), thinking maybe she'd end up in their public relations department!

Of course it was there she met our Dad, Don Ross, and, as you know, "it was an atomic romance and they had fall-out ever since"—for the next 66-1/2 years. As an aside, I'm sorry that she didn't have a chance to read "The Girls of the Atomic City." I think she would have really enjoyed it, personally and professionally.

Her participation in the Selma to Montgomery March with Martin Luther King Jr., carrying her homemade sign "Here's One Native Selmian for Truth and Justice" was the perfect marriage of her belief in the importance of not only putting her Christian faith in action, but also the importance of individuals to effect societal change. She really felt that if

her friends and relatives in Selma saw her participate in this march for freedom and civil rights for all that they would realize the righteousness of the cause and mend their ways. So when those same friends and relatives let her know in no uncertain terms their disapproval, she learned—and then

taught us—the difficulty, but continued necessity, of individuals joining together to advocate for the rights of others and societal change.

Fortunately, we have a video of our Mom recounting her Selma to Montgomery March experience, which the kids and grandkids and in-laws viewed during our time together at her funeral last spring. Now the next generation is as inspired by her example as we were, as one grandchild posted to Facebook earlier this year, she was "channeling her inner-Moop" as she marched on Moral Monday for Education in North Carolina.

Was there ever a perfect union of person to career than our Mom and Oral History?

When she was ready to return to the workforce after raising her six children, she discovered the nascent field of oral history and immediately sought to learn as much as she could about it. And none of our lives would be the same.

She was able to learn the techniques of oral history and use them in her master's thesis at the University of Maryland and then hone those skills and develop a systematic way of teaching them, empowering other students to do what came to her so naturally: to give voice to the everyday experiences and recollections which taken together make up our collective history. We have fond memories of her making the famous

"how not to interview" tape in our dining room, and her recommendation that Playboy be a resource for her students because, of course, of the interviews!

Could there have been a more perfect union of people than the gatherings of oral historians, which so graciously welcomed and supported and enriched our Mom and, really, our entire family?

I've had fun over the past few weeks going through my Mom's family letters, which served as the chronicle of the times. And I have selected out the ones which described her attendance at the annual OHA meetings. Twenty years of fabulous locations—



Martha Jackson Ross and Donald Morris Ross



Members of the late Martha Ross' family attend an OHA roundtable session in her honor. From left: daughters Maria Ross-Lyons of Kent, Wash., and Kathryn Ross of Fremont, Ohio; husband Don Ross, sons Michael of San Jose, Calif., and David of Houston, Texas, and grandson Donald Ross, also of Houston.

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Inside the 2013 OHA Conference

Mom and oral history

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Jackson Hole; Asheville; Chateau Montebello near Montreal; Tamarron, Colo.; the Queen Mary and even Barcelona for the international meeting in 1985. Delicious food; the drink (!); the weather (need I only say, Pensacola?); the speakers, the workshops. Fascinating stuff.

But, of course, the most memorable—yes, even more memorable than Hurricane Juan—are the people of the Oral History Association. You all here, as well as those who have passed on, were—no, really ARE—like a second family to us. We have partied together, celebrated (and even read some of) your published works, supported each other in both personal and professional endeavors, and, yes, we have even mourned together. You have modeled for us and for each other the definition of true collegiality. And for that we can all be proud and grateful.

Was there ever a perfect union of person to career than our Mom and Oral History?

So isn't it ironic that a woman who was so interested in preserving the memories of others would slowly lose hers? Perhaps that can serve as an inspiration to us all as we continue forward, the vagaries of time and memory making the work of oral history all the more important.

In closing, thank you all. Thank you for loving us and our Mom and Dad, Martha and Don, Moop and Doop. Thank you for honoring Mom's memory with the teaching award and with your lives. I'm sure she standing up in heaven (trying to see over the people in front of her) and smiling her big smile and maybe even lifting a drink in toast—after all, it's 5 o'clock somewhere!—and wishing for you, as we do, continued success in your work and in your relationships together. ❖

Little Rock high school

continued from page 1

Students explained the process by which they conduct interviews, write essays about the interviewees' stories and evaluate and edit them for publication. They invited the audience to create impromptu reading groups in which the students demonstrated their process for analyzing and editing student writing. Much of the work is accomplished through an extracurricular service learning club. By now, more than 1,000 Little Rock students have conducted interviews as part of the Memory Project.

Student Sally Goldman told the OHA audience: "What we want people to do is develop a personal connection to history. We believe all stories are valuable." ❖



Little Rock Central High School students and teachers (front row) Cynthia Nunnley, Keith Richardson and George West celebrate the students' presentation of their Little Rock Central High School Memory Project. Jodi Morris (far right), park ranger at the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, said oral histories, like those collected in the Memory Project, are an important part of the interpretive program there.

OHA election winners

The following Oral History Association members were voted into office in the 2013 balloting:

1st VICE PRESIDENT
ANNE VALK,
BROWN UNIVERSITY



OHA COUNCIL
AMY STARECHESKI,
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



NOMINATING COMMITTEE

CURTIS AUSTIN, OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

MARIA BELTRAN-VOCAL, DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

IRENE RETI, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

SOHA regional conference welcomes everyone

"Courage to Ask, Courage to Tell" is the theme of the spring conference of the Southwest Oral History Association, set for April 3-5, 2014, in Tempe, Ariz.

While SOHA membership generally is drawn from Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico and Southern California, the organization welcomes people from anywhere who are interested in oral history, including students, academics, professionals and community group members of all sorts.

The deadline for submitting proposals for presentations has passed, but if you want more details about the conference so you can plan to attend, contact sarahemoorhead@fastmail.fm or visit the SOHA website at www.southwestoralhistory.org.

Inside the 2013 OHA Conference

Presidential reception features history, music ▶▶

OHA conference attendees who went to the presidential reception at the Oklahoma History Center were treated to spectacular views of the state capitol from the museum's soaring atrium and engaging exhibits that explore the state's history and culture.

The evening also featured a performance of "Polango," a composition for piano, bassoon, clarinet and accordion that was inspired by oral history interviews with central Pennsylvania coal miners. Composer Scott McAllister won a research grant from Baylor University's Institute for Oral History to record coal miners' stories and music that inspired his piece, which combines striking elements of tango and polka rhythms.



Book review ▶▶

Oral history books and their authors drew a crowd at the OHA conference exhibit room.



Native American dance troupe ▲

Oklahoma Fancy Dancers entertained OHA members at a reception sponsored by the committee on diversity.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

ORAL HISTORY IN MOTION: MOVEMENTS, TRANSFORMATIONS, AND THE POWER OF STORY

2014 OHA ANNUAL MEETING | OCT. 8–12, 2014
MADISON CONCOURSE HOTEL | MADISON, WIS.

Motion suggests many things: action and transformation; dynamism and fluidity; migration and the power to move. By its very nature, oral history is constantly in motion—in the evolving relationship between the two parties in an interview; in the interplay between the past and the present; in conjunction with emergent technologies and diverse applications. Oral history also has played a crucial role in documenting and understanding the central movements of our time, from a broad array of social movements to transnational migrations.

The 2014 annual meeting of the Oral History Association will offer the opportunity to assess various dimensions of oral history in motion. The digital revolution has ushered in myriad new possibilities in the collection, curation, presentation and interpretation of oral history interviews, with complex consequences and implications. Many of the currents and developments of the contemporary world—from war to trauma to the global migration of people, capital, culture and ideas—have oral historical ramifications. In particular, oral historians have had a varied and complicated relationship with movements for social

change both in the U.S. and around the world. And Madison, Wis., long known as a vibrant cultural hub and site of political ferment, offers an excellent place to facilitate discussions about movements.

Conference organizers invite proposals for panels, individual papers, performances, exhibits and roundtables that address any and all themes of oral history in motion. Presenters are encouraged to incorporate voice and image in their presentations and to think about innovative delivery models including dramatic performance, interactive sessions, dialogic formats that engage audiences and use of digital media.

OHA welcomes proposals from independent scholars, community activists and organizers, archivists, librarians, museum curators, Web designers, documentary producers, media artists, ethnographers, public historians and other practitioners whose work is relevant to the meeting's focus. OHA also welcomes international presenters, who may apply for limited partial scholarships if their proposals are accepted. Small scholarships also may be available for others who attend the meeting.

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.

Proposal queries may be directed to:

NATALIE FOUSEKIS

California State University, Fullerton
nfousekis@fullerton.edu

KATHRYN NEWFONT

Mars Hill University
knewfont@mhu.edu

PAUL ORTIZ

University of Florida
portiz@ufl.edu

For submission queries or more information, contact:

GAYLE KNIGHT

Program Associate
Oral History Association
Georgia State University
Dept. of History, P.O. Box 4117
Atlanta, GA 30302-4117
Phone: 404-413-5751
Email: oha@gsu.edu

**For details on how to submit proposals electronically, go to:
WWW.ORALHISTORY.ORG and click on the 2014 conference.**

THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF ALL PROPOSALS IS

JANUARY 20, 2014

Using oral history in the classroom

By Melissa Marinaro, Curator, Italian American Program, Senator John Heinz History Center

SINCE THE EARLY 1990s, the Senator John Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh has built a repository of artifacts and archives documenting the history and heritage of Italian Americans in Western Pennsylvania. As the new full-time curator of the Italian American Collection at the History Center, I was issued several priorities upon accepting this position, including improving the accessibility of more than 300 oral histories of first- and second-generation Italian Americans housed within our extensive archival collection. One of the more successful ways that I have shared our oral histories with the public since joining the History Center staff was to use select interviews as an educational tool to facilitate learning in higher education.

This past semester, oral histories from the Italian American Collection were used to teach about the Italian American experience in the class “Italian American Culture and Civilization” at Penn State University. Professor Johanna Wagner, being familiar with the History Center’s Italian American Collection, contacted me about how our institutions could collaborate digitally.



Cathy Cerrone, former curator of the Italian American Collection, interviews Mary Balestreire in 1995.



Immigrant Angela Pasquale poses for a studio portrait in 1957, shortly before immigrating to Pittsburgh. In her oral history interview, she discussed designing and sewing the wool suit in the photograph specifically for her journey to the United States. The outfit and her steamship trunk are also part of the Italian American Collection.

Knowing that primary source documentation can offer insights that textbooks cannot, I suggested that using oral histories in the classroom would allow her students to connect real people with historical events. She emailed me a copy of the course syllabus and I was able to identify several oral histories that complemented themes discussed during the course.

Since a large percentage of the oral history collection is available in a digital format, it was simple enough to deposit the audio files and corresponding transcriptions into a designated Dropbox account. Audio files were streamed in class during the semester as a way for students to collectively listen to firsthand accounts of the Italian American experience. Subjects broached by the narrators were used to launch small group discussion among students. As homework, they were asked to publish their reflections on the oral history interviews to their class blog, Penn State Voices.

The ubiquitous nature of a public blog allowed staff at the History Center and members of the Italian American community in Pittsburgh to examine how college students were reacting critically to the material. This is a particularly important outcome of the collaboration; the Italian American community suffers from disparate communications between older and younger generations. By having the students share their feedback in a safe, university-sanctioned platform, they are able to react honestly to the oral histories through a digital medium they are comfortable operating.

As a museum professional interested in audience perspective, I found their blog entries incredibly valuable in understanding the broad spectrum of experiences in which contemporary young Italian Americans are raised. Many students noted that stories of immigration were not passed down in their families, while others commented that the oral history narratives were reminiscent of conversations shared during Sunday dinner. No matter how wide the range of personal experience, there was a resounding sentiment expressed by the Penn State students to engage more with oral histories. ❖

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Kay Quinlan**, 7524 S. 35th St.,
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ohaeditor@gmail.com

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

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**Look for more OHA conference highlights in the spring
issue of the *OHA Newsletter*, where you'll read how:**

- ▶ **oral history collections reflect 50 shades of gray,
along with a full-page decision tree to help guide you
through thorny access issues**
- ▶ **a mouthwatering plenary session focuses on oral
history and food**
- ▶ **oral history interest groups round up like-minded
colleagues**
- ▶ **the Minnesota Historical Society is digitizing its
extensive oral history collection.**

Visit www.oralhistory.org for more information