



NEWSLETTER

Diverse Communities On Tap at Bethesda, Md.

Get ready for a whirlwind of history, community diversity, monumental grandeur, film and theater productions, examination of legal challenges to the profession and a showcase of community oral history projects at the 2003 annual meeting of the Oral History Association, Oct. 8-12 in Bethesda, Md.

And if the potpourri of scholarly work doesn't take all your energy, you can even plan a Saturday bike ride along the C&O Canal, a trip to Mount Vernon, a behind-the-scenes tour of the Library of Congress, a trip to Washington, D.C.'s U Street neighborhood or a stroll through the nearby farm women's cooperative market.

Program plans also call for a Thursday morning tour of the route of hijacked American Airlines Flight 77, which plowed into the west wall of the Pentagon. Escorting the tour will be Sarandis Papadopoulos of the Naval Historical Center, which has accumulated more than 1,000 interviews with survivors and emergency response workers. After the tour, a panel discussion at the Women in Military Service Memorial will share their experiences on collecting traumatic stories.

Featured speakers scheduled for the conference include:

+ Barbara Franco, president of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and active promoter of heritage tourism and community history, including a leading role in creation of

the City Museum of Washington, D.C.

+ Pete Daniels, curator at the National Museum of American History and a leading scholar of southern rural life;

+ Paula Johnson, curator in the History of Technology Division of the National Museum of American History, who oversees marine resources and food technology collections;

+ Rayna Green, chair of the division of cultural history and director of the American Indian Program at the National Museum of American History, with special expertise in the history and culture of American Indian women, American Indian agriculture and has pioneered in making audio recordings of Native women's music;

+ Monica Smith, project historian and exhibit specialist at the Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History;

+ Victor Casaus Sanchez, internationally known Cuban poet, film director and writer;

+ John A. Neuenschwander, past OHA president, law professor at Carthage College, municipal judge in Kenosha, Wis., and author of the OHA pamphlet **Oral History and the Law**;

+ Ronald Grele, past OHA president and retired director of the Oral History Research Office at

Columbia University;

+ Elizabeth Millwood, outreach coordinator of the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and

+ Richard Candida-Smith, a past OHA president and director of the Regional Oral History Office at the University of California, Berkeley.

Old-timers Breakfast

On Saturday, Oct. 11 at Fellini's Restaurant, the Oral History Association will launch its first annual Old-timers Breakfast. The dual purpose of this event is to focus attention upon the history of the OHA, which held its organizing meeting at Lake Arrowhead, Calif., in 1966, and to raise money for the OHA Endowment Fund to support our association's work. To be eligible to attend this event, one must have attended an OHA annual meeting in 1985 or earlier. The cost for the breakfast is \$100. A suitable program for the breakfast will be arranged.

Because old-timers typically are early risers, the breakfast will be held at 7 a.m. Those interested in attending this event or assisting in arrangements for it, contact Art Hansen at hansen@fullerton.edu or by telephone at 714-278-2283. More information about the Old-timers Breakfast will follow in a separate mailing. **Please support this event.**



From Your President

By Arthur A. Hansen
OHA President

In this, my final presidential column, I would like to revisit some items that I prefigured in my initial column in the Winter 2002-2003 issue of the **OHA Newsletter** and provide you with a progress report on them.

Unfortunately, two of the items in that earlier report fall under the category of "promises not yet kept." One of these promises concerns my urging the OHA Council and the Publications Committee to: 1) commission a new pamphlet in the OHA pamphlet series on doing community oral history in a multicultural context; and 2) consider developing training films, CDs, and other media oral historians can use to enrich such oral history-based community study. The other still unfulfilled promissory note involves my pledge to assist in the exploration of exciting new ways in which oral history can be used to touch and move audiences into consequential action. Luckily for me, during the past mid-winter OHA Council meeting, it was decided to extend for six months the Council service of the immediate past president, effective immediately. Thus, I will rededicate myself during this interval to make good on the above promises.

Thanks mainly to the dedicated and resourceful work of others, progress has been made on the remaining items alluded to in my initial column: the formation of a Japan Oral History Association; the strategic development of both a Council-created Institutional Review Boards Task Force and Committee on Digital Technology and New Media; and the addition of an Oldtimers Breakfast at the OHA annual meeting.

First, Eriko Yamamoto reports from Japan that she is working with

Japanese colleagues to form an OHA counterpart there. They will be assisted in this effort through a series of September 2003 lectures by noted oral historians Laurie Mercier (a former OHA president) and Jaclyn Gier-Viskovatoff in Tokyo, Sapporo, Nagoya, and other cities in Japan.

On another international front, past OHA President Clifford Kuhn is mobilizing the members of the Committee on Digital Technology and New Media, which he chairs, to have that committee (comprised of Mike Frisch, Sherna Gluck, Charlie Hardy, and Rina Benmayor) sponsor a panel at the XIIIth International Oral History Conference to be held June 23-26, 2004, in Rome. Tentative plans call for the panel to address some of today's most pressing technological issues and developments and to consider some of the broader implications of oral history and new media.

In a related vein, Andy Dunar, editor of the **Oral History Review**, has informed Council that in his introduction to the next **OHR** he will announce that the journal will be affiliated with the History Cooperative, the leading forum for the online publication of historical journals. "Membership in the Cooperative," writes Dunar, "will give OHA members access to the state-of-the-art search capabilities of the History Cooperative's Web site and will increase the visibility of **OHR**."

In respect to progress on Institutional Review Board reviews, former OHA presidents Linda Shopes and Don Ritchie have been pursuing the exemption of most oral history work from them. As chair of its IRB Task Force, Ritchie has represented the OHA and Shopes has represented the American Historical Association. Working in tandem, they attended a meeting at the Office of Human Research Protection and met with its staff for a general discussion. "A general consensus developed," Ritchie notes, "that most oral history was a very different type of research than what the federal regulations [have in mind]. They [the OHRP]

asked us to put that in writing, and we asked them to endorse it for dissemination to IRBs." As soon as Shopes and Ritchie receive an OHRP response to their trenchant jointly prepared memorandum, they will develop a report for Council's fall meeting in Bethesda, which will be shared at the general membership meeting on Oct. 12.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will be reading about the highlights of our forthcoming annual meeting in Washington D.C. You can get full details about this year's remarkable conference coordinated by OHA Vice President Rose Diaz and brilliantly assembled and tastefully arranged by Roger Horowitz and his Program and Local Arrangement Committees by logging on to OHA's new and improved Web site. You will also be alerted in these same two venues to the Call for Papers for the 2004 Oral History Association Annual Meeting to be held in Portland, Ore., Sept. 29-Oct. 3. The Portland meeting, whose program chairs are veteran oral historians Lu Ann Jones of East Carolina University and Kathryn Nasstrom of the University of San Francisco, will be tied together by the theme of "Telling Stories: Narratives of Our Own Times."

I would like to thank all of you for honoring me by allowing me to serve as your OHA president. I first became affiliated with OHA 30 years ago at the 1973 annual meeting held at West Point, N.Y. During the Bethesda meeting, I will "celebrate" my 65th birthday, and back in June I entered my university's early retirement program. So, by many standards, I qualify as an old-timer, which brings me to my final point in this column. Appropriately enough, at Bethesda I would like to set in motion a new tradition for our association by introducing an Oldtimers Breakfast. To find out the facts about this event and to discover whether you are eligible to attend it and why you might want to do so, please check out the related story in this newsletter.

Diversity Committee Gains Momentum

By Horacio N. Roque Ramirez and Nilsa Olivero, Co-Chairs

Several generations of Oral History Association members met at the 2002 San Diego conference to work on behalf of diversifying the association further. The Committee on Diversity sponsored nearly a dozen panels and presentations in San Diego and supported several presenters' attendance through scholarships. In 2003, once again we will distribute \$1,000 in scholarship support and sponsor panel presentations from multiple perspectives.

Setting an agenda for more long-range planning, those of us at the San Diego meeting reviewed the history of efforts to expand diversity within the OHA and discussed plans and goals for the future.

The first efforts began in 1988 with Andrew Skotnes and Rina Benmayor at the Baltimore meeting. The original goals were to make a space for outreach to diversify the membership and to bring diversity to the structure of the OHA through leadership development. Those forming the original caucus formed a permanent committee on multiculturalism.

Today the goals include continuing to develop a committee with a charge and a vision and to remain a standing committee with active membership and a designated leadership (Nilsa Olivero in New York and Horacio N. Roque Ramirez in California serving as co-chairs since fall 2001).

With the support of new and ongoing members, the committee wants to reach out to younger generations (including students) while retaining the experience and commitment of long-time contributors.

At this year's conference, the Diversity Committee is sponsoring Boricua College's roundtable discussion titled "Colloquium: A Community Building Process Grows

in Brooklyn." Faculty participants include: Joseph Gaines, Gina Pena and Luis Esquilin. Student participants are Iris Crespo, Luis Cabrera and Carmen Cruz. Nilsa Olivero will moderate.

Oral history interviews of students and faculty illustrate the uniqueness of the college's learning experiences and provide examples of the obstacles and challenges students face in building community at a learning center:

+ One student who confronts breast cancer as she continues to perform at a 4.0 level and the only time she misses class is to have procedures done;

+A student with five children who are also working hard in school because their mother is in college;

+A student whose grandmother graduated from the college and now she wishes to graduate with her own degree.

Boricua College is a Puerto Rican institution, the only one of its kind in the United States. It seeks to strengthen Puerto Rican and Latino culture through a bilingual-bicultural approach to all learning.

To emphasize this commitment to the inseparability of culture and education, the college offers a program of individualized instruction that aims at enhancing personal learning styles. In so doing, it responds to the educational and economic difficulties experienced by Puerto Ricans and other Spanish-speaking people.

All faculty, staff and students are bilingual and bicultural. For most of the students, this will be the first time they leave Brooklyn, N.Y. We are looking forward to sharing and participating with oral historians from all over the world in Bethesda, Md., this October.

The national OHA conference will be a real learning experience for us all. It will be amazing to be around such wonderful diversity and talent.

Reserve Rooms Soon To Get Conference Rate

The Hyatt Regency Bethesda at One Bethesda Metro Center is the site of the 2003 OHA annual meeting. Located on the Washington-area Metro, the hotel offers quick access to downtown Washington and many of the region's attractions. To reserve at the conference rate of \$155 per night, single or double, call before Sept. 8. The telephone number is 301-657-1234.

OHA Endowment Notes

The Oral History Association Endowment Fund thanks Dale Treleven for his recent contribution in honor of James V. Mink.

The fund welcomes tax deductible contributions from all OHA members and friends. Gifts help support special projects for the association, including offering scholarship assistance for presenters to attend the annual meeting.

Send your donations to: OHA, Dickinson College, P.O. Box 1773, Carlisle, PA 17013.

OHA Online

Check out the new OHA Web site, developed by Jesse Greenberg and Internet Presentations Group of Westchester University at: www.dickinson.edu/oha

Some of the sections are still under development and we hope to have them completed by early fall.

You can also stay up to date by joining the oral history electronic discussion list, H-Oralhist, one of the H-Net affiliated scholarly lists. No dues or fees are required to enroll. To subscribe, send a message to: listserv@h-net.msu.edu with no subject and the following text: SUBSCRIBE H-ORALHIST firstname lastname, affiliation.

Access the main H-Oralhist Web site at: <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~oralhist>

Problems? Contact Editor Jeff Charnley at: charnle2@pilot.msu.edu

New York Court OKs Access to 9/11 Interviews



By John A. Neuenschwander
Carthage College

Using oral history to document a mega-catastrophe is not a new phenomenon. In recent decades oral historians have come on the scene in the immediate aftermath of such events to try to preserve the memories of survivors, rescuers and eyewitnesses. During the 1990s, Hurricane Andrew and the Oklahoma City bombing were examples of mega-catastrophes that prompted oral historians to pursue immediate documentation.

Quite naturally an event of the magnitude of Sept. 11, 2001, triggered a similar response. Not only did the Columbia University Oral History Research Office undertake a major oral history project, but so did a number of private organizations and governmental agencies like the American Red Cross and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Thus, when the New York City Fire Department set out in the wake of Sept. 11 to interview hundreds of its employees, including chiefs, administrators, firefighters, emergency medical technicians and paramedics, this was a predictable undertaking. Historical considerations as well as the FDNY's desire to internally review its response to 9/11 were the primary considerations for initiating the project. What was not foreseeable

was that the project would spark a legal dispute over access to the interviews. In the Matter of New York Times v. City of New York Fire Department, 754 N.Y.S. 2d 517 (2003). This case note reviews and analyzes the decision of the Supreme Court for New York County to allow the New York Times access under the state's Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) to the oral histories collected by the FDNY.

When Jim Dwyer, a reporter for the New York Times, filed his original freedom of information request, a total of 511 interviews had been conducted for this project. The request filed under New York's Freedom of Information Law was for access to "all transcripts of interviews conducted by the department with members of the FDNY concerning the events of Sept. 11, 2001."

This request was initially denied. In doing so the FDNY relied on two provisions of the Freedom of Information Law, which it maintained made the oral histories exempt from disclosure. The first involved the exemption under FOIL for materials "compiled for law enforcement purposes." The FDNY invoked this exemption in light of the ongoing prosecution of the so-called 20th hijacker, Zacarias Moussaoui.

The second exemption related to the privacy rights of the FDNY membership. If the oral histories were released, the FDNY maintained, this would constitute "unwarranted invasion of personal privacy" for both their membership and the families of the 343 firefighters who perished on Sept. 11.

Like many freedom of information statutes, New York's law is grounded on the presumption that documents in the possession of governmental agencies are available for inspection and disclosure unless an agency can show that a specific exemption precludes release of the materials. Courts are to construe narrowly all statutory exemptions, and the burden

of proof in regard to the applicability of a particular exemption is with the agency seeking to prevent disclosure. Thus, it was up to the FDNY to demonstrate to the court that the two exemptions it utilized to preclude access by the New York Times were proper fits.

The first exemption, "compiled for law enforcement purposes," was intended to preclude disclosure of materials that might either impede an ongoing investigation or interfere with a judicial proceeding. According to an assistant U.S. attorney who testified on behalf of the FDNY, the oral histories sought by the New York Times were considered potential evidence in both the trial of Moussaoui as well as in the penalty phase should he be convicted. As the court noted, however, this assertion lacked the necessary specificity to be taken at face value. The assistant U.S. attorney further admitted that if Moussaoui was convicted, the U.S. attorney's office was prepared to call witnesses similar to those who had given oral histories to the FDNY. In the end, Justice Richard Braun found that the projected interference with "law enforcement purposes" was too vague to justify using the exemption to bar disclosure. He also rejected as speculative the FDNY's claim that release of the oral histories and their subsequent publication might taint the jury pool. Given the massive publicity that Moussaoui's case had already generated, Justice Braun found this argument unconvincing as well.

The second exemption relied upon by the FDNY to initially deny access, "unwarranted invasion of personal privacy," required the court to determine whether the oral histories fit into any of the five categories of information that the statute characterized as private. Types of information exempted from FOIL requests included employment, medical and credit histories as well as

information of a personal nature reported in confidence to any agency. The court ultimately held that the oral histories did not fit within any of the five private information exemptions.

Although Justice Braun found that neither of the FOIL exemptions raised by the FDNY to bar access to the oral histories were justified, he did not grant the Times unfettered access to the interviews. He accepted the position of the FDNY that the opinions and recommendations offered by interviewees should not be disclosed. The basis for this ruling was a provision in the Public Officer Law that barred public access to "the consultative or deliberative process of government decision making." Only the factual portions of the oral histories could be accessed.

This case is instructive for oral historians in several different ways. With more and more oral historians seeking to document very contemporary events and issues, the likelihood of increased interest among researchers, the media and the general public in accessing such materials is almost a certainty. Such interest in turn may lead oral history centers and archives to rethink current access and use procedures. On another level this decision underscores the general rule that without a specific statutory provision to the contrary, freedom of information requests for oral histories held by government agencies will be upheld. At this time only two states, Kentucky and Texas, specifically exempt oral histories created by government agencies from disclosure via freedom of information requests. On the federal level, the National Archives and Records Administration utilizes a procedure that enables federal agencies to allow some interviewees the opportunity to exempt their interviews from freedom of information requests.

Editor's Note: John Neuenschwander is a past president of the Oral History Association, a history professor and municipal judge in Kenosha, Wis. He is a featured speaker at the 2003 OHA conference.

Aug. 30 Deadline for Rome Meeting Proposals

If you hurry, your proposal for an international oral history conference paper can still be considered.

Proposals will be accepted until Aug. 30 for contributions to the XIIIth International Oral History Conference, June 23-26, 2004, in Rome. The conference is sponsored by the International Oral History Association in collaboration with the City of Rome.

Proposals may be for a paper, workshop session or thematic panel, and must have a clear focus on oral history. Papers also will be evaluated according to their methodological and theoretical significance.

Theme of the conference is "Memory and Globalization." Sub-themes include processes of globalization, politics, labor, social movements, war, terrorism, migration, development and theory and methodology.

For more information, the North America contact is Rina Benmayor, whom you can reach at Rina_Benmayor@csumb.edu

Proposals Due Jan. 15 For 2004 OHA Meeting

"Telling Stories: Narratives of Our Own Times" is the theme of the 2004 OHA conference in Portland, Ore., Sept. 29-Oct. 3.

Conference program co-chairs Lu Ann Jones and Kathryn Nasstrom said they are "eager for presenters to help set an agenda for the myriad stories of our times that need to be recorded and suggest new ways of preserving and disseminating them."

Proposals should be sent by mail or fax to the OHA office at Dickinson College. Complete details on how to submit proposals will be in the next **Newsletter** or are available on the OHA Web site. Proposals from oral historians in a wide variety of disciplines and settings are welcome.

The deadline for proposals is Jan. 15, 2004.

"And I'm proud to be an American that was on [the] Apollo space program because Americans, instead of American'ts, are what made the space program possible."

—Archie Beckett, aerospace engineer, White Sands Test Facility

"In my mind, the Apollo program...represents the collective efforts of hundreds of thousands of people, and these efforts are in the form of virtually every bit of human skill and knowledge, the aggregate of virtually every bit of human skill and knowledge one way or another, all the way from knowledge of mathematics that had to do with the trajectory, to the knowledge of sewing when it had to do with the putting together of the spacesuits."

—Joe Allen, astronaut

"We had the Vietnam War, we had all those uprisings and almost chaos, and here we were in the middle of it doing something that made sense."

—John Llewellyn, Apollo flight controller

Turn the page for information about NASA's Johnson Space Center oral history project, from which these quotations came.

Johnson Space Center Oral History Project Shares Voices from the Earth and the Moon

**By Rebecca Wright
Johnson Space Center
Oral History Project**

Less than three years after Congress created NASA in 1958, an announcement from President Kennedy resulted in the evolution of a community committed to one cause – “of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth.”

This October at the OHA annual meeting team members from the NASA Johnson Space Center Oral History Project will present “Voices from the Earth and the Moon: The Community of the Moonwalkers.” Participating in the session will be Rebecca Wright, Sandra Johnson, and Jennifer Ross-Nazzal. Moderating the panel presentation will be Dr. Roger Launius, chair of the Department of Space History at the Smithsonian Institution’s Air and Space Museum.

They will share the words from some of the more than 200 men and women who have been interviewed, whose efforts resulted in mankind’s first steps on the Moon, and they will discuss how the nation’s communities benefitted from NASA.

The panel session will provide an insider’s look from those who in the early 1960s traveled from many parts of the country to a large tract of undeveloped land near the Texas Gulf Coast in quest of this historic goal.

Soon after arriving in Texas, these space pioneers created a culture and a community, complete with its own language, traditions and literature that existed inside the institution that became the Manned Spacecraft Center, now known as the Johnson Space Center. The facility quickly became surrounded by neighborhoods, cities and businesses that emerged and played supporting roles for the employees and their families. Established towns located near the wide open spaces of the new NASA site were affected by the “outsiders” now taking residence in their area.

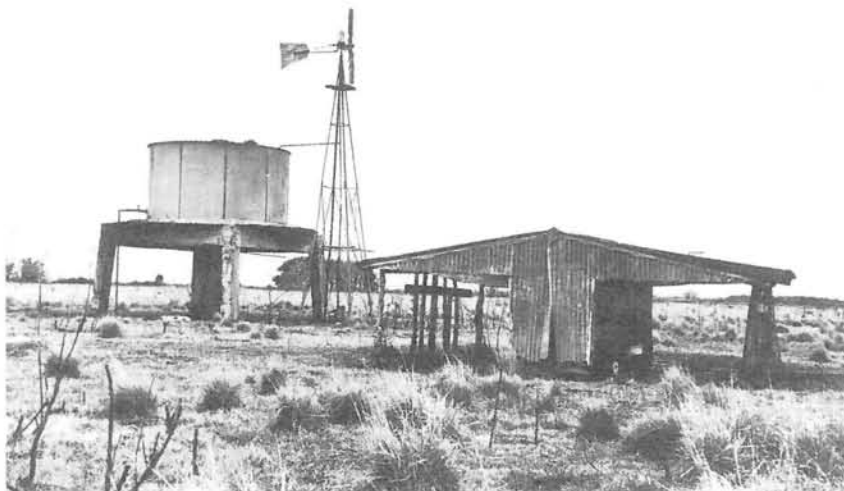
Ongoing since late-1996, the goal of the NASA JSC Oral History Project is to capture history from the individuals who first provided the country and the world with an avenue to space and the Moon. Participants include many of the managers, engineers, technicians, doctors,

astronauts and other employees of NASA and aerospace contractors who served in key roles during the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab and Shuttle programs. These oral histories ensure that the words of these pioneers live on to tell future generations about the excitement and lessons of space exploration.

Before scheduling an oral history session with an individual, extensive research is conducted about each person and compiled in a data profile by using and documenting primary and secondary resources. The profiles include information about the individual’s duties and positions while working for the space agency, as well as a brief biographical summary and information about their jobs prior to and after working for NASA. The research is conducted primarily by graduate students who are funded by NASA JSC for both short-term and long-term assignments. Based on the research collected, a list of topics and questions is prepared prior to the interview that focuses on the historical contributions of the individual.

The oral histories average 2 to 3 hours per session and are recorded on digital audio, then transcribed to an electronic file for printed documentation. A release form is signed by the individual. Each participant receives a set of the tapes and a printed transcript, allowing the individuals to review the printed text to ensure accuracy. For archival purposes, the recording is transferred onto compact disc (CD), which along with the transcript, the signed release and the biographical summary are sent to the NASA JSC History Collection at the University of Houston-Clear Lake.

Also in the History Collection are recorded materials transferred to CD by the project team from out-of-date, decaying media. These resource



An animal shelter and a windmill on land outside Houston in 1961 that was designated as the site for the Johnson Space Center.

Photo: National Aeronautics and Space Administration

materials include interviews, press conferences and data recorded 20-30 years ago on reel-to-reel tapes that continue to slowly degrade. Approximately 500 recovered interviews have been returned to their original locations and duplicates placed at the University of Houston-Clear Lake.

In 1998, the NASA JSC Oral History Project team captured the experiences of many individuals who were involved in the United States and Russia partnership, formally known as Phase I of the International Space Station. These participants, American and Russian, described how the social, economic, political and cultural aspects they encountered affected their jobs, their co-workers, their families and their personal lives. The Shuttle-Mir Oral History Project served as the foundation for a book, CD-ROM, and Website.

The 220-page illustrated history publication, "Shuttle-Mir: The U.S. and Russia Share History's Highest Stage," was written by Clay Morgan, and details the first major Russian-American partnership after the fall of the Soviet Union. The book with its 150 full-color images presents the human side of the Shuttle-Mir story. It starts by setting the historical stage, then alternates between efforts of the team members on the ground, the missions of the American Space Shuttles to and near *Mir* and shares the experiences of the seven American astronauts, who with their Russian crew mates, endured months in Earth orbit.

The book's companion CD-ROM serves as a repository of information about the space program and sets the stage for the International Space Station. It features more than 600 images, 145 video clips and animations, diagrams of U.S. and Russian spacecraft and 74 participant oral histories. Also available are the Shuttle-Mir and Shuttle mission status reports, mission summaries, NASA news releases, interviews, personal letters from the NASA *Mir* astronauts, science reports and other published documents used as source material for the book. The NASA



Flight controllers study a weather map to find a landing site for Apollo 13, after an on-board explosion caused cancellation of the lunar landing.

Photo: National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Headquarters History Office replicated the Shuttle-Mir CD-ROM for broad and free distribution, especially to educational facilities and libraries.

The related Shuttle-Mir Web site is designed so that the more than 500MB can be easily and logically accessed by users of any age or interest level. "Tours" lead the user through the Web site chronologically with time lines, videos, photos and stories told in the NASA *Mir* astronauts' words and descriptions. Also featured is a specially designed electronic "children's book" with beautiful images and a simple interface with easy text for beginning readers. The Web site became available to the public in October 2001 and can be accessed at <http://spaceflight.nasa.gov/history/shuttle-mir>.

Continuing the efforts to provide an easy access to NASA's history, the project team designed and developed the NASA JSC History Web site (<http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/history>) in August 2002. The site provides a single source for all online JSC history resources and includes more than 300 history Web sites and resources, both within and outside NASA, including links to the transcripts of the individuals participating in the JSC Oral History Projects. Researchers can access the

online History Search Index, a database that allows patrons to search the contents of the JSC History Collection, housed at the University of Houston-Clear Lake library.

The oral history team also has facilitated projects for the NASA Headquarters History Office including "Herstory," which features women in NASA history and the Administrators project that focuses on key individuals from NASA management.

In March, the team began the *Columbia* Recovery Efforts Oral History Project for NASA Headquarters. The mission of this project is to document the experiences of those involved with the recovery efforts of the Space Shuttle *Columbia*, lost to the nation on Feb. 1, 2003. More than 200 federal, state and local agencies, plus thousands of individuals came together for three months to assist in recovering the country's first orbiter and to help find an answer to the cause of its tragic re-entry. The project team continues to collect interviews from representatives of the varied aspects of this effort.

For more information about the NASA Johnson Space Center Oral History Project, contact the team at 281-461-1537 or 1301 Regents Park Drive, Suite 100, Houston, TX 77058.

STATE AND REGIONAL REPORT



MOHA Members Promote Veterans History Project

**By Geneva Kebler Wiskemann
Michigan Oral History Assn.**

The Michigan Oral History Association is distributing Veterans History Project materials at conferences, workshops, exhibits and presentations. Hard copy kits for oral history projects were included in the exhibit of Civil War-related documents, letters and realia accompanying the Memorial Day rededication of a restored Union Soldier at Rest monument in the rural Wacousta Cemetery, Clinton County.

The project will again be highlighted in Michigan during Oral History For Michiganians, a conference in Lansing on Oct. 23, sponsored by MOHA in partnership with the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries. This is offered as part of the state's program for Family History Month.

Members of the MOHA workshop team also carry VHP materials to classrooms and organizations, and Geneva Kebler Wiskemann shared information and materials with the Michigan Chapter of Blue Star Mothers Inc. during their annual meeting in Lansing on June 10.

Virtual History Archive Wins NEH Grant

The California State University, Long Beach's Oral History program has received a two-year, \$161,045 National Endowment for the

Humanities grant to fund its Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive.

Project director and grant recipient Sherna Berger Gluck said the funds will permit the addition of 575 more hours of interviews to the existing online collection, including significant portions of the women's history and ethnic history collections

Gluck detailed the development of the online archives in the Spring 2002 **OHA Newsletter**.

"Once we add the 575 hours to the site, under this grant, close to 1,000 hours will be available," Gluck said.

The Web site also has been awarded the Accenture and MIT Digital Government Award, which recognizes exemplary development of Web-enabled programs by federal, state and local governments and by institutions of higher education.

The Web site is:
www.csulb.edu/voaha.

Roy Rosenzweig Receives Lyman Award

Roy Rosenzweig, who directs the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University in Virginia, has received the prestigious Richard W. Lyman Award presented by the National Humanities Center. It recognizes those who have advanced humanistic scholarship and teaching through the innovative use of information technology.

Rosenzweig was cited for "his use of information technology to expand and diversify the audience for works of history; to incorporate new voices, especially the voices of ordinary people, into works of history; and to make the practice of history more open and collaborative."

The Center for History and New Media offers a rich collection of digital archives, guides for teachers of American history, on-line magazines, and free digital tools for historians, and can be accessed at: <http://chmn.gmu.edu/index1.html>

Award, Changes Set For Educators Group

The Association of Oral History Educators has awarded its annual Betty Key Oral History Educator Award to Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, a professor of journalism at the University of Texas at Austin and founder of the U.S. Latino and Latina World War II Oral History Project. The award recognizes exemplary use of oral history as an educational methodology. Integrating oral history in her course "Narrative Journalism," Rivas-Rodriguez has her students publish a newspaper filled with oral history manuscripts, creative writing and intriguing photographs. To learn more about this unique project, contact her at the School of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin, 1 University Station A1000, Austin, TX 78712-0113.

The association also plans to reorganize into a Consortium of Oral History Educators headquartered at the Martha Ross Center for Oral History, University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Four additional universities are expected to serve as regional centers and provide local assistance for educators using oral history. The consortium will disseminate electronic newsletters and educational materials online.

The consortium is accepting manuscripts for a publication titled "Preparing the Next Generation of Oral Historians: An Anthology of Oral History Education." The publication will focus on K-12 and college or university oral history instruction. Manuscripts should relate to the philosophy, the theory, the research, the technology or the practice of oral history as an educational methodology. Vignettes of projects are also being accepted.

For more information about the organization, contact Barry Lanman at: AOHELanman@aol.com or write AOHE, Box 24, Ellicott City, MD 21043.

Cultivating Common Ground Builds Bridges Between Generations in Charlotte, N.C.

By June Blotnick
Charlotte, N.C.

Not so long ago, Americans of all ages met in the garden, on common ground. Young and old worked side-by-side tending vegetables in the family plot. As naturally as they waited for frost to sweeten the collard greens, elders passed on gardening knowledge to the younger generation, seasoned with family stories from the old days.

In today's urban landscape, littered with strip malls and freeways, these vital ties have torn apart. Young and old increasingly inhabit separate worlds, no longer sharing work and wisdom. And many Americans, both children and adults, have no earthly idea where their food comes from.

Cultivating Common Ground, A Charlotte, N.C.,-based oral history project, seeks to bridge this rift between teenagers and seniors, as well as reconnect young people to the soil that feeds and sustains us all. To accomplish this, Cultivating Common Ground combines the irresistible appeal of storytelling with the down-to-earth magic of gardening.



Mary Nash working on story quilt square. Photo by June Blotnick



Melvin Young and Willie Coleman show off the vegetables they grew in their Charlotte, N.C., community garden.

Photo: Nancy Pierce

In the fall of 2001, Cultivating Common Ground brought together a team of teenagers, six boys and three girls, from Wilmore, an inner-city Charlotte neighborhood. The young people tackled a challenging assignment: to gather and document the oral histories and garden wisdom of the gardeners at the Wilmore Community Garden. Most of the gardeners are senior citizens who grew up in the Charlotte region, long before it was transformed into the modern upwardly mobile New South city of today.

The teens spent more than 600 hours working with the seniors in the garden planting vegetables and landscaping. They also met for a series of cooking nights where the seniors instructed the youth on preparing vegetables that were in season during the mild Carolina winter. During the year, the youth also learned such skills as photography, video production and oral history interviewing.

Patricia Ryckman, special collections archivist at the J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, provided technical assistance in the form of oral history interviewing workshops for the youth, use of recording

equipment and transcription services. The library has archived the full transcripts of the 11 interviews as part of its New South Voices online oral history project. Ryckman and Common Ground project manager June Blotnick will make a presentation at the OHA conference in October.

In addition to depositing the transcripts at the UNCC library, the project also produced a photo exhibit and a student-produced oral history video called "Diggin' in the Garden of Soul" of the seniors telling their stories. Finally, the book "Cultivating Common Ground, A Harvest of Stories from the Wilmore Community Garden," edited by Don Boekelheide, gives voice to the seniors' life stories. The 80-page book includes 11 oral histories, photographs, recipes and a resource section for those interested in starting similar projects.

Cultivating Common Ground wants to inspire more inter-generational oral history work this year. The senior gardeners are finishing work on a story quilt based on their oral histories, which will be on display at the OHA conference.

For more information, call Blotnick at 704-491-564.

Oral History Leads to Frederick Douglass Sewing Box

By **Abigail Posie B. Davis**
City Planner, Lincoln, Neb.

One of the aspects of oral history that I love is the moments of discovery unique to this type of qualitative research.

This is the story of one woman's experiences participating in the African-American Community of Lincoln (Neb.) Oral History Project. It began several years ago when Kathy Colwell, a graduate student in community and regional planning at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, decided to research and document the historic African-American community in the city. Her research yielded four National Register nominations of structures associated with significant historical African-American figures in the city, and led her to the McWilliams family, which shared with her a number of glass plate photo negatives of African-Americans in Lincoln, taken between 1912 and 1923.

When I became a graduate intern with Ed Zimmer, the city's historic preservation planner, solving the mysteries of the glass negatives was a top priority, for they remained ambiguous in origin, number and history. From discussions with McWilliams family members, obituaries, burial records and newspaper articles, I created a family tree spanning six generations of McWilliamses, most of whom still lived in Lincoln.

But few of them were old enough to help identify anyone in the photographs. Though it was a long-shot, one we thought might be able to help was Alyce McWilliams Hall. Unlike much of her extended family, her parents had migrated to California to try farming, and she still lives in the Los Angeles area.

In the fall of 2000, Ed Zimmer and I arranged a trip to Los Angeles to meet Alyce, and she was most gracious to us, even though her husband was not well. We explained to her that documenting the history of

minority communities often has been overlooked because historic preservationists traditionally have studied architectural structures, a method that often ignores minority communities, which have been economically, socially and politically disadvantaged. The buildings and houses that made up the physical landscape of the community often are dilapidated or destroyed. The glass plate negatives, however, had supplied a new source from which research could grow, with the willingness of the descendants of the community to share their own history.

We looked at prints of all the photos, but she shook her head and said she was sorry but she did not recognize anyone. We spent some time looking at a few more, just because the images were so interesting, and then sat for a moment, all of us a little down-trodden. Then, wanting to cheer us up if she could, she said: "Well, I'm sorry that I don't recognize any of these people, but I do have a sewing box from Frederick Douglass—would you be interested in that?"

Our jaws dropped while Alyce told us how her great-grandmother, Ruth Cox Adams, had escaped slavery and was taken in by the Douglass family to become the adopted sister of Frederick Douglass. The family called her Harriet Bailey. She also became the nanny of the abolitionist's children and helper to his wife, Anna Douglass.

Alyce showed us photos of the sewing box and explained that Frederick Douglass had bought it for her great-grandmother in London for \$6 and had sent it back to her in the United States with an endearing letter of thanks for taking care of his children and his wife.

At one point in the conversation she said she'd be interested in donating the sewing box to Nebraska, but Ed told her that perhaps she'd better keep it for now, as she was busy caring for her ill husband.

We stayed in touch with Alyce, but by then it had become clear that oral history was the only way to document and preserve Lincoln's African-American community history, which we began to do.

It was a year-and-a-half before I had another chance to travel to Los Angeles to interview Alyce. Her husband had died, but she assured me she was in a little better place in her life to think about other things. She again told me she was interested in donating the sewing box to Nebraska.

When I arrived, I saw the sewing box for the first time, there on her dining room table. She told me how her older sister, Opal Pollard, had been chosen by their aunts to take care of it, and how at Opal's death, the sewing box was passed down to her. Opal had, in fact, tried many times, along with her aunt, Alice Coffee, to place the sewing box in a repository without success.

Then Alyce opened up the sewing box and pushed it toward me. To my surprise, it was full of things—letters and artifacts filled the entire box! It had never occurred to me that there would be anything inside it. Alyce smiled knowingly. She had waited to tell me any more details about what the sewing box contained until I had proven to her that I was sincerely interested in the box and its story.

An hour or two passed. We had looked at a tintype of a young man, cut out as if for a brooch; a pair of earrings; a hand-made sewing needle book of her great-grandmother's; locks of braided hair, one from each child of Frederick Douglass and one from himself; a piece of Ruth Adams' wedding dress that Douglass had bought for her; a Confederate bill; numerous calling cards; a letter dictated from John Brown and letters between Ruth Cox Adams and her mother, Ebby Cox.

Alyce assured me that she and her children wanted the small cherry wood and mother-of-pearl box to be returned to Nebraska, where her family was from.

Nebraska State Historical Society Director Lawrence Sommer arranged for me to make another trip to Los Angeles, and eventually, last year, Alyce brought the family heirloom and additional family letters and documents to Lincoln, where she also was welcomed and became reacquainted with her extended McWilliams family.

At one point, while unraveling the family connections to Frederick Douglass, I called Leigh Fought, assistant editor of the Frederick Douglass Papers Project at Purdue University, and told her I had information concerning a woman named Ruth Cox Adams, who was taken in by Douglass as an escaped slave. When I added that he had given Ruth Adams his sister's and mother's name, so if caught she would not be identified and returned to her master, Ms. Fought shouted with joy.

It was known that there was a Ruth Adams in Douglass' life, and a Harriet Bailey, and that there was a chance they were one and the same woman, but scholars had come to a dead end a decade ago. The Library of Congress had correspondence

between Ruth Adams, a.k.a. Harriet Bailey, a.k.a. Harriet Adams. The letter indicated it was sent from Norfolk, but no one had ever thought to follow the lead to Norfolk, Neb.

As a final note, Alyce not only brought the sewing box to the Nebraska State Historical Society, but she returned to Nebraska earlier this year to attend an NSHS conference on the state's black heritage.

Ruth Cox Adams died in Lincoln in 1900 and is buried in an unmarked grave at Wyuka Cemetery. Efforts are underway to place a stone at the gravesite.

Alyce McWilliams Hall Adds Her Perspective

When I initially agreed to talk with Dr. Ed Zimmer and Abigail Davis, I was a little apprehensive..not only because my husband was quite ill, but I didn't feel I knew enough to recognize my relatives on the glass plate negatives they had discovered.

However, within minutes after we met at my home, we were all comfortable. They assured me whatever help I could offer would be

appreciated. Later, it was easy to agree to taping my oral history with Abby. By this time we were friends. She also has all the required qualifications for taking oral histories.

It isn't just random conversations. It is structured to acquire the most accurate information in a most pleasant setting. I was a little nervous at first, but I soon forgot the tape recorder was running and we were just friends talking.

That is an important part of taking oral histories. The rapport must be there along with a sincere desire to ask the proper questions to make sure thoughts and remembrances are accurately recorded.

I have begun spreading the word about how important saving the history of your family is. I have spoken not only to my family but I was asked to speak at the Neighborhood Watch meetings. I stressed don't wait until it is too late to ask questions about your family.

On a personal note, I have asked Abby when will she record her family's history. She has promised to "do that just as soon as I have time."

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Oral Historians Gather in Scotland

*There's harbours to be built lad, an'
rigs to tow an' tilt,
That sit upon the ocean bed like
pylons in the sea.
There's pipelines to be laid an' a
hundred different trades
That'll give a decent livin' wage to
the like o' you an' me.*

--Lyrics from "Men of Worth," by
Archie Fisher

Off-shore oil drilling provided a recurring subject of discussion for the meeting of Great Britain's Oral History Society, which took place in Aberdeen, Scotland, in June 2003, on the 25th anniversary of the Scottish Oral History Group. Oral historians from England, Scotland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Italy and the United States gathered at Kings College, the University of Aberdeen. The conference adopted the formal theme of "Transitions: Changing Practices in Politics, Work, and Oral History."

Keynote speakers and the topics of their remarks included Hugo

Manson of the University of Aberdeen, "Transitions in Oral History;" Alessandro Portelli, University of Rome, "Memories of Bombardment in Italy During the Second World War" and Don Ritchie, U.S. Senate Historical Office, "What's More To Be Said? Understanding Legislative Bodies Through Oral History."

Known as the "granite city" for the sparkly granite stone facing of most of its buildings, the ancient Scottish port of Aberdeen was dramatically affected by the 1969 discovery of oil in the North Sea. Business and workers from around the world converged on the city, and oil revenues profoundly influenced the local and national economies. "Rigs"--off-shore drilling platforms--housed hundreds of workers who kept the oil pumping day and night. Others who worked the boats, helicopters or supplied and maintained the rigs, were largely based in Aberdeen. As it stimulated the economy, the oil boom also challenged the traditional local culture.

Terry Brotherstone and Hugo

Manson, who organized the meeting, direct the Oil Lives Research Project, which has been collecting oral testimony of those who had worked in the North Sea oil industry, or whose lives have been affected by it. Traveling from the other side of the globe, John Holt provided a complementary report on interviewing the "forgotten workforce" of those laboring on oil platforms off the coast of Perth, Australia.

Immediately following the Aberdeen conference, Brotherstone and Manson traveled to Washington, D.C., having been invited to participate in the Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the Mall. They were accompanied by off-shore oil workers Dennis Krahn, Alexa Reid and Bob Ballantyne, whom they interviewed about their lives and experiences on the North Sea rigs. At the festival they also displayed models of off-shore oil rigs and examples of specialized tools to give visitors a sense of the life of the Scottish oil-field workers and the impact of the industry on northeast Scotland.

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