



NEWSLETTER

Mellon Foundation Underwrites Joint Study

By Rebecca Sharpless
OHA President

The OHA, along with the American Folklore Society (AFS) and the Society of Ethnomusicologists (SEM), is participating in a study of these fields within the academy.

The AFS first approached OHA in mid-2005, saying it was interested in such a study and that funding appeared to be forthcoming from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The OHA agreed to participate, with the belief that a number of questions exist regarding oral history and oral

historians at academic institutions. The association received word in November 2005 that the funding had indeed been awarded and that OHA, AFS and SEM would be the three entities under study.

The first task of OHA officers was to select six members to carry out the study. They are: Madelyn Campbell (Dickinson College), OHA executive secretary, and Rebecca Sharpless (Baylor University) OHA president, both ex officio; former OHA presidents Laurie Mercier (Washington State University-Vancouver) and Albert Broussard (Texas A&M University), both of

whom had been on an ad-hoc OHA committee to look at the creation of oral history projects as a criterion for tenure; Thomas Charlton (Baylor University), a former university administrator; and Linda Shopes (Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission), who has been deeply involved with the efforts of the American Historical Association to come to terms with university institutional review boards. Shopes will write the OHA position paper. The six committee members will meet with AFS and SEM representatives in Nashville in May.
(Continued on page 2)

Plans Taking Shape for 2006 Meeting in Little Rock, Ark.

Oral History Association members who attend the 2006 fall conference in Little Rock, Ark., will celebrate the organization's 40th anniversary and enjoy a wide variety of workshops, panels and multimedia programming highlighting oral history in the region and around the world.

The conference, titled "Generational Links: Confronting the Past, Understanding the Present, Planning the Future," is scheduled for Oct. 25-29 at Little Rock's Peabody Hotel.

Program chair Tracy E. K'Meyer said the three full conference days will each focus on a separate theme:

+ Thursday's theme is social

justice movements since 1970.

+ Friday's theme will focus on projects related to Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the Gulf Coast last year.

+ Saturday's theme will focus on the history of oral history.

Workshops also are scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 25, including an introduction to oral history, project management, oral history and the law and recording and preservation technology.

Workshops for teachers and on editing oral history for publication are scheduled for Saturday.

K'Meyer said conference planners aim to present a variety of

programming. In addition to customary panels, roundtables and plenary sessions, the conference will feature multimedia presentations in formats ranging from radio programs and documentary films to Web sites. Conference attendees also will be able to enjoy oral history performance pieces and meet authors.

A Saturday evening awards dinner will feature presentations to winners of the OHA awards for post-secondary teaching, article and projects with budgets of more than \$6,000 and less than \$6,000.



From Your President

By Rebecca Sharpless

Since the founding days of the Oral History Association, members have struggled with a fundamental question: what differentiates oral history from other types of fieldwork? Simply put, what the heck is oral history anyway? That question is as real and legitimate in 2006 as it was 40 years ago.

My recent work with a local history project has brought me face to face with other people who do interviews, and I continue to be struck by the differences in approaches. Recently, the Baylor Oral History Institute, Texas Collection archives and the Department of Anthropology assisted an interviewing and photo search day in an old Mexican-American neighborhood. We had carefully, oh so carefully, explained informed consent to the anthropology students who conducted the interviews, and we had stacks of legal agreements on hand. So how were we to explain to the students when a reporter and photographer from the local newspaper showed up, taking notes, names and photos without any written permission whatsoever?

During down time, I visited with one of the anthropology professors, a good guy who specializes in fieldwork in the Maya of Guatemala. His work is covered by our institutional review board and he fully understands the need for informed consent.

But much of his work is with nonliterate people, and he doesn't even try to get legal releases. And all of his recordings and field notes are in drawers in his office. Most anthropologists, he said, don't seriously consider placing materials in archives. Processing them is just too time consuming and doesn't bring any professional rewards.

The field day was a success—more than 11 hours of interviews and 35 photographs. The problem with the journalists became compounded,

however, when an article appeared in the newspaper the next day, prominently featuring a photograph of a woman who had specifically asked not to have her picture appear in the paper. The event organizer, a community member, spent much of his morning outside the church, apologizing to his friends and neighbors for the newspaper's mistake.

One of the students promptly e-mailed her complaints about the newspaper to the reporter in question, who immediately forwarded the message to the managing editor. Now the publisher is involved. At this writing, several of us from the various entities are scheduled to meet to talk about what happened and what, if anything, should be done to try to mend relationships torn—already tenuous relationships between the Mexican-American community, the newspaper, the university.

Journalists, anthropologists, oral historians, all fascinated with questions of memory, all depending on the interview method for obtaining information. What do we possibly have to say to one another? These are questions that underlie the study in which the OHA is participating to analyze the role of oral history in the academy.

The OHA officers at the mid-winter Council meeting adopted a mission statement about promoting excellence in oral history practices. That raises a corollary question of how vigorously the OHA should try to spread its message of excellence. The answer to that question has ramifications for institutional review boards and funding agencies, for which the OHA "Evaluation Guidelines" were first created.

In the months ahead, members of a study committee funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the OHA Council will be wrestling with these matters, and they welcome your thoughts. Please feel free to e-mail them to Rebecca_Sharpless@baylor.edu.

Mellon Study

(Continued from page 1.)

The committee has formulated a number of different questions. First is the location of oral history within any given academic institution. Some colleges and universities have freestanding oral history units, while others house them in their libraries or history departments. Courses may be offered in a variety of disciplines, and many faculty members in a dazzling array of fields have oral history components in their courses. In some universities oral history is accorded the same prestige as documentary research and in others, that is not the case.

The committee is conducting research through surveys, analysis of a sampling of the syllabi for oral history courses and will also investigate the books receiving awards from the AHA and Organization of American Historians to look at their acceptance of oral history methodology.

Early returns seem to confirm much of what OHA officers suspected. First, oral history is everywhere, indicating wide acceptance of the validity of the methodology and inclusion of oral testimony as evidence. Second, many faculty members and students are conducting oral history research with little preparation. Third, adherence to the OHA "Evaluation Guidelines" appears to be spotty. Fourth, institutional review board issues are alive and well. Given the limited success of the AHA in exempting oral history from IRB oversight, OHA may need to imagine creative ways of getting out the need for the "Evaluation Guidelines" and other materials.

We welcome your feedback on these matters. Please feel free to respond to OHA president Rebecca Sharpless at: Rebecca_Sharpless@baylor.edu or [Linda Shopes at lshopes@state.pa.us](mailto:Linda_Shopes@state.pa.us).

The report will be available after the May meeting, and a synopsis of the meeting will be in the summer **OHA Newsletter**.

Council Tackles Long-range Planning

By Rebecca Sharpless
OHA President

The OHA officers held an extremely fruitful mid-winter meeting in Little Rock the last weekend in February. With facilitation from University of Arkansas-Little Rock social work professor Judith Faust, the officers held a day-long meeting for long-range planning followed by many hours of discussion of ongoing OHA business.

Faust's first pointed out that the OHA apparently lacked a formal mission statement. Quickly but with great care, the officers adopted the following mission statement: **"Recognizing the value of documenting the range of human experience, the OHA promotes excellence in the collection, preservation, dissemination, interpretation and use of oral history."** All other activity during the weekend was measured against the mission statement.

The OHA is in its best financial condition ever, due in part to a string of successful annual meetings. The endowment fund has a balance of more than \$150,000, and the operating fund has a reserve of more than \$100,000. With this kind of financial security, the Council believes that the association is uniquely poised to make significant strides.

The association plans to continue its financial progress with the able help of the Finance Committee, chaired by James Fogerty (Minnesota Historical Society). In honor of the 40th anniversary of its founding, OHA plans a campaign to increase endowment funding by at least \$50,000. To date, OHA has made few disbursements from its endowment income, but priorities include scholarships to attend the annual meeting and support for emerging fieldwork projects that might otherwise go unfunded. The Finance Committee is assisting Executive Secretary Madelyn

Campbell with management questions and assisting Council with advice on spending guidelines both for the endowment and the operating reserve fund.

Much of the discussion focused on the OHA publications, now under the excellent oversight of Publications Committee chair Irene Reti (University of California-Santa Cruz). The **Oral History Review**, with Kimberly Porter (University of North Dakota) as its new editor, provides much of the intellectual basis for the oral history movement as a whole. Council member Kathy Nasstrom (University of San Francisco) is spearheading an evaluation of the intellectual content of the **Oral History Review**, to be conducted in the next year and a half. The OHA also is continuing discussions of electronic publication of the **Review**, currently available through the University of California Press' Caliber system for members only. By late 2006 or early 2007, the **Review** will be available on JSTOR.

The **OHA Newsletter**, which has been ably edited by Mary Kay Quinlan (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) for many years, will receive a facelift while continuing its role of bringing news of the association to its members.

The OHA Web site is playing an increasingly important role as the association's electronic front door, and the Council has authorized a search for a Web editor.

And, last but not least, the OHA will bring out a family history pamphlet in 2006, a completely new title for the association, edited by Linda Barnicle. Work also continues on a revision of the community history pamphlet.

Relationships with other associations continue to be a high priority to OHA. For the 2006 International Oral History Association meeting in Sydney, the OHA will provide \$5,000 in scholarships. Council member Roger Horowitz (Hagley Museum), active

in Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region, is drafting a policy for OHA presidential travel to state and regional meetings. While funds for this purpose have existed for many years, they have been used sporadically. OHA Vice President Alphine Jefferson will represent the association at the Southwest Oral History Association's 25th anniversary meeting in Albuquerque in April.

Association officers also want to increase ties to other professional associations such as the American Association for State and Local History and the Organization of American Historians. To that end, the association will revisit the system of formal liaisons, which existed most recently during the 1990s.

Officers spent much time thinking of ways to encourage excellence in oral history practices. A study funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation may help shed light on the need to promulgate our standards.

We also talked about continuing to strengthen our committee structure and to encourage people to get involved in OHA.

When Judith Faust asked at the beginning of the meeting on Friday what it would take for Council members to feel that they had had a good meeting, one member joked: "Double our membership, triple our endowment and solve all our problems."

By the time the officers scattered across the country on Sunday, they did indeed feel that the association holds significant promise for a larger membership and an even more secure financial future. But most important, they left feeling that the potential for a vibrant, intellectually challenging association is almost limitless.

In the months to come, the officers will strive to share their enthusiasm with the membership and to put firm foundations under the visions so that they may become reality.

Entertainment, Dining, Museum District Attracts 2006 OHA Conference Attendees to Little Rock

By David Stricklin
Local Arrangements Chair

Little Rock's River Market District will be the scene of the 2006 Oral History Association annual meeting. Anchored on one end by the new Clinton Presidential Center and on the other by the Old State House, the River Market is an entertainment, dining and museum district that will offer OHA attendees a stimulating and enriching experience.

The meeting will take place on the eve of a year-long observance of the 50th anniversary of the pivotal 1954 Little Rock Central High School desegregation crisis and will include an appearance by members of the famous Little Rock Nine, who as courageous young students braved angry mobs to claim their right to equal educational opportunities.

The meeting also will feature several great tours, including a behind-the-scenes look inside the archives of the Clinton Library and a

day trip to Hot Springs, the resort town famous for its bath houses, horse racing and role as a neutral ground for Al Capone and other Chicago gangsters on holiday from their usual labors.

Saturday night's OHA presidential reception will take place in the beautiful 1836 Old State House, the original Arkansas capitol famed as the setting of Bill Clinton's presidential election-night victory celebrations.

The Old State House is next door to the conference hotel, the Peabody, which is noted for its ducks and for being a nice place to stay.

The Clinton Center is within walking distance as are a number of fine examples of historic architecture, Robinson Auditorium among them, a Greek revival WPA structure named for an Arkansas senator who was Al Smith's 1928 vice presidential running mate. A self-guided walking tour of River Market art galleries and historical museums will include New Deal and other architectural

highlights, as well as sites along the Arkansas River.

Guides will be available to take OHA attendees out to eat at local haunts, including Bill Clinton's favorite eating places, at least the ones he liked before he went on a diet!

The museum in the Clinton Center features wonderful exhibits and films, including the hilarious spoof Clinton and his family and staff did in his last days in office.

Visitors can easily get from the Clinton Center to the Clinton School of Public Service in the historic Choctaw Railroad Station and to the fabulous new headquarters of Heifer International, the organization that empowers people in marginal economies to create sustainable agriculture and other initiatives to defeat hunger and power.

Little Rock offers a great deal to the OHA and will provide a memorable, historic setting for the 2006 meeting.

Summer Oral History Workshops Available

Looking for more oral history skills? Here are some of the summer opportunities available.

Morrissey Workshop Set in Vermont

The oldest ongoing summer workshop is at Vermont College, Aug. 7-11, taught by past OHA president Charles T. Morrissey. It has been held in Vermont since 1975 and includes hands-on, personalized instruction. For more information, e-mail Maureen Schake, conference coordinator, at maureen.schake@tui.edu.

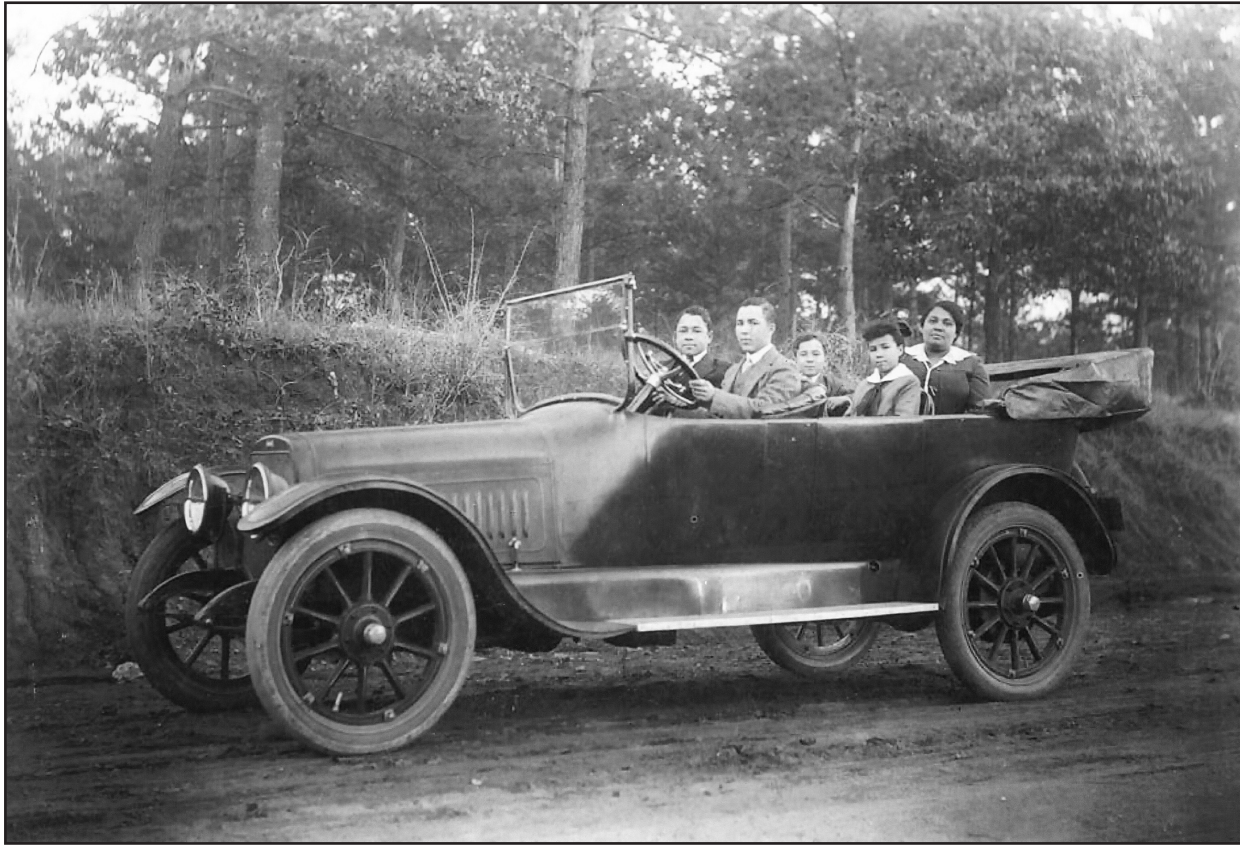
San Francisco Site Of LEGACY Program

The LEGACY Oral History Program of the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum is sponsoring its 11th annual intensive oral history workshop, July 6-8 in San Francisco. The workshop draws on examples in the performing arts, but it is equally appropriate for work in other fields, such as family, social and neighborhood or institutional history. For more information contact legacy@sfpalm.org.

Training Offered At Kenyon College

Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, is the site of a June 6-8 Oral History Institute on planning and conducting oral history projects. The institute is cosponsored by the Ohio Humanities Council and the Rural Life Center at Kenyon College in cooperation with the Ohio Association of Historical Societies and Museums and the Ohio Historical Society. For more information, call Frank Dunkle at 614-461-7802.

Oral Histories Enhance UCLA Exhibit



The Hawkins family is among African Americans depicted in a UCLA library exhibit. Augustus P. Hawkins, third from the right in back seat, was only the second African-American assemblyman in California's history (1935-62). After his service in the State Assembly, he represented California's 29th District in the U.S. Congress from 1963-1991, the first African American elected to Congress west of the Mississippi. Photo: UCLA

“Forming and Transforming the City: African Americans in Los Angeles,” which reveals the influence of African-American individuals, organizations and institutions both in Los Angeles and beyond, was featured this spring in the lobby of the UCLA Charles E. Young Research Library.

The original 44 founders of Our Lady of the Queen of the Angels in 1781 included several of Afro-Mexican descent. In the more than 200 years since, African-American Angelenos have played an integral role in the city's development into a world class metropolis.

The exhibit's themes encompass Afro-Mexican origins, early pioneers and first migration, art, business, civil rights and the Black Power movement, film and the arts, journalism and literature, music,

politics, religious life and UCLA.

In addition to such noteworthy figures as Tom Bradley and Ralph J. Bunche, the exhibit highlighted the contributions of lesser-known individuals, including retired assemblyman and congressman Augustus P. Hawkins, film maker George P. Johns and librarian Miriam Matthews. It also featured a number of UCLA alumni, including Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Arthur Ashe, Yvonne Braithwaite Burke, Rafer Johnson, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, James Lu Valle, and Jackie Robinson.

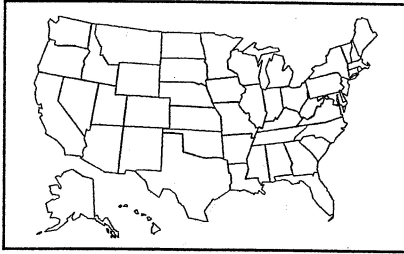
Other highlights of the exhibit included excerpts from the oral history interviews produced by UCLA's Center for Oral History Research. Central Avenue jazz musician Horace Tapscott, minister and civil rights activist Thomas Kilgore and Rep. Diane Watson are

among those whose voices bring to life the role African-American Angelenos have played in the 200-plus years of the city's history.

Since the early 1980s, the Center for Oral History Research has documented the history of African Americans in Los Angeles in such fields as art, business, music, politics and government. In many cases, the UCLA Library is fortunate not only to have the personal and professional papers of significant individuals but their remembrances and recollections as well.

[Editor's Note: Thanks to Alva Moore Stevenson of the UCLA Center for Oral History Research for sharing this with OHA Newsletter readers.]

STATE AND REGIONAL REPORT



SOHA Celebrates 25th Anniversary

The Southwest Oral History Association invites you to its 25th anniversary celebration April 20-23 in Albuquerque, N.M.

“With Voices Raised: Twenty-Five Years of Oral History in the Southwest” will feature an introductory workshop and varied sessions on Native American oral history, women and veterans’ oral history, project planning and a look at legal and ethical issues in community and classroom oral history projects.

For more information, contact Rose Diaz, at rosediaz@unm.edu or call 505-277-3570..

OHMAR Presents Pogue Award

Charles “Stu” Kennedy, who created and manages the Association for Diplomatic Studies Oral History Collection, has been named the 2006 recipient of the Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region’s Forrest C. Pogue Award.

Kennedy’s organization, the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, established its oral history project in 1986 to document diplomatic history and improve training for U.S. foreign service officers.

The Pogue Award, scheduled for presentation at OHMAR’s March 24 spring meeting, is named after U.S. Army historian and oral history pioneer Forrest Pogue (1912-1996).

Michigan Group Promotes Excellence In Oral History Work

By Geneva Wiskemann

The Michigan Oral History Association (MOHA) continues its mission to promote excellence in oral history through education.

Recent highlights were workshops for the Ray and Clinton Townships’ historical organizations in Macomb County and the Lansing Union 602 Job Team of GM Fisher Body. Presentations focused on oral history collection/preservation for archivists and on methodology and new technology for historians and genealogists in Detroit and Lansing.

Consultations included Sparrow Health Services, the Michigan National Guard, a private school, friends of a lighthouse, veterans of wars and homeland service, a fraternal organization, women’s history conference programming and more.

MOHA partners with the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries in offering “Veterans’ Voices: Stories Behind the Uniforms” in conjunction with “Life of the Soldier,” an exhibit at the State Museum on March 25.

Hosting of the Saturday breakfast and offering of a panel of presenters sharing experiences using oral history as a resource for book and documentary publication during the Michigan In Perspective local history conference at Wayne State University is scheduled on April 22.

That day members also will judge entries in the Michigan National History Day final competition at Grand Valley State University and give the James Campbell Award for Best Use of Oral History in all categories.

Similar activities are filling the 2006 calendar. For information, see our quarterly newsletter or contact MOHA at 5580 West State Road,

Lansing, MI 48906-9325.
Telephone: 517-321-1746. E-mail:
gwiskemann@arq.net.

University of Miami Starts Cuban Family History Project

The University of Miami’s Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies announces the creation of the Cuban Family History and Genealogy Project.

A collaboration with the Cuban Heritage Collection of the Otto G. Richter Library, the project aims to promote, preserve and document families’ Cuban ethnic and cultural past.

An oral history program is under development as part of the project, according to project director Jorge R. Pinon.

The institute is developing family history seminars and workshops for Cuban-born elders in cooperation with the Miami-Dade County Senior Citizens Activity Centers and with Cuban-American youth in cooperation with the Miami-Dade County Public Library System.

Pinon said the purpose of the seminars and workshops is to “raise awareness on the importance of documenting in narrative or oral form our families’ heritage.”

The institute’s publication, “Research Guide to Cuban Family History and Genealogy,” includes basic information on how to begin genealogical research, including ethnic roots and information about surnames and coats of arms, as well as basic oral history interviewing techniques.

It also includes an extensive guide to research in archives and libraries in Cuba, Spain and the United States.

Hundreds of Interviews Now Available Online In California Oral History Collection

By Sherna Berger Gluck
California State University,
Long Beach

With the completion of its National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation and Access grant, the Virtual Oral/Aural History Archive of California State University, Long Beach now is making available nearly 1,100 hours of original oral history recordings in American studies at www.csulb.edu.

With its focus on orality, VOAHA brings to life the timbre and tone of voice, the nuances of spoken language and the richness of oral narratives of some 333 people. They range from anarchists and communists to garment workers, oil workers, community builders and jazz arrangers. They are African American, American Indian, Nisei, Latino/Latina and Southeast Asian and Eastern European immigrants.

In a variety of dialects, in this oral literary genre, they recount their joys

and sorrows and their triumphs and defeats as they lived out their daily lives. Their oral narratives, which document life in the period from the 1890s to the 1990s, are organized in 30 separate series that fall into four major categories:

+ **Women's Studies** includes 700 hours of interviews with 135 narrators on a wide variety of themes, including suffragists, World War II aircraft workers, the feminist health movement and the welfare mothers movement.

+ **Labor Studies** includes 150 hours of interviews with 48 narrators on themes ranging from fights to desegregate unions during World War II, Mexican furniture workers and women garment workers.

+ **Ethnic Studies** includes 275 hours of interviews with 110 narrators (including some counted in other categories) on wide-ranging themes like civil rights activism, Indian boarding schools, the Japanese fishing village on Terminal

Island, Cambodian and Hmong immigrants and the Chicano student movement.

+ **Community Studies** includes 195 hours of interviews with 91 narrators on various topics, including the impact of the discovery and extraction of oil on the region and the subsequent economic, political and social changes and the building of community institutions.

The interviews are divided into organic time segments that are summarized and assigned search terms, enabling users to listen to specific interview segments driven by their own or selected search terms. Alternatively, users can browse the collections, working through the hierarchy and either listen to entire tapes or to selected segments. Full bibliographic citations are provided for each segment.

For more information, contact Sherna Berger Gluck at sbgluck@csulb.edu or Kaye Briegel at kbriegel@csulb.edu.

3 Former Presidents Of OHA Featured In George Aiken Video

Three former presidents of the Oral History Association are featured prominently in a new video about George D. Aiken (1892-1984), who served as Vermont's governor from 1937 to 1941 and as a U.S. senator from 1941 to 1975.

Donald A. Ritchie of the U.S. Senate Historical Office comments on Aiken as a member of the Congress. Samuel B. Hand, retired historian at the University of Vermont, tells how Aiken as a left-of-center Republican became unbeatable in Vermont politics. Charles T. Morrissey, Aiken's oral history interviewer in the late 1970s, draws on that unrestricted transcript to recount stories Aiken shared.

The video, titled "Vermont's George Aiken: Balancing Freedom and Unity," premiered Nov. 9, 2005, in Montpelier and Nov. 11, 2005, in Burlington. It is available on DVD from the University of Vermont at www.uvm.edu/aiken.

Check Details Online For Sydney Meeting

Plans are in full swing for the 14th International Oral History Association conference in Sydney, Australia, July 12-16.

The conference Web site, www.une.edu.au/ioha2006, includes online registration, information on accommodations, social and cultural activities, master classes on July 11 and other conference details.

Everyone is welcome.

Hurricane-Displaced Librarian Finds Home In California

California State University, Fresno has hired OHA member Alan H. Stein as a librarian for its Center for the Study of Children's Literature. Stein was a victim of Hurricane Katrina, which devastated New Orleans last year.

The university noted in a press release that it hoped other libraries would follow its lead in developing jobs for displaced Gulf Coast librarians.

The university said Stein literally was the last New Orleans Public Library employee to leave before the hurricane struck. He locked the door and left the library key in his apartment before evacuating, thinking he would return soon.

American Historical Association Sponsors Oral History Sessions at Annual Meeting

By Donald A. Ritchie
U.S. Senate Historical Office

The Research Division of the American Historical Association sponsored two sessions on oral history at the AHA annual meeting in Philadelphia on Jan. 7. The morning roundtable on "Oral History and Institutional Review Boards: What Oral Historians Need to Know Before Doing It" was chaired by Linda Shopes of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Panelists included Jonathan Knight of the American Association of University Professors, Zachary Shrag of George Mason University and Mary Marshall Clark of the Columbia Oral History Research Office.

The panelists dissected the problem of institutional review boards' "mission creep." Despite the federal government's willingness to exclude most oral history from human subject restrictions, many IRBs continue to require oral historians to submit their research proposals for prior review.

Oral historians have therefore striven to reach "acceptable accommodation" with campus IRBs. A few historians are serving as members of IRBs and have made their boards more sensitive to the differences between scientific and historical research. Some IRBs have begun to rely on departmental review rather than claim expertise in methods outside their own disciplines.

Panelists also noted that many academics simply ignore IRB review, but warned that practice is not advisable for the vulnerable members of the profession—graduate students and untenured faculty. The panelists also conceded that some careless oral history is occurring and that students need to be trained in oral history protocols, however, they reiterated that the protection of human subjects

was meant to address physical and psychological risks, not sloppy research.

The panel offered two options for academic oral historians. Columbia University, as Clark explained, followed the policy statement that the American Historical Association and the Oral History Association crafted in consultation with the federal Office of Human Research Protection and gained IRB recognition that most of its oral history was excluded from review.

She said that Columbia won the "ethical battle" right away by showing that oral historians had established high standards of practice, including obtaining the informed consent of interviewees, and that its methodology did not meet the federal definition of "generalizable" research.

The real battle was over the level of legal protection. They had to convince the board that the care with which the Columbia Oral History Research Office treated its interviewees translated into protection of the university from lawsuits.

By contrast, Shrag reported that faculty at George Mason University chose to collaborate with its campus IRB. Rather than rely on the OHA's "Principles and Standards" and "Evaluation Guidelines," George Mason's historians wrote a training model along IRB lines and adopted the IRB release forms for informed consent.

There is no guarantee, however, that such an "agreeable accommodation" will survive the rotation of IRB members. Faculty at other universities have reported that new board members do not always accept arrangements forged by their predecessors.

The afternoon session, "Doing Oral History in the Future Tense: Prospects in Oral History," was chaired by Donald Ritchie of the

Senate Historical Office. Its prospectors included Charles Hardy of West Chester University, Pamela Henson of the Smithsonian Institution and Kim Lacy Rogers of Dickinson College.

Hardy offered an extensive list of recent innovations in digital technology that are reducing costs and improving the ease of use of new equipment, awaiting creative application by oral historians. The digital revolution stimulated a great wave of democratization in access and dissemination of information, but he pointed out that the axiom of "garbage in/garbage out" still applied.

Henson provided an assessment of the archival preservation of digital recordings after the extinction of traditional analog tape. Archivists have accepted the inevitable, but are monitoring different digital formats for long-term stability and for the potential obsolescence of their recording devices.

Rogers considered the increasing interest in conducting oral history of traumatic events, from the Holocaust to Sept. 11 and Hurricane Katrina. She cautioned that focusing on tragic episodes runs the risk of oversimplifying the epic of human survival and people's remarkable resilience.

Ritchie concluded the session with a review of international trends in oral history, noting how societies that underwent social and political revolutions have used oral history to create new archives to replace those of the old regimes. He noted innovative programs in Eastern Europe, South Africa and South America as well as the application of oral history to the land claims of Australian Aborigines and Canadian First Nations.

Oral historians around the world have shared their finds and learned from each other on the Internet, leaving a richer record of our times.

History Association Tracks Status of IRB Oversight

By Robert B. Townsend
American Historical Association

[Editor's Note: The following article is excerpted with permission from Perspectives (44:2, February 2006), a publication of the American Historical Association.]

If you or your students use oral history interviews in research, you need to be attentive to continuing problems with the increasing extension of human-subjects research protocols—designed primarily as protections for subjects of medical and scientific research—into areas of historical study. An AHA staff survey of review board policies at 252 colleges and universities found the policies are largely unchanged, despite a 2003 agreement seemingly excluding most oral history research. As a result, historians find themselves and their work in a very complex and contradictory position....

The results [of the staff survey] were exceptionally disappointing. On almost 95 percent of the university Web sites, the only guidance a faculty member or student will find is a passing mention of oral history among the research methods subject to “expedited” review. This language comes from the insertion of “oral history” into the federal regulations for review boards in 1998. Most university administrators see these regulations as inviolate law and refuse to accept the recent agreement with federal authorities as a valid interpretation of the rules. To make matters worse, the agreement was further undermined when staff at OHRP issued conflicting and contradictory statements about its meaning shortly after it was issued. The net result—stated explicitly by a few of the review boards—is that even if oral history is excluded from review, only the review boards can decide what is excluded on a case-by-case basis. As a consequence, it appears oral history is still subject to review on most campuses....

We can point to a few success stories, however, in which specific review boards have adopted the exclusion agreement wholly or in part. The University of Texas at Austin’s Office of Research and Compliance, for instance, states explicitly, “in general oral history projects are not subject to the requirements of the HHS regulations, and therefore, those that are not subject to the requirements of HHS regulations can be excluded from IRB review.”

By and large, however, where our recent exchanges with the federal government did effect some evident change in policy, it was more likely a change for the worse—eliciting a stronger assertion of review board oversight. ...

So in practice, we have begun to hear regularly from historians who find themselves accused of violating rules that are not appropriate to our field, and which they fairly assumed did not apply to them.

Perhaps equally important, growing numbers of oral historians find themselves bumping up against hard-and-fast rules on matters like source confidentiality that cut against the standards and established practices of our profession....

This helps to explain why we seem to be receiving a growing number of calls and messages about historians running into hurdles at the review board level.... Typically historians find themselves filling out forms and being forced into classes that insist on confidentiality for interviewees, and require assent to hard science notions of hypothesis testing and evidence....

A few of the cases, however, are quite extreme....At Hunter College of the City University of New York, one review board ordered a halt to all research on a subject, even portions that did not use oral history methods, until the board determined that [the researcher] had not violated the rules. Other historians have reported threats of letters of reprimand or large fines for conducting or allowing their

students to conduct unauthorized interviews. So the potential risks can be quite high....

Some history departments have been able to limit the intrusiveness of IRB oversight and expand the criteria for assessment by proactively discussing these matters with their administrations. But there are at least two limits on this strategy.

First, there is a “sleeping dog” problem. A considerable amount of oral history work never comes to the attention of review boards, either because it has not been funded by federal grants, or because it never passes through a layer of administrative review....For most faculty conducting this kind of research, there is an obvious incentive to avoid drawing attention from the review boards....While ignorance can be bliss, ...there are some significant risks.

The other limitation arises from the nature of most history departments, where only a relatively small number of faculty members use oral history methods. We have found it difficult to get department chairs and directors of graduate studies to engage this issue at the institutional level unless it affects their own work or that of their students....

Administrators...need to carefully assess the risks to faculty and students of ignoring this issue at their institution. Anyone training students to conduct such research, or using oral history methods as part of their own research, needs to work proactively to ensure such work is done responsibly by adhering to the guidelines of the Oral History Association...

Meanwhile, we continue to work on the issue at the national level. In November 2005, the association sent another letter detailing our concerns...to Bernard Schwetz, the director of the OHRP. It should come as no surprise, however, given the limited effect of our past communications and agreements with OHRP, that our expectations are rather limited.

Oral Historians Share Skills, Gain Perspectives During Winter Tour of India

By Bruce M. Stave
University of Connecticut

During the second half of December 2005 and the first half of January 2006, two Americans visited India where they participated in oral history conferences and conducted oral history workshops.

Under the auspices of the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs, Bruce M. Stave, director of the Center for Oral History at the University of Connecticut, and Sondra Astor Stave interacted with a variety of audiences ranging from the nation's most accomplished scholars to undergraduate students and the general public. Questions regarding memory, the distinction between oral history and oral tradition and the mechanics of the process informed their conversations.

They began by traveling to Nagaland, a restricted area in India's far northeast near Burma that requires special permission to visit. At Nagaland University in the mountain city of Kohima, they participated in an oral history workshop that brought together scholars, teachers and journalists.

The participants, steeped in Naga history, deal with a non-literate society based in tribal villages. One folklorist, for example, is collecting the songs of the region in an attempt to reconstruct cultural history.

The day-long meeting encouraged an exciting and thought-provoking exchange in a place that may seem quite remote to most westerners. Participants demonstrated great enthusiasm while learning about the practice of oral history, and the Staves learned a great deal about Naga society and the complexities in documenting a non-literate culture.

At Jamshedpur in the new Indian state of Jharkhand, they interacted with students at the Institute for Tribal Education, Gamharia, and met

with the institute's founding director, Rev. P.D. Thomas, a visionary Jesuit priest, and his staff, who bring tribal students from near and far-off villages to study.

The ability to access live Internet in this distant location allowed for showing the tribal students a Web site on the voices of World War II, created by students at the University of Connecticut, and discussing the potential of similar activity on their part. In Calcutta, they participated in a conference at the American Center dealing with oral history and Indian partition, which brought together leading scholars from Calcutta and New Delhi.

A paper, "A Daughter's Testimony and the Partition of Punjab," by Nonica Datta of the Department of History at Miranda House, Delhi University, exhibited the sophisticated use of memory common to an increasing number of Indian scholars.

That conference was followed by an energetic and lively meeting with a general audience interested in oral history that included film makers, attorneys, writers and teachers and showcased the passion of the Bengali intellect.

From Calcutta, the Staves moved on to other parts of India. They had lived in Aurangabad in the western state of Maharashtra 37 years earlier when Bruce Stave taught history as a Fulbright lecturer at Marathwada University and Sondra Astor Stave taught at the Little Flower School. They visited there and found a much expanded city, school and university, where they spoke to students about oral history and met with faculty and administrators.

In Madras, the students and faculty at Women's Christian College showed a great interest in oral history, and after the presentation there determined to establish a regional oral history association. At the National Folklore Support Center



in Madras, the differences between oral history and folklore received a great deal of attention and discussion.

They completed their tour in New Delhi, where they participated in conferences at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and at the Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts. Both conferences brought together leading scholars in the field.

They found it was exciting to speak at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, which since 1966 has housed what is probably India's most professional oral history project, in the western sense. The Nehru museum and library reminds one of a presidential library in the United States and impresses visitors as a magnificent institution.

The Staves met briefly with B.R. Nanda, the pioneer who established the project, and could not help but think of him as the Allan Nevins of India.

Newspapers in Nagaland, the Tamil weekly edition of India Today and a major paper, The Hindu, carried stories about the visit and the uses of oral history, which appears to have a promising future as well as a substantial past in India.

Participant Thanks OHA for 2005 Conference Support

By Alicia J. Rouverol
Independent Scholar
Santa Rosa, Calif.

[Editor's Note: What follows are excerpts from folklorist Alicia Rouverol's report to the OHA Scholarship Committee, which provided support and an honorarium for her to attend the 2005 OHA conference in Providence, R.I.]

I'd been asked to attend this year by my colleague Della Pollock at UNC-Chapel Hill. Della had compiled and edited a series of articles for her volume "Remembering: Performing Oral History" (MacMillan/Palgrave, 2005), which is part of the series edited by Linda Shopes and Bruce Stave.

For her collection, Della drew on the work of her colleagues at UNC and elsewhere across the nation. She had asked me to contribute an article based on my oral history/life review performance project in a correctional facility in rural North Carolina. She also organized a series of panels on performing oral history for this year's OHA. Della and four contributing authors, including myself, attended the Providence meeting.

I was not able to make Laurie Latham's performance workshop on Wednesday, but I did attend the Thursday morning session featuring Shannon Flattery's "Touchable Stories."

Shannon draws on oral history and community-based art to recast unused (and often deteriorated) urban spaces to create portraits of a community, alternately challenging the viewer to consider what constitutes a community "narrative" and engaging the viewer as a necessary participant in the event itself. Her work is nothing short of visionary....This is the caliber of folks who were at the program this year.

Rivka Eisner's performance on my panel later that afternoon, "Embodying Memory, Changing

Lives: Performance as Making a Difference," was a strong example of the power of performance to illustrate the narrative of a "transnational" Vietnamese-American woman and her experience of living in this country while separated from her own native land.

The tug-of-war of identity so clear in Rivka's essay, as performed by Rivka for our audience that day, raised questions about how story identifies us, connects us, sometimes separates us, right at the moment of telling.

I delivered a revised version of my article from Della's book and shared excerpts of video from both life review sessions and the inmates' performances of their narratives for at-risk youth. I wanted audience members to reflect on how narrating and performing their lives had affected their lives.

Pamela Dean had also asked me to participate in "The Oral Historian's [and Folklorist's] Work: A Tribute to Sandy Ives." Sandy had been a major force in my professional development, so I was honored to be a part of it. The session was well attended (some 200-300 audience members). The event was recorded for Sandy, since he couldn't make it for health reasons. We missed his presence, but his colleagues toasted him well, and I've since heard from him that—in his inimitable Sandy Ives way—he was pleased as punch we'd all taken the time to be there.

Neil Rosenberg had traveled all the way from Newfoundland; he, like all of us, was deeply influenced by Sandy's work and would not have missed it, even if Sandy had to....

I did enjoy as well the Thursday evening special multimedia presentation, "Crossing the BLVD: Strangers, Neighbors, Aliens in a New America," and later purchased a copy of Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan's workbook in the OHA book room.

The narratives and content were powerful, but I did sharwith

colleagues some concern about the theatrical-ness of the presentation.

Admittedly two presentations that evening were more than I could manage as a viewer/audience member. And my own preference in oral history performance led me not to attend, for instance, "The Legacy of Roger Williams" later that evening. I lean toward the kind of performance Rivka Eisner did on our panel—or the performance Daniel Kerr did in Buffalo at OHA many years ago—in which the narratives are drawn directly from the interviews, with the interviewers (or in my project, the interviewees) embodying their own voices or those of their narrators.

That OHA focused intensively on performance this year...was indeed one of the program's strengths, I thought. I would welcome more performance-based work—particularly for the evening programming—that brings a critical eye to the ways in which performing narratives are not simply a retelling of an historical occurrence (as I'm gathering the Roger Williams piece was) or a performance as add-on/entertainment.

Still, I remember years ago at OHA when performing oral history was not particularly of interest to program committees, so OHA's movement in this direction came as a welcome and stimulating change.

Without support from the OHA Scholarship Committee and the honorarium Pamela Dean secured for me, I could not have participated at this meeting; so again, many thanks.

Thanks also to the program committee for creating such a strong conference. It takes a lot to drag me away from my family and current book project these days, but OHA 2005 was well worth the journey.

Candidates Announced For First VP, Council Seats, Nominating Committee

The Oral History Association Nominating Committee announces the following candidates for election to the positions of first vice president and OHA Council seats.

Nominated for first vice president is: **Charles Hardy**, West Chester University.

Nominated for Council seats are, for Seat One:

+ **Curtis Austin**, University of Southern Mississippi, or

+ **Horacio Roque Ramirez**, University of California, Santa Barbara.

For Seat Two:

+ **Troy Reeves**, Idaho Oral History Center, or

+ **Valerie Yow**, independent oral historian, Chapel Hill, N.C.

OHA members also will elect members to the Nominating Committee. Three two-year positions are to be filled, with members voting for one person for each of the three seats. The candidates are:

Position One:

+ **Elly Shodell**, community oral historian, New York, or

+ **Jennifer Abraham**, Louisiana State University.

Position Two:

+ **Chuck Bolton**, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, or

+ **Claytee White**, University of Nevada at Las Vegas.

Position Three:

+ **Linda Wood**, classroom educator, Rhode Island, or

+ **Brad Williams**, Northwest Oral History Association.

OHA members in good standing will receive biographical information, candidate statements and mail ballots this summer.

Additional nominations for officers, Council members and Nominating Committee members may be made as provided in the OHA bylaws. Nominees must be dues-paying members of the organization.

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