

ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Oral History Association Newsletter

Winter 2015 Vol XLIX Number 3

Oral History Association annual meeting in Tampa examines social justice, social change

More than 420 oral historians from around the nation and from nine foreign countries examined stories of social change and social justice through an oral history lens at the Oral History Association's 49th annual conference Oct. 14-18 in Tampa, Florida.

The conference featured keynote speakers, plenary sessions, panel presentations, roundtable discussions, interest group gatherings, a poster session, films, awards, performances, workshops, book signings and informal as well as inspiring opportunities to polish oral history skills and get new ideas for projects to pursue.

This first digital issue of the Oral History Association **Newsletter** highlights keynote speakers, plenary sessions and OHA news. The next issue will recap highlights from other conference sessions.

Cliff Kuhn, OHA executive director, dies following heart attack

Clifford M. Kuhn, the Oral History Association's first executive director and a history professor at Georgia State University renowned for his passion for Southern history and for just about everything else he encountered, died Nov. 8 following a heart attack. He was 63. (*cont. next page*)

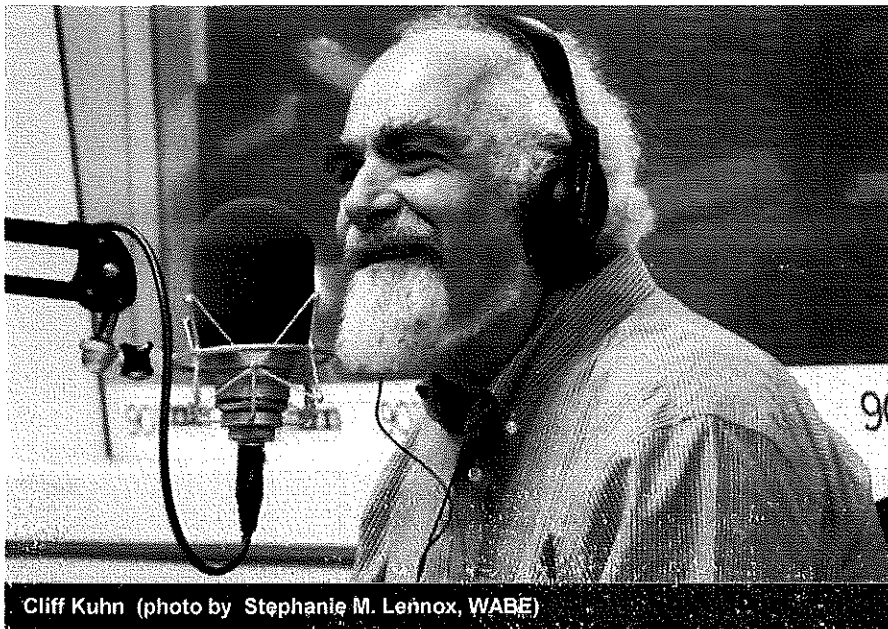
The OHA newsletter is now digital! This basic version of the online content is for those who requested a print copy. Thank you for your patience as we continue to grow and change.



You know you're in Tampa, Florida, when you are warned to keep your eyes peeled...

The OHA Newsletter is published three times yearly by the Oral History Association for its members. Copy deadlines are March 1, July 1, and November 1.

Submit stories to Editor Mary Kay Quinlan, 7524 S. 36th St., Lincoln, NE 68516 or via email at ohaeditor@gmail.com



Cliff Kuhn (photo by Stephanie M. Lennox, WABE)

OHA Executive Director dies

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A memorial service was held on Dec. 13 at 1 p.m. in the Georgia State University Student Center.

Kuhn, a native of Princeton, New Jersey, where his father was a mathematics professor at Princeton University and his mother worked for the American Civil Liberties Union, was a Northerner who earned respect and accolades from scholars, public officials and everyday people in his adopted city and state of Atlanta, Georgia, where he immersed himself in the region's history.

Kuhn graduated from Yale University in 1974, taught in Atlanta Public Schools for a year and was involved in independent and public radio programming. In 1993 he earned a doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and began teaching history at Georgia State the following year.

Long active in the OHA, Kuhn served as president in 2000-2001 and was named the OHA executive director in 2013. He moved quickly to raise the organization's national profile by successfully applying for membership in the American Council of Learned Societies, a federation of more than 70 organizations that represent the nation's leading scholarly work in the humanities and social sciences.

His leadership also led to a strategic planning process for the OHA, development of a new logo and membership initiatives, streamlined conference planning, a partnership with the History Channel to develop oral history educational materials for teachers, a revived OHA pamphlet series with publication of *Doing Veterans Oral History* and transition to an online *OHA Newsletter*. OHA officers said in an email to OHA members announcing Kuhn's death:

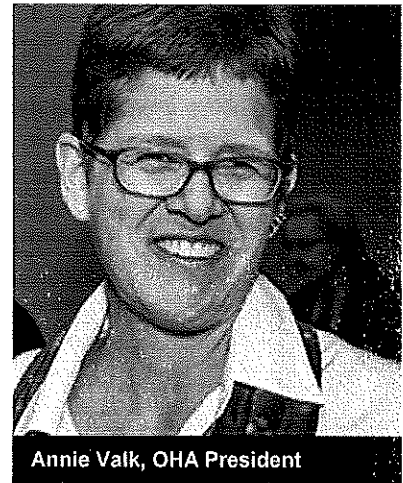
"Surely we do not have to tell you what a loss this is--not just to his family and to us in the OHA but to the worldwide oral history movement, to the fields of southern history and public history, to the city of Atlanta, to Georgia State University students and colleagues, and to many, many others.

(continued on page 11)

President's Letter

I write this only days after Cliff Kuhn's sudden death. I cannot imagine the Oral History Association without Cliff's commanding presence; this sentiment has been echoed by many people who have communicated similar shock and grief.

As the reality of this loss sets in, OHA members have begun to share their recollections and stories about Cliff. My own memories span more than 20 years, my entire professional career. We met when I was in graduate school at Duke and Cliff was finishing his Ph.D. down Tobacco Road at UNC. *(continued on page 10)*



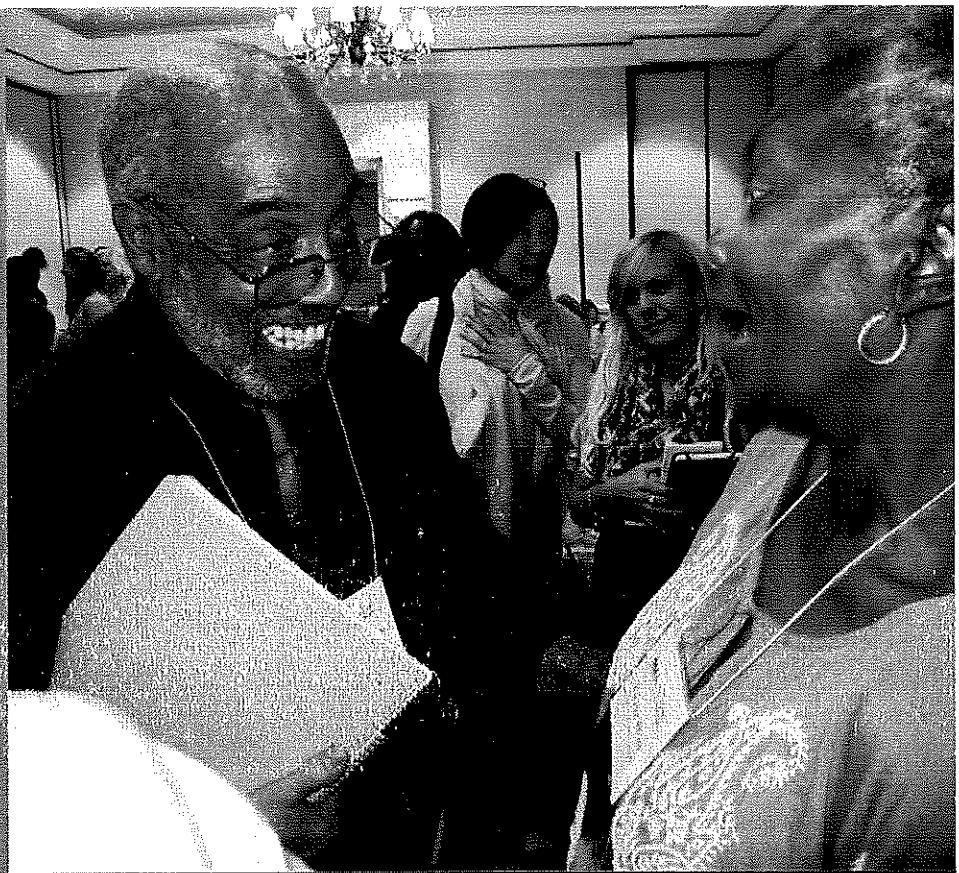
Annie Valk, OHA President

OHA urges contributions to 50 year campaign

The Oral History Association Endowment Fund invites contributions to the 50th Campaign, aimed at strengthening the OHA and extending its tradition of promoting excellence in oral history practice into the next half century.

Donate online at www.oralhistory.org or by mailing your tax deductible contribution to: OHA, Georgia State University, P.O. Box 4117, Atlanta, GA 30302-4117.

You may designate your contribution to support the general endowment, publications, the annual meeting or general operations.



Keynote speaker Charles E Cobb, Jr. shares a laugh with Council member Claytee White

Cobb's passion: Preserve black freedom movement history

As a young man, Charles E. Cobb was a civil rights activist, working in Mississippi as a field secretary in the 1960s with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

Now, at 72, after a prolific career as a bookstore owner, foreign correspondent for National Public Radio, National Geographic editorial staffer, author and college teacher, his passion is preserving the history of SNCC as a founder of the SNCC Legacy Project, which aims to document the history of the history-making movement.

"Understanding history involves more than collecting and archiving it or even writing books," Cobb told an OHA luncheon audience. "The question is one of using history. How do you make it usable?"

It wasn't until SNCC's 50th anniversary in 2010 that movement members realized the importance of documenting the organization's history, Cobb said.

"We never really grappled with our history," he said. But at the 50th anniversary celebration, SNCC workers, now in their 60s and 70s or older, recognized the need to preserve their experience.

That realization led to the creation of the SNCC Legacy Project, which has three goals: *(continued on next page)*

Cobb's passion

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- ◆ Identify where SNCC-related materials are, whether in personal collections, attics, basements or garages;
- ◆ Raise money to support project needs and
- ◆ Generate new work pertaining to SNCC's history.

Collecting old materials wasn't sufficient, Cobb said. So a New Works Committee has initiated efforts to add new information, such as interviewing relatives of people who were killed for their support of SNCC.

The challenge, he said, is to present the history in usable ways. A key step in that direction came when Duke University approached the SNCC Legacy Project in a collaboration that resulted in www.onevotesncc.org, which incorporates essays, documents, maps, oral histories, timelines, short documentaries and other audiovisual materials to shed light on SNCC's historic work.

Cobb noted that there often has been tension between participants in the movement and scholars who have studied it.

To historians, the focus has been mostly on charismatic leaders and national legislation, a civil rights history boiled down to "Rosa sat down, Martin stood up and the white folks saved the day," Cobb said.

What too often has been missing is the bottom-up ideas that drove SNCC's success. "These things didn't happen for no reason," he said.

The movement was full of people no one ever knew about but who were critically important as the young people learned how to be community organizers.

"The movement was really pretty practical," Cobb said, figuring things out on the ground. "Sometimes what we tried to do worked; sometimes it didn't."

He said young people today who are involved in Dream Defenders and Black Lives Matter have sought out SNCC veterans to learn about their organizing experiences.

"Young people protesting today are beginning to realize that something more than protest is needed," he said. "They'll find their way, just like we did."

"I tell young people today, 'you all sound a lot like us,'" he said, drawing smiles from the audience.

And like the SNCC veterans learned, he said, today's activists need to remember that "nothing gets done in a hurry."

'Guantanamo' more than prison

Say the word "Guantanamo" to many Americans today, and mostly you'll evoke images of a prison in Cuba where men believed to be connected to the 9/11 attacks have been incarcerated.

It also was a place, in the 1990s, where HIV-positive Haitian refugees were housed, and then a stepping stone to freedom for Cuban refugees rescued at sea who had sought to escape Cuban dictator Fidel Castro.

But long before that, it was a U.S. naval station built as a small town where people lived their lives and shaped community memories, Liz Sevchenko, founding director of the Guantanamo Public Memory Project, told an OHA plenary session audience.

Sevchenko and Patrick Moore, president of the National Council on Public History, described the project, started in 2011, in which student and faculty teams from more than a dozen universities studied the history of GTMO, conducted interviews with people who lived, worked, served or were held there as well as others associated with the base.

Groups also held community outreach activities to spark conversation about issues related to Guantanamo, including national security, immigration, public health, militarization and the future of the base, which President Obama wants to close.

Students found it shocking that Guantanamo was a place people called home, Sevchenko said.

In excerpts played for the audience, one woman interviewee recalled: "There was no crime...It was summer all year round. It was wonderful growing up there in the '60s." She said she wanted to go back.

A Cuban refugee, speaking in Spanish, said: "It felt like a prison."

And a contemporary detainee there called it "a place where people lose their minds."

Moore, who is founder and director of the Public History Program at the University of West Florida, began GTMO interviews in 2001 when, at the invitation of the base commander, he took a team of graduate students to conduct oral histories of Cuban exiles there and citizens who commute to work on the base, a labor force relied upon for decades. The interviews were sealed for 20 years.

That planted the seeds for the larger, national project, which culminated in December 2012 with an exhibit in New York City based on display-window-sized posters with text and images featuring people with radically different experiences of Guantanamo.

QR codes on the posters enable visitors to listen to interview excerpts, which also can be found at www.gitmomemory.org. *(continued on next page)*

Guantanamo

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The posters created a cheap, lightweight, easy-to-hang exhibit that has toured to more than 20 cities and has been seen by more than 550,000 people, Sevchenko said.

Interviewers for the public memory project found prospective interviewees in various ways.

In Pensacola, Florida, for example, Moore said, Guantanamo doesn't evoke negative images, so the project simply advertised for people who had stories they wanted to tell. They also found oral history opportunities in reunion groups associated with the 50th anniversary of the Cuban missile crisis.

Moore said the community discussions that have emerged in connection with the exhibit tour have focused on aspects of the Guantanamo experience that might relate to specific local issues. In Indianapolis, for example, the community was grappling with the implication of super max prisons.

Through the exhibit-sparked discussions, people have been able to come to an understanding that there are other sides to an issue, he said.

"Through oral history, you really can get liberals and conservatives to talk to each other," he said.

Oral history links disparate community activist themes

AIDS activists, Mexican barrios in El Paso and health care workers in Florida may seem to be disparate groups to connect in an OHA plenary session.

But oral history work in all those communities illustrates how community activists have used oral history in quests for social change.

Filmmaker and activist Jim Hubbard of the ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) Oral History Project said the work of ACT UP, which forced attention to the high price of life-saving AIDS drugs, shows that "activism works."

The oral history project includes 186 interviews, with transcripts and short video clips available online at www.actuporalhistory.org. The project is archived at Harvard University.

Hubbard said oral history was the best way to create a critical mass of information about AIDS. People in the trenches were the AIDS experts, he said, adding that he has "a great belief in citizen knowledge."

Hubbard said the collection includes more than 350 hours of interviews, which form the basis for discussion of many issues central to the struggle for grassroots social change.

Grassroots activism also is at the core of a neighborhood oral history project described by Yolanda Chavez Leyva, history department chair at the University of Texas at El Paso and director of Museo Urbano, a museum without walls in El Segundo Barrio, an El Paso neighborhood on the border with Juarez, Mexico, which has the nation's lowest income zipcode.

Chavez Leyva said the "museum of the streets" grew out of a city campaign to diminish the role of El Paso's second ward by demolishing historic buildings in the name of redevelopment.

Community activists' work to block the redevelopment led to an effort to document El Segundo's history, which resulted in murals being painted on buildings slated for demolition and historical photos displayed on buildings, she said.

An effort to launch an oral history project of the neighborhood was dropped because of developers' ties to the university, she said. "The project didn't move forward, but the people did," Chavez Leyva added, because a community group took up the oral histories instead.

Oral history projects have led to exhibits related to traditional healers in the community and garment workers who used to dominate the district. Chavez Leyva said El Paso may once again see a revived garment industry as Los Angeles companies eye a return to the Texas border city as a way to escape a new, higher minimum wage in L.A.

In a third example of using oral history to effect social change, Kim Diehl, writer and labor union communications coordinator, called her presentation "Oral History as a Tool for Worker Organizing in the Wild, Wacky, Hostile, Anti-Worker State of Florida."

Diehl, a native Floridian transplanted to Brooklyn, said that as the daughter of a teacher and a union activist, she came early to her role as a labor organizer, and she described for the OHA plenary session attendees the four key steps of labor organizing:

- ◆ Develop leaders. Those are people who have followers.
- ◆ Create a supportive base of workers.
- ◆ Move the undecided or apathetic to become supporters.
- ◆ Isolate or neutralize the people who oppose you.

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Oral history links community activist themes

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And that, she said, is just what they did in organizing health care workers in the Sunshine State, despite strong anti-worker sentiment in much of the South.

Nursing homes, hospitals and other health care settings, along with motels and the entertainment industries that are key parts of the Florida economy, are place-specific jobs, Diehl said. They cannot be offshored to Mexico or Singapore.

To overcome negative attitudes about unions, the labor organizers turned to oral history, collecting stories from people about health issues and about the reality that many health care workers couldn't afford health care, she said.

In 112 days, the Service Employees International Union organized 13 Florida hospitals with some 6,000 employees.

The oral history approach was effective, she said, because it wasn't the union talking; "it was people talking on their own behalf."

Documenting Ferguson poses challenges for oral historians

The St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, Missouri, erupted in violent protests following the death of an unarmed black teenager shot by a white police officer on Aug. 9, 2014. The protests and the longer-term youth activism that emerged, fueled significantly by social media, raise important issues for oral historians interested in documenting events in real time, members of a plenary session panel told an OHA audience.

What does it mean to apply historical methods to contemporary issues, asked panel moderator Donna Murch, associate professor of history at Rutgers University.

The preponderance of digital media involved throughout the protests create important sources, she noted, but while social media communications represent "a form of utterance," it remains to be seen whether they should be considered "oral" sources.

Murch described conditions in Ferguson, where the population is two-thirds African American and the city is a place of "profound divestment." In many ways, she suggested, it is an example of a place that has been abandoned by the larger community.

People who took to the streets following Michael Brown's death "showed us how to protest," Murch said, noting that unemployed people have time to protest.

"This is not a population of elite college students," Murch said.

Among other outcomes of the dramatic events, librarians at Washington University in St. Louis created Documenting Ferguson, <http://digital.wustl.edu/ferguson/>, a digital archive to collect and preserve digital materials related to the Michael Brown protests.

Librarian Makiba Foster said the library realized that it needed to be a content creator because otherwise, materials like smartphone photos will be lost.



Nailah Summers of Gainesville, Florida

She said the university is collaborating with other institutions to come up with ways to collect Twitter and Instagram messages related to the Ferguson protests.

Social media also were critical in the youth-led protests following the death of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black teenager shot by a neighborhood watch coordinator in Sanford, Florida, on Feb. 26, 2012.

Martin's death sparked the creation of Dream Defenders, which panelist Nailah Summers, a founding member, described as "angry Florida students."

"This history is being written...by people with smartphones," she said, adding that they used social media to create community.

But Dream Defenders activists also discovered that constantly using social media also takes away time from learning how to be community organizers and to recognize that one of the downfalls of social media is the digital divide between young people who have grown up with it and older people who haven't. Church ladies, for example, aren't on Twitter.

But people who don't rely on social media can't be ignored if social activism is to succeed, Summers suggested. "It's our job not to leave anyone behind."

THANK YOU

Nearly three dozen institutions and individuals contributed sponsorship support to the 2015 OHA conference in Tampa. Our sincere thanks to the following:

Arizona State University
Baylor Institute for Oral History
Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University
Center for Oral and Public History, California State University, Fullerton
Chemical Heritage Foundation
The Citadel Oral History Program
Columbia Oral History M.A. Program, Columbia Center for Oral History Research and INCITE
Columbia Oral History Alumni Association
Dilip Patel
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University of Florida, College of the Arts
University of Florida, Department of History
University of North Texas Oral History Program
University of South Florida Tampa Library
University of Texas at Austin, College of Communication
University Products
Williams College, Center for Learning in Action

OHA business meeting addresses concerns

OHA President Paul Ortiz told members attending the organization's annual business meeting that Council members recognized concerns raised about labor disputes at California hotels, including the Long Beach Renaissance, site of the 2016 OHA meeting.

OHA would forfeit more than \$100,000 if it pulled out of its contract with the hotel, Ortiz said, but the OHA Council has established a committee to develop guidelines for future conference site selection. Members interested in serving on that committee should contact incoming president Annie Valk.

Karen Harper, local arrangements chair for the Long Beach conference, said she would research the labor dispute at the Renaissance to determine whether it would be appropriate for the OHA to write a letter supporting hotel workers there.

Rosalie Riegle of Michigan suggested next year's conference organizers might include a panel of oral historians working on projects with maintenance and service workers.

In other business meeting notes:

Ortiz announced the OHA's 50th anniversary endowment campaign, with a goal of 100 percent participation by OHA members.

OHA Executive Director Cliff Kuhn invited members to comment on a new Council policy on public resolutions. Under the policy guidelines, public statements would be expected to address matters specifically of professional concern to oral historians and would be submitted to Council 45 days before an annual meeting. Proposed statements would be reviewed by an ad hoc committee, which would make recommendations to Council regarding submission of the proposed statement to members attending the annual business meeting. Details can be found at www.oralhistory.org.

Kuhn also announced that OHA membership has increased more than 15 percent over 2014, when the OHA executive office took over membership management that previously was handled by Oxford University Press, which publishes the *Oral History Review*.

Thanks to 2015 donors

The following individuals and organizations have contributed to the Oral History Association this year (through Dec. 1), and we offer them all our thanks:

OHA Endowment Donors

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Troy Reeves
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Anne and Don Ritchie
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Linda Shopes
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Society of Biblical Literature

2015 Life Members

Doug Boyd
Mary Larson
David Morse
Paul Ortiz
Samuel Robson
Stephen Sloan
Anne Valk
Regennia Williams

Deadline extended for comments on human subjects research rule excluding oral history from IRB review

Oral historians have until Jan. 6, 2016, to submit comments on a proposed landmark rule change that would exempt oral history and other related scholarship from federal rules aimed at protecting research subjects.

Initially intended to protect subjects of biomedical and behavioral research, the rules promulgated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Human Research Protections, have been interpreted variously by campus Institutional Review Boards, whose membership often is dominated by biomedical researchers with little understanding of oral history or research in the humanities.

Leaders of the OHA and other history-related organizations have advocated for changes in the rules for nearly 20 years, arguing that application of rules meant for medical research are inappropriate for oral history interviews. OHA leaders urged that the OHA's Evaluation Guidelines be used as the standard by which to judge ethical performance in oral history work.

In October, the OHA joined 14 other members of the National Coalition for History in submitting comments to HHS strongly endorsing the proposed rule change. In commenting on the new policy proposal, the coalition's letter said: "In its content, tone and recommendations, the document reflects a sensitivity toward and appreciation of the work that historians do."

The proposed change to the rule, known as the Common Rule, would exclude from IRB review "oral history, journalism, biography, and historical scholarship activities that focus directly on the specific individuals about whom the information is collected."

The federal proposal also notes that in such research, "the ethical requirement is to provide an accurate and evidence-based portrayal of the individuals involved, and not to protect them from public scrutiny. Therefore, the protections afforded to individuals by the Common Rule seem unhelpful in furthering the aforementioned ethical goal in this context. Additionally, these fields of research have their own codes of ethics, according to which, for example, consent is obtained for oral histories. It is believed that because of these reasons, explicit exclusion of these activities from the scope of the Common Rule is appropriate."

The history coalition said in its letter commenting on the proposal:

"We concur with this recommendation of full exclusion of such activities from IRB oversight. It reflects an appreciation that these activities should not be evaluated under frameworks originally designed with the sciences in mind. It recognizes the value and attributes of these forms of scholarship. It eliminates any ambiguity about review, regulation and enforcement, and thus removes an enormous and contentious burden for both scholars and IRBs."

The coalition letter also notes that the historical fields specified by HHS "have long maintained their own explicit ethical standards concerning the wishes and rights of the narrators in oral history interviews."

It added that the historical organizations signing the letter "firmly believe in the principle and practice of informed consent and will continue to work to ensure that scholarship in these areas is of a high ethical quality."

People interested in more detailed information might want to follow www.institutionalreviewblog.com by Zachary M. Schrag, a history professor at George Mason University, who has followed the evolution of IRBs for many years.

Introducing new editors to the OHR's Pedagogy Section

While the use of oral history as an educational methodology is not new, there has recently been significant growth in the scholarship on this topic. Similarly, there has been an explosion of oral history projects from primary to graduate school classrooms and programs across the country and throughout the world. All levels of educators continue to seek out scholarship on teaching, as well as a forum in which student experiences and work can be shared with an interested audience. In response, the *Oral History Review* introduced a pedagogy section to the journal, featuring articles on pedagogy and highlighting exemplary projects related to education.

Starting in volume 43 (2016), the pedagogy section will be co-edited by Ken Woodward, Upper School history chair at the Stoneridge School in Bethesda, Md., and Abby Perkiss, assistant professor of history at Kean University in Union, N.J. Woodward will handle the K-12 end of things, while Perkiss will focus on post-secondary education.

We want to take this opportunity to thank Glenn Whitman, whose work to found this section, cannot be overstated.

For more information, or to submit an article, contact Ken Woodward at kwoodard@stoneridgeschool.org or Abby Perkiss at aperkiss@kean.edu.

President's Letter

Continued from page 2

He immediately treated me like a colleague and friend, revealing the egalitarian nature that made him such a good oral historian. One of our first meetings ended outside a restaurant during an Atlanta storm. I was soaked, waiting to get in a car and out of the pouring rain. I no longer recall exactly what we discussed (I am sure that Cliff would have remembered), but I vividly recollect Cliff's intensity as he continued talking, either oblivious to the downpour or content to get wet for the sake of a good conversation. In such moments Cliff's lack of attention to bad weather and other discomforts could be exasperating; but I never doubted his intentions and I always admired his spirit.

His passion for his work and his enthusiasm never seemed to flag; he was energetic in 2015 as he was in 1993. I was reminded of this when we met recently in New York City for an American Council of Learned Societies-sponsored workshop. The event assembled executive directors and incoming presidents of professional associations to enhance team building in our organizations and encourage more productive practices among governing boards. We shared many ideas that day and anticipated the opportunity we would have to work together this year. Sadly, we didn't have time to put those plans into action.

Cliff was exceedingly proud of how OHA has grown and how it has changed since moving to Georgia State University, including an expansion in membership and better member services, a new strategic plan and updated logo, acceptance into the ACLS, investment in conference management software that smoothed the process of submitting and reviewing proposals, and the launch of an endowment campaign. He certainly would want the OHA to continue its many activities and become an even stronger force.

In the coming year, OHA will coordinate ways to collectively remember Cliff and to commemorate his many contributions to the association. For now, I want to call attention to many initiatives that Cliff helped to launch. Chief among these is the commemoration in 2016 of the OHA's 50th anniversary. Under the leadership of past-president Mary Larson, a large task force is planning special projects to honor OHA's history and strengthen its future. At the same time, OHA has started a campaign to expand its endowment. In keeping with OHA's democratic spirit, the Council and 50th anniversary task force hope all members will contribute to these efforts. Stayed tuned for more details about these plans.

I hope you will get involved in other ways, too. Those who stayed in Tampa for the Sunday business meeting heard about several matters for which members' input is sought. The Council has proposed a new process for bringing public resolutions that lengthens the time between their introduction and discussion at the annual business meeting. The proposed change is posted at <http://www.oralhistory.org/new-oha-policy-on-public-resolutions/>. In addition, a new task force is developing recommendations to guide the selection of future conference sites and to formulate language for hotel contracts that increase OHA's flexibility to respond if labor actions take place at the chosen conference hotel. And, most recently, the Council has appointed a group to begin the process of selecting a new executive director. Please send comments and ideas about any of these issues to me or members of the Council.

I launch my term as president tremendously saddened by Cliff's absence but optimistic about OHA's continued growth and the vitality of the larger field of oral history. I look forward to moving ahead together during this 50th anniversary year.

Belarusian journalist's work of oral history leads to Nobel Prize for literature

This year's Nobel Prize for literature went to a nonfiction writer from Belarus for chronicling the lives and times of people in the Soviet Union and the nations that succeeded it in works that combine journalism and oral history.

The works of Svetlana Alexievich include *Voices from Chernobyl*, based on interviews with people in Ukraine who survived the 1986 nuclear power plant disaster. In addition to nonfiction books, Alexievich also has written documentaries and screenplays.

Only two other nonfiction writers, Winston Churchill and Bertrand Russell, have been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, and she is the first journalist to be so honored.

Officials of the Swedish Academy, which awards the prizes, praised Alexievich for her "polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time" and credited her with developing "a new literary genre."

OHA Executive Director dies

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"Cliff brought high energy, unfailing good humor and generosity, and a larger-than-life personality to everything he did, whether it was welcoming new oral historians to our organization, coaching his sons' soccer teams, advocating for oral history in front of academic organizations and funding agencies, or making all of the communities he belonged to more democratic, egalitarian, and just.

"For all of these reasons we grieve with Cliff's wife, Kathie Klein, and their sons Gabe and Josh. We also recommit ourselves to the causes that were so dear to Cliff and resolve to pay forward some of the generosity and encouragement he gave us.

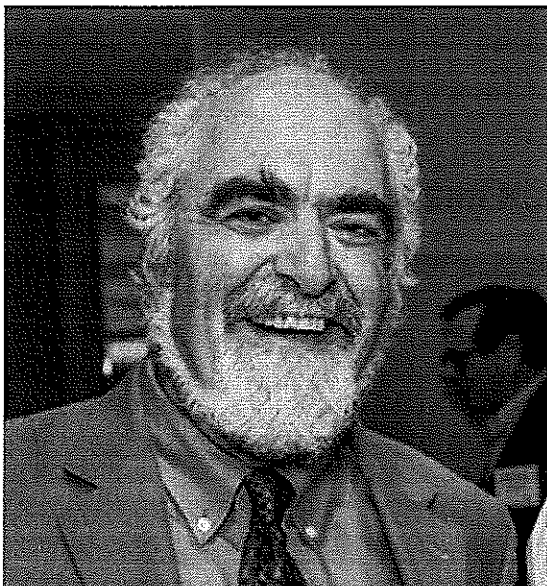
"You might enjoy learning more about the work he did to document and confront Atlanta's history--and take solace, as we have, in hearing his voice.

"NPR reported on his and others' efforts to commemorate the centennial of the [1906 Atlanta Race Riot](#). This work was very near and dear to Cliff; between 2006 and last month he took hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Atlantans and visitors to the city on walking tours of race riot sites in Downtown Atlanta that more often than not resulted in discussions of what we could do to bring racial justice to present-day Atlanta.

"He also recorded hundreds of oral histories for the independent radio station WRFG ("Radio Free Georgia"), which he developed into his book *Living Atlanta*, and "This Day in History" pieces for the local NPR affiliate WABE, which are archived at [WABE](#)."

In addition to his wife and sons, Kuhn's survivors include his mother, Estelle Kuhn of New York, and two brothers, Nicholas of Charlottesville, Virginia, and Jonathan of New York.

Colleagues Remember Cliff Kuhn



Remembering Cliff by Linda Shopes, Carlisle, Pennsylvania

I can't remember when I first met Cliff – I thought it was sometime in the late 1970s or early 1980s, when he was conducting interviews for *Living Atlanta* and I was involved with the Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project, but Cliff said that wasn't so. At any rate, my first memory of him is at the 1988 OHA meeting in Baltimore, where I was living at the time. Each evening, when the program was over, I drove him to the home of one of his friends, where he was staying while in the city. Of course: Cliff seemed to know everybody. What I remember most is that he talked incessantly – about his work, about the meeting, about history, about politics. His restless energy, his roving mind, his intense desire to share – that was Cliff.

I subsequently served with Cliff on the OHA Council in the mid 1990s; appointed him as program co-chair, with the late Debra Bernhardt, for the 1998 annual meeting in Buffalo, New York, when I was OHA president; and co-chaired, with Rina Benmayor, the search committee that led to locating the OHA executive office at Georgia State, with Cliff as OHA's first executive director. Most recently, I accepted his invitation to serve as an advisor to OHA's effort to define oral history as scholarship and consulted with him on the association's response to the Office of Human Research Protection's recommendation that oral history be excluded from IRB review. In all of these it was an utter pleasure to work with Cliff: for all of his larger than life persona, his apparently indefatigable capacity to cultivate networks and relationships, his passion for justice, you could also count on him to get the job done. And he was just fun to work with: at the recent OHA meeting, we shared a laugh about our travels around Buffalo as we planned the 1998 annual meeting. *(continued on next page)*

Remembering Cliff, by Linda Shopes

Continued from previous page

Over the years, our professional relationship, always congenial, matured into friendship. Last year, when my husband and I missed a plane connection and were stranded overnight in Atlanta, I called Cliff out of the blue and asked if we could spend the night at his house. He and Kathie welcomed us with open arms – at midnight – and what was a huge inconvenience turned into a lovely experience. There's not too many people I'd feel comfortable imposing on like this. But Cliff's and Kathie's hospitality was boundless.

I have always thought of Cliff as one of "my tribe," a group of people who came of age in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s and for whom history, oral and otherwise, is a means of both democratizing the past and promoting a more just present. Our shared experiences over the years have been a defining feature of my life.

Godspeed, my friend. You are sorely missed.

"To Be a Friend" by Lu Ann Jones, National Park Service

Since Cliff's sudden passing I have found comfort in the words of two wise friends and a poet. Virgie St. John Redmond, one of the rural elders I interviewed nearly 30 years ago, recently remarked, "Life is but a vapor." In spite of her 95 years, she saw life as a fragile and transient gift.

Where had the time gone since Cliff and I met at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, both of us in the orbit of the Southern Oral History Program? As I think about it, Cliff was probably the first public historian that I knew. From the start, he was so excited about his work, and he wanted to share it with others. He did this through radio documentaries, a book of Atlanta oral histories and work rooted in community. Cliff showed that you could make a career—and a life—by following your passions. I'll always remember the afternoon that my husband and I joined his walking tour describing the Atlanta race riot. It's a cliché, but it's true: his gift for storytelling made the events of 1906 come alive for us. He displayed this same excitement in his scholarship, in the classroom and as a public intellectual. He leaves a tangible legacy, and yet Virgie Redmond was right. Cliff's life was also like a vapor—fleeting, gone too soon.

Lurline Stokes Murray, another of my southern farm women, taught me, "To have a friend, you have to be a friend." My friendship with Cliff took many forms. My husband and I spent two of the best Thanksgivings ever when Cliff and his family invited us to join them at a Gulf Coast beach where they celebrated the holiday annually with good food, good company and lots of laughter. But a touchstone of our friendship was our visits at the annual meetings of the Oral History Association. It always seemed like we took up where we had just left off. We traded news of family and friends. We talked about our work, celebrating achievements but also trusting each other enough to acknowledge struggles and doubts. Cliff always lifted my spirits. Endlessly curious, he sometimes turned our OHA visits into real adventures. Listen to Cliff's three favorite stories about OHA meetings, featured elsewhere in the Newsletter. We told our "Alaska story" every time we saw each other, and we never tired of laughing at how naïve we were to be driving a Chevy Geo in the wilds of Alaska.

Finally, since Cliff's death, I have thought of a question posed by the poet Mary Oliver. At the end of "The Summer Day" she asks, "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" We know what Cliff did with his. He lived more wholeheartedly than anyone I've ever known. We'll miss him.

Remembering Cliff by Todd Moyer, OHA First Vice President, University of North Texas

Others will write about the many wonderful things Cliff Kuhn did for the oral history community. I share their sentiments and I appreciate him for all of the same reasons, but I'd like to celebrate Cliff for what he did for my hometown of Atlanta.

Cliff was the platonic ideal of a mensch, a connector who loved nothing more than to bond—genuinely bond—with other human beings over stories, and to encourage others who shared that passion. He was more dedicated to the ideals of democracy, egalitarianism and social justice, not as theories but as ways of living and learning, than just about anyone else I have known. I'm grateful that he chose to live and learn in Atlanta, where he worked as a radio documentarian for most of two decades, and as a history professor at Georgia State University for another two, and as a public historian from the day he first parked his bike there until nearly the day he died. *(continued on next page)*

Remembering Cliff, by Todd Moye

Continued from previous page

I grew up in the Atlanta suburb of Sandy Springs. When I moved back to the city in 2000 to direct an oral history project for the National Park Service, he was one of the first people I called to introduce myself. We got together for coffee and hit it off. He said, "You know, there are so many oral historians in Atlanta these days. We should really find a way to get together to discuss things." So we did: he and I convened the Atlanta Oral History Roundtable, and with a couple dozen others we met more or less monthly for the next five years. (We usually met at [Manuel's Tavern](#). In admitting this I should also apologize to the taxpayers of Georgia and the United States—he and I were, after all, public employees—for the amount of fun we had during working hours. But we did work, and we always drank iced tea.)

By 2005 he was deep into his efforts to commemorate the centennial of the low point of Atlanta's history, the 1906 Race Riot, and to help Atlantans draw lessons from it. A coalition of social justice activists, religious people, public historians, amateur history buffs and others were planning public programming for 2006. Cliff and Clarissa Myrick-Harris, another stalwart of the Atlanta Oral History Roundtable organized the local historians and genealogists. I moved away from Atlanta in 2005 to start a new job in Texas, and I still have some regrets that I was not able to work with Cliff and Clarissa through 2006 for the centennial, because they truly did great things and [started conversations](#) that the people of Atlanta clearly needed to have.

Cliff wrote two important books and several scholarly articles, but he was never content just to do research and write about what he had learned. He helped organize public symposia about the 1906 riot's history and memory and saw to it that the event made it into the state's public school history curriculum standards. (I attended Georgia public schools in the 1970s and 1980s, but I didn't learn about the riot until I was in graduate school, and even then I didn't know much about it until I met Cliff.) He also developed what he'd learned in the course of his race riot research into a walking tour of the sites of the worst violence throughout Downtown Atlanta: he literally walked the walk of racial justice. In fact, Cliff thought the term "race riot" did not fully describe what had happened in 1906 because it implied that the mayhem had been two-sided. Instead he called it a "white riot." Between the fall of 2006 and October 2015 he led at least one walking tour a month. *Thousands* of Atlantans participated in and benefited from the tours and the conversations they generated. Long before southerners

started rethinking the prominence of Confederate flags in public places or saying Black Lives Matter, Cliff had Atlantans from every walk of life puzzling over the meanings of the riot and wondering why they had never heard of it before 2006. As much as I cherish Cliff's books, I think the walking tour was his opus.

The walking tours were so popular that Central Atlanta Progress Inc., a booster group sponsored by downtown developers, presented Cliff with their 2013 Turner Downtown Community Leadership Award. The award was "designed to recognize those in our community who, as individual private citizens, step forward and do good work on Downtown's behalf." The less said here about the developers behind CAP the better, but I can guarantee you they have never honored anyone else whose politics remotely resembled Cliff's! In the [video](#) that the group produced to honor his work, a narrator describes Cliff as "an oral historian: a title that suits his unique ability to retell historical events from memory." That might not be a very good definition of oral historians in general, but it describes Cliff perfectly, because in addition to being an oral historian who recorded and archived people's memories, he was a griot who remembered and cherished and retold them. Atlantans are better off today for having heard those stories and having had to wrestle with them.

I am and will remain grateful to Cliff for a lot of things, but I'm most thankful that he did more than his part to make Atlanta a more democratic and slightly more just place and that he did it by putting the skills he developed as an oral historian to work. I will always remember Cliff as a preternaturally gifted talker, but also (to borrow the term his Georgia State colleague Alex Sayf Cummings coined), as [Atlanta's greatest listener](#). I appreciate Cliff for starting conversations.

Remembering Cliff Kuhn by Charles Hardy, West Chester University

Cliff and I have been friends since 1984, so yeah, just about half our lives. We met at a National Federation of Community Broadcasters conference and hit it off immediately. We were the same age, doing the same kind of work--working in public radio producing documentaries that used oral history interviews-- and both trying to figure out what comes next. In the years that followed, Cliff was always excited about the project he was working on, always eager to share what he was doing, to talk about who he had just met, or the trip he had just taken. He was always eager, too, to hear with equal enthusiasm and interest what I was up to. And Cliff remembered. He remembered my travails and successes, and our beginnings and our adventures. *(continued on next page)*

Remembering Cliff Kuhn

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The first of the latter took place in Pensacola in 1985, my first OHA meeting. There, someone had organized a volley ball game, so we drove out to a beautiful beach on the Gulf Islands National Seashore. I don't even remember if the net was up before a great storm came roaring into the coast. Could that actually have been Hurricane Juan? As the skies darkened we ran back to the car and sped across the Route 98 causeway as the storm bore down the Bay, shaking and tipping the blue subcompact.

In the decades that followed the OHA became a home away from home for both of us. Every few years we would hop a trolley or rent a car and head off for a new adventure. Most memorable for me was at the 2006 meeting, when rather than go see Senator Barack Obama speak in Little Rock we drove out to Petit Jean State Park. Hiking along mountain and river trails on a cool, drizzly October day we talked at our leisure about family, kids, careers, aspirations and the beauty of the park and the day. Cliff took tremendous delight in the all-American road food on the way back, crappy burgers and fries ordered by intercom, which we ate in the car. He relished each bite and recollections of the day with equal enthusiasm.

It was about that time, too, that Cliff persuaded me to accept the nomination for OHA vice president and president. Over the next three years he provided much needed moral support and invaluable advice on how to run an annual meeting, raise money, choose the right people...

Over three decades he was always there to help. When my daughter and her bandmates needed a place to stay in Atlanta, Cliff and Kathie put them up. In Tampa we got away for one dinner, with a friend and two students who had accompanied me from West Chester. As usual, Cliff was welcoming, curious about their lives, filled with stories, and overflowing with energy. Dying at home after a good bike ride is not a bad way to go. It was just way too soon. He was a good friend and I will miss him.

Memories of Cliff by Mary Larson, Oklahoma State University

I was president of OHA when Cliff came on board as the organization's first executive director, so I was fortunate enough to experience all of his unbridled enthusiasm firsthand. From the moment the transition committee selected Georgia State University's proposal to become the OHA's new headquarters, Cliff was in constant communication with so many of us – on everything imaginable and at all hours of the day.

I am a person with strong archival roots, and in the days after Cliff's passing I took a look at my collection of emails as a way of trying to gain some perspective on all of this, though what exactly I hoped to learn I couldn't really tell you. I can say that my inbox from those first months of the transition is a veritable shrine to Cliff's energy and his inclination to dive into the deep end immediately, but it also showed me, rather unexpectedly, that my regular email correspondence with Cliff went back much farther than that, even though we had never shared any task force duties and had only served together on one committee. My email archive only extends back to 2001, but at its farthest reaches, there are emails from Cliff – the earliest ones following up on an award in 2001 when he was OHA president, later ones discussing a panel in 2006, workshops at the Atlanta meeting in 2010, and the list goes on.

Even without people necessarily noticing it, Cliff was an ever-present force in the life of OHA for many years, and his almost boyish delight at becoming executive director of the association he loved so well was apparent to all of us. Cliff's enthusiasm for OHA was not a gentle wave – it was more like a tsunami, and he somehow maintained that same level of energy with so many of his other pursuits, as well. All of us who were buoyed by that exuberance will miss his ebullience, his attention to detail, his grand schemes, and his kind heart. Oral history has lost a dogged advocate with Cliff's passing.

OHA recognizes award winners

Awards for exemplary oral history work in seven categories were presented to winners at the OHA presidential reception held at the Tampa Bay History Center. The winning individuals and projects are:

+ **Article Award**—Amy Starecheski for her article in the summer/fall 2014 issue of *The Oral History Review* titled “Squatting History: The Power of Oral History as a History-Making Practice,” which illustrates the use of oral history in social activism.

+ **Book Award**—*Listening on the Edge: Oral History in the Aftermath of Crisis*, edited by Mark Cave and Stephen M. Sloan, and published by Oxford University Press, 2014. The book is a collection of essays about oral history work in connection with 12 world crises.

+ **Elizabeth B. Mason Project Award for a major project**—the Brooklyn Historical Society’s “Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations,” which involved more than 100 interviews focusing on the history and experiences of mixed-heritage people and families.

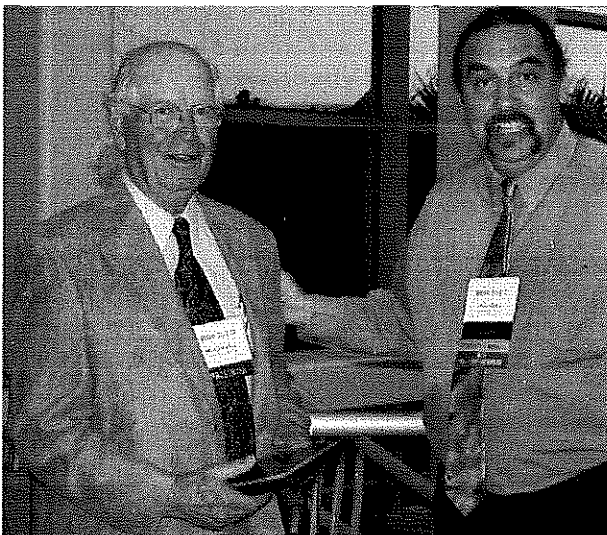
+ **Elizabeth B. Mason Project Award for a small project**—“Freedom Summer Oral History and Library Curation Project,” a collaboration between the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program and the George A. Smathers Libraries at the University of Florida, which documented the voting rights struggle in Mississippi in the 1960s, with a focus on the 50th anniversary commemoration of the events of 1964.

Honorable mention in the small project category also went to the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky for its project “From Combat to Kentucky: Interviews with Student Veterans,” which used veterans trained in oral history to conduct interviews with other veterans transitioning to civilian life after military service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

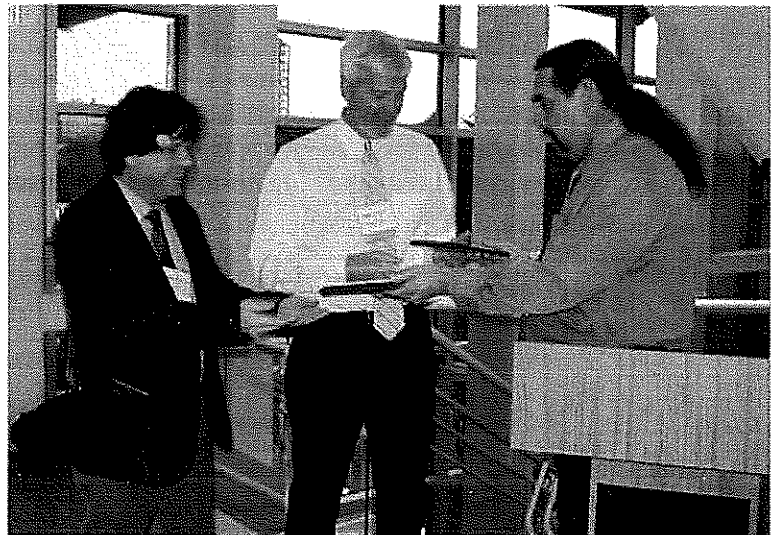
+ **Oral History in a Non-Print Format Award**—“Goin’ North: Stories of the First Great Migration to Philadelphia,” a classroom-based project developed by Charles Hardy III, Janneken Smucker and Doug Boyd, which repurposed a valuable set of older interviews to create digital storytelling related to the migration of African to northern industrial centers during the first third of the 20th century.

+ **Martha Ross Teaching Award**—David Jones of Eastside High School in Gainesville, Florida.

+ **Stetson Kennedy Vox Populi Award**—Michael Kline of Talking Across the Lines, recognized for grassroots oral history work with often marginalized people focusing on social change in Appalachia and on environmental justice. The award, named for a pioneer oral historian and human rights advocate, honors individuals and organizations for exemplary use of oral history to create a more humane and just world.



Michael Kline, 2015 Vox Populi Award Winner



Mark Cave and Stephen Sloan receive the 2015 Book Award

Call for Papers

OHA@50: Traditions, Transitions and Technologies from the Field

OHA Annual Conference
Oct. 12-16, 2016
Long Beach, California
Renaissance Hotel

“OHA@50: Traditions, Transitions and Technologies from the Field” is the theme of the 2016 Oral History Association 50th anniversary meeting, set for Oct. 12-16 at the Renaissance Hotel in Long Beach, California.

The OHA invites proposals that reflect on the evolution of this interdisciplinary field, assess current trends and look ahead into oral history’s future.

The Southern California location of the 50th anniversary conference marks a return to the West Coast, where the First National Colloquium on Oral History took place at Lake Arrowhead, California, in 1966, leading to the founding of the Oral History Association.

The past 50 years have seen enormous transformations in oral history, from a more sophisticated consideration of the interview process itself and of how people remember, to the extension of oral history practice into multiple disciplines and settings.

Despite the changes, much also remains constant. The concerns of those who gathered at Lake Arrowhead—what makes a good interview, sound ethical guidelines, the relationship between specific technology and historical practice, issues of access—remain lively today.

The participants at Lake Arrowhead would have concurred with OHA’s current stated values of democracy, inclusivity and quality. As it has since its inception, the OHA remains committed to fostering best practice in every aspect of the oral history process, in all the diverse places where it is done.

The OHA Program Committee invites proposals from the widely varying fields in which oral history is practiced and encourages innovative presentations.

Proposals must be submitted online where you also can see the detailed call for papers.

If you have questions, please contact one of the following:

Sady Sullivan, program co-chair, Columbia Center for Oral History, Columbia University,

sas2358@columbia.edu

Sarah Milligan, program co-chair, Oklahoma Oral History Research Program, Oklahoma State University, sarah.milligan@okstate.edu

rah.milligan@okstate.edu

Doug Boyd, OHA vice president, Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky,

doug.boyd@uky.edu

New OHA pamphlet focuses on veterans

Oral historians interested in documenting veterans' experiences can turn to a new OHA resource, *Doing Veterans Oral History* by Barbara W. Sommer, a collaboration between the Oral History Association and the Library of Congress Veterans History Project.

Sommer is an independent oral historian and longtime OHA member who has worked with countless community organizations and educators on a wide variety of oral history projects.

The 96-page, easy-to-use pamphlet, which was released at the OHA conference in Tampa, Florida, includes an introduction to oral history and a detailed discussion of what oral historians need to do before, during and after an interview. It also includes a chapter with information and recommendations for high school and college teachers who want their students to conduct oral histories with veterans.

The Library of Congress Veterans History Project has archived thousands of interviews with veterans donated by all manner of volunteer individuals, organizations and educators. The OHA pamphlet supplements and elaborates on materials the Veterans History Project has typically made available to would-be interviewers.

In particular, the pamphlet offers detailed suggestions on how to develop interview questions. It illustrates the difference between identifying overarching themes, such as daily life in the military, and specific topics within those themes, such as food, clothing, shelter, friendships, recreation, hardships and the like.

The pamphlet also contains information on dealing with sensitive issues and the practical and ethical concerns associated with interviewing veterans who experience post-traumatic stress disorder.

In addition, detailed appendices contain sample legal release forms, biographical information forms, an interview summary form, sample correspondence and information about media and format standards the Library of Congress will accept for archiving interviews with veterans.

Doing Veterans Oral History and other pamphlets in the OHA series are all available through Amazon and Barnes and Noble. The list price for *Doing Veterans Oral History* is \$15.

Stay connected to OHA

Make sure to renew your membership so that you can be part of
OHA's 50 Year Celebration!

You may renew online via our website, www.oralhistory.org,
or mail in the 2016 membership form with your check.

For assistance with membership renewal,
please email the OHA office at oha@gsu.edu
or call us at 404-413-5751.

OHA members elect new leaders

Congratulations to the winners of the 2015 elections for OHA leadership positions. They are:

- ◆ First Vice President—Todd Moye, University of North Texas
- ◆ OHA Council Members—Allison Tracy, Kentucky Historical Society; and Claytee White, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- ◆ Nominating Committee Members—Charles Hardy III, West Chester University; Christian Lopez, University of Georgia; and Sarah Milligan, Oklahoma Oral History Research Program.

Contact Us

For more information,
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