



NEWSLETTER

Voices of Dissent, Voices of Hope Highlight OHA Meeting in Providence, R.I.

From Puritan-garbed Rhode Island founder Roger Williams (portrayed by Mark Peckham) and fellow religious refugee Anne Hutchinson (portrayed by Marilyn Meardon) to immigrants and refugees who populate the modern borough of Queens, New York, whose lives were chronicled by Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan, Oral History Association members could

partake of a rich smorgasbord at the annual meeting Nov. 2-6 in Providence, R.I.

About 450 people were on hand for the awards, workshops, movies, panels, keynote speakers, book signing and special sessions focusing on the role of oral historians in documenting life in a time of global social change.

This **Newsletter** offers a look at some of the panels and special features of the 2005 conference, which included a last-minute addition of a panel examining the role of oral historians in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the Gulf Coast in late August. Excerpts of an account of another disaster offer some additional insights.



OHA Council members and officers say farewell after the 2005 annual meeting in Providence, R.I. From left: Council member Horacio N. Roque Ramirez, President Rebecca Sharpless, past president Kim Lacy Rogers, Council member Mary Ann Larson and Vice President/President-elect Alphine W. Jefferson. Not pictured but newly elected are: First Vice President Mehmed Ali, Council member Roger Horowitz and Nominating Committee members: Albert S. Broussard, Elaine Eff and Andrew Russell.

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From Your President

By Rebecca Sharpless

Thank you all for the privilege of serving as your president this year. I am very optimistic about the possibility for good things for the OHA and its members in the coming months.

The air seemed abuzz at the 2005 Oral History Association annual meeting in Providence, full of intellectual energy and big ideas for the association. I came home from the meeting with great excitement about the potential of oral history as a field and the OHA as an organization—and a little awed at my responsibility for helping to ensure that the vibrancy of Providence continues throughout the coming year.

The energy seems to be coming from a number of different areas. As always, the conference sessions demonstrated oral history to be a most malleable medium for a wide variety of applications. As much as we old-timers take that notion for granted, the actual fieldwork remains exciting and even moving.

Just one session that I attended gives a great example: the work of a Palestinian film-maker who interviewed ordinary people about their recollections of their removal from Haifa in 1948. The session commentator was a Jewish anthropologist, also from Jerusalem. Sitting in the same room with them, listening to them share honest and raw feelings spurred by the interviews, was a rare privilege and superb example of why we come together in person to talk about ideas in our work.

Being with people attending their first OHA meeting is a splendid reminder of that jazzed feeling that comes from doing a particularly insightful or groundbreaking interview.

The challenge, of course, is to remain an association that is stimulating for the long-time members and accessible to the

newcomers. It seems that, at its best, the annual meeting meets that challenge.

There is also enormous energy around the work of the association. The OHA Web site in particular appears to be a focal point, loaded with promise. The Digital Technology and New Media Task Force is exploring the use of streaming video to deliver workshop content, for example.

The Publications Committee is considering all sorts of ways to use the Web to distribute association materials, including this **Newsletter**. (Never fear—we'll be keeping the print version, too! You may not realize that the **Oral History Review** is already available online to members through the University of California Web site, and back content is now archived in JSTOR.)

Association activities take the OHA in a multitude of directions, literally. Kimberly Porter, the new editor of the **Oral History Review**, is actively soliciting ideas about the journal. The Finance Committee has made a number of strategic changes in OHA Endowment Fund investments, and the members of that committee will be working on an endowment campaign in honor of the OHA's 40th anniversary in 2006.

Speaking of which, the annual meeting next October in Little Rock, Ark., will include a snazzy celebration of our two-score years. Plans for that meeting are well under way.

The OHA, through members of our International Committee, will have a significant presence at the 2006 International Oral History Association meeting in Sydney, Australia, next July as well.

Channeling the energy and potential that we felt in Providence is among my top priorities. To that end, next February the OHA Council will spend a full day talking about long-range planning for the association. Please send your ideas for appropriate topics to any member of Council. We believe that we can create a unified vision for the OHA that will enhance your work and the field of oral history in general.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve as president. To plagiarize Garrison Keillor, be well, do good interviews and stay in touch.

Special Thanks To Meeting Donors

The Oral History Association extends its enthusiastic thanks to the following organizations that helped sponsor the 2005 meeting in Providence, R.I.:

Baylor University
Brown University
Bryant College
Texas A&M University Press
University of California Press
University of Connecticut
Center for Oral History
University of Connecticut
Research Foundation
University of North Carolina Press
University Products
University of Rhode Island

Publications Committee Plans New Pamphlets

The OHA Publications Committee has contracted with Linda Barnickel, librarian/archivist at the Nashville Public Library, to write "Using Oral History in Family History," to be published next year as part of the OHA pamphlet series. Barnickel, who is also a genealogist, has been the coordinator of the Nashville Public Library's Veterans History Project, which includes a large oral history component.

Publications Committee Chair Irene Reti also reported that Laurie Mercier is revising and updating the "Using Oral History in Community History" pamphlet.

Editor's Note: The OHA Newsletter encourages committee chairs to report their activities so all OHA members can stay abreast of what their organization is doing. Please submit items to the editor at: ohaeditor@aol.com.

OHA Recognizes Top Achievers at Annual Meeting

The 2006 OHA awards banquet featured presentations to winners of the 2005 awards for outstanding use of oral history in books, nonprint media presentations and pre-collegiate teaching.

The book awards went to:

+ Alessandro Portelli for "The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome" and

+ Eva Tulene Watt, with assistance from Keith H. Basso, for "Don't Let the Sun Step Over You: A White Mountain Apache Family Life, 1860-1975."

Also given honorable mentions for their outstanding work were:

+ J. Todd Moyer for "Let the People Decide: Black Freedom and White Resistance Movements in Sunflower County, Mississippi, 1945-1986" and

+ Eric A. Johnson and Karl-Heinz Rueband for "What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder, and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany."

Winners of the nonprint media award were:

+ Steve Rowland for the radio documentary "Leonard Bernstein: An American Life" and

+ Carrie Nobel Kline, Adam Nordell and Michael Nobel Kline for the radio documentary "Born and Raised in Tobacco Fields: Portrait of a Changing American Landscape."

The Martha Ross Teaching Award went to Kenneth Woodard, who teaches at the Connelly School of the Holy Child, a Catholic girls' school in Potomac, Md.

Editor's Note: *The winner of one of the OHA 2005 book awards, Eva Tulene Watt, who wrote "Don't Let the Sun Step Over You: A White Mountain Apache Family Life, 1860-1975" was unable to attend the awards celebration in Providence. University of New Mexico Professor Keith H. Basso, with whom she collaborated, sent this letter from the 92-year-old winner, which was read at the banquet.*

Eva Tulene Watt Says Thank You to OHA

Thank you for giving my book this award. I hope you enjoy my stories from long years ago.

I was born in 1913 near Cibecue on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. When I was small yet, just a girl, my mother and my grandmother Rose Lupe used to tell stories to my sister and me and my brothers. They told us to listen good to what they were telling us. "If you don't listen, you won't learn," they said. So we listened real good to those stories. I guess that's why I remember lots of them. I guess that's why I like telling stories myself.

They told us stories mainly in the evening and at night. We used to sit around my mother's cooking fire after we ate, and somebody would start talking. After he was done talking, somebody else told another story. They went around in a circle like that.

Those old people never tried to write the stories 'cause they don't know how to read and write. They never even thought about that. Nowadays, there's lots of people that don't speak Apache, but they can read and write English. That's why we made the book in English—so younger generations, if they want to, can read it.

The stories [in the book] should be in Apache 'cause that's my real language, my best language, but if we did that white people can't read it. So it's in English. I think white people should try and read it, if they want to, 'cause that way they can know how we tell our own Apache history.

Like I said, we never did write our history—we just put it in our stories—but that don't mean it's not true. We know, it's mainly true.

I'm glad you people gave this good award to my book. I don't even know you, not even one [of you], and still you went ahead and done it. If other tribes find out about it, maybe

they'll start to record their own history stories. I heard that some in other tribes are doing that already. That's good, that's good, 'cause the older people that know most of the stories are getting pretty old.

Keith Basso knowed us Apache people for a long time. He speaks our language OK and helped a lot making the book. It took about seven years to do it, but finally we did it. We did it together.

One time, I asked him, "Do you want to make another book?" You know what he said? He said, "Eva, you wore me out with this one." We laughed about that.

Well, that's all. I hope all of you people travel safely back to your homes and families. Thank you.



Valerie Yow

Yow Recognized For Oral History Work

Oral History Review book review editor Valerie Yow was awarded the Harvey A. Kantor award for outstanding achievement in oral history by the New England Association for Oral History.

The association was among the co-sponsors of the Oral History Association's annual meeting in Providence, R.I.

Featured Speakers Address Freedom, Diversity

Bernard LaFayette is committed to nonviolence. He's also committed to humor.

The one-time freedom rider and national coordinator of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1968 Poor People's Campaign shared both convictions with the OHA awards banquet audience.

LaFayette is director of the Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies at the University of Rhode Island, and he bases his global view of social justice issues on his own childhood in Tampa, Fla., where he was born in 1940, and later in Nashville, Tenn.

It was a time of strict segregation, he said. "Colored people here, white people there. Sometimes white people there, colored people nowhere."

"I thought it was horrible that those white people had to sit in the front of the bus," he recalled. "A white person would have got arrested if they'd sat in the back."

But the back was safest, LaFayette told the OHA members. "The front was where all the wrecks took place."

LaFayette said he joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People when he was 12 and learned early on that if anything was going to change, "colored people needed to change themselves first."

"Nobody can ride your back unless you are bending over," he said. "All they had to do was straighten up and it was over."

LaFayette described the persistent, but nonviolent, effort that desegregated lunch counters and movie theaters in Nashville.

Today, he said, he's devoted to building organizations around the world dedicated to promoting nonviolence.

"Nonviolence will always win over violence," he said, noting that in Iraq, Israel and a host of other world hotspots, people have been trying to solve problems with violence, but it doesn't work.

"We need to figure out how to



Bernard LaFayette speaks at the OHA awards banquet Saturday night.

live in a civilized way like the other animals who don't kill each other," he said, adding:

"We have conquered outer space. Now we have to conquer the space between our ears—our inner space."

Harvard University's Diane Eck told Friday's OHA luncheon audience that American religious freedom is a "recipe for religious diversity."

Eck, who teaches comparative religion, Indian studies and Sanskrit at Harvard's Department of Religion and the Harvard Divinity School, reminded OHA members that the American concept of religious freedom was a contested one. The Puritans and Pilgrims, she noted, did not create religiously tolerant communities. They killed Quakers, outlawed Catholics and forced out Jews, she said. But others, like Roger Williams, who founded Rhode Island, argued for freedom of the soul, not subject to state coercion.

Changes in U.S. immigration law in 1965 opened the nation to a more diverse population, Eck said, including more religious diversity.

The religious transformation in communities has been gradual and often invisible, she said, noting that in many communities, you can drive by places and not notice Vietnamese or Buddhist temples in people's homes.

"People are surprised to think about the religious dimensions of greater cultural diversity," Eck said.

But immigrant populations are becoming increasingly active politically and increasingly visible in following their religious beliefs. Most major cities now have growing Islamic communities, she noted, many of which were victims of "xenophobic hysteria" in the hours after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

"The Muslim world is here," she said, adding that the "xenophobic backlash revealed the ragged edges of America's encounter with difference."

Eck decried historical efforts to deal with differences by trying to erase them, as the popular "melting pot" image advocates. "We cannot insist that people look like 'us,' whoever we mean by 'us,'" she said.

Instead, she advocated embracing pluralism, noting that "pluralism and diversity aren't the same."

"Pluralism is engagement with diversity that brings people out of their isolation," she said. "Pluralism is not just tolerance, but the effort to know and understand one another."

Reporter's Notebook...

The actors in this tale are mostly old now. Or dead. But former New York congressman Joseph DioGuardi and Shirley A. Cloyes of the Albanian American Foundation are determined that the story not be forgotten of how Albanian Muslims protected several thousand Jews during World War II.

"It will be oral history that sets the record straight," DioGuardi, the first ethnic Albanian elected to Congress, told an OHA session.

Photographer Norman Gershman began documenting stories of Albanian families who protected Jews seeking to escape Nazi Germany beginning in the 1930s. It's a story few people know because the rigid Stalinist regime that followed World War II broke all contact with the outside world, DioGuardi said, adding: "Now the story is coming out."

Albanians are the oldest people of Eastern Europe and have resisted assimilation by various conquerors, Cloyes said. They were isolated from the institutionalized anti-Semitism in the rest of Europe and had a history of religious tolerance based on their traditional moral code.

The concept of foreigner doesn't exist in Albania, Cloyes said, "only the concept of the guest." So when Jews began fleeing from Germany and sought refuge in Muslim Albania, they became beneficiaries of an ancient Albanian honor code requiring that any guest be cared for, even to the point of risking one's own life.

To them, Cloyes said, the Jews were guests. The Albanian government stood up to the Nazis and refused to provide lists of Jews in Albania. By the end of the war, nearly 2,000 Jews were safe in the tiny Muslim nation.

World War II was a turning point in many lives, and nowhere is that clearer than in the stories emerging from interviews with Latinos and Latinas in Texas and elsewhere in the Southwest, panelists at a Friday OHA session said.

Whether at work in defense industries as "Rosita the Riveter" or in military service, Mexican-American women in World War II faced experiences that helped break down cultural barriers and gave them a new sense of independence that continued after the war, said Brenda Sendejo of the University of Texas at Austin.

The war encouraged women to return to formal education, for themselves and their children, even though it often meant they had to fight school officials in their "search for first class citizenship," she said.

Brian Lucero of the University of New Mexico described the experiences of Mexican-American copper miners in Santa Rita, N.M., who were critical to the war effort. The mining companies blatantly discriminated against all Spanish speakers and they had trouble retaining workers because of competing demands from other defense industries, Lucero said.

By 1942, one mine even hired women as mine workers, although many of the men thought they would endanger everyone by their incompetence, Lucero said. Most of the women left the mines after the war, but a few stayed on, marking a "sea change for mining in the West," he said.

Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, who teaches journalism at the University of Texas, Austin, profiled Peter Moraga, a Navy veteran who used the GI bill to earn a college degree in advertising. He pursued a broadcasting career and became a role model and advocate for Hispanic journalists.

Until World War II, Rivas-Rodriguez said, many Mexican Americans in the Southwest lived in highly segregated communities and attended highly segregated schools. During the war, many experienced working with whites for the first time and observed that their skills were as good as anyone else's, she said.

When Pearl Harbor was attacked, Mexicans suddenly became Americans, she said, adding: "Once they had a taste of equality, there was no going back...It changed their perspective forever."

Lucero said the Mexican Americans also came back from the war or from work in defense industries with leadership skills and the ability to organize in their own interest.

"It was a huge watershed," he said.

January Deadline Set For Pa. Research Grants

Jan. 13, 2006, is the deadline for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission's 2006-07 Scholars in Residence Program.

The program provides stipends of \$375 a week for up to eight weeks of full-time research in manuscript and artifact collections at any of the commission's museums, archives or historic sites. The program is open to anyone conducting research on Pennsylvania history, including academic scholars, public sector professionals, independent scholars, graduate students, educators, writers, film-makers and others.

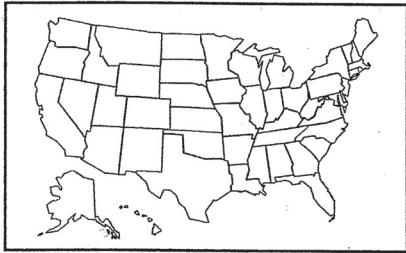
For more information and details on how to apply, check the commission's Web site: www.phmc.state.pa.us.

Brooklyn Historical Society Names New President

The Brooklyn Historical Society has named Deborah Schwartz as its new president. She has been deputy director of education at the Museum of Modern Art.

Schwartz said she plans to expand the Brooklyn Historical Society's ongoing oral history efforts, which comprise an important part of the society's long-running exhibit "Brooklyn Works: 400 Years of Making a Living in Brooklyn."

STATE AND REGIONAL REPORT



Texas Legal History Sources Now Available In Online Sites

The University of Texas at Austin Tarlton Law Library has put online two new oral history guides.

The first, "Texas Legal History: A Survey of Oral History Resources," provides links to the many archives, museums and law-related organizations in Texas that collect oral histories with lawyers, judges, legislators and legal educators who have shaped Texas law. The Web address is:

<http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/rare/law-relatedOH.html>

The second guide, "Tarlton Law Library Oral History Collections," describes 20 oral history interviews, primarily of outstanding law school faculty and alumni.

The guide includes biographical information of the interviewee, the name of the interviewer and date the interview took place and the major topics covered. Instructions for how to access the interviews or purchase copies are included. The Web address is:

<http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/rare/oralhistory.html>

Morrissey Session On Tap

Register now for the 2006 oral history workshop taught by past OHA president Charles T. Morrissey in San Francisco. The workshop is scheduled for Feb. 24-26, 2006, at the Fort Mason Center. Application deadline is Feb. 13. For more information, contact Elizabeth Wright at 415-928-3417 or e-mail her at: elizabeth@HistoryInProgress.com

TOHA Announces Web Site Changes

By Lois Myers
Texas Oral History Association

The Texas Oral History Association announces revisions to its Web site:

<http://www.baylor.edu/toha>.

Included on the new site are descriptions of TOHA's four awards: Lifetime Achievement, Community History, Teaching and Texas History Day, with stories of previous winners and their oral history work. Forms are available from the award pages for nominating individuals or organizations for the various awards.

Also available from the TOHA Web site are links to resources on oral history and Texas studies

The Web site contains an online version of the organization's newsletter and the cumulative contents of all eight volumes of *Sound Historian: Journal of the Texas Oral History Association*. Editor Kenneth E. Hendrickson Jr., invites you to submit articles on your oral history work. Learn submission requirements and how to subscribe or order back issues from the journal pages on the TOHA Web site

New Editor Named For Northwest Group

Janice Dilg of the Oregon Historical Society is the new editor of the Northwest Oral History Association newsletter.

Troy Reeves of the Idaho State Historical Society said Dilg will benefit NOHA by bringing her extensive historical background and her publications experience at the Oregon Historical Society Press to the editor's post.

Dilg can be reached by e-mail at dilg@teleport.com or by mail at 2603 NE 11th Ave., Portland, OR 97212.

Southwest Oral History Celebrates 25 Years

The Southwest Oral History Association is celebrating its silver anniversary in conjunction with the 300th anniversary of the city of Albuquerque with its 2006 annual meeting set for April 20-23 at the Sheraton Old Town, across the street from Albuquerque's Old Town Plaza.

The theme of the meeting is "With Voices Raised: Twenty-Five years of Oral History in the Southwest." SOHA invites proposals for papers and presentations that show how oral history illuminates and upholds long-held traditions in the Southwest and reflects the cultural mosaic of contemporary societies in diverse settings and locales.

Proposals must be postmarked by Jan. 6, 2006. For more information on how to submit a proposal, contact Rose Diaz at rosediaz@unm.edu or Pauline Heffern at pheffern@unm.edu.

Additional conference details are on the SOHA Web site: <http://soha.fullerton.edu>.

International Meeting Planned for Australia

Join oral historians from around the world for the 14th International Oral History Conference July 12-16, 2006, in Sydney, Australia. The conference theme is "Dancing with Memory: Oral History and its Audiences."

The conference has attracted more than 400 proposals from practitioners who will share their ideas and experiences in applying oral history in museums, films, heritage studies, land rights claims, political movements, archives, academic studies, performances, community projects and more.

For more information, check the conference Web site: <http://www.une.edu.au/ioha2006>

USC Becomes Home For Shoah Collection

The Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation will become part of the University of Southern California College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, beginning Jan. 1, 2006.

USC will become the permanent repository for the Shoah Foundation's 52,000 testimonies of survivors and other witnesses to the Holocaust.

USC is a world leader in developing digital libraries and has state-of-the-art technological resources for preserving these archival materials and providing access for researchers and scholars around the world.

The Shoah Foundation testimonies, collected in 56 countries and 32 languages, constitute the world's largest visual history archive. The foundation's mission is to overcome prejudice, intolerance and bigotry—and the suffering they cause—through the educational use of its visual history testimonials.

Steven Spielberg, Shoah Foundation founder and a USC trustee, said the partnership with USC will ensure both preservation and access to the collection.

"All of us know that the survivors and witnesses have given us a precious gift whose wise use will build a better world for this and future generations," Spielberg said in a press release.

UCLA Renames Oral History Program

By Alva Moore Stevenson

The UCLA Library Oral History Program has been renamed the Center for Oral History Research.

The name change emphasizes the unit's involvement in the larger research mission of the university and its role in facilitating the practice and discussion of oral history in the campus community at large.

The Center for Oral History Research will have an increased role

in the classroom teaching of oral history; partnering with other campus entities on projects; acquiring interviews conducted by graduate students and faculty and making transcripts and interview recordings more accessible through the UCLA Digital Library.

Latina/o Symposium Set For March in Texas

"Place, Space & Race: World War II & Latina/o Cultural Citizenship" is the theme of the 3rd national symposium sponsored by the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project at the University of Texas at Austin. The symposium is scheduled for March 23-25, 2006.

Presenters will draw on more than a thousand hours of interviews with more than 500 Latinos and Latinas of the World War II generation, who experienced a traumatic yet watershed event in Mexican American social and political history.

The interviews, plus the extensive archive of photographs, diaries and manuscripts offer unmatched opportunities to explore the significance of the era.

Studs Terkel Center Created in Chicago At Historical Society

The Chicago Historical Society announced in September it was creating the Studs Terkel Center for Oral History, which will house more than 5,000 hours of sound recordings of the prolific interviewer's work as well as hundreds more hours of oral history recordings that document urban life in Chicago.

The Terkel interviews in the collection include Rosa Parks, Tennessee Williams, Leonard Bernstein, Carol Channing and Martin Luther King Jr.

The collection also includes oral histories for Terkel's books, including "Division Street," "Working," "The Good War" and "Will the Circle Be Unbroken."

Also in the Chicago Historical Society collection are more than 100 interviews from the Teen Chicago project, in which Chicago teenagers trained by Terkel interviewed older generations about their teen experiences.



Members of the New England Association for Oral History helped sponsor the Providence, R.I., OHA meeting. Seated, from left, Pamela Dean and Sarah Boyer. Standing, from left, Jim Findlay, John Fox, Mehmed Ali, President Betty Hoffman, Bruce Stave and Linda Wood.

Mission Creep Reduces Effectiveness of IRBs

By The American Historical Association

Did you hear the story about the Institutional Review Board that required written consent forms from preliterate tribes?

Or the one that required taped oral histories to be destroyed after five years or, if kept, to keep the subjects' names confidential?

The odds are good that, if you conduct any kind of research involving talking to people, you have experienced or heard about misguided oversight by your institution's IRB. This has been a cause for national concern.

IRBs are stretched to their breaking point. One cause of this crisis is what is called "mission creep" in a new white paper originating from a conference at the University of Illinois.

IRBs experiencing mission creep misdirect their energies and other resources to low-risk research and often unnecessarily reject proposals, which threatens academic freedom and diverts resources away from truly risky research that needs oversight.

As the report makes clear, it is time to bring to light the problems created by overzealous and misguided attempts to force different types of research into the biomedical framework and to recognize that, while it is critical to protect human subjects from harm, it is also time to step back and make sure IRBs are doing what they were intended to.

Researchers and IRB professionals are beginning to recognize the negative consequences of mission creep. The HHS Secretary's Advisory Committee on Human Research Protections (SACHRP) has appointed a committee to begin to investigate the situation and make recommendations, so now is the time to pay attention and speak up.

An invitational conference at the University of Illinois on Human Subject Protection Regulations and Research Outside the Biomedical Sphere analyzed much of this dialogue.

A recently released white paper emanating from this conference examines the problem and proposes some solutions, many of which can

be implemented at the local IRB level within existing regulations.

The white paper suggests:

+ collecting data to get concrete information about the scope of the problem;

+ reclassifying the proposals submitted to IRBs according to degree of risk, so not all projects have to be reviewed with the same degree of scrutiny; and

+ that some methodologies are not well served by being in the IRB purview.

Expansive notions that have IRBs oversee all university scholarly activity involving humans in any way are untenable. As IRBs are being asked to do more and more, they are becoming less effective. The white paper makes clear that it is time to clarify the scope and purpose of IRB review. Researchers and human subjects alike need IRBs to become more effective through being more selective.

To view the white paper in its entirety, visit:

<http://www.law.uiuc.edu/conferences/whitepaper>

Letter to the Editor

Doug Boyd, the media review editor, and Mary Larson, the former media review editor, and I, the book review editor, want to express our appreciation for Andrew Dunar's work as editor of the **Oral History Review** these past six years.

We have watched him, a diligent scholar himself, seeking articles and critiques, planning special issues, trying—and encouraging us to try—new approaches in the work for the **Review**.

All the while, he has been supportive with us. Indeed, his good judgment, sense of humor and compassion have made the process a good experience. We are glad we had the chance to work with him.

Ever careful and responsible,

Andy is preparing the **Review** for the new editor, Kimberly Porter. We expect the transition to be smooth and look forward to working with Kim. We will do all we can to continue to bring to the readers of the **Oral History Review** the best scholarly articles and reviews of the best books and media presentations based on oral history.

Valerie Yow, Book Review Editor

Mark your calendars now for the next OHA conference in Little Rock, Ark. The dates are Oct. 25-29, 2006.

Annual Meeting Notes OHA Finances Strong

New OHA President Rebecca Sharpless announced that Finance Committee Chair Jim Fogerty will be spearheading a new endowment fund campaign in recognition of the organization's 40th anniversary next year.

The endowment fund totals about \$153,000, which is invested in conservative, interest-bearing accounts.

Executive Secretary Madelyn Campbell reported that the OHA operating budget is about \$100,000. She said the OHA's contract with Dickinson College has been renewed for three years, until June 30, 2008.

Documenting Tragedy: Oral Historians Examine Role in Hurricane Aftermath

When New Orleans' victims of Hurricane Katrina began arriving at the Houston Astrodome, the first instinct for Gene Preuss of the University of Houston-Downtown was to head down to interview them.

But somehow, it didn't seem appropriate, Preuss told a Saturday morning OHA panel that addressed oral history and recording tragedy.

"I began wondering if maybe I was being opportunistic," he said, adding that he wondered: "Where is history? Where are current events?"

Meanwhile, two days after the hurricane devastated the Gulf Coast, Jennifer Abraham of the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History at the Louisiana State University, was getting calls from people wanting to help do oral histories of victims, just like doctors, nurses and other professionals were streaming to the region from all over the country.

In the city itself, Alan Stein of the New Orleans Public Library is among some 3,000 city workers—200 from the library alone—laid off from jobs that no longer exist.

"By some miracle," Stein said, the main library and its oral history collection did not flood, despite being just two blocks from the Superdome and Charity Hospital.

Farther east, along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, communities weren't as fortunate. Whole towns are gone, said Stephen Sloan of the Center for Oral History at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

"Waveland, Miss., is gone," Sloan said. "Waveland, Miss., doesn't exist anymore....People want that story to be told."

Without oral history, he said, "The human cost of this is being lost."

Panelists pondered the challenges of documenting hurricane victims' experiences while the emotions of those experiences are still raw.

Mary Marshall Clark of Columbia University, who led a groundbreaking oral history project in New York City



Panelists, from left, Gene Preuss and Alan Stein listen as Jennifer Abraham describes her experiences in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, said the question of when to start interviewing after a tragedy needn't be paralyzing.

"If people are ready to be interviewed, why not?" she asked.

Abraham said her oral history center at LSU has received many requests for workshops and is keenly aware of the challenge of putting events into historical context and creating primary sources that will stand the test of time.

A critical concern, she said, is that oral historians are not trained in grief counseling. They need tips to help them so they don't say things like: "You can always get another dog."

Sloan agreed the challenge is to be involved, but still hold to the standards of the profession.

"I'm being pretty selective about who I send out in the field," he said.

Clark said oral historians working in the wake of a tragedy need to understand that "people rebuild their lives through telling and listening."

"I understand tremendously the human cost of doing this interviewing," she said. "The work of documenting catastrophe is a form of grief work."

Respecting narrator's stories and protecting them from exploitation

should be oral historians' guiding principles, she said.

The storm's aftermath has prompted an assortment of efforts to coordinate attempts to document victims' experiences.

The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress is partnering with folklorists and oral historians in Houston and Austin, Texas, Baton Rouge and Shreveport, La., that will put academic survivors of the hurricane to work collecting survivor stories.

The center said on its Web site that it will provide training and donate recording equipment and will help develop a database and recording archive to make the oral histories available to researchers.

The Library of Congress also said it is partnering with the Internet Archive and the California Digital Library to create a Web archive documenting communications, reactions and commentary on the unprecedented natural disaster.

In addition, the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded 19 emergency grants totaling \$565,000 for projects to help preserve cultural resources in the Gulf Coast region.

Documenting Another Disaster: North Dakotans and the Red River Flood of 1997

Editor's Note: Long before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita wrought devastation on the Gulf Coast, a smaller scale, but no less disastrous, flood devastated Grand Forks, N.D., and East Grand Forks, Minn., causing what was then an evacuation of historic proportions.

Kimberly K. Porter, associate professor of history at the University of North Dakota and new editor of the Oral History Review, reflected on the oral history project that resulted from the flood in a paper presented in mid-August at an international oral history conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Here are excerpts from her paper. The Newsletter editor hopes this detailed account will provide insights for others seeking to document disasters.

On April 19, 1997, the Red River of the North breached the dikes surrounding Grand Forks, North Dakota, and East Grand Forks, Minnesota, forcing the evacuation of over 60,000 residents. By late afternoon, as the cities' residents fled to the drone of storm sirens, the business district burned and the Red River broadened its grasp, slowly, inexorably, claiming neighborhood after neighborhood for its own. According to historians, the Great Flood of 1997 marked the largest single evacuation in American history, and the most complete one since the citizens of Gettysburg were forced to take flight.

Among those taking flight were historians, archivists, sociologists, and anthropologists from the University of North Dakota. Their semester prematurely ended, many sought not only to make sense of the ordeal for themselves and their families, but to incorporate the experience for classroom and research purposes. Others sought simply to preserve the moment for future, unknown researchers.

This paper explores the project

undertaken to preserve the multitude of flood experiences, as well as the involvement of the community in the process. It discusses the development of the University of North Dakota's Oral History Center, the effort to train volunteers, and the rush to gather the stories from the multitude of charitable volunteers and military personnel who served Greater Grand Forks. It also explores the desire to make the project a useful resource for other communities in disaster recovery. I offer this paper as a personal reflection of the Great Flood of 1997, and the ensuing effort to preserve its power.

* * *

Some eight years ago this past April and May, I was homeless, sleeping on a floor in Minneapolis, frantically making telephone calls, trying to reconstruct my network of family and friends. As I...questioned what had befallen my world, I came to the understanding that just as the waters would ultimately recede,

I resolved that the experiences we had endured must not be allowed to perish. As a historian, that was my responsibility.

memories of the flood would do so as well. Accordingly, I resolved that the experiences we had endured must not be allowed to perish. As a historian, that was my responsibility. And if, along the way, I could make sense of the occurrence for myself, all the better.

Apparently, I was not alone in my musings, nor in my efforts at grant writing. For when I returned to Grand Forks two weeks later and began the monumental task of cleaning up my life, I met a number of individuals from the UND

academic community who had come to the same conclusion: memories of the flood of 1997 must be preserved.

The question was simple: How? The answer was as diverse as the individuals who gathered in early June in response to our call. For some the solution lay in photography, for others visual arts, poetry, or fictional prose, and even theatrical productions. Others, although thoroughly adrift in a sea of clean-up, reconstruction and paperwork, found their answers in gathering a mountain of documentary evidence--National Weather Service flood forecasts, disaster declarations, city evacuation plans, piles of the *Grand Forks Herald*, Salvation Army location lists and Red Cross clean-up tips.

While disciples of different disciplines began their projects, a number of faculty members were not yet satisfied. As we met yet one more time to discuss the appropriate form for memorializing our experience, one professor noted, "More than anything, I want my kids, my grandkids, the world to know what this *felt* like"--fleeing in the night, sleeping in a shelter, standing in line for countless hours, gratefully accepting the nation's charity, watching our city burn, wondering for days what was left to return to, and realizing that at least 60,000 individuals shared our experience.

Indeed, second only to cleaning out the wreckage of our homes was the overwhelming compulsion of everyone to tell their stories. When did it first dawn on them that the water would win, that nature could not be controlled? When were they evacuated? Where did they go? Who helped them? When they returned, what did they find? How high was their water? What did they lose? What was the hardest part of the entire experience? What happened to their friends? What does the future hold? Like the Ancient Mariner, all needed to tell.

With the help of Jaclyn Jeffrey,

then of Baylor University, and the guidance of a skilled grant writer at the North Dakota Museum of Art, as well as an assortment of out-dated books from our flood-damaged library, the project took shape. I became the unofficial advisor to the endeavor, having expressed an interest in the form, and having confessed to not only using others' recorded memories in my own research, but also having conducted interviews for a volume on Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

We would attempt to gather the stories of people from all walks of life.

On successive Saturdays, we gathered in the North Dakota Museum of Art to focus our energies, determine our goals, and train our volunteers. As the initial 40 volunteers dwindled to approximately 20, we decided to direct our attention to the broadest ranges of the flood experience. We would attempt to gather the stories of people from all walks of life--city officials and workers who had conducted the most courageous of battles, residents whose homes were totally destroyed, business people who lost a lifetime of work, and young people who helped build the dikes. We also wanted the stories of the elderly who were carried from their homes on payloaders, the residents of neighboring towns who provided us refuge while in exile, and inmates from the county jail who suddenly found themselves housed in Lutheran churches. We also sought the stories of those financially strapped and unable to see beyond the day, and those with the financial wherewithal to guide their own recovery. We also sought the insight of clergy, firefighters, and police officers. Our list of the "significant" went on and on.

Our volunteers would attempt to gather the wide-ranging stories of stoicism and selflessness, heroism

and heartbreak, courage and confusion, tragedy and triumph, abandonment and achievement, determination and devastation. As one volunteer reflected on the goals, he noted that the project was a "kind of Noah's Ark, saving our best from the flood."

Our project was ambitious, but given our relatively untrained enthusiasm, it didn't seem all that impossible. We initially didn't even feel all that hampered by a lack of funding. With all of the rebuilding and calls upon charitable trusts, no sponsor could be found. The first round of interviews would be collected on personal tape-recorders, on tapes purchased by the North Dakota Museum of Art, and transcribed by the hardest, and shyest, of volunteers....

Our primary fears were a lack of training in the interview process, particularly with the technical side of the equipment, and the fact that each of us had a burning desire to tell anyone, and perhaps everyone, *our* story of the flood. The problem was solved in the most basic of ways. Each volunteer was paired with another whom they had not previously known. They were assigned to interview one another, thus assuring that all of the volunteers would have their personal stories recorded for posterity, and also assuring that each amateur oral historian had at least one practice experience before hitting the streets of Grand Forks. Also, if the equipment overwhelmed the individual, the interview could be reconstructed.

When the project was started, we knew that at least a portion of the interviews would be utilized in a commemorative display at the North Dakota Museum of Art. In order to provide some sense of thematic organization, and to offer a thank-you to the museum for providing photocopying, transcription, storage and letterhead, we decided to focus at least part of every interview on a few structured questions. When did you evacuate?; where did you go?; where were you when you heard about the fire?; what was the hardest thing to

throw out?; what was your proudest moment?; your most humbling? This series would provide structure to the museum's display, and also ease our subjects into a story they'd undoubtedly told a hundred times before.

Besides assisting our mentor--the North Dakota Museum of Art--we had two ultimate goals of the project. First and foremost was the creation of an archive of raw material detailing the flood for students and scholars--historians, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, economists, linguists, etc.--to examine, reflect on and use as primary sources for articles and essays. Secondly, we wanted to make sense of the flood for ourselves and our disciplines, while simultaneously offering a commemoration of sorts to the community....

As an aside, I would also note that many of us were concerned with the sheer number of "transients" involved in the flood's history. As citizens of Grand Forks, we all had become clearly aware of the fact that we were not alone in the process of recovery. Both before and after the inundation, the story of our town had become national news. Accordingly, we had not only local individuals to focus upon in the process of recording the

The perceptions of the volunteers who had come to us in our darkest hour warranted attention.

flood, but also individuals from all corners of the nation, and many from our near northern neighbor, Canada--which also endured the deluge--as well. The perceptions of the volunteers who had come to us in our darkest hour warranted attention.

Also, we needed to be aware of members of the National Guard, the Coast Guard, and those service members temporarily stationed at nearby Grand Forks Air Force Base. We also needed to contact representatives of the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Federal Emergency

Management Agency, Small Business Administration, Emergency Animal Rescue Service (EARS), World Vision, our college population, etc. Once again the list seemed endless.

Many of us feared that rather than the obituary columns claiming the history of Grand Forks and the flood of 1997, the disasters of a nation in need would claim them. How would we ever again gather the multitudes who had been in Grand Forks ever so briefly to assist us in our hour of need? And even if we did by chance re-claim the aid workers, how would they differentiate our plight from that of hurricane victims in Florida, mudslide casualties in California, or tornado-stricken residents of Tennessee?

At the end of August...we could count 175 separate interviews, involving 200 individuals, comprising approximately 220 hours of tape.

As the summer wore on, the decision was made, but not enforced, that volunteers should work specifically at gathering the stories of those individuals who would soon, without a doubt, disappear from our lives.

At the end of August, we sat down to consider what the summer of interviewing had wrought. We could count 175 separate interviews, involving 200 individuals, comprising approximately 220 hours of tape. These totals did not include the numerous "mini-interviews" collected at the celebrations of survival which dotted our summer.

In the process of recording these stories, we had heard the voice of LaVonne Swenson break as she told of evacuating her terminally ill husband. Via helicopter, he was transported from United Hospital, to a gravel road where a fleet of ambulances from around the state, stretching at least a mile, awaited their precious cargo.

We also heard the humility of a

Grand Forks fire fighter as he relived the effort to save our downtown while struggling to stand, chest-deep in 38 degree water. Describing his heroic laborers, he simply said, "hey, I'm a firefighter, that's what I do."

And we listened as the Koubas, Leonard and Marilyn, a couple in their 70s started over with nothing more than the clothes on their backs and furniture borrowed from grandchildren. With a quaver in his voice, Leonard, a World War II veteran, compared the aftermath of the flood to his experiences in Germany.

We heard Mike Maidenbergh, editor of the Pulitzer prize-winning *Grand Forks Herald*, struggle to relate the decision to keep publishing the paper when it seemed as if the world was collapsing around him. "Just when it seemed it couldn't get any worse, it did. And we'd made a new plan."

And we listened as Major Lannie Runck of the North Dakota National Guard described the effort to retrieve the photographs a cancer-stricken woman so desperately sought. Her family now scattered to evacuation centers around the state, she wanted to pass from this earth surrounded by their presence. With a Humvee, he accomplished his mission.

The stories broke our hearts, lifted our spirits, elevated our faith in humanity and gave us the strength to reach out for more interviews of the Great Flood.

The stories broke our hearts, lifted our spirits, elevated our faith in humanity, and gave us the strength to reach out for more interviews of the Great Flood. And while I would be deceptive to suggest that we were not proud of our effort, all realized that significant problems remained. While we had indeed, managed to capture much of the "transient" story, many long-time residents remained to be interviewed. Particularly weak

were our efforts at gathering the stories of Grand Forks' minority communities and its elderly citizens. We had also been somewhat lax in obtaining the stories of our city and university officials.

I would hasten to say that this was not entirely our fault. While the cities' and the University of North Dakota's leadership had always displayed an interest in the project, and had indeed volunteered for interviews, few had been conducted. The efforts of rebuilding our community had sapped their time to the point that when push came to shove, the oral historians were usually the first to be trimmed from a busy schedule.

People NEEDED to tell their stories.

Part of this problem had been met by a declaration from then President of the University of North Dakota, Dr. Kendall Baker. He had urged upon the Office of University Relations the task of memorializing the college effort in preserving the city. Accordingly, Jan Orvik from the aforementioned office, conducted approximately 35 interviews. She also managed to gather all sorts of documentary and visual evidence of the flood. Not the least among her gatherings were the 52 rolls of film taken by UND First Lady Toby Baker. We soon found ourselves engaged in a collaborative effort not only with the University's oral historian, but also with researchers associated with the Minnesota State Historical Society and Moorhead State University.

As the classroom reclaimed the majority of volunteers in late August, the looming question was simply "what now?". It seemed clear that much remained to be done--local residents, business leaders, city officials, the elderly, the minority communities, rural dwellers, etc. It seemed as equally clear that people had learned of our project and were eager to be interviewed. As we had initially assumed, people *needed* to tell their stories.

The solution to continuing the project came in two forms.... With only the slightest of efforts, many of us found ways to incorporate the project's continuation into our course work. Students from around the campus found themselves with strangely similar assignments. Accordingly, students in history, social work, geography, sociology, and English hit the tape recording trail. And while freely admitting that not all of the work submitted that first semester was of the highest caliber, the students frequently ferreted out interviewees that had slipped through our structure. They were especially good at interviewing compliant grandparents, fraternity fellows and sorority sisters.

The larger help to the project came in the form of city assistance. As summer turned to fall, and many of our city leaders found themselves not only well on the road to recovery, but also on the road to innumerable guest presentations, it became clear to all that our tale of recovery had broad interest. Accordingly, when one of the city's plethora of committees posed the question, "Who's recording the history of the flood?," the volunteers associated with the summer project could provide an answer. Moreover, the answer we provided was in the form of a grant request.

The city was interested in the decision-making process, the passing of information, and the levels of communication within the city both immediately before and immediately following our disaster.

Eliot Glassheim, a volunteer associated with the North Dakota Museum of Art, skilled in the finesse of grant writing, proposed a continuation of the initial project involving city funds. Accordingly we were funded to acquire tapes and

equipment, pay our harried transcriptionist, and meet the incidental costs of the ever-growing project.

City officials had a list of individuals they wanted interviewed, and also had a series of questions they wanted answered. In particular, the city was interested in the decision-making process, the passing of information, and the levels of communication within the city both immediately before and immediately following our disaster. Given that many of the suggested questions had already been posed, and that many of the recommended subjects were on our initial "wish list," the cost/benefit ratio seemed minor at the time. It remains so in my mind.

The city also urged cooperation from its employees and requested various departments to make duplicate copies of all pertinent flood documents available to our researchers. While a bit outside our purview, it only made sense to have our interviewers gather paperwork as they traveled to collect oral history. Along the way to recording the voices of the flood, we became the clearing house for the city's collective memory.

With the initial grant, came publicity. Accordingly, we have suffered a secondary flood, albeit one of a more pleasant nature. Individuals, within and without city hall, have come forth to be recorded, as well as to suggest folks who should be interviewed. Additionally, civic groups became aware of the concept of oral history. We have provided numerous speakers to these groups; and many have begun financially assisting us in the project or have designed projects for their own purposes relying upon oral history as a key element.

The effort at recording the nation's worst natural disaster is still underway. At present, we have recorded approximately 400 individuals on nearly 550 hours of tape. These numbers do not include student projects, or the mini-interviews conducted at summer celebrations. We have also been the beneficiary of approximately 700

hours of local radio coverage--oral history of another sort. We have collected literally a room full of documentation--photographs, video, city memoranda, Red Cross hand-outs, Salvation Army pamphlets, and FEMA brochures.

First and foremost is the need for stout-hearted people determined to salvage the best from their community.

Looking back on the project from the distance of only a few years, I would offer the following "lessons learned" to those contemplating oral history in a natural disaster. First, try to avoid the disaster; paperwork and reconstruction woes cannot offset the joys of preserving an event. If you do, however, endure the wrath of nature, I would suggest that first and foremost is the need for stout-hearted people determined to salvage the best from their community. While I will freely admit the services of professionals would have contributed to the quality of the project, the sheer numbers of volunteers made the project work, and work in a situation where speed was of the essence. Had not we hit the streets early and with a concern for the volunteers who had so briefly come to our assistance, the stories of horrified news personnel and disaster response officials would have been lost to us.

I also believe that the use of mini-interviews at public celebrations was beneficial. While they did not offer us the opportunity to go into great depth on a topic, they did provide us the opportunity to gather reflections on specific issues. The short interview process also allowed us to publicize our efforts and to gain the names, and confidence, of individuals who had significant stories to tell.

I would also tell those gathering oral reflections in the aftermath of a natural disaster to be prepared for emotional turmoil. Stories of the evacuation, the devastation, the loss of home, and the loss of friends did not touch only the life of the

interviewed. All of the volunteers themselves had been through much of the same roil of emotions. Indeed, for a limited number of our volunteers, the process of re-hashing the flood was overwhelming. One or two left the project with a simple, "It's just too much for me to handle."

Most disaster survivors feel the need to tell their stories and to have their stories preserved for posterity.

On this same avenue, a social worker recently told me that the oral history project has served a significant need in the community. Most disaster survivors feel the need to tell their stories, and to have their stories preserved for posterity. The sheer fact of having someone listen, and record, their personal tale is therapeutic. So, if you are looking for grant money, try using that particular angle.

The interviews, as well as assorted documentation, photographs, art work, videos, and written efforts, focusing on the flood will ultimately be archived in the University of North Dakota's Chester Fritz Library...for future generations of scholars to delve at their pleasure.

The collection is a treasure trove of material illustrating the economics, leadership and communications channels of a natural disaster. It also contains magnificent, personal insight on gender relations and generational responses in a period of devastating distress. And while it tells of our bright and shining moments, the collection also provides commentary on our darker side; domestic violence, child neglect, truancy, alcoholism, suicide, and drug abuse have all come to light....

Our city has laid bare its soul for the generations of scholars who will reflect upon our tragedy in their individual styles.

The collection, still awaiting the archivist's touch, also offers communities in disaster the benefit of

our experience. The learning curve of recovery is rather steep. No community should face such devastation and be forced to respond from scratch. Our collection has been utilized by the Red Cross, World Vision, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and untold others to discover proven routes to recovery.

Our reserve has already been utilized by scholars from around the United States and Canada, and I can only imagine that the collection will be drawn upon by a generation of researchers for theses, dissertations, articles, books, films and lawsuits. And, I'd be lying if I didn't admit that I had a few ideas for utilizing the tapes myself....

The flood of 1997 was quite frankly the most horrifying experience of my life. And although I remember scowling, and perhaps even snarling, at a far too chipper evacuation center volunteer, her words ring true a year following the event: "Something good will come from this, you wait and see."

In Memory of Sam Proctor

By Alice Hoffman

The early years of the Oral History Association were blessed by the leadership and insights of Sam Proctor. He served as president of the OHA in 1974-75 while he was in the midst of his 30-year stint as editor of the Florida Historical Quarterly. Sam was a history professor at the University of Florida and director of the university's Oral History Program. He taught me a great deal. His saw the newly created field of oral history as a worldwide phenomenon whose role and responsibility could change the very nature of what scholars would define as history. (See Proctor, Sam. "Oral History Comes of Age." **Oral History Review**, 1975, p. 4) He recognized that oral history could expand scholarship to enable a much more complete, non-exclusionary, multifaceted story of the past. His leadership was enhanced by an infectious sense of humor and a capacity to simply refuse to accept "no" for an answer.

I succeeded Sam as president and presided over the first, and I might say only attempt by the OHA to meet beyond the borders of the U.S.A. by planning a meeting in Canada. The task proved to be daunting. The French Canadian who undertook to do local arrangements did not have the best of relationships with the apparently excessively Col. Blimp type who was his boss at the

National Archives. This worthy did not answer my letters nor agree to much cooperation of any sort.

Moreover, when I went to meet with the woman in charge of what went down in the annals of OHA lore as Le Chateau Mont de Gypo, she announced that she always preferred to deal with a man. Her relationship with me went downhill from there. I began to feel the need of Sam's assistance. So we arranged a meeting. Sam came from Florida with Bessie up to Canada. Even Sam was unable to extract cooperation from the Anglophile who held the purse strings at the Archives, but it felt enormously supportive to have him there.

Sam decided that inasmuch as we were that far north (not all that far from my point of view from Pennsylvania), we should stop off to see Louis Starr, the first president of OHA, at his summer home in Lake George, N.Y., so we set off in our distinctly non-commodious Mercury Comet. We were five: Howard Hoffman, our 13-year-old daughter, Bessie and Sam and myself. We all piled into the Mercury to drive about 400 miles. Our daughter spent most of her time composing long letters to her boyfriend. But Bessie and Sam treated her with respect. We had been urged to stop at a Vietnamese restaurant, which offered good food, but no plates or utensils. Sam and Bessie treated it all as a great adventure, and somehow their enthusiasm and good humor affected us all. We Hoffmans remember the trip as a happy adventure, which we will always cherish.

Call for Papers

Generational Links: Confronting the Past, Understanding the Present, Planning the Future

Oral History Association Annual Meeting
Little Rock, Ark.
Oct. 25-29, 2006

The Oral History Association invites proposals for papers and presentations for its 2006 annual meeting set for Oct. 25-28 at the Peabody Hotel, Little Rock, Ark.

The program committee welcomes proposals on a variety of topics. However, in keeping with this year's theme, "Generational Links: Confronting the Past, Understanding the Present, Planning the future," the meeting will focus special attention on oral history work with groups and individuals who risked their lives to confront injustice in its many forms, on institutions and organizations that promote understanding and on oral history projects that encourage a just and diverse future.

We anticipate that the stories of political activists and civil rights workers, labor organizers and "freedom riders," radical reformers and social protesters for various causes will be an important part of the meeting.

Histories of communities and families are often sagas of failure and triumph. Thus, this meeting's emphasis on "generational links" will provide an important way to confront, understand and plan for a better future, free of the horrors and intolerance of yesterday.

Presentations based on interviews with individuals and groups that focus on intergenerational activities and actions are especially welcome. Because oral history often relies on interviews with elderly persons, presentations on the relationship between "hindsight and insight" are encouraged.

Regional as well as international historians are welcome. The committee also invites proposals that reflect on the process of oral history and the role of theory in its practice. A variety of formats and presentation methods are welcome. The committee particularly hopes to build the program around presentations in which the audience may hear or see the actual voices and actions, which link the past, present and future.

Proposal format: submit five copies of the proposal.

For full sessions, submit a title, a session abstract of not more than two pages and a one-page vita or resume for each participant.

For individual proposals, submit a one-page abstract and a one-page vita or resume of the presenter.

Each submission must be accompanied by a cover sheet, which can be printed from the OHA Web site: www.dickinson.edu/oha.

Proposals should be postmarked by Jan. 31, 2006. They may be submitted by mail or fax. No e-mail attachments will be accepted. Submit proposals directly to: Oral History Association, Dickinson College, P.O. Box 1773, Carlisle, PA 17013. Fax: 717-245-1046. For proposals sent by courier service, add: Holland Union Building, College and Louther Streets.

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Deadline: Jan. 31, 2006

Oral Historians Pay Tribute to Sandy Ives

An array of folklorists and oral historians regaled an OHA conference audience with tales of how folklorist and oral historian Edward "Sandy" Ives bridged both worlds in his long career, changing the lives of all he touched.

Ives was unable to attend the tribute, but it was recorded for him.

Conference co-chair Pamela Dean recalled her days as a student of Ives' in an oral history and folklore fieldwork class at the University of Maine in the early 1980s.

One of the lessons he taught, Dean said, was the power of Murphy's Law and the power of serendipity.

"You just never know which interview is going to provide the key to your project—or your life," she said.

"Sandy Ives changed my life," Dean said. "That's my story and I'm sticking to that one."

OHA past president Dale Treleven called Ives a "deeply admired friend."

He credited the Maine scholar as shifting oral historians' attitude toward seeing the sound recording, not the transcript, as the principle historical document. Ives' attitude toward researchers who won't listen to tapes is "to hell with them," Treleven recalled.

Neil Rosenberg of Memorial University of Newfoundland said he became acquainted with Ives as a graduate assistant in the music archives in Bloomington, Ind., where he dubbed copies of Ives' field recordings. Rosenberg said the folklorist's work has had a far-reaching impact. Ives, he noted, is the only non-Canadian to win a Canadian national award for lifetime achievement in folklore.

OHA past president Charles Morrissey said he can't even recall

how he and Ives got acquainted. "Sandy and I have been joshing for 40 years," he said.

Morrissey said he and Ives share the "halitosis school of oral history." That's the philosophy, Morrissey said, that "bad breath is better than no breath at all. Don't expect perfection [in an oral history interview]. Do the best you can."

Endowment Fund Contributions Welcomed

Plan now to make your year-end, tax-deductible contribution to the OHA Endowment Fund, which supports scholarships and other special program initiatives.

The OHA thanks the following recent donors for their contributions: Mehmed Ali, Madelyn Campbell, Mary Kay Quinlan, Horacio Roque Ramirez, Deborah Sampson and Shirley Stephenson.

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