

FROM THE CHAIR



As I'm waiting for the weather to decide if it's spring or winter, I think back to the hot, humid days at the 2006 SAA meeting in Washington, D.C. It was a true heat wave leading to a record-breaking 101 degrees on August 3 (feeling like 115), and I'm sure many of you were glad to be inside for pre-conference programs, sessions, and meetings. I hope you also enjoyed the famous sites, the free attractions, and the wonderful restaurants that the capital has to offer!

The Oral History Section meeting, held on Friday August 4 and attended by about 60 members, was led and coordinated by Chair Eileen Simon. The program included three speakers from the Library of Congress, who discussed access to oral histories.

Ann Hoog from the American Folklife Center talked about the September 11, 2001 oral history collection and the issue of providing access as the collection was being received and processed. The news media, for example, wanted high-quality sound clips as quickly as possible, so a simple database with subject headings and sound quality notes was created to identify

the most useful among the volume of interviews received.

Also from the American Folklife Center, Marcia Segal discussed the effects of digitization and quality review on intellectual access to oral history recordings. The importance of improving access documentation for digitized materials was stressed. Finally, Rachel Mears from the Veterans History Project discussed online access to oral history and the challenges of a grassroots oral history program.

During the business portion of the meeting, steering committee elections were held. Congratulations to Lauren Kata, who is serving as Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect this year, and to Mark Cave and Tom Dillard, who will serve on the steering committee from 2006 to 2008. And thanks to Joel Minor for volunteering to be our newsletter editor.

Now, with thoughts of spring, I look to upcoming projects and wish you the best on yours.

Debbie Whalen
Eastern Kentucky University

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS

“Unsung Heroes” Pays Tribute to African-Americans in the Military

by Lisa Daniels

A continuing oral and visual history project is underway that honors the legacy of African-American veterans and their contributions in the military during wartime and peacetime.

The “Unsung Heroes Living History Project” is spearheaded by SAA member Lisa Daniels, who after discovering her grandmother was a civilian “Riveter” in the Brooklyn Naval Yard, wanted to learn more about people of color who contributed to the military effort in the World Wars. Saddened by the limited information provided by mainstream anthologies and school textbooks, Daniels wanted to ensure the legacy of the African-American veterans would not be forgotten.

“Unsung Heroes” is an exciting intergenerational program that teaches young people valuable 21st century job skills and the importance of community service, volunteerism and civic engagement. Working with adult mentors, youth producers interview veterans for the Library of Congress Veterans History Project, and use computers to combine the veterans’ words with images and music, creating short “digital stories” that are shared with schools, libraries and museums. “Unsung Heroes” is a 501 ©3 non-profit charitable organization.

The search is on for veterans and their families willing to share their stories as well as volunteer interviewers. Anyone interested in participating or for more information should contact Project Coordinator Lisa Daniels at (916)821-7017 or by e-mail: unsngros@yahoo.com.

Catholic Boarding Schools Project

by Stephanie Morris

Recently I have begun an oral history project with Sister Jeanette Kinlicheeny, SBS (Sister of the Blessed Sacrament). We have interviewed two women, each 96 years old, who were connected with boarding schools for African Americans in Powhatan, VA. St. Francis de Sales School was opened by Mother M. Katharine Drexel, foundress of the Sisters of the

Blessed Sacrament, in 1899 and operated until 1970. This school was for girls. Mother Katharine’s sister and brother-in-law, Louise D. and Colonel Edward Morrell, opened St. Emma’s Military Academy, 1895-1970, for boys, also in Powhatan.

We interviewed the two women who had either worked at the schools or whose family had worked at the schools. We intend to interview other faculty and staff, former students and neighbors of the schools.

For more information, contact Stephanie Morris at sbsarchives@aol.com.

Pioneers in Aviation Safety and Security

by Arel Lucas

As part of the mission of the Aviation Safety and Security Archives of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (Prescott Campus), we are collecting oral histories of pioneers in aviation safety and security. These interviews are being recorded as moving images and formatted for access on DVDs. As the interviews are done and accessible, we are choosing a clip or clips from each one and uploading them to our online database at

<http://prcarc1.erau.edu/index.html>

The excerpts are in .avi or .mpg format (although this may change), and require the appropriate plug-in on the user’s computer. More information about the Archives as a whole may be found at <http://archives.pr.erau.edu/>

Currently the oral history collection is only represented by our interview with Jack Hartmann, a former instructor at ERAU, but soon we expect to add a collection icon for “Oral Histories” that will include the Hartmann as well as further excerpts, with at least two more interviews in the works within a year’s time.

For more information, contact Arel Lucas at lucasf56@erau.edu.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS (continued)

Voices from the Blue: An Oral History and Documentary of Michigan Folk Music

by Elizabeth Palmer

Born out of a deep love and respect for folk music, the culture that surrounds it, and the healing and historical role which it fills specifically in the state of Michigan comes *Voices from the Blue*. A collaboration between myself and a colleague and friend whom I met during our studies in the Historic Preservation program at Eastern Michigan University, *Voices from the Blue* will be a multi-media documentary of Michigan folk music and culture, the centerpiece of which will be a series of oral histories recorded with contemporary and legendary Michigan folk artists.

What began solely as a recording project has evolved through the meshing of ideas to become a truly live thing both figuratively and literally. We will be documenting Michigan folk music festivals for a number of seasons with various forms of media, audio, film, text, etc. with the intent at the core to honor one oral tradition, folk music, with another oral tradition, oral history.

Recording oral histories of the artists who perform throughout Michigan and on these festival stages becomes a sister method of preserving the story of this heritage to the inherent preservation of history already embedded in the folk music tradition. The songs and stories of folk music are passed down through the oral tradition from generation to generation, and for the stories within the songs; this becomes a self-sustaining method of preserving its own heritage.

What we aim to do is simply preserve the story of those stories told in the songs, and those associated with the songs by the artists; stories about the things that have become indecipherable from aspects of the culture itself.

In addition to recording narratives and histories on folk music itself, the other imperative component to this project is its specificity to the state of Michigan.

This does include stories of musicians who have migrated to Michigan, and the diverse musical traditions have traveled with them to Michigan from all over the globe, for these are all a part of the varied and rich tapestry of our state. Most importantly however, we will begin with what is here and now in Michigan, and who began it, and then ultimately why and how this tradition came to be what it is today, which is a thriving bed of talent, inspiration, and activism.

Michigan has within its peninsulas a rich and ever-green tradition of creativity and technical skill that informs its music. Right now especially, the soil in our state seems to be fertile and nurturing to fresh, original musical talent. Our economic hardships as an entire union, but more pointedly as a state have also brought us together to tell our stories and preserve our heritage in a sustainable way.

Part of our research is to find out through our recording sessions and conversations with the artists why it is important to them in many cases to be from, but in all cases to stay in Michigan when so many people feel compelled to leave. This hits close to home for my collaborator and I, because it is also very important for us too to remain in Michigan. It is imperative to make the choice to stay and come up with creative and paradigm-breaking ways to be constructive and sustainable in our environment, to educate our people and live as an informed and inquisitive culture, and to band together through our shared history and preservation of such so that we may grow into the future with the healthy perspective needed in order to survive what are currently and what are sure to be more oncoming troubled times.

Our project aims to begin and to sustain this discussion in terms of our history, our story, and our heritage. Hopefully it will also, over time, provide strategies and ideas for us all so that we may exist in this human story for a long time to come. That's what folk music is; the honest telling of our human story.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Palmer at alizabee84@hotmail.com.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS (continued)

The Cold War Aerospace Technology Project, Wright State University



Peter Morgensen filming his oral history interview in the television studio at Wright State University. Photo courtesy of the Center for Teaching and Learning, Wright State University.

by Lynda Kachurek

In the spring of 1970, Otto Peter Morgensen Jr. turned sixty-five years old and soon retired after working nearly thirty-four years as an aeronautical engineer at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio. Today, thirty-seven years after his retirement, and having turned 102 in April 2007, Mr. Morgensen is working with staff from Wright State University's Special Collections and Archives to ensure his story is collected as part of the Cold War Aerospace Technology project.

Peter Morgensen's experiences are prime examples of how important and rich these stories are. He was involved in many aspects of aerospace technology development, from his first job with Donald Douglas in 1925, where he shared a drafting table with Jack Northrop, to his final projects at Wright Field. Having moved to Dayton, Ohio, in 1936, his stories are also replete with Dayton's local history. He remembers riding Dayton's "red car" out to Wright Field, eating at Culps Cafeteria, and having breakfast at the Virginia, where twenty-five cents bought a meal of eggs, ham, toast and coffee. His stories are also dotted with recollections about famous figures in aviation he met, including Igor Sikorsky and Orville Wright. Mr. Morgensen's contributions serve as a marvelous cornerstone for the Cold War project, as well as true gems for future researchers of local history and the history of aerospace technology.

Initially funded by the Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program, the Cold War Aerospace Technology project documents the creativity that produced Cold War aerospace technology in the Miami Valley, as home to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and the Monsanto Mound Laboratory. The numerous and varied oral histories and manuscript collections are creating a remarkable research source by highlighting such topics as early stealth and signature technology, human physiological studies, avionics, composite materials, foreign technology and intelligence analysis, and propulsion development, just to name a few.

By archiving the individual stories and manuscripts of those who created and developed such technology, the Cold War project complements Special Collection and Archive's existing focus on both the history of aviation and local history. Begun in late 2005, the Cold War project is an ongoing project for the department. For more information about the Cold War Aerospace Technology project, please contact Lynda Kachurek, Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, at (937)775-3625 or lynda.kachurek@wright.edu.

Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences Project

by Megan P. Guglielmi

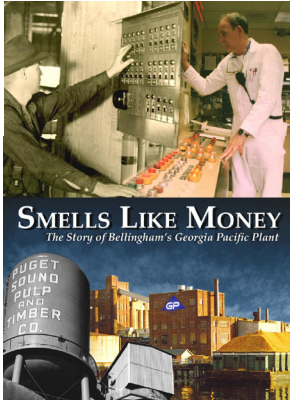
In May of 2005 the University Archives at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences began an oral history project for the purpose of documenting the history of the University. The Uniformed Services University, located in Bethesda, Maryland, is the only fully accredited federal school of medicine and graduate school of nursing in the United States. The University Archives is collecting the histories of key individuals, namely founding staff, faculty, and administrators; along with others whose contributions have helped to develop the University from its inception to the present.

The ultimate goal of the project is to edit and transcribe each interview and to make this material available not only for individuals associated with USU, but for outside researchers as well.

For further information on USU and its Archives, please visit www.lrc.usuhs.mil/local/archives.html or contact Megan Guglielmi: mguglielmi@lrcm.usuhs.mil.

ORAL HISTORY PRODUCTIONS & PUBLICATIONS

“Smells Like Money” Documentary



by David Albright

The objective of this documentary is to present and preserve the history of the Georgia Pacific Pulp Mill, through the words of the people who lived it.

The Pulp Mill on Bellingham's Waterfront was more than just a pulp mill to its employees, for whom the

plant represented stability, innovation and many close friendships. This film tells the story of the pulp mill using a combination of interviews, images, historic film clips, newspaper articles, and television reports, to show the human side of a place and people that many have labeled the enemy. The film focuses on what the mill meant to its workers, what life was like there, and how major events like the merger with GP, the strike of 1978, environmental concerns of the 1990s and the closure in 2001 effected them.

Made in association with: Western Washington University, Chris Friday and his Georgia Pacific Oral History Project, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, and The Northwest Film School. Produced, directed and edited by David Albright, a documentary filmmaker based out of Bellingham, WA. Narrated by Brett Bonner, KGMI Radio Host.

This documentary premiered at the Northwest Projections Film Festival in November 2006, where it was one of the most attended screenings. It is currently for sale at Village Books and Michaels books in Bellingham, and online. It is set to be featured at Village Books as part of their "Literature Live" series on May 11, 2007, and in the coming months will be featured in newsletters and journals of the Northwest Oral History Association, the Oral History Association, and the Whatcom County Historical Society.

For more information visit www.NWFilmSchool.com/Money or email David Albright at albrigd2@cc.wvu.edu.

Oral History and Folklore featured in New Routledge Katrina Anthology

by Al Stein

SAA member and hurricane-displaced librarian Alan H. Stein landed on his feet at Fresno State University in December of 2005, in a unique 12-month Visiting Lecturer appointment as "Katrina Relief Librarian." He spent part of the academic year researching and writing a chapter on oral history and Katrina, co-authored with Gene B. Preuss for the Routledge anthology "There Is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster: Race, Class, and Hurricane Katrina." The anthology examines the social issues surrounding the disaster in New Orleans and is the topic of an ongoing exploration of public policy issues. It is edited by Gregory Squires, chairman of the sociology department at George Washington University, and Chester Hartman, director of research at the Washington, D.C., based Poverty and Race Research Action Council, have assembled a useful and wide-ranging look at racial issues, housing challenges, the special concerns of women, the elderly, education and public health.

The Times-Picayune book editor Susan Larson wrote in her January 28, 2007 review – entitled "Depression in the Gulf":

"One of the most moving (of 14 essays) in this collection comes from Alan Stein, former head of the Louisiana division, city archives and special collections at the New Orleans Public Library, now at California State University, Fresno. In "Oral History, Folklore and Katrina," he and Gene B. Preuss of the University of Houston describe the many immediate and ongoing efforts to gather the oral histories of Katrina survivors. They provide a fascinating overview of issues facing oral historians -- when to begin, how to judge, how long to continue. They draw some useful comparisons with post Sept. 11 efforts, quoting Mary Marshall Clark, of Columbia University's "September 11, 2001 Oral History Narrative and Memory Project," who wondered, "Is this history yet? Is it memory? And . . . Is it therapy?"

The Stein-Preuss collaboration also led to a major plenary session and two panels at last year's OHA conference

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in Little Rock, which examined the impact of Katrina on oral historians, and the numerous community projects underway in the region.

According to Stein, Katrina put the "movement" back into oral history. The numerous community-based, activist approaches to projects and anthologies that

have been produced clearly illustrates the resurgence of history "from the bottom up" - a phrase imbued with ironic tension, since it literally depicts the murky flood waters all along the Gulf Coast, post-Katrina/Rita.

For more information, contact Al Stein at astein@csufresno.edu.



Oral History Section

<http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/oralhist/index.asp>



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The Oral History Section of the Society of American Archivists is composed of members of the Society and others who are interested in or are actively engaged in conducting oral history interviews and/or teach oral history methodology. The Oral History Section provides a forum for news, for discussion of issues and developments, and for establishing and maintaining communication and cooperation with other professional organizations.

ORAL HISTORY HAPPENINGS AT THE 2007 SAA CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

(for more information, visit www.archivists.org/conference/chicago2007/index.asp)

Pre-Conference Workshop

August 26, 9 am - 5 pm
"Using Oral Histories: Publications, Exhibits, Internet"

Privacy & Confidentiality Roundtable Program

August 29, 4 - 6 pm
"Privacy Issues and Oral History in the Digital Age"

Session 101

August 30, 10 - 11:30 am
"Free Speech, Free Spirit: The Studs Terkel Center for Oral History"

SAA Oral History Section Meeting

August 30, Noon - 2 pm

P7 Poster Presentation

August 30, 5:45 - 7:45 pm & August 31, 9:30 am - 4 pm
"Gathering Institutional Memory: Oral History as Outreach Programming"



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