

FROM THE CHAIR

Al Stein, Chicago State University



“I Tape, Therefore I Am”: Studs Terkel, ex-Presidents and Oral History

Honor among oral historians and ex-presidents—while not the over riding theme of this issue of *Dialogue*—is a discussion worth having. But first the news:

Lauren Kata reports that our Section will hold its first online elections, thus assuring continued, sound leadership and responsiveness to ideas and programs of the Section. Concurrently SAA’s first-ever electronic ballot was open to members from March 11 to April 11. See her “from the Past Chair” column.

Chair-Elect Mark Cave has organized what promises

to be an outstanding Section program in Austin that will help us prepare for SAA’s 75th Anniversary in 2012. (This year marks the 75th anniversary of NARA and NHPRC.) We are in the process of forming an anniversary subcommittee with conversations about how to best prepare to document our organization’s history. To that end a live interview conducted by oral historian James E. Fogerty with long-time SAA member and educator Dr. David B. Gracy III will be the feature presentation in Austin. The interview will be part of the section’s effort to record narratives of SAA members in preparation for the organization’s 75th anniversary.

Archives tell stories of worker’s struggles and May Day is a time of hope and history. It is a day filled with significance for American working men and women. Over the past few months it has rained on

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the life parade of labor and oral historians—as we lost Utah Phillips, Studs Terkel, Archie Green, Franklin Rosemont, and John Hope Franklin. All within a year! I want to particularly remember them as we approach an international worker’s day, which won’t be the same without them. Their voices and chords, laborlore, music and words populated our culture, enriching us and the oral history movement. They all fought the good fight, and we shall miss them and treasure their archives and recordings forever.

The history of presidents and presidential library oral history projects is topical news during a post-election season in which National Archivist Allen Weinstein resigned, and Deputy Archivist of the United States, Adrienne Thomas, became Acting Archivist. Here in Chicago there is already talk of where to put the Obama Presidential Library, while a grassroots “movement” of digital storytellers is underway capturing the stories of Obama volunteers in a Colorado oral history project. As Cyns Nelson reports: “as we think about the complexion of our presidential archives, the 2008 election becomes more and more exciting—especially for oral historians.” Why wait to begin a Presidential oral history project in your own backyard? Start taping now: if you do you will find purpose, and meaning in life and an archival home for your recordings. Look around your own community for these stores from impassioned Obama volunteers—students, educators, seniors, and politicians—all have the impulse to do oral history.

According to Studs Terkel – the late and legendary oral historian born when the Titanic went down in 1912– it was President Nixon who inspired him to compulsively record the stories of his generation: “There’s only one other person addicted to the tape recorder, and that was Richard Nixon,” Studs said in smug reference to Nixon’s White House recording habits (or the Nixon Presidency in reel-time)! Studs would go on to call Nixon “and myself fellow Cartesians – you know, Descartes said, ‘I think, therefore I am.’ But Dick and I are neo-Cartesians, ‘I tape, therefore I am.’” So Terkel appears to have been as addicted to the tape recorder as Nixon was, and the creation of Terkel’s archives is testimony to that endeavor, as well as the fact that Studs’ first autobiography was called “Talking to Myself”... be kind, and rewind.

May 8th marks the 97th birthday of Studs Terkel, (who passed away on October 31, 2008). In our Section’s annual report I suggested to SAA Council to honor Mr. Terkel via an award or resolution. At Council’s midwinter meeting they asked me to make a proposal to the Awards Committee. If the Section concurs, the appropriate action would be a MOTION to authorize an SAA Resolution Honoring Studs Terkel (see proposed draft below).

Studs had the ability to narrate history orally – and would help confront the issue most archival oral historians deal with in terms of giving an identity to the increased popularity of oral history collections being recognized for their own merit (as more written records are being digitized); spotlighting archives that collect and interpret their “aural” history collections; and finally what better way to help SAA celebrate its own anniversary than by celebrating Studs, whose life spanned the history of SAA – from Roosevelt’s New Deal to Obama’s New Era of transparency. Finally, by looking at the Studs Terkel Center for Oral History, our Section also becomes an advocate for the access, use and interpretation of oral history products that too often languish in backlog/or storage.

Some might well ask why honor Studs since he has received so many awards? My response concerns one agenda: further recognition of archival oral history. The Oral History Association honored Studs in 1995 in Milwaukee, and plans to again (posthumously) to honor him this October at the annual conference in Louisville. And for us, it was in 1997 that our Section first honored Studs at a session I organized in Chicago at the SAA annual meeting, with Fred Calabretta (Mystic Seaport Museum). At the time the late Archie Motley from the Chicago Historical Society was Terkel’s archivist. The SAA Oral History Section endorsed the session, and Studs was given a recognition which is worth repeating here, in that it helps set the tone for an approach to a current award/ recognition:

MYSTIC SEAPORT MUESUM, Inc. 75
Greenmanville Ave. Mystic, CT 06355
May 27, 1997
Mr. Studs Terkel WFMT Radio
5400 N. St. Louis Avenue Chicago, IL 60625-4698

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FROM THE CHAIR (continued)

Dear Mr. Terkel:

I am writing on behalf of the Oral History Section of the Society of American Archivists (SAA). The SAA is the premier professional organization within the archival community of the United States, providing leadership to help ensure the identification, preservation, and use of the nation's historical record. The Oral History Section, one of a number of special focus groups within SAA, consists of over 400 members with a common interest in, and commitment to, the oral history process.

Your work has been an inspiration to so many of us, and has effectively served to promote oral history and heighten the general awareness of its uniqueness and value. You have given a voice to many people who's stories wouldn't have otherwise been told, and you have inspired many of us to record those voices and preserve those stories.

In recognition of your work and contributions in the field of oral history, and as an expression of our gratitude, the SAA's Oral History Section would like to present you with a certificate of appreciation during the SAA's 1997 annual meeting, to be held August 25-31 at Chicago's Fairmont Hotel.

As I believe you are aware, this year's program will include a session entitled "Giving Workers a Voice: Studs Terkel's Oral History Archives and His Contributions to Working Class History," to be chaired by Alan Stein. This session is scheduled on the morning of Friday, August 29, from 10:30-12:30. The panel members have enthusiastically agreed to permit me a few minutes to present you with the certificate prior to their program. This would be a very brief presentation, and it would be an honor if you would be able to join us.

At your convenience, please let me know if you will be able to be present. I would be delighted to meet you. Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Fred Calabretta, Chair
Oral History Section/Society of American Archivists

Proposed [DRAFT] SAA Council Resolution Honoring Oral Historian Louis "Studs" Terkel, submitted by Al Stein, Section Chair

Whereas Studs Terkel has made outstanding contributions to archival oral history, the National Gallery of the Spoken Word, based at Michigan State University, and to Chicago's cultural record at the

Chicago History Museum; and

Whereas sound recordings in general, and oral history recordings in particular, have established a significant and rapidly increasing presence within multimedia archives; and

Whereas the Studs Terkel Center for Oral History (at the Chicago History Museum) presents both a case study and an examination of one of the country's most important and popular oral history archives; and

Whereas the SAA Oral History Section recognized Studs Terkel, and as an expression of our gratitude presented Mr. Terkel with a Certificate of Appreciation during SAA's 62nd annual meeting, August 25-31, 1997 in Chicago; and

Whereas the SAA Oral History Section endorsed the Studs Terkel Plenary Session "Free Speech, Free Spirit: the Studs Terkel Center for Oral History" at SAA's 71st Annual Meeting, August 28–September 2, 2007; and

Whereas Studs Terkel's work has been an inspiration to so many of us, and has effectively served to promote oral history and heighten the general awareness of its uniqueness and value; and

Whereas Studs Terkel has given a voice to many people who's stories wouldn't have otherwise been told, and has inspired many of us to record those voices and preserve those stories; and

Whereas this resolution will enhance appreciation for the value of the oral history process in general and for the contributions and significance of Studs Terkel's works in the field of archival oral history;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the SAA Oral History Section recognizes and thanks Louis Studs Terkel for his outstanding contributions to the field of oral history and the archives profession by preserving the cultural record through the spoken word.

DRAFT: April 20, 2009

FROM THE PAST CHAIR

Oral History Section elections move to online format

Lauren Kata
Past Chair/Nominating Committee Chair

As we discussed at last year's Section meeting in San Francisco, this year the section is taking advantage of the services offered by SAA Headquarters staff and moving to an online ballot for officer and steering committee elections. We'll be holding elections prior to the annual meeting, and will then install new officers and committee members at the meeting in Austin.

From now through mid-May, we are accepting nominations for the position of Vice Chair/Chair-Elect, and Steering Committee member for the 2009-2011 term (2 open positions). We'll create and post a special newsletter at the end of May that includes candidate bios and the draft by-laws revision.

Section members are encouraged to consider this great professional development opportunity. For more information about what the responsibilities

entail, please take a moment to review the current OH Section by-laws:

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

(Please note that our ballot will also include a by-laws revision to reflect changes in the election process.)

The online election will take place during the month of June. Results will be announced at the annual meeting—and via the email list, for those who will not be attending the meeting in Austin.

Please send nominations to Lauren Kata (lauren.kata@gmail.com) by Friday, May 15. Candidates will be asked to provide a brief description of their work/background (100-150 words) to be included on the ballot. We're hopeful that moving to an online format will allow more section members to participate in the election process. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like information about requesting a paper ballot, please feel free to contact me.

Looking forward to receiving this year's nominations!

SPOTLIGHT: PRESIDENT-RELATED ORAL HISTORIES

Obama Volunteers Story Project

By Cyns Nelson

A movement is underway to capture the stories of individuals who dedicated time and energy to the presidential campaign of Barack Obama. The project stems from volunteers who saw that their experience transcended politics; the "Campaign for Change" became a catalyst for individual and communal engagement. Volunteer groups are still going strong, and people are hungry to share their stories and contribute to the national understanding of a historic turning point.

In Arapahoe County, Colorado, researchers Steve Kennedy and Cyns Nelson are beginning to record volunteers' reflections. Steve's background is social work, education, and community organizing; Cyns has a degree in library science, with expertise in the creation and organization of oral history collections.

To date, six interviews have been completed and 42 people have been contacted. Many of the volunteers are older and/or retired, and their stories lend rich perspective to a grassroots movement largely seen as youth driven. Their voices explain how and why people became impassioned.

Arapahoe County may be a starting point, but the scope of this project is expanding throughout Colorado (to Denver and to Boulder) and could easily become national, with pockets of interviews representing different regions of the country. Chicago State University has joined as a sponsor, and the Center for Digital Storytelling is also involved. More partners are needed! We are looking for institutional support, collaborators, and interviewers who can work within their locales. Please contact Cyns Nelson (cynsnelson@voicepreserve.org) if you'd like more information about project developments and how you can participate.

SPOTLIGHT: PRESIDENT-RELATED ORAL HISTORIES (continued)

As we think about the complexion of our presidential archives, the 2008 election becomes more and more exciting—especially for oral historians. The popular foundation of Mr. Obama's victory is laced with individual connections and shared stories; we have an incredible opportunity to make these narratives a living, breathing part of history even as it unfolds.

Inauguration 2009 Sermons & Orations Project

By Nancy Groce and Megan Halsband

American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

On January 20, 2009, the United States inaugurated Barack Obama, the country's first African American president. To mark this historic moment, the Library of Congress's American Folklife Center (AFC) instituted the Inauguration 2009 Sermons & Orations Project, a nation-wide effort to collect audio and video recordings of sermons and orations that comment on the significance of Obama's inauguration.

With the cooperation of press organizations and religious networks throughout the country, congregations and secular organizations were asked to assist the American Folklife Center by documenting sermons and orations delivered during Inauguration Week 2009 and donating them to the Library of Congress. Specifically, AFC requested audio recordings, video recordings, and/or written texts of sermons commenting on the 2009 inauguration that were delivered between Friday, January 16th and Sunday, January 25th. Photos and printed programs from the gatherings during which the sermons and orations were delivered and documented were also requested. Acceptable formats, suggestions of how to make high-quality recordings, as well as a mandatory Participant Release Form and a mandatory Information Form requesting additional details about when and where the material was gathered were included on the AFC website. Anticipating that not all organizations involved might have access to the

Internet, a contact phone number was included in AFC's press announcements, and hard copies of the instructions and the required forms were mailed to interested parties upon request.

The amount of interest generated by this project and number of donations already submitted is substantial. To date, we have received more than 100 submissions from 33 states; the number continues to grow with each mail delivery. Submissions have come from churches, mosques, synagogues, humanist groups, and secular organizations, ranging from giant super-churches to tiny secular organizations to academic institutions. The first submission came from a mosque in Missoula, Montana; the one-hundredth submission documents a poetry reading in Oakhurst, California. Several overseas submissions have also arrived or have been promised. Many submissions arrive with enthusiastic comments about being able to assist the Library in documenting history.

After being processed by AFC's archivists, the Inauguration 2009 Sermons & Orations Project collection will be preserved at the American Folklife Center and made available to scholars, students and the general public. The collection will become one of many oral history and spoken-word collections at the Center that preserve American's accounts of, and reactions to, important cultural events. Over many decades, the American Folklife Center has documented everyday citizens' reactions to major historic events in our collective American experience. For example, AFC's archive includes man-on-the-street interviews recorded the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, interviews with Americans across the nation in the weeks following the tragedy of September 11, and personal-experience stories of Americans who served the nation in wartime. These voices of ordinary Americans responding to extraordinary events exist as valuable research collections for the scholars of today, and they are a cultural legacy preserved for future generations. For more information on the Inauguration 2009 Sermons & Orations Project, please visit the Center's website: www.loc.gov/folklife/inaugural/.

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ORAL HISTORY SPOTLIGHT (continued)

FDR and Herbert Hoover: Deciphering Their Friendship and Rivalry

By Donald A. Ritchie
Senate Historical Office

For an oral historian writing about the presidential election of 1932 [*Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932* (University Press of Kansas, 2007)], there clearly would be no participants left to question. I would need to rely on interviews conducted by others, along with memoirs, newspapers, and archival records. My research took me to the Herbert Hoover, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Harry S. Truman presidential libraries, and to the manuscript division at the Library of Congress, and the Columbia Oral History Research Office. I reviewed the papers and interviews of the candidates, their advisors, and the journalists who covered them in a pivotal election that created a sweeping political realignment and dramatically changed the direction of federal policy.

I found that the Democratic and Republican candidates, Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover, had been friends during the Woodrow Wilson administration, and had briefly entertained the notion of a Democratic Hoover-Roosevelt ticket in 1920, before Hoover declared himself a Republican. By 1932 they had become bitter rivals, barely talking to each other on the way to Roosevelt's inauguration. One instance that proved particularly telling demonstrated the value of oral history when combined other documentary sources.



Governor and Mrs. Roosevelt, dinner guests of President Herbert Hoover, at the White House, April 28, 1932.

Photo courtesy of Library of Congress. Public Domain.

In April 1932, when Roosevelt was governor of New York and a contender for the Democratic nomination to run against the Depression-battered Hoover, the nation's governors dined at the White House. Roosevelt had lost the use of his legs to polio, but

could stand with difficulty using leg braces and a cane. He arrived by a special entrance, took the elevator to the hall leading to the state dining room, and waited patiently with the other governors. Hoover knew of the elaborate preparations to facilitate Roosevelt's movements, but despite his own reputation for punctuality he was inexplicably half an hour late that evening. During the wait, White House personnel offered Roosevelt a chair, which he declined, although in obvious discomfort. The longer they waited, the more Eleanor Roosevelt became convinced that Hoover was deliberately putting her husband through an endurance test. She later told FDR's biographer, Frank Friedel, that she and her husband were "absolutely convinced" that Hoover had stayed away purposefully to prove that Roosevelt would collapse and was not capable of being president. Friedel considered it "absolutely preposterous" that Hoover would do such a thing.

FDR had sent word that he would need "a strong, sturdy chair" at the table where he would be sitting and a strong man to hold the chair. The Hoover Presidential Library holds an oral history with Alonzo Fields, the White House butler who got that assignment. Fields recalled how Roosevelt literally fell into the chair. His legs shot straight out until he unlocked each brace and then discreetly arranged himself to face the table. The awkwardness of this gesture made it clear why he had not taken a seat in full view of the other guests in the reception hall.

Hoover's physician, Joel T. Boone, also provided an oral history for the library's collection, and he described a conversation that Hoover had with a close circle of his advisors at his fishing camp. Hoover reminisced how he and Roosevelt had once been neighbors, and while he found Roosevelt "a pleasant fellow and well meaning," he considered him lacking any grasp of the issues facing the nation. The president asked his doctor about the chances that Roosevelt might "collapse in office." Boone agreed that it would be impossible for a man in his condition to run for national office, and that Americans would never elect a "half-man." Supreme Court Justice Harlan Stone, however, warned them against selling Roosevelt short. Stone had seen Roosevelt speak and reminded them that "He has a magnificent torso, and he has a wonderful warm voice, and a gracious smile."

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ORAL HISTORY SPOTLIGHT (continued)

Hoover's appointments log verified that the circle of participants Dr. Boone named in his interview—decades later—had indeed gathered at the fishing camp on the day after the governor's dinner.

In this case, the oral evidence lifts a veil on aspects of a personal relationship inadequately reflected in political documents and helps explain why Hoover underestimated Roosevelt as a challenger and waited so long to mount a serious campaign against him. President Hoover expected FDR's personal appearances to reveal his limitations and thought that he could safely run a "Rose Garden" campaign, staying in Washington and acting presidential. By the time he realized his mistake, the election was just weeks away. That's the kind of convergence of sources that historians crave and that makes oral history so valuable.

The Nixon Presidency: Real-time and Structured Conversations

By Maarja Krusten
Historian and former National Archives archivist

Under a law passed in 1974, the National Archives took possession of President Richard Nixon's White House documents and tapes in 1977. My colleagues and I first worked with Nixon's taped real-time Presidential conversations. We then moved on to doing oral history interviews.

Our first task was to find out what was on the 3,700 hours of White House tapes. In 1979, Supervisory Archivist Fred Graboske likened it to "listening to a group of professors deliver rambling lectures and attempting to organize them and take notes. The system is very good at picking up sirens, airplanes, and lawn mowers, but is not so good at picking up the human voice."¹ Some of the tapes had poor sound quality. Archives' engineers taught us to use spectrum analyzers, notch filters and parametric equalizers to produce "enhanced" reference copies.

Graboske recently explained why the National Archives only transcribed a few excerpts for court cases: "These are what are called 'natural conversation' as opposed to the structured conversation of a speech

or an oral history interview. Tone and inflection are more important in natural conversation than in other types. Transcription cannot render these."²

He added, "At 100 hours of staff time per hour of conversation . . . it would have taken 400,000 staff hours to produce transcripts. . . My staff varied in size between 6 and 8 people. 8 people would have taken 25 years to transcribe the tapes." Instead, we described the tapes in subject logs (examples at <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov>.)

In the late 1980s, we decided to start a program of oral history interviews. We sought the perspectives of the historical figures but also saw an opportunity for outreach. Until we started the interviews, we archivists largely had been sequestered in our work. Doing oral history gave us a chance to make contact with key people outside the National Archives. Outreach had a two-way potential for humanization and insights.

Working with Nixon's associates gave Graboske and his team opportunities to display the professional qualities to which federal archivists aspire. Given the controversies that surrounded Nixon, several of the people we interviewed welcomed the chance to tell their side of the story. It was a mutually beneficial experience.



Maarja Krusten working at NARA, ca. mid-1980s.

In 1987 and 1988, we interviewed H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, Charles W. Colson and other

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ORAL HISTORY SPOTLIGHT (continued)

Nixon administration officials. Haldeman's interview was especially valuable. He offered very candid, insightful comments about what worked well and what did not in the Nixon White House. As an introspective person, he proved to be a great interviewee. <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forresearchers/find/histories.php>.

Although it got off to a good start, the oral history effort only lasted a couple of years. After 1990, it was put on hold, in part because of personnel shifts. In recent years, the National Archives revived the oral history effort. Not only will historians benefit, but the new oral history initiative also offers interns and permanent staff at the Nixon Library great projects on which to work.

(Endnotes)

1 "Tight Security Veils Complex Task of Archivists with Nixon's Tapes," *New York Times*, June 30, 1979.

2 <http://hnn.us/readcomment.php?id=132432&bheaders=1#132432>

Oral History Collections at the Jimmy Carter Library

By Albert Nason
Archivist, Jimmy Carter Library

The Jimmy Carter Library opened on October 1, 1986 and is part of the Presidential Libraries branch of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The primary holdings consist of the White House paperwork of the Carter administration but the Library also holds a variety of oral history collections intended to extend the understanding of the staff and functions of the Carter presidency. They are also useful in shedding light on the personalities and backgrounds of individuals connected with the administration.

The main collection is called the White House Exit Interviews, consisting of interviews of outgoing White House staff members made over 30 years ago. Some of the interviews were conducted during the Carter years when staff members resigned for other jobs but the majority were made in the last months of

the administration or the beginning of the Reagan administration. Some of them are quite lengthy—100 pages or more—and go into great detail about major policy issues; others are simply brief accounts describing the person's background and job. Many of the Carter staff members (Warren Christopher, Madeleine Albright, Donna Shalala, Stuart Eizenstat) were later members of succeeding presidential administrations while others (James Fallows, Chris Matthews) made notable careers in other fields.

There are approximately 140 of these Exit Interviews, most of them in the public domain. These oral histories are available on audiotape and, as time and staff allow, typewritten transcripts are created and posted on the Carter Library website (<http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/>). Since most were created as part of the job description of the individual involved, there are few editing or copyright problems. Light editing is done, mainly to eliminate false starts and tighten the dialogue. Names are corrected or extended, or job positions identified, in parenthetical notes. The interviews were conducted by staff of the National Archives.

A second large collection is available at Carter Library through the courtesy of the University of Virginia's Burkett White Miller oral histories from their Jimmy Carter presidential project. These are, of course, available directly from the University of Virginia, along with their other presidential projects. These interviews concern some of the top players in the Carter administration, including some already interviewed in the Exit Interviews above, but the focus is more on higher policy and political problems rather than projects and jobs. The interviewers are historians and political scientists unconnected with the National Archives.

Especially valued by biographers are the Carter/Smith Family oral histories, which include interviews of family members, teachers, friends, and neighbors of both Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn Smith Carter. These have been opened to the public as deeds of gift are acquired from the interviewees and most are also available on the Jimmy Carter Library website.

A similar collection is the National Park Service's Plains, Georgia, project which also interviews family

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ORAL HISTORY SPOTLIGHT (continued)

and friends of the Carter family. These interviews were performed for a national park near Plains, Georgia, but copies were given to Carter Library and they are in the public domain.

A smaller collection entitled simply "Miscellaneous Interviews" are individual interviews conducted elsewhere but later donated to the Carter Library along with their copyrights.

The last and most recent collection is the Carter Center Oral Histories which consist of interviews detailing the history of the Jimmy Carter Library and its sister organization, the Jimmy Carter Center. (The Carter Library is concerned with preserving the history of the Carter administration while the Carter Center is concerned with the ongoing projects of the former President with international conferences, elections, and health programs for underdeveloped nations.) The Carter Center has no archives open to the public but does transfer its inactive records to the

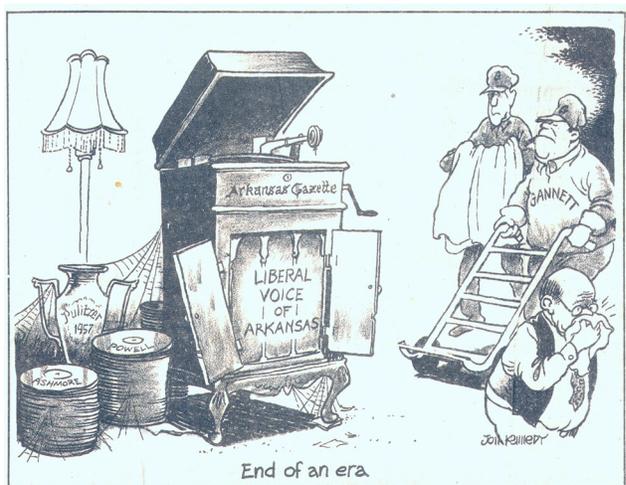
Carter Library, where they will eventually be made available to researchers. The Carter Center interviews were conducted by Martin I. Elzy, retired Deputy Director of the Carter Library, and by Kay Hamner, a longtime official at the Carter Center, also retired.

Elzy's interviews updated Carter family member oral histories to the post-presidential period, and he also recorded talks with Georgia political personages who had extensive contact with Jimmy Carter as governor of Georgia. Kay Hamner was herself involved in setting up many arrangements establishing the Carter Center. She then interviewed many of the lawyers, archivists and planners working with the Center. Particularly interesting is her interview with lawyer Dayle Powell Spencer, who aided President Carter in setting up the Carter Center's conflict resolution center, which later became involved in mediating differences between political rivals in Haiti, Nicaragua and other countries.

ORAL HISTORY NEWS

Arkansas Newspaper War Documented in New Project

Submitted by Diane F. Worrell



Arkansas Democrat cartoonist Jon Kennedy mourns the sale of the Arkansas Gazette to Gannett in 1986. From the Margaret Smith Ross Collection, Box 62, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries.

After three years of effort, an oral history project to record the story of the Arkansas Democrat newspaper has been completed by the Special Collections Department of the University of Arkansas Libraries. Working through the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral & Visual History, more than 100 interviews were conducted with people who worked for the Democrat. Transcriptions of the interviews have been posted on the Libraries' Web site.

Established in 1878, the Arkansas Democrat was a competitor with the much older and highly regarded Arkansas Gazette. Widely touted as the "Old Grey Lady," the Gazette was a vigorous newspaper with a reputation for quality coverage of the entire state. By comparison, the Democrat was traditionally seen as the underdog.

Jerry McConnell, the veteran reporter and editor who coordinated the Arkansas Democrat oral history project, worked at the Democrat on more than one occasion. He believes that being number two often causes reporters to try harder. McConnell observed that, "While the Democrat had less money, paid

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ORAL HISTORY NEWS (continued)

lower salaries and had poorer fringe benefits (if any), it was staffed with young, eager journalists trying to make their mark in the profession by competing with, and sometimes beating, the Arkansas Gazette. Many of them went on to distinguished careers in the newspaper business.”

The oral history interviews provide interesting accounts of the great newspaper war of the late 20th century between the Democrat and the Gazette. The two newspapers had been competing for nearly a century in 1974 when a young Walter Hussman, Jr. purchased the Democrat and announced his intentions to compete with the Gazette. Over the next two decades Little Rock and Arkansas witnessed a take-no-prisoners newspaper war that ultimately ended in 1991 when the Gazette surrendered.

Hussman was interviewed twice for the Project, and he provided extensive background on the newspaper war. Another interviewee was Ozell Sutton, the first African American reporter to work for an Arkansas daily newspaper. Sutton told how he insisted on using the courtesy title of “Mrs.” when referring to black women, a practice traditionally forbidden by racist attitudes.

Among the many other people interviewed were cartoonist Jon Kennedy, veteran reporter and editorial writer Robert McCord, and Rex Nelson, Mara Leveritt, Mike Masterson, Bob Lancaster, Wally Hall, Bill Husted, and Sam Dickinson.

The Arkansas Democrat oral history project complements the Arkansas Gazette oral history project completed in 2006. Tom W. Dillard, head of the Special Collections Department commented that, “The Arkansas Democrat oral history project vastly expands our knowledge of Arkansas journalism history. The great war between the Democrat and the Gazette was a defining moment in Arkansas history, and it is good to have it recorded in separate oral history projects with both the Gazette and now the Democrat.”

Transcripts of the Democrat interviews are available at <http://libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/pryorcenter/projects/ArkansasDemocrat/>. Transcripts of the Gazette interviews are available at <http://libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/pryorcenter/projects/ArkansasGazette/>.

[uark.edu/SpecialCollections/pryorcenter/projects/ArkansasGazette/](http://libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/pryorcenter/projects/ArkansasGazette/).

Immigrant Oral Histories Become Online Curriculum In IMLS Grant To Minnesota Historical Society

Submitted by James E. Fogerty

While the Minnesota Historical Society’s Oral History Office is best known for its projects on agriculture, the resort industry, environmental issues, and business, it has also assembled a major collection of projects dealing with the history of new immigrants to the state. In 1992, the MHS launched its first oral history project on recent immigration in cooperation with the India Association of Minnesota. The narrators in that project were chosen with an eye to diversity of birthplace in India and religion. They provided remarkable perspective on their lives and on the many facets of adjustment to American life and culture, and to settlement in Minnesota. The success of that project, and the rich historical information it provided, launched a joint effort of the Society and the India Association to ensure ongoing documentation of Minnesota’s important and growing Indian community. The Society and IAM completed their fifth oral history project in 2006.

The India oral history projects sparked interest in the Hmong, Cambodian (Khmer), Tibetan, and Somali communities – each of which has established a major presence in Minnesota. The Society has completed oral history projects in all of these communities dealing with issues of gender, acculturation, religion, education, and cultural retention. It is these interviews, together with the Indian projects, that form the basis for the proposed digitization project.

In preparing for the project, the Society staff conducted focus groups with elementary and secondary school teachers, and with members of the immigrant communities. Both groups expressed interest in having material from the interviews available for education. Access to these collections has been limited to on-site consultation in the Library

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ORAL HISTORY NEWS (continued)

at the History Center in St. Paul, and the interviews are available to users in audio formats that can be challenging to use in a classroom setting. Finally, teachers require curriculum packages that they can incorporate into their classrooms with few modifications since they do not have significant time to develop such materials.

With a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), MHS will create a Web-based product that focuses on the immigrant oral history collections, packaged for teachers and students which meets Minnesota Social Studies standards. In collaboration with immigrant groups and educators, oral history excerpts will be selected based on their relevance to the education standards and copied to a digital format that can be easily downloaded by teachers and students using current technology. The Web site will provide easy access to 250 full immigrant oral narrative transcripts, as well as to a selection of approximately 100 digitized audio excerpts, through a searchable database. These will be integrated into lesson plans and activities that can be used in a classroom setting. Teachers and students will be given the opportunity to learn about an important aspect of Minnesota history and broaden their perspectives on the ethnic and cultural diversity of the state.

For more information contact James E. Fogerty (james.fogerty@mnhs.org).

News from the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

Submitted by Barbara Aikens



Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner in Pollock's studio, ca. 1950. Black and white photographic print, 13 x 16 cm. Rudy Burckhardt, photographer. Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner papers, circa 1905-1984. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The book *Speaking of Art: Selections from the Archives of American Art Oral History Collection (1958-2008)* celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Archives of American Art's oral history program with excerpts from some of the Archives' most fascinating interview transcripts. Sculptor Isamu Noguchi recalls his

apprenticeship with Constantin Brancusi in Paris in 1927; legendary curator Katherine Kuh speaks about her visits with Mark Rothko; and painter Agnes Martin explains why she considers herself to be an Abstract Expressionist. These interviews, along with nearly 3,000 others in the Archives' collection, chronicle the great diversity of the American scene, augmenting and refining our perception of individual artists, dealers, critics, and curators and their social worlds.

A related exhibition in Washington, D.C. at the Lawrence A. Fleischman Gallery inside the Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture ended on March 15, 2009. The Archives selected audio excerpts from some of its most fascinating interviews and paired them with photographs from the archival collections. A sample of the audio clips included Lee Krasner rejecting the word 'drip' as an accurate descriptor of Jackson Pollock's paintings; Charles Burchfield reading poems that he penned on the verso of his paintings; and Emmy Lou Packard recounting working with Diego Rivera on the Pan-American Unity mural in 1940.

An online component of the exhibition includes audio clips, interview transcripts, and photographs for interviews with Charles Burchfield, Carmen Lomas Garza, Paul Cadmus and George Tooker, Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner, Robert Motherwell, Dominic Di Mare, Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Katherine Schmidt, Roy De Forest, Charles Henry Alston, William T. Wiley, Emmy Lou Packard and Diego Rivera, and Robert C. Scull: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/exhibits/index.cfm/fuseaction/projects.projectitems/projectID/167>.



Charles Henry Alston at work in his studio, circa 1937. Albumen photograph, 18 x 13 cm. Unidentified photographer. Charles Henry Alston papers, 1928-1980. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The Archives of American Art has nearly 750 oral history interview transcripts available on its website. Audio clips from thirty interviews are also found here: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/>.

ORAL HISTORY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Texas History Day

On May 20-21, 2009*, you are invited to witness amazing oral history documentary work created by some of our state's most talented young people. Each year since 1989, the Texas Oral History Association (TOHA) has recognized the outstanding work of junior and senior high students who use oral history in their Texas History Day entries. This year, the award focuses on individual students who create documentaries on a topic that fits the annual theme: The Individual in History.

The TOHA Oral History Award recognizes outstanding oral history work by students. Winners receive a medal and a certificate. Entrants must: a) Conduct at least three oral history interviews that relate directly to the topic and record historically-significant memories; b) Audio or video record the interviews and have the recordings available for the judges; c) Demonstrate ways information from the oral history interviews was used in their project; and d) List the interviews in the annotated bibliography.

Learn more about Texas History Day at <http://www.tshaonline.org/education/thd/index.html>.

Read about the outcomes of last year's award at <http://www.baylor.edu/TOHA/index.php?id=29364>.

**Editor's Note: This event was originally planned for May 9, 2009, as printed in the previous version of this newsletter. See postponement announcement at: <http://www.tshaonline.org/education/thd/postpone.pdf>.*

Oral History Institute in Gambier, Ohio

If you are doing an oral history project or are thinking about doing one, you should apply to attend this year's Oral History Institute, June 2-4 on the beautiful campus of Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. The program trains participants in planning and conducting successful oral history projects. Emphasizing hands-on experience, topics covered in the two-and-a-half-day schedule include framing questions, interviewing techniques, transcribing and archiving, and devising public programs based on oral history. To develop these skills, participants will work

on a practice project that encompasses all stages of oral history, and will also have time to consult with experts about planned projects. Sessions on using technology in oral history and on fundraising will also be available.

The faculty consists of professors from the fields of History, Sociology, Archiving, and Telecommunications who all have extensive experience with Oral History.

We encourage volunteers or paid staff from local historical organizations, libraries, schools, and colleges and universities to apply. Admission to the institute is limited to thirty and is competitive. The cost of the institute is \$275, which includes two nights stay, six meals, and all other workshop materials. The Ohio Humanities Council is making available partial scholarships for Ohio residents to subsidize the cost of the institute. You can download an application from www.ohiohumanities.org, or contact the Ohio Humanities Council at (800) 293-9774 or frankd@ohiohumanities.org. The application deadline is May 4.

The Oral History Institute is co-sponsored by the Ohio Humanities Council and The Rural Life Center at Kenyon College, in cooperation with Ohio Association of Historical Societies and Museums and the Ohio Historical Society.

The Labor Working Class History Association presents "Oral History and Labor History"

Al Stein will serve as the chair for a workshop entitled, "Oral History and Labor History" at the upcoming Labor and Working-Class History Association Meeting, May 28-31, 2009 at Roosevelt University. The workshop is scheduled for 5:00-6:30pm on Saturday, May 30th.

As Chicago developed into a metropolis, it became a city "proud to be Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation." Control over these and other jobs over

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ORAL HISTORY ANNOUNCEMENTS (continued)

the past two centuries also provoked the formation of organized labor, civil rights, and other working-class movements. Meeting in Chicago, Carl Sandburg's "City of Big Shoulders," this joint conference aims to bring together academics, activists, and other enthusiasts of labor history and culture.

For more information on the conference including the conference schedule, registration and housing information please [click here](#).

Workshop Participants:

Jim Wolfinger, DePaul University

Betty Balanoff, Roosevelt University, emeriti

Joe Lambert, Center for Digital Storytelling

Erin McCarthy, Columbia College, Chicago

Al Stein, Chicago State University

Kieran Taylor, Citadel and Southern Oral History Project, University of North Carolina

Timuel Black, Professor Emeritus, City Colleges of Chicago

Sussex Master of Arts in Life History Research

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Part-time or full-time, flexible study

- Oral history
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- Documentary

The University of Sussex is a leading international centre for life history and life writing research and teaching. This MA has close links with oral and community history projects and draws upon the Mass Observation Archive—a major international

resource and the base for an ongoing research project in autobiographical and documentary writing. MA students can take a public history placement in an archive, museum or other public history workplace.

For further details, including on what some of our alumni are doing now, please see the [Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research](#).

Or contact the course convenor Margaretta Jolly

E: m.jolly@sussex.ac.uk or g.holloway@sussex.ac.uk

T: 01273 877888 or 01273 873575

SAA Oral History Section Annual Meeting - Preliminary Agenda

Friday, August 14, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm, Austin, Texas

1:00 – 1:20: Section Business

1:20 – 1:40: Kelvin D. Crow (Presentation on Oral History at the Combat Studies Institute)

1:40 – 2:00: Ben Alexander, Lauren Kata, Alan Stein, SAA representative: (remarks on the 75th anniversary)

2:00 – 3:00: Live interview (James Fogerty interview with David Gracy)

A live interview conducted by noted oral historian James E. Fogerty with long time SAA member and educator Dr. David B. Gracy III will be the feature presentation. The interview will be part of the section's effort to record narratives of SAA members in preparation for the organization's 75th anniversary.

To register for the Joint Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists and the Council of State Archivists, go [here](#).



Purpose of the SAA Oral History Section

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.

Read the rest of the Section's [By-laws](#)

Steering Committee Members

2008-2009

Section Chair

Al Stein
Chicago State University
astein@csu.edu

Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect

Mark Cave
The Historic New Orleans Collection
markc@hnoc.org

Past Section Chair & Nominating Committee Chair

Lauren Kata
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Newsletter Editor/Ex-officio Member

Joel Minor
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New leadership assumes office at the close of the annual meeting of the section.



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