

# Texas Oral History Association

## SOUND BITES

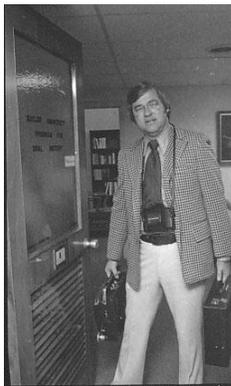
SINCE 1983

SUMMER 2010

### *TOHA Founder, Tom Charlton, completes 40 years at Baylor University*



*Tom first recorded interviews on open-reel tapes. Transcribers used electric typewriters and made carbon-paper copies.*



*Tom grasped every opportunity to catch a good story He still does!*



*Every Texas historical site captures Tom's interest.*

Tom Charlton loves Texas history! He has devoted his career to teaching and preserving the state's history, a vocation he pursues with contagious enthusiasm. Tom has inspired countless college students and community people across the state to open their eyes and ears to the history surrounding them every day. Whether they know it or not, almost every oral history program and project in Texas has some connection that is eventually traceable to Tom Charlton's influence.

In 1970, Tom founded the Baylor University Institute for Oral History (BUIOH), and he served as its director for the next twenty-three years. He has accumulated a record 484 interviews to date for Baylor, with more to come. The Baylor oral history collection reflects the broad range of individual life histories he helped create—including oral histories with the three presidents who served Baylor from 1947 to 1995; local Central Texas business leaders, as well as Dr Pepper chief Woodrow “Foots” Clements and Word Records founder Jarrell McCracken; legislative and judicial figures, from Texas Supreme Court Justice Robert Calvert to Congressman Bob Poage to Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski; and dozens of Texas Baptist leaders, as well as famed atheist Madalyn Murray O’Hair.

In 1982, Tom planted the seeds from which grew the Texas Oral History Association, so naturally TOHA thought of him first when initiating its award for outstanding oral historians, now named the Thomas L. Charlton Lifetime Achievement Award. Space prevents our listing here his publications and leadership roles in TOHA and the national Oral History Association, but you can learn more about his overall contributions to oral history on the TOHA awards pages at <http://www.baylor.edu/toha/index.php?id=29474>.

Over the past several years, as head of Baylor's special collections library, The Texas Collection, Tom has spent much of his time promoting historical preservation in Independence, Texas, Baylor's birthplace. Among his goals for this summer are continuing to gather oral histories from longtime residents of Independence. After his retirement August 1, Tom will be living in Fort Worth. Share your congratulations and thanks with him by writing him at 4801 Silent Ridge Court E., Fort Worth, TX 76132, or e-mailing him at [Thomas\\_Charlton@baylor.edu](mailto:Thomas_Charlton@baylor.edu).

# TOHA Board of Directors News

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## 2010 Program Meeting and Spring Board Meeting

### *“Using Oral History to Document Civil Rights Movements in Texas”*

TOHA met in joint session with Texas State Historical Association on March 6, 2010, for a timely oral history session arranged by Michelle Mears. The program, chaired by Todd Moye, director of the University of North Texas Oral History Program, stimulated understanding on the topic of African American and Mexican American civil rights in Texas.

Robert Edison, Dallas ISD director of social studies, presented “Oral Histories of African American Educators from the Era of Segregation.” As the title suggests, this presentation stems from Edison’s many oral history interviews with black educators from the segregation era and documents an important chapter in the early history of civil rights organizing in Dallas.

Kristine Navarro, director of the Institute of Oral History at the University of Texas–El Paso, shared stories from “The Bracero Oral History Project,” a collection of more than four hundred interviews with Bracero participants from both sides of the US-Mexican border. The Bracero program, a federal guest worker program initially intended to address labor shortages during World War II, brought more than two million Mexicans to the US to work.

The rising costs of printing and postage have hit the association particularly hard, so in its spring 2010 meeting in Dallas, the TOHA Board of Directors voted for the following changes in TOHA’s membership dues and journal subscriptions:

- Annual membership for individuals, raised from \$10.00 to \$15.00.
- Annual membership for institutions, raised from \$25.00 to \$30.00.
- Individual copies of *Sound Historian* raised from \$5.00 to \$15.00.

The board also voted unanimously to award its lifetime achievement award to Dan K. Utley. Additional information on Dan’s extensive oral history work on behalf of Texas will appear in the next newsletter.



## *Awards: Texas History Day*

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TOHA recognized outstanding use of oral history in individual documentaries entered in the state’s history fair contest, held May 7-8, 2010, in Austin. We appreciate the time and talents of our 2010 Texas History Day judges: **L. Patrick Hughes, Paula Jameson, Hubert Miller, and Joel Minor.**

### JUNIOR CATEGORY (grades 6–8):

First place: Matthew Johnson, Tennyson Middle School, Waco, “Cameras in the Courtroom: The Story of the First Live Televised Trial.” Matthew also won first place in the state contest and will represent Texas at National History Day. Second place: Jovonne Ledet, Gentry Junior High School, Baytown, “DNA Fingerprinting: The Revolution in Handy Evidence.” Honorable mention: Francisco Castro, Clifton Middle School, Houston, “The X-Ray: The Mistake that Changed the World”

### SENIOR CATEGORY (grades 9–12):

First place: Wendy Gonzales, Eisenhower High School, Houston, “Built on the Strength of the People,” a documentary on Israeli kibbutzim. Second place: Ariella Noorily, Health Careers High School, San Antonio, “Drip Irrigation: Making the Desert Bloom.” Honorable mention: 1) James Voytek, Lee High School, Baytown, “The GI Bill: Preserving America’s Future and Freedom” 2) Ty Wilson, Madison High School, Houston, “Bondage, Enforcement, and Emancipation of the N-Word”

## TOHA Member News

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TOHA will be well represented on the Oral History Association program in Atlanta, Georgia, October 27-31. **Shruti Varadharajan**, a high school senior from Sugar Land who has been doing oral history since seventh grade, will present her documentaries of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Also on the program is **Peter J. Myers**, of San Antonio, who will share his successful use of oral history in his community college history classes. **Stephen Sloan**, of Waco, will moderate a panel on race, class, and Hurricane Katrina and participate in a roundtable on campus oral history programs. Another Texas-related session will focus on a grassroots oral history project in Mart, a small town at the intersections of McLennan, Falls, and Limestone Counties.

**Stewart Caffey**, of Abilene, has been appointed historian for the Abilene District of the United Methodist Church, which includes some fifty-plus churches.

Historic Waxahachie, Inc., a former winner of TOHA's Mary Faye Barnes Community Oral History

Award, has announced that its complete set of transcripts is now available for viewing at <http://sites.google.com/site/historicwaxahachie/home/oralhistories>.

Michelle Holland, editor at **Baylor University Institute for Oral History**, is writing scripts for the August debut of *Living Stories*, a new public radio series featuring memories gleaned from Baylor's oral history collection. Central Texas listeners can access the show on KWBU at 103.3FM. For those outside the listening area, the programs will be available on a new Web site, <http://www.baylor.edu/livingstories>.

**Thad Sitton's** new book on backcountry fox hunting will be out next October from the University of Texas Press. Titled *Gray Ghosts and Red Rangers: American Hilltop Fox Chasing*, the book captures memories of a masculine nocturnal backwoods experience practiced from

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### Confessions of an oral historian . . . .



The editor asked TOHA members to send in stories of their interviewing experiences. The following comments come from Stephen Sloan, director of the Baylor University Institute for Oral History, pictured here interviewing a veteran of World War II.

. . . your most common blooper when interviewing

A bad habit that I have always had while interviewing is my tendency to chuckle. Thankfully, it is usually appropriate to the conversation, but it often has the tendency to break up the textual flow of the transcripts of my interviews. My narrators' transcribed responses are occasionally broken up by a (Sloan laughs). But it has made me resolve that

anytime I do training I talk about the importance of *nonverbal* feedback with an interviewee—now if I could only fully learn that lesson.

. . . the person(s) who inspired you to do oral history

My mentor at Arizona State University, the late Dr. Noel Stowe, inspired me to do oral history. He pushed me to realize that history is always contested and constructed, and nothing else offers a fuller point at which all those forces meet better than an individual oral history.

Are you ready to confess? What was your most embarrassing moment in oral history? your proudest? most interesting? most common blooper? Who inspired you to do oral history? Send your comments to Lois Myers, [lois\\_myers@baylor.edu](mailto:lois_myers@baylor.edu), or call her at 254-710-6285.

# Project highlights

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## Shruti Varadharajan



### **Oral History: A Powerful Tool**

What is oral history? Oral history is a methodical collection of personal testimonies and is a powerful tool that brings forth the hidden voices of our communities. It could be in the form of an interview, a

handwritten transcript, or a taped memoir. Often many things in history are undocumented and lost with time, and oral history fills these gaps. Each one around us has a unique story to tell that has historical importance. By listening to these stories, we not only get an eyewitness account of an event, but we are also able to relate to that event and transport ourselves into that era. The story that touches one's heart poses the finest topic to research as one's interest in the topic will only amplify as the project progresses. With as much data collected in regards to the project, one can be overwhelmed with the information. This article discusses some tips for collecting this valuable treasure with ease and some of my experiences in conducting oral history interviews. Although there is no rule of thumb or a universal formula on how to collect oral history, these simple guidelines and techniques will simplify the process during the project.

### **Preliminary Steps**

It is highly important to do a good amount of research of the topic before starting any oral history project. This helps in deciding whom to interview, formulating questions for interviews, and interpreting the answers. It also gives a good start to look for other forms of testimonies. A thorough research also aids in formulating the thesis question and deciding on how other types of oral histories can help in achieving the goal of the project. It is not unusual to drift from one's initial goal during the project. I found myself doing something totally different from where I began

in my first project. I soon learned how important it is to focus on one idea and adhere to it throughout the project. A good planning of the project is of great advantage because this aids in deciding the budget, time frame, the equipment needed, etc., in an efficient manner.

### **Conducting Interviews**

After doing a considerable amount of research and once the interviewee list is ready, it is ideal to contact the interviewee and talk about the project in simple words. It is also important at this point to stress the fact that the information they provide will be used solely for the project and no misuse of the data will be done. Depending on the availability of the person, a prior appointment of the interview date assists in preparing for the interview. It has helped me in the past to mail the questions to the interviewee before the interview so the interviewee is prepared to some extent and knows what will be asked during the interview. This in a way also reminds the interviewee about the appointment. I normally practice my questions and try the equipment before I conduct the interview. I tape the date and location of the interview in my own voice before I record the interview. It is usually a little tricky to set up the recording of the interview on video. It is essential to pay attention to the light conditions, and if the interview is long then the use of artificial lighting system becomes mandatory because the natural light changes as the day progresses.

As I start the recording, my first question to the interviewee is always, Please state your name and your background. This also serves as an icebreaker and makes the interviewee comfortable. As the interview progresses, it is important to put the narrator in a comfort zone, establish a good rapport with the person, and be a good listener. The questions should be succinct and formulated in such a way so that the answers are not brief—the idea is to get detailed information. It is not a good idea to ask controversial questions in the beginning or to interrupt at any point of time. At the end of the interview, thanking the narrator for his or her time is a gratifying gesture, and it will be more heartwarming to send a thank-you note later

on too. After all, you have benefited exponentially from the information the narrator has provided you.

### **Post Interview Tips**

Normally, I like to maintain a tape log. The first thing I like to do after finishing the interview is to mark the tape with the date and the narrator's name. I also sometimes upload the digital files in proper project folders and make a hard copy of the interview on my computer. Although one has done a good amount of research before the interview, further research after the interview helps in relating available information with the first-hand information obtained from the narrator. This also helps in verifying and validating certain facts.

Till date, I have conducted over fifty oral history interviews, and each has been a unique experience. I love to research the history of science and explore

how the social aspects and the technological milestones in history were interrelated and how they influenced each other. The interviews I have collected range over a wide spectrum, covering individuals with technical backgrounds to commoners of the era, each enormously contributing to my projects. Each of the interviews has posed challenges in different ways, but it is the challenge that kept me going and has been the driving force. It has been a fascinating experience, and I plan to continue this wonderful adventure of collecting the hidden treasures that are difficult to find in books. To all readers of this article, I hope this article instigates an interest in collecting oral history and gives an easy start in the process.

*Shruti Varadharajan will be a senior at Anty International School in Houston this coming school year.*

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## *Kimberly Bacon*

### **More than a Mug Shot**

*"We grew up with a very loving family. My grandparents were great. We had just a very loving family. We had normal family functions: Easter picnic, family get-togethers such as you know. But when we were growing up we started noticing changes in James . . ."*

—Tina Duroy, interview with the Texas After Violence Project on August 11, 2008



texas after violence project

The Texas After Violence Project conducts oral history interviews with people directly affected by serious violence, the criminal justice system, incarcerations, and executions in Texas. Since our first interview in the spring of 2008, we have conducted close to ninety interviews ranging from one to six hours in length. Narrators include family members and friends of murder victims and executed people, attorneys, judges, jurors, corrections officers, and public actors.

Our aim is to offer alternatives to "official" histories by listening to the people behind the numbers, statistics, and sound bytes. We ask very few questions in our interviews and hope that we can provide narrators with the support and opportunity to have their

stories heard the way they want them told. Our approach reflects the understanding that the people whose voices need to be heard are not the ones writing history, but the ones silently living it.

"Official" histories are generated through newspaper articles, television reports, court transcripts, and police reports. While they may teach us about the age, race, and prior prison record of an individual, we know that these records are not only incomplete but also inadequate. For instance, we know from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice that James Blake Colburn, who was executed by the State of Texas on March 26, 2003, was "convicted in the murder of 55-year-old Peggy Murphy," whom he reportedly, "lured to his apartment where he attempted to rape her." Why? James "wanted to return to prison," according to TDCJ offender information.

"Official" records of those who have committed crimes ignore the person and focus on the crime. Here, offenders are one-dimensional and monstrous. They aren't like us. They are something to be feared, breathing manifestations of what's wrong with our society, the reason we lock our doors at night and don't go out alone. But they are like us; their lives are intertwined with ours.

In our interview with James's sister, Tina Duroy, we learn that James was "like every girl's big brother" in high school and would drive his sister and their friends anywhere they wished. As the firstborn in his



family, he was doted on by his grandparents. James liked to eat pats of butter in restaurants. Tina describes him as “everybody’s favorite.” He was “very sweet, artistic, articulate. I mean he was just very intelligent.”

James’ schizophrenia, however, was severely triggered after he was raped at the age of seventeen. He became paranoid and began to hallucinate and hear voices. The media didn’t report his attempted suicide by drinking liquid bleach or his inability to pay for his medication after his medical insurance ran out at the age of eighteen. We don’t know that he went missing for several weeks as a teenager while his family visited shelter after shelter trying to find him. Public information about James only tells us that he was a “murderer.” For the Texas public, this “understanding” makes James expendable. But James was a victim first. He was raped and then left to manage his schizophrenia without medical insurance or the means to receive treatment.

Oral history teaches us that violence does not exist in a vacuum. By interviewing people who have been directly touched by violent crime and the death penalty, we learn that people on Death Row were once captains of their football teams or had the talent to be major-league baseball players. They are brilliant artists, poets, and craftsmen. So what happened? Who are

these people we strap to gurneys with needles in their arms?

Through oral history we strive to correct and supplement the public record, to add the detail and nuance inherent in human life that is too often ignored or rejected because of its complexity. In a society where state-sanctioned murder is not only tolerated but accepted, it is our responsibility to know those we are condemning to die beyond their mug shots and to look instead at their baby pictures before we can even try to justify taking their lives.

Texas After Violence Project has recently partnered with the Human Rights Documentation Initiative (HDRI) at the University of Texas at Austin. Through this partnership, complete videos and transcripts of our public interviews will be available through a new social media software called Glifos. Glifos allows for searchability within individual interviews and entire collections. Users can enter in key words, names, locations, or phrases and will be directed to specific points within each interview where these terms are addressed. This technology takes oral history out of archives and libraries and expands its accessibility. As oral historians researching the causes and repercussions of violence, we recognize that we have a responsibility to make our materials as widely accessible as possible.

*Kim Bacon is associate director of Texas After Violence. Learn more and listen or view oral history interviews created by the project at <http://www.texasafterviolence.org>.*

## Worlds of Transcription

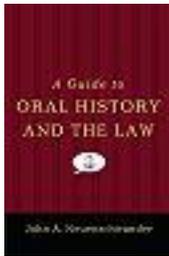
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# Oral History News



**Baylor University Institute for Oral History** is offering a live, online workshop, “Getting Started with Oral History,” on two consecutive Wednesdays in July 2010: July 21 and July 28, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This is the third online workshop for Baylor oral historians and the last one until 2011. Earlier workshops have attracted participants from Canada and Mexico, as well as from Texas and other US states coast to coast. From the convenience of your own home or office computer, you can receive six hours of instruction from experienced and knowledgeable oral historians. The \$75 registration fee also includes access to readings and oral history forms and ongoing consultation for your oral history project. View topics and access registration forms at [http://www.baylor.edu/oral\\_history](http://www.baylor.edu/oral_history).



Oral historians rely upon the expertise of John A. Neuenschwander to inform them about legal matters. An Oral History Association pamphlet series made Neuenschwander’s advice accessible in the past, and now Oxford University Press brings us a revised and enlarged edition, *A Guide to Oral History and the Law* (Oxford, 2009). The book include useful sample release forms. Also, Dr. Neuenschwander has started posting on OUPblog, a discussion blog sponsored by Oxford University Press. See the latest discussions on legal cases and other matters pertaining to oral history and the law at <http://blog.oup.com/?s=neuenschwander&Submit.x=30&Submit.y=5>.

Are you still unsure about switching from analog to digital recording? The Tape Transcription Center in Boston, Massachusetts, has created a table of pros and cons for analog and digital recordings on the factors of cost, market life, useful life, maintenance, learning curve, ease of use, audio quality, recording capacity, portability, management of content, and content use. Bottom line: Digital recording is here to stay.



“Digital Recording: Here to Stay”

<http://ttctranscriptions.com/Digitalvsanalog.html>.

Once you have made the switch to digital recording, you will discover many online helps. Here are some sites designed just for oral historians that provide practical tips on using and formatting digital equipment:

- Detailed instructions for the Marantz PMD 660 are provided by the Kentucky Oral History Commission at <http://history.ky.gov/pdf/Library/KOHC%20PMD%20660%20User%20Guide.pdf>.
- Watch video instruction on several preferred digital recorders at the Oral History Association’s technology page at <http://www.oralhistory.org/technology/recorders/>.
- Andy Rush of the University of Mary Washington provides an online digital audio tutorial, including instruction in using digital technology for recording and editing, as well as guidelines for digitizing analog tapes, at <http://www.umw.edu/training/inte/multimedia/audio/tutorial/index.htm>.



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# TOHA Calendar of Events

**June 24–26, 2010 – Korean War Conference: Commemorating the Sixtieth Anniversary, Victoria College/University of Houston–Victoria, Victoria, Texas**

Details at <http://vcuhvlibrary.uhv.edu/korea/home.htm>

**July 7–10, 2010 – International Oral History Association, Clarion Congress Hotel, Prague, Czech Republic**

Details at <http://www.ioha2010prague.cz>

**July 21 & 28, 2010 – Baylor University Institute for Oral History Online Workshop “Getting Started with Oral History”**

Details at [http://www.baylor.edu/oral\\_history](http://www.baylor.edu/oral_history)

**September 16 – 18, 2010 – East Texas Historical Association Fall Meeting, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas**

Details available at <http://www.easttexashistorical.org>

**October 27 – 31, 2010 – Oral History Association Annual Meeting, Sheraton Hotel Downtown, Atlanta, Georgia**

“Times of Crisis, Times of Change: Human Stories on the Edge of Transformation.” Learn more at <http://www.oralhistory.org>.

**February 17 – 19, 2011 – East Texas Historical Association Spring Meeting, Waco**

Details forthcoming at <http://swco.ttu.edu/westtexas>

**March 3 – 5, 2011 – Texas State Historical Association, Camino Real Hotel, El Paso, Texas**

Details available in January at <http://www.tshaonline.org>

**March 31–April 2, 2011 – West Texas Historical Association, Lubbock, Texas**

Details forthcoming at <http://www.wtha.org>

*SOUND BITES is an occasional newsletter of the Texas Oral History Association Board of Directors for the benefit of TOHA members. For questions, submissions, or comments, or to volunteer as a newsletter reporter, please contact Lois E. Myers at [lois\\_myers@baylor.edu](mailto:lois_myers@baylor.edu) or 254.710.6285. To access live links in the newsletter, view Sound Bites online at <http://www.baylor.edu/TOHA/index.php?id=29357>.*