

SOUND BITES from TOHA Board of Directors

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Summer 2002

Conrad Receives 2002 Lifetime Achievement Award

On March 7 the TOHA Board of Directors unanimously awarded the 2002 Thomas L. Charlton Lifetime Achievement Award to Dr. James H. Conrad. In making the nomination, Gerald Saxon, co-chair of the lifetime award committee, wrote the following tribute:

“Dr. James H. Conrad is essentially the face and voice of the oral history movement in East Texas—and has been for more than twenty years. Like most good oral historians, Conrad is quiet, unassuming, and intent on listening to what others have to say rather than promoting himself. His work on behalf of and using oral history, however, speaks for itself, and in the process speaks volumes.

Conrad received his B.A. from Wittenburg University, Springfield, Ohio, in 1962; his M.A. and Ph.D. from Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, in 1966 and 1974 respectively; and his Masters of Library Science from Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas, in 1975. He taught history at East Texas State University from 1967 to 1970 and again from 1972-1974. In 1976, he was appointed university archivist at the James G. Gee Library on the ETSU campus, a position he still holds.

At ETSU—now Texas A&M University Commerce—Conrad has shaped the oral history program in a significant way. The program was begun by Joe Fred Cox of the Department of History in 1970, but Conrad assumed supervision over the program in 1976 and began interviewing individuals to add to the growing collection and instituting procedures to make the interviews more accessible to researchers. Today there are more than 530 interviews in the collection.

In addition to serving as both university archivist and oral historian, Conrad has promoted oral history to historical societies, genealogical groups, professional organizations, and schools

for the past two decades. For example, he has presented oral history workshops for such diverse groups as the Dallas Bar Association, Hunt County Historical Commission, Hopkins County Genealogical Society, American Cotton Museum, and the Maxey House Museum, just to mention a few.

Much of Conrad’s scholarship incorporates the techniques of oral history to study and give meaning to the events, trends, and people of the past. His excellent book, *Every Sun That Rises: Wyatt Moore of Caddo Lake*, co-authored with Thad Sitton (the 2001 Charlton Lifetime Achievement Award recipient), uses oral history interviews to examine the colorful and extraordinary life of Wyatt Moore, a longtime Caddo Lake resident. The book has received numerous awards. Another of Conrad’s books, *Nameless Towns: Texas Sawmill Communities, 1880-1942*, also co-authored by Sitton, is largely based on oral history interviews as well. Conrad’s book *Developing Local History Programs in Community Libraries* includes an important and prescriptive chapter on how to do oral history aimed at librarians who administer local history collections. Conrad has used oral history techniques in many of his other publications as well, studying such diverse topics as a Texas planked pirogue and the James G. Gee Library.

Conrad is active in both professional and community organizations. He is a charter member of the Texas Oral History Association and attended the organizational meeting for the association in San Antonio in 1982. Conrad has served TOHA in several different capacities, including two terms as board member, 1985-1988 and 1995-2001; vice president, 1996-1997; and president, 1997-1998. He has also served on the TOHA Lifetime Achievement Award Committee. In addition, Conrad has been on the
(continued on page 2)

(Conrad, continued)

boards of the South Sulphur Regional Development Association,; East Texas History Association,; Hunt County Museum, and the Hunt County Historical Commission, where he served as chairman, 1987-1989. Conrad is active in the Oral History Association and has made several presentations at annual meetings.

Dr. Conrad's scholarship using oral history, his professional expertise, his advocacy of oral history to both professional and avocational audiences, and his willingness to serve the association when called upon make him an ideal selection for the Thomas L. Charlton Lifetime Achievement Award."



Three Projects Receive TOHA Community Awards

TOHA proudly announces three winners of the Mary Faye Barnes Award for Excellence in Community History Projects. Each of these projects exhibits imagination, innovation, and integrity in oral history research.

Dr. Kathleen Hudson, Kerrville

Gary Hartman, Director of the Institute for the History of Texas Music, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, nominated Hudson, a TOHA member since 1989, citing the following qualifications:

"Since 1986, Dr. Hudson has been conducting and compiling an extensive collection of oral interviews with a wide range of Texas singer/songwriters, including Willie Nelson, Tish Hinojosa, Lyle Lovett, Townes Van Zandt, Tanya Tucker, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Marcia Ball, Johnny Rodriguez, Robert Earl Keen, and many more. Dr. Hudson has brought together these interviews in her recent book, *Telling Stories, Writing Songs* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2001)."

Dr. Hartman extolled both the significance and excellence of Hudson's work: "This collection of oral history is not only unique, it is profoundly important to the academic study of the musical history of Texas and the American Southwest. These interviews will allow music

historians to better understand the tremendous ethnic and cultural diversity of the region as reflected through its music. Dr. Hudson conducted these interviews in a very thorough and professional manner. She also has been careful to include an analysis of the interviews in order to demonstrate how these various artists differ in their understanding of Texas folk culture, but, at the same time, also share certain overlapping similarities."

Having known Hudson's work through the years, the TOHA board agreed with Hartman's praise: "Dr. Hudson has done a truly remarkable job in preserving the history of Texas music and music makers through her work. Her approach to conducting oral history is innovative, thorough, and professional and should serve as an inspiration to others in the field."

To learn more about Kathleen Hudson, visit the Texas Heritage Music Foundation Web site at <http://www.texasheritagemusic.org>.

Johnson Space Center Oral History Project, Houston

Established by NASA in 1996, the JSC OHP has collected oral histories with over two hundred persons who were pioneers in the nation's space program, including not only astronauts, but also managers, engineers, technicians, doctors, and other employees of NASA and aerospace contractors who worked on the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, and Shuttle programs. The facilitator of the oral history work throughout the

project has been SIGNAL Corporation of Houston, a TOHA member since 1998. In 2001, program manager Rebecca Wright and others shared their oral history experiences with TOHA at our annual meeting. Space exploration began with technological innovations, and the oral history project at the space center is likewise state-of-the-art. Interviews are recorded in digital audio/and or video tape and transcribed to an elec-

tronic file. After the interviewee has reviewed the transcript, it is transferred to compact disc (CD) and archived. The University of Houston-Clear Lake is the repository for the project, and TOHA Board Member Shelly Kelly administers those archives. Kelly told TOHA, "I can attest that the oral histories are well researched, enthusiastically given, and available and used by the public."

In addition to recording new oral histories, the JSC OHP included the transfer of previous recordings of interviews, press conferences, and related materials from out-of-date, often aged media onto CD. Approximately five hundred

Homero S. Vera, Premont

George R. Gause, from Edinburg, co-chair of the TOHA community award committee, introduced the TOHA Board to the work of this hard-working community historian from Premont: Gause wrote, "Vera is the editor and publisher of *El Mesteño* Magazine, a publication about Mexican-American culture and heritage in South Texas and Mexico area. For the past four years, when he started *El Mesteño*, he has conducted oral history interviews with different persons in South Texas covering a variety of subjects." More about Vera's leap into journalism was revealed in Sylvia R. Longoria's article in the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* (April 2001) titled, "Editor educates readers about their heritage." Vera originated the idea for his magazine after being laid off his job as a warehouse supervisor. Taking what he had learned in journalism classes in college, Vera created a monthly magazine that grew to serve about eight hundred subscribers throughout the U.S. and Mexico. For the *Caller-Times*, Vera said, "The mission of the magazine is to inform readers about the culture and heritage of people of Mexican and Spanish descent." Although Mexican Americans have a long and valiant history in South Texas, "not enough of this local history is taught in our schools," according to Vera. "I want family histories and the traditions of South Texas to continue for generations."

Gause wrote that Vera began his research among his relatives. "He first recorded his father, Lino R. Vera, on his World War II experience in Europe. This interview covers his participation right after the Normandy Invasion, the Battle of

interview recordings have been recovered and copies placed in the UHCL archives. Over seventy oral history interviews were collected on the Shuttle-Mir Program, and many of them are incorporated into the Web site at <http://spaceflight.nasa.gov/history/shuttle-mir/>. Also available is a CD-ROM for educators and interested persons.

The JSC OHP has collected a remarkable amount of significant historical information in a remarkably brief time with remarkable quality. TOHA is please to commend the work of SIGNAL Corporation and its oral history project on the Johnson Space Center.

the Bulge, meeting the Russians in the Rhine River just a few kilometers from Berlin, and other aspects of the war and his part in it." Another oral history interview with Vera's aunt, Paulita V. Gonzalez, provided an interesting story, Gause wrote, "that turned out to be 100 percent accurate." The story told of Vera's grandfather, whose older brother was a member of a 1890s revolutionary army led by Catarino E. Garza. The army often camped on Vera's great-grandfather's ranch in Duval County and his grandfather, a young boy then, carried food to the troops. A doctoral candidate at Oregon's Lewis and Clark University who studied Catarino E. Garza was able to confirm for Vera that the great-uncle had indeed served in the revolutionary army. Beyond his family, Vera has also interviewed founding members of the La Raza Unida Party and has documented the origins and history of the Rancho Alegre neighborhood in Alice, Texas. His oral history work is also evident in the article, "The Galveston Ranch: Prelude to Premont," authored by Richard A. Laune in the *Journal of South Texas* (13:2, Fall 2000).

Homero S. Vera told the *Caller-Times*, "I really hope that the history I'm preserving one day benefits the children in schools. We have tremendous backgrounds worth exploring and documenting." To that end, Vera has deposited his interview tapes in the South Texas Archives Oral History Collection at Texas A&M University in Kingsville. To learn more about Vera and *El Mesteño* and to read stories from his oral histories, visit the Web site at <http://www.elmesteno.com>.



TOHA Presents Teaching Award

TOHA awarded its first W. Stewart Caffey Award for Excellence for Precollegiate Teaching to Lincoln King, longtime educator at Gary High School and creator/sponsor of *Loblolly* magazine. Caffey himself nominated King, stating, "I believe he is the quintessential example of an individual who teaches his students the value of history and the importance of preserving it. Then together they do so."



Loblolly students from Gary High School presided over the refreshment table at the award presentation ceremony honoring Loblolly founder, Lincoln King.

On February 15, at Panola College in Carthage, TOHA President JoAnn Stiles presented the award to King. The Panola County judge had declared it Lincoln King Day, reporters from Longview and Dallas were present and took notes for articles, and former students, current *Loblolly* staffers, and interviewees spoke of King's significant work in their community. In an impressive display of energy, Stewart Caffey and his wife drove halfway across Texas from Abilene just to attend the ceremony and luncheon, which was lovingly arranged by Ann Morris and her helpers at Panola College. Bobby and Myrna Johnson and Tom Nall and his wife drove up from Nacogdoches, and the event was a great success.



Ann Morris, of Panola College, welcomes TOHA and friends to the award presentation February 15, 2002.

Bryan Wooley featured King in "How Mr. King became a teacher for the ages" (*Dallas Morning News*, February 23, 2002). Wooley explained that at Gary High School, with its 130 students, King was "the entire history department." He taught American history for both eighth and tenth grades and also taught Texas history and world history, government, economics, and geography.

Mark Ewy wrote for the *Longview News-Journal* (February 16, 2002), "King said it was fun watching all the interviews come in year after year. 'It's like a part of the jigsaw puzzle. They're all small parts of the story.'"

Honoree Lincoln King (left) is congratulated by Bobby Johnson.





Award Reflections by Lincoln King

In May 2001, I completed my thirtieth and final year as teacher at Gary High School. Little did I think when growing up in Maine that life would begin at forty in a small, rural community in faraway Texas.

In the summer of 1971, I was in Dallas with my wife, Mary Nell, and our three sons. I was hunting for a teaching job in the eastern half of Texas, and I discovered an opening for a history teacher existed in Gary. Upon looking at a Texas map, I couldn't find Gary anywhere. Mary Nell's grandmother told me, "I know where Gary is. Poppa and I taught there in 1903." I discovered they had been the total teaching staff. He taught the big ones and she taught the little ones.

The rest, as they say, is history. In my second year at Gary, I had an outstanding group of freshmen. We spent the fall semester trudging through a geography course. At Christmas, my wife received a copy of *The Foxfire Book*, published by a class of Georgia high school students and their teacher, Eliot Wigginton. The book consisted of interviews with older members of the community as a means of telling the history and culture of the area. The concept was based on the idea that learning could take place outside the classroom. I figured that Texas students were as smart as any others and could do the same thing here.

I returned to school in January 1973 and we got started on a project ourselves. The students were glad to escape geography and were off with tape recorder and camera to visit the first of hundreds of those to be interviewed and to become part of the *Loblolly* story of Gary and Panola County. The generation gap disappeared and old and young learned to understand and appreciate each other.

The *Loblolly* has been a most successful project for the young people of Gary. They have learned much of their history and culture. They have learned how to run a successful business as they do not depend on the school for financial support. They have gained confidence in themselves by speaking at state conferences and on television. A key to *Loblolly's* continuity has been the peer teaching where older students train younger ones on interviewing, computer skills, marketing expertise, and communications.

Over the first twenty-eight years, Gary students have published sixty-one issues of the *Loblolly* magazine and six books. In the process they have done much to preserve the history and culture of East Texas. Article topics have ranged from quilt making and churning butter to baseball, to World War II, to Tex Ritter, and on to our best seller, the exploits of Bonnie and Clyde.

The students made these twenty-eight years of *Loblolly* a wonderful adventure for me. Hundreds of students at all levels and capabilities have been part of the project and have been my friends. The excellence of their work has brought them state and national recognition, ranging from articles in the *Houston Post* to the *New York Times*. That was pretty heady stuff for all of us. The exciting thing for me has been realizing that such excellence can be the product of such a small school.

I want to thank all those who were with me. We could never have done it without Stanley Yarborough, our principal and superintendent for over twenty-three years. I also thank my wife, Mary Nell, for her patience and understanding. Most of all, my deep gratitude goes to the students of Gary who have put up with me for so long.

I am delighted that the *Loblolly* continues at Gary. An issue appeared in the fall. Interviews have been done which will appear in the next issue this spring. Older students are training new staff members in the many skills required to produce a *Loblolly* publication, and a new advisor, Valerie Blair, has been found to carry on the project which put Gary on the map. Valerie was the second student editor back in 1974, so she is well prepared for the job.

Finally, I want to thank TOHA, Stewart Caffey, Ann Morris, and Panola College for a great surprise and honor for all of us at *Loblolly*.



Texas History Day

by Shelly Kelly

On Saturday, May 11, 2002, Bruce Ashcroft and I judged the special Oral History Award for the Texas State History Fair. TOHA Board Member Karen Riles was expected to join us, but had been re-assigned to judge documentaries as TSHA was a little short on judges.

We had ten entries overall. There were three in the Senior category and seven in the Junior category.

The Seniors were all wonderful entries and it was extremely difficult arriving at a conclusion. In the end, we awarded one Award and two Honorable Mentions. Bruce and I encouraged all of the senior entries to submit a journal article to the *Sound Historian*.

The Juniors were a little more lackluster. Of the seven, four did not actually record the inter-

views. They only “took notes” while talking to people. We carefully went over our guidelines (see below) while making our selections. We carefully studied the remaining three and settled on the Award and gave two Honorable Mentions.

To qualify for the TOHA award, entries must:

1. conduct oral history interviews that relate directly to the topic and record historically-significant memories;
2. audio or video tape the interviews and have the tapes available for the judges;
3. demonstrate ways information from the oral history interviews was used in their exhibit, performance, documentary or paper
4. list interviews in annotated bibliographies.

WINNERS:

Junior category: Entry 1322, Luke D. Scroggins, Individual Performance titled, “Fight for the Philippines”

This young man interviewed his grandfather on audiocassette about his experiences during WWII. His grandfather survived the Bataan Death March and four years as a POW after the Americans surrendered on the Philippines. The student then composed a performance based on this recorded interview. During the judges’ interview, he spoke of the new respect he had for his grandfather. Also, we learned that three days after recording the interview, his grandfather suffered a stroke and can no longer speak.

Senior category: Entry 2224, Andrew Nguyen, Nang T. Pham, Mytien T. Nguyen, and Cuong M. Cao; Group Exhibit titled, “Untold Lies: The Reeducation of South Vietnam.”

These four students did an exhibit on the Reeducation Camps begun by the North Vietnamese Army in 1975. Several of their parents were inmates before coming to the United States. They conducted nine interviews, all on videotape, in Vietnamese with English translation. They had photographs of all nine interviewees as part of their exhibit and a shortened videotape showing a few minutes of one of the interviews. During their discussion with us, they mentioned how many more people they asked who refused to be interviewed, largely based on a fear of repercussions. One man even insisted on retaining the original videotape for his personal files. (The students kept a copy.) The stories were very emotional, very raw, and contained historically significant, possibly even new material.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Junior category:

- 1) Donnica C. Fowler, Aaron P. McPahul, and Amanda Castillo; Group Exhibit titled, “‘80’ John Wallace Revolutionary Cattleman of West Texas”
- 2) Michelle E. White, Jessica A. Nicolas, and Mandi M. Shane; Group Documentary titled, “Japanese American Internment: A Reaction That Will Live in Infamy.”

Senior Category:

- 1) Bryan L. Prihoda, Jeormey S. Thornton, and Alex M. Bernick; Group Documentary titled, “‘Sock it to Me’: A Revolutionary Reflection of American Society.”
- 2) Jenny Fu, Jenny K. Tran, Huong X. Nguyen, and Ashwini P. Mehta; Group Exhibit titled “A Revolution Redefined: International Reaction to Castro’s Reforms in Cuba.”



Member News

After more than twenty years with the Texas Historical Commission, **Frances Rickard** has taken a new job at the Texas Department of Human Services. Frances has been a loyal TOHA member since the 1980s. TOHA appreciates her significant and vital work in preserving our state's historical resources over the years.

Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr., professor of history at Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, and TOHA's journal editor, was elected a Fellow of the Association at the Texas State Historical Association's March meeting in Corpus Christi.

JoAnn Stiles, TOHA president, received the Mary Jon and J. P. Bryan Leadership in Education Award from the Texas State Historical Association. The annual award recognizes the outstanding history teacher in Texas. Besides teaching, JoAnn is an energetic oral historian. With her students, she is working to index the oral history collection at Lamar University's Gray Library, where three hundred oral histories cover such topics as the Great Depression, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Texas oil industry, and area ethnic history. In addition, JoAnn, working with Ellen Rienstra and Judith Linsley, has helped produce a thirty-minute video on the Spindletop discovery for use in Region V public schools. Material for the video came from oral histories done locally and others preserved in the 1950s Texas Pioneers in Texas Oil oral history archives housed at The University of Texas at Austin.

In spring 2002, **Gerald Saxon** taught a course at University of Texas at Arlington on oral history methods as part of the public history master's program. Saxon is coordinating an oral history project at UTA focusing on women in Arlington.

Sally Kelly Flatua, of Austin's **Story Circle Network** (<http://www.storycircle.org>) is facilitating e-mail life story/memoir classes for the Writer's League of Texas. **Pat Flathouse** is coordinator of the Older Women's Legacy Circle Memoir Program (<http://www.owlcircle.com>), which has held memoir workshops in Austin-area churches and women's groups to promote writing and sharing of women's personal histories.

Michelle M. Mears, archivist for the Texas Historical Commission, completed an M.A. in history at Baylor University last December. Her thesis, "African American Settlement Patterns in Austin, Texas," includes information from oral history interviews conducted by researchers as late as 1972 and which proved invaluable in helping to form a picture of life in Austin's freedmen communities. Michelle's research verifies the importance of depositing oral history tapes and/or transcripts in archives and libraries for the use of future researchers.

Following the last issue of Sound Bites, which listed several transcription services, **Valerie Dunnam**, of Austin, wrote TOHA to recommend transcriber Michele Deradune of Austin. Michele's rates for tape transcription are \$13 per 1,000 words, but she is willing to discuss being paid on a per-tape basis. Hourly work for revisions and editing is \$20/hour. You may contact Michele concerning editing and tape transcription services at 512-443-7332 or e-mail, Michele@Deradune.com.

Lynn Burlbaw is seeking interviewees among women who were in high school in Texas between 1935 and 1940. Contact Lynn at 979-845-6195 or burlbaw@neo.tamu.edu.

Bill Pitts, religion professor at Baylor University, presented findings of his recent oral history project for the regional meeting of the American Association of Religion at Dallas. Pitt's interviews documented the process by which First Baptist Church, Waco, accepted women deacons. The 1994 event marked an important transition for the church. Pitts interviewed the pastor, the chair of the deacons at the time of the change, and, most importantly, a half dozen women who have since become deacons at the church.

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2001-2003**

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Sound Historian

The latest edition of *Sound Historian* will arrive in your mailbox soon. Manuscript submissions for the journal are needed and welcomed. Please send your article to

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Oral History Association

Make plans to attend the annual meeting of the Oral History Association, October 23-27, in San Diego, California. The theme for the program is Global Linkages: Internationalization of Everyday Life. In addition to stimulating panels and speakers, the conference offers exciting tour packages of southern California. The conference will be held at the DoubleTree Hotel San Diego Mission Valley. Visit the OHA Home Page for program highlights and registration information:
<http://www.dickinson.edu/oha>



If you have read this entire edition of *Sound Bites* to this point, then you have to be impressed by the work being done in oral history throughout Texas. You should be convinced by now that TOHA wants to recognize exemplary projects and oral historians—like you!

- *Let us know about you and your work so that we can share it with TOHA members.*
- *Nominate yourself or other people doing oral history well for our awards.*
- *Write an article about your work for Sound Historian.*

Visit TOHA's Web site at <http://www.baylor.edu/TOHA>

- for criteria for TOHA awards
- for information on upcoming meetings
- for instructions on submitting journal articles
- and for links to oral history sites around the world