

SOUND BITES from TOHA Board of Directors

Texas Oral History Association PO Box 97271 Waco TX 76798-7271
Phone 254/710-3437; Fax 254/710-1571; E-mail Lois_Myers@baylor.edu
<http://www3.baylor.edu/TOHA/>



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Keeping Current: New Resources for Oral Historians

by Lois E. Myers

Oral history research is maturing. The evidence is revealed in recent publications of interest to newcomers to the field as well as to seasoned veterans. Also, new oral history sites available on the Internet are providing instruction in good interviewing practices and making oral histories accessible to the public. Below are my top picks of the new resources, which range from how-to instruction for designing and executing an oral history project to online oral histories in Texas libraries and archives.

From the Oral History Association comes a new edition of *Oral History and the Law*, first published in 1985, revised in 1993, and expanded in 2002 to ninety-three pages. This classic, essential explanation of the legal and ethical ramifications of oral history presents recent case studies and includes samples of legal release forms. The author, John A. Neuenschwander, professor of history at Carthage College and a municipal judge in Kenosha, Wisconsin, is a revered authority on legal issues related to oral history. His revised guidebook provides updated information on the basic questions of copyright, libel, and restrictions on use, and, in addition, discusses legal and ethical issues raised by the use of oral histories on the Internet. He also discusses the ramifications of recent decisions made by university Institutional Review Boards concerning oral history research. This book is a must for both interviewers and archivists, for institutions and individuals. Copies are \$15.00 each. To order, contact Madelyn Campbell, Executive Secretary, Oral History Association, Dickinson College, PO Box 1773, Carlisle PA 17013-2896; or call 717/245-1036, or e-mail oha@dickinson.edu. Additional information is available from the publications link

on the OHA home page, available at <http://www.dickinson.edu/oha>.

Also new on the oral history scene is a comprehensive guidebook with the straightforward title *The Oral History Manual* (AltaMira Press, 2002). Written by Barbara W. Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan, the manual is part of the book series of the American Association for State and Local History. Chapters carry the researcher from project planning through recording technology, budgets, interviewing, processing, and programming. The appendices provide samples of oral history forms, including correspondence with narrators, record keeping ideas, legal releases, and a sample interview outline. The authors discuss digital versus analog equipment and suggest potential funding sources for oral history projects. The manual is \$24.95 (paperback) and can be purchased through a major book retailer, such as Barnes and Noble.

Good oral history instruction is now available on the Internet. Of course, you should start with my (slightly prejudiced) personal favorite, Baylor's **Oral History Workshop on the Web**, at http://www.baylor.edu/Oral_History. But also check out the UCLA Oral History Program's well-done manual, **Planning and Conducting an Oral History Interview**, at <http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/special/ohp/>. Judith Moyer's **Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History** also covers the basics of oral history interviewing, at http://www.dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html.

Once you've collected your stories on tape, how do you "make sense" of them? Linda Shopes, historian at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and past president of the Oral History Association, is the author of an online document that

explains how to interpret oral history. Titled, “**Making Sense of Oral History**,” the article is part of George Mason University’s Making Sense of Evidence series, available on History Matters: The U.S. Survey on the Web, available from <http://historymatters.gmu.edu>. Shopes poses questions for historians to ask in order to better understand an oral history interview: Who is talking? Who is the interviewer? What are they talking about? Why are they talking? What are the circumstances of the interview? She provides a model interpretation and analysis. In addition, “Making Sense of Oral History” provides useful tips for interpreting online oral history and lists several exemplary Internet sites based on oral history research.

TOHA members are going global with their oral history expertise through sites on the Internet. Recent additions to the Baylor University Institute for Oral History site, at http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral_History, include online versions of the out-of-print texts of the proceedings of two of Baylor’s oral history symposia. *The Past Meets the Present: Essays on Oral History*, edited by David Stricklin and Rebecca Sharpless (1988), contains eleven articles on the nature of oral history written by prominent oral historians William W. Moss, Barbara Allen, Eliot Wigginton, Vivian Perlis, and Cullom Davis. *Memory and History: Essays on Recalling and Interpreting Experience*, edited by Jaclyn Jeffrey and Glenace Edwall (1994), includes articles by both psychologists and historians, including Paul

Thompson, Elizabeth F. Loftus, Michael H. Frisch, Marigold Linton, Karen E. Fields, Alice M. Hoffman, and Howard S. Hoffman. Coming online soon will be chapters on project design and interviewing from *Oral History for Texans*, by Thomas L. Charlton (2d edition, 1985). The BUIOH site also supplies the “Workshop on the Web,” with oral history instruction from planning through programming, and the “Guide to the Collection,” a searchable database of almost 2,000 oral history interviews deposited in The Texas Collection at Baylor.

TOHA members are also making available on the Internet the text, and sometimes audio, of their oral history interviews. For example, the **Johnson Space Center Oral History Project**, available at http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/history/oral_histories/oral_histories.htm, provides full transcripts of interviews with space center pioneers who played important roles in the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, and Shuttle programs. The JSC site also provides links to an audio documentary, *Apollo 8: Earth’s Rise to a New Era*, featuring excerpts from oral histories, and to the University of Houston-Clear Lake, where the audio tapes are archived. Also, the **Vietnam Project at Texas Tech University** provides audio files and transcripts of their interviews. Visit <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/oralhistory/>.

For live links to sites in this newsletter, visit the online version at <http://www3.baylor.edu/TOHA/Newsletter.html>



Keeping in Touch: Member News

In January 2002 **Carol Parsonage** completed a fifteen-month assignment for the Texas Council for the Humanities coordinating an oral history project titled *Parallel and Crossover Lives: Texas Before and After Desegregation*. The project resulted in 30 videotaped interviews of African Americans discussing their public school experiences in Austin, Hawkins, and Big Sandy, Texas. Complete transcripts of the interviews, conducted by faculty from Huston-Tillotson College, Austin, and Jarvis Christian College, Hawkins, are available online at <http://www.public-humanities.org/desegregation.html>. Carol authored a Project’s Manager’s Guide, which along with a Teacher’s Guide, authored by Carol Schlenk, can be obtained from TCH. Now Carol is working with the Texas Association of Developing Colleges to implement additional Parallel and Crossover Lives projects. In October, **Rebecca Sharpless**, director of the Baylor University Institute for Oral History, conducted an oral history workshop to help launch interview projects at Paul Quinn College, Dallas, and Texas College, Tyler.

Michael Widener, Head of Special Collections at The University of Texas at Austin's Jamail Center for Legal Research and editor of the Tarlton Law Library Legal History Series, announces the publication of *Gus M. Hodges: An Oral History Interview*. Hodges (1908-1992) was a longtime professor in the UT law school. His oral memoir discusses student life at UT during the Depression, the rise of the UT law school to national prominence, and the increasing diversification of both the faculty and student body. Interviewer for the project was H. W. Brands, a professor of history at Texas A&M University. Other published oral histories conducted by Brands for the law school include interviews with W. Page Keeton and former Texas Supreme Court Justices Robert Calvert, Joe Greenhill, and Jack Pope. The publication can be ordered online from <http://www.law.utexas.edu/pubs/> or by contacting the Publications Coordinator, Jamail Center for Legal Research, University of Texas School of Law, 727 East Dean Keeton Street, Austin, TX 78705-3224; phone 512/471-7726.

Stewart Caffey's book, *The Sleeping Rattlesnake* (Abilene: Chaparral Publications, 2001), which contains six short stories based on his parents' lives, was honored at the West Texas Book and Author Festival in Abilene in September.

Susie Kelly Flatau has been busy. Last spring she traveled to Germany upon invitation by the U.S. Army (Equal Opportunity Program) as guest speaker for Women's History Month. She presented "From Generation to Generation: Keeping Stories Alive" for military personnel, family members, and students in military bases at Wiesbaden, Dexheim, Giessen, and Hanau. In May, her fourth book, *Red Boots & Attitude* (Eakin Press), appeared. The book features the fiction, non-fiction, and poetry of 34 veteran and emerging Texas women writers. In the summer, Susie was at Kurth Memorial Library in Lufkin to conduct a day-long "Life Story Workshop" and present a luncheon talk on "For Women Only: Women Writing Their Life Stories." This fall, she facilitated a half-day "Life Story Writing" workshop for the Writer's League of Texas in Austin. If your group or organization would enjoy a life story workshop, contact Susie by e-mail at Susie@WordsbySusie.com. For more information, visit her web site at <http://www.WordsbySusie.com>.

Louis J. Marchiafava, of Houston, is conducting interviews with physicians and administrators at the Texas Medical Center. He is also continuing interviews related to business in a family context and is conducting oral history workshops for local and regional groups.

Thad Sitton's recent oral history projects have included such diverse topics as Bob Bullock (for the Baylor University Institute for Oral History), Texas freedman's settlements (with Jim Conrad, for a forthcoming book from University of Texas Press), and the farm and community life of twenty-four settlements displaced in 1942 by the building of Camp Hood (for Prewitt and Associates, Austin).

AWARD ANNOUNCEMENT

For the fourth time in 2002, TOHA presented the Mary Faye Willms-Barnes Award for Excellence for Community History Projects. On September 24, in Abilene, Stewart Caffey, former TOHA director, presented the award to **Vernon L. Williams**, history professor at Abilene Christian University. In conjunction with the award presentation, the Taylor County Historical Commission hosted a reception at Abilene's 12th Armored Division Museum. Dr. Williams and his graduate students in public history have recorded and archived 300 interviews with World War II veterans, particularly former members of the 12th Armored Division

which trained at Camp Barkeley in Abilene. In addition to oral history interviews, the project involved an archaeological survey of the former training camp site, transferring the World War II archives of the 12th Armored Division Association to Abilene, two major exhibits, one traveling and one permanent, video documentary production, and an Internet site, plus several conference papers, theses, articles, and books. Additional information about ACU's 12th Armored Division oral history project is available at <http://faculty.acu.edu/~vwilliams/>.

**TOHA Board of Directors
2001-2003**

Suzanne Campbell

PO Box 11013 ASU
San Angelo TX 76909
Phone 915/942-2164
suzanne.campbell@angelo.edu

George R. Gause, Jr.

Special Collections
Univ of Texas-Pan American
1201 West University Drive
Edinburg TX 78541-2999
Phone 956/381-2799
ggause@panam.edu

Shelly Henley Kelly

Neumann Library
Univ of Houston Clear Lake
2700 Bay Area Blvd
Houston TX 77058
Phone 281/283-3936
Kellysh@cl.uh.edu

Tai Kreidler, President

Southwest Collection
Texas Tech University
PO Box 41041
Lubbock TX 79409-1041
Phone 806/742-3749
litdk@lib.ttu.edu

Karen Riles

743 South Blanco
Lockhart TX 78644
Karen.riles@ci.austin.tx.us

Gerald Saxon, Vice President

3409 Sheffield
Arlington TX 76013-1129
Phone 817/272-5318
saxon@uta.edu

Jo Ann Stiles

4150 Crow Road Apt. 3
Beaumont TX 77706-7022
Phone 409/899-3281
stilesjk@hal.lamar.edu

Sound Historian

Kenneth Hendrickson is compiling Volume 7 of *Sound Historian*. Manuscript submissions for future issues of the journal are needed and welcomed. Please send your article to

Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr.
Department of History
Midwestern State University
3410 Taft Blvd
Wichita Falls, TX 76308-2093
Phone 940/397-4150
Fax 940/397-4899

Oral History Association

Now is the time to submit a proposal for a session or paper at the 2003 annual meeting of the Oral History Association. The program theme, *Creating Communities: Cultures, Neighborhoods, Institutions* correlates well with the projects of many TOHA members. The meeting will be held October 8-12, 2003, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Bethesda, Maryland. Submission guidelines and a proposal cover sheet are available on the Calls for Papers link on the OHA site at <http://www.dickinson.edu/oha>.



- *Tell us 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://www3.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.*



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