



NEWSLETTER
Vol. 6, No. 3
Fall, 1982

ORAL HISTORY in the MID-ATLANTIC REGION

FALL MEETING: USING ORAL HISTORY IN COMMUNITY HISTORY

OHMAR will hold its fall meeting on Saturday, November 6, 1982, at the Arlington Historical Museum (formerly the Hume Museum) in Arlington, Virginia. Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m. and coffee will be available. The morning session, beginning at 10 a.m., will feature the presentation of this year's Forrest Pogue award to Martha Ross, and her acceptance speech on "Oral History: Teaching and Learning." The annual business meeting will also be held during the morning. A box lunch is available for \$4, reservations required.

At 1 p.m. the afternoon session will focus on "Using Oral History in Community History-- An Update." Sara Collins and Roy Rosenzweig have organized a program that is a variation from previous formats. Oral historians representing many diverse programs in community history have been invited to make brief presentations describing their projects and particular procedures, problems, methods, uses, and results. After these presentations, those attending will have the opportunity to visit the exhibit area to discuss the projects with the presenters, to view video productions, and to examine publications resulting from the programs. Those making presentations include:

Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, Northern Virginia Community College: "Retrieving the History of Household Workers in Washington, D.C.; Process and Problems."

Pamela Cressey, archaeologist, Alexandria, Virginia: "Oral History in Urban Archaeology."

Roxanna Dean and Marcia Greenlee, Martin Luther King Library: "Development of an Oral History Research Center in the Washingtoniana Division of the Martin Luther King Memorial Library, Washington, D.C."

Betty Key, Maryland Historical Society Oral History Office: "Community Projects in Maryland and the Maryland Historical Society's Involvement."

Sandra Kurtinitis, George Washington University: "Interviews and Slide Show on Takoma Park, Maryland."

Marian Mohr, Fairfax County Public Schools: "High School Students and Community History."

Diane Malone, stage director in Arlington Performing Arts: "Arlington Anthology, Dramatization of Oral History."

Carl Oblinger, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission: "Convergence of Oral History and Folklife in Pennsylvania."

Following the program, a dinner will be held to honor Martha Ross at the Yenching Palace on North Washington Street in Alexandria. The cost is \$11.50 per person. Please fill out the form on the attached flier for your lunch and dinner reservations; no advance payment is required.

Directions to the Arlington Historical Museum are listed with a map on the back page of the newsletter.

INTERVIEW WITH MARTHA ROSS

The 1982 Forrest Pogue award for distinguished contributions to the field of oral history will be presented to Martha Ross at the November 6 meeting of OHMAR. At that meeting she will speak on "Oral History: Teaching and Learning," and will be the guest of honor at a dinner open to all OHMAR members and friends later that evening.

In connection with the award, newsletter editor Donald Ritchie interviewed Martha Ross on Friday, September 3, 1982. Excerpts from that interview follow:

Q: Martha, you have probably been instrumental in starting more people in oral history than any other person I know. How did you get started in oral history?

A: On the one hand, it was a fluke, a happenstance, and on the other it was a logical development from a lot of activities I had done for a long time. When my sixth child went to first grade, I threw up my hands, said "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty I'm free at last!" and looked for something to do.

I really wanted to sort through my interests and to find out which ones I should relegate to the category of hobbies, and which I might want to develop more seriously, professionally, with the rest of my life.

I had been involved in writing and interviewing. I had edited my high school newspaper; I had edited my college yearbook; I had been a columnist for my college newspaper; I contributed a column to my hometown newspaper; I had worked for the Birmingham newspaper as a stringer. So I had written and interviewed people literally throughout my adolescence and adulthood....All my life I have been in one way or another doing

interviews, and enjoying a genuine interest in people and their experiences.

In the fall of 1969, when Maria went to first grade, George Washington University was just in the second year of a program for just such a person as myself. It was a program called "Developing New Horizons for Women".... This was really an excellent program. It was a fifteen week course involving extensive testing and then teaching students how to interpret the testing....And as part of this program, each of us had to develop a paper on a profession in which women could satisfactorily



be involved, where there was not terrible discrimination, where there were not physical barriers, and so forth. Over all this period of time, I knew that I wanted to be involved somehow in communications, because I am, as you know, a big talker.I was interested in perhaps something like educational television, developing programs. But as we went around the room and people were talking about what papers they were planning to do, one of my colleagues said that she was going to write a paper on educational television.

I thought, "Well, Martha, you can't do that, there can't be two papers in this small group on educational television." So I thought, "Well, back to the drawing board."

Here is where fortune stepped in. In the Washington Post over that weekend, was an article on the slave narratives in the Library of Congress, and I was exposed for the first time to the term "oral history." That was, I can pinpoint the date, late November 1969. I immediately called the Library of Congress, asked the person at the switchboard to put me in touch with any oral historian who was there, and there was a momentary pause. She switched and I later found out it was Alan Jabbour

A: Of course, I'm the eternal optimist, so my natural knee-jerk answer would be of course changes are all for the better. The Oral History Association has been trying very hard and very diligently and very determinedly to raise the professional sights, to raise professional standards, to raise the consciousness of people to what professional oral history is versus the journalistic approach of taking an interview and using it for something and calling it oral history; where the interviewer may or may not have been prepared, may or may not have gone through all proper ethical and legal activities that would be certainly suggested. I think the Wingspread Conference and the evaluation guidelines that resulted from that was a milestone in this direction.

If the proposal that we were working on to implement the study of the teaching of oral history, if we had been able to get that submitted and if it had been funded--of course, it came just at the wrong time financially--the result of that would have in addition established some sort of Wingspread type conference for people involved in funding oral history. In other words, we feel a real need for informing the funding agencies and people so that they can be aware of what professional oral history is, versus the radio announcer who had incidentally interviewed interesting people who came to town and now wants money to transcribe these things because it's oral history, this kind of thing. I think that was certainly a change for the better....

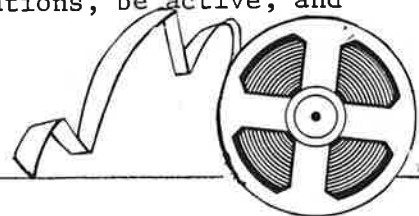
I think the attention to maximizing sound quality is an important change. Bill Moss sent a paper to Durango on the enhancement of sound quality. He pointed out that people would come to the Kennedy Library wanting to use the actual voices for voice-over for documentaries, and found out that the tape quality was so poor that they had to take the transcripts and hire actors to recreate the voices. I think that's a step in the right direction.

There are several things that disappoint me a little bit. One is that there has not been a more consistent expansion of what I consider to be good, responsible teaching of oral history. A lot of the courses spring up for a few years and then they disappear. In some instances, I realize, it probably arises from the fact that the professor is doing some research, he dis-

covers oral history, he thinks, "Aha, I'll teach a class!" He teaches the class, but his research moves on to something else, he's no longer interested, he drops the class. This is my assumption in several cases. But it's disappointing that in more places around the country one cannot have a university level course in oral history, which I think is entirely different--and this is a point we all made on the council to writing these proposals--entirely different from a weekend workshop, a one week workshop, a two week workshop, a month workshop. A fifteen week university level undergraduate or graduate course is going to be entirely different from somebody coming in and doing a workshop and not monitoring what they are doing over a long period of time. That's a disappointment to me....

Q: What would you recommend to someone who is starting out right now in oral history? What would be your words of advice, say to someone else who might be in a class like you were in 1969?

A: Well, in the first place, there are many more resources available now than there were then, but at the same time, some of them are a little confusing. While there are many more very good sources of information on oral history there are some sources of information that are a little shaky. Naturally, since I teach a class, I would highly recommend enrolling in a class. If one does not have a class available, one should enroll in a workshop, should seek out expert advice, should certainly join the oral history associations, become familiar with the literature, both past and current, find the publications, such as the American Archivist and the American Association for State and Local History that regularly publish information about oral history. So that not only will you get off to a good start but you will be regularly plugged into a network that will keep you current as developments come forth. And of course, in an activity that is closely aligned to technology as oral history is, with tape recording and now videotaping, it's important to keep up with the latest developments in order to maximize the investment that you make. So I would say: get good grounding, good instruction, plug into the literature, join the organizations, be active, and enjoy it.



REGIONAL REPORT

Edited by Richard Voelkel

With each newsletter we hope to bring you information about oral history projects within OHMAR's borders. For this purpose, reporters are being selected for each part of the region. Those who have already agreed to serve are Jerry Braglio (eastern Pennsylvania), Marcia Greenlee (District of Columbia), Betty Key (Maryland), Robert Maddox (West Virginia), and Roy Rosenzweig (northern Virginia). Reporters are still needed for Delaware, New Jersey, western Pennsylvania, tidewater Virginia, and central Virginia. If you would care to take up one of those positions, please write to me at the newsletter.

Pennsylvania

Old Dry Road Farm, Inc. is a 200 acre public preservation site located in Pennsylvania near the city of Reading. The purpose of the organization is to preserve the lifestyle of the German farmers who settled and developed the area. One of the Farm's many functions is preserving cultural heritage through oral history. In 1981-1982 the Farm funded a project conducted by the students from Conrad Weiser High School in Robeson, PA, under the direction of American history teacher Phil Hayes and media specialist Holly Jobe. The students documented the restoration of one of the Farm's older buildings called a "speicher," which was a small log building used by inhabitants for food storage, as a spring house, and for food preparation activities.

The project was actually a spin-off of interest generated by two students who were conducting interviews with the men directing the restoration and with those local people who had personal experiences with the structure in the past. Their goal was to produce a videotaped documentary of the restoration and an oral history of the structure. Work began in October 1981 with eighteen students from an oral history class and a ninth grade American history class participating in the re-thinking of the logs. This process took two months. In February students helped fell a large white oak tree which would be used to make roofing shingles. March, April, and part of May saw the students learning how to use the "fro," "draw knife,"

and "schnitzelbank" or shaving bench for the making of these shingles. Interviews were conducted to record the methods of using these tools.

During May the restoration continued as the shingles were installed. Approximately 30 students participated in the actual physical restoration of the building. The final taping session was with a representative of the Great Valley Regional Archaeology Center which had conducted excavation research prior to the restoration. This provided more insight into the history of the building. Thirty-plus hours were spent carefully deciding which parts of the 8 video tapes would be used to complete the final project. The end result was a 40 minute color videotaped documentary and oral history of the "speicher." Two students had used oral history to record the present and preserve the past.

--Jerry Braglio

West Virginia

The Oral History of Appalachia Program at Marshall University is working on an Appalachian Health Care oral history project. This project will attempt to expand the historical background of Appalachian health care by the use of the systematic methodology of oral history. Virtually no attempts have been made in this area. It is appropriate that with the advent of the Marshall Medical School, with its emphasis on family practice and rural health care, that the Oral History of Appalachia Program should take the leadership on this topic. The project will consist of taperecorded interviews with nurses, physicians, and midwives as well as other health care professionals. The Oral History Program is seeking funding for the project.

The Oral History of Appalachia Program has also completed and submitted Part III of its collection to the New York Times Micro-filming Corporation of America. Since 1976, when the program became affiliated with MCA, approximately 4,200 pages of its transcribed tapes have been microfilmed. These materials represent one of the largest single collections of Appalachian oral materials in existence.

--Robert Maddox

STATE OF THE ART

Edited by Mary Jo Deering

OUR THIRD EAR AND THE NEW USER

by Amelia R. Fry

One of the most elusive tasks that be-sets any oral historian is the care and feeding of a reliable third ear. This is the ear which, while the other two listen to what-happened-then, stays tuned to the way the potential user of that transcript will be reading it. It also connects the brain to follow-up questions when it hears a promising nuance. And it is the organ that sounds a brake buzzer when it hears a reluctant note. Without this ear, an entire catalog of follow-up questions would be missing from oral histories.

Recently my desk has become stacked with what may be nutrition for Ear Three, books gathered not for conducting interviews, but to use in my reincarnation as a biographer condemned to using some of her own formerly-produced oral histories as sources for a publishable biography of Alice Paul. Although these books do not bear directly on an individual's life story itself, they illuminate a vast area of related scholarship from which we, as oral historians, could distill areas of inquiry for follow-up questions.

These are books to consult outside the central research on the interviewee's life or neighborhood or career specialty. They are ethnographers' monographs, social histories, developmental pathologies, and of course analyses of wider events that have been a part of any American's four score and ten--like Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Gurr's report to the national commission, Violence in America (1969).

For purposes of this column, three such books can serve as concrete examples of the way they can help program the third ear: Erik Erikson's Life History and the Historical Moment, a 1975 Norton paperback particularly well-known; Carol Gilligan's 1982 update of his and others' research, In a Different Voice from Harvard Press; and Telling Lives, The Biographer's Art, which Marc Pachter edited for the University of Pennsylvania Press in a 1981 paperback.

First, why should we burden our third ear with works like these any more than we have already been doing? Because it appears that the field of history--if we can believe recent articles from Gordon Wood, C. Vann Woodward, and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. is changing. The emergence of high-tech historiography, made possible by computers and bred on undying hopes that history can be scientific, has created an undertow pulling history-making back towards the hands of writers with "pride in their prose and drama in their narrative." This means oral sources to me. However, historians who use our interviews are likely to come to them seeking answers that will differ in emphasis and scope now.

That is because such writers--biographers especially--will more than simply co-exist awkwardly with the strangers and their machines who are, in the words of Gordon Wood, producing works "more and more specialized... single subjects, computer printouts, Guttman scales, Lorenz curves, and Pearson correlation coefficients...written only for each other. The new wave of historians will use this information to enrich understanding of the re-born narrative and people-focused history. In these more arcane sources the aspiring biographer can find contexts that illuminate more specifically than ever before what life was like in the world surrounding his subject.

So he reads them, then he consults oral histories. The moral for us is that he will be searching for clues that will connect a real person to those graphs and studies so he can produce live humans who can run through his narrative in full voice, at the same time affording a third dimension by exemplifying or disproving the various theoretical constructs he has built under the narrative he is writing.

It is therefore up to us to read these sources-once-removed, to find ways to connect their findings to our questions. Take Erik Erikson's insights. Such distillations for oral history he gives us! Here are but a few:

1. What are the interviewee's life themes--his constant traits and concerns from

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Linda Shopes

An important new work in historical methodology, After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection by James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle (New York: 1982), contains an excellent chapter on the evidentiary value of oral sources. Focusing on an analysis of slave narratives in a chapter entitled "The View from the Bottom Rail," the authors argue that the nature of oral evidence is profoundly effected by the nature of the relationship between interviewee and interviewer, that interviewers, in other words, deeply shape the recollections they elicit by their very presence in the interview.

OHMAR members Joan Morrison and Charlotte Fox Zabusky's book, American Mosaic: The Immigrant Experience in the Words of Those Who Lived It, has recently been issued in paperback by New American Library. Reviewing the book when it originally appeared in 1980, John Bodnar wrote in the International Journal of Oral History: "/T/his work is extensive. Few collections of this kind capture such a geographical diversity or span such a large period of time....And few can skim these pages without being impressed by the range of backgrounds, aspirations, and experiences /of immigrants/ in this country and abroad. Certainly the authors can sustain their claim that America was more of a mosaic than a melting pot."

The Spring, 1982 issue of the Maryland Historical Magazine is largely devoted to the histories of three Baltimore neighborhoods written as outgrowths of the Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project, a publicly funded community history project. All of the articles draw upon oral histories collected in the neighborhoods by Heritage Project staff. Since issues of the Magazine are available for \$4 from The Maryland Historical Society, 201 W. Monument Street, Baltimore, MD 21201.

Once again, please let me know of publications produced by oral history projects in the mid-Atlantic region, books and articles written by OHMAR members, and in general publications you would like to see noted or reviewed in the Newsletter.



###

Linda Shopes
3103 Abell Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21218

At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor by Gordon W. Prange. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1982. 832 pp., \$22.95.

Air Raid: Pearl Harbor: Recollections of a Day of Infamy edited by Paul Stillwell. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982. 306 pp., \$19.95.

At Dawn We Slept almost defies review. It is at once a tour de force, exhaustive, brilliant, formidable, and whatever other superlatives you choose. Gordon Prange devoted a lifetime to the examination of an extraordinary variety of materials, widening the investigation where it proved necessary. In this reviewer's experience, only a few authors so emphatically illustrate the difference between research and what passes for research in so much of what is currently published.

At Dawn We Slept is more than the usual recitation of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It is an exploration of a "turning point" in the history of the world. Prange sets the state, describes the event, and measures the effect of each decision across the whole period. He lets a massive collection of fact logically presented prevail, and along the way destroys the Pearl Harbor revisionists, who would have us believe that Franklin Roosevelt carefully planned a whole sequence of events to have the United States drawn into World War II. It is clear from Prange's skillful interpretation of the flow of events that the world as we knew it at the instant of the attack on Pearl Harbor was changed and would never be the same again.

Prange's evaluations depend on an intimate knowledge of many disciplines. The description of the forces in operation in Japan before the attack takes the best from sociology and political and military science. In his treatment of Commander Kramer, who

of the war, and even about who the enemy was, is rehearsed by one veteran after another. The tedium and hardships of jungle warfare are recounted and contrasted to the terrifyingly often thrilling experience of being attacked and of killing. There are courageous statements in these books from people who acknowledge their fears and their dishonorable actions, actions that the reader comes to realize distinguish these veterans from other Americans only by the fact that they were there while we were not.

Not everyone experienced the war in the same way. Male informants referred repeatedly to their masculine socialization (there are literally dozens of references to John Wayne movies in the two books) and frequently understated their feelings: "When it hit the kid, he didn't die right away. His guts were hanging out his mouth and his nose. He coughed them up when he was shot. That hurt me."

The female veterans are more unequivocally offended by the perceived senselessness of the carnage: "Over and over and over. I used to see these people--they'd come in and give them Purple Hearts on the war....I would watch this ridiculous little ceremony, and they'd get a Purple Heart for what was left of them, and I'd think, 'You're getting this? What are you getting this for? It's not going to get your leg back...It's not going to make you avoid all the pain you're going to have to face when you go home and see your family and get into society....' What a waste, huh? What a wasted, wasted, wasted life."

Perhaps the most shocking reflections on American society came from the veterans who found Vietnam basically better than what they left or returned to: "Basically, I enjoyed Vietnam. It was the most vivid part of my life....You're with the guys who really look after you. You can trust them. I missed that a lot when I got back to the States."

The impact of these books is in the extraordinary power of their personal statements, often filled with profanity and cries of anguish. Neither book, however, has provided the kind of analytical framework that is required to understand the complexities of the Vietnam war. In their efforts to personalize the war, the authors have deprived their readers of the historical and political context that would enable us to understand much of the unredeemed pain of

the Vietnam experience. Instead, we are left with the same confusion that the vets themselves found so intolerable.

Baker has organized his book according to four themes which trace the life cycle of the combatant from initiation to homecoming. A series of unidentified excerpts composes each segment, making the theme rather than the individual the focus. There is a brief narrative introduction to each section, but these are more literary than historical, reinforcing the impression that the war was a bad dream rather than the deliberately executed policy of the United States government.

Santoli's interviews follow one another in vaguely chronological order according to the tour of duty of the informant, with no introductory statement to integrate or clarify. Santoli's informants are identified, and his interviews are not as crisply edited as those in the Baker book, making them more tedious to read but perhaps enhancing their value as oral histories. Baker's Nam is the more forcefully literate and cohesive book, the one I will choose to use as a text in my community college course on Vietnam.

Lacking any discussion of methodology or how informants were selected, these books do not qualify as professional oral histories. They are journalistic endeavors which nonetheless give us insights into what oral histories can and cannot do. No analysis of the Vietnam war could possibly convey the sense of outrage found in the descriptive statements of those who endured the cruelties. On the other hand, none of the interviews I read, no matter how poignant, provided much insight into why those cruelties had to be endured. Both the raw poignant statement of the individual experience and the carefully considered analysis are necessary for what we as historians seek: a full understanding of our past.

Karen Whitman
Dundalk Community College
Baltimore, MD

TREASURER'S REPORT

As of 2 September 1982:
OHMAR account: \$872.13
Workshop account: \$832.02
Total: \$1704.15



--David Goodman

PERSONAL AND

PROFESSIONAL

JOHN T. MASON, Jr. has retired as director of the U.S Naval Institute's oral history program, which he founded 13 years ago. At the request of Allan Nevins he began doing oral history interviews for the Columbia Oral History Research Office, where he specialized in naval interviews, based on his service in the Office of Naval Intelligence during World War II. At Annapolis, Mason built a collection of more than 125 volumes, totalling 100,000 pages of transcripts. His last series of interviews, with Admiral Stansfield Turner, will be completed later this year.

PAM HENSON of the Smithsonian Archives Oral History Project was awarded a fellowship by the Naples Zoological Station to attend their summer course on "Classification and Hierarchies in the Biological Sciences: Historical Developments and Epistemological Aspects," held at the Villa Aquaria on the Isle of Ischia, Italy.

The Radcliffe Support Program has awarded MELIA (CHITA) FRY with a grant to assist in her writing of a biography of women's suffrage leader Alice Paul.

A photograph of BEN FRANK, clad in kilts and described as "looking every inch the hefty Scot enthusiast" appeared in Richard Williams' article, "Their Hearts are in the Highlands--of North Carolina," Smithsonian, XIII (July 1982), 112.

NEW EQUIPMENT COLUMN

Starting in the next issue the OHMAR newsletter will carry an equipment column. David Goodman has agreed to serve as a contributing editor. He will report from time to time on new developments and new problems with tape recorders, microphones, tapes, transcribers, and word processors. With the assistance of Blair Hubbard, chief of the Branch of Audio Production Services at the U.S. National Park Service, the column will seek to answer specific questions from members about new technology, to promote better quality sound recordings. Please address all questions to EQUIPMENT, OHMAR, P.O. Box 266, College Park, MD 20740.

AUDIO GUIDE TO WASHINGTON

A book which should be of considerable use for identifying oral history resources in the Washington area is the forthcoming Scholars' Guide to Washington, D.C.: Audio Resources by James R. Heintze with assistance from Trudi Olivetti. Some 250 audio collections and organizations which disseminate information on audio resources will be listed with full annotations. A significant number of oral history resources representing virtually all of the sciences and humanities will be cited. Some of the types of collections and organizations surveyed will include libraries, archives, museums and galleries, embassies, data banks, broadcasting organizations, research centers, U.S. government agencies, associations, and others.

Publication sponsored by The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and The American University is expected in 1983. Information regarding oral history collections is being sought by the author, James R. Heintze, The American University Library, Reference Division, Washington, D.C. 20016.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING?



Have you completed an oral history project? Begun a new series of interviews? Received a grant or an award? Changed jobs? Had some new thoughts about oral history? The editor will gratefully accept items (of any length) for inclusion in the Newsletter. The next deadline is December 10. Please send your material to the OHMAR post office box.

CLASSIFIED

Seeking Employment: Oral Historian with book, Voices from the Land: A Caroline County Memoir, to be published in 1983 by the Queen Anne Press of Wye Institute, seeks employment in the field of oral history. Excellent academic credentials, widely published. Write Mary Anne Fleetwood, 104 Caroline Drive, Denton, MD 21629, or call (301) 479-0956, or (301) 364-5744.