



NEWSLETTER  
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# OHMAR

ORAL HISTORY in the MID-ATLANTIC REGION

## OHMAR FALL MEETING IN HARPERS FERRY

SATURDAY, 15 OCTOBER 1983

Like John Brown, OHMAR is headed to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia--our fall meeting will take place at the U.S. National Park Service Center there on the weekend of the 124th anniversary of Brown's famous raid.

Harpers Ferry is easily accessible from most areas of the OHMAR region. From Baltimore take I-70 to Rt. 340; from Washington, I-270 to Rt. 340. Northern Virginians can take Rt. 7 to Rt. 9, then Rt. 671 to Rt. 340. Those coming south from Pennsylvania can take I-81 to Rt. 9. A map of Harpers Ferry and the Park Service Center is located on the back page of this newsletter.

Coffee will be available during the 9:30 AM registration. A registration fee of \$3 for members and \$5 for non-members will be payable at the door. There is no pre-registration. The morning session will feature the presentation of the 1983 Forrest Pogue Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Oral History to Dr. John T. Mason, Jr., retired director of the Oral History Program at the Naval Institute, Annapolis. Dr. Mason will speak on "*Words, Tapes, Manuscripts--Twenty-three Years in Oral History.*" His address will be followed by the annual business meeting and election of officers for 1983/84.

The Park Service grounds offer a beautiful setting for lunch, with a view of the mountains, rivers, and autumn foliage. We suggest you pack a picnic lunch. In case of inclement weather, an indoor eating area is available, and coffee shops are located nearby.

At 1 PM the afternoon session will begin with a presentation by Charles L. Perdue, Jr. and Nancy J. Martin-Perdue, "*When E.F. Hutton Talks, Everybody Listens: Some Thoughts on Problems of Audience and Authority in Oral History.*" Their talk will draw in part on their study of the Shenandoah National Park removals in the 1920s and 1930s.

A panel discussion beginning at 2:30 will focus on Oral History in the National Park Service. David Nathanson, Chief, Branch of Library and Archival Services, NPS, will give "*An Overview of Oral History Materials Available in the NPS.*" Heather Huyck, Assistant to the Superintendent for Resource Management, National Capital Park Central, will speak on "*From Chilkoot to Tuzigoot: Doing Oral History in the Parks.*" And Blair Hubbard, Chief, Branch of Audio-Visual Production Services, will discuss "*Using Oral History in NPS Audio-Visual Presentations.*" As time permits we will adjourn to Blair Hubbard's studio to view examples of A-V productions that draw on oral history interviews.

Plan to be there.

## INTERVIEW WITH JOHN T. MASON, JR.

OHMAR will present the 1983 Forrest Pogue award for excellence in oral history to Dr. John T. Mason, Jr. at the fall meeting in Harpers Ferry on October 15. Dr. Mason retired recently as director of the U.S. Naval Institute's oral history program, which he founded thirteen years earlier. On June 16, 1983, he was interviewed by Ben Frank, head of the Marine Corps' Oral History Section. Excerpts from that interview follow:

Q: I know that you began doing interviews for Columbia /University/, for the Naval project. Do you want to talk about that, please?

A: Yes. I began that series of interviews with Columbia back in 1960.... My wife was working there at the Oral History Research office. Allan Nevins was still chairman of the Advisory Committee, and Louis Starr was director of the Oral History Research Office. But Allan Nevins was very much on the scene. He was also a member of the Secretary of the Navy's Advisory Committee /on Naval History/,.I guess it was....

Nevins had been to Washington for one of those sessions...and he came back to New York and asked Betty /Elizabeth Mason/ if she could think of anybody in the area who might do naval interviews, since he felt that they should have a Navy section to their oral history project at Columbia. So, she thought about it, she being an old Navy gal herself-- I suppose that is the reason he went to her-- but she couldn't come forth with any name. So, she came home to me that night or a night later and said, "The Professor wanted somebody to interview Navy people in the area," and could I come up with suggestions because I had known so many Navy people, having served in Naval Intelligence during World War II.

Well, that had been a long time before and I hadn't kept up my Navy connections, but at any rate, I told her I would think about it and see if I could suggest somebody to them. And I suppose I promptly dropped the subject,

because I didn't do very much thinking about it. I didn't really know anybody whom I could suggest and I knew that they didn't have in their stable of interviewers at Columbia anybody who was cognizant of naval affairs. So, she didn't approach me again on this for some time and finally came back to me and said, "Have you thought of anybody who could do this kind of interviewing? The Professor is pressing me again and I can't come up with anybody." I said, "No, I haven't," and she looked at me; I can see her now. She said, "Why don't you do it?"

I said, "Dear, how can I possibly do it? You know what my schedule here is in this parish /Mason was an Episcopalian minister/, we're building this place up." We had seen to the erection of the church building and a new rectory and this was all in being. And she said, "Well, of course." I worked seven nights a week and every night I was out at some kind of a meeting. And she said, "Well, that's precisely why I suggest that you do it. I've always thought that you should take a day off during the week and this would give you an opportunity to take a day off and at the same time do something quite different from running a parish and it would bring back some

pleasant associations for you." Well, I said, "I'll think about it." And I took a long time to think about it again.

She finally came back, she's a very persistent gal, you know....She said, "What have you thought about this, will you do it?" I said, "I have great doubts about it. I've never done any interviewing in my life and so I don't know whether I could do this." And she said, "You interview every day. You see parishoners who come in with problems and you draw them out on the extent of the problem and ask them all sorts of probing questions. Of course you are interviewing. So you do have a technique whether you know it or not." Her persuasive powers were enough to have me say, "Yes, I'll do it." Then I arranged to take off one day a week which was largely on Monday and I undertook this series of interviews. At first it was limited to the Navy.



shortly thereafter, I think, he advised her that they were interested in setting up a program, and again, I suppose, asking for suggestions of names. Anyway, she told me that-- would I be interested in it. I said I didn't think so, that I still had this parish and was still heavily involved in it, and it seemed to me I was giving as much time as I could to oral history, which was one day a week, and sometimes lapping over a little more than that. So, eventually, Roger offered the job to me. I have always said, "If you want a job, be the only one in the field doing Navy history," you see, 'cause that's what I had done....

He offered me the job, and it took me about three months to make up my mind. I know he got very impatient with me for just procrastinating but it was a terrific decision for me to make to give up the active ministry and to undertake an uncertain future, really, in this new job. I'd then reached the age of sixty and although I'd been in this parish for twelve years, I could stay on until retirement age. But, I felt that I had done as much as I could there. We had done all this building, we had incurred a tremendous debt and we paid off everything except, I think, \$20,000. So, I was getting a little bored with the program, you see, and needed a change....So finally, I think that that was enough to convince me that maybe it would be wise to accept this offer.

But it turned out to be not that easy. It sounded promising and the salary was very good. But, I found that I was not immediately accepted there. I was not really a Navy person--I was a clergyman, and this was a strange new element in this organization. All of them had commissions or what have you, or were retired from the Navy, and I was just an unknown quantity. I had in back of me a record of having talked with this person and that person and quite a collection of interviews, but that made no real impression on people. So I quickly learned that I had to fight my way along there and endure. Well, then there was a blow because Roger, once I came on (which was in April or something like that), announced that he was leaving at the end of May. My only voice in the institution, the only person who had any real interest in the oral history program, was Roger and he was leaving the next month....

When I went to the Naval Institute and before I went there, I'd always thought that there should be a biography of Admiral Nimitz. Why I thought so I don't know, but I was confirmed in that belief. I admired him from afar. I had interviewed him for Columbia on the West

Coast, and so I was imbued with this idea that there had to be a biography of the man. Then I went through the minutes of the meeting at Naval Institute and discovered that the Admiral, when he was CNO /Chief of Naval Operations/ had been approached by them. They wanted to have a biography written of him, and he said, "No."...that he had no fortune to leave his four children. All he had was his reputation, his Naval career, and therefore, it was his intention to have his four children write his biography. Well, I thought, "What a ridiculous idea." How could you get four children to write your biography?

So I called, after all, I was Director of Oral History and I thought that I had some kind of authority, so I called Chet Jr.... and asked him if I could come and see him. I set up a date and I was going up there on a weekend. I told Roger about this and Roger quite approved of it...but he was filled with plans for his retirement and going up to New England and setting up a publishing house. And he did not say anything to Bud about it.

Q: That's Bud Bowler? /Secretary-Treasurer/ Publisher of the U.S. Naval Institute/

A: Yes. Didn't tell Bud anything about it, and here I was missing and Bud is cognizant of these things and he said, "Why hadn't I come and asked permission to go?" Roger didn't speak up for me, and so I was in the stew when I came back. Bud was fuming and would hardly speak to me. I was really in a bad way. Nevertheless, Chet was very open to the idea and he said, "Yes, I think the time has arrived when we should have a biography of my dad, and why don't you go out and see my mother, because if she will give you a green light on this, why then we can move forward with a biography." I came back with that knowledge and finally when I could get in to see Bud, it was pretty frigid, but he warmed up to the idea and he at least gave me permission to go to California and see her. And as you know the result was a pretty good biography based on a whole series of interviews. I think we interviewed about seventy people, all of which, as a collection, was very valuable to Ned Potter in writing the biography. Financially, it has been one of the most lucrative books published by the Naval Institute....

Some of my colleagues wanted me to concentrate on the enlisted men and not bother with the officers.

## EQUIPMENT AND TECHNICAL NOTES

by David R. Goodman

*OHMAR is fortunate to have received permission to reprint the excellent article that appears below. This article is commended for careful review. At the very least it should help clear up some of the confusion which surely must result from advertising claims by retailers. It is not unusual to see cassette tape being sold for practically nothing. The implication is that considerable economies can be achieved by purchasing in bulk one or the other type of cassette tape being advertised. It should go without saying that an off-brand type or a second or third line tape that won't do the professional job required is no bargain. Worse yet, if the one-of-a-kind archival copy cassette tape begins dropping magnetic particles and tearing away from the backing, any savings is quickly lost. Repair can usually only be accomplished with the loss of a piece of the tape.*

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## AUDIO CASSETTES

Unless you're a confirmed audio buff, you probably approach the purchase and recording of audio cassette tape as an act of pure faith: faith in the sales clerk to recommend the right tape for your needs and faith in yourself to record properly.

It needn't be that way. With knowledge of a few basic principles of tape and recording you can begin to understand why you may need a particular type of recording.

When it was introduced nearly 20 years ago the cassette medium caught on quickly for voice recording, but audiophiles stuck by their reel-to-reels for more demanding music recordings. Not until the industry made significant improvements in both tape and the recording process were serious music lovers won over.

Perhaps the most significant development was the introduction of Dolby noise reduction in cassette recorders, which removes most of the annoying hiss characteristic of cassettes. Meanwhile, the tapes themselves were getting better. Improved formulations and entirely new magnetic materials--chromium dioxide and,

later, metal--enhanced the quality of musical reproduction

## SORTING OUT THE TAPES

Recording tape consists of three basic parts: the backing, or base; the binder; and the magnetic coating material. The backing is a clear film of polyester. Binders are glues mixed with solvents and other additives that bind the magnetic particles to the backing.

In an effort to simplify the consumer's job of choosing among the myriad tapes on the market, the International Electrotechnical Commission has classified tapes into four categories, according to their magnetic coating. Many of the name-brand tapes on the market now conform to the IEC labeling standard, which uses Roman numerals to indicate the category the tape belongs to.

**TYPE I.** This is also known as a normal-position tape; its magnetic material is ferric oxide, which requires "normal" bias and 120-micro-seconds (ms) equalization. Type I includes the off-brand tapes as well as the least expensive name-brand tapes (usually called low-noise) and the so-called premium ferrics, which are very good reproducers of music.

Low-noise tapes are suitable for voice recordings or music recordings to be played over less sophisticated equipment. The premium ferrics may be suitable for even your most demanding music recordings, although they are generally recommended for music with limited dynamic range, such as rock.

Prices of Type I cassettes range from under a dollar for off-brands to \$7 or \$8 each for the most expensive 90-minute premium ferrics. Discounts are common.

**TYPE II.** Invented by Dupont in the late '60s, its magnetic material is chromium dioxide (CrO<sub>2</sub>). Type II's may also use cobalt-enhanced ferric oxide (often called chrome-equivalent) as the magnetic material.

Type II's, also called high- or CrO<sub>2</sub>-position tapes, are recorded with a higher bias than Type I's and 70-ms equalization. Because these levels of bias and equalization produce less tape hiss, Type II's generally give a better signal-to-noise ration (S/N).

The better S/N makes Type II's suitable for recording music with quieter passages and greater dynamic range, such as orchestral music or acoustic jazz.

Costs for 90-minute Type II's are about the same as for the premium ferrics.

bass sounds and only some treble.

Maximum output level (MOL) is the highest you can set the recording level of your tape recorder without getting noticeable distortion when you play back your tape. Generally, the higher the MOL the better because louder sounds drown out the residual tape noise, or hiss (caused by the bias).

More important than MOL is the signal-to-noise ratio (S/N), sometimes called the dynamic range. This is the sonic range of a tape between the MOL and the bias noise levels. S/N is measured in decibels, the basic measure of the intensity of sound. Most audiophiles acknowledge an S/N of 60 db as a minimum for high-quality recording--in other words, tape noise should be at least 60 db lower than the peak levels of the recorded material.

The early cassette recordings could produce an S/N of only 50 to 52 db, meaning tape hiss was annoyingly audible. Then Dr. Ray Dolby helped revolutionize cassette tape recording by developing the now-ubiquitous Dolby noise reduction system, which can reduce audible tape noise significantly.

Dolby works by taking soft-volume high frequencies, which can't drown out tape hiss, and boosting their volume during recording without boosting the volume of the tape hiss. When Dolbyized tapes are played back with the Dolby switched on, a special circuit reduces the high frequencies to their original volume and at the same time reduces the volume of the hiss. If you don't switch the Dolby on in playback, high frequencies will be emphasized.

Dolby B, which is what most home decks use, is getting competition these days from improved Dolby C and another type of noise reduction called dbx. Dolby C and dbx are not yet available on most lower-price tape decks.

###

by Blair Hubbard

From Pam Henson: "We are duplicating our tapes to ensure preservation. Could you discuss tape duplication, addressing such issues as patch cords between machines versus sound cables, real time versus high speed recording, etc.?"

When copying from one tape machine to another is is always desirable to connect

them with good quality shielded cables. Never copy by placing the microphone of one beside the speaker of another, as the degradation in quality is severe.

Plug-in connections are rarely as reliable as permanent ones, but are necessary with most equipment. Badly fitting connectors cause loss of level, noise, hum and loss of signal--any of which can be intermittent. Good quality cables have connectors that fit well and are made of metal that retains its shape without fatigue, fitting snugly after many uses. There are many poor cables that look like the good ones but fail quickly. Look for the names of known good quality recorders or ask for a recommendation at a stereo equipment store. The Switchcraft brand is reliable and widely distributed by electronic parts distributors.

Cables are available with virtually any combination of high quality molded connectors at their ends. Using the proper cable can avoid the use of an "adaptor" which is a frequent cause of problems.

The use of a "Patch Bay" or "Switching System" is sometimes convenient, but becomes important when it can be used to protect the connectors on the recorders from damage. If recorders will spend most of their lives in one location, but must be re-connected frequently, they should be "patched."

The connectors on recorders are not designed for heavy use. The "Phono" jacks used on hi-fi/stereo equipment are good for a few hundred insertions, but not thousands. "Miniature Phone" plugs have a better contact shape for frequent use, but are still fragile.

If switches will meet your needs, industrial or military quality silver or gold plated contacts are much more reliable than patch cords. Patch cords are very versatile, but must be kept meticulously clean.

A good copy to protect against damage to the original is very desirable. If the original recording is on  $\frac{1}{4}$ " tape it is quite practical to make either reel-to-reel or cassette duplicates at either high-speed or normal speed. The original can then be kept in archival storage and duplicates used as work tapes. Any copy made will have some degradation--a minimum of 3 db loss in signal-to-noise ratio and some increase in all types of distortion. Assuming all equipment is of good quality, a high speed copy will have some additional loss of high frequencies and increased noise.

If the original recording is cassette, I strongly advise making a single track (preferably full-track)  $\frac{1}{4}$ " reel-to-reel copy

# STATE OF THE ART

*edited by Mary Jo Deering*

*version of the following article appeared in The Maryland Historian, 8:2 (Fall/Winter 1982), where complete annotation can be found. It is reprinted here with permission.*

INTERVIEWER OR INTERVENER:  
Interpretation within the  
Oral History Interview

by Martha Ross  
Department of History  
University of Maryland

Oral history theorists and practitioners have discussed the role of the interviewer since their earliest professional exchanges. Should the interviewer act only as a relatively passive facilitator, providing the opportunity and producing the ambience in which the narrator is able and willing to reflect on his experiences and articulate fully and candidly those recollections? Or is the interviewer "an active agent," leading the narrator to resolve contradictions, draw conclusions from his experience, make judgments about broader implications from that experience, and formulate together a new historical consensus? Should the interview be a "more or less unmediated experience," "an oral autobiography not filtered through the process that produces regular history?" Or should the interview be regarded as a form of interpretive conversation, contradiction and contrariety, produced by speech and counterspeech?

The discussion has been confused somewhat by different usages of the word "interpretation." In some theoretical work, interpretation connotes the narrator's recounting of his experience, the ordering of the narration, and the sequence of its presentation. Practitioners, on the other hand, have considered interpretation to encompass reflection on experience a summing up, and an extraction of meaning therefrom. This article, while conceding the validity of the first definition, will use the second. That the two groups have misunderstood each other and experienced difficulty in carrying forward this necessary discussion is not surprising. That the discussion continues indicates that resolution is still sought and not yet found.

There is general agreement that the interviewer, even in his most passive role as facilitator, is an active agent in arranging for the interview to take place, planning an overall structure for its conduct, and asking

questions that prompt wide-ranging responses from the narrator. To this extent, all agree that the interviewer plays an essential part and that he and the narrator are co-creators of the interview which results.

Co-creators are not, however, co-participants. If the interview is "a special relationship between people with its own conventions," the interviewer fosters the relationship (i.e., establishes and builds rapport with the narrator) by having and showing interest in and respect for him, for his experiences, and for his way of telling about it. This description assumed "a notion of mutual cooperation, trust, and respect." At least at the outset, the narrator should be encouraged to produce "long monologues," free from interruption, rather than the give and take of a dialogue or the informal exchange of conversation.

Disagreement about the interviewer's role arises over the extent to which the interviewer and intervene, in pursuit of his worthwhile purposes, without tainting the narrator's testimony and damaging the credibility of the entire undertaking. The question of inappropriate intervention then becomes one of suitability to the particular interview situation, of timing, and of degree.

Relationships in interviews, and hence the imperatives for their maintenance, differ as the participants are separated by age, sex, race, professional status, and social class. The interviewer's role changes as these relationships change. The scholar approaching the unlettered (but not inarticulate) respondent can exert unintended influence and intimidation if the narrator tries to order his memory to conform to the perception of what the more learned interviewer is seeking. The younger interviewer, acting in the context of his generation's mores, can alienate the older respondent, whose attitudes and manners are more traditional. The frequently interviewed public figure offers a different kind of challenge to the interviewer who would reach beyond the glib but superficial responses the narrator is accustomed to offering. Repeated firm probing by the well-prepared interviewer may be appropriate and effective with the experienced narrator, while such a practice could be biasing and counter-productive with less self-assured and sophisticated respondents.

Interpretation within the interview can be exaggerated or misdirected if bias on the part of either the interviewer or of the project design intrudes. In interviewing a retired woman labor organizer who had participated in Operation Dixie in the 1930s, a

# REGIONAL REPORT

by Richard Voelkel

**District of Columbia:** Strayer College has completed the first phase of its oral history program, the Washington Entrepreneurs Project. The project focused on owner-operated businesses in the Washington metropolitan area which were established at least thirty years ago. Twenty-two business men and women were selected and interviewed extensively, with the same basic questions asked of each. In addition to discussing details of the business' founding, locations, turning points, and so forth, the interviewees were asked about their relationship to local governments, their civic and charitable involvements, their feeling toward the city, and the positive and negative aspects of the family-owned business.

Those interviewed included Milton Kronheim, a liquor distributor, who opened his first store in Georgetown at the age of 15, in 1903; Anthony Bovello, a plumber, who is still leading the business he opened in 1911; Walter Bell of W. Bell and Company; Robert McGuire, owner of a funeral service, whose family has been active in Washington civic affairs for four generations; and others who have carried on businesses begun at the turn of the century by their fathers and grandfathers, in addition to those who chose the entrepreneurial role immediately after World War II. It is hoped that these materials will encourage urban historians to focus on the role of small business in the development of urban areas.

The material is being accessioned at the Strayer College library and will be available by October 1. For further information, call the library at (202) 467-6966. A set of the tapes and transcripts will also be donated to the Washingtoniana Division, District of Columbia Public Library, in November.

**Maryland:** The Montgomery County Historical Society is in the middle of an oral history project involving its own building, the Beall-Dawson House. In addition to the very careful archaeology research of the Restoration Committee, the docents of the society have been developing an oral history of the early Federal period house. Interviews are being conducted with members of the families that owned or occupied the house, with family friends who were frequent visitors to the house and its public tea garden, and with those who worked at the house. When possible,

the interviews are taped while touring the house, seeking descriptions of how the rooms were used, where children played, the excitement and pleasure of holidays, etc. While the tapes will remain available, it is expected that they will be excerpted for publication this winter, rather than transcribed, for now.

**Virginia:** The Local History, Geneology and Oral History Forum of the Virginia Library Association will be meeting on Saturday, November 19, from 9-11 AM, at the VLA annual conference (November 17-19) at The Homestead, Hot Springs, Virginia. In addition to a brief business meeting, the Forum will feature the Portsmouth Public Library's film, "Lower Tidewater in Black and White." A panel discussion of the project will be moderated by Dean Burgess, Director of the Portsmouth Public Library. Other participants in the project who will be on the panel are: Margaret Stewart, Director of the Chistopher Newport College Library, Don Jeffries, WHRO-TV, and Tommy Bogger, History Department, Norfolk University. The panel will be discussing the cooperative efforts of the separate institutions involved in the project and specifically describing the planning, funding, research methodology, uses of oral history, film production, benefits of the project to the community, and effects upon the local library and its local history resources. For further information, contact Sara Collins, chairperson of the Forum, at the Arlington County Library, 1015 N. Quincy St., Arlington, VA 22201. (703) 527-4777, ext. 52.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The fifth biennial Conference of Quaker Historians and Archivists will meet in Providence, RI, from June 15 to 17, 1984. Proposals for papers and panels on any theme relating to Quaker history and research are welcome. Deadline for proposals: October 1, 1983. Deadlines for completed papers: April 15, 1984. Please send proposals and requests for information to the program coordinator: Jo Ann Robinson, Department of History, Morgan State University, Baltimore, MD 21239.

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interpretation, to make facilities accessible to the handicapped, to train volunteers, and to disseminate information. He uses these examples to raise questions and to suggest directions for the use of video equipment.

For instance, Jolly clearly articulates the merits of three-quarter inch versus half-inch cassettes, as well as the pros and cons of VHS or Betamax equipment. Unfortunately, he is so specific in his descriptions of equipment that the book will become dated easily. However, practitioners of oral history who are interested in the possibilities of videototechnology should read this short study for a basic introduction.

For readers who remain unconvinced of the value of videototechnology for oral history, it might be useful to read Joel Gardner, "Equipment Review," International Journal of Oral History, II (June, 1981), 139-142. He comments that "the vast range of video equipment now available defies an oral history program to avoid it. And those many doubters all around the country have lost forever an aspect of every single interview conducted on audio tape alone."

More significant in my view is the growing use of video equipment in the home. In addition to its entertainment value, more persons are finding other uses. A popular article, "Families: They Ought to be in Pictures," by Jura Koncius, recently appeared in the Washington Post, December 17, 1982, F5. Koncius described the creation of personal video family histories. Video equipment allows individuals to replay instantly what has been recorded by the camera, and will undoubtedly stimulate more families to produce "Roots" type interviews. Telephone directories already list several sources of video equipment and services. Oral historians need to be aware of this use of the resource.

Most individuals who object to the use of video do so for reasons of cost and perceived intrusions of the camera technician on the interview. The economics of technology is such that the cost will come down. As for intrusion, I can only suggest that we need more experience with the medium before we can make a final judgment. The size of the equipment is becoming more compact daily (see Peggy Sealton, "The New Breed of Compact Video Cameras," New York Times, June 19, 1983, H 38). My own work has been limited to the use of video in oral history with deaf persons. Since they use a visual mode of

communication (sign language), videototechnology is mandatory for interviews. My preference is to use a fixed camera with no other persons present during the interview rather than to work in the field with a technician. A few moments of hands-on experience with the equipment by the interviewee seems to dispel initial nervousness. My my experience with deaf interviewees, their awareness of the camera is no different than of audio tape recorders in interviews with hearings persons. I have not heard any objection to the use of videototechnology which can not be overcome when more practitioners develop experience and expertise. A good place to start is to read Brad Jolly's Videotaping Local History.



—John S. Schuchman  
Gallaudet College  
Washington, D.C.

Oral Historiography by David Henige. New York: Longman, Inc., 1982. 150pp. \$4.95 (paper).

Comprehensive collections of oral history volumes will include David Henige's Oral Historiography, a well-organized, interdisciplinary discussion of the context, problems and challenges or the collection, interpretation and synthesis of oral materials with a strong closing argument for the sharing of original sources with other scholars.

Henige, African Studies bibliographer at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, makes unique contributions to oral history literature in his review of oral sources in historical scholarship and in his eclectic bibliography. His chapter, "Putting Oral Historiography in Its Place," ranges far beyond the usual references to Herodotus and Thucydides to include historians of Islam, Oceania, Africa and medieval Europe. His bibliography, listing more than 500 publications in diverse disciplines, languages and time periods, will introduce any scholar to erstwhile unfamiliar sources of valuable information.

Henige's own interest in oral societies in Africa leads him to illustrate his arguments with examples from Third World studies, not always applicable to the problems of U.S. oral historians. We do not often face the challenge of international travel, of establishing ourselves in another society speaking a different language and following what is to us an obscure culture; nor do we need to make elaborate plans to maintain personal health while conducting interviews.



Home on the Canal by Elizabeth Kytle. Cabin John, MD: Seven Locks Press, \$19.95.

To many, the C & O Canal is a pleasant place to walk, to exercise, to canoe or to ice skate in the winter. Its history is there, vaguely, in the background. Now Elizabeth Kytle has made that history readily available. Her book is a combination of traditional historical research, excellent photographs, and an interesting use of oral reminiscences. The book is divided into two major sections, half being a lightly documented account of the building and use of the canal, and the remainder containing the reminiscences of eleven men and women who lived and worked on the canal before it closed in 1924.

The account of the building of the 184 mile canal is, in part, a history of boosterism, naive management, and chronic undercapitalization. Rivalry with the politically powerful B & O Railroad runs through the history, with the B & O capturing control of the canal in 1902. When the use and abuse of immigrant and local labor is detailed, the author displays indignation, not drifting from the facts, but merely expressing her personal response to the exploitation and manipulation of those who built and operated the canal.

This tendency to become the interpreter also appears in the section of reminiscences. The interviews, retained on tape, were obviously extensive. They are the core of the book, underlining the difficulty of the work on the canal, explaining its detail, and preventing the reader from romanticizing working class life. Because the canal was closed almost sixty years ago, the recollections of these men and women now in their eighties often offer a view of the life and labor of children and adolescents, an important aspect of working class history. Kytle's handling of these reminiscences, mixing narrative and paraphrase with direct quotation, serves a useful literary function. It is nevertheless frustrating to the oral historian. On the whole, however, the desire to know what was left out and what was rearranged is more than balanced by the extent of the quotations and the overall success of the book in bringing this history to life.

--Richard Voelkel  
Strayer College  
Washington, DC



### HEY YOU--WHO DIDN'T SEND IN YOUR WORKSHOP QUESTIONNAIRE

You remember that questionnaire on the back page of your last newsletter, asking for your advice and suggestions on future workshops? Chances are you didn't fill it out and send it in. The return, in fact, has been very disappointing. OK, we admit we made a mistake. It was a little long and complicated. And we sent it to you in June, just when you were finishing the school year and leaving on vacation. And we didn't give you a self-addressed stamped envelope to return it. And we know how much you hate to answer questionnaires, and how many you get. But we really do want to know what you think about our current workshop formats and locations and costs, and where we should be going in the future. We still want to hear from you. Send your questionnaires, or simply a letter expressing your views, to Betty Key, 7302 Pomander Lane, Chevy Chase, MD 20815.

### WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

A list of the names and addresses of all participants in the 1983 OHMAR workshop at the American College is now available. Anyone seeking a copy should write to the newsletter editor, preferably enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

### MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

The publications committee is at work on a new membership directory to be ready after the spring workshop in 1984. Please notify of the committee of any changes in information concerning the listing of your name, address, telephone number, and project. Write Martha Ross, Publications Committee, 6008 Grosvenor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814.

### AUDIO RESOURCES GUIDE

James Heintze and Trudi Olivetti, at the American University, are preparing a guide to the audio resources in Washington, D.C. All oral history projects in the area that have not previously been in contact with them should notify James R. Heintze, The American University Library, Washington, DC 20016 (202) 686-2137.