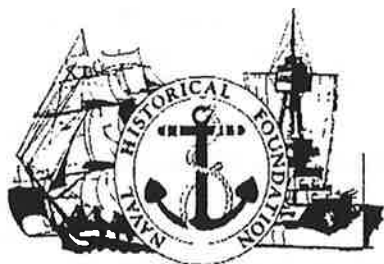


Volume XXII Number 1

Spring 1999

A Publication of Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region, affiliated with Oral History Association



SPRING CONFERENCE

April 15 and 16, 1999

Naval Museum Education Center
Naval Historical Center
Washington Navy Yard
901 M Street, S.E.
Washington, D.C.

ORAL HISTORY IN THE MILITARY

Come for one day or two. A conference registration form is included on pages 9 and 10 of this newsletter. Please tear it out and return it to Phyllis Palmer. We'd appreciate an early registration. Each session, with the exception of the beginner and advanced workshops, will have three or four expert presenters.

A synopsis of workshop topics follows.

Thursday, April 15:

9:00 a.m. **Oral History in the Field**

(Benis Frank on Grenada & Lebanon, 1983; Desert Shield & Desert Storm, and current operations in the Pacific)

10:45 a.m. **Oral History with Women and Minorities** (the integration of the Navy; and Military Women at WIMSA)

2:00 p.m. **Teaching Oral History**

(Drs. Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, and Mimi Conway presenting)

3:45 P.M. **Tours and Briefings of Oral History Collections**

5-7:00 p.m. **Reception** at the Navy Museum, Washington Navy Yard

Friday, April 15 9:00 a.m. **Promoting Your Oral History Program** (speakers from the U.S. Atlantic Command, the Navy Memorial and the Foreign Service Institute)

10:45 a.m. Concurrent Sessions:

Workshop for Beginners (Dr. David Crist, Marine Corps Historical Center), and **Workshop for Advanced Oral Historians** (Dr. David Winkler, Naval Historical Foundation)

2:00 p.m. **Video Oral History** (Video fiasco in DS/DS; Interviewing NATO Leaders on the Bosnia Experience; and the pros and cons of video)

3:30 p.m. End of conference.

In This Issue:

Spring Conference, p. 1
Pogue Award Interview, p. 2
Year End OHMAR Financial Report, p. 6
Announcements, p. 6 &
Wrap-up of Gettysburg, p. 8
Registration form, p. 9-10

Lincoln. All of these women aren't public figures. They are just extraordinary women doing a job. We don't have outside sources to find out about their lives and how they did their jobs, but these oral histories let us come into their lives, come into their homes, come into their hearts. I think that is very generous of them.

AR: In a way they put themselves out in what they wrote but they also had their private lives. It's that part of their lives that come out in the oral histories--what it was like to deal with the family when they had a job that was demanding.

AT: Absolutely. What is it like when your marriage is falling apart and you're on assignment and you have an editor who wants you to rewrite a story at deadline. What does that feel like? Now these issues are the same for men as well but I think they are of particular interest for women. I am partial to that historical view because of my daughter. She is a reporter with AP. These stories will help her realize how important it is to build the chain from one generation to the next. These stories are wonderful firm links in that chain.

AR: Why do you think your daughter went into journalism?

AT: You know, I don't know. She grew up in a house of journalists. Her stepfather is a journalist. She didn't show any interest in college but when she got out of college and she went to San Francisco she ended up in the *Bay City News*, which was a city wire, and she just loved it. It's something about the life and something about the people. I think a lot of it is the people. This is another thing that these histories show--there is a particular type of person that is drawn to journalism. That's exciting to tease out, which you can in these

oral histories, because you get to know them as people not just as journalists.



Left to right: Donita Moorhus, Fern Ingersoll, and Abbie Trafford of the Women in Journalism Oral History Project. Photograph by Don Ritchie.

AR: Why were you attracted to journalism?

AT: I love a story. I realize that there's nothing like a story that just lifts me along. I did start out with the Apollo moon landing story, which was a great story. I love to read. If I pick up the paper I love to read a great story. I'm not so interested in "the Department of Agriculture announced a new program for chickens yesterday." I like the stories that go beyond the news, beyond the events, and reveal what people's lives are like. There are so many great stories out there. I think most journalists are that way.

What is so intoxicating is the challenge--working terrible hours, going to unbelievably queer places, having an invasion of your personal life. If you're really going to be a journalist it's very hard to have a normal 9 to 5 job. Everybody wants balance in their life but you may not get it all at once. There are times in your life that are not balanced. How do you face that? How do you confront it? How do you make choices? I think since I've been doing it for a while, what I would say to my daughter and what I say to younger colleagues is that you don't have to do it all at once. You have to think in terms of a long

Press Club, we wanted to keep that spirit alive because it had a function. It was sort of a beacon to those who are not always in the majority. We felt that was important to continue. Even now in newsrooms, the buzz word is diversity, and certainly there is much more diversity in newsrooms. But as my daughter said, "please point out to everyone there [at the OHMAR meeting] that I'm the only woman in this bureau."

AR: How many are in her bureau?

AT: There must be four or five. That includes photographers as well as writers.

So the Washington Press Club Foundation was formed and we had some assets and the idea was to help people get into this field, and help them when they are in the field. We have a dinner every year, the Congressional salute dinner, which is a black tie dinner, and we raise money. The money goes into scholarships at journalism schools and internships. It's very important to support young journalists coming along, both students and then those who have just graduated and are starting out. But a key part of our mission is also chronicling the experiences of pioneer women. We felt that they had a special story to tell even though it's been spread out over years. They have a story--both of the historical sweep of what's happened to women in this country and they have a wonderful human story to tell of how individuals fit in to these broad historical sweeps.

AR: In your talk you also mentioned journalists interviewing journalists. Why did you have oral historians do this?

AT: Well, I think this is a debate. What we do for a living is interview other people. We wanted to interview women journalists and we wanted to get their stories for history. Your immediate response is: "Terrific, I'll do

that Saturday morning. We'll just interview someone. We know how to ask questions and get all the information." Of course we're journalists--we tell stories. The thing about oral history is that it's a distinct field. Oral historians have different techniques, they're interested in different kinds of things, and if you want to do an oral history you are better off having an oral historian do it.

So it was pretty clear. We did understand that we wanted to get oral historians to do it and make it an oral history project. Sometimes this was hard because as journalists we think: Why didn't they ask that, or whatever? But we also understood that if you want an oral history then you have an oral historian do it. And the results have been spectacular. Now where you want journalists or writers, they can take this information in the oral history and tell a story or write a book. It doesn't cut us out at all. What it does is give us a real basis to go forward and then tell stories as we tell stories.

AR: Do you think there's any chance that the project might continue or pick up at another point?

AT: This is totally personal, so I am not speaking for the Foundation, but I personally think it would be a very good idea if we could find a way to institutionalize continuing the project and doing one or two oral histories a year, and somehow raise the money for that and get that going. There's a great debate--is it more efficient to do a whole lot all at once. But I think we're beyond that. We've established a repository of these great stories and we ought to continue. There are some people maybe we think we've missed or we might want to get now. Again, this is part of our mission--it's giving people who are coming into the field some friends in history that they can turn to. We ought to keep doing that before the pioneers are gone.

**FALL 1999 OHMAR CONFERENCE
CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

OHMAR is seeking:

- 1) interactive web sites; and
- 2) documentary films

based on oral histories. If you have one/some you'd like to submit, contact **Elaine Eff**, OHMAR President. Work phone 410-744-0703; fax 410-987-4071; and e-mail eff@dhcd.state.md.us



Don Ritchie talking to Deborah Haskell, OHMAR newsletter editor at Gettysburg. Immediate past President Judith Knudsen seen in distance at registration table. Photo by I.B. Sinclair

**RECAP OF THE CONFERENCE
November 7, 1998, Gettysburg, PA
At Gettysburg College**

Community Oral History

On a lovely sunny, fall day in the heart of the Gettysburg battlefield, keynoters Charles and Nan Perdue from the University of Virginia talked about their work documenting the experiences of a community in central Virginia.

The title of the session was "King Lear in Virginia"—no doubt a reference to the "sanity and madness, temporal power

and primary familial relationships" the pair became embroiled in and attempted to sort out (Funk and Wagnalls definition). A serious pair of researchers enraged by an article titled "Lost Community in Blue Ridge Hills: Centres where Intelligence Practically is Missing: Reported by Psychologists" published in the *New York Times* during the 1930s, asserted a community of human beings were "not intelligent, were uncouth, and never bathed. They recorded their property lines by word of mouth and spoke a dialect which could be traced back to the 17th century." Charles and Nan Perdue were inflamed by the story and set out to investigate.

Throughout the U.S. the WPA in May of 1935 provided work relief to artists and writers at the state level. Virginia fieldworkers interviewed 1300 people. Eudora Ramsey Richardson directed the project. She sorted the project materials at the end but none were turned over to the Library of Congress as requested. The materials finally came to the University of Virginia, 1300 narratives. Chuck was looking in particular for the Virginia ex-slave narratives. Referred to by librarians as "the junk in the basement", the Perdues finally found them in the old library building. The narratives were all in bad physical shape so the Perdues copied 5000 pages of textual material in order to study them. They worked on the stories of 6 women (one of these was African American) and one man. For example, John Garrett worked as a janitor at the Hopewell Silk plant and he was a pentecostal minister. A problem with these narratives was they had been edited previously and they'd been fictionalized. So the Perdues started their detective work making intensive comparisons of texts and checking on

(MORE Conference on page 11)

Registration Form

Oral History of the Mid-Atlantic Region OHMAR's Spring 1999 Meeting

Thursday, 15 April and Friday, 16 April, 1999

ORAL HISTORY AND THE MILITARY

at the

**Naval Museum Education Center
Naval Historical Center
Washington Navy Yard
901 M Street, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20374**

**Co-Sponsored by the Naval Historical Center, the Naval Historical
Foundation, and the Marine Corps Historical Center**

(Please **PRINT** or **TYPE**)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (work) _____ (home) _____

E-mail address _____

How would you like your name to appear on your name tag? _____

Please note the lunch will be on your own. A list of eating facilities in and around the Washington Navy Yard will be included in your registration packet.

Do you need information about hotel accommodations? Yes _____ No _____

genealogies in courthouses. The Perdues selected 61 texts out of the 1300 to work with. The results of this work can be found in their book *Talk About Trouble*, published in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

The philosophical problem posed in this age of cyberspace is that all 1300 narratives are going to be put onto the internet by the Library of Congress for all to read. But given their inaccuracy as a whole, what indeed is being disseminated, truth or

**AFTERNOON SESSION NOVEMBER 7
Doing Community Oral History With
Postsecondary Students & Collegians**

Session Participants:

Dr. Michael Birkner of Gettysburg College
Dr. Kim Lacey Rogers of Dickinson College
Dr. Beverly Romberger of Susquehanna U.
Dr. Wanda Cordero-Ponce of Susquehanna
Dr. Linda Shopes, PA Historical & Museum
Commission, Panel Chairperson



Panel Participants from left: Birkner, Rogers, Cordero-Ponce, Romberger and Shopes. Photo courtesy of I.B. Sinclair.

Kim Lacey Rogers, author of *Righteous Lives*, started the session with a discussion of some of her fieldwork-based student initiatives. In 1996 her students interviewed steelworkers. The experience 1) allowed the students to reflect and define

their own experiences; 2) furthered college-community relations; 3) allowed undergraduates to take their research project to the national association meeting; and 4) educated students in diversity issues. On March 26-27 at Dickinson College, the Community Studies Center is sponsoring a conference creating and exploring community: collaborative research involving undergraduates. For information, contact KLR at rogers@dickinson.edu.

Beverly Romberger from Susquehanna University has been working on a project called "Reconstructing the Past-Reaching for the Future" which has involved rural elderly Pennsylvania German women and Central Pennsylvania latino high school students. Romberger trained the students to do oral histories. They did practice interviews and they were taught to index. At the end of June 1998 their results were published on a web page in a magazine format. These interviews may be accessed at www.susqu.edu/ad-depts/modern language.

Wanda Cordero-Ponce, also from Susquehanna University, worked on the same project. The project started with 14 students, 6 from the Susquehanna area and 8 from Harrisburg. The latter eight dropped out. The Harrisburg students had been from an "at risk" population with no high school teacher helping to keep them on task. But the 6 students living along the Susquehanna completed the project. The end results were: 1) the project fostered respect between the generations; and 2) the students became more aware of their own ethnic roots.

Michael Birkner of Gettysburg College a project to get his students into the university archives. An assignment to write a history of the class of 1908 forced students to interview faculty, administrators and