



Newsletter
Vol. 8 No. 1
Winter, 1983

OHMAR

ORAL HISTORY in the MID-ATLANTIC REGION

FREE WORKSHOP IN WASHINGTON

February 24-25, 1984

SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR TEACHERS

The federal city will be the focus of OHMAR's spring workshop this year. February 24th and 25th may not seem like spring, but the opportunity to cosponsor a meeting in Washington with the Columbia Historical Society, the George Washington University Center for Washington Area Studies, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library was too good to pass up. As a result of these cosponsorships, there will be no registration for the workshop, which will be held at the King Library.

Conference sessions, organized by Marcia Greenlee and Richard Voelkel, include presentations on life in segregated Washington, small business in the capital, oral histories of religious institutions, women's labor history, military history, the use of computers in oral history, and the many uses of oral history in the federal government. There will also be a strong emphasis on neighborhood and ethnic studies.

On Saturday evening, in connection with the conference, Michael Frisch, professor of history and American studies at SUNY Buffalo, and a specialist in oral history and public history, will deliver the annual Letitia Woods Brown Lecture at the John Wesley Powell Auditorium in the Cosmos Club at 7:30 p.m. Prior to his speech there will be a reception at the Columbia Historical Society, 1307 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., at 6:30 p.m.

The workshop, organized by Amelia Fry, will run all day on Saturday. Recognizing that all 9th graders in the District of Columbia public schools are now required to take local history and do oral history interviewing, one track of the workshop is designed for primary and secondary school teachers. In addition to discussions, activities and lectures by experienced oral history teachers, local projects will be featured and their directors available for questions. The second track, also daylong, will deal with other uses of oral history techniques, particularly in community history projects.

The entire meeting will be free and there will be no prepaid meals. You may bring a lunch or enjoy one of the many restaurants in nearby Chinatown or at the Pavillion in the recently renovated Old Post Office Building. An informal dinner will be organized on Friday night.

The conference will be held at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library at 9th and G Streets, N.W., in downtown Washington. Across the street is the Gallery Place station which services both the Red and Yellow lines of the Metro (subway). Parking is available in the library and in lots close by. The Harrington Hotel (202-628-8140) is just a short walk away and offers reasonable rates (single: \$32/\$36; double \$44/\$46). Many Washington hotels also offer special weekend rates, including the Capital Hilton (202-393-1000), the Sheraton Washington (800-325-3535), the Georgetown Hotel (800-424-2882), and the River Inn (800-424-2741).

who live and work with history, acknowledge that it does not have a clear terminal point. We must explore the past not only to gain perspective but also prospective about the continuum of human affairs, and our analyses of oral history materials should be enriched by the concept of temporality.

OHMAR OVERSEAS

During the past year several OHMAR members have been involved in oral history outside the United States. In this issue we include two accounts, ranging from interviewing on a naval vessel sailing toward Lebanon to a small village in Thailand. In future issues we hope to include other descriptions of overseas activities, and we encourage members to submit brief articles on their own experiences.

ODYSSEY OF AN ORAL HISTORIAN

by Benis M. Frank

At 0700 on 30 October 1983, I was awakened at my home in Bowie, Maryland, by a telephone call from the director of the Command Center at Headquarters Marine Corps, who told me that he had orders for me to leave that day for Grenada. I was to interview key personnel of the 22nd Marine Amphibious Union (MAU). He asked how soon I could be ready. I replied that I needed to pack, and get my orders, tape recorders, and tapes at the Marine Corps Historical Center in the Washington Navy Yard. By 1630 that afternoon I was flying by helicopter from Bolling Air Force Base to Norfolk, where, shortly after midnight, I boarded a large Air Force transport for a flight to Barbados. After a long delay at Barbados, in an atmosphere that can only kindly be described as utter confusion, at 1630 on 31 October I flew to Point Salines airfield on Grenada.

Landing at dusk, I began looking for Marines. All I saw were soldiers, none of whom knew where the Marines were. Finally I found a detachment of Marine 2d Anglico (air/naval gunfire liaison company), which was in contact with the Guam, then off of Carriacou Island, north of Grenada, where the 22d MAU Marines had landed unopposed that morning. I was flown to the Guam, where I reported in to MAU headquarters, was assigned berthing space, and began interviewing--as I continued to do for the entire transit across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

Since the Marine Corps historical program is concerned with current as well as past

activities of the Marines, I had started a program interviewing personnel of the MAUs who had been deployed to Lebanon. In January I made interview trips to their home base at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and in May and June to Beirut. Immediately following the news of 25 October that the 22d MAU had that day conducted Operation Urgent Fury--the landings on Grenada--the Marine Corps History and Museum Division made arrangements for me, as head of the Oral History Section, to join the MAU and interview its command and staff about their planning and conducting of operations. As part of this program it was anticipated that I would fly to Rota, Spain, and from there by helilifted to the USS Guam as it steamed by Spain into the Mediterranean and ultimately to Beirut, where the 22d MAU would relieve the 24th. Then Grenada changed the timetable.

In all, I conducted 36 interviews, some of them of considerable length. I learned how the Amphibious Ready Group, en route to Beirut, was diverted to head south to Grenada, and how the operation was quickly conceived, and plans prepared and distributed. I was told that on the night before the landing, the Executive Officer of the Guam had the scheduled closed-circuit TV movie stopped ten minutes into its showing and replaced instead by "Sands of Iwo Jima." This act was acknowledged by a mighty cheer rising from the crew and troop berthing spaces as the Globe and Anchor of the Marine Corps appeared on the TV screens, accompanied by the strains of the Marine's Hymn.

On the day that the Guam and its accompanying ships left Grenada, we steamed past St. George's harbor, close to shore, with ships' whistles blowing and signal flags displaying the message: "God Bless You All."

We were one day away from Spain on 10 November, the 208th birthday of the Marine Corps. All Marines were formed up on the hangar deck of the Guam. The colors were marched out and behind them was the traditional birthday cake, to be sliced by the commanding officer. Again traditionally, the oldest Marine present received the first piece of cake, and the youngest the second. This year on the Guam, I received the first piece of cake. I probably was the oldest individual in the whole damn flotilla!

After arrival off Beirut on 17 November, I was flown to the Iwo Jima, sister ship of the Guam, which soon took on board the headquarters and other elements of the 24th MAU. We left Beirut two days later, and I immediately began interviewing Colonel Timothy J. Geraghy, CO of the 24th, and his

changes in the association in the near future: new services, new publications, a new meeting format, and a vigorous membership drive. The council devoted considerable attention to new and expanded publications. Joel Gardner is preparing a prospectus for a technical pamphlet series, covering such topics as grants and oral history, new technology, and legal issues. These pamphlets will be distributed to OHA members and made available for sale through the state and regional groups. The OHA Newsletter will be changing its format to make it more of a forum for discussion about oral history and less of a bulletin board for organizational notes. The Oral History Review is exploring the possibility of a second issue, either another scholarly journal, but based on a single theme, or a more popular-styled community-level magazine. The membership directory will be expanded into an Annual Report and Directory, including minutes, financial reports, committee memberships, and other information, along with names, addresses, and telephone numbers. The council has also proposals to accept advertising in OHA publications as a means of generating additional revenue to fund these ambitious projects.

Betty Mason deserves credit as the pivotal person in these changes. As chair of the long-range planning committee and as president of the OHA for the past year she supervised the planning and prodded others into action. We can now look forward to Cullom Davis and Martha Ross continuing, and building on her initiatives. If you're not already a member of the OHA, now is the right time to join.

CLASSIFIED

Transcribing on IBM-PC, letter-quality printer. Contact A. Craker, 9511 Locust Hills Drive, Great Falls, Virginia 22066. Telephone: (703) 759-9344.

OHMAR Welcomes New Members:

Esther R. Dyer, New York, N.Y.
 Scott Bowler, Morris Plains, N.J.
 Bernice Kelly, Washington, D.C.
 Joseph W. Palmer, Amherst, N.Y.
 Eileen McGuckian, Rockville, Md.
 Frederick Stielow, College Park, Md.
 Robert Goshorn, Berwyn, Pa.
 John J. Harter, Geneva, Switzerland
 Deborah Reid, Galesville, Md.
 Marie Bourgeois, Bethesda, Md.
 William T. Durr, Baltimore, Md.
 N. Claudette John, Philadelphia, Pa.

EQUIPMENT AND TECHNICAL NOTES

By David R. Goodman

There is still a considerable sentiment among some practitioners of oral history for the use of reel-to-reel recorders they achieve a recording which is more "archival" in quality than a cassette recorder, all other things being equal such as the physical location of the interview. Cassette tape recorder users are quick to note that it is at least equally true that the range of differences between the recording characteristics of reel-to-reel and cassette recorders has so narrowed over the past few years that whatever differences once existed are nearly impossible to discern now. There is some truth in this claim since with "professional" type cassette tape recorders a strict comparison of recording qualities reveals little technical difference evidently not enough to bother most oral historians or transcriptionists.

Despite the disclaimer by cassette recorder users a recording done with a good reel-to-reel recorder is usually of better quality than with a cassette recorder.

Qualities of a reel-to-reel recorder which make the difference are the recorder design, the type of tape used, recording range and sensitivity, whether the recording is done full track, half track, or quarter track, and the tape transport system combined with speed. It can be stated with some certainty that currently in vogue \$75-or-less recorders will always be outperformed by most reel-to-reel recorders.

Why isn't there more use of reel-to-reel recorders for oral history purposes? I would wager that very few of the readers have seen reel-to-reel recorders in use recently for oral history purposes. Indeed in my experience I have seen only one used, and that several years ago. For the average oral history purpose the current preference seems to resolve around the cost of cassette recorders versus reel-to-reel, the ease of set-up and transportability of the cassette recorder, the simplicity and dependability of operation of the cassette recorder, the ready availability of components such as batteries and tapes, and a sense of immediate satisfaction with the type of recording obtained.

For both types of recorders two additional influences operate. The first is that while there is much discussion of archival quality recording, no standard has been set for oral history. In most cases a

literally because it wished to reap the anecdotal quality of the remarks as well as the historical fact. (Finally) Suid came to the heart of the matter. The oral statements of Wayne and Wellman were admittedly the unique intellectual products of both men. But the releases they executed to Suid together with the copyright assignment made by Wellman gave Suid full authority to exercise control over their words. The affidavit submitted by Professor James Hammack, Jr., the president-elect of the Oral History Association, supported Suid's contention that thousands of oral historians would be adversely affected if oral history was denied copyright protection. The major difference between traditional historians and oral historians according to Hammack was that, "Unlike the traditional historian who uses documents and artifacts already in existence, the oral historian creates a record as he works."

To the disappointment of the plaintiff and oral historians in general, the court granted Newsweek's motion for summary judgment. In disposing of the oral history infringement claim the court relied on technical flaws. Both of the alleged copyright assignments were found to be invalid. The release that Michael Wayne executed did not expressly convey his copyright interest and Suid had failed to register Wellman's assignment prior to bringing suit as required by statute. Even if Wellman's assignment had been properly registered, the court admitted that Newsweek's use of his quotations would have constituted "fair use." The language of the court in rejecting Suid's alleged copyright interest is instructive in this regard: "The author of a factual work may not, without an assignment of copyright, claim copyright in statements made by others and reported in the work since the author may not claim originality as to those statements." The Suid court implies that if there had been a proper assignment of copyright, then the plaintiff could have pressed his claim even though he could not claim originality for the oral history statements. Another supportive sign was the court's acknowledgment of the bona fide economic interests of Suid as a professional oral historian. Because of the various flaws in Suid's claims, however, the court found that "the copyright statute does not permit the extension of protection which the plaintiff seeks."

It has been the practice in most major oral history programs to seek copyright protection for all interview transcripts that are completed. Whether such efforts have been worthwhile or in vain will ultimately be determined by the courts. The creation of a test to distinguish oral history from ordinary conversations would certainly be essential for any court directly faced with the copyrightability question. The first element of the test asks whether the speaker intended to mark off his words from the ordinary stream of speech. The act of consenting to an oral history interview and the exercise of some of the many rights that programs regularly afford interviewees would seem to satisfy the intent element. Second, does the speaker mean to adopt the interview as a unique statement? The right of final review that most oral history programs accord an interviewee would seem to satisfy the finality of expression element. For once an interviewee has either exercised or waived the review option and executed a legal release, most programs consider the interview transcript to be unalterable. Third, does the speaker wish to exercise control over the publication of his words? Virtually all programs both ask and answer the question of who retains the right to control publication. And fourth is there an express reservation of common law copyright? There would have to be some showing that proper steps were taken to insure copyright protection. Since the federal statute gives instant protection to a work at its creation and only requires formal registration before one files suit for infringement, most oral history programs that attach the copyright symbol and secure written transfers could pass the test.

One of the most important provisions of the new copyright act is an elastic clause that authorizes the extension of protection to qualifying intellectual products that are either "not known or later developed." Although oral history has been recognized as an important research field for over twenty years, the copyright status of the voluminous historical materials it has and continues to generate remains effectively "unknown." Whether the copyrightability of oral history will soon be favorably decided seems to depend most heavily on the appearance of a plaintiff with a much stronger suit than Lawrence Suid pressed. In the meantime, oral historians should consider either introducing a bill to amend the current copyright statute or trying to utilize the rule making power of the U.S. Copyright Office.

seems to offer certain analytical tools for getting at the meaning of the data we deal with the spoken word.

The National Women's History Project (P.O. Box 3716, Santa Rosa, CA 95402) has published a resource catalogue of materials suitable for use in teaching women's history at all levels from elementary school through college. Included are several items that either draw upon interviews or encourage students to do interviews as a way of learning about the history of women.

As always I welcome items worth noting in this column, suggestions of books to review, and people to review them.



Linda Shopes
3103 Abell Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21218

Getting Up: Subway Graffiti in New York by Craig Castleman. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982, 191 pp. \$15.00.

One mandate of oral history is to illustrate the lives of those unrepresented in formal written materials. Getting Up does that and much more. It may even make you want to get on the next Amtrak to New York and then walk to the nearest IRT station--an activity that many "respectable" New Yorkers gave up in the early 1970s, just about the time the first "Taki 183" markings began to appear all over Manhattan.

Castleman warns right off that this is a descriptive work, not an analysis of the aesthetic value or social significance of graffiti writing. His academic advisor at Columbia University suggested that "this isn't the time to worry about why people write and fight graffiti, because we aren't sure just yet what it is that they are doing. Find that out first. People can argue about what it all means later on." (x) By wisely following this advice, Castleman avoids the "decline of western civilization" frame of most editorial and intellectual discussions. Instead, by gently arranging his photographs and extensive interviews with graffiti "writers," he creates order and even dignity out of what had previously seemed a chaotic jumble of malicious scribbling.

The results are refreshing, startling, often ironic. The world of the subway graffiti writer is a complex one, with its

own boundaries, language, conventions, and variations. While all demographic groups are represented, most writers are male, either black or Puerto Rican, and under 16--the age at which adult penalties begin to apply. On the whole, they seem a quiet, nonviolent lot, preferring the power of the pen to that of the knife. Writers necessarily work only within the four boroughs that have rail transit service, yet even within that confined territory, there are regional differences. Bronx writers face little interference from armed gangs and therefore tend to be more individualistic; in the more hostile environs of Brooklyn, however, they tend to band together for protection.

Perhaps Castleman's greatest contribution is his classification of graffiti forms. "Tags," the simplest type, are names or initials quickly scrawled inside the cars. "Throw-ups" are large two or three-unit names written on the outside. "Pieces"--short for masterpieces--are more elaborate three or four-letter names. "Top-to-bottoms" (T-to-Bs) and "end-to-ends" cover a more extensive canvas, while "whole cars" use the entire side, often including windows and doors. "Whole cars" take a whole night and considerable planning and are generally as far as a "master" writer can go, but occasionally several have banded together to execute a "whole train"--or "worm". The most famous was painted on July 4, 1976: an eleven-car "freedom train" depicting Bicentennial themes.

As in other deviant subcultures, graffiti writing frequently mirrors the mainstream. Writers seem genuinely motivated by the need to express themselves and to "reach out and touch someone" through an available communications medium. Using the 700 mile New York City subway system as a tool of self-publication, they spread their names and reputation throughout the city. As in so much of mass culture, artists and audiences (other writers, not the general public) may develop strong mutual attachment without ever coming face and face. Some writers also feel a wider mission to help beautify an otherwise dingy, impersonal urban environment. Many of the larger, multicolor works--nicely reproduced here--are indeed stunning. Like other artists, writers must decide whether to perfect their craft or sell out for mass appeal. Faced with a choice between creating a few, high-quality ("nasty") works or scribbling a large number of less distinctive "tags" and "throwups," most

storage, accessing and transcription of the tapes, all especially beneficial to the novice in oral history.

After dealing with the practical aspect of machinery and method, the authors turn to a model for fieldwork in oral history. This model contains the stages of pre-interview research, first interview, analysis of the interview, and re-interview. This chapter is important for the teacher who has no experience with oral history, for it clearly points out some of the potential pitfalls. Emphasis is placed on the need for adequate research by the students before they attempt an interview, and several tips on interviewing strategies and tactics are provided. The field model should ease the task of implementing an oral history program.

The last chapter summarizes what classroom teachers have done with the interviews. Examples include: the oral history archive; the Foxfire-concept publication; production for local media; community specific curriculum materials and historical problem reports. These examples enable teachers to develop their own ideas.

Several valuable aids to teaching are found in the appendices and bibliography.

The appendices contain a sample legal release form, The Goals and Guidelines of Interviewing from the National Oral History Association, and criteria for evaluating an oral history interview. The bibliography is extensive and includes books, articles, and texts that have used oral history for basic research.

Where was the Oral History Guide seven years ago when I started to teach oral history? Even with seven years of experience, the Guide provides many new ideas and materials. The authors clearly recognize the needs of teachers, both novice and experienced, who are developing projects in oral history. The numerous practical examples both from their own experiences and from that of hundreds of other teachers, make this Guide useful. This book should be part of every history teacher's library.

Richard A. Williams
Plum Borough Senior High School
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

COLUMBIA CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S HISTORY

On November 18 and 19, at Columbia University, I had the pleasure of attending the International Conference on Oral and Women's History, sponsored by the University's Oral History Research Office with the cooperation of the Barnard College Women's Center. I was struck primarily by the sophistication of the presentations. Both the topical and methodological papers demonstrated the intellectual richness available in oral material. Joan Hoff-Wilson, in her keynote, noted the importance of oral history in understanding one of the yet uncharted areas of history--women's sexual experience and identity. Marsha Darling, of Wellesley College, and William Chafe, of Duke, further illustrated the historiographic importance of oral history materials in their presentations of their work on Southern black women, about whom more traditional records are generally mute.

A panel discussion on theory and method, with Luisa Passerini, of the University of Turin, Dominique Willems, of the University of Ghent, and Michael Frisch, of SUNY-Buffalo, clearly illustrated how interviews lend themselves to interdisciplinary modes of analysis--folkloristic, linguistic, socio-political. I found a series of presentations on community history projects especially exciting: presenters spoke of projects well-based in their communities, well-aware of the social and political implications of studies of working class and/or minority communities, attentive to class differences between studied and studier, and sensitive to the social functions of memory.

I was unable to attend the final evaluation session in which panelists addressed the question of future directions of oral history. However, I caught as an underlying theme the deeply social nature of oral history: it is generated in a social relationship, it is a source of social data in linguistic form, it is often directed toward broader social purposes. Ron Grele and Betty Mason, Director and Associate Director of the Columbia University Oral History Research Office, are to be commended for their excellent work in putting together this conference.

Linda Shopes
UMBC

Oral Historian Bumperstickers: "Oral Historians Talk About It" and "Oral Historians Do It With Their Lips," available at \$3 each, 2 for \$5, or \$2 each for quantities over 10. Contact Margo Knight, E. 361 Grunert Rd., Shelton, WA 98584.