

## FROM THE CHAIR

Al Stein, Chicago State University



Louis "Studs" Terkel, 1912–2008

Studs Terkel, the spiritual father of the oral history movement, died peacefully in his Chicago home on October 31, 2008, at age of 96. Terkel was one of the best known and most respected oral historians. An especially vivid memory I have was the remarkable OH-Section-endorsed program in 2007 featuring him in a special session: "Free Speech, Free Spirit: the Studs Terkel Center for Oral History" (see OH-Section Newsletter, Vol. 4, Issue 1). It seems very likely that those who attended that session -- including our Section members -- will always cherish the memory of Studs and SAA in Chicago. He was always known as a "free spirit" at WFMT, his flagship radio station, and at the Chicago History Museum

(CHM). CHM has remarkably preserved Terkel's archives (more than 6,000 hours of sound recordings) and WFMT broadcast portions of his taped interviews and programs the day and weekend after Studs passed. The oral history testimony from co-workers and friends who worked with him on numerous radio documentaries (behind the scenes and in front of the microphone) revealed how unique Studs was, how valuable his contributions were to radio and oral history, and it seemed like a fitting tribute to "America's oral historian". See: <http://www.studsterkel.org/> for more information on Studs.

Our main OH Section program in San Francisco this year featured Joe Lambert, Founder/Executive Director of the Center for Digital Storytelling. Studs supported the work of the Center, and the "wonderful important idea" of digital storytelling. I called Joe when I heard the news about Studs, because Terkel

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was a role model for the Center. Joe dedicated [Studs' Shadow](#).

I am privileged to have known Studs, and to be working with the Oral History Section as your new Chair for the 2008-2009 term. It's been an electric political year, and during the Democratic Convention a national candidate was nominated, someone that Studs wanted to become president. As we collectively watched Barack Obama's acceptance speech in the big hall, on the big screen at SAA, we were not just oral history archivists but witnesses to history. We had great success with the OH Section meeting on Friday, August 29, appealing to both educators and curators. Sixty attendees elected a new Vice-Chair/Chair Elect – Mark Cave - as well as two new Steering Committee members – Douglas A. Boyd and Hermann Trojanowski.

Outgoing Chair Lauren Kata announced that one of her major activities of the year was working with Mark Greene and SAA Council to submit comments to the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) regarding oral history exclusion from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review. This is an issue that deserves ongoing monitoring, and she proposed the establishment of a section sub-committee for this purpose. Our group is pleased to continue to monitor IRBs, and in the end, based on the responses Lauren received from members of our Section, we see taking the stronger position "to endorse the exclusion of oral history from IRB review – while re-asserting the importance of adhering to the standards outlined by the Oral History Association (OHA) in conducting projects as well as SAA's code of ethics in the care and preservation of interview collections."

Congratulations to Lauren and all her fine work with putting together the program for the Section meeting and her work with IRB issues. I also want to thank Don Ritchie and Linda Shopes, who were both very generous in offering their expert advice and support. Lauren also discussed Section plans in transitioning to Online Voting, and an oral history email discussion list and blog. I'm really looking forward to working with the Section on this and other projects.

Mark Cave is serving on a committee charged with

revising the OHA Evaluation Guidelines. In October he met in Pittsburgh at the OHA conference to discuss potential changes. He is looking critically at two of the sections that most directly relate to oral history archives, and will give us a future report. The complete current Evaluation Guidelines can be found, along with IRB issues, at:

[Oral History Evaluation Guidelines](#), rev. ed. Carlisle, Pa.: Oral History Association, 2000.

Our main program at the Section meeting included presentations by Howard Levin, Director of Technology at [the Urban School of San Francisco](#) and Joe Lambert, Executive Director of the [Center for Digital Storytelling](#). Both Bay Area-based presenters are seasoned, motivational speakers and instructors who shared a passion with the audience for storytelling and education. Levin, who was an interviewer for the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History program, spoke about the "Telling Their Stories" Oral History Archives Project, and Lambert spoke about and demonstrated the Center's current initiatives, including co-sponsorship of the first "International Sharing Our Stories Day." Over the past ten years, digital storytelling has emerged as an important participatory media production method, drawing from well-established traditions in the fields of popular education, participatory communications, oral history, and, most recently, what has been called citizen journalism.

One of the highlights for our Section, in terms of oral history-related activities, included the pre-conference workshop Driving Exhibitions With Oral History, on Monday, August 25. Participants explored the role of oral history in the conceptual and design processes, the selection of artifacts and documents, writing text, and creating exhibition films and ancillary materials; in other words, oral history products!

In the Saturday session, Models for Collaboration: Providing Enhanced Access to Oral History, panelists addressed how to draw upon the expertise of colleagues in-house and in other agencies to create quality products, and meet project goals through institutional collaboration.

For more on the Section meeting, the pre-conference

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## FROM THE CHAIR (continued)

workshop, and the Models for Collaboration session at SAA, see Bonnie Gurewitsch's and Jennifer Eidson's reports in the Spotlight section of this issue.

In re-reading a portion of the OHA Evaluation Guidelines, about responsibility of repositories and sponsoring institutions, it occurred to me that Studs Terkel himself was not only an oral historian, but an archivist as well (he worked with the late, great archivist Archie Motley). In a sense the 2007 SAA Terkel session reflected the interdisciplinary of oral history, with Studs being the bridge between the two worlds of broadcasting and oral history; between librarians and archivists; between citizen journalists and sociologists. In fact Studs liked to call himself a "guerilla journalist" rather than an "oral historian" and seemed self-deprecating when referring to himself as "Distinguished Scholar-in Residence" at the Chicago History Museum.

Terkel was charged with the documentation of the collective memory of a community (Chicago) and of documenting and preserving periodizations in American history (the Great Depression, the "Good War," labor and the farm workers movement, to name a few). Is it any wonder that a decade ago, upon his retirement from broadcasting, the *Chicago Tribune* dubbed him: "The Studsonian Institution"? At the time, I thought it was "Terkelesque" (although

the adjective used to describe him had not even been invented yet), but that was Studs: he invented and improvised, and challenged authority and conventions.

He also had a profound influence on the oral history movement in the United States and throughout the world. Thanks to his efforts as both scholar and curator at the Chicago History Museum, he has helped legitimize archival oral history, paving the way for other institutions to collect stories, initiate oral history projects, and to preserve them:

"Archives, Museums, Historical Societies, Libraries and other institutions charged with the documentation of the collective memory of a community have a responsibility to initiate and/or fund oral history programs when it is clear that other forms of documentation do not exist for a given topic or that sources would be greatly enhanced by the recording and preservation of oral narratives."

For that we have to thank Studs Terkel. "Take it easy, but take it," Studs!

*Ed. note: see page 8 for Stetson Kennedy's tribute to Studs Terkel. In addition, the next issue of Dialogue will include a larger compilation of Terkel tributes.*

## ORAL HISTORY SPOTLIGHT: CONFERENCES

### SAA Pre-Conference Workshop: Driving Exhibitions With Oral History

By Bonnie Gurewitsch

A new oral history related pre-conference workshop debuted at SAA's Annual Meeting in San Francisco. It was taught by Bonnie Gurewitsch, C.A., archivist/curator at the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, in New York City.

Since the technology has been available, audio and video oral histories have been used in many exhibitions. Until very recently, exhibitions have been artifact-driven, deriving their story or message

from the artifacts selected for exhibition. Oral history has usually been used to supplement that story and illustrate it. Archivists are often asked to create exhibitions that feature the collections in their care. Those who work with oral history are uniquely positioned to blend the use of recorded testimonies and artifacts.

Reversing the prevailing process by deriving the story and message of an exhibition from oral history, archivists can personalize their exhibitions dramatically. The personal story becomes the focus; the artifacts illustrate that story, creating an intimate connection among all elements of the exhibition. The personal nature of oral history-driven exhibitions

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## ORAL HISTORY SPOTLIGHT: CONFERENCES (continued)

validates the experiences of interviewees and artifact donors, facilitating successful institutional outreach to various constituencies.

The workshop explored the role of oral history in the conceptual and design processes, selection of artifacts and documents, writing text, and creating exhibition films and ancillary materials such as educational, publicity, and digital components. The process was described, step by step, from the earliest stage of conceptual planning to fabrication and installation of the exhibition. Samples of documents developed and used during the process were distributed for use as prototypes for exhibition planning. Participants were asked to prepare a topic sentence for a proposed exhibition, and to bring with them several quotes from their oral histories that were used in writing sample exhibition text.

Fourteen archivists participated in the workshop, representing a great variety of oral history and archival collections. Institutional history included the US Navy, a hospital, and a university. History of specific populations included refugees, trappers, and World War II internees. This variety resulted in interesting challenges and examples of proposed texts that were shared.

Participants felt that they had learned a lot about the process of creating exhibitions, and were intrigued and excited about the possibility of making their oral histories come alive in exhibitions.

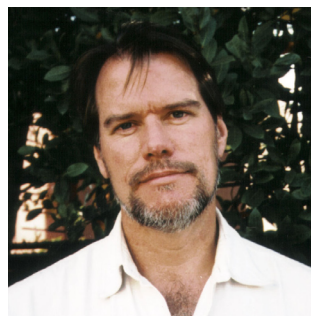
### Report on the SAA Oral History Section Meeting, August 29, 2008

By Bonnie Gurewitsch

Archivists who attended the Oral History Section meeting at the San Francisco meeting were treated to two fascinating and thought provoking presentations that described digital story telling projects. The projects raise important questions about the process and value of recording personal history, and challenge the assumptions that oral historians have when they design and implement their work.

Joe Lambert, founder and creator of the Center for Digital Story-Telling, was strongly influenced by

the late Studs Terkel, who was one of the first to interview ordinary people about their experiences, work, and values. In Lambert's story-circles, people come together in a circle to tell their stories. Ordinary people, often those with very little autonomous control of their lives, share their experiences, listen to each other, discuss the stories, and try to get to the core of each story. They are both story-tellers and audience. This is the beginning of a creative process that Lambert relates to his earlier experiences in theater.



*Joe Lambert, founder and creator of the Center for Digital Story-Telling*

But Lambert wants the stories of common people to become part of a larger narrative. After each story is told and discussed, the production element enters, widening the circle of listeners to include the public.

The participants learn to create digital productions in which their stories are told and can be communicated. His motivation for creating the digital production is two-fold. The process is psychologically healing and self affirming, helping the individual frame his or her own story, thus taking control of it, coming to terms with it. This builds self-image and a sense of personal worth. The technological process demystifies the media, teaches the participants marketable skills, planning and record keeping skills, promoting creativity and effective communication.

The digital media productions have many implications for public history and policy. When these productions are disseminated, either on the Internet or in cooperation with PBS stations, they can promote social change and civic engagement, and become a means of reframing public history by including new stories in the public narrative.

Joe Lambert can be reached at [joe@storycenter.org](mailto:joe@storycenter.org).

Howard Levin, a high school technology director and former history teacher who was trained as an oral history interviewer by the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, has taken his training into

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## ORAL HISTORY SPOTLIGHT: CONFERENCES (continued)

the classroom at the Urban School of San Francisco and engaged his students in the process. Students learn oral history technique, conduct broadcast quality videotaped interviews of Holocaust survivors, concentration camp liberators, and Japanese American camp internees. Students then complete all transcription and movie editing and the work is published on the web – <http://www.tellingstories.org/> – as a service to teachers and scholars across the world. Howard has also recently collaborated with a public school in McComb Mississippi on a new civil rights interview project, also to be published on the website.

Levin stressed the importance of transcription in the learning process for the students. The act of transcribing focuses attention on every word, and on the particular narrative style of the interviewee. The transcript also provides a text that the students then study and research, using primary and secondary research tools, as well as other follow-up interviews that were done by other students. The students then create follow up questions and organize them into a coherent secondary interview that explores particular aspects of the interviewee's experience in greater depth. Sometimes the same interviewee will be visited by different teams of students over the course of a few years, and will respond to their questions with new stories and memories. The project is designed with sensitivity to the trauma suffered by the interviewees, using only those people who are experienced and comfortable telling their stories to teenagers.

This project combines educational goals and the goals of traditional oral history, using digital tools to engage the students' interest and teach them new skills. The students elicit new historical information from the interviewees, which they must then research and verify. They do the videotaping and the interviewing, and they then post the interviews to the school's web-site, which contributes to the historical record. The experience is rewarding for its personal nature, bringing students into relationships with eyewitnesses to an epoch-making event of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and for a genuine contribution to public history.

Howard Levin can be reached at [hlevin@urbanschool.org](mailto:hlevin@urbanschool.org).

Both projects look at story-telling as a means of engaging different population groups in the process of creating public history and memory. Both projects have the potential for tremendous dissemination of much new material into public memory, by connecting the stories they collect to the public domain via the Internet. There may or may not be scholarly mediation of the accuracy or context of the stories, and the process is certainly not traditionally structured. Are these projects oral history? Do we need to re-examine oral history in the light of the possibilities that the Internet offers for dissemination of stories and expansion of public memory? What can oral history learn from the informality and flexible structures of story-telling? How can oral history inform and contribute to story telling so that the end-products can be relied upon as public history? Is story telling an anti-thesis to oral history, or is there a synthesis in our future?

### Models for Collaboration: Providing Enhanced Access to Oral History

*A panel report on session #610 at the 2008 Annual SAA Meeting*

By Jennifer Eidson

In August, I talked about some of the components behind operations at the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress. I was joined by Burt Altman from Florida State University and Chris Petter from the University of Victoria in Canada, to discuss how collaboration has benefited our respective oral history collections. Collaborating with outside individuals and organizations is an essential reality for most dealing with patchwork collections. The experiences of this panel were no different, and we each shared how we were able to improve the value of our collections by figuratively knocking on doors and opening windows of our institutions.

Chris Petter talked about the phases of collaboration involved with the Canadian Oral History Project. Over 550 interviews were donated by Dr. Reg Roy, the chair of the Military History Department in the 1970s and more in the 1980s. An additional 180 were given

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## ORAL HISTORY SPOTLIGHT: CONFERENCES (continued)

by a retired Naval Officer in the early 1990s. They did not include release forms and other pertinent information. In the 1980s, the library received grant funding to properly process and provide access to the interview materials. Mixed success was achieved since some processing issues were not anticipated; a guide to the collection was created. Later, a military historian volunteered to help with some of the processing tasks. As the materials were processed they were listed in a Filemaker Pro database. Digitizing using ContentDm, and plans to move to a full program are also in the works.

Burt Altman, Session Chair, recognized the uniqueness of an incomplete gift from Dr. Jackson Ice, Professor of Religion, and talked about a group of about 20 interviews. They were interviews of key leaders, spokesmen, and participants of the civil rights movement in Florida. Transcripts included in the original gift were checked for accuracy. The audio recordings were repaired and digitized through in-house collaboration and outside vendors. Time was also required to secure copyright permissions from the interviewees or their heirs. A working finding aid was revised in 2003 and coded into EAD in 2004 for access through the Florida State University Libraries' Catalog.

I talked about the multiple collaborations that support the collecting for the Veterans History Project. Within the LOC we use the resources of other divisions for our digital services, such as our website and database. We also have relationships with about 1,400 institutions around the country which illustrates just how many volunteers it takes to establish a growing oral history collection, which is so far comprised of over 60,000 collections. Communication with our volunteers and participants is a practical issue that is constantly evolving. Our methods of communication have adjusted over time to ensure that our collection materials remain research worthy and appropriate for our collecting policies.

As you can see, collaboration can be accomplished in different ways as it responds to varying needs in a collection. Sometimes it can be tricky to negotiate for what you want, both inside and outside an institution, but it always pays off!

## Stetson Kennedy Speaks at the Oral History Association Annual Meeting

By Joe Atkins & AL Stein

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA. - Stetson Kennedy, one of the last of the firebrand activists from the 1930s, veteran of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Federal Writers' Project, Ku Klux Klan infiltrator, fellow traveler with the likes of Woody Guthrie and Zora Neale Hurston, made a recent confession here: he didn't want to stick to the script in speaking about the 75th anniversary of the New Deal, instead he tied his discussion to the current economic crisis in this country. He stressed that "we need another Works Progress Administration today," putting the unemployed to work, amid bank failures and a shrinking national infrastructure.

Speaking at a Plenary session to an audience of over 100 or so at the Oral History Association's 42nd annual meeting here, the 92-year-old Kennedy invoked a long-gone era in this country, a time when the federal government was "Uncle Sam", sticking up for the little guy rather than the big guys in the corporate boardrooms.



*Stetson Kennedy (second from right) and Andrea Kalin appeared together on the OHA Plenary Session: Portrait of America: Voices of the Federal Writers' Project, Thursday October 16, 2008. Al Stein (left) organized the session with Sandra Parks (right) of the Stetson Kennedy Foundation. Photo by Gene B. Preuss.*

Kennedy was featured along with the late Studs Terkel in a preview of Spark Media's [SOUL OF A PEOPLE: VOICES FROM THE WRITERS' PROJECT](#). Instead of being an historic documentary, drawing upon archival footage depicting Hoovervilles and breadlines in the grip of the Great Depression, the film seemed

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## ORAL HISTORY SPOTLIGHT: CONFERENCES (continued)

at once contemporary and more relevant in its graphic depiction of new hard times. Kennedy was interviewed at the session by David A. Taylor, Head of Research and Programs at the Library of Congress, American Folklife Center. Kennedy stressed that the institutions F.D.R. built have proved to be both “durable and essential.” Donald A. Ritchie, author of “Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932,” chaired the session, which also featured Andrea Kalin, documentary filmmaker and founder of Spark Media.

Kennedy, a Jacksonville, Florida, native talked of joining the WPA and its Federal Writers’ Project in 1937, taking responsibility for Florida in its state-by-state travelogue. The project was one of many efforts during FDR’s “New Deal” to put the jobless-everyone from laborers to writers-to work, good and needed work that would keep their spirits high and serve the nation as well during the Great Depression.

The WPA paid him \$37.50 every two weeks to travel through Florida interviewing and recording the histories of 100-year-old former slaves, veterans of the turpentine camps in the rural backwaters, and anyone whose life contributed to the sprawling story of the nation as a whole. “We had two hundred field workers, most of them housewives, and they spoke the same language, had the same culture (of the interviewees). We’d interview former slaves, and we’d play back (the tape recorder) and they heard their own voices for the first time. They’d become instant ham actors.” Kennedy and other workers such as legendary African American writer Zora Neale Hurston were on a mission to preserve the nation’s oral history. Yet they constantly encountered the racism that infected not only the Deep South of north Florida, Arkansas and Mississippi but also the nation. “America was a nation of Archie Bunkers. Jim Crow was looking over our shoulders at everything we did.” Called “the original angry young man” by Florida journalist Louis J. Salome, Kennedy would earned his greatest fame in the 1940s by going undercover to expose the Ku Klux Klan. He joined the Klan, learning its secret rituals and code words, risking his life each step of the way, but then casting a spotlight on the secret Klan world in such books as *Southern Exposure*, *The Jim Crow Guide*, and *I Rode With The Ku Klux Klan*. In 1952, Kennedy ran a write-in campaign for governor

of Florida, and his good friend and frequent visitor, “This Land Is Your Land” composer Woody Guthrie penned a song for Stetson, entitled “The Ballad of Stetson Kennedy.” Guthrie penned the final draft of his autobiography, “Seeds of Man” at Stetson’s homestead on Lake Beluthahatchee, which is now distinguished as a U.S. Literary Landmark honoring Guthrie.

### The Other Kennedy Archives

The life and times of “America’s number-one Klanbuster” are remarkably represented by the officially recognized [Stetson Kennedy website](#) which contains an online history gallery, articles, movie clips, and books by and about the author; focusing special attention on his storytelling and remarkable career as a writer and folklorist, devoted to social justice, politics, oral history, peace and nonviolence. The website uses a “multimedia” approach that can be adapted by oral history educators to teach students about the history of oral history, folklore and civil rights in America’s Jim Crow South.

Kennedy’s papers, photographs, and oral histories can be accessed at:

University of North Carolina: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/A-0354/menu.html> and <http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/k/Kennedy,Stetson.html>

Georgia State University: <http://www.library.gsu.edu/spcoll/xml/L1979-37.xml>

University of South Florida, Tampa: <http://www.lib.usf.edu/index.cfm?Pg=TampaWPAOfficePapers>

Library of Congress, Folklife Center: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/florida/> and <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/collections/florida/ffbio.html>

and Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library: <http://www.nypl.org/research/manuscripts/scm/sckenned.xml>

### Kennedy’s tribute to Studs Terkel

“I very much doubt that there will ever be a brighter star in the American firmament than Studs Terkel.

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## ORAL HISTORY SPOTLIGHT: CONFERENCES (continued)

"His books, broadcasts, and lifelong championing of the common man were a major force in keeping America on the straight and narrow path toward her ideals of democracy, peace, freedom, and opportunity. It was good that he lived long enough to see the great coming together of America to elect a 'person of color' to the Presidency.

"One of Stud's many crowning achievements was putting oral history on the map, so that at long last the so-called 'little' people who make history have an opportunity to tell it, as participants and witnesses, like it really was, as opposed to the 'big name' pap fed to us in all too many official textbooks.

"We can rest assured that, so long as there is an

America, Studs Terkel's legacy will stand alongside those of Jefferson, Lincoln, Douglass and Roosevelt, Whitman, Sandburg, and Richard Wright, Woody Guthrie, and Pete Seeger, as steadfast believers in and champions of the people."

"Like Studs, I go all the way back to Roosevelt's New Deal and the WPA Writers Project of the 1930s. I was working with the Project down in Florida, and corresponding with Richard Wright, Jack Conroy and others, who were on the Chicago Project with Studs. It was a great privilege and joy to live in the same century and work for the same causes with him."

-Stetson Kennedy

## ORAL HISTORY NEWS

### Remembering LBJ

Submitted by Barbara L. Thibodeaux



August 28, 2008 was the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Lyndon Baines Johnson. The LBJ Library and Museum in Austin, Texas and its partners planned a year long national celebration to honor former President Johnson through symposiums, lectures, and special events. Lyndon Johnson's alma mater, Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, planned a parallel celebration. A steering committee comprised of university and community members formed to plan the year long birthday celebration under the University's Common Experience themes of Civic Responsibility and LBJ's Legacy. Events were planned throughout the year to engage students and the community in recognition of the relationship between the former president and the university. The Community Subcommittee developed the idea for the LBJ Oral History Project to interview people in the San Marcos and university communities who had ties to Lyndon Johnson.

In the decade after President Johnson's death, the LBJ Presidential Library and Museum conducted extensive oral histories and interviews of close political colleagues and family friends. Our intent was not to duplicate their collection, but to cast a wider net to include people who may not have been interviewed in the past, to develop a local perspective of how the Hill Country area of Johnson's home had influenced him and was influenced by him. The members of the community subcommittee compiled a list of possible interviewees from their personal experiences and knowledge of community leaders, university personnel, and long-time community residents.

The interviewees included a few members of former President Johnson's inner circle who had settled in the Hill Country area of Texas. Their memories spanned not only time in Washington D.C., but a rich description of the Johnson Ranch which served as a second White House, a refuge, and open house to friends and associates. Other interviews gave insight into the development of the politician and his ideology as Johnson advanced from student at Southwest Texas State Teacher's College to Congressman, Senator, Vice-President, and President. Interviews of community leaders gave a sketch of the area and time in which Lyndon Johnson honed his

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## ORAL HISTORY NEWS (continued)

ideas and political skills. The totality of the interviews did not generate new scholarship, but through the anecdotal stories shared, exposed the essence of Johnson's character inspired by the land and people in a hardscrabble part of Texas, a land and people that Johnson held close to his heart throughout his lifetime.

Patricia Murdock, a member of the subcommittee and vice-president of the LBJ Museum in San Marcos, Texas, in collaboration with Texas State University, successfully applied for a grant through Texas Humanities to produce a portable, interactive exhibit of the oral histories. The exhibit opened with special recognition to the members of the community who shared their stories. Interviewees were further honored by a San Marcos proclamation recognizing Texas State University's Common Experience theme of remembering Lyndon Johnson. The oral histories serve to remind us of the legacy of a "favorite son" and the community which helped to shape that legacy.

### **Ball State University Libraries Participates in New Oral History Grant Projects**

Submitted by Maren L. Read

The Ball State University Libraries' Archives and Special Collections is participating in two new oral history projects, the Cantigny First Division Oral History Project and Muncie's Response to Recent Economic Change: An Oral History. These two collections will soon be added to the Ball State University Libraries' Digital Media Repository (<http://libx.bsu.edu>), a growing resource for oral histories, photographs, videos, and other digitized materials.

The Cantigny First Division Oral History Project is funded by a grant from the Chicago-based McCormick Tribune Foundation and First Division Museum to the Ball State University Department of History. The University Libraries were named as a partner in the grant. The project includes 40 high definition video oral history interviews with veterans from the U.S. Army's First Division Infantry Division – commonly known as the "Big Red One". The interviews were conducted by students from Ball State University

History Department under the supervision of history professors Dr. Michael Doyle and Dr. David Ulbrich. These interviews are now housed in Ball State University Libraries' Archives and Special Collections and are currently being transcribed. The videos and transcripts will be available online through the Digital Media Repository in spring 2009.

"Muncie's Response to Recent Economic Change: An Oral History" is a collection of seventeen oral history interviews local civic and business leaders involved in past and current efforts to address problems related to long term economic change in Muncie and Delaware County. The interviews were conducted by the Ball State University's Center for Middletown Studies with support from the Community Foundation of Muncie and Delaware County. The collection has been donated to Archives and Special Collections and is currently being transcribed. It will also soon be available in the Middletown Digital Oral History Collection, a part of the Digital Media Repository.

Other oral history activities this year have included a presentation at the Oral History Association Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Amanda Hurford and Maren Read gave a paper entitled "Middletown: An Oral History Project for the Digital Age." They discussed how the Middletown Digital Oral History Collection is a model for providing access to digital oral history collections through a digital content management system. Hurford and Read also published an article entitled "Bringing the Voices of Middletown Together: The Middletown Digital Oral History Project" in Volume 27 Number 2, 2008 of Indiana Libraries, the Journal of the Indiana Library Federation and the Indiana State Library. For more information, contact Maren L. Read, Archivist for Manuscript Collections at [MLRead@bsu.edu](mailto:MLRead@bsu.edu).

### **Mills College and Friends of Negro Spirituals Bring Town and Gown Together Through Oral History**

Submitted by Nancy MacKay

As an oral historian, archivist, and roots music enthusiast, I was thrilled when Lyvonne Chrisman

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## ORAL HISTORY NEWS (continued)

from the Friends of Negro Spirituals approached me about a partnership between her organization and mine, the Oakland Living History Program at Mills College, for an oral history project. Her idea fed my dream to utilize the best resources of an academic institution and a community organization to collaborate on a project with deep roots in the community, and a permanent home in a college library. The project is now complete, and like a dream come true, Oral History Association honored us with the Elizabeth B. Mason Small Project Award for 2008.



*Nancy MacKay (left) and Lyvonne Chrismanin in the Digital Showcase Room at the OHA annual meeting*

The oral history project, titled “In our own words: the Negro spirituals heritage keepers” consists of ten video histories and transcripts. Narrators are San Francisco Bay Area based educators, singers, arrangers, public radio hosts, and everyday folks for whom spirituals have played a pivotal role in their lives. Each story begins with childhood memories of the music in church and at home, and continues as each narrator traces the unique role of music in their life paths.

For example, public radio host and jazz activist Doug Edwards describes his relationship to the music from his childhood in Harlem to consciously drifting away from the music to returning to it later in life:

“I met Negro spirituals through church. To me they were songs of reverence. I never had any training but I grew up hearing people like Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson sing them, songs like ‘Wade in the water,’ and ‘Sometimes I feel like a motherless child.’ ... As I grew older I recognized that those were the songs of

slaves, and I got further and further away from them. My own pride distanced me from spirituals, anything that had to do with slavery. ...”

After a lifetime of activity in the civil rights movement and jazz music, Mr. Edwards was drawn back to spirituals through a relationship with Friends of Negro Spirituals: “At some point I met Sam Edwards, co-founder of the Friends of Negro Spirituals, ... and we explored [the meaning] of spirituals and their origin on [my KPFA radio show]. And that started my re-interest and full understanding of the spirituals and what part they played in lives of slaves -- the black codes that were continued in many of the spirituals, black codes of the underground.

I got a really full understanding of the cultural impact of the spirituals, of their beauty, and of what they furnished for the slave population of the time. It made me totally aware of the contributions of African Americans to music in America. First with jazz, then as I explored the music backwards, I discovered that jazz really came from the slaves. ... Then it came forward to religious music. And then blues, which was religious sounding music, but that had secular lyrics so that preachers wouldn’t allow it in the church. So there is a definite association between spirituals and jazz and the music we listen to today.”

Mr. Edward’s story and others are captured on video by younger interviewers carefully matched to the narrator. In addition, oral histories are “packaged” for the library shelf. The bound volume consists of statements by project directors, an article on the history of Negro spirituals, biographical statements of the narrator and the interviewer, the transcript, and the DVD enclosed inside the back cover. Mills College keeps oral histories on open shelves available for checkout. All oral histories are catalogued on OCLC’s [WorldCat](#) (type “Friends of Negro Spirituals” into the search box).

Our goal is to provide broad access to these materials, but still maintain control over the way they are used. Currently, copies of the oral histories are available at the Oakland (Calif.) Public Library Local History Room, and the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, as well as Mills College. Friends of Negro Spirituals retained copyright, giving the organization

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## ORAL HISTORY NEWS (continued)

complete control of future distribution and the right to use. We are hoping that these oral histories will find their way into libraries and archives around the country to supplement any collection in African American history, American music, or American social history.

For more information about the project, contact Nancy MacKay, [mackay@mills.edu](mailto:mackay@mills.edu). For information about how to obtain copies, contact Lyvonne Chrisman, Friends of Negro Spirituals, [fns3@juno.com](mailto:fns3@juno.com).

### University of Illinois at Springfield Oral History Digitization Project Completed

Submitted by Thomas J. Wood

Norris L. Brookens Library at the University of Illinois at Springfield is pleased to announce the completion of a grant-funded project to digitize the original audiotapes from the UIS Oral History Collection, housed in the library's Archives/Special Collections department.

Funding for this grant was awarded by the Illinois State Library, a Division of the Office of the Illinois Secretary of State, using funds provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), under the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).

The Oral History Collection at UIS consists of over 1200 oral histories collected between 1957 and the present from an diverse array of people, mostly from Illinois, including WWII prisoners of war, farm families, coal miners, captains and workers on river boats, members of a variety of ethnic communities, Illinois legislators and politicians, members of churches and service clubs, teachers in rural one room schools, and many others. The collection is a rich record of life in the Midwest from the late 19th century to the present, and preserves the memories of many individuals whose life experiences would not otherwise be recorded.

This oral history collection includes over 3000 original audiotapes, dating from the early 1950s onwards. These have now been digitized, and UIS Archives

staff are in the process of uploading the digitized audio files to the Illinois State Library's Illinois Digital Archives (IDA). IDA already contains copies of approximately 800 volumes of transcripts from the collection, which were digitized in 2004 using funds from an earlier LSTA grant. The UIS Oral History Collection, made conveniently accessible online, will be a superb cultural resource for a wide variety of users, including historical researchers, students, and genealogists.

See <http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm4/browse.php?CISOROOT=/uis> to access the UIS Oral History Collection at the Illinois Digital Archives. See <http://www.uis.edu/archives/contents.htm> for a guide to the UIS Oral History Collection.

### The University of Delaware's Iron Hill Oral History Collection

Submitted by Evan Echols  
Assistant Librarian, Special Collections Department  
University of Delaware Library

In April 2008, The University of Delaware Library Special Collections department acquired the Iron Hill Oral History Collection. The project was initiated in 2003 by oral historian Roberta Perkins and Laura Lee, director of the Iron Hill Museum, near Newark, Delaware, in order to document the history of the Iron Hill School #112C, a former African American one-room schoolhouse from the days of segregation.

The schoolhouse, in operation from 1923 until 1964, is now home to the Iron Hill Museum, operated by the Delaware Academy of Science. The building is one of 89 rural schools constructed through the philanthropy of Pierre S. du Pont for the community, and one of only a few that are still architecturally intact.

As director of the Iron Hill Museum, Laura Lee met many former alumni who would visit the museum and share their school memories. In order to preserve these stories, she enlisted the help of oral historian Roberta Perkins and transcriber Marcia Adams to establish an oral history project. The project received partial funding from the Delaware Academy of

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## ORAL HISTORY NEWS (continued)

Science, Delaware Humanities Forum, and Delaware Heritage Commission. In addition, Rohm & Haas Community Partnership Initiative provided funding for a school outreach program featuring the oral history project.

The oral histories also proved to be an invaluable resource for Lee and Perkins, who contributed a chapter on Newark's African-American history to *Histories of Newark, 1758-2008* (Newark, Del.: Wallflowers Press, 2008), a community project commissioned to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Newark's first town charter. In the course of researching related sources in Special Collections at the University of Delaware Library, Lee became aware of other oral history collections and made the decision to preserve and share the Iron Hill project by donating it to the Library.

The Iron Hill Oral History Collection, 2003-2008, consists of 24 interviews recorded on 44 audio-cassettes. The interviews were conducted by Roberta Perkins and Laura Lee. The interviewees

include fifteen Iron Hill School alumni, two parents of alumni, one teacher from Townsend, and three alumni of other du Pont schools in Hockessin and Milton (Delaware). Also included is an interview with an alumnus of the white Pleasant Valley School, which was located less than a mile from Iron Hill, and a Conowingo, Maryland, alumna. The collection is supplemented by three interviews of long-time white residents of the Iron Hill area.

The interviews include but are not limited to discussions of community and school life, relationships between the segregated Newark-area schools, civil rights, transportation issues to and from school, employment, church life, and political vote buying. Transcripts of the interviews accompany the collection and are available for review. Transcription is an ongoing process and more transcripts will be added to the collection in the near future.

For more information visit: <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/findaids/html/mss0587.html>

## ORAL HISTORY ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Stories Matter Software

By Kristen O'Hare and Stacey Zembrzycki



Free, open software built by oral historians at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling  
<http://storytelling.concordia.ca/development>

The [Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling](#) at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, is currently developing a new oral history database tool, entitled Stories Matter; this development project is being generously supported by the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

This free, open source software is being built for oral historians by oral historians. It will allow for the archiving of digital video and audio materials, enabling oral historians to annotate, analyze, and

evaluate materials in their collections. In addition to containing an offline version, the software will have an online version that will facilitate sharing and collaboration in the discipline. Both versions of Stories Matter will operate in English and French, and will have the capacity to support other languages at a later date. This software will be launched in early 2009.

While Stories Matter promises to change the ways that we think about and do oral history, it also offers a unique glimpse into the interdisciplinary process of creating digital technologies. The project team is directed by Dr. Steven High, who holds the Canada Research Chair in Public History, and it is being led by a computer programmer, Jacques Langlois. Two oral historians, Dr. Stacey Zembrzycki and Kristen O'Hare, are also embedded in the development process, consulting with High and Langlois on every aspect of the project. Those interested in this exciting project may monitor its progress, development, and implementation through its [blog](#).

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## ORAL HISTORY ANNOUNCEMENTS (continued)

### **FUTURE PERFECT: Retooling Oral History in the Digital Age**

Submitted by Lois E. Myers

Saturday, January 17, 2009 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Mayborn Museum Complex, Waco, Texas

For today's oral historians, digital technology has eliminated the distinction between creation, or collection, of oral history and the management of it. Digital expertise is required at every stage of the oral history process; it is needed for recording interviews, for designing and creating intermediate and end products, and for managing preservation and access. Information systems must now be at the heart of the oral history enterprise, for without them, digital collections cannot survive in any useful way or for any length of time.

Creating and managing today's digital assets and anticipating tomorrow's technical innovations require oral historians to learn new skills and forge new relationships. In this workshop, participants will hear from experts about digital recording, digitization, and digital object management for access and preservation, and will also have the opportunity to share experience and insight with colleagues in all aspects of digital oral history practice.

Both a practical workshop, with hands-on opportunities, and an open forum for screenings and demonstrations of digital oral history, FUTURE PERFECT is planned for those who create, use, and publish oral history, including students and teachers, community and academic historians, volunteers and professionals, and for those who preserve oral history collections and make them accessible to researchers.

Customize your own digital workshop experience by choosing topics most useful to you:

- recording techniques • transcribing digital recordings • editing digital audio/video recordings • digitizing analog tapes • creating and managing metadata • making collections accessible online •

managing workflow for digital collections • designing and publishing digital documentaries and Web sites

Workshop presenters are, from the Institute for Oral History, Stephen Sloan, Director; Elinor Mazé, Senior Editor; and Rick Fair, graduate assistant for digital projects; and from Baylor's Electronic Library, Tony Tadey, Audio Specialist; Darryl B. Stuhr, Manager of Digitization Projects; and Scott Myers, Digital Media Studio Academic Technology Consultant. The closing plenary session will feature a live video discussion of the future of history presented by Dan Cohen, Director of the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University and co-editor of *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web*.

This workshop is sponsored by the [Baylor University Institute for Oral History](#).

All sessions will take place in the classrooms of the [Mayborn Museum Complex](#), 1300 South University Parks Drive, Waco, Texas. [Click here for maps and directions](#).

Advance registration required by January 9, 2009. Cost: \$50, includes notebook. A limited number of scholarships are available. For information, [contact us](#) or visit the [workshop website](#).

### **OHA Launches New Website**

Submitted by Lauren Kata

This fall, the Oral History Association launched a new website, which includes the [OHA social network](#), "where participants can make connections, share interests, and work with OHA committees and regional groups." The network includes the [OHA Wiki](#), "where you can find and share information resources about oral history."

The various Oral History Association Groups and Committees have "groups" set up in the network that you and others can join. This includes the State and Regional Forum. Check it out--you don't need to be an OHA member to join the network.



## Purpose of the SAA Oral History Section

The Oral History Section of the Society of American Archivists is composed of members of the Society and others who are interested in or are actively engaged in conducting oral history interviews and/or teach oral history methodology. The Oral History Section provides a forum for news, for discussion of issues and developments, and for establishing and maintaining communication and cooperation with other professional organizations.

Read the rest of the Section's [By-laws](#)

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### Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect

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New leadership assumes office at the close of the annual meeting of the section.



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