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Oral History
The Hyde Park Project

Frederick L. Rath, Jr.

On October 15, 1947, George Palmer, superintendent of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site, sat in the greenhouse with William A. Plog (Plow) who had been in charge of the grounds and gardens at the Roosevelt estate near Hyde Park, NY, since November 3, 1897. On a table between them there was an RCA Magnetic Wire Recorder, Model MI-12875, purchased for $190 and delivered three days before. It was a heavy compact unit; its magnetic wire, capable of taking 30 minutes of interviewing, was sealed in a metal cartridge (M1-12877) that was inserted in to the recorder. The two men talked for 15 minutes, but some part of the recording must have been lost, for there are only a little more than five pages in the transcription. It is quite likely, nonetheless, that this was the first time in the history of the National Park Service that a recorder was used as part of the research program that had been instituted early in the 1930s. During the next four years more than 30 dated interviews and two undated were conducted, most of them by George Palmer. A few Mr. Palmer and I did together, and four I did before I left Hyde Park in the summer of 1948 on a new assignment, plus one I did in Washington two years later.

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Eleanor Roosevelt at opening of home of Franklin D. Roosevelt, April, 1946.

Cover photos:
Clockwise: Roosevelt Home, opening day; cover of instruction booklet for RCA magnetic wire recorder; wire recorder with cartridge inserted and additional cartridge on the side. Photos courtesy Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site.

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The Hyde Park Project

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George Palmer became superintendent of the Vanderbilt Mansion in September 1945 and was appointed to the same position for the Roosevelt Home after Secretary Harold Ickes accepted the designated national historic site on November 21, 1945. After four years of service in World War II, I reported for duty as historian for Roosevelt-Vanderbilt on January 3, 1946. Although I moved into the former servants' quarters in the Vanderbilt Mansion, I worked almost exclusively at the Roosevelt Home. It was our responsibility to have the Home ready for dedication on April 12 and open to the public on the following day, a formidable task. Expecting a maximum of 200,000 visitors the first year, we were host to 513,000. With no parking area except the fields nearby and with only two bathrooms hastily installed in the carriage house and sometimes more than 10,000 visitors a day, crowd management was the major problem. But it also became a thought-provoking challenge and a new experience in dealing with roadside education.

Shortly after I came on staff, George Palmer introduced the idea of getting a wire-recorder. The thought had come to him, he said, when he heard a wire-recording rebroadcast of the D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944. It was a proposal that I could appreciate and even lend some credence to. My pre-war experience in Park Service at Fort Pulaski and at Vicksburg talking to descendants of Civil War veterans had convinced me that even at second remove there was considerable human interest and provable factual detail in the stories I heard. Even more pertinent, perhaps, was the fact that I ended my wartime service as an Order of Battle specialist in military intelligence. Through the winter and spring of 1945 I was dealing with the information gathered by interrogators of prisoners of war and of the civilian population as we advanced through France into Germany. Although I believe that no recorders were being used, the transcriptions of the interviews were lessons in history-in-the-making. And too, both Mr. Palmer and I were trained historians who had witnessed the watering of the roots of oral history in the various New Deal projects that were under way in the 1930s, especially the Federal Waters Project. We knew too that Park Service had profited from oral testimony when the national military park at Gettysburg was turned over to it by the War Department on August 10, 1933. With the transfer came the voluminous notes and maps of an unusual man, Col. John B. Bachelder, who came to Gettysburg two days after the battle ended and spent the rest of his life interviewing veterans from both North and South. A final influence, I am sure, was that we had in hand an interesting document that resulted from a conversation that Dr. Francis Ronalds, the superintendent of Morristown National Historical Park and at the time the designated supervisor of operations at the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, had with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on January 13, 1945. Grace Tully, the president's secretary, took notes that were transcribed and carefully entitled "History of the President's Estate at Hyde Park, N.Y. with Anecdotes." A brief account, it was never completed.

George A. Palmer in Roosevelt Home, 1946. Photo courtesy Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS.

It was soon evident to us that we were awash in a sea of witnesses to recent history. We had on our staff, beside Mr. Plog, eight men and women who had been part of the Roosevelt staff for many years; there were neighbors and friends of the late president and his family nearby; and relatives and important visitors were with us off and on throughout the first year. Prior to getting our recorder we talked and listened, took notes (more than 400 5"x8" cards with random data) and learned, and then transmitted the information promptly to the 13 ex-GIs who, without any prior experience in the historic preservation field, were hired as guards. Particularly helpful was Eleanor Roosevelt, who spent many hours in the Home with us, sharing her knowledge of the furnishings and the way life was lived in the days gone by. And it was she who at the dedication ceremonies on April 12 gave a classic statement that became the keystone of our interpretive program. (A number of years later she agreed to be recorded as she made a tour of the Home; it is still available to visitors.) With the help of Robert McGaughey, who had been the houseman at the Home for many years, we turned the guards into guides. We tried to make them feel important—and they were. Visitors were welcomed rather than suffered and we followed the injunction of the great chief of the Park Service museum division, Ned J. Burns, to seek to achieve a "lived-in look rather than a died-in look." A year later Daniel Lang of The New Yorker visited and in a lengthy article reported: "The house, in fact, did look like a private dwelling that was still being lived in...."

George Palmer got permission to pursue the recording project by the end of 1946, but it took 10 months to launch it late in 1947 because we didn't have the necessary equipment. In the meantime we spent what time we could talking to the family and to staff who had served the family, and reading extensively. Finally, the recorder with two metal cartridges arrived on October 12 and we tested them and talked about procedures. Trouble was, there were no oral history manuals to tell us what to do and no experts to consult, so we didn't clearly define our purposes on paper in advance

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other than to decide that we were not going to try to deal with FDR as president, as commander-in-chief, or as diplomat or world leader. Our primary purpose was to get a fuller and more comprehensive impression of how the Roosevelts and the Vanderbilts lived in the homes we were preserving. We wanted to know more than was then in print about FDR at home. We also hoped that we could get more about people's personal feelings toward the family.

By October of 1947 we had dealt with almost a million visitors at the Roosevelt Home, the hosts of the curious as I came to call them. We could have listed their 50 most-asked questions, but we had already gotten the answers to all of those. We knew we had to go beyond the obvious when we could, of course, but now we had to deal with recollections largely and sometimes with reflections that were emotional and even heart-warming. Had we had the time to review our interviews in depth we might have subjected them to analysis and further questioning. George Palmer did that in a few cases after I was gone. In my time there were only a few transcriptions. Most were done away from the park by contract in 1949 and 35 wire recordings were duplicated on open-reel magnetic tape in 1960. Fortunately Duane Pearson, the current superintendent of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt site, asked Bill Urbin, a museum technician on his staff, to proof the transcriptions and recordings to insure accuracy and to do audio cassettes and floppy discs that will soon be available for research at the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Conservation Facility at Hyde Park. A full account of what has been done so well in recent years with the new technology is given in Mr. Urbin's account in the following article.

At the first interview with Mr. Plog on October 15, George Palmer reached back into the Roosevelt past and got descriptions of Mr. and Mrs. James Roosevelt, FDR's grandparents, and their home, "Springwood," which eventually became the president's. What was significant was that these were the first steps to establish the family's way of life in some detail. In later interviews with both Mr. and Mrs. Plog and others we were able to build on that base. Once again in this and successive brief interviews not only was a way of life exposed, but details about interiors that might not have been discovered in any other way were established.

Entirely different was the interview that we did jointly with "Uncle Ben Haviland" a friend and neighbor of FDR's who shared his interest in history. He spoke of a visit from FDR when he told a long, complicated story about some common ancestors. When he was queried about the truth of the story, he reported that FDR said '"Never mind the truth"' and Uncle Ben added that "it was a good story and the truth will take care of itself." FDR invited him to come see him if he ever got to Washington, so he called on his next visit to the capital and when it was politely suggested to him by a supernumerary that perhaps he'd better call on FDR when he was in Hyde Park, Uncle Ben's answer was curt, "...he calls on me when he's in Hyde Park, I don't have to." The message got through and the two neighbors and friends spent the afternoon riding around Washington having "a splendid time." George and I loved the human details, of course, and we felt we were on the right track.

Somewhat different were a number of wire-recorded interviews I had with Robert McGaughey between November 22 and December 14. Robert, sometime houseman and later butler, had come from Ireland in April of 1922. A week after he arrived in New York City he was interviewed by Sara Delano Roosevelt and within a month he found himself in Hyde Park, where he remained for the rest of his life. He married one of the house maids and they lived together with their two boys in an apartment over the stable overlooking the rose garden not many yards from the house. I became Robert's boss and it wasn't long before we were good friends who spent a large part of each day working together. I quickly discovered that Robert was unflappable, so when the crowds were so large

William A. Plog in Roosevelt greenhouse. Photo courtesy Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS.

that the waiting line curved about a quarter of mile on an arc between the rose garden and Home it was he who manned the front door. With unfailing Irish good humor he welcomed visitors and stemmed the tide when we had more than 75 in the house. By the time we had the wire recorder I knew Robert well enough to realize that I probably would have to drag answers out of him. Reading the transcriptions some 45 years later I found myself smiling, for I got only short answers to my questions. Unlike "Uncle Ben," Robert wasn't given to small talk or long answers. As a result there were a lot of questions. But through my conversations with him, both informally and with the recorder, I came to know a great deal about the family and the operations of the household.

Prior to February 2, 1948, George Palmer interviewed Moses Smith, from 1920 until 1947 the Roosevelt family farmer, who was another of FDR's local political sounding boards; over a period of 42 minutes he got detailed information that could have been procured in no other way. Mr. Smith's feelings about FDR as an employer and friend were summed up in one sentence: "He was just a plain, real, and honest good fellow." Then I sat with current members of our guard staff who had grown up in Hyde Park or were connected with the 240th Military Police Battalion, stationed at the Home from August of 1942 until November 1945; they were assigned to augment the Secret Service detail protecting the president.

On the second of February we struck gold: Grace Tully, longtime assistant secretary and then private secretary to the president, visited Hyde Park. George and I were able to sit informally with her for three hours, largely talking

about the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Foundation, of which she had become executive secretary. She was fascinated by our description of the wire-recording project and we listened to a few of the recordings. Thereupon she introduced the idea that the Foundation might help us in the future. (As it turned out, nothing came of the possibility that the project might become a cooperative venture, but after I left Hyde Park the Foundation gave $300 for cartridges.) Later, we set up the recorder, first in "the secretary's room" alongside the small den that FDR considered to be his Hyde Park office, then in the den itself. The transcription covers only three and one-half pages and it clearly shows that I hadn't had a single chance to ask a question. George Palmer admitted that he got carried away! But we came away from the day believing that we had learned a lot about the "Summer White House." What we did not learn until many years later when we read about it in the February/March 1982 issue of *American Heritage* was that Miss Tully already knew something about recordings and transcriptions. Between August and October 1940 a microphone was concealed in FDR's Oval Office. It was connected to a Continuous-film Recording Machine developed expressly for the purpose by RCA. Only one roll of sound-scribed film was ever found and it was re-recorded on sixteen 16-inch discs that were placed in the FDR Library, adjacent to the Home, in December 1947. They were finally exposed to public view in 1973 and may be heard in the Library.

On March 15, 1948, we sent a summary report to the regional director expressing our belief that the interviews already held had convinced us that "the technique should be adopted formally as a legitimate research tool...." We then pointed to the several advantages in the use of the wire recorder to secure information over note-taking interviews. We could have a literal transcription of the interview made. We learned that the desire of most people to be interviewed was heightened by use of the recorder. Interviewees, we thought, gained the feeling that he or she was an important part of a research project and that their opinions or memories could not be altered. We again posed questions about the permanency of the wire recording equipment and meeting the cost of the project, which was clearly beyond the appropriation for the two areas. We even prophesized that this new type of research will be more generally used in the field of history in the very near future." We also pointed out that Mrs. Roosevelt "has already given her approval to its continuation after hearing several interviews." (We had learned quickly that there was little the Regional Office or even the Washington Office would do to countermand her wishes.) In due course the Regional Director congratulated us and encouraged us to continue it, but he offered no positive suggestions about meeting the costs.

Fred Rath in his study at Cooperstown, NY, 1993. Photo by W.D. Urbin.

My next interviewee was Dean Mildred Thompson, historian and dean of Vassar College and an old friend of FDR. She came with her brother to visit the Home one day and I signed her up for a recording session. On April 28 we talked for about 30 minutes, which became a bit more than six pages of transcription. We covered a lot of ground, starting with FDR's early political career, but offering many personal impressions of the man. One made me think of my relationship with Mrs. Roosevelt at the time: "He was always comfortable to talk to and friendly." I sought to get from Miss Thompson a reaction to the way the Park Service had dealt with the Home and her answer was pleasant to hear. She was especially impressed by the naturalness of the living room, "where the whole life of the family went on."

As it turned out, that was the last chance I had to interview anyone at Hyde Park. My primary job still was to deal with visitors and interpretation and this I did until the middle of August 1948. Then, with the encouragement of Mrs. Roosevelt, who clearly saw the need for a nongovernmental organization dealing with sites, buildings, and objects significant in American history and culture, my wife and a new son and I left for Washington for a new job and a new challenge.

And now in passing it should be noted that there were some curious coincidences at that time. Alan Nevins is deservedly known as the founder of the oral history movement: the Oral History Research Project at Columbia University that he established in 1948 is still one of the great sources of information for all historians. But he had difficulty acquiring a wire recorder during that year (his first wire-recorded interview was with Judge Learned Hand on January 21, 1949). As a result, when Professor Nevins did his first interview in New York City on May 18, 1948, he was accompanied by a graduate student who took notes and made a transcription. The interviewee was a relatively new postwar friend of mine, George McAneny, a distinguished gentleman who classically was in the mold of those who Dr. Nevins in the introduction to *The Gateway to History* in 1938 said needed to be interviewed: "men once prominent in politics, in business, in the professions, and in other fields." One of Mr.McAneny's other fields was the preservation movement. As president of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, he worked with Horace Marden Albright, the second director of the National Park Service who retired in 1933 after convincing FDR that all federal historic sites in the country should be administered by the Park Service, and Ronald F. Lee, chief historian of the Service, and others, in setting up the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings. I have always thought that George McAneny and Horace Albright were instrumental in having me appointed to my new job as executive secretary of

*(**Hyde Park**—continued on page 6)*

*(**Hyde Park**—continued from page 5)*

the National Council, whose primary mission was to get Congressional and presidential approval of a bill to create the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States.

George Palmer carried the wire-recording project on, but he was able to find the time for only one more interview in 1948, on August 16. It was an important one, however, for it was the beginning of further investigation into the local political scene through the years. Thomas Kilmer, the interviewee, was a Hyde Park neighbor who with a group of other local Democratic friends formed the Roosevelt Home Club in 1928. A 10-page transcription of the talk with Kilmer gives descriptions of the torchlight parades to the Home in the wake of elections and FDR's continued participation in the political affairs of Dutchess County.

Early in 1949 George Palmer had a lengthy interview with the man who painted the homes and outbuildings, John Clay, and gave detailed information about them. The interview went on to reminiscences about the young Franklin growing up, including the remark made by his father: "You know, John, he is going to be president someday."

George Palmer took immediate advantage of that interview. Four days later he sat with another local friend and politician mentioned by Clay and elicited the story of FDR's first political venture in 1910. John Leonard described the maneuvering to elect FDR to the State Senate at that time. But the most touching tale was Leonard's reaction to seeing his old friend on the day after the election in 1944: "He looked awful. I never saw such a change in a man. Oh! I-I-I turned and touched him on the arm, and I said, 'Why don't you throw that job up and come home? You have done plenty for the people of this country, why don't you come home?' I will never forget it. He said, 'Tom, I will be home soon.' And he was. But he was dead, Mr. Palmer, when he came home."

Front of wire recording cartridge. Photo courtesy Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS.

In the months ahead, George Palmer managed to interview two more local political friends, Judge John Mack and Grant Dickenson, rounding out the story of FDR's early years in local politics. He then located an old newspaperman in Beacon, NY, Morgan Hoyt, who had been active in the earlier politics of the region. When FDR returned from Yalta in February 1945 he immediately replied to a letter Hoyt had written: "Those were the good days that you recall—that 1910 Campaign...As you will observe those tranquil days are a far cry from the present. But the comparison helps us to see things in their due proportion. I still say 'Thank God' for the old days and for the old and tried friends like you."

There then followed two rewarding interviews on December 13 and 14. George Palmer sat down with Mrs. Theodore Douglas Robinson (the former Helen Roosevelt, whose grandfather was FDR's father), and Mrs. Gerald Morgan, one of FDR's very early playmates, and queried them closely about all aspects of their growing up together. By this time Mr. Palmer was very knowledgeable about the entire Roosevelt family and again and again his questions reflect that knowledge. As a result there are 26 pages of transcription that gave for the first time a clear idea of FDR as a boy and the way he grew up.

During the following month, January 1950, George Palmer turned to another facet of FDR's interests, his tree plantation. By interviewing Russell W. Linaka, superintendent of grounds for Mrs. Roosevelt, he got the story of the president's determination to expand his nursery in 1940-1941. At the suggestion of Admiral William Leahy he interviewed Linaka, the Navy man who took care of three greenhouses and 100 acres of land around the Naval Observatory in Washington. FDR quickly persuaded him to retire and take over the neglected tree plantation in Hyde Park. There were immediate results, for more than 100,000 trees were in the ground within two years. After the war they planted another 38,000 trees. Obviously, part of FDR's plans for retirement included income from thousands of Christmas trees maturing each year. But that seems not to have been the principal motive. As Mr. Linaka said, "...after they got 2 or 3 feet high, he could sit in his car and look at them. Row upon row. He was just as proud of them as a little boy with a stick of candy. He loved to see those straight lines of trees."

Before his next interview on April 17, 1950, George Palmer quite obviously became a student of the local stone architecture. The interviewee was supervising architect with the Public Buildings Administration in Washington, Louis Simon. Eleven pages of transcription give a clear idea of FDR's ideas and his attention to detail about planning for the Library and the Hyde Park Post Office. The interview concludes with a story Mr. Simon told about being summoned during the war to the White House on a Sunday afternoon to discuss the Library plans. It says a great deal about FDR. "I went up to his room, the room he used for his office on the second floor...Everything was so still and quiet —so still and serene—the whole atmosphere, it impressed me very much that this man, the center of such enormous interests, could break away and take time to go over this building that he was adding as another interest in his life. I think he had his stamps in front of him and he was going over them at the time I was there. It also impressed me the way he could switch from these world affairs, you know, down to the details of the things he was talking about at that time and making little sketches of things that he thought he ought to do in connection with this building. It's a great quality, a dominant quality of his nature, I think."

On July 7 George Palmer found the time to interview Robert McGaughey about a specific period, FDR's last visits to Hyde Park between Christmas 1944 and March 25-28, 1945. Three things immediately struck me when I read the

14-page transcription: George did a lot of homework before he tackled this one; he quite obviously had read the transcriptions of my interview with Robert at the end of 1947 and had noted that answers would be brief and to the point; and he tried to soften Robert's tight lips by telling him that the transcription would be labeled "confidential." It helped Robert to remember that when FDR ate his last dinner at home his "hand was shaking and he looked terrible around the eyes." The interview adds a great deal of detail to an understanding of FDR's last days.

The only other interview that can be dated 1950 with certainty took place in The Octagon House in Washington, the site of my office as director of the National Trust. On November 12, a Sunday, at George Palmer's request I sat with Newman McGirr, who had owned an antiquarian bookstore in Philadelphia. He started to sell naval paintings and prints to FDR "shortly after" 1912 and continued to deal with him until 1935. Hit hard by the Depression, he was delighted that then FDR suggested that he might be interested in becoming the reference librarian for the new National Archives and he served there for the next 15 years. We discussed briefly his feelings for the president and my log for that day notes "...there was a bit of drama in his voice breaking and his sobbing as he spoke of FDR's death."

In the years ahead George Palmer evidently found it ever more difficult to find time for careful interviewing. But he found it irresistible when Louise Hackmeister, the chief telephone operator for FDR from 1933 to 1945, came to visit Hyde Park on September 6, 1951. The transcription that resulted gives a clear picture of how communications were established for the president no matter where he was. Her tale ended with the final trip to Warm Springs in April 1945, where a new switchboard ("My baby," she always called it) and new telephones had been installed. In her words: "So when the president took the new telephone receiver off the hook, the new one in his cottage, and talked to me, he said, 'Well Hackey, how are you girls fixed?' And I said, 'Oh, very well, Mr. President, and I do hope you can come down and see 'my baby.' She is a beauty. Whereupon he said, 'Well, Hackey, hope I will be down there one day to see it.' But he said, 'It's a big improvement, isn't it?' And I said, 'It certainly is, Mr. President...And the day that he passed away was the day that he had told us that he hoped to be down that following evening."

On January 8, 1952, George Palmer interviewed one of the long-time employees who had been with the family since 1931. Frank Draiss was what might be called an outdoor handyman and it was he who worked for Mr. Plog on the estate roads and the early establishment of the tree plantation before Russell Linnaka took over. The story I like best is, I think, a worthy ending to the wire recording project at Hyde Park. It came about during the course of a ride Frank took with FDR when they "got talking about the lay of the land. So I said to him, 'Mr. Roosevelt, I know that there must be some strong reason for so many of you people settling in the Hudson Valley. Now, I says, you have just come back from the west...Where do you like it best? Out west or here?' 'Frank' he says,' I like it here. Now, for instance, out in Wyoming I could drive around and I could see ahead of me for 100 miles and see the mountains, see the snow on the mountains. But, on the other hand, nobody lived there. And here, look what I see here. I can look down and see all those people, see where they are living, people in those houses making their living, going back and forth to work, sending their children to school.' 'Why,' he says, 'by all means, this is the best place for me. I like it better here.'" Upon reading this recently I was reminded immediately of the final sentences of Eleanor Roosevelt's talk at the dedication ceremony on April 12, 1946: "It was the people, all of the people of this country and of the world, whom my husband loved and kept constantly in his mind and heart. He would want them to enjoy themselves in these surroundings, and to draw from them rest and peace and strength, as he did all the days of his life."

For reasons no longer clear, that was the last wire-recording interview. Like Allan Nevins, George Palmer found it hard to get money to support the project and he was not able to get approval in his budget for cartridges and for the cost of transcriptions. While lip service had been given to the project by some in the Regional Office and some in the Washington Office, no one stepped forward to assure its continuation. In 1955 George Palmer was promoted to an assistant directorship in the Regional Office and moved to Philadelphia, where he was able in the years ahead to originate and coordinate the Independence Bicentennial Oral History Project.

In 1966 Professor Nevins spoke to the First Colloquium of the Oral History Association on "The Uses of Oral History" and opened his talk with the following statement: "Let us begin by disposing of the myth that I had anything to do with the founding of oral history. It founded itself. It had become a patent necessity, and would have sprung into life in a dozen places, under any circumstances. I'm in the position of a guide in Switzerland. A valley in the Alps that had previously been barren was filled by an avalanche with a great body of soil and became quite tillable. A poor guide in the village had stumbled over a rock as he came down the mountain one wintry day, and had started this avalanche that filled the valley. People pointed to him and said, 'There's Jacques, he made the valley fruitful.' Well, I stumbled over a rock (laughter) and the avalanche came. It would have come anyway."

George Palmer and I were among those who stumbled over a rock at the same time, but it took many years before the National Park Service adopted and supported oral history as an important and valid tool for historical research. We were not too surprised, for we left behind us a lot of unfinished business. We recognized our failure to follow through on many of the interviews. We rarely had the time to make comprehensive notes immediately in the wake of our interviews and not one of the transcriptions was corrected and edited at the time. Many of the transcriptions were done ineptly at a distance from Hyde Park by typists who were not familiar with the nomenclature.

And yet...And yet I think I might defend what it was we were trying to do and perhaps even a good deal of the record that was left behind. It is George Palmer, of course, who contributed most to the project, and only he tried to tackle the interviews dealing with Vanderbilt Mansion, getting into the record details that otherwise would have been lost forever. Had we had staff and money, we would have done much better, for we learned

*(**Hyde Park**—continued on page 12)*

Wards of the Hyde Park Project

W.D. Urbin

Securely stored in media safes in the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Curatorial Facility in Hyde Park, NY, are the voices and memories of neighbors, staff, and associates of the Roosevelts and Vanderbilts of Hyde Park. Endearing us to history, adding warmth and dimension to the Hyde Park story are the feelings and impressions of people such as Grace Tully, President Roosevelt's secretary; Moses Smith, Roosevelt's tenant farmer; and George Martin, Mr. Vanderbilt's butler. These are but three of the individuals and events making up 1,440 minutes (24 hours) of wire recordings, made between 1947 and 1951.

The recordings are known as the Hyde Park Project. The initiators, two men of foresight and perseverance—George A. Palmer, superintendent of Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS, 1945-1955, and Frederick L. Rath, Jr., historian, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS, 1946-1948—overcame the pressures and challenges of their time to establish this fine collection of phonic memories.

We at Roosevelt-Vanderbilt are the wards of this collection and are responsible for the stabilization and storage of the recordings as well as accessibility to the information on the recordings in a form that is current and user friendly.

For the most part, the wire recordings and the RCA Magnetic Wire Recorder used to make the recordings are in good shape and are stored according to museum standards in our conservation facility. Along with the wire recordings are reel-to-reel magnetic tape copies of the wire recordings made in the early 1960s and transcriptions of the wire recordings made in the late 1940s. The fidelity of the wire and reel-to-reel recordings is remarkably good considering the toll of the years and the pressure the initial interviewers were under. For many years information on the wire recordings was available only through reading the transcriptions. There was a problem here, however, as the transcriptions made in the 1940s and 1950s were made by people who were not trained transcribers, so the text did not fully correspond with the spoken word. There was a need to assimilate the transcriptions with the voices to establish integrity.

For a number of years now I've wanted to focus on this unique collection. The opportunity did not come about until two years ago when the park was offered a number of interns from local colleges. I asked that I might have an intern to work with me on oral history projects. I received a diligent and precise Marist college student, Martha Williams. Martha's project was to scan all the existing wire recording transcriptions and place them in the word-processing program, WordPerfect. This was not an easy undertaking as the transcriptions were on aged pink office paper that would not feed through the scanner. In addition, much of the text was faded and difficult to read. So, first we photocopied all the pages of the transcriptions to bring the text up to a standard that could be read by our scanner. Even with this text refinement the scanned material registered numerous errors, so many that at times the text looked more like a shuffled scrabble board than a transcription. Martha's patience held steady, and we now had the transcriptions in WordPerfect, where the text could be easily manipulated to make the needed additions and corrections.

The next step was to take the reel-to-reel tape copies of the wire recordings and copy them to a current and manageable format—audio cassettes. The reel-to-reel recordings have a nature of their own; they are a smorgasbord of tapes and handwriting. The preferred choice of labeling on the wire cartridges was inscribed masking tape and hand-painted numbers. On the reel-to-reel boxes it seems all forms were preferred. We first had to decipher the web of information on the boxes and make sure the corresponding tape was housed within. Once we had the right tape in the right box and a handle on the labeling systems, interns from Vassar and New Paltz College were assigned the task of transferring the interviews from reel-to-reel to cassette. The students were particularly pleased with this form of internship as they could sit for hours, headset on, listening to wonderful voices tell of days gone by. We are fortunate that we not only have the original wire recorder, but we have the recorder that was used to make copies off the wire recordings. This reel-to-reel recorder after a bit of work was brought back to life and used as the source recorder in transferring the information to audio cassette, maintaining an audio link with the initial recordings. The students did well, and it was pleasing to see their excitement in what they were hearing.

With the transcriptions in WordPerfect and on floppy disc, and the interviews on audio cassette, we now had manageable material. The next step would be to achieve the integrity we were striving for between the voices and the words. It would call for listening to the interviews while reading the transcriptions, making all the needed corrections and returning conversation that was omitted during the original transcribing. An individual with immense patience, computer skills, and the willingness to see the project through to the end was needed. Such a person was found in Mary Buchal, a retired school teacher, part time WordPerfect instructor at a local college, and a volunteer at the Vanderbilt Mansion.

Mary took on this confusing and at times frustrating task with enthusiasm and efficiency that exceeded expectations. As of this writing, Mary has completed seven of the interviews; the text now corresponds with the voices. These interviews, copied verbatim, plus additional ones upon completion, will be available for study on floppy disc and audio cassette with dossier and photos of the interviewees and interviewers included.

We have a long tradition of pursuing oral histories here at Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, starting way back with those pioneers George Palmer and Fred Rath. We are proud to be the wards of the Hyde Park Project, and today as through the years are actively seeking out individuals with knowledge to enhance and clarify the history of our community and nation.

The Hyde Park Project is on-going, perhaps one of the longest on-going projects in the Park Service. We must thank the innovators and all those along the way for the nurturing and care of these precious memories.

Bill Urbin is a museum technician at Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS.

Oral History

Delivering a Powerful Interpretive Message

Edwin C. Bearss

Director Bill Mott, as I had learned from experience at the initial hearings on legislation to establish a Jimmy Carter National Historic Site before Chairman Bruce Vento's Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, was an advocate of oral history. This led to my involvement with Superintendent John Tucker and Rangers Fred Sanchez and Jim Small of Andersonville National Historic Site in the Jimmy Carter oral history project that I described in "Oral History: A Challenge and Provocative Experience," which appeared in the April 1990 issue of *CRM* Bulletin (Vol. 13, No. 2).

At the April 1987 meeting of the National Park System Advisory Board held at Big Cypress National Preserve, Regional Director Bob Baker and Superintendent Jim Sanders of Biscayne National Park in a breakfast conversation told me of a recent visit to Biscayne by Director Mott. While in the park the Director had been introduced to and conversed with an African American sponge diver. A septuagenarian, Lancelot Jones was an area icon, having worked for and guided Bebe Rebozo, President Richard Nixon's South Florida confidant. Bill Mott, familiar with my work with Superintendent Tucker, had spoken to Baker and Sanders of the need for an oral history project at Biscayne aimed at recording the recollections of Mr. Jones and other longtime residents.

The breakfast resulted in my return to South Florida on July 30. Prior to my arrival at Biscayne National Park, Park Ranger Theresa Vasquez—a can-do professional—had taken necessary action to insure an efficient and productive use of the three days that I had programmed for the project. She had contacted the participants and prepared their thumbnail biographies; scheduled times and places for the sessions; familiarized herself with the electronic equipment; and arranged for standby interpreters to operate and monitor the recorder on her lieu days. Such cooperation on the part of the park staff, I again emphasize, as I did in my April 1990 article, is vital to the success of an oral history project. Without a technician to monitor the recording, the odds are against it possessing the quality for its use in interpretive programs.

The recording session with Lancelot Jones took place at the Adams Key Information Center, and Jones, as Director Mott had noted, was a treasure trove of information. Jones' recollections of his life and work on Biscayne Bay and the Keys as a sponge fisherman give insights into a vanishing way of life that is a part of the park story. His life on the water and the Keys led to employment as a sportsman's guide to the best fishing spots. This is how he first got to know Bebe Rebozo, and then President Nixon. In a modest unassuming manner, Jones told of his years on the water and his association with all classes of people from the humble to the wealthy and politically formidable.

Equally important, Lancelot Jones was articulate and spoke in a melodious dialect associated with the region. Jones' words, spoken by him, give a special dimension to the park's multifaceted themes as lived by an African American waterman.

The subjects of the two other oral histories were upper-class whites long associated with the area. These sessions took place in their homes, an important factor in planning and selection of electronic equipment. The first participant was Virginia Tannehill, who shared with us the history of her Elliott Key property, her knowledge of shipwrecks and salvage lore, and her collection of maritime-related artifacts. Charles Brookfield's association with the area and the adjacent keys dates to the 1930s. When the park's administrative history is written, the Brookfield tapes will be invaluable.

Director Mott next called me to undertake an oral history project to enrich the Service's interpretive initiatives at War in the Pacific National Historical Park and American Memorial Park. The Director's interest resulted from a July 1988 field trip to the western Pacific and meetings on Guam and Saipan with government authorities, preservationists, and the public. Bill Mott listened to the islanders' concerns about the pace of the Service's efforts to implement the general management plans for the Guam and Saipan parks.

Chamorros of an age to remember the grim World War II years called attention to the failure of the Service to include exhibits in the War in the Pacific visitor center or to develop wayside exhibits within the park or elsewhere on the island to interpret the defense of Guam by the Insular Guard, the hardships of the 31-month Japanese occupation, and the horrors they experienced as the Japanese military ran amuck from the days preceding the July 21, 1944, landing of U.S. forces across the Asan and Agat invasion beaches through the August 8 announcement that the island was secure. The Saipanese noted that at least there was a visitor center on Guam, while at American Memorial Park there was none and a significant collection of military hardware was rusting away exposed to a harsh tropical environment. An additional source of embarrassment was the modest memorial erected by the American Battle Monuments Commission, as contrasted to the handsome landscaped memorials erected by the Japanese and Korean governments and Japanese veterans.

Since there had been no appropriations for construction and development of visitor centers, Director Mott had Denver Service Center professionals visit the islands and prepare drawings and site plans for a War in the Pacific visitor center on Nimitz Hill and for an auditorium and visitor center at American Memorial Park. Estimates were prepared for construction and a partnership proposed to raise necessary monies. Mr. Mott also discussed with the Navy the relocation of the Japanese two-man submarine from Orote Peninsula to Asan Beach.

Construction of the visitor centers, development of waysides, and relocation of the submarine would all require large sums of monies that were not in the

*(**Message**—continued on page 10)*

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Service's budget. But the cost of an oral history program to address the islanders' concerns about the failure by public historians—be they military or civilian—to duly recognize their suffering, patriotism, and gallantry, was minimal. Always the activist, Director Mott called on me to pack my bags, and February 5, 1989, found me aboard an airplane en route to the Marianas.

Superintendent Ralph Reyes at War in the Pacific NHP and Supervising Ranger Ed Wood at American Memorial Park had been alerted to my impending arrival and mission. Superintendent Reyes, as a teenager, had gained an intimate knowledge of what Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere meant to the Chamorros. In the weeks prior to the June 15, 1944, landing by the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions on Saipan, 17-year-old Reyes and his older brother had, as forced laborers, toiled away extending the Orote Peninsula airfield. He had then been sent to the Manengon concentration camp, while his brother had remained behind and continued to work for the Japanese in a forced labor battalion. In the closing days of the battle of Guam, as the Japanese retreated northward, they, after binding his hands behind his back, beheaded the older Reyes and a number of other Chamorros.

Superintendent Reyes and Supervising Ranger Wood had contacted and scheduled recording sessions with a number of Chamorros and Saipanese, both male and female, who were willing to talk with a stranger about grim and traumatic experiences. Although I saw combat on Guadalcanal and New Britain as a Marine grunt, I found what happened to several of the participants shocking.

Most Chamorros of my age prefer to live on "ranchos" in the country rather than in Agana. This resulted in a number of the histories being recorded in a rural environment, where there were no electrical outlets and barnyard fowl noises in the background. Another problem was the failure to budget for a technician to handle the recording equipment, compelling me to wear two hats, one as the interviewer and the other as an audio technician.

Neither World War II front line combat nor previous oral history endeavors had prepared me for the emotional experience that I was about to undergo during the next two weeks as I relived, through taped interviews, the pre-1941 and wartime experiences of Chamorros and Carolinians. Four hours were spent with Pedro Cruz, a grizzled-haired former Insular Guardsman, and a veteran of the fight for the Plaza de España that preceded the surrender of the island to Japanese troops by Governor George D. McMillin on a December morning 47 years before. With tears in his eyes and choked voice, Cruz told of taking position behind an obsolete air-cooled Lewis machine gun as Japanese sailors of the Special Landing Force who had landed at Tamuning after midnight on December 10 approached. You feel the tension and then it is momentarily broken as Seaman Cruz opens fire. It is followed by a flurry of firing as tracers lace the air. Cruz breaks down as he tells of the death of his assistant gunner, Vicente Chargualaf, the collapse of resistance as the Japanese overran the plaza and Governor McMillin surrendered the island.

Carmen Kasperbauer and her parents lived during the war years in the Dededo community near Tweed's hideouts on the island's west coast escarpment overlooking the Philippine Sea. In her comfortable living room, she told of life in the country and the aid and comfort that her parents and neighbors gave to Radioman First Class George R. Tweed, the lone American service man who hid out in the bush throughout the Japanese occupation. In assisting Tweed, the Chamorros did so at the risk of their lives.

In the years subsequent to the island's liberation, Mrs. Kasperbauer and her family kept in contact with Tweed until his death in an Oregon car accident in 1990, and unlike many Chamorros, they see him as a hero.

Mrs. Beatriz Perez-Emsley's story for sheer horror held me transfixed and speechless. A mother of 10 and grandmother of 15, she told of a day in August 1944, when she was in her early teens, and U.S. forces, having secured their final beachhead line, pivoted 90 degrees and advanced northward toward Agana. Beatriz and a number of Chamorros were rounded up by Japanese soldiers and were escorted up onto Agana Heights. Suddenly and unexpectedly, the officer in charge gave an order, and the soldiers turned upon the Guamanians with clubbed rifles and fixed bayonets, while the officer sought to decapitate some of the victims with his sword. There were screams, shouts, and cries of anguish; Beatriz was felled when struck at the base of the neck by a sword and blacked out in a welter of gore.

When she recovered consciousness, she found to her horror that she had been buried alive. Recovering her senses, she realized that she had been called back from the dead by a kitty cat licking her blood-smeared nose. Because of the cat she escaped her tomb.

As she recalled her terrifying experience, Mrs. Perez-Emsley broke down several times but continued with her story after recovering her composure. When I left Mrs. Perez-Emsley's, I was emotionally exhausted.

On Saipan, the situation prior to World War II was different than on Guam. The island was a Japanese mandate and had been administered by the Empire of the Rising Sun since the autumn of 1914. During the intervening years, there had been a heavy influx of Japanese capital and immigrants, and a prosperous economy based on growing sugar cane and its refining thrived. Five of the six Carolinians interviewed, as might be expected, had a different perspective on the Japanese military and police than the Chamorros. They recalled the Japanese military that began to arrive on the island in 1940 in ever-increasing numbers favorably. This was particularly true if they resided in Garapan, which during the mandate years grew into the largest city in the Pacific between Honolulu and the Philippines. Many of the sailors, airmen, and soldiers were friendly and gave the children candy and cigarettes.

War for the Carolinians became serious in early 1944, as the tide turned rapidly against the Japanese in both the Central and Southwest Pacific. The informants told of shortages of food resulting from the arrival of thousands of Japanese reinforcements and the success of American submarines in sinking shipping. There was forced labor as the military frantically strove to shore up the island's defenses, and then came carrier-based air attacks. The pre-invasion bombardments were terrifying and then, on

June 15, the Marines stormed ashore on the beaches south of Garapan.

The next three weeks of bitter fighting were described by people who had been through hell. To several their experiences are still deeply etched in their minds, and are as vivid as 47 years ago. Pedro Guerrero, then in his late teens, lived with his parents and family inland from the invasion beaches. He and an elder brother were compelled by the Japanese military to work on defenses as they dug in on Mt. Fina Susu. The Japanese soldiers became increasingly brutal as the Marines, now reinforced by the Army's 27th Division, slugged their way inland and closed on Aslito Airfield. They turned on the Carolinian laborers with a vengeance born of despair, and Guerrero's brother was bashed in the head with a butt stock and left for dead. Soon after the Japanese pulled back and the Marines arrived; Guerrero and other civilians were taken to the beach and confined to a stockade guarded by Marine MPs, and his brother was taken to a sick bay where he died. The Marines detailed Japanese prisoners to bury the dead. Pedro was there when the Japanese approached a gravesite carrying his brother's body. When they unceremoniously dumped the body into the grave, Pedro lost his cool and, picking up a pick-mattock handle, charged the Japanese and began clubbing them until subdued by the MPs. As he told the story he choked up and wept. Supervising Ranger Wood and I were verbally transported by his words back to that terrible day in June 1944. Before he could collect himself, Guerrero remarked that even today he cannot visit the luxury hotels that have sprung up along the west coast of Saipan catering to Japanese honeymooners two generations removed from the dark days of World War II.

The Marianas oral history project won friends for the Service from critics who had complained to Director Mott that in our exhibits and interpretative programs we were slighting the contribution of the Chamorros in the defense of Guam, their loyalty to the United States during the Japanese occupation, and their and the Carolinians' suffering and courage during the savage fighting that accompanied the battle of Saipan and the liberation of Guam. When I left Guam on February 21 to return to Washington, Tony Palomo, former legislator, distinguished journalist, and author of *An Island in Agony,* inscribed a copy of his book as follows:

> Ed,
> It's a pleasure meeting someone who cares about Guam's past and is willing to do something about it. You are a rare breed, Ed. *Si yya masse.*

The Guam oral history project benefited the Service in 1991 when Supervisory Ranger Rosa Manibusan at War in the Pacific National Historical Park was named by Governor Ada to the commission to oversee commemoration of the Japanese attack on Guam and the island's defense. A key element in the program was an interpretive exhibit at the park visitor center featuring the Insular Guard and their December 10 defense of the Plaza de España. Encouraged by Superintendent Wood, all-out support by the Harpers Ferry Center and Lynne Nakata of the Western Regional Office, and timely financial assistance by the Arizona Memorial Museum Association, the energetic and able Ms. Manibusan succeeded in having the exhibit in place on time. On the 10th, following appropriate ceremonies attended by surviving on-island members of the Insular Guard, several gold star mothers, and Vicente Chargualaf's widow, former guardsman Pete Perez, assisted by Deputy Secretary of the Interior Frank Bracken, cut a ribbon opening the exhibit. At the ceremony there were few dry eyes.

Jim Ridenour replaced Bill Mott in April 1989 to become the 13th Director of the National Park Service. Like Mott, Director Ridenour, from his days as Director of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, had gained a deep appreciation of the value of oral history. On reading my article on this subject in the April 1990 *CRM* Bulletin, he informed Associate Director Jerry Rogers, "You [Bearss] have talked yourself into more work. I am a fan of oral histories. Do more but go easy on the margaritas."

Meanwhile, Mr. Vento's Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands had held a hearing on Representative John Lewis' bill (H.R. 3834) to study the route of the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery for potential addition to the National Trails System. At the hearings, Representative Lewis, a key participant in the march, expressed keen interest in my suggestion that an oral history approach would facilitate timely completion of the study, besides being invaluable to interpretation of the trail and its national significance to future generations. Mr. Lewis expressed enthusiasm for the undertaking and offered the assistance of his staff in contacting appropriate parties for interviews.

On being apprised of this in view of the value he placed on oral history, Director Ridenour replied in a cryptic note, "Proceed, make sure qualities of tapes and material is good enough for use of displays later on."

Director Ridenour's words underscored what I had learned the hard way at the Trinity Site in June 1968 and on Guam and Saipan in February 1989, that if oral history is to be of value as the audio component of an interpretive exhibit, **it must be a team effort.** With the Director's injunction in mind, I made certain that when I arrived on July 11, 1990, at Representative Lewis' office, I was accompanied by old friend Blair Hubbard of the Harpers Ferry Center, whose electronics skills and know-how had insured the success of the first phase of the Lyndon B. Johnson project in March 1973. Our session with Representative Lewis was memorable as he recalled his early years in Troy, AL, participation in the Freedom Rides of 1961, membership in the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), his role in the fight for civil rights and social justice, his association with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Selma voter registration drive, and his participation as one of the leaders in the Selma to Montgomery march. Through John Lewis Clio spoke to us.

The lead in undertaking the study that resulted in a finding by the National Park System Advisory Board that the Selma to Montgomery March Trail meets the criteria for designation as a National Historic Trail was undertaken by Lake Lambert and Barbara Tagger, a pair of young and capable historians assigned to the Service's Southeast Regional Office. Contact with key players in the Dallas County Voters League, SNCC and Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), and the community identified by Representative Lewis was established,

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*(**Hyde Park**—continued from page 7)*

a lot in the doing. But even without adequate secretarial services, without money, and primarily without time for reflection and further planning, it was not a failure, for there is a wealth of information for the historian who has the patience to go through more than 320 pages of transcriptions. A saving grace, perhaps, was that we knew how difficult it was to achieve historical truth, for we also knew that a sliver of the diamond of truth was not the whole truth. In any event, various auditors seemed to feel that it was worth the effort after listening to some of the results. My own evaluation of the project at the time came during my interview with Dean Mildred Thompson. We were talking about the purpose of the interviews and I said, "it gives us some of the human values that we are seeking to inject into ...all of our operations; and in the future by dove-tailing this with other material that will be collected we shall be able to give a better impression of who this man (FDR) was, and what he was, and what he did here at Hyde Park."

Some 29 years later Dr. William W. Moss, Smithsonian Archivist and former president of the Oral History Association, wrote an article for *American Archivist*. In it are several sentences that have comforted me: "Even when erroneous or misguided, recollections may in their very errors provoke understanding and insight. Furthermore, the aggregate recollections of many people can provide a rough means for approximating historical truth where no transactional records or selective records exist." In any event, it was with some confidence that George Palmer in a memorandum to the regional director on March 15, 1948, vouchsafed that "this new type of research ...will be more generally used in the field of history in the very near future." And he added to that proudly, "We believe that we are the first to adapt the new technique to this use, a fact which should redound to the credit of the National Park Service."

It never did redound, so far as I know. The results of the project were little known in the years ahead and are only now being made available to scholars. Exactly when the Park Service got back into oral history I have not been able to track. I have been told by David Nathanson, Chief, Office of Library, Archives, and Graphics, NPS, that by 1981 there were more than 150 oral history projects under way, but no one seems to have an exact tally now. The best clue to what has transpired in the National Park Service since that time can be found in Chief Historian Ed Bearrs' article on "Oral History: A Challenging and Provocative Experience," which appeared in *CRM* Bulletin, Volume 13: No. 2 (1990). He describes with his usual vivacity becoming a "true believer" when he became part of a team in 1968 that interviewed four scientists and engineers who worked with Robert Oppenheimer in the development of the first atomic bomb. There he learned among other things more directly connected with oral history procedures that three margaritas in an Alamagordo bistro after a long day of interviewing can have an effect almost equal to that of the atomic bomb. He persevered, however, and in the years thereafter, learning all the way, he participated in the LBJ oral history project, the Eisenhower project, and the President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter project, where video-tape was added to audio recording. All this, and more, he describes in the fine article that follows and I have told him that I will some day see to it that he gets three more margaritas—but not in Alamagordo.

Fred Rath is a much-honored historian living in Cooperstown, NY. Researcher, writer,and lecturer, Fred wrote "Reflections on Historic Preservation and the National Park Service: The Early Years," which appeared in *CRM*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1991), as a special supplement.

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and in the first week of September 1991, I traveled to Alabama's Black Belt. There I rendezvoused with historians Lambert and Tagger, and at Selma on September 4 and 5 conducted four interviews. Lambert and Tagger oversaw the recording. Three of the informants were African American activists and the other was a white reporter for the *Selma Times Journal*.

Mrs. Marie Foster and Dr. F.D. Reese, the former a dental hygienist and the latter an educator, both longtime Selma residents, had entered the struggle for equal rights through the Dallas County Voters League. They focused on local voter registration efforts, the violent reactions these provoked on the part of Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark and his posse, the support given first by SNCC and finally by SCLC, and the marches. Albert Turner, president of the Perry County Civic League, gave the story as seen and experienced by African Americans in adjacent Perry County, and told how the beating and death of Jimmie Lee Jackson in Marion served as a catalyst that led to the march from Selma to Montgomery to formally protest to Governor George Wallace the continued voter discrimination and violence. Albert Turner's interview led the study team to reassess their work plan to give greater significance to the role of the Perry County Civic League and their activities, and to schedule a public meeting in Marion.

Jamie Wallace provided a white journalist's overview of those weeks when the eyes of the nation and much of the world were on Selma. His recollections of the white power structure—Sheriff Clark, Commissioner of Public Safety Wilson Baker, Mayor Joseph Smitherman, and Circuit Judge James Hare—gave a special dimension and balance to the oral history.

In Atlanta, C.T. Vivian and Hosea Williams—two stalwart and articulate SCLC leaders whose names were household words during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement—participated in the project. C.T. Vivian spoke eloquently as he recalled the march, associated events, and his work with Dr. King. Although a quarter of a century had passed, Hosea Williams, then running for mayor of Atlanta, was no less passionate. As he alternately sat and paced back and forth across his modest living room in his bermuda shorts, he described his role in the march and the players in the drama, mincing no words, and the march's place in history. This he did in an exciting and uplifting fashion that underscores that oral history can deliver a powerful interpretive message second to none.

Ed Bearss is the Chief Historian of the National Park Service.