
The Sign Oral History Project

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Description

One of the projects established following the Workshop was the Sign Oral History Project. The purpose is to preserve important historical information that otherwise may be lost and to make it available for scholarly study.

Those of us interested in preserving first-hand accounts of the early history of the UFO phenomenon are, in some respects, engaging in a form of triage with regard to aging potential interviewees. Many individuals who have personal knowledge of some aspect of UFO history—whether witnesses, Air Force project officials and personnel, investigators and individuals involved in the social aspects of the phenomenon—have never been interviewed or questioned about information and perspectives that only they can provide. Most of the surviving early participants and witnesses from the late 1940s and '50s are reaching an advanced age.

One of the primary purposes of the oral history project is to record on videotape as many of the knowledgeable persons from the late 1940s through 1969 as possible, and to preserve and disseminate the information for posterity. A number of interviews have already been accomplished. However, a much larger scale effort is needed and the matter becomes more critical as the years go by. The list of candidates is quite extensive for the more than 50+ years of UFO history.

Sign/Oral History Project Statement of Purpose

Oral history is a method of gathering and preserving historical information through recorded interviews with participants in past events and ways of life. It is both the oldest type of historical inquiry, predating the written word, and one of the most modern, initiated with tape recorders in the 1940s.

The purpose of the Sign/Oral History Project is to collect and preserve important information that otherwise might be lost by interviewing as many knowledgeable participants as possible. Such information would be especially useful to academic historians and other scholarly students of the UFO phenomenon. The information would be invaluable for clarifying the sometimes sketchy, often misinterpreted and always-incomplete history of UFOs in modern times.

Interviews are acquired on archival media incorporating broadcast standards. Copies and transcripts of pertinent interviews will be deposited with the primary organizations, and eventually other oral history depositories.

Principles and Standards of the Sign/Oral History Project

The Sign Oral History Project supports the Principles and Standards of the Oral History Association in promoting oral history as a method of gathering and preserving historical information through recorded interviews with participants in past events and ways of life. It encourages those who produce and use oral history to recognize certain principles, rights, and obligations for the creation of source material that is authentic, useful, and reliable. These include obligations to the interviewee, to the profession and to the public, as well as mutual obligations between sponsoring organizations and interviewers.

Oral history interviews are conducted for a variety of purposes: to create archival records; for individual research; for community and institutional projects; and for publications and media productions. Regardless of the purpose of the interviews, oral history should be conducted in the spirit of critical inquiry and social responsibility, and with recognition of the interactive and subjective nature of the enterprise.

Following is a partial listing of interviews that have been acquired, to date:

Charles B. Moore

Albert M. Chop

Roy Craig, Ph.D.

Col. Doyle Rees

Michael Swords, Ph.D.

Charles Hixson

Leon Davidson, Ph.D.

Frederick C. Durant

Joseph J. Kaliszewski

Frank Salisbury, Ph.D.

Capt. Willis T. Sperry

William A. Rhodes

Paul McCarthy, Ph.D.

Richard Greenwell

Ted Bloecher

Rex Heflin

Robert J. Friend

Additionally, interviews are being acquired in other areas including: contemporary ufology; abduction/contact phenomenon and the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI).

Your assistance in this project would be greatly appreciated!

(Source: Thomas Tulien)

