



*Serving those who are interested in methods and techniques of the oral history process as a means of preserving unique memory of people, places, events and ideas*

**2016 Michigan History Day Awards for Best Use of Oral History**

The State Finals competition of Michigan History Day was held April 30 in Bay City. Nearly 500 Michigan elementary, middle and high school students – a record-setting number – took part in this year’s Michigan History Day, which is an educational program of the Historical Society of Michigan. This year’s theme was “*Exploration, Encounter, Exchange in History,*” presented by students in performances, exhibits, papers, websites and documentaries. Along with top honors in each of these categories, Special Awards were selected.

**The James Campbell Award for Best Use of Oral History, sponsored by the Michigan Oral History Association, was presented to:**

- Charles Parsons, Midland High School, “*Bypass Odorizer: Stinky Sulfur Smell Saves Lives,*” Senior Division Individual Website National Finalist (interviewing former employees of Dow Chemical)
- Kennedy Brooks, Anna Leach, Keith Porter, and Jadin Wolfe, Sam Adams Elementary School,



*MOHA Board Member Tammy Apmann presents Jr Division James Campbell Award*

Cassopolis, “*The Orphan Train,*” Junior Division Group Performance National Finalist (interviewing a Cass County resident about experiences being transplanted via “Orphan Trains” in the 1930s) *Continued on P. 6*

*Charles Parsons, Senior Division, Award for Best Use of Oral History*



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## About the Michigan Oral History Association

### Mission

The mission of the Michigan Oral History Association (MOHA) is to provide effective cooperation and communication among persons, programs, and institutions concerned with the techniques, uses, and promotion of oral history in Michigan. Based on the foundation of the Michigan Oral History Council organized in 1979, the name of the non-profit corporation was changed to Michigan Oral History Association in 1994.

### Who We Are

MOHA serves people interested in methods and techniques of the oral history process as a means of preserving unique memory of people, places, events and ideas. MOHA promotes and educates about oral history, as a resource for capturing on electronic media, attitudes and emotions not otherwise preserved. The pool of presenters includes experienced oral history practitioners, archivists, database managers, video producers, authors, professional transcribers, journalists and teachers. Presenters participate in history-related conference sessions, conduct workshops, and serve as facilitators for state and regional forums.

**Request a Workshop!** Workshops are tailored to meet the specific needs of the audience. Common topics presented: the importance of oral histories, how to organize a project, how to conduct oral histories, technology, forms to use, best practices, and archiving your oral histories. For help planning a workshop, contact Geneva Kebler Wiskemann at [gwiskemann@arq.net](mailto:gwiskemann@arq.net) or (517) 321-1746.

*Presentation: Doing Oral History: Best Practices*  
*Sponsor: Ionia County Genealogical Society*  
*Date: Sat., August 13 Time: 1 pm*  
*Where: 1117 Emerson St., Lake Odessa 48849*  
*Open free to public and members*  
*Contact: [lorilfox@gmail.com](mailto:lorilfox@gmail.com)*

***Please submit newsletter or website ideas, information, news, and features to: [newsletter@michiganoha.org](mailto:newsletter@michiganoha.org).***

### How Can MOHA Help You?

Workshops, information, advice and resources are available to both beginning and experienced oral historians. Forums provide exchange with others who may have similar problems, obstacles, and opportunities. Established or in-progress oral history projects can benefit from MOHA's ability to promote and publicize initiatives and resources. Through mutual efforts, we can improve the quality and quantity of oral histories in our state.

### Become a Member!

As a member, you will receive:

- The MOHA Newsletter
- Mentoring and assistance with your oral history project
- Opportunities to participate in local and statewide conferences and workshops
- News of MOHA publications and other related resources
- Updates on oral history innovations and current projects in the state
- Opportunity to join a MOHA committee

### **Membership Dues:**

Individual:	\$25
Institutional:	\$50
Patron:	\$50
Sponsor:	\$100
Student:	\$15

*Send to: MOHA,  
5580 W. State Rd., Lansing MI 48906-9325.*

*To receive the MOHA newsletter electronically, send an email to [newsletter@michiganoha.org](mailto:newsletter@michiganoha.org) with the word "newsletter" and a preferred email address.*



## Guidelines for Transcribing Oral Histories

*Lynn Simmons has been a court reporter and a transcriber for around 40 years. She has transcribed hundreds of oral histories. When it comes to transcribing oral histories, they are a special kind of transcription. See MOHA Newsletter Winter 2016 issue for information about Cost of Transcription, Conducting the Interview, and Setting of the Recording.*

### Working with a Transcriber

The interviewer has a lot of information that can make transcribing easier to do. A list of names of people and places, any special terms that may have been used, and general background information all make the transcribing process more efficient. For example, if the interviewee worked in a particular industry, a source for the terminology unique to that industry would be helpful. If English is a second language for the interviewee, and if they use that language during the interview (Yiddish for example), then a link to a dictionary for the language will help with the accuracy of the transcript. With the help of the Internet, a lot of information can be at the transcriber's fingertips. For example, in doing a series of community oral histories, a list of the streets in the community, many of which are based on the names of founding families, has been very helpful. If you had a prepared list of questions to ask, even if you didn't ask all of them, that is helpful information. It gives the transcriber an overview of the interview.

### Verbatim or Edited Transcript

In court work, what you say is what you get. If a person speaks in incomplete sentences, mixes up word order, or makes grunting responses rather than words (uh-huh, uh-uh), those appear in the transcript. Most people do speak part of the time in incomplete sentences, or interrupt the thought process with side comments. A verbatim transcript is much longer than an edited transcript. But how much editing should there be? That is something to discuss with the transcriber before the transcribing begins. If someone uses a phrase often as part of their speech pattern, you might want that included in the final transcript. However, you might want the transcriber to eliminate "you know" or "like."

### Transcribing Process

There are two ways of preparing a transcript: start and stop, and continual. If you are using a start and stop approach, you are spending a lot of time with your hands off the keyboard going through those

motions. Continual means that you are not worrying about every word on the first time through. When using a computer, you can easily go back and insert any missing words that are necessary to make the transcript meaningful.

There are a number of transcribing programs available. While downloading the program may be free, the cost comes with the foot pedal. I use Express Scribe, which allows you to transcribe a variety of formats, adjust your speed, and adjust how much back-up of the recording is done so the transcriber can transcribe on a continual basis. I can hold only so much information in my head at a time as I listen to the recording. When I get to the end of the portion I remember, the little bit of back-up lets me pick up where my memory left off and continue with the thought. So I am transcribing more or less continuously.

Learning how to use the macros feature in your word processing program can make the transcribing process go much faster. That means that a word that is said often is stored in such a way that a single keystroke will reproduce that word as opposed to typing it out each time. For example, I put the names of the speakers in my transcripts in bold, and they are indented. So Mary, bold and indented, would be Return, Tab, Bold, Mary (spelled out), Colon, Bold Off, Space, Space. Eleven strokes. With the macro it is Alt and one letter. *Continued on P. 6*

***A list of names of people and places, any special terms that may have been used, some general background information- all make the transcribing process more efficient.***

## **Giving voice to diverse communities through history: Asian Pacific American Community**

*By Melanie Shell-Weiss, Ph.D., Director, Kutsche Office of Local History  
and Associate Professor of Liberal Studies, Grand Valley State University*

*Our Asian Pacific American Community*, launched in January 2016, grew out of ongoing efforts by the City of Holland and Herrick District Library to more fully serve Holland's diverse communities. In Summer 2015, Grand Valley State University (GVSU) was invited to join the collaboration along with Latin Americans United for Progress (LAUP) and St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church. We began by collecting oral histories with Hispanic residents as part of National Hispanic Heritage Month celebrations.

Located in the Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies at GVSU, the Kutsche Office of Local History facilitates collaborative endeavors among community members, organizations, K-12 and college students, professional and amateur historians, as well as university faculty and staff. We are always looking for ways to bring people together and to help build projects that fit our mission of giving voice to diverse communities. The Kutsche Office provided equipment,

forms, oral history training, and a photographer to support the effort. We also worked with GVSU students to transcribe and translate the interviews. Students then created short bilingual biographical quotes that were incorporated into boards to be used as part of a public exhibition. The exhibit and archive of nearly 50 oral histories was called *Nuestra Comunidad Hispana*. Many community members who participated in the effort commented that the effort not only inspired them and helped them to feel like a full part of the City of Holland, but they also made new connections to fellow Hispanic residents.

Based on the success of that project, the partners decided to launch a similar project focusing on collecting portraits and oral histories from Asian-Pacific Americans. Our partners expanded to include the Holland Museum, Integrated Fabrics, LifeQuest Church, and the Cambodian Fellowship Christian Reformed Church. We collected nearly 50 oral histories that showcase the international and cultural diversity of West Michigan's Asia-Pacific American communities. The oral histories and portraits will remain a permanent part of the Herrick District Library's genealogy collections.

**For more information about this and our other projects, please visit [www.gvsu.edu/kutsche](http://www.gvsu.edu/kutsche), follow us on Facebook, or call (616)331-8099.**

**2016 OHA Annual Meeting**  
October 12-16, 2016  
Long Beach, California  
Renaissance Long Beach Hotel

The meeting enables students and both emerging and established scholars to network and learn valuable skills. The theme this year is **OHA@50: Traditions, Transitions and Technologies from the Field**. The fiftieth anniversary meeting offers an opportunity to reflect back on the evolution of this interdisciplinary field, gauge its current trends, and look ahead into the ever shifting oral history landscape of the future.

The Oral History Association engages with policy makers, educators, and others to help foster best practices and encourage support for oral history and oral historians. With an international membership, OHA serves a broad and diverse audience including teachers, students, community historians, archivists, librarians, and filmmakers.

In addition to fostering communication among its members, the OHA encourages standards of excellence in the collection, preservation, dissemination and uses of oral testimony. To guide and advise those concerned with oral documentation, the OHA has established a set of goals, guidelines, and evaluation standards for oral history interviews. See [Principles and Best Practices](#).

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**Michigan History Day**, *continued from P. 1*

The award **honors James Campbell, former President of MOHA. The Historical Society of Michigan** – the oldest cultural organization in the state – has been committed to preserving our history, through publications, education, conferences, awards, and local support. For more information on HSM and the 2016 Michigan History Day State Champions, visit [www.hsmichigan.org](http://www.hsmichigan.org).

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**Guidelines for Transcribing Oral Histories**, *Continued from P. 4*

**Becoming a Transcriber**

How does someone learn to be a transcriber? Practice, practice. The most important skill is being able to listen and type at the same time. Working with someone who already does this can help to build your skills. Having reference materials at your fingertips (dictionary, speller, grammar book) can help to build your skills as well. One of the hardest spoken types of words to deal with is contractions. Often people do not pronounce contractions carefully, and sometimes you can miss the meaning of what is being said because of that. When I had transcribers working for me, I figured it would take at least a year for them to become really proficient.

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## **Using Oral History in the Classroom**

*By Jim Cameron, 40 Years Teaching U.S. History,  
Michigan History and Economics*

*Partnerships between schools and your organization  
- whether museum, historical society, or archives -  
promote quality history instruction while adding  
resources for your organization.*

(Continued from a series in the Fall and Winter issues)

### **Oral History Progression**

1. Choose Topic(s)
  - A. schools, transportation, businesses, communication
  - B. role of women, civil rights, work day, etc.
2. Research the Topic
  - A. Libraries, universities, Internet
  - B. Museums, Michigan history resources
3. Contact the Interviewee
  - A. Set up the time, date, place, approximate length
  - B. Explain purpose and general topics to be discussed
4. Prepare for Interview
  - A. Create and organize questions
  - B. Prepare equipment
5. Complete Interview
  - A. Include biographical sheet\*
  - B. Include release form\*
6. Transcribe Interview
  - A. Verbatim
  - B. Make sure all words are included and spelled correctly
7. Evaluate Interview
  - A. Review purpose of the interview
  - B. Discuss with the other interviewers
8. Share Your Interview
  - A. With other interviewers – content
  - B. With the local historical societies, schools

### **Quality Questions**

1. Know the content of your questions:  
If you are asking about life on the farm know about life on the farm.
2. Open-ended questions:  
“What was your favorite place on the farm?”
3. Two-part questions:  
“Your main job was with the orchard, what specifically did you do?”

4. Follow-up questions:  
“What crops did you plant in the orchard?”
5. No trivia questions:  
“Do you like apples?”
6. Don’t ask questions:  
“Did anybody get killed on the farm?”
7. Drive-by questions:  
“Did any serious accidents occur when you were on the farm?”
8. Be curious

### **What else?**

Pictures, certificates, trophies, letters, keepsakes, items, diaries, yearbooks

*\*For more details and to get a sample release form, biographical data sheet and other resource materials - contact MOHA to set up a MOHA Workshop for your organization.*

*See Fall 2015 MOHA Newsletter for “Oral History v. Oral Interviews in the Classroom,” and Winter 2016 for How to get teachers to partner with your organization, including Common Core Connections.*

## **CHECK THIS OUT!**

### ***Fall 2016 Issue MOHA Newsletter:***

- **Oral histories of Yemeni population in Coldwater**
- **What is a Public Interest minor for Michigan university students?**
- **Experiences of Vietnamese-Americans, project of Troy Historic Village**
- **Tips and Techniques for conducting oral histories**
- **Expanded information on MOHA Midwest Regional Oral History Forum**

**Midwest Regional Oral History Forum  
Michigan Oral History Association  
November 19 – 8:30 am – 2:30 pm  
Portage District Library, Kalamazoo  
In collaboration with the 2016 Summit on Racism**

**Opening Reception of the Forum will be held at the 2016 Summit on Racism, “Understanding Racial Equity; Transforming our Community,” sponsored by the Society for History and Racial Equity (SHARE) on November 18** at 4:45 pm at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. A Summit session will feature the value of oral histories.

**The November 19 Forum** will bring together oral history practitioners and those interested in developing oral history projects. The **agenda** will include sessions on the basics of conducting an oral history project, the latest technology involved in conducting projects, and oral history in the classroom.

A networking luncheon following the program will allow participants to connect, report on projects, and share ideas.

A registration fee of \$25 includes the Forum, all materials, and a box lunch.  
**Register online at <http://mohamidwestforum.eventbrite.com>.**

Registration for the November 18 Summit opens August 1, at [www.sharekazoo.org](http://www.sharekazoo.org).

**Michigan Oral History Association  
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