



*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*

“Rosie the Riveter” Wins Award

Wild Swan Theater in Ann Arbor created its original production of “Rosie the Riveter” to tell the story of the women who filled factory jobs during World War II to take the place of men who were called up for military service. The Historical Society of Michigan presented the 2017 award for “Education: Educational Programs” to Wild Swan for the play and its associated educational materials.

Jeffrey Duncan, playwright, described how the play, based on interviews with local “Rosies,” developed. “Wild Swan Theater wanted to do an original play based on Michigan history. In a brain-storming session Rosie the Riveter and the World War II Willow Run airplane factory came up. A story about women helping build B-24 bombers seemed a sure-fire winner.

“With no particular story in mind, I knew I had a lot of reading to do, and I knew it would be helpful to interview some actual Rosies, to find out what their experience in the plant and on the line was like. Kim Godek was head of the local chapter of the American Rosie the Riveter Association. Through Kim I got the names and numbers of eight Rosies in southeastern Michigan.

“The interviews were simple: tell us what you remember: where you came from, what you did, how it changed your life, how it changed *you*. We were particularly interested in any stories, anecdotes, episodes they recalled. Most of them were surprised by our questions—they didn’t think that they had much of interest to say as they felt they were so ordinary. But when we kept encouraging them, they

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*Cast Working, “Rosie the Riveter:”
From left to right: Aynsley Martindale, Leah Fox,
Erin Parrish, Shelly Tocco, Kalyse Edmondson,
Sarah Briggs*

Photo Credit: Leisa Thompson Photography

2018 OHA Annual Meeting October 10-13, 2018

Make plans to attend the 2018 OHA Annual Meeting at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. The meeting attracts a broad range of people and features the best work in the field, enabling students and both emerging and established scholars to network and learn valuable skills. The theme for 2018 is **Oral History in Our Challenging Times.**

2018 Call for Papers, deadline January 31, 2018. The submission site is open at OHA 2018.

***Check out more opportunities in oral histories
on pages 2 and 7.***

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! 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 (517) 321-1746 or workshops@MichiganOHA.org.

Michigan in Perspective: The Local History Conference, March 23-24 **Historical Society of Michigan**

Numerous sessions based on oral histories, with many breakout sessions that address local and statewide history. Keynotes:

- *From Isolationist to Internationalist: Senator Arthur Vandenberg With Hendrik Meijer of Meijer Inc.
 - * Chuck Stokes of WXYZ/WMYD-TV Detroit
 - * Ilyasah Shabazz of Ilyasah Shabazz Enterprises on her father Malcolm X in Detroit
 - *Conversation With Judge Avern Cohn With Columnist and Commentator Jack Lessenberry
- hsmichigan.org for details and registration.*

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.

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.*

Annual Midwestern History Conference June 6, 2018, Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Midwestern History Association (MHA) and the Hauenstein Center at Grand Valley State University will hold a conference that continues a discussion designed to spark and sustain a revival of Midwestern studies in American historiography.

To become a member of MHA, contact Michael Skaggs at skaggs michaela@gmail.com.

Veterans History Project

By Owen Rogers, Liaison Specialist,
Veterans History Project –
Library of Congress
orog@loc.gov

The Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center collects, preserves, and makes accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war.

The United States Congress created the Veterans History Project in 2000. AARP is the founding corporate sponsor of the Veterans History Project. In addition to providing initial major funding for the Project, AARP also spread the word to its legion of volunteers and almost 37 million members, encouraging them to get involved. Numerous state chapters have also been involved in the Project. The Veterans History Project is made possible by the generous support of the U.S. Congress.

A participant may be a veteran, an interviewer, or person donating a veteran's collection ([learn more about what we collect](#)). Students in the 10th grade and above may also participate and there are special resources for [educators and students](#).

To participate, take these four steps:

1. [Print the Veterans History Project Field Kit](#) (required forms)
2. [Prepare for the interview](#)
3. [Conduct the interview](#)
4. [Send your collection to the Library of Congress](#) (Keep a copy for yourself!)



Exciting Individual Stories: “Charlie” Kettles

(Photo above)

Below is an account of how the mention of a 1967 airborne evacuation during a Veterans History Project (VHP) interview prompted congressional action and a subsequent award of the Medal of Honor. Veteran Charles Seymour Kettles was a Major during rescue operations in Vietnam. He retired from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Adopting the “crowdsourcing” VHP methodology, volunteer interviewers record “grass roots” oral histories and collect veterans’ original materials, all of which are donated to the Library of Congress. Drawing on participants from every state and congressional district, VHP comprises more than 100,000 individual stories, some 5,300 arriving this past year. Coupled with the personal exchange inherent to oral history, the transition of local recordings to national institutions ensures the preservation and discoverability afforded by an online collections database and archive.

In 2008, Kettles, a resident of Ypsilanti and also Lansing and DeWitt, joined nearly 3,700 Michigan veterans whose stories are archived at the Library of Congress. During the four to six months-span of VHP collections processing and publication, a conversation sparked by the Ypsilanti District Library and Rotary Club extended to both comrades and Congressional staff.

Kettles

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Ypsilanti volunteer interviewer William Vollano, who recorded more than 80 veterans' oral histories, was astounded when he heard Kettles describe the events of May 15, 1967. A review of Kettles' story and award citations reveal the frenetic pace of helicopter operations and the daily hazards of combat aircrew. Only one day earlier, Kettles was recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross following his recovery of an embattled reconnaissance team. With only minutes remaining, the Major evacuated a Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) from the path of an Air Force bombing mission. Narrating his story alongside a map of South Vietnam and his award citation for the Distinguished Service Cross, Kettles described the helicopter evacuation of an outnumbered – and overwhelmed – group of soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division.

Commanding a flight of UH-1D "Huey" helicopters, Kettles directed the rescue of infantrymen and aircrew stricken by a National Liberation Front (NLF) battalion. The evacuation required several roundtrip flights, deadly fire disabled five helicopters and required reinforcements from the 161st Aviation Company. At the end of his third flight, bleeding fuel and missing a windscreen, Kettles landed his aircraft with eight additional troopers aboard.

Vollano followed up by interviewing Kettles' comrades. He pursued, and, following a five year review, the endorsement of Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and the U.S. Congress, Kettles received the Medal of Honor in a White House ceremony.

Memories from the Edge of the Abyss: Evaluating the Oral Accounts of World War II Veterans

Sherry Tuffin is a frequent contributor to the MOHA newsletter. She reviewed Rodney Earl Walton's article from The Oral History Review 2010, Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 18-34 © The Author 2010. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the Oral History Association.

Author Rodney Earl Walton asserts that WWII veterans are often reticent to talk about their war experiences although their memories – even decades later - are often quite reliable. In "*Memories from the Edge of the Abyss: Evaluating the Oral Accounts of World War II Veterans*" (*The Oral History Review: vol.37 (1)*), he uses a small case study about the battle of Okinawa (April–June 1945). The essay examines some aspects of the memory quality of World War II veterans interviewed late in life. It presents three arguments. First, American veterans of World War II were frequently reticent about recounting their memories; they often waited until late in life to do so. Second, the American World War II veterans' interviews were generally reliable and accurate even when given late in life. Third, the veterans could provide greater detail about their initial experiences during a campaign.

Regarding the first position of reticence, Walton reasons this is because: having lived during the Great Depression instilled a sense that complaining was unacceptable, and they view their individual roles as small in the scheme of things. After the war they directed their focus to rebuilding their lives. Tuffin also confirms, through her WWII veteran interviews, the dearth of veteran's stories in the post-WWII period was because they were anxious to move on with: education (on the GI Bill), marriage, children, and careers. When they might have been ready to tell their stories it was felt that the Baby Boomers were anti-war and uninterested. Events that prompted vets to share their war experiences were the end of the Cold War, collapse of the USSR, and a national surge of patriotism that made telling war stories more acceptable.

This small case study suggests that the oral accounts of World War II are generally reliable and of high quality. This is true even when some veterans wait until late in life to tell their story in detail. The veterans tended to have sharper recollections (more vividly and in greater detail) of events early in the campaign but less vivid memories of the later phases. "Listening to stories of events that occurred almost three quarters of a century ago," says Tuffin, "I too was amazed at the rich details veterans were able to summon – names, places, clothing, scenery, thoughts, sounds."

Walton maintains that, "Oral history remains a critical tool
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All Hands on Deck: Preserving Home Front History of World War II

by Erica Fugger, Oral Historian to Washington College's Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience. She is currently developing training curriculum and community partnerships for the StoryQuest Program's nationwide effort to preserve memories of World War II on the American home front. efugger2@washcoll.edu

Many stories passed down within families relate to transitional moments in both American and global history. When you think of World War II, what comes to mind may be momentous battles in the long campaign for victory. But it is also important to recognize that these military efforts were supported by American fortitude and sacrifices by those remaining at home, whether it was women entering the workforce, families rationing supplies, or marginalized communities challenging widespread discrimination.

Today, there are numerous efforts to collect the last remaining stories of World War II veterans, spanning the national [Veterans History Project](#) at the Library of Congress to more localized initiatives.

But the wartime experiences of veterans' families and their communities—though so pivotal—are lesser-known and celebrated. It has become [The Home Front Project's](#) passion to preserve these memories and begin new dialogue between the generations before the opportunity is soon lost forever.

Since 2013, the [StoryQuest Oral History Program](#) at Washington College in Maryland has recorded over 200 interviews with local residents of the home front. Supported by funding from [Iron Mountain](#), these student-led oral histories have been compiled on an interactive website, preserved in a digitally accessible archive, showcased in public exhibitions, and featured in publications by *Smithsonian Magazine* and *National Geographic*.

While the program began with a focus on the mid-Atlantic region, [The Home Front Project](#) will be spreading its reach in 2018 by seeding new interview initiatives across the country, digitizing pre-existing home front oral histories, and

The wartime experiences of veterans' families and their communities—though so pivotal—are lesser-known and celebrated.

ensuring that these stories are preserved long-term. Communities will have access to equipment recommendations, educational resources, and promotional support. Interviews previously documented on analog mediums like audio cassettes can be donated to the project, along with pre-existing digital recordings. Student interns will showcase our partners' oral histories on [The Home Front Project's multimedia website](#) and deposit them in Washington College's public archives.

While the community partnership selection is being finalized, the StoryQuest Oral History Program will still reach out to collaborating partners.

If your family has an important story to tell, your community is interested in honoring its longtime residents, or your institution has World War II interviews in need of an archival home, please reach out via story_quest@washcoll.edu to receive additional information about our national partnership program.

We've just published a Thanksgiving-attuned post on the American Association of State and Local History that we hope you'll enjoy: <http://blogs.aaslh.org/all-hands-on-deck-mobilizing-communities-to-preserve-world-war-ii-history>
www.storyquestproject.com

**Promote Your Project!
Submit newsletter or website
features, ideas, information,
and news to:
newsletter@michiganoha.org.**

Resolution: Patricia Pilling

The Michigan Oral History Association recognizes Patricia Leslie Frances Pilling, pioneer oral historian and anthropologist, and expresses appreciation for her contributions to Oral History, a field of study and method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voice and memories of people, communities and participants in past events.

Early in the acceptance of oral history as a primary source, she taught a class at Lansing Community College sponsored by the Historical Society of Greater Lansing. She was part of a group at the Oral History Association meeting at Michigan State University which recognized the need for a state organization. She was organizational chairperson of the Michigan Oral History Council in the 1970s. Work continued as the program coordinator for oral history at the Walter Reuther Library of Wayne State University (WSU) and as consultant oral historian for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. As an entrepreneur and President of Share Your Memories, she interviewed, transcribed and published clients' memoirs.

Pilling taught at Oakland University, WSU, University of Windsor and community colleges in the Detroit area, and taught English to secondary school teachers in China and Poland. She wrote articles on anthropology, oral history, poetry, a column on gerontology in *Mature Life*, and was a champion for social justice. In 1987, at age 61, she earned a doctoral degree in Higher Education at WSU.

The leadership and members of MOHA respectfully note her passing, age 91, and commit to the high level of excellence in oral history practice that she exemplified.

Rick Peiffer, President, MOHA, October 2017

Glenn Ivan Ruggles

(Courtesy Oakland Press)

Glenn Ivan Ruggles husband, father, grandfather. Glenn, age 86, of Commerce Township, MI, passed away peacefully surrounded by family October 12, 2017. Glenn was a proud graduate of Elk Rapids High School. He served his country in the Air Force from 1951 to 1955. Glenn earned a Bachelor's degree in History from the University of Detroit and later received a Master's degree in Education. A beloved teacher, Glenn taught history for 35 years at Walled Lake Central High School. He was particularly proud of his founding of the Model United Nations program at Walled Lake Central. He was a renowned oral historian who published numerous books and produced several movies on Michigan history. Glenn served on the Michigan Oral History Association board for many years and mentored countless students and adults on the skills and processes of quality oral history. Glenn's book, "Voices Over the Water, An Oral and Pictorial History of Antrim County's chain of Lakes," is a classic example of excellence in the use of oral history.

Jim McConnell, founder and former president of Michigan Council for History Education, states, "Glenn was not only an outstanding history teacher, but also contributed his knowledge and skill to Michigan's commemoration of the Bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence in 1976. His service on the Michigan State Board of Education Bicentennial Advisory Committee helped students and teachers around the state."

Abyss, Continued from P. 4

for the writing of modern military history. Anecdotal oral history accounts obtained more than 50 years after the event proved useful in providing a greater understanding of the battle of Okinawa." Walton contends that for the most part, oral history acts as a complement to, and not a replacement for, other sources of history. Tuffin concurs that through research and data, "It permits me to ask pertinent questions, assess the accuracy of the ... memories, and can even stimulate the veteran to recall additional detail." Walton states that his perspective can only have validity if confirmed by the experience of other oral interviewers.

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“Real Rosies:” From left to right: Mallie Mallon, Clara Dought, Loraine Osborne, and Vivian Litchard attending Wild Swan’s “Rosie the Riveter” on November 12, 2015 Photo Credit: Leisa Thompson Photography

“Rosie the Riveter”

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opened up, gratified (and amused) that we found what they had to say extremely interesting.

“From these interviews and my reading I got my main characters in mind, a representative cross-section of the women who worked there: a college student from Ann Arbor, a married beautician from Ypsilanti, a young white woman from Kentucky, an older black woman from Tennessee. I had scenes in mind as well: the resistance each of them encountered when they had decided to work at Willow Run; the conflicts they had to deal with on the job, especially the racial conflict between the women from Kentucky and Tennessee; and the way they managed to resolve those conflicts. I connected these scenes with scenes I invented, so that the play is an amalgam of fiction and historical reality.

“Brian Buckner wrote the music—I always thought of the play as a musical—and he and I both wrote the lyrics. The music is original, but has the feel of the music of the ’40’s. The music and the book basically celebrate the empowerment of the characters, and thereby of women in general.”

Premiering productions in its home base of Ann Arbor and touring them throughout Michigan and the Midwest, **Wild Swan Theater** performs for all ages in theaters, schools, libraries and museums. The Theater is dedicated to producing professional theater of the highest artistic quality for children and families and to making theater accessible to everyone including low income, minority, and disabled children through low ticket prices and innovative outreach programs. In addition, the Theater offers a wide variety of workshops for both teachers and students, youth drama camps, and after-school programs.

The **Historical Society of Michigan** presents its State History awards, its highest recognition, to individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions to the appreciation, collection, preservation and/or promotion of state and local history.

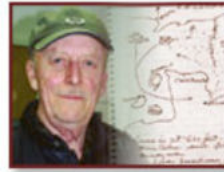
**“Collecting Oral Histories”
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Interactive course, Ann Arbor
www.oli-umich.org

All Hands On Deck!

Much of history revolves around war, and the personal experiences of wars beyond battle dates. Inside this issue are four features focused on oral interviews with individuals who have stories to tell.

- “Rosie the Riveter” play was developed through interviews with women who served in factories during World War II;
- “All Hands on Deck: Mobilizing Communities” provides stories of the support and sacrifices by those who remained at home during WWII;
- “Memories from the Edge of the Abyss: Evaluating the Oral Accounts of WWII Veterans” is a research publication;

Stories can be told through...



Personal Narratives
audio and video-taped
interviews, written memoirs

Correspondence
letters, postcards, v-mail
personal diaries



Visual materials
photographs, drawings,
scrapbooks

- The Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center collects first-hand accounts of U.S. veterans from 17 different wars and conflicts (above).

These stories “fill out” our history and illuminate what war was like.

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