Thanks to a remarkably talented and energetic group of staff and volunteers, we are gathering, preserving, and promoting more oral histories than ever before! We joined UF emeritus professor Kevin McCarthy to assist in the writing of the memoirs of Judge Stephan P. Mickle. Judge Mickle was recently elevated to Chief Judge of the Northern District of Florida, and we are honored to be a part of chronicling his remarkable life story.

After a 14-year hiatus, we are back in the oral history teaching business at UF! We successfully completed graduate, as well as undergraduate, seminars that were taught during the spring and summer terms, respectively. Students received intensive training in the craft of oral history: hands-on instruction with new digital technology and readings from practitioners and theorists in the field.

Our students interviewed Civil Rights Movement pioneers, retired UF faculty union organizers, and community activists. These interviews are already generating senior thesis and dissertation topics. The staff at SPOHP worked overtime to make these seminars successful learning experiences for all concerned! If you missed taking one of our seminars, Dr. Robin Lauriault, a former Sam Proctor student, will be teaching “Writing in Oral History” in the Fall 2009 term.

When Sam Proctor founded our program in 1967, he endeavored to promote oral histories to an audience that extended far beyond the reach of the university. I invite you to subscribe to our podcast series at our website. You will join a growing audience of listeners—young and old—who are listening to stories about environmental justice, World War II, and Florida history on their iPods.

SPOHP has played an important role in the creation of WW II narratives. Over Memorial Day weekend, SPOHP participated in WW II history preservation activities and aired important new experiences about the war through our website and podcast series. We recognized fallen comrades past and present, especially Clair Chaffin, a former Marine corpsman who served on Iwo Jima. Clair was a great friend of SPOHP, and we mourn his recent passing. (See pp. 12-13.)

Please join us at the Samuel Proctor Oral History program! Whether you tune us in via iPod or come in to volunteer your services in person, you will be helping us in our mission to preserve and promote the definitive histories of our time.

Paul Ortiz, Director
Call It Teamwork!

By Ann Smith

Sometime in the mid-1990s, Sam Proctor gathered together a community group at the Alachua County Matheson Museum. Sam and the then-current director of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, Julian Pleasants, were asked to give a program about collecting stories. A small handful of participants joined Mary Ann Cofrin—long-time Gainesville resident and Matheson board member—in obtaining verbal memories about the history of Alachua County. Some of them recalled when the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad came down the middle of Main Street and stopped long enough for riders to step into the White House Hotel for lunch. They collected stories of those who remembered when the fire engine was pulled by horses, and when trials were disturbed by hogs rooting underneath the courthouse on the square.

As a volunteer since 1999 at the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, Sam convinced me to help the Matheson Museum by serving on Mary Ann’s Oral History Committee. Since the Matheson’s “little sister” program was initiated, the two programs have worked collaboratively sharing technology, digitization, board members, expertise, public programs—and me. While the Matheson collects tales of Alachua County’s times gone by, the rigor of SPOHP expands its number of collections every day. I feel fortunate to have one foot in each program. They complement each other! Call it teamwork!
This is my farewell tribute to the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program. Twenty-eight years ago, I had no idea of what changes, growth, and excitement the Oral History Program at the University of Florida would bring to my life. In the beginning of my tenure here, Dr. Samuel Proctor, the program's founder, had become its director.

The Oral History Program was housed in the basement of the Florida Museum of Natural History in Dickinson Hall. The collection held about 2,000 interviews, most of which had not been transcribed or edited. Since that time, Samuel Proctor's legacy has continued. His love and admiration of the history of the University of Florida and the state of Florida, as well as other parts of the South, remain the focus of SPOHP's collection.

I have decided to take an early retirement to spend more time with my husband who has been battling cancer for eight years and who is now under Hospice Care. We have five beautiful daughters, two of whom are still at home (Amanda and Tricia, pictured with Roberta at left), and eight grandchildren.

I may be absent from SPOHP's beautiful new offices in Pugh Hall, but I will never lose the passion and knowledge that these three directors have bestowed upon me. Also, my achievements at my job, as well as the establishment of such a valuable oral history program, would not have happened without all the graduate and undergraduate students and volunteers who have played major roles in the program over the years. My desire to promote the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program will never change. I will always be a part of SPOHP!
World War II Tribute to the “Fly Girls”

By Ira and Diane Fischler

They flew 60 million miles during World War II, crisscrossing the country to transport troops and cargo. They test-piloted 78 kinds of military aircraft to make certain the planes were safe for the airmen to use in all theaters of war. They ferried new aircraft from the factories to the ports of embarkation. They towed targets for shooting exercises—very dangerous missions in light of inexperienced soldiers manning anti-aircraft guns.

These were the WASP—Women Airforce Service Pilots. Although they received the same military training as the men who would pilot these planes on the front lines—and performed key flying services for the armed forces, they received no military recognition for their work. They had to purchase their own uniforms and pay for their travel expenses to the air bases. And when they died in the line of duty—as 38 did—their families had to foot the bill for their funerals, which were prohibited from including any military honors. In December 1944, with victory in sight, the WASP program was dismantled and the women quietly went home.

Not until 1977 was any sort of official acknowledgment made of their contributions to the war effort. An act of Congress finally gave them veteran status, and later, honorable discharges from the military. Thanks to the efforts of a number of private organizations and veterans groups, the WASP have recently been given some of the recognition they most assuredly earned for their service.

This spring Congress added another tribute to these extraordinary women by awarding a Congressional Gold Medal to those who served as WASP. The original medal will be housed at the Smithsonian; individual WASP or their families will each receive engraved copies of the medals.

A year-long exhibit on the WASP titled “Fly Girls,” presented by Wings Across America, is on display at the Women in Military Service for America (WIMSA) Memorial, located at the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery. The exhibition ends November 2009. For more information, visit WIMSA’s website at: www.womensmemorial.org. The National WASP WW II Museum is located in Sweetwater, Texas, where most WASP trained at Avenger Field. The museum’s website is: waspmuseum.org

More locally, a Memorial Day program, held at the Forest Meadows Cemetery, featured a tribute to three of the several hundred WASP still living. The WASP segment was organized by Susan King and Bob Oehl, volunteers with the Aviation Museum and Warbird Restoration Center, soon to be under construction at the Keystone Heights Airport. SPOHP

Left to right: Former WASP Helen Snapp, Barry Smith, and Janet Lee Simpson receive accolades at Gainesville’s Memorial Day commemoration. (photo by Ira Fischler)

“In I have the utmost respect for all members of the Women Airforce Service Pilots. They were hard working, dedicated pilots who served our country well, playing an important part during the war.” --Chuck Yeager, Brig. Gen. USAF Ret. Test Pilot, March 26, 1997

“The WASP were and still are my role models.” --Eileen M. Collins, Lt. Col., USAF NASA Astronaut (four Space Shuttle flights), January 22, 1998

In the hangar at the Keystone Heights Airport, Helen Snapp looks on as Barry Smith pores over WASP photos from her class of “44-6” (graduated in the sixth training class of 1944). (photo by Diane Fischler)
History Speaks: SPOHP News

“You and more than 900 of your sisters have shown that you can fly wingtip to wingtip with your brothers. I salute you and all WASP. We of the Army Air Force are proud of you. We will never forget our debt to you.” --Henry H. “Hap” Arnold Commanding General, Army Air Forces, December 7, 1944

Bob Gasche, a veteran of Iwo Jima and a community veterans’ activist, organized the Memorial Day tribute. (photo by Ann Smith)

“It has been 50 years since you and I and all Americans struggled together to rescue freedom from those who would take it away. Though we worked in different ways toward that common end, every effort was an important one. That is certainly true of the Women Airforce Service Pilots. Thank you for your dedicated efforts on the home front to make our work successful on the battlefront.” --General James H. Doolittle, USAF, Ret., July 15, 1993

Twins Maddie and Jackie Eisterhold in front of a WASP poster featuring Stan Vosburg’s painting titled Lightning Lady. The “Celestial Flight” poem at the top of the poster became a fixture at funerals for female pilots during and after the war. (photo by Joeli Eisterhold)

“This is not a time when women should be patient. We are in a war and we need to fight it with all our ability and every weapon possible. Women pilots, in this particular case, are a weapon waiting to be used.” --Eleanor Roosevelt, September 1, 1942

Twins Maddie and Jackie Eisterhold in front of a WASP poster featuring Stan Vosburg’s painting titled Lightning Lady. The “Celestial Flight” poem at the top of the poster became a fixture at funerals for female pilots during and after the war. (photo by Joeli Eisterhold)

Barry Smith, Janet Lee Simpson, and Helen Snapp pose for one final photo op at the end of the Memorial Day program. (photo by Ann Smith)

Barry Smith, Janet Lee Simpson, and Helen Snapp pose for one final photo op at the end of the Memorial Day program. (photo by Ann Smith)

The three WASP honored are all Florida residents. Barry Vincent Smith (Avon Park), Helen Wyatt Snapp (Pembroke Pines), and Janet Lee Simpson (Ponte Vedra Beach) each described some of their experiences as women pilots and as WASP. The day before the Memorial Day program, SPOHP staff members were on hand to greet two of the WASP on their arrival at the Keystone Heights Airport, and take part in a welcome barbecue dinner held in a hangar—in the shadow of airplanes from the WASP era.

As a result of these contacts, SPOHP will be arranging to record these women’s oral histories and memories of their lives as WASP. Their stories will enhance SPOHP’s World War II Collection.

had a presence at the event, with a display to discuss its World War II Collection and meet and greet North Central Florida veterans.

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SPOHP Showcased at D-Day Commemoration

By Diane Fischler

June 6, 1944—D-Day—was a seminal date in the annals of World War II history. Sixty-five years later the date still resonates in the hearts and minds of those who landed on Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword beaches.

June 6, 2009—Camp Blanding commemorated this milestone anniversary with WW II military exhibits and a wreath-laying ceremony at the D-Day memorial. World War II re-enactors walked among the displays, looking as if they had just finished their grueling combat training at this military camp near Starke. More than 800,000 Army troops trained here in the Florida scrub prior to being sent overseas.

The Samuel Proctor Oral History Program was invited to set up a display table and discuss its World War II Collection of interviews, among which are Dorman Clayton and Tom Santarsiero’s oral histories—two of the D-Day veterans honored at this commemoration. Surrounding the SPOHP exhibit were familiar looking World War II posters of various war bond drives. These posters conjured up many memories from veterans and their families who stopped by the table to ask questions. Several visitors thanked our oral history program’s ongoing commitment to record veterans’ oral histories—from all wars—and to tape stories that would otherwise be lost to history.

Six D-Day veterans were paid tribute at Camp Blanding:

- **Mario Patruno** served as a paratrooper with F Company of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division. He dropped behind the German lines early in the morning of June 6. Patruno’s regiment became widely dispersed in the night jump and only a few paratroopers landed in their targeted drop zone.

- **Frank Heppner** served with the 238th Engineer Combat Battalion, landing at 9:30 a.m. on Utah Beach. His battalion was responsible for keeping the road open from the beach to inland France. The road had been flooded by the Germans.

- **Dorman Clayton** trained at Camp Blanding. He landed on the Normandy beaches on June 8 with the U.S. Army’s 186th Howitzer field artillery battalion after the beaches had been more secured. He manned a 155mm Howitzer, operating the gunsights. The battalion went wherever extra artillery power was needed. During the first two days of battle, Dorman’s battalion watched the invasion transpire while moored on an LST (landing ship tank) in the English Channel next to the USS Texas.

- **Lionel Capoldo**, U.S. Navy, served on a British anti-aircraft gunboat escorting the first, second, and third waves of the Normandy Invasion. His LCF7 ship patrolled up and down the beaches. He was later sent to the Pacific Theater and served on the LCS51, which supplied gun support for the Marines landing on Iwo Jima.

- **Tom Santarsiero** served with the U.S. Army, Company A, 110th Infantry, 28th Division (known as the “Keystone Division”). He landed on the Normandy beaches two weeks later and went on to join the breakout operation at Saint-Lô in northern France. German troops called the 28th the “Bloody Bucket” division because of the division’s red insignia.

A Higgins boat ramp lowers its cargo of GIs near one of the targeted Normandy beaches on June 6, 1944. Referring to Andrew Higgins, whose New Orleans company made these specialized landing craft, former President Eisenhower told historian Stephen Ambrose: “He’s the man who won the war for us.”

D-Day veterans of North Florida gather at the wreath-laying ceremony at Camp Blanding to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Normandy Invasion. Left to right: Mario Patruno, Frank Heppner, Dorman Clayton, Lionel Capoldo, Tom Santarsiero, Levi Starling. SPOHP has interviewed two of these veterans. (photo by Ira Fischler)
Levi Starling served with the U.S. Navy, Seaman First Class. He was aboard LCT587 (landing craft tank) in the first wave of landings on Omaha Beach. He was the “ramp man” aboard the LCT that unloaded the Sherman DD (Duplex Drive) tanks that arrived before the landing forces. He remembers the many “D’s” on D-Day—not including the DD tank: He saw the “dead, dying, and debris”—men who never made it to Utah or Omaha beaches.

These six gentlemen were saluted and thanked for the services they rendered to their country during those momentous times—whether on the beaches, in the air, or on the high seas. Major General Douglas Burnett, Commander of the Florida Army and Air National Guard, spoke to each of these veterans at length and listened attentively to their wartime experiences.

Camp Blanding, now home to the Florida National Guard, houses a significant collection of war memorabilia in its World War II Museum, soon to undergo expansion. A Memorial Park contains monuments to the nine infantry divisions that trained at this military complex, as well as displays of vintage aircraft and Army vehicles. The D-Day veterans gazing upon this landscape of military hardware were sure to recall the Army’s modes of transportation to their combat sites.

Of the 378,000 prisoners of war incarcerated in the United States during WW II, Camp Blanding housed 4,000 German POWs in this remote Florida sector. Inside the museum is a large diorama of the camp’s main POW compound, which also included 15 branch camps. The POWs were captured from many of the theaters of operations in which these six D-Day veterans engaged in combat.

And another connection that the Samuel Proctor Oral History program has with Camp Blanding: During World War II, Sam Proctor—who had just completed his master’s degree at the University of Florida in 1942 and subsequently joined the ranks of the U.S. Army—taught reading and math to illiterate GIs as part of their training at Camp Blanding. Sixty-five years later SPOHP has come full circle in its association with Camp Blanding.

For more information on the Camp Blanding Museum and Memorial Park, visit: http://www.campblanding-museum.org

Tears in the Darkness

The SPOHP-produced documentary, I Just Wanted to Live!, featured about 30 sketches by artist Ben Steele, who himself was a POW held by the Japanese. And now a new book has recently come out focusing on this Montana artist: Tears in the Darkness: The Story of the Bataan Death March and Its Aftermath by Michael Norman and Elizabeth M. Norman (published by Farrar, Strauss and Giroux).

As with the four ex-POWs in the documentary, Ben Steele also experienced the three-month Battle of Bataan, the Bataan Death March, the internment camps in the Philippines, Bilibid Prison, the Hell Ships, and forced labor camps in Japan. He survived starvation, disease, and torture. After liberation, he returned to his home state of Montana and sketched the horrors of being on the receiving end of three and a half years of Japanese atrocities. And as with Victor Cote, Conrad Alberty, John Bumgarner, and Herbert Pepper featured in I Just Wanted to Live!, those dark memories remain with Ben Steele—unspeakable remembrances which he has managed to so skillfully and dramatically convey through his drawings.

Tears in the Darkness has appeared on the Top Ten New York Times Bestseller List (non-fiction).

For more information on Tears in the Darkness, please visit the following websites:

www.tearsinthedarkness.com/ben-steele
www.us.macmillan.com/tearsinthedarkness

Hopelessness and despair permeate these sketches by Ben Steele.
By Diane Fischler

“Um, I’m just a little ole country boy” is how Clair Chaffin would respond to those who were awestruck upon hearing of his dangerous duties as a corpsman on remote Pacific islands during World War II. He would say he was just doing his job—at age 18 and 19. But how many men in their late teens do a tracheotomy in a foxhole while being strafed by a Japanese Zero? Or amputate a Marine’s arm? Or rescue eight Marines trapped in a fire zone between friendly and enemy lines? For this last action on Saipan, Clair received the third highest military recognition, the Silver Star.

In his 2008 interview by the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, Clair talked about how the Japanese were trained to shout “Corpsman!”—without an accent—thereby beckoning some corpsmen to rush to their death. He said he never had to dig a foxhole during any of these battles because he was always jumping into other Marines’ foxholes after hearing “Corpsman! Corpsman!”

As a corpsman, Clair served with the 4th Marine Division that saw combat on Roi-Namur (February 1944), Saipan (June - July 1944), Tinian (July - August 1944), and Iwo Jima (February 1945). These islands were mere specks in the Pacific—yet the memory of his experiences on these islands remained with him for the rest of his life, and he took every opportunity to talk about them at public events, veterans’ gatherings, and school groups. Regarding the youth of today, he said in his oral history, “The young people need to know some of the history that has been created to make a safer place for them to live. Maybe I’m wrong, but if you don’t pay attention to history, you’re destined to do it all over again.”

Clair’s association with the “Fighting Fourth” Marines did not end with the Japanese surrender. He was the national president of the 4th Marine Division Association (2007) and then its official historian. He was on a first-name basis with Marine General Peter Pace, Chairman of the Joints Chief of Staff (2005-2007). He was also involved with the Disabled American Veterans organization, the Marine Corps League, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, among many other veterans’ groups. His home is filled with 4th Marine Division memorabilia. Driveway signs greet guests with “Semper Fi!”

Two years ago Clair, Clif Cormier, and Bob Gasche—of the 4th, 3rd, and 5th (respectively) Marine Corps divisions on Iwo Jima—took forces in Gainesville to create the “Iwo Trio,” a group that meets monthly in a local Gainesville eatery. A corner of McAlister’s Restaurant on Archer Road is designated “Suribachi Cove,” which features Marine Corps posters, photos, plaques, and flags. Suribachi Cove has more recently become a gathering place for many veterans—from all wars, all branches of the armed forces, and all theaters of operation.

But the “Iwo Trio” is no more. Clair Chaffin was shot and killed in an armed robbery attempt on June 8, 2009, in Florence, South Carolina. The staff members of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program were privileged to have known Clair, and we hope that through our efforts, his story and his message will not be forgotten.

Clair holding a Mameluke sword used traditionally to cut a cake commemorating the birthday of the Marine Corps. This particular event marked the 64th anniversary of the first landings on Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945.

Semper Fi, Clair Chaffin
By Bob Zieger

As a recently retired member of the Department of History at the University of Florida—and as an active member of the faculty union, the United Faculty of Florida, I had become concerned that as UFF veterans retired and moved away, important aspects of UF’s past were being lost. Over the years, the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program has interviewed many administrators, faculty members, and non-faculty employees.

No effort has been made, however, to record the memories of the men and women who had built the union, which has represented core faculty at UF since 1976, and whose earlier beginnings were rooted in academic freedom issues in the turbulent 1960s. I knew that the genesis and early history of the union was a compelling story, and I was hopeful that it might become part of the University’s institutional memory.

Having been asked to join the SPOHP advisory board, I suggested to Paul Ortiz, the incoming director of the program, that recording the history of UFF at the University might constitute a good project for one of his classes. Paul immediately took up the challenge, and we worked together during the Fall 2008 term to contact union veterans and ask them to agree to be interviewed by Paul’s seminar students in the spring. The current leadership of the union pitched in with some seed money and Paul’s students then took control. They interviewed a dozen union activists—most of them retired—and then transcribed the interviews for deposit in the SPOHP collection. Several of those interviewed had private archives that they donated to the UF University Archives.

I was personally involved in the process in three ways. First, I helped arrange the initial contacts and recruited several of the interviewees for preliminary and follow-up sessions with the seminar students (see related story titled “Reconstructing the Past” in this issue). Second, I underwent interview training that prepared me to conduct an interview with a retired activist whose visit to Gainesville occurred too late in the term for him to be interviewed by one of the students. Third—and the best part—I was interviewed myself by George Njoroge, one of Paul’s students. (This interview can be read at http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/zieger/rhzoralhistory.htm) The interview was wide-ranging, dealing as much with my upbringing, education, and academic career as with my union activities.

I found the interview a deeply engaging and informative experience, in part because of George’s thorough preparation and thoughtful questions. But I also found myself revisiting important episodes in my life and work. I look forward to expanding on the UFF Oral History Project and to working on other projects with Paul and the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program.

Dr. Bob Zieger is a Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Florida.
History Speaks: SPOHP News

Reconstructing the Past:
Oral History from a Psychological Perspective

By Ira Fischler

I was one of the faculty members and UFF activists interviewed as part of the SPOHP initiative that Bob Zieger coordinated (see related story titled “Capturing the History of the United Faculty of Florida” in this issue). My participation came about as a result of a conversation I had with Bob during one of Paul Ortiz’s open house gatherings last fall. He told me about the effort to interview faculty who had been involved in UFF in its early days, and I mentioned my own participation in UFF. He asked if I would be interested in being interviewed and I agreed—as husband of Diane Fischler, SPOHP Editor and Historian, I could hardly decline!

As it turned out, it was a wonderful opportunity to tell my piece of this story, and to reflect on my role as a UFF member and, more generally, as a professor of psychology at UF. The interview was done in March 2009 by Ed Tennant-Gonzalez, a graduate student in anthropology and a student in Paul’s class on oral history.

I had a lot to talk about. I had been on the faculty in the Department of Psychology since 1973, and had played various roles in campus union activities. I joined in 1976, the first year of the contract between United Faculty of Florida and the Board of Regents. I was the UFF representative in Psychology for a few decades, and helped produce the first issues of the UFF Faculty Voice newsletter. I was a regular at the annual membership meetings, and also served as vice-president of the UF chapter for a couple of years.

Having recently retired from my faculty position in 2008, it was a good time to look back and think about the past 35 years at UF. I was annoyed with my lack of recall of specific episodes and events, let alone the dates in which I was involved. But I was able to express the gist of what I had done and what I thought about these activities. I also learned more about the nature of obtaining oral histories, as well as the careful preparation involved in knowing how to guide the interview and elicit as much accurate information as possible from the subject.

My grappling for “the truth” of my past brought home for me something that, as a cognitive psychologist and memory researcher, I had been telling undergraduates for years: Our memory for episodes from our past is not “retrieved” like you would retrieve a file from a computer disk, but “reconstructed.” In my discipline, there has been great interest in “autobiographical memory,” that is, people’s recollection of their personal past. But the focus is more on the process of recall rather than—as in oral history initiatives—the content.

Psychologist Ulric Neisser, author of Memory Observed, likened remembering to an act of reconstruction, like trying to piece together what a dinosaur must have looked like from the fragmentary fossil record at hand. But even when the “fossil record” is rich and detailed, memory is not a video replay waiting to be activated; it is a musical score waiting to be played and interpreted by our present selves. Some themes are enhanced, others downplayed. Some are lost and some new themes—not present in the past—are imposed on the melody. And each time we tell our story, the replaying becomes part of our memory and can color subsequent recall.

Neisser was not the first theorist to stress the constructive nature of memory. The “creative” aspect of recall is a theme that can be found in writings of Greek philosophers such as Aristotle.

As it turned out, it was a wonderful opportunity to tell my piece of this story, and to reflect on my role as a UFF member and, more generally, as a professor of psychology at UF. The interview was done in March 2009 by Ed Tennant-Gonzalez, a graduate student in anthropology and a student in Paul’s class on oral history.

Ira Fischler standing in front of the Lower Falls of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River, 2005. (photo by Diane Fischler)
The oral history interviewer, then, is an active partner in reconstructing the past, and a skilled partner can help guide recall. Probing with established facts and using what has been remembered as cues for further recall, as well as asking for recall from different perspectives, the interviewer can bring forth memories that have not been awakened for years. I learned a good deal about who I was by the act of remembering what I had done.

Dr. Ira Fischler is professor emeritus, UF Department of Psychology, and current chair of the Institutional Review Board, Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Nonetheless, our core memories are coherent and true, and they define who we are. Neisser himself recognized this truth. He wrote an essay detailing the errors and distortions of “John Dean’s Memory”—Nixon’s special counsel whose testimony at the Watergate hearings was later seen to be confirmed by the actual conversations secretly recorded by the White House. Neisser stated that despite his inaccuracies, self-serving distortions, and outright confabulations, “Dean was right about what had really been going on in the White House”—who knew what, when they knew it, and their awareness of what they were doing.

History Speaks:

Sigmund Freud, c. 1900. Freud was a founder of the psychoanalytic approach to psychotherapy, and an important voice in memory theory throughout the 20th century.
The Summer A course titled “American Communities: An Oral History Approach,” which focused on African American history in the South, has come to a close. Dr. Paul Ortiz said his outstanding group of students “uniformly received high marks of praise” by their interview subjects. Most of these subjects were local African-Americans who lived through the Civil Rights era, a topic many in the class had never broached.

Dr. Ortiz said his intention in assigning the interviews was to get his students off campus to immerse them in a broader historical context. As a result, he said, students learned aspects about Gainesville they had never known. This was true, he said, even for a couple of students who had lived in Gainesville their entire lives.

During the last two classes of the seminar, students gave presentations about their interview experiences. Students shared thoughts about the people they interviewed and about the interview process itself. The presentations ranged from quick recaps to audio excerpts. One student even created a short podcast piece about his interview—complete with an underlying music track.

Students discussed complications during their interviews: 1) the difficulty of getting their subjects to speak sincerely about their personal history or to take credit for their historical contributions; 2) gauging comfort levels with emotional subjects; and 3) trying to stay in control of the interview’s direction. Several students voiced regret for not following up with probing questions during the interview, only realizing their missed opportunities at the time of transcription.

Dr. Ortiz said his students began to see the relationship between African-American history and their own lives, and some are planning to do follow-up interviews even though the course is over. “It wasn’t until they transcribed their interviews that they really understood what had happened in the interview session,” he said. “It’s always surprising to see how transformative that experience is.”

In one class presentation, Julie Desmarais played an audio segment of her interview with Reverend Willie Mayberry, who was a black student during the early years of integration in Gainesville. Though Reverend Mayberry was not one of the students who first integrated Gainesville High School in 1964, he said his experiences during that time were similar to the remembered “firsts.”

Reverend Mayberry remarked in his interview, “There were those of us who came behind them about two, three years. That story never gets told about those who came behind. Oh, we suffered greatly as well.” (This quote was projected in class and is pictured above.)

This is what oral history is all about: the chance for telling the stories that never get told, and the chance for learning something previously unknown. It’s the story of people talking to one another, listening to one another, and then evaluating the exchange.

The next oral history seminar, being offered in the 2009 Fall Semester, is titled “Writing in Oral History.” For more information, visit our website at: www.history.ufl.edu/oral

SPOHP recognizes Deborah Hendrix for her technical contributions to the class! Deborah checked recorders in and out for students, created a YouTube tutorial on using them, and converted audio files for students to transcribe. “Without Deborah,” Ortiz said, “the course would not have run smoothly. I was pleasantly surprised that there were no technical breakdowns, and the students were grateful for the work that she put in.”
History Speaks: SPOHP News

American Motorsports

By Dan Simone
SPOHP Program Coordinator

This past May, I successfully defended my dissertation titled Racing, Region, and the Environment: A History of American Motorsports. My study examined the history of open-wheel racing, including IndyCar, sprint, and midget cars. As part of my research, I interviewed more than fifty motorsports personalities, as well as nearly a dozen National Sprint Car Hall of Fame members.

Oral history added context to my work. For instance, I used the testimonials of former drivers to describe the conditions and characteristics of long-forgotten tracks, such as Plant Field at the original Tampa Fairgrounds. Plant Field held its last race in 1976.

I also discussed the Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg—an annual event which occurs on the city streets each April. Creating a temporary racetrack within a downtown urban area is a vast undertaking. The track causes local traffic jams and noise pollution as streets and avenues are shut down and traffic is diverted. As a result, some business owners economically benefit from the event while others may suffer. Citizens remain divided as to whether or not the economic benefits outweigh the environmental drawbacks of this event. Interviews with those involved helped add a personal dimension to this issue and other stories.

Oral history is also a race against time, and during the course of my project, three interviewees passed away. I was fortunate to have spoken with so many people associated with the sport, and I look forward to conducting new interviews for a possible book manuscript later in 2009.

South African Ex-Combatants

By Steve Davis
SPOHP Graduate Assistant

In 2007-2008, I completed a Fulbright Doctoral Research Fellowship IIE in Cape Town, South Africa. During my time in South Africa, I conducted more than 40 oral history interviews with ex-combatants in Umkhonto we Sizwe, which was one of several groups engaged in the armed struggle against the apartheid government. The topic of the dissertation changes a bit as I write it, but the overall goal of my research is to explore the uses and misuses of various kinds of historical sources.

South Africa is a country most often praised for its peaceful negotiated settlement, but it also experienced a 30-year low-intensity civil war. The history of this violent period sits uneasily in popular memory. In recent years, a number of memorials, biographies, and public programs have revisited the history of the armed struggle, often rewriting this history to serve a number of contemporary political agendas. The result is a new narrative of armed struggle that exaggerates the significance of certain events, or excludes events that contradict these agendas. Most of these new narratives employ oral history to make their claims about the past.

My work uses the oral and written record to peer behind these recent representations. Oral history plays an important role in this dynamic because it is commonly assumed that it is complement or a corrective to the written record. The overemphasis on oral history, as an authoritative source, in many ways reproduces some of the same historiographical problems that plagued histories sourced exclusively from the written archive.

I try to get around the problems by reading both oral and written sources side by side, to give some sense of the relationship between both archives, as well as an understanding how present representations differ from the recorded past.

I will submit my dissertation in January 2010.

Research
History in the Making: SPOHP’s News & Events

Aug. 15-16: V-J Day Commemoration at Books-A-Million on NW 13th Street. SPOHP will be displaying its POW documentary, I Just Wanted to Live! and showcasing its collection of WWII posters for the event. SPOHP is collaborating with local veterans’ groups for this 64th anniversary of the Japanese surrender.

Aug. 17 & 24: PBS’s popular “History Detectives” series will feature SPOHP Director Paul Ortiz being interviewed this past March at Morningside Nature Center in Gainesville. Check TV listings for time.

Aug. 18-23: Indianola, Mississippi trip. SPOHP will continue Civil Rights documentation from its 2008 trip. (p. 19)

Fall: Paul Ortiz will give a talk titled “In the Age of Barack Obama” at the UF Center for Latin American Studies.

Sept. 18: SPOHP will have a table setup at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville as part of the National POW-MIA Recognition Day program. We will answer questions about conducting WWII, Korean, and Vietnam oral histories, as well as discussing the SPOHP-produced documentary titled I Just Wanted to Live! about four POWs held by the Japanese. The movie was based on four oral histories in SPOHP’s WWII Collection. (Summer 2009 newsletter, pp. 8-9)

Oct. 14-18: SPOHP will participate in the annual meeting of the Oral History Association Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. The panel will consist of staff members Diane Fischler, Deborah Hendrix, and Dan Simone. Their presentation on Oct. 16 will be titled: “How to Produce a Low Budget Documentary Based on Oral Histories: Giving Life to Death in Time of War.”

Nov. 11: SPOHP will have a table setup at the Veterans Day commemoration at Kanapaha Veterans Memorial Park.

DVD in Production: The Veterans Oral History Toolkit

SPOHP is producing a video with an accompanying handbook on how to do an oral history with a veteran—from World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Operation Desert Storm, and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

The video will focus on the Deed of Gift types of recording equipment available and offer tips on how to get the best quality recording that will stand the test of time.

The Handbook will provide questions to ask the war veteran interviewee. It will be distributed to veterans’ organizations, and an interviewer within that organization—who is automatically knowledgeable about that specific war—will know what additional questions to ask his fellow comrades concerning that war.

Questions will be divided into three parts: 1) years prior to entering the military service, 2) years in the military, and 3) post-war years.

SPOHP hopes to have the Veterans Oral History Toolkit ready for distribution by the end of 2009.

SPOHP table setups vary according to an event’s theme. This display at Camp Blanding’s D-Day commemoration on June 6, 2009, reflected a definite World War II theme with colorful war bond posters to attract visitors. The event premiered a new table banner to show that SPOHP has a clear presence at events such as veterans’ gatherings, airshows, conferences, and other occasions.

(photograph courtesy of Diane Fischler)
History in the Making: SPOHP’s DVD Collection

The following DVDs are archived at SPOHP and can be purchased for $20 each.

- Building on Sam Proctor’s Legacy: Race, Politics, and Freedom in Florida (speaker: Paul Ortiz, 66 min.)
- Growth, Growth Management and Sustainability in a Distressed Economy (speaker: Bob Graham, 74 min.)
- Ponce de Leon & the Discovery of Florida (speaker: Michael Gannon, 55 min.)
- The Path to the White House (speakers: Terry McAuliffe, Frank Fahrenkopf, moderated by Michael Putney, 84 min.)
- Florida and the Next President (speakers: Adam Putnam, Allen Boyd, moderated by Brendan McLaughlin, 75 min.)
- The Averaged American (speaker: Sarah Igo, 68 min.)
- The History of the State University System (speaker: Robin Gibson, 62 min.)
- Who We Are, How We Began: The History of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program (speakers: Samuel Proctor, Paul Ortiz, Julian Pleasants, Mark Greenberg, 28 min.)
- Testimony of War: Panel Discussion (WW II veterans speakers: Clif Cormier, Victor Cote, Frank Towers, Clair Chaffin, moderated by Julian Pleasants, 55 min.)
- I Just Wanted to Live! (ex-POWs: Victor Cote, Conrad Alberty, John Bumgarner, Herbert Pepper, 55 min. & 35 min.)
- Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944 (speaker: Rick Atkinson, 75 min.)
- Water and Land Management in Florida: Old Challenges in the New Economy (speaker: Nathaniel Reed, 69 min.)
- Trip to Iran (speakers: Bernie and Chris Machen, 57 min.)
- Celebration of the Firsts: 50 Years of Integration of the University of Florida (dinner, 140 min.)
- The Blackness of Barack Obama (speaker: Diane Roberts, 71 min.)
- Everglades Providence: Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the American Environmental Century (speaker: Jack Davis, 61 min.)
- In the Age of Barack Obama (Public Program, 143 min.)
- Florida Waterways in Crisis (speakers: Cynthia Barnett, Craig Pittman, Matt Waite, 72 min.)
- Transition to Power: Diplomacy in Transition (speakers: Ray Mabus, Douglas McElhaney, Frank McNeil, 65 min.)
- Rosewood Traveling Exhibit Presentations (speaker: Sherry DuPree, 84 min.)
- Aging, Healthcare, and the New Congress (speaker: Kristine Blackwood, 70 min.)
- When Bob Graham Became a Gator (speaker: Bob Graham, 63 min.)
- African Creative Expressions: Mother Tongue and Other Tongues (Conference, 220 min.)
- Gainesville Women for Equal Rights Oral History (Group Oral History, in progress)
- Need for a New National Labor Policy (speaker: Donald Fehr, 80 min.)
- Leadership in the Age of Obama (Forum, 71 min.)
- Media and the New Administration (speakers: Bill Adair, Al Eisele, moderated by Steve Orlando, 72 min.)

SPOHP Director Paul Ortiz (top center) welcomed Dr. Derrick E. White (top left), first recipient of the Julian Pleasants Visiting Scholar Award, at an office gathering on July 8. Dr. White discussed his research on the integration of the University of Florida football team. Several SPOHP staff members attended the session. Dr. White is an assistant professor of history at Florida Atlantic University, specializing in African American studies.

(photo by Danielle Navarrete)
If you haven’t checked out the Proctor Podcast yet, now is a good time to explore its listings. We’ve been busy producing episodes this summer and posting them in iTunes, where you can subscribe to receive new episodes as they are posted. We have also created a new Proctor Podcast page on the SPOHP website with links to play podcasts directly in your browser. One of our new interns, Candice Ellis, has volunteered to design a new Proctor Podcast blog with a search by category feature. In August, we will begin using two Twitter accounts, SPOHP and CLASnotes, to announce new episodes. We encourage you to sign up and keep up with us as we share more fascinating interviews from our various oral history collections.

Listed below are the episodes we’ve posted this summer. (More detailed descriptions of these podcasts are available on our website.) The interview collection title is in bold along with the collection acronym in parentheses. Many of our interviews’ complete transcripts are available online and are great resources if you want more information. Searching by the acronym in our digital archive will list what is available in the collection. To access the digital archive, go to the Research page on our website and click on the Samuel Proctor Oral History Archives link.

**World War II Collection (WW II)**
- Episode 7: Bernard Mellman: training for combat and the liberation of Dachau
- Episode 8: Michael Jamin: growing up in German-occupied Holland
- Episode 9: Pauline Pepper: serving as a nurse on a hospital ship
- Episode 10: Clair Chaffin: being a Marine corpsman in the Pacific Theater
- Episode 13: Conrad Alberty: surviving as a POW in Japan

**Florida Growth Management Collection (FGM)**
- Episode 11: Nathaniel Reed: discussing the Miami Jetport and the environmental movement
- Episode 12: John DeGrove: discussing Florida growth management

**Mississippi Freedom Project (MFP)**
- Episode 14: Margaret Block and Hollis Watkins: remembering the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement