

History of the Veterans Oral History Project in Riley County

Interviews Available at Manhattan Public Library

Motivated by a desire to honor our nation's war veterans and to collect their stories while they are still with us, Congress created the VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT in October 2000. (Public Law 106-380). The act calls upon the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to collect and preserve audio and video-taped oral histories along with other material such as letters etc. It provides partnering structures between museums or libraries with other groups to create and preserve within communities a local collection of veteran's oral histories which is part of the national effort.

As part of this national effort, the Manhattan Sertoma Club, Jan McIntosh president, organized veteran interviews in Riley County from April 2001 through March 2002. Sertoma asked Glen Bussett to interview twelve World War II Veterans. The Manhattan Sertoma Club funded the expenses of this project as a pilot project to determine how a larger scale interview program might be conducted. Video taped interviews were made with the following: Edgar Bagley, Edna Bryant, Frank L. Bradley, Ceil Eyestone, Robin Higham, Richard L. Keller, Orris Kelly, Larry Norvell, Frank Orazem, Orlo Sorenson, Hugh Thompson, and Ruth Wells. Diane Soldan transcribed interviews with the following: Edgar Bagley, Frank Bradley, Cecil Eyestone, Richard Keller, Frank Orazem and Orlo Sorenson. The video tapes and transcripts are in the collection of the Riley County Historical Society at the Riley County Historical Museum.

While participating in a salute to veterans at the St. George Elementary Schools in the fall of 2002, Ken Visser heard about the Pottawatomie County veterans organizing to record such stories from individual veterans. Since Ken had some program responsibilities in the Flint Hills Veterans Coalition, he took opportunities to "talk up" this national effort in Riley County during the fall of 2002 and on into spring of 2003. With encouragement from other local veterans, Ken invited Dean Schoengerdt from Wamego to talk to interested Riley County veterans about his results in interviewing Pottawatomie County veterans.

Nine World War II Veterans from the Flint Hills Veterans Coalition met at the Riley County Historical Museum on June 12, 2003 and decided to go forward with an oral history program.. Ken Visser served as Chair of this group, Orris Kelly as Co-Chair, and Rosemary Visser served as Secretary. Bonnie Lenhart assisted Rosemary in her duties. Ron Frank provided technical expertise. Dick Jepson was Chair of the Finance Committee. Jim Sharp coordinated the interview process, Orris Kelly coordinated equipment needs, Cecil Eyestone and Burke Bayer organized a database of prospective interviewees and contacted them to determine their interest.

Bob Smail served as interview clerk; Jim Sharp, Ray Kurtz, John Lindholm, Ken Visser, and Ted Hodges were Captains of interview teams. Also working on the project as interviewers or cameramen were: Floyd Clark, Dana Dodderidge, Al Edwards, Diane Gaede, Alton Lee, William Johnson, Bill Lockhard, Ed Lindley, Milton Manual, John

Neil, Larry Parsons, Kent Smith and Verlyn Steinkruger. Also assisting with the project were Uteva Powers, Margaret Bickers, Richard Fulghem, Barbara Poresky, Cheryl Collins, Sandra Reddish and Karen Sisk. Joseph Chapes worked on the project in completion of his Eagle Scout award. Joe helped conduct interviews, organized help for interviews, and wrote and produced an instruction book for conducting interviews. The group's first interview was with Wayland Keefover on June 18, followed by the Ehlers brothers, Claus and Walter, who were in Kansas in July to attend the dedication of the Bob Dole Institute at KU in Lawrence. During the course of this project 192 interviews were made.

As part of the project, each veteran filled out information and permission forms. The veteran was interviewed and each veteran received a VHS tape of their interview. Two DVDs were also made, one DVD was placed in the collection of the Riley County Historical Society and one DVD was sent to the United States Library of Congress for inclusion in their Veterans Oral History archive.

Equipment for the project was provided by Ron Frank and the Riley County Historical Society and Museum. The camera used for the project was bought with funds donated in memory of Dell Gates by Anna Gates. The Riley County Commission provided the interview room in the Riley County Office Building East.

During the course of our project, Chair Ken Visser passed away. As a memorial to Ken, DVDs of those veterans who gave permission were placed in the Manhattan Public Library for check out. The interviews available for check out at the Manhattan Public Library are:

Adams, Wm. E.	Conklin, Harold	Holtman, Art
Atchison, Fred	Converse, Harry	Hoppe, Fred
Atkinson, Bill	Cook, John T.	Hostetter, Philip
Bagley, Edgar S.	Corn, Jackson L.	Hoyt, Kenneth B.
Baxter, Ed	Dale, Randi	Irvine, James
Bayer, Burke B.	Dockins, Earl	Jack, Lowell
Bayer, Warren J.	Dunbar, John	Jack, Phyllis
Beatty, Daniel	Dunne, Ed Patrick	Jepsen, Dick
Beck, Calvin	Fairbanks, Gustave	Jevons, Russell
Blankenhagen, Elmer	Finney, Tommie	Johns, James L.
Blythe, John	George, Louis	Johnson, Edna
Bradley, Eunice	Gering, Eugene	Johnson, Kenneth P.
Brockman, Helen	Goldstein, Jack	Johnson, William
Brooks, John	Good, Don L.	Johnston, LeRoy
Bryant, Edna	Grubb, Thomas R.	Jones, C. Clyde
Bryant, Era	Gustafson, Merlin	Keller, Richard
Burwell, Glen C.	Hadle, Edith (Mierau)	Kelly, Jack (John)
Butler, James	Hadle, Fred B.	Kelly, Orris
Call, Ed	Hagen, Fred H.	Kelly, Paul L.
Carlson, Ty	Hammel, Wayne	Kennedy, Donna
Clark, Floyd H.	Hess, Carroll V.	Kepple, Melvin
Clark, William K.	Hetzler, Robert	Kidd, Wallace

Kleiner, Betty
 Klocke, Lawrence E.
 Koch, Berl
 Kramer, John
 Kruh, Robert
 Kyle, Benjamin G.
 Larson, Vernon
 Levenson, Arnold E.
 Lindholm, John
 Lindly, Edwin C.
 Longley, Frank
 Lufburrow, Peter
 Lund, Leland
 Lund, Maurice
 Lundin, Quentin/Jean
 Magnus, Beford A.
 Mann, John
 Marcellus, Lawrence
 McGuire, Bert E.
 McManus, Ray
 McNair, Joe
 Medlin, Roger C.
 Miller, Lenard
 Mills, Robert
 Nedwed, Eugene
 Nesmith, Dwight
 Niernberger, Charles
 Noonan, John
 Norvell, Lawrence

Olson, Lloyd
 Osborn, Robert
 Pearson, Bob
 Perry, Ralph H.
 Phillips, William
 Powers, Uteva
 Pudden, Robert
 Ralston, Joe
 Rehschuh, Bill
 Releford, Majorie
 Riniker, Samuel F.
 Roberts Jr., John
 Roberts, Tom
 Robinson, Robert K.
 Rohles, Fred H.
 Romanski, Kenneth
 Rundquist, Clede
 Schlender, John R.
 Schoeff, Robert
 Schroeder, Bill
 Schroll, James
 Sexton, Grice
 Shandy, Clarence
 Shanline, Rix
 Sharp, Jim
 Smail, Robert W.
 Smith, Bob L.
 Smith, Louis Marshall
 Socolofsky, Homer

Stamey, William
 Stanley, Jane
 Steinkruger, Verlyn
 Stepp, Jr., Henly E.
 Stewart, Clarence E.
 (C.E.)
 Stites, John
 Stonehocker, Perry
 Stueve, Freddie
 Thomas, Wilton
 Thompson, Hugh
 Thompson, Marvin A.
 Thompson, Paul
 Trennepohl, Harlan J.
 Unruh, Chester
 Utermoehlen, Ralph
 Visser, Ken
 Vogel, Henry
 Walker, Warren
 Wassom, Clyde
 Weixelman, Louis
 Wheat, John
 Willie, Emory
 Willis, William G.
 Wilson, John
 Withee, L. Vann
 Wolffing, Ralph
 Young, Paul

The Veterans Oral History project was funded through donations. Donors for the project (including donations made in memory of Ken Visser) are: (* = major donor)

*Bayer, Burke B.
 Beatty, Daniel
 Call, Edward P.
 Cooper, Donald
 Corn, Jack L.
 Dale, Melvin and Randi
 Doan, Cathy
 Donahey, Daryl and Sherry
 Eyestone, Cecil and Phyllis
 Faidley, Karl and Dorothy
 Frazier, Les
 *Gates, Anna
 Hayes, Annetta M.
 Hess, Carroll
 Hockersmith, Floyd and Carol
 Hoyt, Phyllis J.

*Jepsen, Richard
 *Kelly, Orris
 Kempthorne, Charley and June
 Koehn, Eileen and Bradley
 Lindolm, John and Mildred
 Lund, Marion and Leland
 Mackender, Charles D.
 Norby, Oscar and Pauline
 O'Neil, Carol and F.L. Lee
 *Riley County Commission
 Roberts, Thomas and Dixie
 Rundquist, Steve and Karen
 *Sertoma Club of Manhattan
 Sexton, Grice E.
 Sharp, Jim and Marilyn
 Shilling, Michael and Diane Gaede

Smith, Evelyn V.
Stevenson, Christina and Paul
The Trust Company of Manhattan
Thomas, Wilton
Utermoehlen, Ralph and Doris
Vandahl, Eldon, and Alicia

Vanskike, William
Visser, Kenneth and Rosemary
*Webster, Bradley J.
*White, Evelyn M.
Wilson, W. John