



Heritage

The FBI Oral History Project

Our Mission-

The mission of the FBI Oral History Heritage Program is to develop, preserve and widely disseminate an oral history of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and related personal papers for use by journalists, scholars, documentary productions and any other researchers interested in the people of the FBI.

Some Background On our Project-

The Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI began this program in 2002 by sponsoring interviews of former Agents as a pilot project. In 2003, the project was launched as a formal Society program managed by Brian R. Hollstein, a former Agent, with the guidance of Susan Rosenfeld, PhD, as a consultant. Dr. Rosenfeld is the former FBI Historian. Former Agents received training as oral history interviewers by Dr. Rosenfeld and have been conducting interviews for the past five years. Our program meets the standards of the Oral History Association and our managers are members of that organization. The program is not sponsored, funded or managed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Our funding comes from the Society of Former FBI Agents Foundation, other foundations and private donations. Ms. Sandra Robinette serves as our administrator. We have a board of advisors which consists of prominent scholars as well as former Agents who have formal training as historians.

Where We Are Now-

As of December 2008, we have completed and documented 300 interviews comprising over 15,000 pages of transcript and acquired many written memoirs and books by former Special Agents. Transcriptions are available in hard copy as well as electronic media. We have emphasized interviews of our most senior members and their experiences date back in some cases to the 1930's. The Special Intelligence Service, a little known branch

of the FBI, served with distinction in Latin America during the Second World War and later turned its files and assets over to the Central Intelligence Agency at the end of the war. Our interviews recount interdiction of smuggled platinum (critical war materiel for the Axis powers), interception of enemy communications and espionage/sabotage agents, diversion of funds for Axis espionage activities and US disinformation programs against the Axis. As far as we know, information of this type is not available from any other source.

Another grouping of interviews, which is still in progress, deals with the FBI's activities during the Civil Rights Era. Agents who were active in the neutralization of the Ku Klux Klan tell of their experiences. We also have interviews of the agents who were responsible for finding the three murdered civil rights workers buried in the dam in Mississippi and the subsequent prosecutions, which continued up until the present day.

Other transcripts deal with Watergate, the McCarthy hearings, Cold War counterespionage, organized crime and the transition of the FBI after the death of J. Edgar Hoover. New interviews are being conducted at a regular pace as we expand our current portfolio of completed material.

We have concluded an agreement with the National Law Enforcement Museum in Washington, D.C. to serve as the archive for our material. The transcripts are being prepared for public use and to meet the standards of the Library of Congress.

Our Future Plans-

This posting on the Society website has the purpose of making interested persons aware of the availability of these transcripts as an interim measure. They will form the basis of the National Law Enforcement Museum's research library of oral history concerning law enforcement in the United States. The transcripts should be available on-line during the first quarter of 2009. Our intention is to continue expanding our interview base with the goal of becoming the primary source for scholars interested in the people of the FBI and their contributions to American democracy in the 20th Century.

Using This Material-

Indices will direct you to matters of interest in each of the sample transcripts. All transcripts have been lightly edited to remove "ums and ahs" as well as repetition of phrases. You will note XXXXX in some of the material. That is editing by the Oral History Program and in general consists of removal of the names of informants and companies that have provided cover for our Agents. A blank in the text is the result of the FBI Pre Publication Review process and in all cases refers to information which is still deemed to be highly sensitive. In almost all cases the general thrust of the conversation is not seriously compromised.

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