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Oceanography: The Making of a Science - Oral History Component [Weir]

Gary E. Weir, Ph.D.
Head, Contemporary History Branch
U.S. Naval Historical Center
Washington D.C. 20374
phone: (202) 433-9767 fax: (202) 433-3593 email: weir.gary@nhc.navy.mil

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LONG-TERM GOALS

My long term goal was to gather as many comprehensive oral histories with critical ocean scientists as possible. This would provide scholars with a unique cache of source material from the surviving pioneers in the field. These oral histories, as opposed to journalistic interviews, were intended as life narratives carefully directed to derive the maximum information and reflection as possible on the individual's contribution to institutions, ONR, and the science..

OBJECTIVES

I intended to conduct comprehensive oral histories with subjects at Texas A&M, WHOI, Washington D.C., and Miami's Rosenstiel School. In the end, I did eighteen oral histories for this project.

APPROACH

After careful preparation and research as well as a judicious selection of candidates, I conducted oral history interviews employing classic methodology while a film crew from George Washington University Television recorded the proceedings.

WORK COMPLETED

The completed project exceeded expectations for the quality of product and the numbers involved. A total of 48 oral histories were done, of which I conducted 18 and assisted at many others. Each of these has been transcribed and, in my case, some follow-up interviews have been conducted focused on my ONR sponsored history of SOSUS/IUSS. The quality of both the transcripts and the video is excellent.

RESULTS

These oral histories will contribute a major source to historical scholarship as well as a video footage bank for educational television productions on this subject. My ONR sponsored study, [An Ocean in Common: American Naval Officers, Scientists, and the Ocean Environment, 1919-1961](#), benefitted from these oral histories well before it went to press at Texas A&M University in 2000.

IMPACT/APPLICATION

The history of oceanography field is growing. With the acceptance of graduate projects for theses and dissertations, the field has received a level of recognition it did not possess earlier. With these attainments comes a deeper understanding of the Navy's critical role both via ONR and other naval agencies in the genesis and growth of oceanography as a field of scientific endeavor. The Oral History component of the Oceanography: The Making of a Science series has produced the most important single oral history source generated for the ocean sciences.

TRANSITIONS

This oral history collection will feed countless historical projects as well as opening up possibilities for the promotion of the ocean science fields as a career track for young people.

RELATED PROJECTS

1 - ONR's Maury Workshop Series

2 – Gary Weir's history of SOSUS/IUSS currently underway with ONR support and the blessing of N09BH and N874.

3 - David Van Keuren's ONR supported oral history project with the Russian Oceanographic community.

PUBLICATIONS

Forty eight finished video oral histories with transcripts, resident at the Heinz Foundation and the U.S. Naval Historical Center.