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## *From the Director...*

### **["The Oral History Center and Berkeley's Teaching Mission"](#)**

For an office that does not offer catalog-listed courses, the Oral History Center is still deeply invested in - and engaged with - the teaching mission of the university. For over 15 years, our signature educational program has been our annual [Advanced Oral History Summer Institute](#). Started by OHC interviewer emeritus Lisa Rubens in 2002 and now headed up by staff historian Shanna Farrell, this week-long seminar attracts about 40 scholars every year... [[read more](#)]



Hailie O'Bryan and Pilar Montenegro, two OHC student employees, in front of the "blue wall of transcripts"!

### **[Supporting the Oral History Center](#)**

Did you know that the Oral History Center receives precious little funding from the university and that all of our projects are supported by external sponsors? Because of institutional sponsors (such as the Getty Trust),

government partners (including the National Park Service), and individuals (too many to list!), we are able to continue the work documenting histories large and small begun over 63 years ago. We conducted over 350 hours of interviews this past year, perhaps our most productive ever. Please help us continue this work by [making a tax-deductible donation](#) to cap off a great year for oral history at Berkeley!

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## *Oral History in Action!*

### **The California/San Francisco Fire Departments Oral History Project**

The world of firefighting is much more than masked people in uniform running into burning buildings and rescuing scared cats from trees. While the bravery of firefighters can't be overestimated, they also work in a complex system that requires constant training and education, a cohesive partnership with local government, extensive procedures and protocols, managerial oversight, effective communication within departments and to the public, acute familiarity with the local and regional environment, and a whole lot of administrative work. The San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD) is a shining example of how people make a civil service operation run and keep people safe. All of these elements, as well as the historic and cultural aspects of the department, are why we chose it as our focus for our California Firefighters Oral History Project. [[read more](#)]



Former San Francisco Fire Chief Robert Demmons

### **Friesen Prize in Undergraduate Oral History Research**

This year we are thrilled to seek applications for the Carmel and Howard Friesen Prize in Oral History Research. The Friesen Prize will be awarded to the Berkeley undergraduate student who submits the best essay that draws upon Oral History Center interviews. Complete OHC interview transcripts are available online and for free. The selection committee will evaluate the submission based on these three criteria:

- How well oral histories are integrated within and essential to the overall essay
- How creatively oral histories are used in the essay
- And the overall quality and persuasiveness of the essay

Applications are due by April 2, 2018. [More information and applications here.](#)

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## Out from the Archives

### [Ruth Bancroft and the Joy \(and Trials\) of Gardening](#)

UC Berkeley alumna Ruth Petersson Bancroft, founder of The Ruth Bancroft Garden in Walnut Creek and well-known expert in dry gardening, passed away at the age of 109 on Nov. 26. Her oral history, *The Ruth Bancroft Garden in Walnut Creek, California: Creation in 1971 and Conservation*, conducted in 1991 and 1992, is described by interviewer Suzanne B. Riess as "...the amazing chronicle of the growth of a passionate gardener, from her childhood recollections of spring wildflowers on the hills of an earlier, bucolic Berkeley, to her current triumphs, and the tribulations of stewardship of a garden more or less in the public trust." [[read more](#)]



Ruth Bancroft in her garden

### [Gene Brucker, Historian of Renaissance Florence](#)

We note with sorrow the passing in July of Professor Emeritus Gene Brucker, historian of Renaissance Florence, one of our esteemed oral history narrators, and the instigator and longtime supporter of our oral history series on the Department of History at Berkeley. The oral history series had its beginning in 1995, when Gene was designated as the Faculty Research Lecturer. Instead of focusing his lecture on Renaissance Florence, he turned his historian's eye on Berkeley, on his own department, where he had arrived in 1954 in time to participate in its postwar flowering into one of the most distinguished history programs in the US. [[read more](#)]

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## News About the Oral History Center

### **Comings-and-goings**

Since you last heard from us, we have had to say goodbye to two long-term employees: Julie Allen and Linda Norton. Both Julie and Linda worked as editors and saw to it that our draft interview transcripts made it through to completion so that the oral histories could be deposited in libraries and made available to the public. Linda, a poet, retired to spend more time on her craft. Julie, who had been with us for 15 years, found another exciting career opportunity on campus in the College of Engineering. We wish our former colleagues all of the best in their future endeavors!

### **Upcoming Events**

February 3: Introduction to Oral History Workshop. [Applications open now.](#)

August 6-10: Advanced Summer Institute. [Applications open now.](#)

## *Catching Up with the Oral History Center...*

### **Recently Completed Interviews**

- [Roger Samuelson](#), former director of UC's Natural Reserve System and a key player in the creation of UC Merced
- Masterly politico and aid to four San Francisco mayors, [Hadley Roff](#)
- Seasoned oral historian and community activist, [Malca Chall](#)

### *Coming Up*

In the coming months, check back to the Oral History Center website for the release of our highly-anticipated interviews, including:

- Former ACLU of Northern California attorney **Marshall Krause**;
- A group of interviews with former Berkeley students who participated in the trailblazing campus political group **SLATE**;
- Several more interviews with women and men who worked on the home front in World War II as part of our long-running **Rosie the Riveter Oral History Project**;
- **Mike Bishop**, UC San Francisco Chancellor Emeritus and winner of the 1989 Nobel Prize in Medicine, with Harold Varmus;
- Former San Francisco mayor, **Willie Brown**;
- **Harvey Dong**, who played a key role in the establishment of Ethnic Studies at Berkeley;
- Noted businessman and philanthropist, **Herb Sandler**;
- **MaryAnn Graf**, a pioneering woman in the California industry;
- Emmy-award winning journalist and broadcaster, **Belva Davis**;
- **Phil Freese**, an influential viticulturalist and "winegrower";
- Longtime leader of the Jim Joseph Foundation, **Al Levitt**;
- Several more interviews from our new project documenting the **East Bay Regional Park District**;
- More interviews in partnership with the **Getty Trust**, including four interviews with **Latino/Latin American artists**;
- The first set of interviews from our new **California Coastal Commission** project;
- Community leader **Paul Bissinger, Jr.**;
- Former chair of the California Coastal Commission, **Mel Nutter**;
- California fruit grower **Lawrence Sambado**;
- Plus many more!

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