



MORS Oral History Program

MORS Oral History grew out of the well established Oral History program of the US Army which originated during World War II as a method to support Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall's program to preserve and collect documentary sources that could be used to prepare the Army's official history of the war. Recognizing that an interview was a principle way to collect this history, over 2000 interviews were conducted in the European theater alone¹. The Army Oral History program continued to grow and flourish with these techniques again being used in Korea and then Vietnam. In the 1970's the Senior Officer Oral History program was established at Army War College by Army Chief of Staff General William C. Westmoreland to convey the experiences and qualities of successful retired senior officers to the younger officers enrolled in the War College. As the Army's program continued to grow, the Center of Military History created an Oral History Activity in 1986 to coordinate issues concerning the Army's Oral History programs and subsequently Army Regulation 8705, Military History: Responsibilities, Policies, and Procedures, was revised to include a chapter on oral history.

Earliest records indicate that during March of 1989, an Army Operations Research Oral History Program was initiated by Mr. Walter Hollis, Deputy Under Secretary of the Army (Operations Research). Mr. Hollis solicited the talents of then retired Dr. Wilbur B. Payne, FS, VWA (1987), (TRASANA) who conducted two interviews. The first Army interviews were of Dr. Hugh Cole, the last president of Research Analysis Corporation (RAC) and of Mr. Floyd Hill of the Ballistics Research Laboratory (BRL). Dr. Cole was a WWII Historian and Mr. Hill a distinguished weapon system analysts. In the Winter-Spring of 1992, this task was assigned by Mr. Hollis to Mr. Eugene P. Visco (FS). Mr. Visco with assistance from Dr. James Williams and LTC Lawrence Epstein conducted eight additional interviews. These (ten in all) Army interviews remain unpublished pending Army release but have been retained by Mr. Visco as part of his Heritage support to MORS. After his retirement from federal service, Mr. Visco recommended that MORS pick up the "baton" and perform additional oral history interviews concentrating on pioneer MORSians and early MORS Fellows of the Society. Under the guidance of MORS Vice Presidents for Professional Affairs Dr. Sheldon and CAPT Lee Dick and Heritage Committee Chairs Ted Smyth (PP) and Mr Jack Marriott, Mr. Visco established the MORS Oral History Program in 1997-1998.

Supported by Dr. Sheldon and Mr. Smyth, the first MORS Oral History interviews were accomplished in 1999 by Mr. Visco (FS) for Mr. Clayton J. Thomas, (FS, Vince Wanner Award (VWA) (1988), SR), Air Force Studies and Analyses (AFSAA) and Mr. Ralph Beatty, Anti-Submarine Warfare Operations Research Group (ASWORG). Mr. Thomas's Oral History was published in Military Operations Research Volume 4 Number 2 and Mr Beatty's in Volume 9 Number 3. Assisted by Mr. Marriott, the next Oral History interview was conducted for Mr.Visco by Dr. Sheldon in 2001 which was published in Military Operations Research Volume 6 Number 2 and PHALANX Volume 34 Number 2.

Under the auspices of Heritage Committee Chair Mr. Mike Garrambone, additional impetus was placed on the Oral History program with the planning and assignment of volunteers to conduct additional Oral Histories. As a result, two more were conducted in 2002, the first by Mr. Greg Keethler for Dr. Marion Williams (PP, FS) and the second was Dr. John Honig (PP, Past Chairman MAS) (published in Military Operations Research Volume 9 Number 1) by Dr. Sheldon. But Mr. Garrambone's planning along with Dr. Sheldon's initiative came to full fruition in 2003 with the following interviews being completed: Dean Wayne Hughes (PP, FS, VWA) by Dr. Sheldon and Mr. Garrambone and Mr. Richard Wiles (FS, MORS Executive Vice President Emeritus) (published in Military Operations Research Volume 8 Number 2), Dr Alfred Rhodes (PP, FS), Dr. Alfred Lieberman (FS) and Dr. Jack Englund (PP, FS) all by Dr. Sheldon. Dr. Sheldon also conducted Oral History interviews with Ginny Wiles and Natalie Kelly, both whom have contributed so much to the Society, which was intended to be included as a part of the 40th Anniversary legacy. In 2004, Dr. Sheldon continued his extraordinary pace with additional interviews of Ms. Amie Hoeber (PP), Mr. George Dimon (PP, FS) and Dr. David Shrady (PP, FS), Dr. Phil Depoy (Past President CNA), General Welch (VWA, Past President IDA), and Mr. Irv Kapos (MORS Pioneer and founding director). Additionally, Mr. Garrambone completed an interview with Dr. Jack Borsting (PP, FS).

Conducting an Oral History is by no means a small task. There is a considerable amount of effort that goes into both planning and in the translation and preparation of a ready for publication draft. The first step of the MORS Oral History is to maintain a list of candidates. This is accomplished by the Heritage Committee and presented semi-annually to the Board of Directors. Interviewers are solicited and assigned by the Heritage Committee chairman and the lead interviewer then makes contact with the individual to set up the interview and obtain some preliminary information. Interviewers

then must do their homework to research the individual being interviewed in order to develop and outline and to prepare questions relevant to the individual being interviewed. Once the interview has been completed, the tapes are professionally translated and then returned to the interviewer who does the first quality check for mis-translations, errors, etc. A clean draft is then returned to the interviewee to review. Final reviews are conducted by two members of the Heritage Committee before the draft is submitted to the MORS office for staff review and readying for publication.

Oral History is a living history of the unique life experience's of Operations Research icons. It is a vital tool for understanding the recent past through the eyes of our analytical leaders. It is an interactive, shared history which preserves the memories of these leaders and allows us and future generations to understand and relive their life experiences. If we don't preserve these memories, they will be lost forever.

1 Oral History Techniques and Procedures, Stephen E. Everett, Center of Military History, U.S. Army, Washington D.C. 1992