

ARMY FAMILY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Finder's Guide

20th Century United States Army Spouse Interview Collection

History:

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a draw down of Army units stationed in Germany began. Many of these units not only left Germany, but they also left the active duty rolls. Memorabilia such as unit colors, battle streamers, unit histories and photos, etc. were sent back to the United States and stored until such time as the units would be re-activated. However, there was no authorization to store like items from spouse activities. Two commander's wives, Mary Ann Meigs and Betty Rutherford, often were approached by concerned members of these activities about what to do with their memorabilia. It distressed them that so much history was being lost. They wanted to find a way to preserve a record of spouse contributions to the story of the United States Army. After much discussion, Mary Ann and Betty came up with a solution and started the Army Family Oral History Project at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1998.

Project:

The Army Family Oral History Project is a collection of interviews conducted with the spouses of career 20th century United States Army soldiers. Recording the activities, experiences and memories of Army spouses helps complete the story of the United States Army. The aim is to interview spouses who have shared a career with service members for at least fifteen years (exceptions to this policy have been made and are identified in the Researcher's Guide Summary). Initially, interviews have been conducted with the wives of men who made the Army their career. After women were integrated into the regular Army in 1973, the number of married women making the Army their career increased. Eventually, this collection will include interviews conducted with their spouses.

Interviews are conducted under the auspices of the Combined Arms Center History Office. The collection is located in the Special Collection Archives, Combined Arms Research Library (CARL), Eisenhower Hall, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Collection Organization:

The collection is sub-divided into the decades of the 20th century beginning with the 1930s. Each decade collection is housed in lettered boxes. A Finder's Guide, Master List of participants and a copy of each participant's Researcher's Guide is located at the front of Box A of the 1930s Collection. An alphabetized list of participants can also be found at the front of Box A of each decade collection. Individual interview folders are filed alphabetically in the decade in which each participant became an Army spouse.

The Researcher's Guide is an aid in finding participants who fit a researcher's study profile without having to scan through all of the interviews. It lists the years that the participant was an Army spouse, major historical events that occurred during this time and information concerning the service member's dates of service and rank. Further, it lists other family members who have a service connection as well as any additional known research sources. The Researcher's Guide concludes with a brief summary of the interview.

Participants in this project have signed an access agreement allowing the information they provided in their interview to be used by historians and researchers. A copy of the agreement can be found in each participant folder. The Project Chairman retains the original of this document as well as the original information sheet provided by each participant.

In addition to the access agreement, each participant folder contains a Researcher's Guide, one or more cassette tapes of the oral interview, a computer disk containing the transcribed interview and a paper copy of the transcript. The transcript has been edited by the interviewer and, thus, will differ slightly from the recorded oral interview. Editing has been done to make the interview more readable, not to alter the content or flavor of the interview. The computer disk label indicates the operating system and word processing version used to save participant files. The files saved to the disk are labeled as follows: Title of disk - Participant's Last Name; Individual files - Title Page, Table of Contents, Interview; Researcher's Guide. Some folders also contain photographs and other materials donated by project participants.

Each page of a participant's interview transcript contains identifying headers and footers in the event that pages from the collection become separated from their file. The header - ARMY FAMILY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT - identifies the archive collection. The footer - 1940s DOE (SMITH) JANE 1947-1969 - provides the following information: 1940s - decade collection; DOE - last name of participant; (SMITH) - maiden name; JANE - first name; 1947-1969 - dates participant was an Army spouse. The header and footer information also is included on all items housed in a participant's file.

This is an on-going project. Interviews are currently being conducted and will be added to the collection as they are completed. For more information or questions, contact CARL Archives at (913) 758-3161 or usarmy.leavenworth.tradoc.mbx.cgsc-carl-reference@mail.mil.