ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The ongoing Oral History Project at The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza explores the history and culture of Dallas and the 1960s and preserves personal recollections regarding the life and death of President John F. Kennedy. These candid, informal interviews offer insight into the Kennedy legacy and the local—and global—impact of his assassination.

The Oral History Collection includes the memories of eyewitnesses, local law enforcement, journalists, civic and political leaders, White House officials, filmmakers and researchers, Kennedy family acquaintances, 1960s schoolchildren, Parkland Hospital personnel, Museum founders and others related to the events of November 22, 1963. These firsthand accounts provide future generations with a tangible link to the past.

Over 1,100 interviews have been completed since 1989, with 70 to 80 new recordings added to the collection each year. In an effort to preserve Dallas and U.S. history and culture—and provide context for the Kennedy assassination and its aftermath—the collection spans the years 1955 to 1975, with a particular emphasis on the early 1960s. In addition, the reflections of younger Americans, those born long after 1963, provide unique insights for this collection and help keep President Kennedy’s legacy relevant to current and future generations. Museum lectures, panel discussions, and public/educational programming are also included in the Oral History Collection.

This rich archive of “living history” is available to students, researchers and historians from all over the world. Full transcripts of over 600 interviews are available for research.

Among the distinguished participants have been:

• Dallas mayors J. Erik Jonsson, Wes Wise, Adlene Harrison and Robert Folsom
• Television news anchors Walter Cronkite, Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw, Bob Schieffer, Robert MacNeil, Murphy Martin and Chris Matthews
• 60 Minutes creator Don Hewitt and CNN co-founder Reese Schonfeld
• Time-Life correspondent Hugh Sidey and publisher Richard Stolley
• Senator Harris Wofford, U.S. Speaker of the House Jim Wright and Congressman Thomas N. Downing
• White House Press Secretaries Pierre Salinger and Malcolm Kilduff
• LBJ White House staff members Jack Valenti, Liz Carpenter and Bess C. Abell
• U.N. Ambassador William vanden Heuvel
• Pulitzer Prize winners John Updike, Walter Mears and Bob Jackson
• Presidential historians Michael Beschloss, Douglas Brinkley, Robert Dallek, Richard Reeves, Ellen Fitzpatrick, Mark Updegrove and Sidney Milkis
• U.S. Air Force test pilot General Chuck Yeager
• NASA astronauts Walt Cunningham (Apollo 7) and Jim Lovell (Apollo 8, 13)
• Official Kennedy photographers Cecil Stoughton and Jacques Lowe
• Academy Award-nominated filmmakers Albert Maysles, D.A. Pennebaker, Robert Stone, Roger Sherman and George Stevens, Jr.
• Former Minnesota governor and media personality Jesse Ventura
• Author and former Los Angeles police detective Mark Fuhrman
• Fort Worth native, actor Bill Paxton (Titanic, Twister, Apollo 13)
• Actor Alan Young, star of the Mister Ed television series (1961-1966)
• DFW community leaders John Stemmons, D.A. Henry Wade, Tom Vandergriff, Dr. Luther Holcomb, Ebby Halliday, Joe Dealey, Stanley Marcus and Tom Landry
• National Organization for Women (NOW) founders Mary Eastwood, Sonia Pressman Fuentes and Dallas chapter founder Marjorie Westberry
• Seven FBI agents, including Robert Gemberling, C. Ray Hall, Bob Barrett, Wallace Heitman, Nat Pinkston and Assistant Director Oliver “Buck” Revell
• Thirteen U.S. Secret Service agents, including White House detail agents Clint Hill, Winston Lawson, Gerald Blaine, Toby Chandler, Mike Howard and Walt Coughlin
• Noted architect Philip Johnson, designer of the John F. Kennedy Memorial

More than 75 motorcade spectators, 70 Dallas/Fort Worth community leaders, 60 law enforcement officials and 150 members of the media have recorded their memories for history, preserving stories that might otherwise be lost.

The Oral History Collection has been featured on C-SPAN Radio and Television, PBS, NPR, and Dallas/Fort Worth television stations. Video and audio excerpts have appeared in numerous documentaries and a Belo Interactive CD-ROM, JFK: The Story Behind the Story (2003). The Collection has been the subject of workshops across Texas and educational sessions at annual conferences of the Texas Association of Museums and the national Oral History Association.

In print, the Collection has been quoted in books, national and international newspapers—including The New York Times and The Dallas Morning News—magazines, historical journals, periodicals and other publications.

The Collection has also been prominently featured in various exhibitions, video productions and educational programming at The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza and in the exhibit November 22, 1963: Image, Memory, Myth at The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.