ORAL HISTORY

An Interdisciplinary Anthology

Second Edition

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Reflections on Ethics

Amelia Fry

The final essay on designing oral history discusses ethics, a part of project design often overlooked in the initial stages of planning. The national scandal concerning Richard Nixon’s presidency provides the backdrop for this statement by Amelia Fry, veteran interviewer.

Taking in turn the rights and responsibilities of interviewees, interviewers, and institutions, Fry discusses the dilemmas which arise daily during efforts to work within the principled guidelines of the profession, the Goals and Guidelines of the Oral History Association. The author sets up a dialogue with the reader, posing real-life difficulties which bedevil professional oral historians. Like Friedlander, Fry recognizes the collaborative nature of the oral history process, which requires interviewers—as the more experienced partners—to educate narrators as to the implications of their accounts. Just as doctors try to obtain an “informed consent” before operations, so oral historians should be sensitive to the danger of victimizing or harming interviewees in the quest for historical fact.

Amelia Fry has conducted interviews and directed projects for the Regional Oral History Office at the University of California, Berkeley, since 1959. She has taught oral history institutes and workshops for the Oral History Association and the University of Vermont and has contributed articles on oral history to a wide variety of professional journals. She wrote a biography of Alice Paul, a spin-off from her oral history project on the Suffragists.

Reflection: an action of the mind whereby we obtain a clearer view of our relation to the things of yesterday and are able to avoid the perils that we shall not again encounter.

Ambrose Bierce, The Devil's Dictionary

Watergate made us question anew the ethics governing American life. Oral history, too, has received its share of scrutiny. Although stemming partially from Watergate, it has also sprung from an accumulation of questions oral historians have evolved from years of collective experience.

Uncertainty about fair practices was a recurring theme of the 1974 Oral History Workshop and Colloquium at Jackson Lake Lodge. Discussions ranged from lively rump sessions in the lobby to hushed debates in hallways outside the meetings, to the formal sessions themselves. One of the first acts of the new president, Samuel Proctor, was to appoint a committee to revise, and, if necessary, augment the OHA's present one-page statement of ethics called Goals and Guidelines.

A concrete ethical question related to the Nixon tapes has confronted some individual oral historians. They have been called upon to provide affidavits verifying that inaccuracies in transcription (when the transcription cannot be checked against their tapes—the one precept which probably would receive unanimous agreement by all OHA members who have ever checked a transcript with its tape. The underlying issue here is whether the question of public access to the Nixon tapes is relevant to oral history. Consider the facts that the tapes are conversations recorded with knowledge of the President (the person in charge of taping) but kept secret from others being taped; that the conversations were released only by the person who taped, in disregard of any wishes of those unknowingly recorded. Should an oral historian allow himself to be called upon, as an oral historian, for an opinion which will facilitate the public release of tape recordings produced in a manner which violates the code passed unanimously by the OHA? Does OHA's Goals and Guidelines give him, in fact, any relevant goals and guides for this question? Should it?

Part of the confusion is voiced in the guidelines' initial statement (a sort of preamble) as a fact of life: oral historians have a dual nature as both producers and users of the tapes. To quote in full:

The Oral History Association recognizes Oral History for what it is—a method of gathering a body of historical information in oral form usually on tape. Because the scholarly community is involved in both the production and use of oral history, the Association recognizes an opportunity and an obligation on the part of all concerned to make this type of historical source as authentic and as useful as possible.

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ers, we want them made available prove of the methods used by the
The main body of the ethics the researcher, the interviewee, an is a set of guidelines for each of basic question is, Are they a deli concrete situations, and broad er changing techniques?

Saith Guideline Number One,

The person who is interviewed s govern the conduct of the intervi

This guideline was written in view and that they should have underpinnings, this one has a p good session if your interview i arrangements. In addition, it stan to feel that it is my interview, my point of view which results from niques. However, the informatio memory cells and frequently in hi five years, that is her prerogative chest will sadly attest, her pm beforehand, lest tremors of disag aftedward.

Number Two says as much:

Before undertaking a taped inte viewee (or narrator) should be respect to tapes and transcript as: seal privileges, royalties, liter right to edit the tape transcript is to be disposed of or preserved

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Many oral history offices no mal agreement letter, which is s
It is this inherent schizophrenia that gives us two views of the Nixon tapes. As users, we want them made available to the public. As producers, we can never approve of the methods used by the White House.

The main body of the ethics document is organized around a sort of trinity: the researcher, the interviewee, and the sponsoring institution. The fact that there is a set of guidelines for each of the three implies reciprocal do's and don'ts. A basic question is, Are they a delineation of principles precise enough to apply to concrete situations, and broad enough to cover all varieties of oral history and changing techniques?

**Sixth Guideline Number One, on behalf of the interviewee:**

The person who is interviewed should be selected carefully and his wishes must govern the conduct of the interview.

This guideline was written in the belief that it takes two to produce an interview and that they should have equal rights. In addition to the philosophical underpinnings, this one has a practical base, too: you are not likely to have a good session if your interview is not conducted in agreement with the basic arrangements. In addition, it stands also as a reminder to those of us who come to feel that it is my interview, my skillful technique which elicits the answers—a point of view which results from our abiding concern with interviewing techniques. However, the information we are after is the interviewee's. It is in her memory cells and frequently in her private files. If she wants something sealed for five years, that is her prerogative and your responsibility. And, as William Manchester will sadly attest, her prerogatives and desires should be agreed upon beforehand, lest tremors of disagreements and even litigation fall upon your head afterward.

**Number Two says as much:**

Before undertaking a taped interview for the purpose stated above, the interviewee (or narrator) should be clear in his mind regarding mutual rights with respect to tapes and transcripts made from them. This includes such things as: seal privileges, royalties, literary rights, prior use, fiduciary relationships, the right to edit the tape transcriptions, and the right to determine whether the tape is to be disposed of or preserved.

One might note that if our former President had followed that procedure, the taped evidence in the Watergate cover-up would have been quite different, or more likely—not created in the first place.

Many oral history offices now send to the prospective interviewee an informal agreement letter, which is signed by each party and which spells out these
rights and conditions for each reference by each party during the course of the interview; others simply tape record the agreement at the first session.

If the interviewee wants a passage sealed, this means you have to remove the sealed passage from your transcription to locked storage with the opening date noted, then, if you wish to keep it available for public access, erase that portion from a tape which you have copied. The original tape you lock up with the sealed pages of the transcript. True, precious staff time is required for searching out the place and going through this process. In addition, the sealed passage presumably resides in your memory cells and must be held there with no leaks.

However clear-cut this guideline appears, a "yes, but" (hereafter called a yes-but) arises when the material on the tape is likely to backfire on the interviewee, or to damage your project or your institution—and she does not want it sealed. An example (partly fictitious):

When you interview Professor Curt, recently deposed from the deanship, she criticizes another professor with an eloquence which is born only of a person wronged. The controversy is still warm; you can see that these transcripts would create history right on the spot if the interview is released, and you envision a sudden escalation of the strife, with a spin-off of secondary charges that the oral history office is doing at least one portion of the faculty no good. Or, even if the oral history office survives the controversy, a certain sector on campus will view the transcript as a collection of unsubstantiated accusations and will demand to tape its side—which disrupts the office budget for the year. In addition, future narrators in other subjects would be more inhibited, less candid, after witnessing this spectacle.

So, are you being irresponsible if you leave the material open for anyone to use: the opposition, the campus newspaper, or the local Daily Bugle?

You point out to Professor Curt that she could be dismissed, that jobs are hard to find, that she should seal it for a couple of years. She says absolutely not, that this is the way she was railroaded and she wants the world to know—now.

Is it ethical to press for sealing, as your part of the mutual right? You could seal it unilaterally, of course, but that would be an open disregard of her privilege as coauthor with equal rights. Although in many projects, like the Berkeley office, either party has the legal right to seal, the question here concerns ethics, not legalities.

If it comes to a choice, would you risk sacrificing your project on the altar of that first guideline—her wishes "governing the conduct of the interview"? Should this guideline be softened, perhaps, to read wishes "mutually arrived at governing the use of the interview"?

A stickier yes-but is, What do you do when she gives you information which is confidential and which she refuses to put on tape? It is presumably for your ears only and important as background, and stick it in your private papers time specified far enough in the future longer exist? In the meantime, a line of questions when interview specifically dealt with in the guideline.

Probably most of the infractio historian's chronic disease of insufficiency schedule a period with the narrative options are and negotiate the agreement agreements are themselves cause for concern.

Shortly after completing the tape, debilitated to sign the final agreement the hands of a conservator who is not real. You realize he is never going to do the research foundation which underwrote it committed not to release it until.

And there is the now-classic on: What happens when the interviewer awaiting her signature? You have to make it available, but you are legally

The third guideline for the interview between an oral history interview and a television-type interview for the

It is important that the interview of costs and effort involved on the subject being pursued.

Underlying this is the recognition never achieve the rich tapestry of ships, the unexpected leads while well-prepared narrator.

The second section of the third guideline: It should be the objective of the scholarly usefulness in the prese
ears only and important as background. You probably make a note of it, mark it confidential, and stick it in your own private files. Should you write it down? Can you keep it in your private papers which are then sealed for your lifetime—or a time specified far enough in the future that the reasons for the confidentiality will no longer exist? In the meantime, should you use it as a source on which to base a line of questions when interviewing someone else? Off-tape information is not specifically dealt with in the guidelines. Perhaps it should be.

Probably most of the infractions of guideline number two issue from the oral historian’s chronic disease of insufficient time: we are in a hurry and neglect to schedule a period with the narrator in which we make clear to her what her options are and negotiate the agreement before interviewing. Sometimes the legal agreements are themselves cause for quandaries. For example:

Shortly after completing the taping, your interviewee has a stroke and is too debilitated to sign the final agreement. The transcript and the agreement fall into the hands of a conservator who is either incompetent, over-protective, or suspicious. You realize he is never going to sign. You are caught between two commitments: one to the interviewee to finish processing her interview and deposit it as she expected you to do (a responsibility which may also extend to a granting foundation which underwrote the project), on the other hand you are legally committed not to release it until she or her conservator sign.

And there is the now-classic oral history nightmare in projects that transcribe: What happens when the interviewee dies and the agreement is there on her desk awaiting her signature? You have, again, a responsibility to her to finish it and make it available, but you are legally restrained from doing so.

The third guideline for the memoirist can be evoked to help her distinguish between an oral history interview for an archive or serious research as opposed to a television-type interview for entertainment:

It is important that the interviewee fully understand the project, and that in view of costs and effort involved he assumes a willingness to give useful information on the subject being pursued.

Underlying this is the recognition that your own preparation alone can never achieve the rich tapestry of overtones, the warp and woof of interrelationships, the unexpected leads which you can get only if you have a serious and well-prepared narrator.

The second section of the trinity—the guidelines for the interviewer—is also riddled with yesbuts. It begins by providing a procedural goal rather than an ethical guideline:

It should be the objective of the interviewer to gather information that will be of scholarly usefulness in the present and the future.
Then follows an attempt to reconcile the dual and sometimes conflicting nature of the oral historian as both creator and consumer of his product:

The interviewer who is collecting oral history materials for his own individual research should always bear in mind this broader objective.

All of us are depressingly familiar with the limitations of time and funding which most researchers have to accept. Visualize an interviewer who is teaching half-time, doing faculty committee work half-time, and supposedly using another half to write a book on the migratory farm workers in the Imperial Valley of California. She tape records Cesar Chavez. She may not have the time to expand the interview to include the childhood of Chavez or the broader story of Chavez's efforts nationwide. Again, the interviewer's commitments conflict: guideline number one is pitted against her obligations to her institution and publisher to use her time efficiently and keep her research to the point. Yet the archives will be the poorer in that collection of transcripts or tapes which she will eventually donate. Dealing as it does with a basically irreconcilable dichotomy produced by one researcher wearing two hats, this guideline is probably as precise as is realistically possible. To "always bear in mind this broader objective" is as much as anyone can demand from the harassed interviewer-writer.

Number two stems from the perennial question, "How much research is enough?" and also from the recognition that broad variations in interview preparation exist among the diversity of projects, each embodying different goals. The statement reads:

In order to obtain a tape of maximum worth as a historical document, it is incumbent upon the interviewer to be thoroughly grounded in the background and experiences of the person being interviewed, to select the interviewee carefully, and, where appropriate and if at all feasible, to review the papers of the interviewee before conducting the interview. In conducting the interview, an effort should be made to provide enough information to the interviewee to assist his recall.

If you are funded with a sufficient grant over several years and a staff of graduate students, you may research every scrap of relevant paper and produce an unsurpassable oral history memoir, as has been done in Tom Rivers: Reflections on a Life in Medicine and Science. It is a magnificent use of oral history. Forrest Pogue from his intensive research and years of interviewing is producing a multivolume biography of General George Marshall which is the ultimate in scholarship. Most of us, however, dig down in our pockets and realize that we have to settle for less grant money, fewer staff, shorter time, and pressures for greater quantitative output. This number two guideline was meant to discourage those unfortunate interviews which rest and then calling on his favorite reviewer who goes to his senator a research similarly blank except for who developed the guidelines bel future scholars to tape with only memoirist, it clutters libraries will and it creates difficulties when a with the victimized memoirist.

Nor is it fair to put the burden on her time and brain power to this which you then share with her to Such a joint effort will more likely be proud. And, on the purely pract getting a release signed.

Yes but two: What if her paper cabinets in a warehouse? Are you catalogued yet. Here it is pertinent viewer's guideline number two: t objective is to draw up questions, dependable answers for his book. final judgments; the historian who assess the evidence and draw con fact, you will probably produce the finality of clear answers. Defining

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unfortunate interviews which result from someone buying a $60 tape recorder and then calling on his favorite community character. Or what about the interviewer who goes to his senator armed only with blank tapes and background research similarly blank except for the Who’s Who vaguely in his memory? Those who developed the guidelines believed it is not fair either to the interviewer or to future scholars to tape with only slight preparation. This makes a victim of the memoirist, it clutters libraries with superficial and usually redundant material, and it creates difficulties when a serious interviewer tries to get an appointment with the victimized memoirist.

Not is it fair to put the burden of the interview on the narrator. She is giving her time and brain power to this; you, the interviewer, are doing the research, which you then share with her to help her recall those far-off dates and names. Such a joint effort will more likely produce a document of which both of you will be proud. And, on the purely practical side, you will more likely avoid difficulties getting a release signed.

Yesh but lurking here, too. For instance, what do you do when you want to interview a public official who has just gone out of office, and her papers have been sealed until her death? She feels that she cannot give one person special access to those papers; you feel you must use them or you cannot be adequately prepared. Is your alternative not to interview her at all? That would be a loss to history. So what do you do? You might compromise; you can dig around in collections of her contemporaries, where you may find letters and references to her. You can talk to her old friends, and enemies, and of course to her, to help you prepare topical outlines. Sometimes you can confer with a scholar who has researched areas relating to her career and who will contribute questions for the interview.

Yesh but two: What if her papers are open, but they fill 350 unorganized filing cabinets in a warehouse? Are you going to go through these? They are not even catalogued yet. Here it is pertinent to bring up a point in reference to interviewer’s guideline number one: there is a difference in preparation when your objective is to draw up questions, as distinguished from a scholar’s research for dependable answers for his book. In oral history, you are not aiming at making final judgments; the historian who later uses your interview is the one who has to assess the evidence and draw conclusions. Your task is to provide evidence. In fact, you will probably produce more useful interviews if you cannot reach the finality of clear answers. Defining puzzles is the focus of your research.

The final guideline for the interviewer, although the shortest, occasions more ethical dilemmas than any of the others:

It is important that all interviews be conducted in a spirit of objectivity and scholarly integrity and in accordance with stipulations agreed upon.
This is partially an attempt to prevent the creation of oral history myths, innuendoes, and fictions not unlike those fashioned from unevaluated FBI files; its principal aim is to discourage tapes which are primarily entertainments that either fascinate with intrigue or tickle the funnybone, but which are unhampered by accuracy. Outside of collections for folklore, the quality of oral history suffers from such amusements.

Once in a while a single word expresses a coalition of meanings more adequately than a torrent of prose. Heuristic, "helping to discover and learn," "serving to guide, discover or reveal" is such a word. 3 Although not specifically stated in the guidelines, he heuristic is what this final guideline means to say. When, after reading an oral history interview, a researching historian can lay it down with the comment, "Now that's a solid, heuristic effort," he has paid the oral historian the highest possible compliment.

Even with the best preparation, however, you sometimes find yourself on the other side of the microphone from a skilled and witty raconteur who, although amusing and delightful, does not share your commitment for heuristic interviews. Actually, you can develop some techniques to discourage exaggerations and distortions by using your research to pin her down with specific names and facts. And you can show her you are simply turned off by the exaggerated story or the colorful scandal which she may be telling you for the immediate reward of the look of relish on your face. Or you can always say, "Well, we'd better leave that out. It might be slanderous, you know, unless you can document it." If she persists in going through with it and leaving it in the transcript, your remaining recourse is to point out in her introduction to the tape or transcript that her charges are worth noting as an example of the perceptions of persons who hold her point of view in that particular group.

The truly heuristic approach is to choose memoirists for a series of interviews designed around a central core of inquiry, so that when one interviewee makes a charge or tells an unlikely story, you have a chance to tape others on the same topic. The result will be a series of different views which explore ambiguities and offer counter-weights to each other. However, even with the series technique, difficulties may arise. Example:

You interview Mr. Wiley. He insists on taping a serious charge against Mrs. Goldfarb. In a series, the logical follow-up is to make a note to include a question on this charge when you interview Mrs. Goldfarb. However, both interviews are still in process, so you are not free to quote Mr. Wiley to her and disclose your source if she should ask you, since the final agreement has not been signed. Besides, by quoting him to her, you may be starting a new controversy with possible chain reactions.

So you have a responsibility! I know her accuser. But your price is getting a balance and counterbalancing morasses.

But that is the good news. The lead you into even a more difficult:

Interview transcripts are continuously transcribed, being sent to the statistical corrections and additions. In an account of an event which the state administration for involved resolution. Her account is not d information on who acted as based on the evidence not available in print, so the

Armed with this scenario, you d administration investigation. He have only the general idea; in part B for you. Then you go into the story. A together from first-hand informants

Put together, that is, until abou says, "I've decided to cull that s for office this year. It might be t

What is right for you to do in the other two interviews, where story, although Interviewee B an more detail and much more vivid

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So you have a responsibility both ways: Goldfarb can insist she has a right to
know her accuser. But your prior source, Wiley, retains quoting privileges. So
getting a balance and counterbalance in a series sometimes places you in a moral
morass.

But that is the good news. The bad news is that a virtuous, heuristic attitude can
lead you into even a more difficult situation. Are you game for another example?

Interview transcripts are continually coming and going out of your office—being
transcribed, being sent to the memorists, being returned to the office with their
corrections and additions. In an interview, Interviewee A gives you a clear, run-
ing account of an event which started with a corruption scandal, moved into
the state administration for investigation, and finally landed in the courts for
resolution. Her account is not detailed: it is the sequential outline with valuable
information on who acted as catalyst in each stage. Such a comprehensive pic-
ture is not available in print, so it is important.

Armed with this scenario, you then tape Interviewee B on his recollection of the
administration investigation. He does not request your source because he sees
you have only the general idea of what happened, and he cooperatively fills
in part B for you. Then you go to Interviewee C, who fills in the litigation sec-
tion and wraps up the story. With all three interviews, you have the story put
together from first-hand informants.

Put together, that is, until about two weeks later, when Interviewee A calls and
says, "I've decided to pull that story out of the transcript because I want to run
for office this year. It might be too controversial."

What is right for you to do in such a case? Is it fair to keep her information in
the other two interviews, where it appears as a major reference? It is still her
story, although Interviewees B and C have covered their respective chapters with
more detail and much more vividly than she had done.

Should you protect her confidentiality by removing those sections in B's and
C's interviews too? This action could throw you in conflict with guideline number
one (the interviewee's wishes should govern the conduct of the interview) because
neither man wants that section disturbed. You are back in the conundrum men-
tioned earlier, when you want something closed and he wants it left open.

It is unlikely that any additions to the present guides and goals can protect
the conscientious oral historian from perplexities like these. As with other dilem-
as in life, some just have to be negotiated and muddled through. In the exam-
ple above, you could wait to see if she loses the election. If she does, she will
likely open that story again and all is well; if she does not, then you either negoti-
ate to close all three, or you put all three in that office drawer labeled "temporary
limbo" and try to explain the delay to B and C.
The third part of the trinity—"Guidelines for Sponsoring Institutions"—is actually only one guideline as it stands now:

Subject to meeting the conditions as prescribed by interviewees, it will be the obligation of sponsoring institutions to prepare easily usable tapes and/or accurate typed transcriptions, and properly to identify, index, and preserve such oral history records for use by the scholarly community, and to state clearly the provisions that govern their use.

In practice this means that the sponsoring institution must serve as a vehicle for carrying out long-term obligations incurred through the other two parts of the trinity. And this requires continuity and longevity of the institution. A library or historical society whose permanence is not reasonably assured can investigate allying itself on a cooperative basis with another more permanent institution.

Since that guideline was written, the number of institutions sponsoring oral history projects has soared, and many of the older sponsoring institutions have developed oral history research specialties. Perhaps it is time to consider a second guideline here: one for relations between oral history offices. It has become increasingly important for institutions to cooperate so that their oral history offices develop specialties which complement those in other institutions while reflecting their own particular strengths. This will help prevent overlap of effort, competition for outside funds, and redundancy in the total pool of oral history tapes and transcripts.

Before we leave the Goals and Guidelines, let us consider a few which are not touched upon at all and which do not logically fit under any of the three headings.

It appears now that we might add "Guidelines for the Relations Between Oral History Projects"—and thereby become the first in history to create a four-part trinity. This guideline springs from the phenomenon that more than one project frequently interviews the same memoirists. Horace Albright, who spoke briefly at the 1974 colloquium, has been interviewed by many major oral history projects in this country because he was the number two man in creating the national parks and was around to run them through several presidential administrations. His popularity is also due to his excellent memory.

Such overkill of interviewees indicates the need for agreement among oral historians not to interview a big-name person with a short, low-research interview which contributes little more than the aggrandizement of a project. Such an interview can make it appear that this major figure has already done his memoir, and when another project applies for a grant to do a thorough biography, it can be turned down on the grounds he has already been interviewed. Second, short topical interviews should be careful with a notation of the subjects covered, the interviewee that history still might refuse subsequent requests. Sometimes a second interview requests that he wants none of that again.

This problem also implies that, despite regular reports on what it [Columbia and a few others do], nothing to NUCMUC and other central.

Another problem: the Grand much discussion and questioning of history. Parts of the present code rando might be expanded on whatever was mentioned. The Royalties should be a part of this and the interview is published, the interpreter for the interview are reim.

In England, the law requires that BBC, and most oral history produced related to problems in paying interview. They are not public figures and may be.

Unlike England, our country "exploiting" public figures for intellectual property in a special group such as Chicanos is occurring weekly raised is, Should oral history with no remuneration to such interviews.

In the United States the legal this question further, or research on badly undercut. One consideration is an interviewee as the nor being studied. If the researcher perhaps its opposition group would coalition committee, the end proc textbook material or for community.

Similarly, today's public figure has time in her schedule, even with the help of a highly paid researcher with background research; or her through with questions, and transcript. For her, it is a fortuitous
topical interviews should be carefully noted as such in an appropriate catalog, with a notation of the subjects covered if possible. It also means making clear to the interviewee that history still lacks a full memoir from him; otherwise he might refuse subsequent requests to be interviewed since he’s already done that. Sometimes a second interview request is rejected because his first was so superficial that he wants none of that again.

This problem also implies that each project should give priority to disseminating regular reports on what it has produced, through mailing its catalog (as Columbia and a few others do), notifying relevant journals, and turning in its listing to NUCMUC and other centralized cataloging services.

Another problem: the Grand Tetons colloquium seemed to be marked by much discussion and questioning of ethics involved in the commercial use of oral history. Parts of the present code relate to this question, such as agreeing beforehand with the memoirist on who will hold prior use rights and the literary rights. Royalties should be a part of this agreement, also. (In a number of projects, if an interview is published, the interviewee gets royalties automatically once the expenses for the interview are reimbursed to the project.)

In England, the law requires that anyone be paid whose interview is aired on BBC, and most oral history produced in Great Britain is for this purpose. This has led to problems in paying interviewees because their whereabouts are not known: they are not public figures and many were taped five or ten years before.

Unlike England, our country has a tradition of writers and researchers “exploiting” public figures for interviews. Similar exploitation of private citizens who belong to a special group such as core city dwellers, women, Native Americans, and Chicanos is occurring with increasing frequency. The question repeatedly raised is, Should oral history be made available for commercial publication with no remuneration to such interviewees?

In the United States the legal answer is often yes. But we need to examine this question further, or research in the several fields of ethnic studies could be badly undercut. One consideration which often balances the researcher’s exploitation of an interviewee is the nonmonetary benefits of publication to the group being studied. If the researcher cooperates, for example, with a tribal council (or perhaps its opposition group) when planning the interviews, or with an urban coalition committee, the end product could be useful for them too, perhaps for textbook material or for community consciousness raising.

Similarly, today’s public figure is generally loath to keep a diary and rarely has time in her schedule, even when “retired,” to approach her memoir without the help of a highly-paid researcher and ghost writer. An oral historian furnishes her with background research, organizes and outlines interview sessions, guides her through with questions, and finally presents her with her own copy of the transcript. For her, it is a fortuitous way to leave a memoir for posterity, a free
service which could otherwise have cost her untold dollars and hours. With publishing rights and royalties clearly spelled out beforehand, perhaps there is a fair balance of "exploitation" between the person of distinction who gets her memoir and the interviewer who gets a career credit for a heuristic piece of research.

Those of you who have wrestled the angels down to this last paragraph probably see little relevance now between the taping of oral history properly done and the processes indulged in by the former President. Anguished objections to Nixon-as-historian are based on his violations of every tenet in Goals and Guidelines, with the exception of number one for the interviewer: "... to gather information that will be of scholarly usefulness in the present and the future." As we reject any classification of the Nixon tapes as "oral history," do we base that rejection on the definition of oral history which was offered at the First Colloquium? (It has to be oral and it has to be history.) Surely the Nixon tapes meet both those qualifications. Try the definition in the first sentence in the preamble of Goals and Guidelines: "The OHA recognizes oral history for what it is—a method of gathering a body of historical information in oral form usually on tape." Nixon's efforts fit that description, too.

So we conclude with a larger question for our ethical code: Should we seek a less-inclusive definition of oral history, in an effort to disassociate ourselves from surreptitious, noninterview taping? This requires further thought because there are, to mention only one related aspect, those members of OHA who tape speeches, riots, and current happenings, without infringing on anyone's rights. That is a fitting dilemma on which to end this set of reflections.

Notes

1. This is, of course, one argument for oral history offices which interview for the entire scholarly community.