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At SPOHP, we believe that one of the best investments we can make in our future is an intensive study of our past. We strive to make oral histories of individuals from all walks of life accessible to as wide an audience as possible. SPOHP needs your help in order to sustain and build upon our research, teaching, and service missions. The end of the year provides an excellent opportunity to contribute to our mission of engaging University of Florida students in gathering, preserving and promoting history. If you like what you see in this newsletter please consider making a tax-deductible contribution. Thank you for your support!

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Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
241 Pugh Hall
PO Box 115215
Gainesville, FL 32611

One Community, Many Voices Issue 02 Winter 2011-2012

Find SPOHP on YouTube



Thanks to the hard work and organization of SPOHP's technology coordinator, Deborah Hendrix, SPOHP now has a page on YouTube where you can access videos of interviews and public programs conducted by SPOHP. Visit youtube.com/user/SPOHP111 to view our growing array of videos.

Currently SPOHP's YouTube page features a collection of interviews with important guests at the annual Rally for the Rivers at Ravine Gardens State Park in Putnam County. This annual event draws environmentalists, activists, folk musicians, and concerned citizens together to raise money and support for environmental preservation in Putnam County, including the controversial

Ocklawaha River and Rodman Dam. In the photo below, Bill and Eli Perras sing a song about the river, one of the more unconventional oral records we have at SPOHP.

SPOHP's next video production will be an interview with Kelvin Williams, who just became the first black sheriff of Bolivar County, Mississippi since Reconstruction. Williams sat down with SPOHP during our last trip to Mississippi and shared the challenges and triumphs of working in law enforcement in the Delta. SPOHP's YouTube page is just one of several online resources that we provide to researchers. You can also find our entire catalogue online through the UF Library Digital Collection at <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/oral>.



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One Community Many Voices

STUDENTS AT SPOHP

SPOHP provides a productive research environment for students across limitless disciplines involved in the practice of oral history.

UNDERGRADUATE
SPOHP Intern **Julian Ruiz** earned the **Bronze Presidential Service Award** for his volunteerism at the St. Francis House in Gainesville.

Diana Dombrowski, Caroline Vickers, Sarah Blanc, and Viktoria Petrova were all admitted to the **History Honors Program** at UF to write honors theses on their research projects.

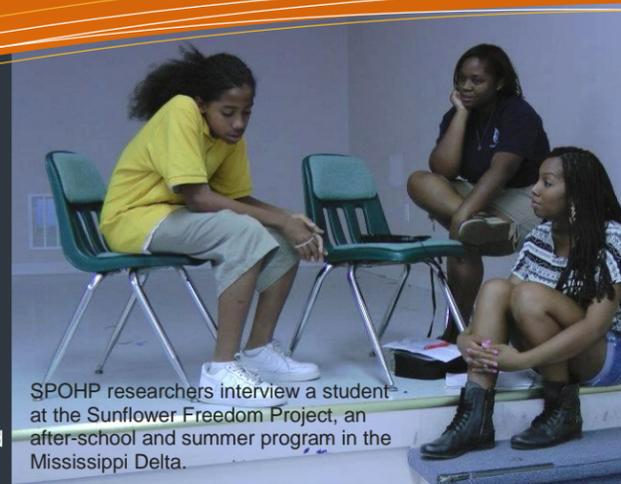
SPOHP staff **Sandra Kay Knapp Haile** (BA, 2011) received scholarships from the **American Quilt Study Group, Women's Studies at UF, Quilters of Alachua County Day Guild, and QACDG's Civil War Bee** for her research on quilting guilds in Alachua County.

GRADUATE

In the Fall 2011 semester **Erin Zavitz** and Graduate Co-Coordinator **Jennifer A. Lyon** passed their written and oral examinations and were admitted to **Ph.D. Candidacy**.

Graduate Co-Coordinator **Nicole Cox** presented a paper at the annual meeting of the **Southern Historical Association** in Baltimore, MD. The title of Ms. Cox's paper is *Selling Seduction: Women and Feminine Nature in 1920s Florida Advertising*.

Excerpts borrowed from Ortiz's article, "VOICES: Stetson Kennedy and the Pursuit of Truth," in *Facing South* from The Institute for Southern Studies.



SPOHP researchers interview a student at the Sunflower Freedom Project, an after-school and summer program in the Mississippi Delta.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE: STETSON KENNEDY 1916-2011

On Saturday, August 27, Stetson Kennedy died peacefully in the presence of his beloved wife, Sandra Parks, at Baptist Medical Center South in St. Augustine, Florida. Stetson spent the better part of the 20th century doing battle with racism, class oppression, corporate domination, and environmental degradation in the American South. By mid-century Stetson had become our country's fiercest tribune of hard truths; vilified by the powerful, Stetson did not have the capacity to look away from injustice. His belief in the dignity of the South's battered sharecroppers, migrant laborers, and turpentine workers made him the region's most sensitive and effective folklorist.

Stetson was so relentless, so full of life, that some of us thought that he would trick death the way that he had once fooled the Ku Klux Klan into exposing their lurid secrets to the listeners of the Adventures of Superman radio program in 1947. As recently as April, Stetson gave a fiery speech to hundreds of farm workers and their supporters at a rally in support of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Tampa. Standing in solidarity with Latina/o and Haitian agricultural workers affirmed Stetson's ironclad belief in the intersections between labor organizing, racial justice, and economic equity.

Throughout his career as a folklorist, author and community organizer, Stetson posed tough questions to authorities that made even many of his friends uncomfortable. He insisted upon a level of accountability from elected

This Issue

- ▶ 4th Year in the Mississippi Delta
- ▶ Peter Wood to Speak at the Harn
- ▶ Remembering Stetson Kennedy
- ▶ Quilting Whiz to Visit Gainesville
- ▶ An Excerpt from Gator Tales

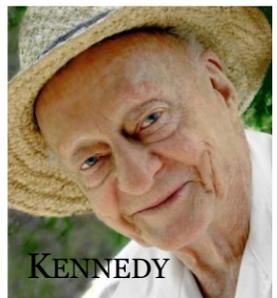
officials unheard of in the one-party South, and he demanded justice for the oppressed. The legendary oral historian Studs Terkel put it best when he said: "With half a dozen Stetson Kennedys, we can transform our society into one of truth, grace and beauty..."

One of the consistent threads in Stetson's work is the exceptional attention that he gave to the relationship between humans and the natural environment. His environmentalism was grounded in connecting the fate of turpentine and phosphate laborers to the degradation of the lands that they worked for low wages and in dangerous conditions. This was a working-class environmentalism, and it is a philosophical stance that underpins the organizing being done today against mountaintop removal and environmental racism.

I am overwhelmed with grief at Stetson's passing. I will revere him as a mentor, a friend, and a role model for the rest of my life. I am heartened that there are so many people today who work in the spirit of solidarity that always animated Stetson's writing. Stetson Kennedy's pursuit of honesty, social equality, and freedom was unparalleled. He told the stories of America's forgotten people. It is our turn now to pick up his torch and to tell his stories for as long as we are able to breathe.

Sincerely Yours,

Paul Ortiz
Director of SPOHP
Associate Professor of History,
Affiliated Faculty in Latin American Studies & African American Studies



KENNEDY



241 Pugh Hall
PO Box 115215
Gainesville, FL 32611
Phone: 352.392.7168
Fax: 352.846.1983
www.history.ufl.edu/oral

SPOHP AND THE CMC REMEMBER STETSON KENNEDY

By Tyler Benjamin

On Tuesday, October 25 at the 18th birthday of the Civic Media Center, SPOHP director Paul Ortíz spoke on the late Stetson Kennedy and called on an audience of around 40 people to continue Kennedy's legacy of thorough research and powerful writing.

Kennedy's wife, Sandra Parks, who sits on the media center's board and who turned 71 the same day of the event, said Kennedy donated thousands of books to the center because he wanted ordinary people to have access to his work.

Parks explained that Kennedy chose the center over one of the most prestigious incubators of social activists in the nation, the Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee, because the Gainesville center was "in the university's face and not on a mountaintop in Tennessee."

Ortíz explained that Kennedy believed in the combination of education and activism to break down oppressive forces like racism, and that economic inequality led to the greatest oppression, not a lack of knowledge or outright hatred.

Ortíz, Parks, and Joe Courtier, the Civic Media Center's co-founder and director discussed Kennedy's unwavering trust in what Parks called "the uncommon good sense in ordinary people." Each of them reiterated Kennedy's best advice: pick a cause and stick with it.

While he never demanded commitment to world-changing causes from anyone, Parks said, Kennedy himself didn't shy away from them. Parks said Kennedy cared deeply about human rights, the preservation of traditional cultures and looking after the environment.

Kennedy's legacy of intense and prolonged activism sat quiet but present in the books that surrounded the audience that Tuesday night, and the bursting biography of a citizen committed to justice came to life in Ortíz's call-to-arms.

Parks summed up Kennedy's fervor in one simple sentence, something she said he used to conclude his own presentations: "If any of you see a hopeful movement, call me collect."



Each year, SPOHP travels to the Mississippi Delta to gather histories about civil rights, and each year something exciting and unanticipated happens to make that trip different from those in the past. On Sept. 21, SPOHP made its fourth trip to the Delta, and this has been the most productive venture ever.

It was the second time Sarah Blanc, a senior history major at UF, made the journey. Blanc said one of the biggest changes from her last visit was the new Emmett Till Historic Intrepid Center (ETHIC). Till, a 14-year-old boy visiting the Delta from Chicago in 1955, was kidnapped and brutally murdered by two men who accused him of whistling at a white woman earlier that day. During the trial, it only took an hour for the murderers to be fully acquitted. For Till's funeral in Chicago, his mother insisted on having an open casket so people could see the evidence of racial violence in the South.

The Emmett Till museum has existed for some time, but it was recently redone thanks to federal funding. The new museum features a recreation of Till's open casket.

"When you actually saw it, it was really powerful and unexpected," Blanc said.

Another change Blanc saw in the Delta was an increase in historical markers, which shows that the Delta is embracing

its adversity-ridden past and using it as an educational tool.

Dr. Paul Ortíz, the director of SPOHP, agreed that these changes are beneficial to teaching the history of the civil rights movement. "In states that don't have a large black population, the states didn't teach civil rights, as if it is not important to whites or Hispanics or others," he said.

The group interviewed members of UFCW local 1529, a union in Indianola, Miss. that is striving to unionize food and agriculture workers. Candice Ellis, a master's student in history at SPOHP, is doing her thesis on this labor union, which is informally called the catfish workers' union. Ellis said the stories of the union workers were inspiring because they reflected racial issues and people fighting against unfair standards.

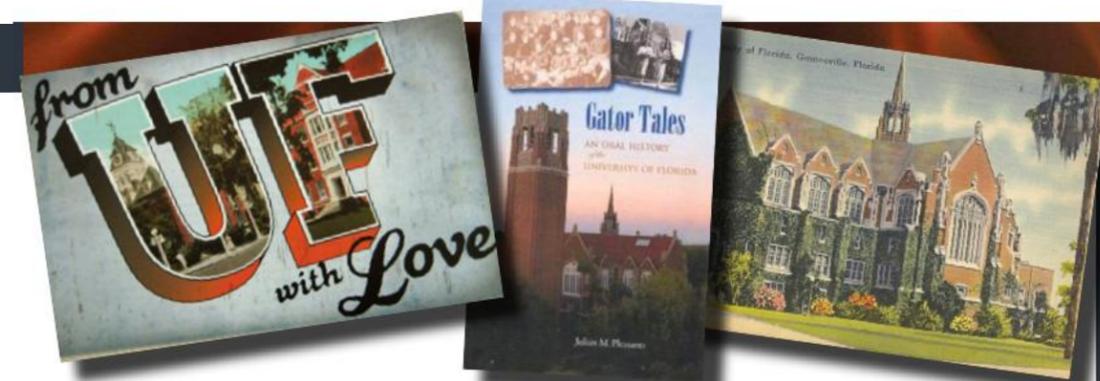
Ellis interviewed one woman who had worked for a fish processing plant for 19 years and never received a raise. When she joined the union, the woman risked losing her job.

"These workers are fighting for better pay and job security because jobs like cutting the heads off of catfish or packaging fish fillets is disposable labor, but it is extremely physically taxing," Ellis said.

Marna Weston, a PhD student who has been on every trip to Mississippi, said the "Civil Rights Movement and Oral History in the Mississippi Delta" panel was the marquee event of their time in the Delta.

"That has become a very important and successful part of the trip," Weston said. "It really means a lot for us to get together in Cleveland, Miss. annually and get scholars from around the country to discuss these issues of social justice. They talk to us about not only the way it was, but apply it to the way it is now."

The students from the Mississippi trip will participate in a panel discussion on their reflections from the trip on February 22 at the Civic Media Center.



GATOR TALES: GET IT IN TIME FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

Gator Tales, by SPOHP Director Emeritus Julian Pleasants, is an oral history of the first 100 years of the University of Florida. In addition to the administrative history of the University of Florida's first century of operation, *Gator Tales* features extended interviews with nine notable individuals whose influence extend from within UF to personal legacies throughout the professional world, including Ray Graves, Otis Boggs, Tracy Caulkins, Steven O'Connell, John Lombardi, Marna Brady, John Dasburg, Manny Fernandez, and Stephan Mickle.

Each interview invites a new perspective to a particular time and challenge in the history of UF, while reflecting the personal strengths that enabled each individual to have a substantial impact on both colleagues and the institution itself. Marna Brady, an ex-marine, was the University of Florida's first dean of women in 1948, and her interview with Dr. Samuel Proctor in 1969 was the first interview to be included in SPOHP's archive. Here is an excerpt of her interview from *Gator Tales*:

Proctor: "Tell us about your office on campus. That must have been a delightful experience."

Brady: "That was rather interesting. Evidently no one had done anything to prepare for the fact that there was going to be a dean of women. So my first office was a table and chair in the corridor on the first floor of Anderson Hall."

Brady's tenure at UF from 1948 to 1966 increased female enrollment from less than 500 to over 5,000. Each story featured in *Gator Tales* is a microcosm of UF's massive growth in its first 100 years. The book is a wonderful gift for an avid Gator fan or alum, and a portion of the proceeds go to continuing the work of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program.

IF YOU HAVE A QR CODE READER ON YOUR SMART PHONE, SCAN THIS CODE TO ORDER *GATOR TALES*, OR VISIT OUR PUBLICATIONS PAGE AT HISTORY.UFL.EDU/ORAL



PETER WOOD DISCUSSES WINSLOW HOMER, RACE, AND THE CIVIL WAR AT THE UF HARN MUSEUM

SPOHP, the Harn Museum, and the Department of History are bringing noted historian **Peter Wood** to the University of Florida's **Harn Museum** on the evening of **Tuesday, February 7 at 6 pm** to discuss his most recent book, *Near Andersonville: Winslow Homer's Civil War*. This book is based on Woods's *Nathan Huggins Lectures* at Harvard University. It is a magnificent analysis of art and social history written by one of the most renowned historians of our time.

"It has never been easy to find new things to say about Winslow Homer," Wood wrote on his website. "...As a lifetime Homer admirer and a historian interested in African America, I was surprised in the 1980s by how little attention had been given to Homer's impressive paintings of black subjects. Working with Karen Dalton (now at Harvard's Du Bois Institute), I felt we had made a fresh contribution through our exhibition, and I was pleased when the art history community took our arguments seriously."



FEBRUARY 7

SUPERB

People around SPOHP

Don Beld, author, historian and quilter, is founder of the **Home of the Brave Quilt Project**. Beld has dedicated his life to honoring the families of fallen heroes by giving a quilt to each family that has lost someone through war. He also has arranged for every family that lost someone in the 9/11 tragedy to receive a quilt. A recognized expert on Civil War quilts, Beld wrote *Civil War Quilts* with co-author Pam Weeks. Their book was published in January 2011.

In September, SPOHP Staff Sandra Kay Knapp Haile, who studies quilting in Alachua County, met Beld at the American Quilt Study Group Seminar in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Through Sandra's efforts, SPOHP and the Women's Studies Program at the University of Florida will host Don Beld in Gainesville for "Remembering with Honor: One Quilter Salutes Our Heroes," a program to be held the morning of Armed Forces Day, May 19, 2012, at Hilton University of Florida.

PODCAST

Picks and Previews

Albert Wilder: Wilder and his twin brother traveled with the merchant marines during World War II. Both of their ships sunk and Albert's crew was menaced by German U-boats on its way to safe shores in Russia. There he was reunited with his twin brother who also survived the attack.

Albert White: White attended Lincoln High School at a time when Alachua County schools were still segregated. He then went to North Carolina A&T University and participated in the Civil Rights Movement there. He is now a community leader and widely participates in community service organizations.

This month's podcasts were produced by Monica Blair with the assistance of Deborah Hendrix

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