



January 2022 News from the OHC

Martin Meeker Retires from the Oral History Center

We would like to congratulate Martin Meeker on his retirement as the director of the Oral History Center of The Bancroft Library. As Martin put it, when you spend so much of your time listening to the stories of other people's triumphs and challenges, at some point you want to focus on creating your own story.

Martin has achieved much during his time at Bancroft. He started his career here as an interviewer/historian in 2004, after graduating with a PhD in history from the University of Southern California. Martin published *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* in 2006 with University of Chicago Press; *The Oakland Army Base: An Oral History*, an anthology of fifty interviews; along with a number of articles over the years. He served as acting associate director of the Center from 2012 to 2016 and became its director in 2016.

From the early 2010s, Martin built up the program, hiring four full-time interviewer historians and a communications director, managing and initiating large endeavors such the Freedom to Marry Project, and facilitating longstanding partnerships with the Getty Trust, the East Bay Regional Park District, and the National Park Service, to name just a few. Under Martin's leadership, the OHC has continued and expanded its education outreach and public profile. An expert interviewer, Martin conducted interviews with former San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown, Governor Jerry Brown, along with many artists, financial experts, and vintners, to hint at the range of his interviewing.

Lisa Rubens, retired oral historian and longtime OHC interviewer, reflected on Martin's appointment: "I worked closely with Martin after he joined our staff in 2003. He was a breath of fresh air — his scholarship, collegiality, and interviewing skills were immediately obvious. Once becoming director he created an environment which supported our staff in interviewing people in all walks of life, sustaining OHC's deserved reputation as the nation's leading academic oral history program."

We thank Martin for his contributions to the growth and health of the Oral History Center, and we wish him the best in writing this next chapter of his

own story.



The Gift of Being an Interviewer

"From years of listening, I've learned that we all want to tell our stories and that we want, we need, to be heard."

After close to nineteen years with the Oral History Center — ten of those years serving in a leadership role — Martin Meeker has decided to hang up his microphone. He conducted approximately 200 oral histories, ranging in length from ninety minutes to over sixty hours each. He's worked on a myriad of projects and with an array of staff members, from interviewers and production experts to students. And he's welcomed many cohorts of attendees our educational programs.

Martin shares his heartfelt reflections on his time as an interviewer and leader, from his beginnings with the OHC to questioning what he thought he knew to moving out of his comfort zone, all in the name of recording people's stories.

Please read Martin's farewell [here](#).

2022 Introductory Advanced Institute

The OHC is offering online versions of our educational programs again this year due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

The **Advanced Summer Institute** will be held via Zoom from August 8 – 12, 2022.

Applications are now being accepted on a rolling basis. Please apply early, as spots also fill up quickly for this program. **For more information, please visit our website.**



Please email Shanna Farrell (sfarrell@library.berkeley.edu) with any questions about either program.

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