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Collection Overview

Repository: Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu

Creator: Stewart, T. D,(Thomas Dale),1901- interviewee

Title: T.D. (Thomas Dale) Stewart Interviews

Dates: 1975, 1986


Administrative Information

Preferred Citation
Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9521, Stewart, T. D,(Thomas Dale),1901-interviewee, T.D. (Thomas Dale) Stewart Interviews

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Historical Note

T. Dale Stewart (1901-1997), a physical anthropologist in the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), specialized in diagnostic characteristics of the human skeleton. Born in 1901 in Delta, Pennsylvania, Stewart came to Washington, D.C., in 1924 to attend college. He received a B.A. from George Washington University in 1927 and an M.D. from Johns Hopkins University in 1931. During his undergraduate years, he worked as a temporary aide to Ales Hrdlicka in the Division of Physical Anthropology of the United States National Museum (USNM), and received a permanent appointment in 1927. Upon completion of medical school, he was advanced to Assistant Curator of Physical Anthropology in 1931, to Associate Curator in 1939, and to Curator in 1942. During these years his research focused on anthropometric studies of Eskimos and American Indians, and on excavations of Potomac Tidewater ossuaries. After Hrdlicka's retirement in 1942, Stewart became Editor of the American Journal of Physical Anthropology for five years. During World War II, he was a visiting professor of anatomy at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. Stewart worked with the U.S. Army Graves Registration Service after the Korean War to establish criteria for identifying the age and race of skeletal remains of soldiers.

In 1961 Stewart was appointed Head Curator of the Department of Anthropology and in 1963 Director of the National Museum of Natural History. During his tenure as Director, Stewart guided planning for the new wings to the Natural History Building (NHB), oversaw the merger of the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) with the Department of Anthropology, and encouraged formation of a Senate of Scientists. In 1964 he served concurrently as Acting Assistant Secretary for Science. He retired from
administration in 1966, and was appointed Senior Research Scientist in the Department of Anthropology. When he retired from federal service in 1971, he was appointed Anthropologist Emeritus.

Stewart achieved recognition as an authority on diagnostic skeletal characteristics for modern and prehistoric humans. During the years 1957-1962 he conducted analyses at the Iraq Museum of the newly excavated Neanderthal skeletons from Shanidar Cave. In 1985-1986, he oversaw the reconstruction of the Wadi Kubbaniya skeleton from Egypt. He performed extensive work in forensic anthropology for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). In addition to his anthropological duties, he served as physician to Smithsonian staff in medical emergencies.

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**Introduction**

The Smithsonian Institution Archives began its Oral History Program in 1973. The purpose of the program is to supplement the written documentation of the Archives' record and manuscript collections with an Oral History Collection, focusing on the history of the Institution, research by its scholars, and contributions of its staff. Program staff conduct interviews with current and retired Smithsonian staff and others who have made significant contributions to the Institution. There are also interviews conducted by researchers or student on topics related to the history of the Smithsonian or the holdings of the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

Stewart was interviewed for the Oral History Collection because of his long and outstanding scholarly and administrative career at the Institution spanning more than half a century.

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**Descriptive Entry**

Stewart was interviewed by Pamela M. Henson on twelve occasions between January and May 1975. A follow-up interview was conducted in September of 1986. The interviews cover Stewart's youth and education; career at the Smithsonian as an aide, Curator and administrator; reminiscences of colleagues; field trips to Alaska, Iraq and Egypt; research on skeletal age and sex determination for anthropological and legal purposes and identification of bodies in mass disasters; exhibits planning; his hobby of painting portraits; and his role as emergency physician for Smithsonian staff.

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**Names and Subject Terms**

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

**Subjects:**
- Anthropology
- Museum curators -- Interviews
- Museum directors -- Interviews
- Paleontology
Types of Materials:
Audiotapes
Interviews
Oral history

Names:
Acting Assistant Secretary for Science.
Division of Physical Anthropology (NMNH)
Exhibits Modernization Program. United States National Museum
Henson, Pamela M. interviewer.
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.).
Shanidar Archeological Site (Iraq)
Stirling, Matthew Williams, 1896-1975
Container Listing

Box 1

Transcript of Interviews

Interview 1: 10 January 1975
Interview 2: 17 January 1975
Interview 3: 24 January 1975
Interview 4: 31 January 1975
Interview 5: 7 February 1975
Interview 6: 12 February 1975
Interview 7: 26 February 1975
Interview 8: 7 March 1975
Interview 9: 21 March 1975
Interview 10: 28 March 1975
Interview 11: 14 May 1975
Interview 12: 22 May 1975
Interview 13: 25 September 1986

Box 2

Tapes of Interviews

Interview 1: 10 January 1975
Interview 2: 17 January 1975
Interview 3: 24 January 1975
Interview 4: 31 January 1975
Interview 5: 7 February 1975
Interview 6: 12 February 1975
Interview 7: 26 February 1975
Interview 8: 7 March 1975
Interview 9: 21 March 1975
Interview 10: 28 March 1975
Interview 11: 14 May 1975
Interview 12: 22 May 1975
Interview 13: 25 September 1986