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Collection Overview

Repository: Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title: Charles F. Bennett, Jr., and Carole Ann Bennett Interview
Identifier: Record Unit 9563
Date: 1975
Extent: 2 audiotapes (reference copies).
Creator:: Bennett, Charles F., Jr., 1926- interviewee.
Language: Language of Materials: English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation
Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9563, Charles F. Bennett, Jr., and Carole Ann Bennett Interview

Historical Note

Charles F. Bennett, Jr. (1926- ), professor of Geography at University of California, Los Angeles, was a Research Associate at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in the 1950s and 1960s. He and his wife first visited the Canal Zone Biological Area in 1952 and he returned several times before being named an honorary research associate in 1966. He earned his B.A. in 1955 and Ph.D. in 1960 from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Carole Ann Bennett (1929- ), Librarian, University of California, Los Angeles, accompanied her husband on his field research, and organized and catalogued the library at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, originally on Barro Colorado Island, now located at the Earl S. Tupper Center in Panama City, Panama.

Charles and Carole first visited Canal Zone Biological Area on Barro Colorado Island (BCI) in Panama in 1952. They returned in 1959 to research the temperature and humidity gradients of the forest. In 1961 and 1963, they returned again. During this period of time they became friends with Director Martin Humphrey Moynihan, and they assisted him in collecting microclimatological data. Carole Bennett also organized and cataloged the BCI library. Charles Bennett returned in 1965 to further study the evolution of neotropical forests including the effects of humans upon the flora and fauna of the forest. In 1966, Charles Bennett became an honorary Research Associate of Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, providing advice and assistance in developing research projects and programs for the Institute.

The Canal Zone Biological Area (CZBA) was established in 1923 on Barro Colorado Island in the Panama Canal as a reserve for scientific study of the tropics. Originally designed as a consortium of universities and government agencies by Thomas Barbour, William Morton Wheeler, James Zetek, and others, CZBA
was transferred to the Smithsonian Institution in 1946 and in 1966 was renamed the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI).

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 students on topics related to the history of the Smithsonian or the holdings of the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

Charles F. Bennett, Jr., and Carole Ann Bennett were interviewed for the Oral History Collection because of their experiences on Barro Colorado Island in Panama during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and their ongoing relationship with the research station. Additional information about the Canal Zone Biological Area can be found in the Records Relating to the Canal Zone Biological Area, Office of the Secretary, 1912-1965, and the Canal Zone Biological Area Records, 1918-1964, also housed in the Smithsonian Institution Archives. The Oral History Collection also contains several other sets of interviews on the history of the research station.

Descriptive Entry

The Bennett interview was recorded by Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute Director, Ira Rubinoff, on August 27, 1975. It discusses their first visit to Barro Colorado Island; reminiscences on how the station has changed; the different visions for the station under various directors, especially Martin Humphrey Moynihan; and STRI's outlook for the future.

The Bennett collection consists of 1 interview session totalling 1.2 hours of tape, 44 pages of transcript, and occupies 0.07 linear meters of shelf space. There are two original audio cassettes for this session. In total, this collection is comprised of two original audio cassettes, 3 reference audio .mp3 files, and a 44 page transcript.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
Botany
Tropical biology

Types of Materials:
Audiotapes
Interviews
Oral history
Names:

Barro Colorado Island. Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
Bennett, Carole Ann. interviewee
Bennett, Charles F., Jr., 1926-
Canal Zone Biological Area. Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
Moynihan, M.
Rubinoff, Ira, 1938- interviewer
Smithsonian Institution. Libraries
Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Barro Colorado Island
Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Canal Zone Biological Area
United States. Canal Zone Biological Area, Barro Colorado Island
Container Listing

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<td>Interview 1: 27 August 1975</td>
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