



# Smithsonian

*Institution Archives*

## Charles F. Bennett and Carole Ann Bennett Oral History Interview, 1975

Finding aid prepared by Smithsonian Institution Archives

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., <a href="mailto:osiaref@si.edu">osiaref@si.edu</a>
<b>Title:</b>	Charles F. Bennett and Carole Ann Bennett Oral History Interview
<b>Date:</b>	1975
<b>Identifier:</b>	Record Unit 9563
<b>Creator::</b>	
<b>Extent:</b>	2 audiotapes (Reference copies).
<b>Language:</b>	English

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9563, Charles F. Bennett and Carole Ann Bennett Oral History Interview

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## 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 Ann Bennett also organized and cataloged the BCI library. Charles F. 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 F. 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.

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## 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 one interview session totalling 1.2 hours of tape and 44 pages of transcript.

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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:

- Botany
- Interviews
- Oral history
- Tropical biology

### Types of Materials:

- Audiotapes
- Transcripts

### Names:

- Bennett, Carole Ann
- Bennett, Charles F.
- Moynihan, M.
- Moynihan, Martin, 1928-1996
- Rubinoff, Ira, interviewer
- Smithsonian Institution. Libraries
- Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
- Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Barro Colorado Island
- Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. Canal Zone Biological Area

United States. Canal Zone Biological Area, Barro Colorado Island

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## Container Listing

Interviews	
Interviews	Interview 1: August 27, 1975
Interviews	Includes Charles and Carole Bennett's reminiscences of scientists and staff on STRI, especially Martin Humphrey Moynihan, changes that have occurred since the 1950s and 1960s, and reflections on the future direction of scientific research and research facilities, c. 1952-1975, including: First trip to Panama, 1952; reminiscences of CZBA director James Zetek; problems on BCI, i.e. water and electricity shortages and communications with the outside world; the railroad station at Frijoles; director Martin Humphrey Moynihan and the first library; the differing visions for the growth of BCI by directors Zetek, Carl B. Koford, and Moynihan; expansion of the scientific staff under Moynihan; being hired as staff members in 1963; choosing between BCI and academia; bringing universities in closer contact with STRI; growing number of scientists on the island; reminiscences of Moynihan and his vision for STRI; administrator Adela Gomez; amusing visitor stories; the team effort between Gomez and Moynihan that allowed BCI to expand; growing support for science in the U.S. in the 1960s; how STRI appeared to the outside world; thoughts about the future direction of STRI; scientific reductionists verses generalists; the influence of hydraulic power on scientific research; and suggestions on expanding staff to include ecosystems analysts.
Interviews	Transcript, pp. 1-44 of audio recording, 1.2 hours.
Interviews	Audio Recording of Interview: Total recording time: 1.2 hours Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Original Master: 2 audiotape cassettes</li><li>• Preservation Masters: 3 7" reel-to-reel analog audiotapes, 3 digital .wav files</li><li>• Reference Copy: 3 digital audio .mp3 files.</li></ul>