



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Oral history interviews with  
Francis Raymond Fosberg, 1993

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Smithsonian Institution Archives  
Washington, D.C.  
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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>	Oral history interviews with Francis Raymond Fosberg
<b>Identifier:</b>	Record Unit 9572
<b>Date:</b>	1993
<b>Extent:</b>	22 audiotapes (reference copies).
<b>Creator::</b>	Fosberg, F. Raymond (Francis Raymond), 1908-1993, interviewee
<b>Language:</b>	Language of Materials: English

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9572, Oral history interviews with Francis Raymond Fosberg

### Use Restriction

Restricted. Contact reference staff for details.

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## Historical Note

Francis Raymond Fosberg (1908-1993) was born in Spokane, Washington, and grew up in Turlock, California, with an early interest in natural history. He received his B.A. in botany from Pomona College in 1930. After graduation, he took a position at the Los Angeles County Museum researching plants of the desert Southwest and islands off the coast of California. This research led to his interests in island ecosystems, and in 1932 he moved to Honolulu to accept a position as a research assistant at the University of Hawaii. While in Hawaii, he was invited to participate in the Mangareva Expedition. He received his M.S. in botany from the University of Hawaii in 1937 and his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1939. Fosberg accepted a position at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and was sent to Colombia to identify stands of *Cinchona* for quinine production for the war effort. After World War II, he participated in a survey of economic resources in the Micronesian Islands. Upon his return to the United States, he and his new assistant, Marie-Hélène Sachet, began vegetation work for the newly formed Pacific Science Board under the National Research Council. Fosberg was also involved in the development of a joint program of the South Pacific Commission and the Pacific Science Board called the Coral Atoll Program, publishing papers twice a year.

Fosberg began his fifteen-year career at the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 1951, mapping the military geology of islands in the Pacific. During his years there he also participated in many conferences, congresses, and scientific organizations such as the Pacific Science Association; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; the Pacific Science Board; and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1966, Fosberg took a position at the Smithsonian's

National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) in the tropical biology branch of the Ecology Program. Sachet was also appointed to the Program, allowing a continuation of their joint research. In 1968, with the demise of the Program, he and Sachet transferred to the Department of Botany, where Fosberg became Curator. He became Senior Botanist in 1976 and continued his career as Botanist Emeritus from 1978 to 1993.

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

Fosberg was interviewed for the Oral History Collection because of his distinguished scientific career, contributions to the field of Pacific science, and career as a botanist at the National Museum of Natural History. Additional information about Fosberg can be found in the F. Raymond Fosberg Papers, which are also housed in Smithsonian Institution Archives.

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## Descriptive Entry

The F. Raymond Fosberg Interviews were conducted by Smithsonian Institution Archives Historian, Pamela M. Henson, during six sessions in 1993. Fosberg discusses his early life and influences; education and reminiscences of William Atwood Hilton and Philip Alexander Munz at Pomona, Harold St. John at Hawaii, and Jack Fogg at Pennsylvania; work on the Mangareva Expedition; his career at the USGS and USDA and work on the Colombian *Cinchona* Mission and the Marshall Islands and Micronesia surveys; work on *Cinchona* while on a Guggenheim Fellowship; career at the NMNH and reminiscences of Sachet; work in the international systematics community specifically on plant taxonomy and nomenclature, and work on the Pacific Science Congress; and his multidisciplinary, ecological view of science. The collection consists of 11 hours of audiotape recordings which have been remastered digitally into 22 .wav files and 22 .mp3 files for reference, and c. 250 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  
Ecology  
Geology  
Museum curators -- United States -- Interviews  
Records of meetings, organizations, and professional societies

Types of Materials:

Audiotapes  
Interviews  
Oral history

Names:

Colombian Cinchona Mission  
Coral Atoll Program  
Ecology Program (NMNH). National Museum of Natural History  
Fogg, Jack  
Fosberg, F. Raymond (Francis Raymond), 1908-1993  
Geological Survey (U.S.)  
Henson, Pamela M., interviewer  
Hilton, William A. (William Atwood), 1878-  
Los Angeles County Museum  
Mangareva Expedition  
Munz, Philip A. (Philip Alexander), 1892-1974  
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.). Department of Botany  
National Museum of Natural History. Department of Botany (NMNH)  
National Museum of Natural History. Ecology Program (NMNH)  
National Research Council. Pacific Science Board  
Pacific Science Board. National Research Council  
Pacific Science Congress  
Pomona College  
Sachet, Marie-Hélène  
St. John, Harold  
United States. Department of Agriculture  
University of Hawaii (Honolulu)  
University of Pennsylvania

## Container Listing

### Box 1

#### Transcripts of Interviews

- |            |                            |
|------------|----------------------------|
| Box 1 of 1 | Interview 1: 25 May 1993:  |
| Box 1 of 1 | Interview 2: 28 May 1993:  |
| Box 1 of 1 | Interview 3: 17 June 1993: |
| Box 1 of 1 | Interview 4: 18 June 1993: |
| Box 1 of 1 | Interview 5: 21 June 1993: |
| Box 1 of 1 | Interview 6: 25 June 1993: |

#### Audio Recordings of Interviews

- |            |                            |
|------------|----------------------------|
| Box 1 of 1 | Interview 1: 25 May 1993:  |
| Box 1 of 1 | Interview 2: 28 May 1993:  |
| Box 1 of 1 | Interview 3: 17 June 1993: |
| Box 1 of 1 | Interview 4: 18 June 1993: |
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| Box 1 of 1 | Interview 6: 25 June 1993: |