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Collection Overview

Repository: Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title: Oral history interview with Oscar Dean Kidd
Identifier: Record Unit 9574
Date: 1987, 1990
Extent: 3 audiotapes (Reference copies).
Creator: Kidd, Oscar Dean interviewee
Language: English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation
Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9574, Kidd, Oscar Dean interviewee, Oral history interview with Oscar Dean Kidd

Use Restriction
Restricted.

Historical Note

Oscar Dean Kidd (1907- ) was born in Jamaica and migrated to Panama in 1909. He grew up in the Panama Canal Zone, eventually settling down in Frijoles, the train station used by scientists visiting Barro Colorado Island (BCI). The BCI Research Station was created in 1923 as a preserve for the study of tropical biology. In 1946, this Canal Zone Biological Area (CZBA) was transferred to the Smithsonian and in 1966 was renamed the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI). As a motorboat operator, Kidd became acquainted with scientists visiting BCI, especially CZBA Director James Zetek.

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.
Kidd was interviewed for the Smithsonian Institution Archives Oral History Collection because of his long tenure of service at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama.

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**Descriptive Entry**

This collection consists of a 1990 interview of Kidd by Pamela M. Henson of Smithsonian Institution Archives, and Patricia Escobar Paramo and Elizabeth Stockwell of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, that covers his youth, work as a chauffeur and motorboat operator, and reminiscences of Barro Colorado Island and the scientists working there. A second interview of Kidd by Mitch Aide and Carolien Haerkate of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in 1987 was also donated to the collection. The collection consists of 2.5 hours of audiotape recordings and 27 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:**
  - African Americans -- History
  - Tropical biology

- **Types of Materials:**
  - Audiotapes
  - Interviews
  - Oral history

- **Names:**
  - Aide, T. M. (Mitchell) interviewer
  - Barro Colorado Island Research Station
  - Barro Colorado Island. Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
  - Canal Zone Biological Area. Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
  - Escobar Paramo, Patricia interviewer
  - Haerkate, Carolien interviewer
  - Henson, Pamela M. interviewer
  - Kidd, Oscar Dean
  - Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
  - Stockwell, Elizabeth interviewer
  - United States. Canal Zone Biological Area, Barro Colorado Island
  - Zetek, James, 1886-1959

- **Geographic Names:**
  - Panama