



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Ira Rubinoff Interviews, 1989-1990

by Smithsonian Institution Archives

Smithsonian Institution Archives
Washington, D.C.
Contact us at osiaref@si.edu
<http://siarchives.si.edu>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., <i>osiaref@si.edu</i>
Creator:	Rubinoff, Ira. interviewee
Title:	Ira Rubinoff Interviews
Dates:	1989-1990
Quantity:	6 audiotapes (reference copy).

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9582, Rubinoff, Ira. interviewee, Ira Rubinoff Interviews

Use Restriction

Restricted.

Historical Note

Ira Rubinoff (1938-) received his B.S. from Queens College in 1959. He continued his education at Harvard University, receiving his A.M. in 1961 and Ph.D. in biology in 1963. In 1964, Rubinoff became Biologist and Assistant Director of marine biology at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) in Panama where he conducted research on the evolution of fishes. The Barro Colorado Island Research Station (BCI), in the Panama Canal Zone, was a tropical biology field station established in 1923 and run by a consortium of universities and government agencies. This Canal Zone Biological Area (CZBA), was transferred to the Smithsonian Institution in 1946 and was renamed the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in 1966. Rubinoff became the Assistant Director for Science at STRI in 1970, and in 1973 he assumed the directorship. During his tenure, he focused on creating infrastructure for scientists, fund raising, and the transition of the Panama Canal from United States to Panamanian control. Rubinoff also held many concurrent positions: member of the science advisory board for the Gorgas Memorial Institute; Chairman for the board of fellowships and grants of the Smithsonian Institution, 1978-1979; and member of the board of directors for the Charles Darwin Foundation for the Galapagos Islands. In 2002 and 2007, Rubinoff served as Acting Assistant Secretary and Acting Undersecretary for Science during transition periods in central Smithsonian administration.

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.

Ira Rubinoff was interviewed for the Oral History Collection because of his long and distinguished career as a researcher and administrator at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama and role in central Smithsonian management.

Descriptive Entry

These interviews by Pamela M. Henson, Historian, Smithsonian Institution Archives, cover Rubinoff's education, how he came to STRI, establishment of the marine biology program at STRI, fund raising and master planning for the island and other STRI sites, reminiscences of STRI staff and influential visitors, development of an international mission statement for STRI, the situation in Panama during the United States invasion in 1990, and his role in Smithsonian administration.

This collection is comprised of five interview sessions, totaling approximately 8.5 hours of recordings and 281 pages of transcript. There are two generations of tape for each session: original tapes and reference tapes. Preservation masters were created for interview 1 cassettes. In total, this collection is comprised of 2 original cassettes, 7 original 7" reels, 2 original digital .wav files, and 6 reference copy audiotape cassettes and 6 reference digital .mp3 files.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Ichthyology
Tropical biology

Types of Materials:

Audiotapes
Interviews
Oral history

Names:

Canal Zone Biological Area. Barro Colorado Island.
Canal Zone Biological Area. Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
Henson, Pamela M.
Rubinoff, Ira, 1938-
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

Box 1

Transcripts of Interviews

Interview 1: 21 April 1989

Interview 2: 7 June 1990

Interview 3: 11 June 1990

Interview 4: 12 April 2010

Interview 5: 15 April 2010

Audio Recordings of Interviews

Interview 1: 21 April 1989

Interview 2: 7 June 1990

Interview 3: 11 June 1990

Interview 4: 12 April 2010

Interview 5: 15 April 2010