<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collection Overview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Information</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Note</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive Entry</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names and Subject Terms</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Container Listing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Collection Overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repository:</th>
<th>Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., <a href="mailto:osiaref@si.edu">osiaref@si.edu</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creator:</td>
<td>Shropshire, Walter. interviewee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>Walter Shropshire Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity:</td>
<td>18 audiotapes (reference copies).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Administrative Information**

**Preferred Citation**

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9597, Shropshire, Walter. interviewee, Walter Shropshire Interviews

**Use Restriction**

Restricted.

**Historical Note**

Scientific research has always been essential to the Smithsonian Institution's mission. These interviews focus on the history of the Smithsonian's Division of Radiation and Organisms, which became the Radiation Biology Laboratory and later the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, focusing on the effects of sunlight on living organisms. The interviewee, Walter A. Shropshire, a research scientist with RBL, worked at the Institution for thirty-two years. His reminiscences span from his early childhood in Washington, D.C., to his second career as a pastor. The topics covered include background information about his education and personal life; studies at The George Washington University; early work in the basement laboratories of the Smithsonian Institution Castle; scientific research for RBL; participation in Smithsonian symposia; collaboration with other scientists of his era; conducting research abroad; his administrative duties at RBL; working as a Methodist pastor; and an in-depth conversation about photographs from the early years of the Smithsonian's Division of Radiation and Organisms and RBL.

**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 reminiscences and interviews recorded by researchers or students on topics related to the history of the Smithsonian or the holdings of the Smithsonian Institution Archives.
The Walter A. Shropshire, Jr., Oral History Interviews were recorded to document the history of the Smithsonian Institution's Division of Radiation and Organisms (DRO) of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO), which then became the Radiation Biology Laboratory (RBL) and later the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC).

Descriptive Entry

Pamela M. Henson, Historian, from the Smithsonian Institution Archives, conducted these interviews as a part of the Smithsonian Institution Archives' Oral History Collection. These interviews cover the history of the Smithsonian's Radiation Biology Laboratory; the research conducted by its staff; the challenges faced by administrators; changes in the scientific field of biophysics; and Shropshire's personal life and pastoral career. Interviews of Shropshire include audiotape sessions and photographs.

The Walter A. Shropshire, Jr., Oral History Interviews consist of 16 interview sessions, totaling approximately 15 hours of audiotape recordings and 684 pages of transcript. There are two generations of recordings: original tapes and reference tapes. In total this collection is comprised of 30 original 7" reel-to-reel tapes and 17 reference copy cassette tapes. The reel-to-reel audiotapes have been transferred to digital .wav files. The original tapes and digital files are reserved in preservation storage.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
- Biology -- Fieldwork
- Botany
- Methodist Church -- Clergy
- Photobiology
- Religion and science

Types of Materials:
- Audiotapes
- Interviews
- Oral history

Names:
- Delbruck, Max
- Division of Radiation and Organisms. Radiation Biology Laboratory
- Henson, Pamela M. interviewer
- Joys of Research, The (Symposium)
- Klein, William H. (William Harvey)
- Shropshire, Walter
- Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory
- Smithsonian Environmental Research Center.
- Smithsonian Radiation Biology Laboratory
Container Listing

Box 1

Transcripts of Interviews

Interview 1: 2 November 1998
Interview 2: 29 February 2000
Interview 3: 20 March 2000
Interview 4: 3 April 2000
Interview 5: 24 April 2000
Interview 6: 22 May 2000
Interview 7: 8 June 2000
Interview 8: 24 July 2000
Interview 9: 7 August 2000
Interview 10: 15 August 2000
Interview 11: 28 August 2000
Interview 12: 11 September 2000
Interview 13: 25 September 2000
Interview 14: 23 October 2000
Interview 15: 20 November 2000
Interview 16: 15 December 2000

Audio Recordings of Interviews

Interview 1: 2 November 1998
Interview 2: 29 February 2000
Interview 3: 20 March 2000
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