



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Alfred C. Glassell Oral History Interviews, 2002

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Historical Note.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Descriptive Entry.....	2
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	4

Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Alfred C. Glassell Oral History Interviews
Identifier:	Record Unit 9601
Date:	2002
Extent:	3 mini-audiotapes (Originals).
Creator:::	Glassell, Alfred C. (Alfred Curry), 1913-2008, interviewee
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9601, Alfred C. Glassell Oral History Interviews

Use Restriction

Restricted (Tapes and transcripts). Contact SIHistory@si.edu to request permission.

Historical Note

Alfred C. Glassell, Jr. (1913-2008), a leader in the petroleum industry and an advocate for marine biology research, was a generous supporter of the Smithsonian Institution. He was born on March 13, 1913, in northwest Louisiana on Cuba Plantation, a remote cotton plantation near the Red River. He received a B.A. from Louisiana State University in 1934, and in 1945, after serving approximately three and half years in the U.S. Army, he moved to Houston, Texas. Glassell traveled the world extensively hunting marlin, blue fin tuna, and swordfish. He was a member of the U.S. Team in the International Tuna Cup Matches for seven years and served as captain of the 1952 second-place team. He secured the world record title for hooking a 1,560 pound black marlin, the largest grander caught on rod and reel, off the coast of Cabo Blanco, Peru, on August 4, 1953. Glassell donated the immense fish to the Smithsonian for a new hall titled *Life in the Sea* at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH). As an accomplished sport fisherman, he was inducted into the International Game Fish Association Hall of Fame in 2001.

He organized scientific expeditions around the world aboard his vessel, the *Argosy*, for Yale University in 1957, and in 1961 for the University of Miami, where a research laboratory bears his name. He was named an Honorary Member of the Smithsonian National Board of which he was a founding member. In 1991, the Smithsonian Benefactors' Circle recognized him for a lifetime of patronage and dedication to the Smithsonian Institution. He founded the Glassell School of Art, a teaching wing at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston (MFAH) where his world-renowned collection of gold is housed, and he served as Chairman Emeritus of the MFAH board of trustees.

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.

Alfred C. Glassell, Jr., was interviewed for his achievements in sport fishing, his contributions to National Museum of Natural History, and his service to the Smithsonian Institution.

Descriptive Entry

The Alfred C. Glassell, Jr., Interview was conducted on March 12, 2002, by Judy Terry Smith and Clyde F. E. Roper from the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. The interview discusses Glassell's background and early career in the petroleum industry; his adventures in sport fishing; the scientific expedition to the Indian Ocean aboard his ship, the *Argosy*; the capture of the world record 1,560 pound black marlin; his induction into the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) Hall of Fame; his wife and family; his first visit to the Smithsonian Institution; the formation of the Smithsonian National Board; his views on leadership, development, and museum outreach; the scientific expedition with the University of Miami Marine Institute (Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences); and other angler friends. The collection consists of 2.5 hours of audiotape recording and 75 pages of transcript.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Benefactors
- Big game fishing
- Billfish fishing
- Exploratory fishing
- Fishes -- Type specimens
- Fishing -- Records
- Fishing stories
- Gifts
- Ichthyology
- Interviews
- Marine animals
- Marine biology
- Marine sciences
- Marlins
- Museum exhibits
- Museum trustees
- Oceanography
- Oral history

Petroleum industry and trade
Saltwater fishing
Scientific expeditions -- Ecuador
Scientific expeditions -- Indian Ocean
Scientific expeditions -- Panama, Bay of (Panama)
Swordfish fishing
Tournament fishing
Tuna fishing
World records

Types of Materials:

Audiotapes
Interviews

Names:

Argosy (Ship)
Glassell, Alfred C. (Alfred Curry), 1913-2008
International Game Fish Association
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.)
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.). Life in the Sea Hall
Ripley, S. Dillon (Sidney Dillon), 1913-2001
Roper, Clyde F. E., 1937-, interviewer
Sanchez, Julio
Schultz, Leonard P. (Leonard Peter), 1901-1986
Smith, F. G. Walton (Frederick George Walton), 1909-1989
Smith, Judith Terry, interviewer
Smithsonian Benefactors' Circle
Smithsonian National Board
United States National Museum
United States National Museum. Division of Fishes
University of Miami. Institute of Marine Science
University of Miami. Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences
Watson, Thomas J., 1914-1993
Williams, Theodore S.
Yale University

Geographic Names:

Peru

Container Listing

Interviews

Interviews

Interview 1: March 12, 2002

Interviews

Covers Glassell's life, work, interests, friendships, and accomplishments, including: childhood, early education, interest in stamp collecting and fishing as a young boy; fishing in Louisiana, off the coasts of Texas, Florida panhandle, Rhode Island, and the Bahamas; background in the oil and natural gas business; service during World War II; tuna fishing tournaments in Nova Scotia with the U.S. Tuna Team; fishing off the coast of Long Island and the Bahamas; friendship with F. G. Walton Smith, marine biologist and founder of the University of Miami Marine Institute; scientific expedition to the Indian Ocean with Yale University on the vessel *Argosy*; origins of the *Argosy*; account of the capture of the 1,560 pound black marlin (also known as the *Mighty Marlin*) off the coast of Cabo Blanco, Peru; induction ceremony into the Fishing Hall of Fame at the International Game Fish Association; account of how he met his wife, Clare Attwell; first trip as a young boy to the Smithsonian Institution to see the stamp collections; involvement with the formation of the Smithsonian National Board; reflections on the leadership of S. Dillon Ripley, eighth Secretary of the Smithsonian; donation of the *Mighty Marlin*, at the request of Leonard P. Schultz, Smithsonian ichthyologist, for the *Life in the Sea Hall* at the National Museum of Natural History; views on development, funding, and government appropriations for the Smithsonian; education program at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston; first acquaintance with Clyde F. E. Roper, Smithsonian marine biologist; scientific expedition to the Bay of Panama south to Ecuador with the University of Miami Marine Institute; and friends inducted in the International Fish and Game Hall of Fame, including Julio Sanchez and the baseball player Ted Williams.

Interviews

Transcript, pp. 1-75, of audiotape recording, c. 2.5 hours.

Interviews

Audio Recordings of Interview: Total Recording Time: c. 2.5 hours

Note:

- Original Masters: 2 audiotape microcassettes
- Preservation Masters: 5 digital audio .wav files
- Reference Copies: 2 audiotape cassettes and 5 digital audio .mp3 files.