



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Oral history interview with
Alfred C. Glassell, Jr., 2002

Finding aid prepared by Smithsonian Institution Archives

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Oral history interview with Alfred C. Glassell, Jr.
Identifier:	Record Unit 9601
Date:	2002
Extent:	3 mini-audiotapes (originals).
Creator:::	Glassell, Alfred C., Jr. interviewee.
Language:	Language of Materials: English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9601, Glassell, Alfred C., Jr. interviewee., Oral history interview with Alfred C. Glassell, Jr.

Use Restriction

Restricted (Tapes and transcripts). The Alfred C. Glassell, Jr., oral history interview may not be used without the written permission of Alfred C. Glassell, Jr., or his heirs or assigns.

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, 75 pages of transcript, and occupies 0.5 cubic feet of shelf space. The interview has been digitized for preservation purposes, so the collection also consists of 5 digital audio .wav files and 5 digital .mp3 files. Box 1 contains transcript of the interview, digital .mp3 files and cassette copies of the original micro-cassette recordings, which are in security storage.

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
- Marine animals
- Marine biology
- Marine sciences
- Marine sciences
- Museum exhibits

Museum trustees
Oceanography
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
Oral history
Transcripts

Names:

Argosy (ship)
Glassell, Alfred C. (Alfred Curry), 1913-2008
International Game Fish Association (IGFA)
Life in the Sea (exhibition)
Mighty Marlin, The (gift)
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
NMNH
National Museum of Natural History (U.S.)
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
Smith, Judith Terry interviewer
Smithsonian Benefactors' Circle
Smithsonian National Board
United States National Museum
United States National Museum. Division of Fishes
University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences
University of Miami. Institute of Marine Science
Watson, Thomas J., 1914-1993
Williams, Theodore S.
Yale University

Geographic Names:

Peru

Container Listing

Box 1

Transcript of Interview

Box 1 of 1

Interview 1: 12 March 2002

Audio Recordings of Interview

Box 1 of 1

Interview 1: 12 March 2002