Do Historians Have Any Talent? (If so, why aren't they paid for it?)
Walter W. Woodward, University of Connecticut

I seek to draw the Consultants working group's attention – and through them the National Council for Public History's attention as an organization– to an abusive labor practice that has come to be accepted as normative within the history community writ large. The practice I oppose, and seek this organization's help in ending, is having historians appearing in and providing content for television, film, and radio documentaries for no compensation. I know from my own experience (having appeared in numerous documentaries as an on camera expert) that this practice is the prevailing one in both the for-profit and non-profit sides of historical documentary production. It is not just on-camera "experts" who are uncompensated. So, in most instances, are historical re-enactors, museum personnel, and other public history professionals who provide much of the visual and intellectual content for many documentaries. While there are instances where participants in documentary productions receive nominal payment for their work, in the vast majority of cases public and academic historians appear on camera for no compensation, and are expected to sign releases waiving all interest in the material they have provided. Meanwhile, documentary producers market, and sometimes profit substantially from programming that is largely the creation of the unpaid participants they used in the project.

Prior to becoming an academic and public historian, I was in the music and the advertising businesses. I sang and narrated commercials, wrote and produced voiceovers, worked both in front of and behind the camera on a variety of projects related to the work under discussion here. Never once was I asked to perform for free. No matter what the project I was involved in – large or small – there was an expectation (and in fact, union requirements) that I be compensated, often substantially, for my efforts. The only difference between my abilities now and my abilities prior to becoming a historian is that I have added many years of historical knowledge to my repertoire and can talk in depth and substantively on a number of subjects of great interest to documentary producers. My reward for that additional knowledge is to work for free.

I do not know how the idea of having historians appear in for-profit productions for no compensation became so firmly entrenched in the industry, but I believe it is an onerous practice that must end. I hope the consultants working group will agree, and we can begin to develop a set of compensation recommendations that would be endorsed by NCPH and subsequently taken to the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, and the American Association of Museums for their endorsement.

My current workload has precluded me from gathering the data from the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and the Screen Actors Guild that will show the generous compensation paid to performers who appear in the same productions for which we donate our services. If the consultants' group chooses to discuss this issue, I will have this data with me at the Portland conference.

What I seek is an agreement in principle that no historian – public or otherwise - should be asked to provide content for documentary productions without compensation. If we could agree on that, the next step would be to think about how to determine equitable compensation in a variety of different settings.

Mary Beth Corrigan

Many independent historical consultants help establish institutional identity by developing exhibits and websites, writing books, or identifying documents for their clients. Historians quite reasonably fear that such work compromises the integrity of historical interpretation. In its Statement on Standards of Conduct, the American Historical Association (AHA) establishes the importance of respectful debate, reliance of primary sources, and sound documentation as historians construct their distinctive narratives and engage in a critical dialogue with each other. In its own ethics code, the National Council of Public History (NCPH) amplifies upon the AHA's Statement on Standards of Conduct by addressing the special challenges facing public historians, their duty to serve the public interest, and their responsibilities to clients and employers. In strong terms, the code advocates that historians maintain independence of professional judgment as they fulfill their assignments. For nearly fifteen years, I have been privileged to work with clients who have respected my professional judgment and appreciated my role as advocate for historical resources. This includes my current client, PNC Bank, who since 2006 has engaged me as the Curator of The PNC Legacy Project, an initiative that honors the traditions of banking by creating historical exhibitions and installing them in bank branches. More than any of my professional roles, my work on the Legacy Project has challenged my professional conscience.

The Legacy Project grew out of my work with the Riggs Bank records. In 2005, PNC Bank acquired Riggs Bank in Washington, which maintained a collection of bank records and artifacts that documented the activities of Washington's oldest bank. PNC hired me to compile final inventories of the Riggs' materials to prepare for their disposition. The method of disposal was an open question. As I discussed these records with interested officers, we distinguished the records – housed in about 1,200 musty ledgers -- from the artifacts -- ephemera, currency, three-dimensional objects, photographs and works of art on paper suitable for display. The collection, particularly items related to U.S. presidents, generals and congressmen, impressed PNC officers with the importance of their stewardship responsibilities. I was making some headway in convincing the officers that the records belonged in a repository, when PNC received unsolicited publicity on these records with a feature in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Within days, *The Washington Post* ran a front-page story on the dilemma facing PNC in its disposition of the Riggs Bank Collection. Thereafter, NPR, Fox News Sunday, CBS-TV and several local television stations news features on the collection. Drawing upon several extended interviews, these stories prominently featured me. After this media blitz, PNC committed itself to the donation of the Riggs records to The Gelman Library of The George Washington University. PNC also retained the artifacts, forming a museum collection that, in turn, became the seeds for the Legacy Project. Only a few months later, the Communications Department developed the concept for this Project and asked me to serve as its Curator.

This initiative, just by its definition, has presented distinct challenges. The PNC Legacy Project is a branded initiative "designed to honor, document, and preserve the history of

predecessor banks, the employees and officers who guided them, and the communities they serve." The project has used three media to reach its audience – museum-quality exhibitions, oral histories, and a website. PNC also gives small grants to historical organizations. These programs explore the role of predecessor banks in their local communities. PNC hopes that people identify the practices of banking in the past with the personal services currently offered in their branches. They have concentrated on new markets, where bank customers are unfamiliar, perhaps even hostile, to PNC. The Legacy Project believes that the historical programming conveys the message that PNC will preserve the old ways. As curator, I develop exhibitions with the expectation that they will generate positive media attention. Working with a museum designer, I have curated eight exhibits in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. So far, the Legacy Project displays have generated the desired media attention, and I have served as one of its spokespersons.

The ethical standards of our profession have allowed me to define my relationship with my clients, develop educational exhibits, and establish my role as a spokesperson. When the Communications officers hired me, they had little appreciation for the historical profession or its audience. As other consultants, I have not been fully successful in this regard, but they now have a limited understanding of what I do. They have given me a long leash in establishing the content of these exhibits. I have convinced them to use a soft sell in peddling their message and accordingly had control over artifact and image selection as well as the script. In addition, it has been easy to uphold the standards of sound documentation and an interpretation that considers all points of view. This professionalism has resulted in straightforward exhibits that educate the public instead of directly communicating PNC's marketing message. My code of ethics has likewise shaped my role as Legacy Project spokesperson. I have convinced the Communications officers my comments to the press should be limited to explaining the historical record. They have accepted this position, and PNC Communications officer sit in during all interviews and are available characterize PNC intentions in a new market.

Previous exhibits have been a mere dress rehearsal for my upcoming exhibit in Cleveland. In October 2008, PNC Financial Services acquired a larger bank, National City Corporation. Based in Cleveland, NCC was one of the nation's largest providers of mortgages, accounting for half of its profits. The U.S. Treasury asked PNC to purchase NCC and offered $7 billion in TARP money to cover losses on NCC's bad debts. The transaction more than doubled the size of PNC and extended its market from the east coast into the midwest. PNC also has found itself in a hostile market, particularly in NCC's home base of Cleveland. For that reason, PNC asked for an exhibit in Cleveland. It will explore National City's role in the commercial development of Cleveland, its response to economic instability, and the expansion of branch banking services after World War II.

There has been more friction in developing this exhibit than others, because discussion of financial instability could heighten the all-too-present fears of the audience. They have come around to my view that the audience will generally know about past depressions and

will discredit an exhibit that leaves out troubled times. I have argued that including these events provides an opportunity to recast common wisdom and show the responses of bankers to these events. Nonetheless, I continue to receive contradictory messages: the exhibit can bring out financial instability and even include a seven-foot high photograph of a bank run, but they have asked me not to use the terms panic, depression, and recession in my explanatory labels. As I write this script (due next Monday), I am trying to be as positive as I can but will not avoid these terms entirely. In the end, the exhibit will be a powerful piece of messaging that not only explores the response to troubled times. It will show not only the impact of banking in local communities, particularly in its commercial fortunes, but also banking as a reflection of our families and communities. The exhibit will probably create goodwill for PNC, as Clevelanders will respond to the subject, artifacts, and images. I am less confident that it will convey the message of continuity in banking services that PNC wants.

It would be impossible to retain my professional integrity without a firm understanding of our profession's ethics. My commitment to historical research, documentation, and balanced interpretation has served as the basis for any recommendation I have made to one of my clients. It has served me well as my role has included external messaging. It has enabled me to develop sound interpretive statements and conduct press interviews with authority.

Morgen Young

I am a consulting historian for a rather unique corporation who has a strong interest in documenting its roots but little background in historic and cultural preservation. The company is the village corporation for a small Native community. While the community has successfully maintained much of its traditional culture, elders desired more formal efforts to preserve their customs and heritage. I am the first historian to work with the corporation and its community members. Earlier preservation efforts were attempted by consultants with linguistic and literary backgrounds, who heavily edited the materials collected to present the community in the best possible light. I previously held a position as cultural research coordinator for the company and succumbed somewhat to precedence set by those before me – collecting oral histories and editing the words of elders into stories much more elaborate and articulate than what was actually said. I now am working for this corporation again, but as a consulting historian and thus feel it is my responsibility to encourage and promote proper preservation methods and an accurate history of the community. It has been suggested to me by members of the corporation to research existing projects on the Internet, to locate visual documents in image searches, and to ignore copyright issues. Instead I rely on secondary sources, contact archives for appropriate imagery and pay the required usage fees. I do not believe with this company that it is a matter of ethics, but rather ignorance of the field of history and the proper steps that must be taken for any history project.

I am currently editing a book for the corporation. The content of the work focuses on the original village of the community in the 1940s. The Bureau of Indian Affairs assigned a schoolteacher to the village from 1944 to 1948. During his stay there, he frequently photographed the community, encouraged his students to write daily diary entries of life in the village and left behind nearly all of

his correspondence – both personal and official. His sons have successfully preserved these materials. I have been charged with the assignment of writing a narrative thread for these materials, highlighting life in the village during the 1940s. I have been told to move the focus from the teacher to his students, emphasizing the diary entries of the students and collecting oral histories from elders who remember this time period. I have been specifically instructed to edit the content of both the teacher's letters and students' writing. Alcoholism and teen pregnancy are prominent themes in these materials and the corporation fears this presents a negative portrayal of its community. I do not feel comfortable altering history and think that the company should acknowledge these issues, explaining the context in which they arose. Many teenage girls met visiting soldiers and sailors who traveled from village to village following the end of World War II and thus at times became impregnated. Alcoholism was and continues to be a challenge to many Native villages. The children writing these diary entries in the 1940s realized the severity this substance abuse had on many men in their community and discussed it openly.

Unlike past cultural preservation projects created solely for the community, the corporation desires this particular book to target a wider audience, demonstrating to the history community an example of a typical village in the 1940s. If this is truly desired, then I especially cannot justify greatly altering the primary sources. Historians no longer shy away from controversial history, but rather realize the importance of acknowledging what some may consider darker times.

But I am unsure of what might happen if I am challenged to ignore my instincts and schooling as a historian and buckle to the demands of a corporation that is ultimately interested in positive self promotion and portrayal. If a project is meant to reflect a community, but was created by and for the community, do I have a say as an outsider whether I am a public historian or not? I must respect the rights and sensitivities of the company and community, while asserting and maintaining my role as the historian.

I will continue to stress my belief in leaving the book project unaltered and as accurate as possible given the materials at hand. I believe dealing with these sensitive issues could be resolved by addressing that alcoholism and teen pregnancy did exist in this village in the 1940s and either not dwell on the topics or highlight the changes in the community seventy years later. Several elders could be interviewed regarding their experiences with alcoholism and how they and those they knew overcame the issue. The sensitive subject matter could be used as a teaching tool for younger generations, highlighting the negativity arising from addiction or unprotected sex. The community often emphasizes its desire to span the generations, desiring cultural preservation projects as much to remember the past as to educate those in the future. By addressing these issues, the community history could allow for valuable lessons for those younger members of society to learn from.

Another possible solution for my own trepidations in writing the narrative for this book is to select a more limited scope, rather than presenting an entire history of the community from the 1940s. An analysis of the education system in place during the tenure of this teacher could be discussed, allowing for use of all of the primary sources available while avoiding inclusion of alcoholism, as this affected primarily older men in the community. Teen pregnancy could also be skirted, as many of the girls who became pregnant had already completed their studies. Other possible subjects for the book could be an analysis of daily life or childhood in the 1940s, though I find the exclusion of both alcoholism and teen pregnancy difficult to avoid in these two topics as the schoolchildren often wrote of them in the diaries and thus both issues must have had great effect on their daily lives.

Yet another resolution if the corporation is steadfast in its desire to censor these materials for the final book is to write a foreword in which the narrative is presented as one loosely based on actual events, rather than a completely accurate portrayal of a Native community during this time period.

Whatever the conclusion I must maintain an open discussion with the corporation regarding this project. I believe it is a strength of the company to openly admit the problems its community faced in the 1940s and allows for further discussion of how these problems were and continue to be resolved.

Integrating praxis-ethics on the Old US 80 & Gillespie Dam Bridge Rehabilitation Project

Hugh Davidson, Cultural Resources Manager, Maricopa County (AZ) Public Works

As 'all *politics is local'* –in the words of sage politician Tip O'Neil–what constitutes public history's subject matter is often first broached in a local government context. Across the nation's counties and communities are archaeological sites and elements of the historic built environment that retain substantive historic value. Sites, structures, buildings, even districts or historic landscapes are bound to a specific geographical location. Even as a historic property's significance might redound up to the National Register or National Landmark level, all public history must connote local significance.

Stripped to its essentials, most public historians who ply their trade in local government act as planners or planning administrators—that is certainly true in my case, where my task is to inform colleagues and the public the tack my agency should follow to treat local 'history' encountered in our jurisdiction. Drawing from my experience I provide a case today to engage your consideration on the intersection of praxis and ethics in cultural resource management for a metropolitan county agency, Maricopa County (AZ) Public Works.

All good history begins with a question, or a coherent set of related questions. In my current work three questions spring to mind that can be subject to issue analysis.

- How can I give history its due when agency proponents consider fast-paced infrastructure development as an indisputable public benefit?

Here professional ethics come into play as the push to comply with historic preservation regulation contends with advancing transportation improvements our engineer's see as an urgent response to burgeoning urban expansion, deteriorating roads and bridges, and which they design to promote increased traffic efficiency and safety. As cultural resource guru Thomas King cogently asserts, terrible things can happened to your soul if you fail to articulate a clear commitment to your agency mission with an equal determination that history be given its due. Avoid being a purist, to paraphrase King, who grounds his

statement in real world conditions of seeking outcomes rather than doctrinaire adherence to specific cultural resource regulation.1

- Cultural resource managers are being compelled to subsume their evaluations under the NEPA umbrella; does this benefit or detract from ensuring adequate treatment of cultural resources?

Nowadays cultural resources specialists are pressed to dovetail their efforts to meld cultural resource compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance.2 When history has to vie for decision-makers attention along with biological evaluations, endangered species, invasive plant species, protected native plants, noise abatement considerations, clean air and water issues, hazardous waste assays, among a bevy of project environmental issues it is not hard to foresee history suffering as a consequence. Environmental regulations that bound the compliance process can be creatively adapted to reach 'beyond [simple] compliance,' as articulated in Lyn Sebastian's excellent training regime.3 Both Sebastian and King reiterate how individual creativeness executed within the parameters of law-regulation, knowing the broad parameters of designers and fellow planners, and being judicious in standing your ground for what is truly significant can actually be empowering.

- How can I advance my advocacy for *public history* as integral to cultural resource management (CRM) when peers, managers, and all whom I consult simply equate CRM with archaeology? And when will Arizona's historic resources be afforded the same level of consideration as archaeology under state statutes or local ordinances?

As a proponent of public history I feel ethically bound to articulate my view that cultural resources management would substantially benefit from historians (or affiliates from allied historical specialties) serving managerial roles in the ranks of the nation's cultural resource personnel.4

To engage our consideration of these issues I submit an on-going county transportation project as my presentation vehicle; namely, the Old US 80 and Gillespie Dam Bridge Rehabilitation Project (hereafter, GDB). I choose this case study to trace sequential project development, for its evident history preservation tack, but also because the issues under discussion herein are observable as Maricopa County anticipates imminent bridge rehabilitation. I also offer up the GDB project as my example in the belief that observing a specific historic property(s) as a work-in-progress is engaging, and can render our discussion of abstract concepts, practices and compliance activities a bit more comprehensible to a wider audience.

A précis of the Old US 80 – Gillespie Dam Bridge as a historic property5

Foremost in any cultural resource management discussion is the resource itself. Antedating the Gillespie Dam Bridge construction were decisions by state officials that routed a state highway in this location. In 1912 the Arizona State Engineer first proposed a system of

major highway alignments. Among the State Engineer's proposed highway routes was an east-west route from Clifton near the New Mexico border, through Phoenix, to Yuma on the California border. Construction of the Phoenix-Yuma portion of the east-west highway alignment was initiated under state auspices in 1913. A Gila River crossing for the Phoenix -Yuma Highway was fashioned by Arizona highway officials by routing a temporary road over a concrete apron extending outward from the base of the Gillespie Dam by 1922. The Arlington-Gillespie Dam-Gila Bend sections of the Phoenix-Yuma highway were upgraded in 1923 as a 13½-ft wide gravel surfaced road. Before the advent of Gillespie Dam Bridge the state highway authorities provided a contract tow truck equipped with tow chains to convey vehicle trains or to rescue imperiled motorists caught in transit during high water episodes on the Gila River.

With the passage of the 1916 and 1921 Federal Highway Acts, with increased flow of federal aid distributed among the states, Arizona's Yuma-Phoenix Highway was favorably positioned as one of the Arizona's designated Federal Aid Primary Highways. This status made the Yuma-Phoenix Highway a qualified recipient of new federal highway construction funds.

As delineated by design engineer Ralph A. Hoffman in September 1925 the proposed Gillespie Dam Bridge was comprised of nine truss spans, five 200-foot trusses over the river's channel at the bridge's center, flanked by two 160-foot trusses at each end. The trusses supported a 19-foot-wide concrete roadway, with the deck carried at the trusses' lower chord level and the steel truss webs extending over the roadway on both sides. Reflective of engineering standards of the time, the spans were configured as Parker trusses with riveted connections.

In January 1926 the bridge construction contract was awarded to Lee Moor Contracting Company; trusses were assembled and delivered by the Virginia Bridge and Iron Company using *OH*-type structural steel. Construction began in February 1926, with a substantial construction camp set at the river crossing. A year later the concrete piers had been completed, and the men were erecting the steel trusses when the Gila River flooded in February 1927. Moor Contracting Company suffered extensive losses of material and equipment; however, the contractor regrouped and completed the bridge superstructure later that spring and poured the concrete for the monolithic deck that summer. The final aspects of the construction involved installation of the guardrails and field-painting the steelwork.

With little fanfare on August 1, 1927 the Gillespie Dam Bridge was open for traffic. Costing $320,000 to build the Gillespie Dam Bridge was immense incorporating 1,200 tons of steel and 3,200 cubic yards of concrete. Coeval with the bridge's inaugural years were highway improvements made to the connecting Phoenix-Yuma Highway, which was significantly improved to an 18-ft-wide bituminous asphalt road by 1928. These improvements were coeval with the emergence of a designated national transcontinental highway system. The U.S. highway nomenclature renamed the Phoenix-Yuma route as part of US 80 between

Savannah and San Diego. Depicted in *Arizona Highways* magazine in 1933 (above) the modern paved version of US 80 passed over the Gillespie Dam Bridge. Up until 1956 the Gillespie Dam Bridge would comprise an integral component in the newly designated national highway system.

1 Thomas F. King, "The Future," In *Cultural Resource Laws and Practice*, 327-339. I do not universally subscribe to all of King's notions about the proper course of cultural resource practice—what is it with his obsession with the perceived shortcomings of the National Register?—however, King's incisive analysis of the cultural resource field is without peer and an important point of departure in discussing these matters.
2 USDOT Federal Highway Administration, "NEPA and the Transportation Decision-making Process," National Highway Institute Course, Atlanta, GA, February 5-7, 2008.
3 Lyn Sebastian and Terry Klein, "Beyond Compliance in Historic Preservation," Workshop Training co-sponsored by Federal Highway Administration and the National Highway Institute, January 16-18, 2008, Phoenix, AZ.
4 In a field largely dominated by pre-historic archaeologists I contend equally capable cultural resources personnel can be found among historians, architectural historians and interdisciplinary specialists drawn from historical archaeology, American Studies, folklore-folklife studies and cultural/historical geography to fulfill the requirements of cultural resources practice.
5 Archaeological Consulting Services of Tempe, Arizona (ACS) prepared a Class III investigation report on the *Gillespie Dam Bridge Potential Impact Area* (2006). ACS partnered with FRASERdesign of Loveland, Colorado in the compilation of a Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) document, *Gillespie Dam Bridge* (HAER AZ-69).