

## T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

### ABSTRACT

**INTERVIEWEE NAME:** Harold V. Andersen

**COLLECTION:** 4700.1265

**IDENTIFICATION:** Professor Emeritus of the LSU Geology and Geophysics Department

**INTERVIEWERS:** Judith Schiebout, Edward B. Picou Jr.

**SERIES:** University History - Distinguished Faculty & Administrators

**INTERVIEW DATES:** June 18, 1999; September 8, 1999

**FOCUS DATES:** 1900s - 1990s; primarily 1920s - 1960s

### ABSTRACT:

#### Session I

#### **Tape 1846, Side A**

Interviewers introduce themselves; Andersen's affiliation with museums started in 1927 with the Colorado Museum of Natural History (CMNH) and continued with the Nebraska State Museum in the 1930s; both institutions were vying for the Andersen artifact collection, which contained the first artifact type found with bison skeleton; artifact type named Folsom after discovery site near Folsom, New Mexico; Harold Cook with the CMNH excavated the bison skeleton with the artifact; Andersen showed artifact collection to Dr. Frank Howland at the CMNH; Andersen's association with Cook led him to serve as a guide to Elspeth Pabst Parmentier on an expedition through the West; Jesse D. Figgins of the CMNH sent Andersen to seek mammoth remains in southern Nebraska, later to seek the stenomylus camel in Agate, Nebraska; Figgins' wife, Ellen, sent Andersen on an archeological exploration in Tuscumbia, Alabama, with the Tennessee Valley Authority and Works Progress Administration, excavating paleoindian artifacts; he later worked as a museum director and handled the same material; in the 1930s and 40s, attended University of Nebraska and studied geology; became affiliated with LSU c. 1947 as a graduate assistant; in 1949, started operating the department's geology museum; lists the location and content of exhibit displays in the building [now Howe-Russell Geoscience Complex]; Andersen born in 1907 outside Cumberland, Iowa; father Perry Andersen was a cattle buyer; family moved to Yuma, Colorado, when he was three; early memories of a circus, a doctor's car, going swimming with a cousin; he and his father collected Yuma-type paleoindian artifacts, starting with a blowout area on their property; explanation of how blowout areas formed from farming, sod loss and strong winds; he and his father hunted for artifacts in multiple blowouts in northeastern Colorado; Cook found an important Scottsbluff type artifact in situ, cementing the importance of the Andersen collection; professor Erwin Barbour and others at University of Nebraska; it took Andersen fifteen years to get a degree in geology because he didn't always have funds and other opportunities came up; searching for elephant remains in blowouts in Nebraska; CMNH had an elephant skeleton and Figgins sought another in southern Nebraska;

Andersen says he was not enticed to come to LSU; after discharge from service, decided to go back to school; first visited University of Alabama but they had no graduate courses; a professor there told him to go to Johns Hopkins instead of a southern school; next visited LSU and met Harold N. Fisk who was working with the Corps of Engineers at the time; they ran into Henry V. Howe who promised Andersen an assistantship; he intended to get a master's only but ended up getting a PhD on Howe's urging; Fisk led Andersen and James Morgan to the mud lump study; Rufus LeBlanc was on staff at that time; Andersen held labs while working on his PhD; began taking over classes for Howe in the late 1940s; he can't begin to guess how many students went to work with oil companies; dissertation on a foraminiferal assemblage found in mud lump clays, showed vertical displacement of river bed; also did research in Sabine Parish; the mud lump assemblage he discovered was the best material to present to students because it had intact specimens from many genera; he was responsible for a washing facility/lab and built storage areas in the building's attic;

### **Tape 1846, Side B**

From a photo, Andersen identifies the faculty at LSU when he arrived circa 1950, including James Morgan, Grover Murray, Henry Howe, and A.E. Sandberg; his student, Jerry Wermund went on to teach at LSU, was a capable individual; LSU currently has over twenty professors in the department; Dr. R.J. Russell was also in the department at that time; it was unique for geology, geography and archaeology to be as interconnected as they were at LSU; Andersen thinks it goes back to Russell and Howe's relationship; Howe was very facetious and once named a foraminifera specimen after a competitor; interviewer Picou was Andersen's student; Andersen says his only complaint was Picou went to work for an oil company instead of pursuing graduate work; Picou recalls afternoon teas held in Andersen's back office, sometimes Robert West would attend and Fred Kniffen was always there; Andersen retired in 1977, Picou recalls attending his retirement party; describes research he conducted after his retirement, working to correct an error from decades prior, Ruth Todd had misidentified a feature on a weathered foraminifera specimen; he's revisited some of his work on micropaleontology and North Louisiana burials with galena; an unusual burial with a male and female entwined from the Copena culture; Theodor Neagu, a visiting professor from Romania, who Andersen met by accident but ended up being close friends with; Neagu visited LSU in 1966; Neagu named two foraminifera specimens after Andersen; Andersen is also close with Theodor's son, Mircea (Mike); Mike was a child, spoke no English when Andersen first met him; he's like an honorary uncle to Mike now; installing two safes to house the department's fossil collection of over 7,000 items; people from all over the world seek to use this fossil collection; one of Howe's students, Tetsura Hana; Picou and Andersen discuss oral exams for graduate students; visiting professors gave the department a cosmopolitan air; to get idea for the exhibit displays in the building, he visited many museums worldwide; he served as carpenter and designer for the exhibits, had studied architecture earlier in his life; his grandfather was a carpenter who he only surpassed on one occasion; begins story of how he lost his thumb;

### **Tape 1847, Side A**

He worked in the tippel at a coal mine in Columbia, Utah; explanation of loading and moving coal; coworker who was likely intoxicated from the night before did not show up to work so Andersen took his place; his glove was caught in a cart's wheel and it severed the end of his thumb; he got \$300 for his injury; he planned to use his earnings to go to school but his mother

was in the hospital so he paid her bill instead; his grandfather paid for schooling in Chicago for architecture but Andersen left because he was having sinus problems; football games at LSU were an occasion for women to dress up and wear hats, that's rarely seen anymore; Howe was a big football fan, he had seats behind the goal post; the department and students didn't tailgate back then as they do today; most outstanding moment in his career was finding mud lump assemblage at the mouth of the Mississippi River in 1947 or '48; explains how he and Morgan surveyed five lumps and the fifth was a treasure trove; Andersen dug the mud and specimens out by hand; mud lumps no longer exist there, the geography has changed dramatically; the material he found is in high demand for teaching purposes; he's fortunate for his relationship with Picou; conclusion.

## **Session II**

### **Tape 1848, Side A**

Introduction; Andersen is an LSU Geology Department professor emeritus; his mentor at LSU was Henry "Heine" Howe; concept of professor was personified in Erwin H. Barbour from University of Nebraska; he started his education in a "little green schoolhouse" in northeastern Colorado; uncle Rudy Stangle played pranks on him but was a cherished benefactor; playing croquet with his teenage girlfriend, she hit him on the head with the mallet; entered high school in Yuma, Colorado, in 1921 and graduated in 1925; got a scholarship to the University of Denver, his good friend Earl also attended; Earl became a millionaire operating a grocery store while Andersen became a professor; left college after one year because he could not afford tuition; in 1926, accompanied his uncle Rudy and aunt Harriet to Columbia, Utah, a coal-mining town; uncle got him a job on the tippie crew; he planned to save his income and go back to school in Chicago for architectural engineering; the \$400 he had saved ended up paying for his mother's hospital bills; on New Year's Day in 1927, man on tippie crew did not appear for work and Andersen took his place; lost the end of his thumb when his glove got caught; doctor who treated him was the same doctor he encountered once in Chicago; heard about a bison skeleton accompanied by stone artifacts from Dr. Howland at the Colorado Museum of Natural History; Harold Cook, curator of vertebrate paleontology, visited Yuma to see the Andersen artifact collection; description of how blowout areas formed; blowouts unearthed artifacts; in 1939, Cook suggested Andersen serve as guide to Elspeth Pabst Parmentier as she took a four-month tour of some western states; Cook recommended Andersen save his \$150/month salary for tuition at the University of Nebraska; registered for a B.A in Geology; in 1938, offered job as field archaeologist with Alabama Geological Survey to assist in removal of remains from Seven-Mile Island in the Tennessee River; Ellen Figgins helped him get that job, she was the wife of Jesse Figgins, former director of the Colorado Museum of Natural History; important to have this job during the Depression; returned to Nebraska to complete B.A. but no jobs available so he took a job as director at the Birmingham Archeological Laboratory where he cataloged artifacts from his excavations; lab closed in 1942, he went on to study metals present in sedimentary formations in Alabama; explains how metals form concretions, how they sampled them, how they would be washed out of the sediment for collection; volunteered for officers' training with the Corps of Engineers; commissioned in July, 1942, to engineer combat group; sent to Europe briefly, then back to California to train for combat in Japan; war ended so his military career was short-lived; his promotion up to rank of captain; recalled to duty in November 1950, four months after receiving his PhD from LSU; he assisted a Lieutenant Brandon with a manuscript on the contribution of geology to military operations; assisted by a soldier who was a geology major

and a lady editor who checked his science; he was responsible for some of the material in the technical manual (TM5-545) but the rest was done by the military branch of the U.S. Geological Survey; he later found his manual being used as a textbook at Stanford University; after leaving the Corps of Engineers. joined his wife, Dorothy, in Birmingham; Alabama; decided to go back to school and tried University of Alabama first; department chair told him to go to Johns Hopkins, Southern schools were inferior; decided to try LSU where he met Harold N. Fisk and was told by Henry Howe that an assistantship would be available to him; first assignment as grad assistant was assisting Howe and Fisk in lectures and labs; funny story about Fisk closing a lecture; he was also a victim of Howe's pranks; began to teach geology and micropaleontology courses, was made custodian of fossil collections; wishes to thank former students and faculty for purchasing a binocular microscope for him after his retirement in 1977; conclusion.

**TAPES:** 3 (T1846, 1847, 1848)

**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 2 hours, 12 minutes

**# PAGES TRANSCRIPT:** 56 pages (Session I - 45 pgs; Session II - 11 pgs)

**OTHER MATERIALS:** Proper name list; Correspondence

**RESTRICTIONS:** None