

History-SCBA Archives-9/15/10-Wally Mullinax

When the USC Library moved out of the McKissick building G. Richard Shafto, Cosmos Telecasting Company Chairman, Frank Harden (WIS TV) and other broadcasters worked out an arrangement with the University to use space on the 2nd floor of the then empty building as meeting place for SCBA members while visiting the campus.

Frank Harden chaired the committee-composed mostly of active SCBA members, raising funds to decorate, furnish, and paint what became known as the “SCBA Parlor”. Some Columbia Broadcasters wives supervised the selection of colors, furniture and drapes. A well-known Columbia interior decorator was commissioned to assist the decoration committee. Betty Harden chaired the decoration group. During the first fund raising meeting Frank Harden was informed Charleston newsman Wayne Seale was aboard a commercial airliner that crashed in Charlotte.

About \$25,000 was contributed by SCBA members. Their stations gave 1 ½ times their annual station dues to be paid over the 3 years.

It may have been that the SCBA archives project was inspired by the “Parlor Project” because -as time passed, some of the broadcasters shared interesting items to be used for conversation pieces when the Parlor was in use.

The Shaftos contributed a scrapbook of G. Richard Shafto’s Career, Jim Whitaker gave programs of “ Whitaker’s Wax Works” broadcast on Armed Forces Radio, WIS Radio donated a collection of NBC Radio News broadcasts- heard on the network during the 2nd world war, and a collection of speeches by South Carolina Governor James F. Byrnes and Senator J. Strom Thurmond. As time passed there were other archival gifts.

When SCBA established the Hall Of Fame it was decided to display the HOF plaques in the Parlor. During this time there were about 60,000 public school children visiting the facility annually.

As the University grew it needed the parlor space for office space, the parlor decorations were showing wear and it was decided to move the

plaques to the school of journalism. Dave McAtee successfully negotiated this move.

SCBA members were responding with collectables, so a larger area was provided on another floor of McKissick for broadcast materials.

USC President James Holderman, Broadcast pioneer, G. Richard Shafto, School of Journalism Dean-Albert Scroggins and others decided it was time to collect more broadcast materials from throughout South Carolina. Also, provide a place where serious broadcast researchers could glean industry history from wherever it was stored. Thus, the USC/SCBA Archives. Not many such facilities existed elsewhere at this time.

An Ad-Hoc fund raising committee was formed in the late 70s to raise funds for the archives. Charles Batson-who had recently moved to Columbia to become chief executive of Cosmos, was named chairman. Among the participants were: Richard Laughridge (WLTX) Cleatus Brazzel (WELP) Wally Mullinax (WESC) and Richard Uray Executive Director SCBA. (Uray announced he was representing and voting for Dean Scroggins.) Representing the University were: a Professor Berry, director of the McKissick Museum, Chris Vahapalas Assistant to President Holderman, _____representing Wallace Martin. Also attending were University oversight members from the state legislature and board of trustees.

After the SCBA board approved the project- fund raising began with Wally Mullinax Chairman, but was soon “put on hold” because of the 80s recession. Fund raising committee members are listed in the campaign brochure, a copy of which is deposited in the archives. The fund raising goal was \$110,000. Interest rates at that time, were in the 20% range and it was believed that proceeds from \$110,000 would be sufficient to fund the services of a graduate student to catalogue materials and work part-time. Obviously, the University has made up shortfalls because these monies have been insufficient. Dean Albert Scroggins told me that he supplemented the SCBA contributions from his School of journalism budget. During solicitations, VHF stations were asked to contribute \$5000; UHF stations \$1000, large independent radio stations \$1000 and the general membership 1 1/2 times their

annual dues paid over 3 years. Associate members and private donors were also solicited.

By the middle 80s, contributions and interest on contributions had reached the \$ 110,000 goal, therefore the campaign was declared a success and active fund raising ceased. The SCBA Foundation board decided to request the USC Foundation invest and manage the monies, because it could get a better return comingling the funds with other USC foundation investments.

Here are some guidelines under which the SCBA/USC archives operates:

- 1. The archives must be available to all citizens of South Carolina.**
- 2. Must cooperate with all parties doing research.**
- 3. Must be available to broadcast students.**

Presently, Dr. Lynn Robertson, the director of the USC museum at McKissick is the person responsible or making decisions about the archives. Dr. Robertson sees her role as protector of the materials and not collector or promoter of the collection. SCBA Executive Director Shani White is Robertson's contact at SCBA. The SCBA History committee collects materials from South Carolina Broadcasters, identifies the images, provides a listing of materials and delivers them to the archives for storage.

It is important that we continue collecting items and promoting this valuable asset.