

as a routine clerical operation. Therefore some discussion of the transcribing operations is given here in the hope that others working with oral history materials or planning such projects may benefit from this experience. The goal in transcribing has been to reproduce the words of the informant in as near verbatim form as is practicable, which means that transcribing personnel are ultimately called upon to make some decisions as to what the informant is saying and what he means by what he says. For this reason some of the field workers decided either to transcribe their own tapes, or to proofread the transcriptions made by members of the clerical staff. This procedure, where field workers were involved with the transcriptions, was followed for about one-third of the tapes in the collection. Where this was not possible, the transcriptions were checked against the original tapes by someone other than the persons making the rough draft transcriptions. This procedure seems to work very well where the clerical personnel selected for transcribing are carefully screened for their ability to hear well with the audio equipment used, for their conscientiousness in transcribing accurately, and for their willingness to try to overcome a number of difficulties inherent in the transcribing process, including those arising from mechanical limitations of the equipment. Not all typists can become good transcribers, and some very good transcribers may have only mediocre typing ability. The task of transcribing is tedious and often frustrating, and, to keep tension and fatigue at a minimum, is best alternated with other clerical tasks such as the typing of final drafts.

Part of the difficulty in transcribing lies in the nature of oral testimony. Even under the best recording conditions the persons being