

# Using Oral Histories to Repair the Archival Wounds of Watergate

MEGHAN LEE

**Abstract:** Can archivists reconstruct a shattered collection with the help of those who created it? In a ten minute multimedia presentation, archivist Meghan Lee of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum (the twelfth and newest NARA Presidential library) will explain how the Library's archivists have used oral histories and other contacts with former staff members of the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP) to ascertain the provenance and correct arrangement of CREEP's records.

CREEP was the organization that managed Richard Nixon's 1972 presidential campaign and which passed into notoriety because it employed several of the Watergate burglars. FBI, Congressional committee, and the Watergate Special Prosecution Force investigations into campaign activities and the Watergate break-ins destroyed the original order of the collection. After the period of investigations, the materials were crated and sealed, not to be reopened until February 2008, when archivists from the Nixon Library began processing the collection. (The privately owned collection was deeded to NARA in July 2007).

Library archivists are using the Library's ongoing oral history interview project to research the CREEP collection's history. Recently conducted oral histories with CREEP Director of Administration Robert C. Odle, deputy campaign directors Fredrick Malek and Jeb Magruder, and former CREEP counsel G. Gordon Liddy have provided archivists with information of the creation and organization of the records, as well as insights into the destruction and loss of materials.

## About the author:

*Meghan Lee* is the archivist at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California.