

**Collection #  
DVD 0253–0254**

**JAMES HAAN  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW, 2012**

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## COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 2 DVDs (1 master and 1 user copy)

COLLECTION DATES: 16 July 2012; 36 minutes, 52 seconds

PROVENANCE: Indiana Historical Society partner project with Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, 2011-2012

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: DVD 0255-0256 Mike Haan Interview, 2012;  
DVD 0257-0258 John Haan Interview, 2012

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2013.0005m0003

NOTES:

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

During the early Cold War, fear that the USSR would bomb the United States prompted bomb shelters, bomb drills, and efforts such as “Operation Skywatch,” a civil defense program to assist the United States Air Force to monitor the aircraft in the sky. The USAF believed Operation Skywatch was essential because it was a low-cost alternative to contemporary radar, which was not effective enough to detect low-flying aircraft. Operation Skywatch was staffed by the all-volunteer Ground Observer Corps. The GOC found its origins in WW II with the recruitment of volunteer observers along the United States coasts. In response to growing tensions between North and South Korea, the GOC was re-envisioned with GOC volunteers manning observation defense posts in gaps between proposed radar network sites 24 hours a day. Suspected threats were reported to filter centers operated by the USAF. As technology improved, the need for the GOC diminished. By 1959, the GOC was inactivated.

James “Jim” Haan was born in 1918 and grew up in Cairo, Indiana on a farm. He experienced school consolidation and, as an adult, ran his own family farm. He attempted to enlist during WW II but was not physically eligible. He was a member of the local grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry, a service organization formed nationally in 1867 to assist farmers and their families to transition into commercial farming after the Civil War. He volunteered for the Ground Observer Corps in 1952 through the encouragement of Larry O’Connor, a local grocer and former United States Navy Chief Petty Officer. Haan helped engineer and build the watchtower in Cairo, Indiana, which was the first one built in the United States. So impressed with the Cairo tower, the USAF requested Haan’s watchtower plans for use by other builders. The Cairo GOC team reported to the filter center in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Haan’s mother and sons, including John and Mike who were also interviewed for this project, along with other neighbors, helped with the two-hour watchtower shifts, even while the majority of them were maintaining family farms.

The tower was commemorated in 1976 with help from O’Conner and Haan. The tower was reinforced, and a statue was installed.

Sources: Material in the collection

Callander, Bruce D. “The Ground Observer Corps.” *Airforce-magazine.com*. Online journal of the Air Force Association. February 2006. <http://www.airforce-magazine.com/MagazineArchive/Pages/2006/February%202006/0206goc.aspx>.

Cromwell, Bob. “Cold War Watchtower, Delta Lima 3 - Green, DL3-G.” *The History of Information Security and INFOSEC / Military History Tourism*. Accessed March 6, 2013. <http://cromwell-intl.com/security/history/dl3g/>.

Nordin, D. Sven. *Rich Harvest: A History of the Grange, 1867-1900*. Baton Rouge, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1974.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

Folder 1 contains an audio recording of James Haan's oral history interview. DVD 0253 contains a MP3 version of the interview for backup only (master). DVD 0254 contains a MP3 version of the interview for library use (copy). Haan was interviewed as part of the Cairo Observer Corps Oral History Project. Topics include living in Cairo, Indiana, farming in the rural Midwest, building the Cairo tower, the Ground Observation, Corps, and memorializing the local GOC. The interview was conducted by Nicole Poletika on July 16, 2012, in Cairo, Indiana as part of research for her graduate thesis in public history. Poletika is a graduate student at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

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James Haan oral history interview, audio MP3 file on  
DVD (1 master and 1 copy)

### CONTAINER

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