



On Tape

Newsletter of the Oral
History Association of
Australia, Queensland
Branch Inc

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Greetings fellow oral historians!

Apologies for this newsletter being a little late because of Christmas and other commitments. I am the new Editor for our Queensland Branch newsletter and look forward to a long association with the Committee. I have been a member of the Association for several years but until now have not had the time to participate as a committee member. I have recently completed my Bachelor of Arts at University of Queensland majoring in Journalism and Political Science. My journalism studies will help in my oral history endeavours.

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men and women aged about 80 who lived in rural Australia. It made me think about my own grandmother and stories she had told me about her life so I determined to get her on tape after buying a Sony TCM-2 recorder. I still have the tapes which are now so much more precious since her death in 1996.

Then I discovered the Oral History Association of Australia and attended a workshop to learn the procedure for collecting oral histories. My collection of tapes has grown (with mainly family members) and now that I have more time, I intend to branch out further to collect other oral histories before they are lost.

Finally, a reminder about renewal of membership – please complete the form on p.9 and return it to The Treasurer ASAP. I invite all of you to forward contributions to this newsletter either by mail or email. I will email this newsletter to those for whom I have email addresses. The rest will receive a hard copy. If you would like an email copy in future, let me know your email address. Otherwise, I will continue to forward a hard copy.

Suzanne Mulligan
Editor

I first became interested in “oral history” about twenty years ago although at that time I had not heard of the term. My parents gave me a treasured book for Christmas 1982 *If Only I'd Listened to Grandpa* [McAdoo, Martin. 1980. Sydney: Lansdowne Press]. Many of you have probably read it or have copies yourselves. It is a collection of personal histories full of quotes from

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 17 November 2001, 12 noon

Report from President

Present: Denis Drouyn, Niles Elvery, Lesley Jenkins, Ross Lawrie, Marion Mackenzie, Suzanne Mulligan, Sue Pechey, Kate Roberts, Ros Schuppner, Joanne Scott

Minutes of the previous AGM were read and accepted as accurate.

The President reported on her first year in the job, mentioning the Ipswich Forum, held in April, and workshops held in Emerald, Roma, Rolleston, and Springsure. The Association was represented at the Cooroy History Fair by Sue Pechey and Kate Roberts. Sue, Kate and Niles Elvery also went to the National Biennial Conference in September and came back with enthusiasms for oral history recharged and some useful contacts.

Most of this year has focussed on how the Qld branch can continue to exist, in the face of rising insurance costs, lack of a permanent meeting space, and the fact that at least two members of the committee live a considerable distance out of Brisbane. We did have the offer of space at Griffith University, but this was felt to be not central enough for meetings. It is hoped that the appointment of a new State Librarian may see a change of policy and attitude to both oral history in general and the Association in particular. Until we have an opportunity to meet the incoming Librarian, and put our case to her, this is an unknown, and we will try to carry on as we are.

The Treasurer's report was held over, since the Auditor has been unable to deal with our books in time for this meeting.

The Secretary reported on the difficulty of communicating with some members of the Branch, especially when e-mail systems go down at critical times. She stated that we are not able to continue to use the West End Library as a meeting place, and gallantly offered her own home for at least the next meeting. The Editor of *On Tape* reported on the production of four editions of the newsletter this year, at an approximate cost of \$150 per issue.

Elections resulted in the re-appointment of Sue Pechey to the Chair, and she will also Secretary, Kate Roberts will be our Treasurer, Ros Schuppner will take on the membership list, and we welcome Suzanne Mulligan as *On Tape* Editor.

We welcome also Ros Schuppner's offer to take over the membership list, and get it really up-to-date. We need to do this to undertake a membership drive and to send *On Tape* and the National Journal to the right people.

General business centred on a discussion of the income tax problem and the rise in insurance costs. Denis Drouyn bravely undertook to find us the best insurance deal going! Sue Pechey undertook to talk to the National President about income tax payable on sale of books. There was also discussion about the September conference and the need to find a theme and apply for funding. Lesley has already undertaken to look into some sources of funding and there will be a notice in the next *On Tape* encouraging people to seek RADF funding to some from regional centres to the conference.

The meeting closed at 12.45.

MEETING OF 4 DECEMBER 2001

Present were Ros Schuppner, Kate Roberts, Suzanne Mulligan, Denis Drouyn and Sue Pechey

Apologies were received from Lesley Jenkins

Denis Drouyn, our outgoing Treasurer, said that the books needed to remain with the Auditor for a few more weeks, so we had no accurate balance information. He went on to say that we have a problem with the payment of income tax on sale of books (*Talking Together*). The National President, in conversation with Sue Pechey, said that we need not concern ourselves with income tax unless our income is more than \$50,000.00. Sue Pechey undertook to contact the ATO to try to establish the real position.

Denis raised the other problem of insurance, and how we are to meet the increased payments necessary. He has undertaken to research the best possible deal for us. The alternative is to not be an incorporated body, which would obviate the need for insurance—though there would be other legal ramifications of not being incorporated.

Sue Pechey pointed out that membership fees will rise in the new financial year (July 2002), as per the decision taken at the BGM of the national body in September.

The meeting discussed several ways of making sure we stay financially viable. These included:

- a membership drive, with all current members taking on board the need to bring new members into the Association
- charging consultation fees for advice given to enquirers—many of these enquirers come to Niles Elvery at the John Oxley Library, who then contacts Sue Pechey or Lesley Jenkins, who then telephone or are telephoned. Advice is never charged for, nor are those enquiring ever asked to become members of the Association before they receive the information they need. Perhaps we should be more pressing in this area.
- workshops need to be run—on the Downs, in Brisbane, and up at the Sunshine Coast—on a voluntary basis by the presenters.
- the planned September conference needs to be well publicised and we need to have a good program to heaps of people to the conference.

Ros Schuppner undertook to take care of the membership register and to ask James to hand it all over to her. Suzanne Mulligan is to take over the production of the *On Tape*, the next to be out at the end of the year. Sue undertook to look into the costs of a telephone directory entry in the Brisbane phone book.

Sue has an appointment with the new State Librarian on 5 December, and will discuss with her the problems and needs of the Association. Kate Roberts will accompany Sue to that meeting.

We will be looking, in particular, for the State Library to play a larger role in oral history in Queensland, for assistance with the State Conference in September, and for in-kind support of the production of the newsletter. Lesley Jenkins has suggested that the State Library could carry a better collection of oral history material, especially the national journals of the British and American societies.

It would also be helpful if the State Library took a leadership role in deciding what equipment and technical standards the Association should be recommending to potential practitioners. At the moment the John Oxley Library equipment is out-of-date, in that it has no digital technology for interviewers to borrow, nor has it made any ruling about the acceptance of interviews on CD, rather than on audio tape. New standards of indexing for digital technology are also needed.

BOOK REVIEW

Record & Remember: Tracing Your Roots Through Oral History by Ellen Robinson Epstein and Jane Lewit (1994: Scarborough House) seems to have been written as a response to the cultural cringe in America. Its target audience is the amateur family historian who wants to discover their heritage but includes sections for institutional use as well. It is written in a laid back friendly narrative style that is quite informative and easily digestible.

Many useful tips are given in regards to interviewing family members. They suggest it is a good idea that children refrain from interviewing their parents due to the relationship dynamics that exist and resultant censoring of material. Instead the authors' mention other combinations that might work better. The possibility of capturing the stories that have been passed down through the generations and questioning their accuracy is put forward. After covering issues relating specifically to family history collection broader aspects of oral history are covered.

Subsequent chapters cover background research, questioning styles, developing interview outlines, recording equipment, conducting the interview, and what to do with the material after the interview. Oral history is presented in easy bite size chunks that inspire the reader to believe they can be successful in their own project. Beth Robinson's *Oral History Handbook* is similar and seems to differ only in regards to depth of information, writing style and use of examples. *Record and Remember* seems an ideal introduction to the art of oral history within families.

Kate Roberts

RE M I N D E R ! !

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR
MEMBERSHIP FEES
YET?

*Membership subscriptions
are our main source of
funds.*

*If we are to be able to
function as a branch of the
Oral History Association of
Australia we have to be
solvent. To be solvent, we
need your membership
renewals NOW!*

Renewals are due at the
end of June each year and
are to be forwarded to:

Kate Roberts
Treasurer
OHAA Qld Branch
PO Box 548
ANNERLEY 4103

PINKENBA STATE SCHOOL 125 YEAR PROJECT

Prior to our AGM on 17 November 2001 we had an interesting presentation from Sahila ChangeBringer about her involvement with an oral history project to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the Pinkenba State School where there are currently 26 pupils. Pinkenba borders the Brisbane Airport and for a suburb of Brisbane, it is surprisingly isolated and rural in character with Sahila likening it to the fabled "Brigadoon".

Sahila started out marketing the project to attract sponsors and succeeded in involving about 25 different companies including the Brisbane City Council, Shell, BP, and the Brisbane Airport Corporation. Later she was asked to help with the interviews and did 19 herself while others were done by the book's author.

Sahila borrowed a Marantz recorder with two microphones from the State Library in exchange for providing the Library with master copies of the tapes. She transcribed the tapes from a small hand-held recorder (very tedious!).

Research and writing for the book was funded by a Centenary of Federation grant. The writer proposed they would interview between 50 and 100 people and allow half an hour for each interview which was, of course, impossible.

"For example, I drove out to interview a family of four siblings aged from 60 to 85 and they'd have morning tea for me – like a royal visit. Three hours later plus travel time, proved budgets are totally irrelevant. I gave up worrying about it," Sahila said.

Sahila was impressed by the strength of community spirit that centres on the school. Unfortunately active community members are declining as young people move away and it's left to a small band of very proud hard-working people to keep that spirit alive.

"I found it absolutely amazing that so many families there have roots that go back five or six generations in such a small geographical area. I was blown away by how frank people were with me and how welcome they made me. They opened their doors and hearts to let somebody in to hear their stories," Sahila said.

The book was launched at the Pinkenba school in December though will not be available till the New Year. The launch was a community festival with bush bands, old-time dressups attended by local dignitaries and sponsors. There are twelve chapters, A4 size and 288 pages. Printing cost \$13,000.00 for 500 copies paid by pre-orders and sponsorships. The book can be ordered when school resumes from Pinkenba State School, Eagle Farm Road, Pinkenba 4008; telephone (07) 32601342 - \$25.90 includes postage.

Suzanne Mulligan

AS TIME GOES BY

The Toowong Branch of the National Seniors Association have recently published a collection of reminiscences edited by Dr Russell Cowie – *As Time Goes By: Reminiscences of the Twentieth Century*. The project began with a "reminiscences" group that met monthly and told their stories to the group. As interest grew, more people came along to share their stories and Dr Cowie encouraged them to write them down.

There are 26 contributors with 78 articles on topics including Families and Family Events, Memories of Parents, Memories of Wartime and Memorable Journeys. Contributors were delighted to see their stories in print.

Dr Cowie said they received a \$990.00 grant from the Brisbane City Council Senior Citizens' Funding Program which was spent on compositing costs. Printing of the 500 copies was paid for by advance orders. The cover was designed by arts students from Toowong College and Brisbane Girls Grammar School. The book was printed by the Toowoomba Education Centre which had a very competitive price. The book is 166 pages – smaller than A4. The book can be ordered from NSA Toowong Branch, PO Box 1638, Toowong 4066 - \$15.00 (inc. postage and handling).

Suzanne Mulligan

OKINAWA IN HER MIND

Sayuri Shimizu reviews *Women of Okinawa: Nine Voices from a Garrison Island* by Ruth Ann Keyso. Her review in part follows:

“In this gem of an oral history collection, Ruth Ann Keyso deftly untangles the layered memories of war and peace spun by nine women who have lived in Okinawa, site of one of the bloodiest battles of World War II and host to 75 percent of the American military bases in Japan today. Through collective memoirs spanning three generations, the book tells the varied stories of war and displacement of people who came of age under foreign occupation and citizens whose peacetime life is conditioned by a pervasive foreign military presence.

“These translated narrations of women of diverse backgrounds speak eloquently to many of the themes at the core of the garrison island's contorted past. The relevance and interconnectedness of subjects addressed and questions raised by these interviewees, strangers to each other and reflecting separately on their individual experiences, reveal the astute piloting of an oral historian who understands both how the personal and the public intersect in Okinawa's modern history and that the past and the present are linked through multiple chords of memory.

“One of Keyso's interviewees lost nearly her entire family. She remembers lying next to her mother's dead body for two days only to be rescued from imminent death by starvation by, to her surprise, American soldiers. Another woman looks fondly on her memory of working in the mess hall on a U.S. military base in the early postwar years. GIs were kind to her and the PX was a cornucopia of the good life America seemed to promise. An 84-year old documentary film maker and anti-base activist holds a more jaundiced view of Americans in her midst, yet she believes that Okinawa's exposure and close proximity to American culture gave her a more tolerant and cosmopolitan outlook. She sees problems stemming from the U.S. military presence in her homeland as a symptom of military culture and holds the government in Tokyo equally responsible for the misery long endured by many Okinawans.

“In a seamless sequence of generational shifts expressed in personal reflections, Keyso illuminates the gradual erosion of WW II memories in a society still fettered by the war's legacy. Although Keyso places all the participants in her oral history project in the middle-class, their class backgrounds were differentiated enough to demonstrably shape their views of the island's history and their attitudes towards Americans, the mainland Japanese and, ultimately, themselves. Former Okinawa prefectural governor Masahide Ota's afterword rounds out the volume with information and insights that will help readers contextualize the personal experiences narrated in this volume.”

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Citation: Sayuri Shimizu . "Review of Ruth Ann Keyso, *Women of Okinawa: Nine Voices from a Garrison Island*," H-US-Japan, H-Net Reviews, November, 2001.

To read the full review, see the following web site:

<http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=154191006375142>

Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA)

Membership of the OHAA includes a subscription to the Journal of the Association, published annually. There are branches of the Association in all Australian States. Northern Territory members are attached to the SA Branch and ACT members to NSW. Branches hold regular meetings, run workshops and publish regular newsletters, and also provide a friendly and informative forum for those interested in oral history from any perspective.

Membership Fees (please tick the appropriate box)

Individuals _____ **\$30**

Institutions _____ **\$40**

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I wish to join OHAA (please tick) _____

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