



On Tape

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

April 2002

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Welcome fellow oral historians!

Here we are already at April 2002 and it has been a busy year so far. What oral history activities have you all been engaged in? Drop us a line and tell us about it. Remember that 2002 is THE YEAR OF THE OUTBACK when we are all encouraged to participate in activities that will promote the Outback.

I've also been busy with my work at the Queensland Police Service. I work at my local station and volunteered to work at the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). I worked at Twin Waters in the Logistics Section which involved issuing and receiving equipment for the police at the start and finish of their shifts.

It was a massive operation providing 24 hour security for the event which thankfully was without incident. I worked shift work which was a new experience for me, especially the night shift. It felt strange to be eating a meal at 3.00 am and going "home" to our Noosa accommodation at 6.00 am. Our accommodation was very comfortable and what little spare time I had (when not trying to catch up on sleep) was spent enjoying the seascape, shops and restaurants. We were very much in the background, so I didn't see any notables.

In this edition we have lots of interesting information, and a notice about upcoming workshops. Be sure to book early.

A reminder again about membership fees for those members who have not yet renewed for July 2001 to June 2002. Please complete the form on p.12 and return it to The Treasurer ASAP. In order to save on postage, this newsletter will be emailed to those for whom I have email addresses.

Suzanne Mulligan
Editor

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FAMILY & LOCAL HISTORY FAIR 2002

Preparations for the Third Family & Local History Fair organised by the Queensland Association of Local & Family History Societies Inc. (QALFHS) are well under way. The theme for 2002 is "Bringing the Outback to the City".

This year's Fair will be held at the Mt Gravatt Showgrounds, 1644 Logan Road, Mt Gravatt in Brisbane, on Sunday, 26th May 2002, from 9.00 am to 4.00 pm. The Family & Local History Fair will be absolutely bursting with workshops, displays, film showings, camel explorers, computer software, books, conservation materials, entertainment, food and much more.

Screenings of the great film, '*Deluge*', starring Ray Barrett, the "True Story of the Great Brisbane flood of 1893" will be shown throughout the day.

Diane Zischke and her camels will be sharing tales of their 3,500 km camel trek that followed the footprints of Burke and Wills through the Australian outback.

Fair entry is \$8.80 per person or \$5.50 if tickets are pre-paid. All workshops, film screenings, talks and entertainment at the Fair are free.

Stall sites are filling up. Possible stallholders should waste no time in making enquiries.

Fair enquiries:

Telephone: (07) 3397 4208 QALFHS Secretary: Margaret Jenner

Facsimile: (07) 3344 2008

Email: purs@gil.com.au QALFHS President: Stephen McGuire

QALFHS Website: www.qalfhs.org.au

. Oral History Training .

The Oral History Association of Australia – Queensland Inc will be conducting oral history training. The workshops will be facilitated by Lesley Jenkins an experienced oral historian. The day will cover the following aspects of oral history:

- . Introduction to oral history – what it is, how it can be used and what can be made from the recordings
- . Memory – its reliability, its triggers, its possibilities
- . The interview and interviewing techniques – researching, the questionnaire, the venue and ambience
- . Tapes, equipment, copyright and ethics
- . Making the tapes accessible – indexing, transcribing and logging

Workshop 1

When: Saturday, 27 April 2002
10am – 4pm
Where: Meeting Room, Bracken Ridge Library
cnr Bracken & Barrett Street, Bracken Ridge

Workshop 2

When: Saturday, 22 June 2002
10am – 4pm
Where: Central City Library Meeting Room, Cnr Ann, George and Adelaide Streets,
Brisbane
Cost: \$45.00 for OHAA members; \$50.00 for non-members

Bookings are essential as places are limited

Please enrol with Lesley Jenkins, 93 Petersen Street, Wynnum 4178 by sending your cheque or money order. For details phone Lesley on 33933804 or emailto: ljenkins@gil.com.au

Name.....Address.....

Phone.....Payment enclosed.....

Please make cheques payable to Lesley Jenkins.

* If you have a working tape recorder please bring it along.

VOICES OF A 20TH CENTURY NATION
SPEAKING & LISTENING AT THE OHAA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
National Library of Australia, Canberra
30 August - 2 September 2001

From the wide range of Peter Emmett's opening address, inviting us to see and hear human culture in new ways, to the songs we shared with the Cyrenes women's choir on the last morning, this conference affirmed the importance of speaking and listening, and opened up a range of possibilities for recording, understanding, and presenting oral history. We heard national and international historical events brought to life in personal stories, and realised the continuing presence of memories in people's daily lives. Throughout the conference, voices echoed one another. We were reminded that telling and listening to one another's stories shows us how our experiences overlap, but also makes us appreciate differences - in a nation still defining itself and struggling with its past, oral history may well have a reconciling power.

The Voices of a 20th Century Nation were diverse - Indigenous Australians, migrants, nurses, prisoners, workers in industry and on the massive Snowy Mountains Scheme, ex-servicemen, artists, to name just a few. With such a selection of fascinating topics being discussed at the Conference as well as some very interesting tours, we often wished we could be in two places at once. A few snippets about some of the events which impressed us follow here.

On the Federation theme was a comprehensive project called *100 Centenarians: The Children of Federation*. 100 centenarians were interviewed with a purpose of using these interviews in making short radio programs to be broadcast around Australia on commercial radio. Peter Rubinstein presented this collection to the National Library at an evening reception. Peter caught our imagination with a fascinating paper highlighted by excerpts on tape and video of some of his centenarians. At the end we were moved to tears by the recording of an old soldier who described the horror of war in graphic terms, dissolving into tears and sobbing over the fear, mud, blood and death by which he had been surrounded so long ago. Peter explained oral history could be therapeutic in that for many this was one of the few times they had talked of these terrible experiences. Peter aimed to combine history and personal anecdote in his broadcasts, something for which oral history is a powerful medium.

On the second morning we heard a keynote address from Doreen Mellor, who has been co-ordinating the many interviewers around Australia involved in the *Bringing Them Home* Oral History Project. This project, based at the National Library of Australia, addresses the experiences of Indigenous children who were removed from their families. Interviews were recorded with Indigenous people and with non-Indigenous participants in the removal process. Doreen let us hear a telling extract from an interview with an adoptive father. He and his wife had been led to believe that they were adopting an orphan, had received limited information from the authorities, and only became aware some years later of the effects and implications of bringing up an Aboriginal child in a white family. Doreen has often been asked if she finds her work on this project depressing. She answers, no, it is an inspiring project, about the strength of the human spirit. Doreen's talk led into a series of panel presentations by Indigenous and non-Indigenous interviewers from the project, discussing approaches to interviewing, the issues involved, and what has been learned.

On Saturday morning, we heard international voices. From his base in the UK, Alistair Thomson spoke of issues such as continuing training needs of oral historians, technological change, and research in the field of memory. Alistair also brought an international perspective through his paper later that morning about migration between Britain and Australia. Jotika Singh explained how the Fiji Museum collects oral histories in relation to archaeological sites, and oral histories of different communities within Fiji. Alben Reuben from Vanuatu spoke through an interpreter about the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and the work of voluntary cultural officers and field workers in the recording and preserving of culture for future generations.

Another theme of the Conference was Collaborations. Win Haseloff presented an enlightening paper about the 'cut and thrust' and mutual value of working with groups of ageing men and women. Diana Giese and Cuong Phu Le spoke about the aims and outcomes of the Vietnamese Community in Australia Oral History Project. Malcom McKinnon put oral history on film for a series of short documentary segments screened on a South Australian regional television station, which linked historical events and current developments.

Several other papers explored new technologies and the possibilities of video and film. Pauline Rockman, for example, discussed the decision of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation to record interviews on video. Trish Walker gave us some insights and practical guidelines regarding the potential, pitfalls, and appropriate use of video to enhance oral histories, illustrated by some on-screen examples.

Ethical considerations also featured during the conference. Some particularly interesting observations came from Diana Covell, who spoke from experience as a participant in the Wollongong 'Jobs for Women' Campaign. The campaign attracted interest from the media, university students and other researchers, some of whom, far from following OHAA practical and ethical guidelines, failed to show sensitivity to interviewees, misrepresented statements of campaign participants, and failed to follow up on promises to return copies of research work to the community.

Julia Horne raised some questions about the applicability of university ethics committees' policies to oral history research projects, and possible discrepancies between the recommendations of ethics committees and the OHAA. This led to some fruitful discussion, and the decision at the Biennial General Meeting to form a working group to examine this issue and communicate with universities (if you have ideas on this matter, please pass them on to the Victorian Branch Committee or to National President Rosemary Block, email: rblock@slsw.gov.au)

The Conference program included tours of major institutions such as the National Library, National Archives and Australian War Memorial. Some of us opted for a tour at Old Parliament House which explored the events leading up to the Constitutional crisis and Gough Whitlam's dismissal in 1975. This was an interactive tour, and we discovered some dramatic talent in our midst! Friday's tour of ScreenSound Australia was followed by a film evening, where we enjoyed newsreel footage and a remarkable documentary about a mailman on the Birdsville Track.

We congratulate and thank Susan Marsden, the Organising Committee, the National Library of Australia and other participating institutions, and the constantly courteous and helpful faces of the Conference Secretariat, for a memorable 2001 Conference that will generate thought and discussion well into the future.

Heather McRae & Anne Sells

Reproduced from October 2001 REWIND, the newsletter of the OHAA, Victorian Branch

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA'S ORAL HISTORY SECTION

The Library's oral history program has been in existence for approximately 20 years. It originated through the increasing incidence of audio material accompanying personal papers taken into the Manuscript collection. The early acquisition of two important collections, the John Meredith Folklore collection and the Hazel de Berg interviews formed the basis of what is now a unique and significant national collection. These days the Library collects and commissions material in three main streams, Elite oral history interviews, Social History oral history projects and Australian Folklore.

The section is actually three sections in one. The Oral History component comprises seven staff responsible for the interviewing and transcribing activities. The Sound Preservation and Technical Services component has five staff responsible for the preservation and archiving of all sound recordings in the collection. A team of three Special Material Cataloguers, cataloguing oral history collection items onto the Library's catalogue and the National Bibliographic Database complete the "group". However, our contract interviewers are also considered part of the team. These interviewers are based all over Australia and are selected usually for their subject expertise and experience in the field of oral history.

Many of the interviews in the "elite" program, e.g. Australians prominent in areas of public life – including the arts, politics, sport, law, religion, industry, commerce and education are conducted in the Library's purpose-built studio. There is always a "buzz" of excitement when this occurs, and the staff always look forward to meeting our guests and assisting them to feel comfortable about the interview. Other interviews are conducted in the field, usually in the homes of the interviewees.

In 2001, staff in the section were busy working with other areas in the Library to support exhibitions, seminars and open days organised to celebrate both Federation and the Library's 100th birthday. The Oral History Association of Australia's national conference was held in the Library on 30 August- 2 September 2001. Oral History staff took up positions on the planning committee and worked with representatives from the Oral History Association, other Commonwealth Collecting institutions such as Australian War Memorial, Australian Archives, Screensound : National Film and Sound Archive, and the new Museum of Australia to help present the Conference.

Australia's Oral History Collections : a national directory (www.nla.gov.au/ohdir) is also administered in the section. When the Library is notified of a new collection, an entry is created in the directory, and collection owners are then encouraged to maintain the currency and relevance of their entry details via the online update facility. The links to related sites, Australian and international make this directory a useful tool for those interested in the field of oral history.

For more information about our collection and services please have a look at the Library's website at www.nla.gov.au or contact the Oral History Section on 02 6262 1687 (phone) or 02 6262 1653 (fax).

Dianne Dahlitz

FRONT UP

I'm sure many of you have enjoyed the interviewing television series on SBS called *FRONT UP*. Interviewer, Andrew Urban, has an extraordinary ability to have people reveal the most intimate details of their lives. He has interviewed many people and as viewers, we are often surprised when a seemingly very ordinary looking person turns out to have had a fascinating life story – mini-oral history. I emailed Andrew for an insight into his wonderful program. Here is his reply:

Thanks for your mail and I hope this will suffice for On Tape:

Front Up was conceived as a tv version of human interest stories you could find in Sunday newspaper supplements and magazines. I wanted to find good stories which were not prompted by a publicity machine, a visiting star or a sales imperative. I soon realised that the low-key, impromptu approach worked well in drawing out strands of stories from people who are not usually given a public platform - yet who have fascinating stories to tell. We all do, of course, because our life experiences tend to be the stuff of which tv drama itself is made. Except in this case it's real, and more complicated than invented scripts.

Our modus operandi is to randomly select places to go (we are: Greg Kay the cameraman, Ben Hooft his assistant to carry spare batteries and tapes, and myself) and randomly approach people to interview. We pick places where there is a reasonable amount of pedestrian traffic to give us ample variety and choice. My selection of subjects is totally random and has no premise.

After reviewing the interviews, we make a priority list of those which we find the most compelling. Once we have enough "double AA" stories, we start editing them. The interviews are always left in chronological sequence, so we can see the development of the conversation. Then we start compiling the episodes.

We do not impose any particular objectives on the interviews we choose - simply which are the most revealing or surprising or moving. Secondary considerations for programming then come into play, so we construct a 'balanced' episode; eg not all women, or all men, not all young or not all in one location, etc.

In the end, my favourite stories are those that echo with the drama of the human condition and demonstrate the power of our virtues: love, loyalty, courage, humour, etc. But they invariably do so in a low key, unsensational manner.

regards
Andrew

USING MINIDISC RECORDERS

The following is an article from PLAYBACK November 2001, the newsletter for the West Australian Branch on the use of minidisc recorders. If any of you have experience in using this equipment, please write and tell us about it.

The Bunbury group purchased a minidisc recorder in August 1998, a Sharp MD-MS IOOA. It cost \$700 at the time, with an extra \$79 for a Sony ECM-TI40 Electret Condenser microphone. It has taken a while for members to get into the habit of using it, as it has quite a lot of extra features over the Marantz cassette recorders that we have become accustomed to.

A recording in mono (best choice for oral history purposes, I think), can be about twice as long as a stereo recording, which makes your 74 minutes of uninterrupted stereo recording closer to 150 minutes. We always dub the minidisc recording onto analogue audio tape using a Marantz recorder. We then use the tapes for master copies and for transcribing. We do not store the interviews on minidisc for archival purposes. I am currently using minidisc to record a whole of life interview, and have found it to be worth the extra effort involved, because of the excellent sound quality. I believe the tapes dubbed from the minidisc sound better than if they had been recorded directly with the Marantz, although that's possibly a microphone issue.

The rechargeable battery in the unit has enough life to allow for three or more hours of continuous recording. Because of the small size of the recorder, the display can be hard to read. Also some buttons are located on the front and some on the side, which can be confusing as there doesn't seem to be much logic to it. It's all a matter of becoming very familiar with it. I have written out a card with all the steps to set levels, start recording, pause recording, and to finish for quick reference while I am using the recorder. It helps a lot, as it would be easy to make a mistake and not notice because of the small display.

As for speakers to allow for group listening, one of our innovative members discovered the speakers that came with his computer were perfect for the job. The plug is even the right size.

Gail Parker

ORAL HISTORY WEB SITES

One of the most useful sites for oral history enthusiasts is a discussion group in the United States at the Michigan State University. The site also has many other interesting discussion groups. To join the list go to:

www.h-net.msu.edu

Click on "Discussion networks" and find a group named

H-Oralhist

Click on that and then click on "Subscription Help" which will give you the information to sign up.

All information is archived and you may find your question has already been answered. Threads have included:

- Advice on microphones
- Oral history in museum exhibits
- Cataloguing oral history
- Oral history with terminally ill patients

This and other oral history sites can also be accessed through the Queensland State Library site. Go to:

www.slq.qld.gov.au

Click on "Netlinks", then "Humanities", then "History", then "oral history"

Other great oral history sites are:

The National Library oral history site: <http://www.nla.gov.au/ohdir/>

The International Oral History Association: <http://www.ioha.fgv.br/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/mycentury/>

<http://www.storypreservation.com/>

<http://www.cyndislist.com/oral.htm>

http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/humanities/history/oral_history/

<http://www.personalhistorians.org/>

<http://www.toowongwest.org.au/index.html>

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/history/verbatim/>

Tell us of any others you have found on the Net.

WORLD TRADE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded Columbia University a \$90,000 grant to conduct an oral history project on the World Trade Center attacks of September 11. Over a two-year period, researchers will collect and analyze life-stories of individuals both in New York City and around the country who were affected directly and indirectly by the attack. Called 'Narrative Networks: The World Trade Center Tragedy', the project was initiated by Mary Marshall Clark, director of Columbia's Oral History Research Office and one of two principal investigators on the project, which researchers hope will create a valuable historical resource for future researchers and the public.

'As oral historians, we know that people make sense of their experiences through stories', said Clark. 'We want to give people affected by this tragedy the opportunity to offer their own interpretations of this historical event. Through doing so, we will provide the public and generations of future scholars and researchers, a record that represents, to the fullest extent possible, the uniqueness and diversity of responses to this tragedy.'

Using both video and sound recordings, the researchers will capture more than 300 personal accounts in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy and then conduct follow-up interviews with the same individuals after six months and again after two years. Since the scope of the project will extend beyond New York, Columbia will recruit oral historians across the USA.

Columbia researchers intend to investigate the extent to which individuals, life-stories are shaped by the World Trade Center tragedy. Of special interest is how the event emerges as an important turning point. In addition, they hope to understand how narratives of the tragedy are shaped by, and shape understandings of, immigration status, race, social class, and ethnicity.

Also involved in the project as the other principal investigator is Peter Bearman, Director of the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy (ISERP) and chair of Columbia's Department of Sociology. Robert Smith, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Barnard College, an ISERP research fellow, and an affiliate of the Oral History Research Office, is a co-investigator. 'We hope to understand the ways in which stories of the tragedy were told, transformed, circulated, and shaped the understandings of people, both closely and only distantly involved', said Peter Bearman. 'Hundreds of volunteers who have stepped forward to conduct interviews, transcribe data, organize field materials, and help in launching a giant field project in a matter of days', said Bearman. 'Because narrative quality decays quickly, the support of the volunteers has meant that we can get into the field quickly, an essential element for project success.'

'This project represents a wonderful opportunity for Columbia University to participate in a productive and educationally appropriate way to help us understand the reactions of individuals to an unprecedented tragedy', said Provost Jonathan Cole, provost and dean of faculties at Columbia. 'We are deeply appreciative that the NSF is able to act so quickly to support this project, which will capture the reactions of survivors of the horrible attack on the World Trade Center and others. The study will have lasting historical value and help those who participate in the study deal with the consequences of this disaster.'

For more information: contact Caroline Ladhani at (212)854-6581 or e-mail CL2059@columbia.edu

Reproduced from the December 2001 International Oral History Association Newsletter

IOHA CONFERENCE - SOUTH AFRICA

THE POWER OF ORAL HISTORY: MEMORY, HEALING AND DEVELOPMENT.

XII International Oral History Conference.

KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

24-27 June, 2002

The countdown for the IOHA 2002 conference has begun! In June 2002, delegates from all over the world will gather in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, for the 12th conference of the IOHA. The conference will be held on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal. Pietermaritzburg is the oldest colonial establishment in KwaZulu-Natal. It was established by the Voortrekkers in 1838 after they defeated the Zulus. Ghandi was arrested at the Pietermaritzburg station, after a white passenger objected to the presence of an Indian travelling overnight in the carriage. This incident played a decisive role in the genesis of satyagraha (non-violence).

The political violence of the mid-1980s, began in Edendale, one of the black townships of Pietermaritzburg. Hundreds of people were killed and tens of thousands lost their homes. Peace was restored only after the installation of the first democratic government in 1994. The retrieval of this painful and controversial history, by way of oral history, has just begun.

Conferences Sub-themes: Trauma, memory and reconciliation; Preservation and dissemination of oral archives; Oral history and digitization; Oral history in teaching and learning; Gender in oral history; Ethnicity and identity; Land claims and oral testimonies; Religion and memory; Stories of warfare, famine and migration; Sickness and disability in oral history.

Conference website: <http://www.hs.unp.ac.za/ioha2002>

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Reproduced from the December 2001 International Oral History Association Newsletter

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**

Students, Pensioners, unemployed _____ **\$20**

Household _____ **\$35**

I wish to join OHAA (please tick) _____

I wish to renew my membership _____

Name _____

Address _____

Occupation _____

Pension/Student No. _____

Interest(s) _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

**Not registered for GST. I enclose cheque/money
Order for the amount/s listed: \$ _____**

Please return this form to:

The Treasurer
OHAA Queensland Branch Inc
PO Box 548
ANNERLEY QLD 4103

Payment received (Office use only)
