



# On Tape

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

**September 2002**

**Editor: Suzanne Mulligan**

17 Pallinup Street  
RIVERHILLS QLD 4074  
Email: mulligan@gil.com.au

Hello Fellow Members,

Well, this year is flying by. We're counting down now for our State Conference in November. I hope you will all attend and feel free to bring along any friends or associates that may be interested.

The program for our conference is now available and it promises to be exciting and informative. Our keynote speaker is Robin Hughes, the interviewer on the SBS television program "Australian Biography." There are a number of interesting speakers as well as workshops on Sunday afternoon. I hope many of you will join us for the Conference dinner on Saturday night when we can personally share our oral history experiences.

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In conjunction with our Conference, we are having our AGM on Saturday 16 November 2002 (see Conference

program). A Nomination Form for executive positions is on p.9.

I attended the Small Museums Conference on 31 August and found it an interesting and rewarding experience. It was organised by the Redcliffe Historical Society and held at the Redcliffe Entertainment Centre. The Conference included a tour of the recently opened Redcliffe Museum which incorporates an innovative and unusual theatre experience utilising digital media. The Conference also gave me the opportunity to promote oral history and particularly our forthcoming conference.

Speaker, Christine Ianna, from the Queensland Museum presented the new wisdom on preservation of our photographic, audio and video collections. Some of her advice challenged previously held views on preservation, particularly regarding tapes. I have provided a summary of her talk for your benefit.

That's all for now. If you are currently an unfinancial member (unfinancial members will have a pink dot on their envelopes), please return the membership form and subscription without delay. I look forward to seeing you at our conference and AGM.

Suzanne Mulligan  
Editor

## **Oral History Association of Australia Queensland Inc. Conference Program**

Saturday 16 November, 2002. Theatrette, State Library of Queensland

- 10.00-10.30     Registration & Morning Tea
- 10.30-10.40     Welcoming Address - Lea Giles-Peters (State Librarian)
- 10.40-11.25     Keynote Speaker  
Robin Hughes, interviewer & filmmaker for 'Australian Biography', currently screening on SBS. Robin will discuss the dynamics of the extended interview for television plus field questions from the audience.
- 11.25-11.55     Queensland Voices - Niles Elvery, Acting Curator Original Materials Unit, will outline the history of the John Oxley Library oral history program and its future within the context of the Library's imminent redevelopment. Includes question time.
- 11.55- 12.25     Federation Muster - stories of remote learning. Denis Drouyn, oral historian, will discuss a case study featuring rural and remote communities and how the collected oral histories were edited and converted to DVD. Includes question time.
- 12.30-1.15     The North Stradbroke Island Oral History Project. Local resident, Elizabeth Gondwe, and Tracy Ryan, from Redland Shire Council. The speakers analyse this community project which involved indigenous residents, school children and local council. The project aimed to teach local children about their history and to foster the ongoing collection of it through the provision of oral history training.
- 1.15-2.15     **LUNCH**
- 2.15-2.50     The Brisbane Rugby League - the decline of Brisbane community culture - an oral history perspective.  
Dr Greg Mallory - Tom Brock Scholar 2001, will use interviews with well-known rugby league identities in Brisbane from 1950s-1970s to demonstrate that the various communities that made up Brisbane in that period identified closely with their local teams and players. Rugby league was not just a sport but an identification of community.
- 2.50-3.30     How engineers made it happen. - The Institution of Engineers' Oral History Program.  
Norman Sheridan will discuss the development of this ongoing program and the 'nuts and bolts' issues related to training new volunteers and maintaining the collection.
- 3.30 - 4.00     Is there a difference?  
Is the practice of oral history different when it comes to interviewing people in positions of power about their work? This includes politicians, business leaders and senior officers in the public and private sectors. If so, what is the best way to achieve best practice when operating within these constraints? Kay will play oral history excerpts setting out her own thoughts before encouraging discussion on this topic
- 4.00-4.30     AGM OHAA Queensland Branch Inc
- 7.30pm     Join us for dinner at a local restaurant.

Sunday 17 November, 2002. Theatrette, State Library of Queensland

10.00-10.30 Registration & Morning Tea

10.30-11.15 From Political Migration to Preventive Internment - oral sources in the reconstruction of labour history.

David Faber, PhD student, will outline the central function of oral sources in the reconstruction of the life and times of Francesco Giovanni Fantin (1901-42). Fantin was an anarchist émigré from fascism who arrived in Australia in 1924. He was murdered in the Loveday Internment camp by a fellow Italo-Australian of fascist persuasion. David will illustrate Fantin's biography by following an oral information trail from Tasmania to Italy and back to Australia taking in Geelong and Brisbane.

11.15-12.0 Facts, Fables, Fibs & Feuds - The challenge of oral history methodology for researchers and writers.

Margaret Klaassen will explore the risks and difficulties of going into print using oral evidence without checking documentary evidence and/or other oral interviewees.

12.00- 1.00 **LUNCH**

Concurrent Workshops

1-4pm Hone your Interviewing Skills in a masterclass with Robin Hughes.

OR

Editing the spoken word into a range of documents for a range of audiences. Join oral historian and editor Sue Pechey for this workshop.

This conference has benefited from the generous support provided by the State Library of Queensland and the Gaming Machine Community Benefit Fund.

## REGISTRATION FORM

Name (as you wish to appear on your nametag) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email/Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to be sent a receipt

Member: both days \$60.00. Non-member: both days \$70.00.

I wish to become a member of OHAA Qld Inc. (single rate \$35, concession \$25, institutions \$55, household \$45)

One-day registration (member & non-member): \$35

Dinner at a local Greek restaurant on Saturday 16 November at 7.30pm : \$30

Bag lunch: \$7 per day (includes sandwich, fruit, juice, home-made biscuits)

Vegetarian (for lunch catering purposes)

### Workshops

Tick one only

Interviewing skills with Robin Hughes

The art of transcription with Sue Pechey

### Accommodation

I would like to receive information about accommodation in Brisbane near the venue, to a maximum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed a cheque/money order made out to OHAA-Qld Inc to cover my total costs:  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please send completed registration form and cheque/money order to Lesley Jenkins, 93 Petersen Street, Wynnum North, Qld 4178**

## ORAL HISTORY WEB SITES

Here is another page of oral history web sites for you to check out. Let me know of others you have found.

The Oral History Association of Australia's web site is at:

<http://cwpp.slq.qld.gov.au/ohaa/>

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

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

<http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub96/contents.html> A report on "Folk Heritage Collections in Crisis"

<http://www.yourlifestory.org> our member, Glenda Sterling's home page

<http://www.historicalvoices.org/oralhistory/audio-tech.html> an online Oral History Tutorial

<http://www.bl.uk/nsa> the British Library collection

<http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/> Oral History Society, United Kingdom

<http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/bytopic/audio/> Preservation of Audio Materials

<http://www.xcp.bfn.org/fall1999.html>

<http://www.sonicmemorial.org/> Sonic Memorial Project - 11 September 2001

<http://www.albany.edu/jmmh/> Journal for Multi-Media History

<http://www.loc.gov/tr/record/> The Library of Congress, Sound Reference Centre

<http://www.npr.org/ramfiles/atc/20020915.atc.09.ram> – a sound file interviewing the author of *Mama Learned Us To Work*, an oral history of women who worked in the American South.

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO NEXT ISSUE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER – from Janis Wilton

Please provide any news of coming events, publications, research in progress or completed, and any information which you feel the world of oral history should know about. Our copy deadline for the second 2002 issue is 15 October 2002. Copy is preferred as Microsoft Word attachment. Images and illustrations should be scanned at 72dpi, and sent in jpg or pic formats.

Maximum Length:

Future conferences, meetings, and other announcements – 250 words

Conference reports – 500 words

Archive News – 500 words

New Projects – 1000 words

Sent via email to both co-editors:

Joanna Bornat: [j.bornat@open.ac.uk](mailto:j.bornat@open.ac.uk)

Rina Benmayor: [Rina\\_Benmayor@csumb.edu](mailto:Rina_Benmayor@csumb.edu) (note there is an underline \_ between Rina and Benmayor)

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*Lifestory* - a very personal service which helps people record their life journey for posterity.

Hello. I'm Glenda Sterling and I run a business called Lifestory. A writer and I interview our "client" on several occasions, videotaping each session. The writer completes the work which has an emphasis on the character and personality of our client - not just a series of events.

We then scan in photographs, documents and sketches and all is proof read by our editor and then the client.

The approximately 80 page book is then printed on archival paper, leather bound and gold embossed. We present the final result in a hand made cedar box with accompanying edited video tape of our interviews and CD ROMS of the book and video. Various measures are included to ensure the longevity of the end result and we trust that many future generations will come to know and care for this person as we have.

I am passionate about this work and feel that integrity and trust are its cornerstones. The book and its accompaniments are a reflection of the quality of the bond I build with the client. I am the facilitator of everything involved in the process so past counselling and facilitation work is handy. I have also been in business in the past, so there are some useful skills I gained there. But none of this is as important as the quality of the relationship with the client - as I'm sure many of you Oral Historians will understand.

If you come across people who may wish to use our service, my phone number is 07 38702768. My web site is: <http://www.yourlifestory.org>

I wish you well in your endeavours.

Glenda Sterling

**PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF DIGITAL AND OTHER MEDIA COLLECTION ON NEW FORMATS** – Christine Ianna, Senior Conservator, Queensland Museum

- What is preventive conservation

Trying to prevent the deterioration happening in the first place. Greatest cause of damage to collections is from people wanting to do too much – the handling. Have integrated pest management program, disaster procedures. Reformatting or duplicating on a new format such as digital.

Preventive conservation for new age digital memories:

- Cautionary tales

Black and white photographs preserve well.

Colour photographs – colours starting to change. Three basic dyes – blues, reds, yellows. Will change in the light and the dark. If stored in the dark, start to go red. If on display, will take on green hue. Therefore, cannot guarantee it will be here tomorrow. Keep photos out of fluorescent light.

Audio tapes – magnetic tapes – consist of magnetic particle, polyurethane binder and a polyester base. 1960s+ on acetate base. Concern with early metal particle tapes.

Video tapes – on polyester base.

CD Roms –

- Will deteriorate in bright light.
  - Always pick up by the edges.
  - Put back in holders immediately after use. CD is a multi-layered structure.
  - Don't flex CD as you remove it.
  - Cleaning disc – use lint free cloth.
  - Writeable CDs have limited life span.
- Practical tips
    - Environment
    - Keep cool and moderately dry – minimise fluctuations and pollutants.
    - Store vertically with full hub on bottom.
    - Don't rewind as minimises problems with “print-through” with audio tapes – leave at other end.
    - Fast-forwarding and rewinding puts tape under extra tension – store vertically and put hub which has all of the tape at the bottom.
    - Minimise playback as playback is a very physical process
    - Can't copy repeatedly.

Where to go for advice:

MDO's (Museum Development Officers)

Queensland Museum Conservation

ReCollections (available on line) [www.amol.org.au](http://www.amol.org.au)

Danger of technological obsolescence and catastrophic failure. Transcribing is the best way to go.

Don't use PVC pocket for CDs - sometimes they stick and will limit the life of CD.

## INTERVIEWING IN YOUR OWN BACK YARD

For something like twenty years I have been running workshops to help community groups and societies carry out their own oral history projects—and for about the same amount of time, I have been paid to carry out oral history projects for clients who wanted ‘an expert’ to do their interviews.

Now I am working as an oral historian in my own community—a small town where I grew up until boarding school, university and life took me well away from it, and to which I have only recently returned.

You’d think it would be easy—interviewing in the community where you are known and know lots of people, know lots of the issues, where much of your own life constitutes some the necessary research.

But it isn’t—it’s much more difficult than being the outside oral historian.

Our shire council is very keen for a community oral history project to go ahead—to the point of buying a minidisk player and mike to go with it. Twice I’ve tried to run my standard workshop—to no avail. In distant towns and communities folk travel miles to hear my pearls of wisdom on how to ‘do’ oral history, but not here in my own back yard.

So I’m on my own, interviewing on a number of topics (the local show society, trees and timber in this district, and life interviews with community elders). We have a Shire Council release form and have placed explanatory material in the local press and the Council newsletter. Choice of informants is left mostly to me, and I pursue my own interests while keeping an eye on posterity.

I find people perfectly happy to talk to me, but almost impossible to open up on the difficult topics. Even where I know of evidence to the contrary, and know the informant knows of it too, the good news history flows regardless.

What to do? It doesn’t seem possible to chide/argue with/contradict my own community elders, as I have done (ever so tactfully, you know) with people I will never meet again.

I am stumped! And have come to the conclusion that I will have to be content with what I think of as personal reminiscence and not too much of the wonderful cross-grained push and shove that we all know is the stuff of community life.

So from all those people I have blithely encouraged to create their own oral history projects, in their own communities—HELP!

Sue Pechey  
President, Oral History Association of Australia, Queensland Branch



# Oral History Association of Australia Queensland Inc.



## NOMINATION FORM

Nominations are called for the office of:

President, Secretary, Treasurer, North Queensland Representative, *On Tape*  
Editor, Committee Members  
(cross out office not being nominated for)

Name in **BLOCK** letters

Signature

Proposer: \_\_\_\_\_

Secunder: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominations to be in the hands of the Secretary by 5.00 pm Monday 11 November 2002 (but we are also prepared to take nominations from the floor).

*Mail to:*

Secretary, OHAA Qld Inc, 93 Petersen Street, Wynnum North, Qld 4178

