



On Tape

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

June 2003

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Hello Fellow Members!

How are you all? I hope 2003 has been kind to you so far. It's hard to believe it is almost half over already. I passed a significant personal milestone in April when I turned 50. I celebrated the event with family at Raphael's Restaurant at Shorncliffe and we had a wonderful time with delicious food and very pleasant surroundings.

2003 also marks the 50th anniversary of the end of the Korean War so I thought it a good time to interview a Korean veteran for my collection. My subject was Bob Downey from 2RAR who witnessed the horrific closing stages of the war. In common with other veterans I've interviewed, he is a lovely gentle person and it is difficult to understand how such a man could have endured so much. You may see the interview on my web site at:

<http://www.home.gil.com.au/~mulligan>

For my interview with Bob Downey I experimented successfully with uploading on to my computer from mini-disc recorder and then downloading on to CD. I am very happy with the results. There has been some "chat" about this procedure on the Oral History list recently. Please tell me if you've used this type of equipment and share your experiences.

On a sad note, one of our members, Ros Schuppner died suddenly in May. Ros was a committee member until recently and the Editor of *On Tape* immediately before I took on the job.

As you will see from the enclosed Program, the National Conference is on in Western Australia 4 – 7 September 2003 – a wonderful opportunity to mingle with fellow oral historians from all over Australia.

A reminder to members that membership renewal is due by 30 June 2003.

That's all for now. Look forward to feedback from you all.

Suzanne Mulligan
Editor

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Logan River Tinnie Trail
A heritage trail along the Logan River
Funded by Queensland Heritage Trails Network and Logan City Council

The Logan River Tinnie Trail was devised as a self-guiding heritage trail along the Logan River. It includes a book, a series of interpretive signs in riverside parks in Logan and Gold Coast City, and some walking trails in Logan's premiere riverside park – Riverdale.

This project received a Gold Award at the National Trust Heritage Week Awards in the category of cultural tourism.

The book, written by Mary Howells, provides the first comprehensive historical analysis of the Logan River district and in-depth studies of each locality between the river mouth and Logan Village. Each analysis includes oral history interviews and historic photographs. The book is fully indexed with footnotes and a bibliography.

Local artist Darren Johnson was employed to produce detailed sketch maps of each riverside locality to aid in the interpretation of the material. Darren also painted a large colour map of the river, which is featured inside the front cover to guide the reader along the river. His sketches will also feature on the reverse side of the interpretive signs in the Logan River parks. Sign designs are a product of collaboration between Mary Howells and Max Robbie of Metal Sign and Label Pty Ltd.

Logan City Parks Branch will then construct additional concrete walking/bike paths along the river in Riverdale Park, Meadowbrook. This will provide access to the confluence of Slacks Creek and a stunning vista of Murray's dairy farm and across the river to Bethania.

This project has provided the opportunity to liaise with Gold Coast City Council. The research generated will allow further development of riverside parks on the south bank of the river. One of the high quality interpretive signs will be placed in a Gold Coast Park at Waterford. The research material has also informed the GCCC Beenleigh and Sugar Cane Land Heritage and Character Study. Further research material has been provided to GCCC to allow for future signage in riverside parks on the south bank.

Books are available through the Logan City Council Libraries for \$11.00 (GST inclusive) or e-mail maryhowells@logan.qld.gov.au to arrange your purchase. Library supplies will be available through Peter Pal.

Preserving Interviews on CD Roms

Suzanne Mulligan

I have been recording on digital mini-disc recorder for nearly two years and am very pleased with the sound quality. For my last interview I copied the mini-disc recording to my computer and then downloaded to a CD-Rom. This copy was given to the interviewee and there have been requests for other copies. The CD copy is easy and cheaper to reproduce and the sound quality is excellent. At the time of the interview I also do an audiotape recording to use with my Dictaphone to transcribe the tape. There has been some discussion about the merits of using CDs for recording and preservation on the H-Oralhistory list and I have lifted parts of those discussions to share with you:

CDs are supposed to last up to 200 years if kept cool, dry, and out of the sun. CDs are superior to cassette tapes, or for that matter most any magnetic recording medium because they are not susceptible to magnetic fields, including that of the Earth itself (which can and will slowly erase a tape over time). CDs provide a very stable medium for archiving because they are digital. If the disc is readable, the audio information is 100% accurate. Analogue tapes degrade very badly over time. Digital tapes however do not degrade in the same manner. The signal is reduced over time, but as long as it remains on the tape the data can be retrieved. A typical problem with a digital tape would be dropouts where the data is lost in some places because of the degradation of the magnetic tape. CDs also have the added benefit of allowing fast and easy duplication and backup via computer.

The tests on which the 200 year lifetime was based used CDs with a gold layer top and an extra coating of heavy lacquer. This figure is misleading for the commonly available CDs, are a very poor preservation gamble. The better quality CDs can be hunted down on the net. Mitsui makes one. I use those with a matte white finish to accommodate my CD label printer. This also seems a good bet for extended life, especially as no paper labels are used.

From: Bartek Plichta [plichtab@MSU.EDU], Michigan State University
Subject: Beginning a digital project
Date: November 4, 2002

I have a digital technology oral history tutorial at:
<http://www.historicalvoices.org/oralhistory>

I hope you find it useful. I will be more than happy to answer any questions that you might have along the way. Thanks!

Bartek Plichta

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FEAST BY THE MURRAY

The Australian Historical Association Regional conference
MILDURA
26 September – 1 October 2003-06-08 Conference Themes
Food and wine
Environment, Region and Community
Life stories in cross cultural contexts
Rural Life and farming in the margins

Conference begins on AFL Grand Final weekend so accommodation bookings need to be made well in advance.

Conference details are available at www.his.latrobe.edu.au

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50th Interview in Pine Rivers Shire Project

Congratulations to our member, Leith Barter, on his 50th videotaped oral history interview. He writes:

“I have just completed my 50th videotaped oral history interview in the Pine Rivers Shire's 'Eyes of the Residents' program. This program began three years ago when I supplemented my ongoing conventional approach to oral history by forging a partnership with a local video production company, Bluegum Media, to capture some of my interviews as high quality digital video recordings.

Quite fittingly, our 50th interviewee was Janice Hall, the great granddaughter of the famous pioneer, Tom Petrie.

Another notable identity interviewed recently as part of this program was Colin Thiele, the well-known Australian children's author. Many Queenslanders may not realise that, Colin, a South Australian by birth, chose to retire in Dayboro over ten years ago.

Best regards, Leith.”

If you would like to learn more about Leith's project, you can find a copy of the paper he presented to the State conference at my web site. Click on “Conference Newsletter” and scroll through to find the article.

Death of Ros Schuppner

Those of us who knew her in person are all sad to hear of the sudden death of Ros Schuppner.

Ros was born in Brisbane in 1936 and grew up in Goombungee, a small town about half an hour north of Toowoomba. She went to Ipswich Girl's Grammar and at a very young age went into the Australian Navy, serving in communications in Darwin. She married for the first time at the age of 21 and had two children. That marriage ended in divorce and she later remarried. By the time we met her she had an Arts degree, had learnt German, and was something of a musician (loved to play the piano). She was at that time a student of computer design and print layout and was enthusiastically learning to build web pages.

Ros joined us on the committee of the Queensland OHAA branch in the late 1990s and we were instantly energised by the enthusiasm and an absolute torrent of ideas she brought with her. She willingly travelled long distances to come to meetings and, given her computer skills, very soon turned her attention to our newsletter. Members will possibly remember an immediate improvement in that little publication, both in terms of content and layout.

As a committee we shared her with her activities for the Navy, and eventually lost out to her studies, though she remained an interested member of the Branch.

I personally will remember her for her full-on energy and her fine sense of the ridiculous. The branch extends its sympathy to her family.

Sue Pechey, President.

Centenary Award

I have recently been awarded a Centenary medal, for services to history, specifically I suppose for my activities in oral history. In accepting the award I wish to acknowledge the many members of the Queensland branch of the Oral History Association who have worked hard to establish and maintain the Association in this State. Specifically I would like to thank Marjorie Roe, Roberta Bonnin, Niles Elvery, Lesley Jenkins and Gai Copemann - all of whom have contributed time, energy and sometimes personal funds to the Association's activities.

In most Australian states there is a state oral historian, who works within a state library and whose task it is to foster oral history projects, promote professional standards and nurture both the practice and collections in their state. This has not been the case in Queensland, as previous Ministers for the Arts and State Librarians have not found it necessary to make such an appointment. This does not mean that resources have not been available to support oral history - State funding to individual and community projects has at times been generous - but we have lacked a coherent professional guiding hand in the development of policy, teaching of techniques and prioritising available resources.

As a small group the Queensland branch has attempted to fill this gap and I have every expectation that with the extension of the State Library and a dynamic new State Librarian, oral history might at last achieve the professional support it warrants.

For me, becoming an oral historian started with collecting stories from my non-English speaking mother-in-law, whose language I could understand but neither write down nor translate quickly enough to keep up with her. I still have to do something with those memories! I have since then been involved in some really important projects, have interviewed hundreds of people, all of whom accepted my intrusion into their lives with apparent willingness, helped develop teaching techniques and ethical policy and tried to maintain standards of best practice. I particularly have enjoyed travelling throughout Queensland, being the guest of many different communities and sharing the personal tragedies and triumphs with a great many people.

To these, and especially to all my colleagues on the Queensland committee, past and present, I have to say thanks for making me look good enough to have been given the Centenary award.

Sue Pechey

Professor Linda Kristjanson

Lesley Jenkins, practising oral historian and member of our Association recently submitted this thought-provoking piece to share with you in our newsletter:

On the 3 March this year I listened to an interesting interview on ABC's "Life Matters" with Professor Linda Kristjanson. Linda is recognised internationally as a leading expert in the field of loss, grief and suffering – and her palliative care manuals have been translated into numerous languages. In fact Australia's profile has been raised as a direct result of her research with the aged. She was the recipient of the Telstra Business Woman of the Year Award, 2002.

During her interview she discussed a project she has initiated with the dying where she records their life story which is later transcribed, read back to the informant and then presented to them in a simply bound form. I was so moved by what she had to say I transcribed some of the radio interview because of its references to the work we do as oral historians:

We sit down with a person that's ill and we walk them through about eight questions and we tape record their answers and this really allows them to describe their life - the things that they have achieved, their milestones, the lessons they've learned; the things that they would like to leave for their family. The reason that this is a dignity-enhancing thing to do is that it gives that person who is ill, who may not be able to feed or toilet themselves the idea that their words are important, that their life is important and it will continue to be important. It is a testament.

It is transcribed verbatim and edited carefully to be sure it is accurate, coherent and clear and then we read it back to the person to ensure that it is right and then we give it back to the person in a bound envelope with a ribbon. The patients that have been taking part in this have been extremely appreciative and this has been tested against their anxiety, their depression and their will to live and we have had very positive outcomes. We leave it for the families as well and sometimes it is used in Eulogies at funerals. It has to be done with great skill and care and the therapists that have used this have undergone about five days of training to know how to do this sensitively and carefully. It is a simple, simple intervention. We have followed this up with families six months later and it has helped them in resolving their grief and in getting some closure on the relationship that was very central to them.

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 (1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004) (please tick the appropriate box)

Individuals _____ **\$35**

Institutions _____ **\$55**

Students, Pensioners, unemployed _____ **\$25**

Household _____ **\$45**

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 Inc
4 Cadiz Court
BRAY PARK QLD 4500

Payment received (Office use only) _____
