

OHAA On Tape

September 2005

Editor: Suzanne Mulligan

Email: mulligan@gil.com.au

Hello Everyone!

I hope you have enjoyed the year so far. Hard to believe we're already into September! Christmas not far around the corner!

Thanks to all those who have renewed their membership. I am also very happy to welcome new members:

Elena Volkova
Janette Garrad
Marie Reid, Emerald Shire
Historical Association

Our President, Lesley Jenkins, has returned home from her overseas Churchill Fellowship studies and you can read her report on pages 4 and 5. We also look forward to her seminar on 22 October 2005 when she will share her experiences and give us all the opportunity to ask her questions about oral history in the areas she visited.

There have been some wonderful oral history books coming out including three from our members *Toowong – Snapshots in Time* compiled by Leigh Chamberlain, *Port's People – Locals' Stories of Port Douglas* by Pam Willis Burden and *Shared Vision* by Aladin Rahemtula. Congratulations to you all. Articles on the

first two of these books will be featured in the next *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* which members will receive later in the year.

I am very grateful to members who have contributed articles to this newsletter. In this way we can learn from each other what is happening with oral history here in Queensland and see what can be achieved.

I enjoy hearing from you all about what you are doing in the oral history field so that I can share that information with other members. So please, let me know what you are doing.

Suzanne Mulligan
Editor

RUBY OF TROWUTTA – RECOLLECTIONS OF A COUNTRY POSTMISTRESS

by
Christobel Mattingley

BOOK REVIEW

In the last newsletter I told you that I would be reading this book after ordering it from Tasmania. It is regrettable that this book has not found its way into bookshops so that it gains a wider distribution as it is a wonderfully good read.

Ms Mattingley has written many books including children's book and other historically based books. In reading her story of Ruby Paul (nee Pacey) I found Ms Mattingley has a gift for recognizing the most interesting historical gems from all the research and work that she puts into her book. The reader is drawn into an understanding and appreciation of the time about which she writes. In this book Ms Mattingley was indeed fortunate to discover an oral historian's dream – a wonderful character with a sharp memory able to tell her story in incredible detail and in a most entertaining way about a bygone era.

The fourth of six children, Ruby was born in 1893 at Zeehan on the west coast of Tasmania after her family had moved there from Hobart. Her mother Emily had had a cultured upbringing in Ireland, learning French, painting and music before traveling to the other side of the world to join her father. Emily married Charles Pacey in 1886. Ruby's father, Charles, was often working away from home for extended periods so her mother had to cope at home with bringing up her family.

Ruby describes the minutiae of everyday life such as the way babies were dressed in 'the long flannel'. She tells us about her schooling where "big long desks would hold five" and "had inkwells and pens with nibs" and one of our teachers was "as crabby as the dickens." The food and cooking methods are presented to us such as Irish potato cake cooked in a camp oven. Ruby describes a happy childhood filled with love and she was indeed fortunate to have her Irish grandparents living close by for much of her life.

Ruby had a memorable wedding, marrying Colin Paul in 1916 on the same day her grandparents celebrated their Golden wedding anniversary. Ruby had a happy married life bearing five children and eventually took over the Trowutta Post Office and shop in 1930 where she remained until 1971. Ruby's daughters also tell part of the story of the post office and its importance in the community.

This book is an important contribution to the story of everyday life in Australia because of its attention to the detail of how lives were lived in those days. We learn about food, communication, education, transport, money and many other things that need to be recorded so that we understand what life was like for our ancestors. In this book we are also fortunate because Ruby's grandparents lived to a very old age and, through Ruby, have given us an insight into an even earlier period.

Your copy of *Ruby of Trowutta: Recollections of a country postmistress* can be ordered direct from Montpelier Press, PO Box 196, North Hobart 7002. Phone/fax 03 6234 8080 for \$31.00 (\$25 + \$6 postage and handling).

Suzanne Mulligan



Downloading the Churchill Fellowship

Lesley Jenkins, recently returned Churchill Fellow in Oral History, will talk about what she saw and what she learnt at: The Washington State Arts Commission, The Summer Institute in Oral History-Columbia University, The Smithsonian Folk Life Festival, The Digital Storytelling Centre, The British Sound Library, The Museum of London – London Voices Project, The Imperial War Museum, Brighton Museum, QueenSpark Books, Kings Cross Voices Project, Northside Folklore Project (Cork), Penryn Castle, Heritage Recording, Brighton & Hove Project & Making Multimedia Group, Book Trade Lives Project plus numerous meetings with independent practitioners working with oral history.

When: Saturday 22 October 2005 ,
10.00 am – 11.30 am

Where: Central City library meeting room (lower ground level, City Plaza) Cnr Ann, George and Adelaide Sts, City.

Cost: Gold coin donation – morning tea provided.

RSVP

Please RSVP by making by notifying Lesley Jenkins at 93 Petersen Street, Wynnum 4178 or phone Suzanne Mulligan on 3376 1865. Email enquiries can be sent to Lesley at recordinghistory@optusnet.com.au

Lesley Jenkins has recently returned from her Churchill Fellowship in Oral History. The following article is the first instalment of a series she will write chronicling her journey.

With Angel Wombats for Company

Before I left on my Churchill Fellowship everyone told me to pack light. I did so, and even though there was only room for a couple of pairs of pants, a few skirts and one book, there was room for twelve small terracotta wombats with gilded wings. A potter made them for me and they arrived wrapped lovingly in tissue and bubble plastic. They nestled together in a plastic container as I took them to the US and Canada, on to the United Kingdom, Wales and the Channel Islands and over the Alps to Italy, before parting with the last angel wombat in Ireland. As I travelled I gave them to people who had gone out of their way to help me understand their oral history work and how this could be applied in Australia.

Dr Willie Smyth, Folk Arts Program Manager at the Washington State Arts Commission in Olympia received the first wombat. I had a placement with him for four days as I explored his approach to the collection and documentation of oral history. He has a collection of 400 recordings, mostly cassettes, with 300 interviewees and most of the interviews run for 90 minutes. Some of the interviews are fully transcribed. They do not follow the life story approach, rather they are undertaken to explore the specific skills of community members undertaken over time, such as Indian basket weavers, or to explore other aspects of occupational artistry. Willie's training is as a folklorist. This is a degree course run at a number of Universities in the United States. I was to meet many folklorists on my travels in the States as they are often involved in oral history, either as curators, collectors of sound and stories, or in management positions in archives and art institutions.

“...folklore is the study of traditions. Things learned by observation, imitation, not from a book. Folklore passed over space and through time: blues singing, basket making, fairy tales, flat foot dancing, herbal remedies, knock-knock jokes.” Dr Betty Belanus wrote this explanation in her novel *Seasonal*.¹ Betty is also a trained folklorist and a curator at the Smithsonian Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in Washington DC. I stayed with her a bit later in my trip. I mention this now because the approach to the collection of oral history is fundamentally different when you are documenting the how, what, where & when of a craft or activity, as opposed to the ‘life story’ which centers on how the person got to be who they are in order to embrace the craft or activity. The life story or life history model is the one I encountered at the large institutions I visited: Columbia University Oral History Collection and the National Life Story Collection based at the British Library Sound Archive.

My time with Willie Smyth focused on the development of the Tour Guide for the Interstate 5 North Heritage Tour: Seattle to Blaine (USA – Canada Border). This included an audio track with traditional music and narratives from local residents. I was interested to find out how this was developed and funded. How many people were involved in the production of the very professional looking, spiral bound booklet? How were the narratives collected and edited along with other sound on the CD or cassette? My first surprise was to learn that these booklets take a team of about six people 1-2 years to finish.

¹ Betty J. Belanus, *Seasonal*, Round Barn Press, Maryland, 2002

I had originally thought that the development of the Tour Guide could be translated to my current work – a history of the Barcoo Shire. The Council had expressed interest in a range of outcomes as well as the traditional book.

Two interns have been working on a number of the Tour Guides and a freelance editor and contracted folklorist were also employed. The maps, sound editing and finished artwork is all outsourced to professional companies. Jens Lund, the folklorist, collects the oral histories and the music in the field, but a professional sound editor does the final mix. The route is traveled many times during the development of the Tour Guide as the speed of the vehicle has to coincide with the spoken word and the identified landmarks. A professional actor ties the narrative together with a voice over. One of the interesting and perplexing aspects of the Tour Guides is that much of what you hear about, you can't see. The visible landscape is married with an invisible one of music, songs, stories and reminiscences. These features were essential to the first Tour Guide from Othello to Omark as this identified the region as a cultural heritage site worthy of the funding they received from the Department of Transportation. Subsequent guides have received money from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Washington State Arts Commission.

In 2000, Michael L. Murray wrote a paper about the invisible landscape portrayed in the Tour Guides commenting, 'As the landscape is depopulated of loggers, fishermen, and farmers, these people of the earth and sea come to be the inhabitants of a "lost world" that is nostalgically remembered'.² As I toured one of the routes it was certainly preferable to hear reminiscences from an 'old timer' long since removed to a nursing home, than to hear the story of the huge carpark that passed my view as I was driven along at 100 kilometres an hour.

To Be Continued...

² Michael L. Murray, *Touring the Invisible landscape: Oral History and Heritage Highway Tourism*, Graduate Program in Folklore, University of Pennsylvania, Oral History Association Meeting, Durham, North Carolina, 12 October 2000.

**The OHAA panel at the International Congress for the Historical Sciences
(CISH) conference, Sydney 2005**
Sandra Hodgson

The *Talking Communities* oral history panel session was well attended by local and overseas attendees at the vast Australian Historical Association (AHA) CISH conference in Sydney in July. Five minutes before the due start, OHAA's panel members and even Madame chair herself were looking a bit wild-eyed and asking each other 'What if no one comes?'-but it was full house in the small lecture theatre a few minutes later.

The work outlined by the panellists brought home the endless variety of community projects in train all over the country. The Chairperson had organised photos from each panel member into a smooth running PowerPoint presentation to accompany the talks. These images emphasised the diversity of material oral historians are exploring in their communities. Panellists had been invited to note in their talks the challenges thrown up by their projects. There was something to learn and carry away to one's own practice from each presentation.

Jill Cassidy spoke about exhibiting community histories and her images showed her final exhibition at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston. The exhibition itself, even seen as a PowerPoint display, carried a freight of past sadness and hope in a potent mix. Things like luggage and children's toys are made of indestructible materials these days, but the flimsy brown suitcases and battered cloth toys are infinitely more durable, especially in the hands of a curator sensitive to their pull. Jill spoke of how the curator must make the final choices among competing voices and materials, and her exhibition seems to demonstrate the wisdom of this. The most affecting stories are not necessarily the sagas of success.

Heather Goodall's account of her collaboration with Aboriginal activist Isabel Flick demonstrated how inextricable landscape and people are. Oral historians know how being in the place where memories formed enlivens interviews. Heather's work underlines the slippage between words, memory and place and reminded the audience that personal memory and telling are always recompositions. Oral historians uncover uniquely formed and processed perceptions of memory.

Sandra Hodgson's *Hmong cultural maintenance* project evolved from history into anthropology, leaving her out of her depth and deep in ethical dilemmas. One of these was that, in effect, the project supported the all-male hierarchy of a Hmong community in its desire to maintain the traditional status quo. Young Hmong people prefer to identify with mainstream (well, Far North Queensland) Australian culture and this is causing anxiety among the elders. Recording shamanic interviewees and interviewees in Hmong language was challenging for the oral historian, who was in effect a technician only. An anthropology graduate has taken over the latter phases of the project.

So unique and interesting was Mary Anne Jeb's project that if she mentioned problems, they were immediately forgotten. Her talk, *The object of the story: Jack Wherra's nut carvings*, was drawn from her ongoing research in collaboration with the Mowanjumb Aboriginal community. Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is funding the project, which is entitled 'Kimberley boab nut carving as historical narrative'. A boab nut is about the size of an emu egg. When the velvety brown skin is carved, a creamy

white line shows. Jack Wherra's carvings wrap his multi-dimensional, emblematic life and times around the everyday (in the Kimberley) boab nuts: a universe in small things. Mary Anne is reintroducing these repatriated objects into their home community and recording the responses.

Jan McCahon's talk *Gathering oral histories for the Town of Victoria Park, WA* returned to the suburbs and perhaps the group within the general population with the time and interest to really enjoy oral history projects, to the benefit of their wider communities. Jan works for an enlightened local Council it seems: since 1997 she has been the Local Studies Librarian at the Victoria Park Library in Perth. She and her community of oral historians are researching, recording and archiving the history of their suburb. *Gathering oral histories* was a reminder of the importance of the local library as the nexus where complementary interests can mesh with appropriate resources.

As the rep isolated in Faaaaaar North Queensland, I was pleased to meet OHAA names face to face. The variety of the work the panellists do and their commitment to it is as inspiring as their energy is daunting. Thank you, OHAA Queensland, for supporting my attendance.

oooooOOOooooo

Writing the Landscape
A Weekend Workshop — November 12 & 13, 2005

A workshop in the bush. Rainforest, plantation forest, pasture and rolling vistas will all provide inspiration and raw material. It has four inter-weaving themes:

Landscape & narrative

Landscapes are littered with signs that we can learn to read and use in the telling of a story.

Landscape & history

Landscapes are made by natural change, human intervention and by how we learn to see them. All such making can be explored historically and through writing.

Landscape & image

Artists, photographers, cartographers – as long as humans beings have made images, the landscape has been a focus of attention. How can writers read and use these images?

Landscape & language

The landscape is a domain of language as much as the visual. Poets and writers from all cultures have striven to describe it and capture its essence. These themes will be presented by four different writers all of whom are from, or work in the bush

Tony Fry is widely published design historian, writer, environmental consultant and farm forester working nationally and internationally. **Anne-Marie Willis** is a photographic and visual culture historian, editor and writer with a background in Australian cultural studies **Mark Svendsen** is novelist, poet and author of picture books, as well as being an acclaimed writer of young adult fiction. **Sue Pechey** is a writer, editor and one of Queensland's leading oral historians who also teaches creative writing. The workshop presenters have had over 20 books published between them.

The workshop will be held at the outdoor education centre of TreeLines, Ravensbourne (140km west of Brisbane and 45kms north east of Toowoomba). The program will include walks, talks, writing and reading. Attendees are invited to send a 1000 statement on their thoughts on landscape or on a relevant writing project by 5 November – this will help shape the form of the workshop.

Cost: The full cost of the workshop is \$195 including Saturday lunch, Saturday dinner (with after dinner speaker?) and Sunday lunch. Excellent accommodation is available in the area – details can be provided.

Booking inquiries: TreeLines Workshops 07 4697 8082 or email teamdes@teamdes.com.au

QUEENSLAND STORIES GRANT TO PINE RIVERS SHIRE COUNCIL

Leith Barter

Pine Rivers Shire Council's Local Studies Librarian, Leith Barter, who received a 2005 Queensland Stories Grant from the Library Board of Queensland, is currently producing a short film about timber-getters and woodworkers on the Pine. The grant provided \$12,500.00 towards the cost of making the film.

The Pine Rivers Shire has a rich timber-getting and woodworking history. The film will include information on the use of local timber resources by Indigenous people and will describe how the first European explorers discovered the valuable timber resources which were subsequently exploited by several generations of settlers. As the last remnants of the pioneering timber-getters, sawmillers and woodworkers are rapidly disappearing from the Shire, the film will provide a unique opportunity to record their stories and skills before they are lost forever.

The film is being made in partnership with Bluegum Media, a local video production company based in Lawnton. Leith has been working with Bluegum Media for over five years to capture video-recorded oral history interviews with present and former residents of the Shire. To date, some seventy videotaped interviews have been completed, a number of which relate to the subject matter of the film. A useful by-product of the film will be a more complete library of interviews with the few remaining Shire timber-getters and sawmillers.

Ken Gold, a third generation descendent of a pioneering Pine Rivers family, is the film's narrator. Rhylle Winn, who is a fifth generation descendent of Shire timber-getters and sawmillers and is a well-known local author, is making available his own expertise on the timber industry and is co-ordinating liaison with other people formerly involved in the industry. Members of both the Dayboro District Historical Society and the Samford District Historical Museum Society are assisting with the project and have already acted as interviewers for some of the videotaped interviews.

One hundred copies of the film in DVD format will be made available to schools, libraries and museums. Appropriate information from the film will also be incorporated in a website for access by those interested in the project.

**Book Review: *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*
by Umberto Eco**

Published by Secker & Warburg 2005 (on sale in bookstores now)

Umberto Eco, Professor of Semiotics at Bologna University, author of *In the Name of the Rose* and numerous other books and essays has delved into the realm of memory in his latest book: *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*.

The plot revolves around the main character, sixty-something Yambo, a rare book dealer in Milan who has experienced some kind of trauma and is recovering in hospital. He has lost his memory and is unable to recognise his family but retains a clear recollection of every book and poem he has ever read.

Feeling robbed of his identity and frustrated by his apparent memory loss Yambo sets off to spend time in his childhood home in the hills somewhere between Milan and Turin. Here throughout the late heat of summer, cared for by the old housekeeper, he rummages through old rooms full of the bric-a-brac of family life: old photograph albums, magazines, comics, stamp collections, newspapers and posters in an attempt to recover his past.

As the summer heat intensifies, Yambo's search takes on a momentum of its own. He discovers a locked room and a family secret that reaches back to his childhood and events that occurred during the Second World War. All the while his search is haunted by the shadowy image of his first love, the memory of whom is somehow connected to the young female assistant in his bookstore.

This is a big book, more than 400 pages long, beautifully illustrated with drawings, cartoons and posters from the 1930's and '40's. It was released in Europe in 2003. I first heard about it from a European reader last year. Australian booksellers could not even find it on their forward lists, confirming for me that the timeframes for Australian book releases remain unchanged, globalisation notwithstanding. Like all Eco's books the story operates on several layers, asking more questions than providing answers, tantalising the reader with an equally credible range of possibilities.

*semiotics: the study of signs and of how meaning is transmitted

In further literary news "*And the Dance Goes On*", an anthology of Australian Catholic women's stories will be launched in October 2005. The stories are a collection of the personal experiences of 51 women across Australia including one by this writer set in Palm Island in the late 1980's.

Pat Ryan
Brisbane

Hilda Kean, *London Stories* (Rivers Oram Press, 2004)

Review written By: Keith Flett

Date: January 2005

Hilda Kean is well known as a lecturer at Ruskin College, and one of those who has fought to keep the kind of traditions that the late Raph Samuel maintained there, and also as a longtime activist in London's East End.

Her latest book combines something of these two perspectives in constructing a family history. This kind of history – establishing one's family tree and ancestors – is without doubt the most popular form of participatory history in the UK. Many thousands hunt in record offices and archives for details. It says something about official British society that it is also a form of history frowned upon by the academy and, indeed, until recently, the TV history market.

Even the left itself has tended to be disdainful. Certainly we have had only one or two papers in the general area in the ten years' existence of the London Socialist Historians Group. And while Raphael Samuel and *History Workshop* had begun to champion family history as an historical approach – even if Raph himself did describe it as 'unpolitical', little work appears to have been done since his untimely death.

Hilda Kean's book is a welcome attempt then to re-open the question of what constitutes history and historical evidence and how we should write the history of ordinary working people.

As Hilda demonstrates, her ancestors were not leading militants in left-wing organisations, or trade union organisers. They were working people trying to make their way and survive in a capitalist market economy not so different to that which currently exists in London's East End.

That means that actually piecing together the history is a major task of recovery. It is no good looking in trade union minute books or the left-wing press for details. Rather what Hilda Kean has to go on are a large amounts of possessions and memorabilia left by her parents, and the clues that these, often disregarded as historical evidence by professional historians, give to her ancestors history. It is backed up of course by visits to record offices and to graveyards to check burial dates and locations.

The focus of the book is on what might be called the inner East End from early nineteenth century Spitalfields to twentieth century Bethnal Green, but chapters range widely across the country in search of the origins of family members who ended up as East Enders.

Hilda's research uncovers and throws light on the East End Methodist community that her parents were part of in the second half of the twentieth century, and in particular looks at a secret from their, and her, past. Read the book to discover more on this!

In a brief concluding chapter Hilda Kean argues that writing *London Stories* should be seen against a backdrop of political defeat, where, if big battles are lost, at least it is possible to see interest and hope at the micro and personal level. Readers of this Newsletter might, in part, disagree with this political perspective, but it should not detract from the value of an immensely interesting exercise in writing the history of ordinary people. It is surely time to return to one of the best aspects of the *History Workshop* tradition, apparently itself lost in the New Labour years, of a

democratic history, where historians look at the struggles and battles of everyday life, while not of course forgetting the bigger picture.

Editor's note – this is part of a book review from the following web site where you will find other interesting articles:

<http://www.londonsocialisthistorians.org/newsletter/articles.pl/noframes/read/108>

BOOK NOTES

SHARED VISION: Recollections of the life and achievements of an inaugural Queensland Churchill Fellow: Dr Brian Wilson

edited by Aladin Rahemtula

(Supreme Court of Queensland Library, Oral History project 2005)

Shared Vision is a very attractive and readable book. Once you start there's no way of stopping the Queensland reader from finishing. Then you can re-start and re-read and absorb new layers of Queensland history.

The book is about an Ipswich boy, Brian Gilmore Wilson, ophthalmologist, son of Ipswich doctor, Benjamin Gilmore Wilson. He was the son of a Benjamin Gilmore Wilson too, who worked in Cribb & Foote's store in Ipswich. The first of this Wilson family, Benjamin Gilmore Wilson also, was Irish -from Moy in County Tyrone -who came in 1858 to Melbourne. His mother was Dorothy Dunstan, an Arts Graduate of University of Sydney in 1916. Most of her ancestors were convicts -a fact she never knew until well in to her nineties.

Brian was the youngest of a family of four children -all doctors -Harry, Esther, Chester and himself. They lived on the corner of Milford and Brisbane Streets where their father had his home and surgery. The family all went to Ipswich Grammar Schools. Their father was Chairman of Trustees of the Boys Grammar.

Such an oral history is a genre in itself portraying the history of Brian Wilson and his family beautifully and accurately. It is an excellent way of undertaking a family history. So many families might consider this method rather than laboriously recording dates and names in chapter headings chosen by formulae, because, after all, a family history is meant to tell the story, the character and recount the special thread of who the family is. The result is a brilliantly accurate picture, in this case, of Ipswich and Brisbane life from the early 1920s to 2004. A hallmark of the book is the objective questioning by the Supreme Court Librarian, Mr Aladin Rahemtula. The whole book is presented in the form of an interview. The questions are comprehensive, brief and carry the human story forward throughout the whole of Brian's private and professional life. The subtlety of the questions provide an unobtrusive framework for the detailed and autobiographical nature of the responses.

Whilst telling of the competitive nature of some of the family, the abiding love of the parents, the educational and sporting opportunities provided and an understanding of the daily ritual of life - from breakfast through school and work to after dinner music.

The lovely stories are clever and lovingly told. There was the smoking story. A visitor had left some cigarettes behind at the Wilson home. Brian smoked one downstairs. His father bounded down the stairs and asked where the smoke was coming from, seeing it coming up around Brian's ears. He decreed that Brian could smoke as often as he desired as long as he told his father so that he knew the house was not burning down. However, he said his son must understand that smoking would stunt his growth and he'd have to be a jockey. That was a clever response to boyish pranks. Brian knew he never wanted to be a jockey and there was now no adventure in smoking if there was rule to inform his father first. Little did he know then that his father was violently opposed to smoking and Brian never smoked again.

Brian's father said that on the Gold Coast holidays where there might be 16 boys at the house, if you gave the boys a swim and two showers in a day then they were bearable, and if they were well dressed for dinner then they would be civilised.

Every part of the book is filled with these real life stories -told in an unjudgmental way. The book is really the family's private history -not for public consumption -yet it is a Queensland story told for Queenslanders. There's even references to Bjelke-Petersen, Vince Gair, Springboks playing rugby, medical mistakes and how the results were dealt with (the Clarkson story is amazing), medical practices and costs of equipment, hospital working hours.

Brian tells his own story of his medical career set within the family context. His role on the OCS and the AMA is fitted in with Brisbane suburban and family life in Coorparoo. He outlines his profession matter-of-factly and professionally. One of the values of the book is also its scholarship - with footnotes and a detailed index. The recollections of colleagues from a number of facets of his life provide several worthy introductions to the book.

What stimulated the Supreme Court Library to undertake the oral history and research for the book and to publish it? The answer is in the Churchill Fellowship Program. 2005 is the fortieth anniversary of the Churchill Trust in Australia. Brian Wilson was one of Queensland's first Churchill Fellows.

Many judges of the Supreme Court of Queensland have participated in the selection process of Churchill Fellows. The library has an on-going program of interviewing Queenslanders who have made significant contributions to the law and to society. *Shared Vision* is the first oral history in a series of these publications exploring the life histories of a variety of Queenslanders. The program illustrates the library's wider view in preserving and disseminating Queensland's social and legal history.

Ruth S. Kerr.

.....

DELIVERY DETAILS	
Name:	
Address:	
State:	Postcode:
Tel:	
Email:	

Item	Price*	Quantity
<i>Shared Vision</i>	\$22.00	
Postage & Handling	\$2.45	

*All prices are GST inclusive

Please return this form to:
Aladin Rahemtula
Supreme Court Library
PO Box 15019
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Also available from Avid Reader, Coaldrakes and University of Queensland bookshops.

Oral history: finding its home within a Creative Writing Research Masters

Helen Klaebe

Creative Writing encourages innovative and cutting-edge research methodology and more students are using some form of oral history as part of their research. During 2003-2004 I recorded, collected, collated and interpreted the words used in an oral history about Outward Bound Australia, then generating my research work into text in a creative print format.

The result of my Research Masters is, *Onward Bound: the first 50 years of Outward Bound Australia*, a non-fiction historical novel which weaves together a traditional researched history with the oral history excerpts that provide the personal social history.

OBA is an organisation of people more concerned with the 'doing' than the recording of milestones in a formal historical manner. Much documentation had been written dedicated to the psychological and physical effects of their outdoor education style but little effort had been given to documenting the history of the institution itself.

Oral history draws on an intuitive, yet understated wisdom to recall and interpret. Such a participatory type of research was preferable for OBA as a community based organisation looking to bridge the gap between individual and collective memory.

But memory is usually an individual understanding. A historian, for instance, might interpret events in a different manner than another individual, depending on their own discipline or standpoint. As I created a collection of interviews, inclusive of many different viewpoints from within the organisation, this oral history collection, once condensed and entwined with OBA's time line, has become accessible to people in a way that a series of archived documents could not have been.

The very nature of OBA as a holistic and complex organisation makes these individual life stories about their involvement with OBA of importance. The richness and the highly contextual nature of talking with an individual or a group involved with the organisation also gave me insight and provided cultural context for the time frame.

Humans elect to engage and contribute practically toward their complex world. We do this through the search for authenticity and our collaboration with each other. This certainly rang true with OBA, which has an ethos which is centred around its commitment to all people in the community; making a historical manuscript of 'all the people' involved with OBA a most appropriate methodology in attempting to capture their collective spirit. The book uses the oral history as a connecting value — connecting old with the young, the academic/institutional with the broader outside world, and as the formal connection in the interpretation of their history.

***Onward Bound: the first 50 years of Outward Bound Australia* will be out in mid October, 2005. Any queries about the publication can be emailed to h.klaebe@qut.edu.au**

