
NOHANZ

Newsletter

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www.oralhistory.org.nz

Calling all members...

We would like to hear what you are working on. Please share your stories, successes, proposed projects, challenges, etc., with us.
Send to:

NOHANZ
P.O. Box 3819
WELLINGTON

Or e-mail to:
megan.hutching@mch.govt.nz

NOHANZ news

The new web site is up and running at
www.oralhistory.org.nz

We hope that you will visit it and send us feedback. We are particularly interested in getting suggestions from you about things that you would like to see there.

One of the possibilities is an online register of members, with your areas of interest and expertise, information about recent and current projects you have been involved in, and contact details. Participation would be voluntary, that is, we would only put up the details of people who have indicated that they are willing for us to do so. We will include a form for the register in the March 2002 newsletter.

The 15th anniversary function was very well attended by members past and present. All enjoyed listening to the panel of speakers (Claudia Orange, Judith Fyfe, Taina McGregor and Jock Phillips) talk about their visions of the future of oral history. The cake was great too! There are more pictures from the function on the web site.

The committee would like to take the opportunity to wish you all the best for the festive season.

Megan Hutching, Secretary

Oral history in New Zealand

✿ *Loreen Brehaut from Marlborough writes:*

Having just returned to New Zealand after seven years involvement in Western Australia (resulting in the publication of three books and another manuscript just finished), I am interested in getting a group together in this district which might start recording interviews for local projects.

I have had some experience with training, and I would be prepared to help organise this.

Perhaps there are other Marlborough members who would be interested in meeting and discussing doing some co-operative projects.

You can contact Loreen at:

brehauts@paradise.net.nz

or

P.O. Box 269, PICTON

Loreen's books are:

- Miles of Post and Wire, with Florence Corrigan. Magabala Books, 1998 (Florence's autobiography)
- Pilbara Journey Through the 20th Century, with Anna Vitenbergs. Robe River, 2000 (local history excerpts and photographs)
- The Guruma Story, with Anna Vitenbergs. IAD Press, 2001 (Aboriginal history of one language group or 'tribe')

✿ *Mary Nash writes:*

Mary Nash has been collecting oral histories from retired and elderly social workers about their lives and careers in New Zealand. This is a continuation of research carried out for her doctoral thesis, a study of social work and social work education in New Zealand. Retired and elderly social workers are a largely untapped source of information about social work. Yet their contribution has been significant in many ways. They represent a rich strand of information on the changing role of social work and the development of a professional presence in welfare. Their practice methods, case studies and the institutional settings in which they worked are of interest in our rapidly evolving working environment. Information on these aspects of social work is in danger of being lost and Mary hopes to help collect, preserve and analyse it.

Reflections about the past, present and future for social work are timely as social work is an occupation undergoing much change and reinterpretation. The history of social work and social work education shows there are many people who were involved and are still alive. They live all over New Zealand. Mary has now collected twelve oral histories (both life histories and topic based interviews) of social workers. This has meant visiting people from Dunedin to Auckland and recording their stories and reminiscences. This is in addition to the interviews Mary carried out with social workers for her doctoral studies.

The questions asked concentrated on the following areas:

- * How did the social worker become involved in social work?
- * What preparation or training did they receive?
- * In what kind of agencies and work was the social worker involved?
- * Was supervision available and if so what kind of supervision?
- * The social worker's career, promotions and responsibilities.
- * What were the effects of changing legislation on practice?
- * Other relevant areas of interest to the participant.

So far, under the title 'Their stories, our history', Mary has published two accounts from these interviews, both by women,

one with a Salvation Army social work career which began in the 1940s, while the other has a secular background and worked in a variety of statutory settings. They are: 'Their stories, our history: Thelma Smith.' *Social Work Review*, (2000). 12, (3) 32-36 and 'Their stories, our history: Bertha Zurcher.' *Social Work Review*, (2001). 13, (1) 20-24. More will follow, and the series will be concluded with an analysis of themes and issues arising from the research.

✿ *Windsor Jones, Curator, Army Museum Waiouru writes:*

The Army Museum Waiouru has undertaken an Oral History Project over the last year as a result of a generous grant from the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board. The grant has enabled the Army Museum to purchase the necessary equipment and send some of their staff to Wellington to receive two days training from the Oral History Centre at National Library. The training was an excellent introduction into conducting interviews and was enjoyed by all who attended.

The main purpose of the grant was to record the wartime experiences of returned servicemen and women, with the focus being WWII veterans. With the assistance of Megan Hutching (Ministry of Culture and Heritage) who had compiled a database of veterans for her Crete Project, we were able to 'tap' into the database to get names of the veterans who were willing to have their story recorded for future research and remembrance.

To date, Sergeant Brenton Beach, Mark Attfield and Windsor Jones have recorded the memories of 30 veterans and have enjoyed this experience immensely. It is planned to continue with this project in 2002.

✿ *Jenn Falconer writes of a new book on Campbell Island based on interviews she recorded:*

George Poppleton's frank account of three years on Campbell Island during the 1950s has created a quirky book. George went down there as expedition leader late in 1955 to put into place foundations for a weather station which is still on the island today although now obsolete. He returned for a further two years, 1958-1960, living this time in the completed, purpose-built station hostel with fewer builders and more scientists for company.

Although the star of the book is the island itself with its remote stark beauty, wonderful birds and mammals, incredible plants and very fickle weather, this book presents stories about day-to-day living. Descriptions of special meals and parties, disastrous cooking adventures, visiting ships and their personnel, and bizarre practical jokes sit along side a recorded daily grind of keeping machinery running. Good equipment was particularly important during winter when daylight hours are reduced to six or seven depending on the day, and there might not be a ship visit for some months.

The book has 250 pages of stories, announcements, recipes and menus; there are line

drawings of ships swimming through text, a cartoon, floor plans, site plans, black and white images of varying quality, philatelic envelopes, a hand drawn fold-out map in brilliant yellow and blue, and twelve colour pages crammed to the gills with contemporary photographs.

**Available from Jenn Falconer, 17 Volga Street, Melrose, WELLINGTON.
Email: jenifa@paradise.net.nz**

Price: \$39.95 + \$5 P&P

Conference report

Jane Moodie reports on the 2001 National Conference of the Oral History Association of Australia: 'Voices of a 20th Century Nation.'

This biennial conference was held at the end of August in Canberra, looking at its best in spring green. As the conference title implies its themes were the multicultural aspects of Australia and a celebration of the turn of the century. The following is a brief overview of some of the papers I was able to attend.

Looking back on the 20th century there were the presentations of the *100 Centenarians* project for radio, to celebrate the Centenary of Federation, and of the National Archives project to collect the voices of Australia's 20th century Prime Ministers as part of a wider effort to examine their role in the nation's development. On a less official note Frank Heimans described interviews with inmates and workers from the maximum security Maitland Gaol which closed in 1998 after 150 years. The use of some video interviews on site made this particularly poignant. Yet another sought to examine the cultural implications of social and ecological change over the last 50 years in a wheat and sheep farming area of south eastern Australia.

A particularly interesting paper, bridging both themes, was that of Siobahn McHugh, *From Wogs to Wunderkinder: The Make-over of the Migrants who Built the Snowy Mountain Scheme*. While not denying that the Snowy Mountain Scheme was an important part of the building of the nation, she argued that there is a need to re-examine the current romantic myth of the migrants who worked on the scheme as simple folk who despite their strange ways were not afraid of hard work and handsomely repaid their debt to the nation which gave them a home, and to recognise

instead the complexities of the relationships among such a diverse workforce, the bonds forged in shared danger, privation and isolation, and the discrimination and intimidation experienced at the hands of ruthless contractors.

There were many papers looking at Aboriginal oral history, among them the problems of gaining access to remote communities, and linking Aboriginal memories of place to highly detailed Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps. There was a strong focus on the National Library's project, *Bringing Them Home*, which is part of the Australian Government's response to the Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families. Over 200 of the 300 intended interviews have so far been recorded by about 60 interviewers, of whom 24 are indigenous. Unfortunately few, if any, of the Aboriginal parents have been able to be interviewed. About 25% of the interviews have been conducted with the some of the adoptive or foster parents, and with various administrators of the scheme, in order to understand how culture shapes people's values and influences the way they interact with those of other cultures. There was discussion on the difficulties inherent in interviews involving very painful childhood memories, and the point was also made by Peter Read who has been recording with Aboriginal people for some decades, that as this story has emerged so has the construction of Aboriginal memories changed. Until they realised that their individual experiences were part of a larger event, most tended not to talk about what had happened to them.

It was interesting to see the wide variety of other multicultural studies being done in Australia, some but by no means all by members of the different ethnic groups themselves. There were papers dealing with the Hungarian experience, the Vietnamese, Japanese war brides, and how the various ethnic groups – Portuguese, Greek, Sri Lankan, Lebanese, Chinese, Indonesian and Anglo/Australian – of Marrickville, Sydney keep their cultures alive in their gardens. Of course not all migrants 'make it' in their new country, and Alistair Thompson's paper, *Voices We Never Hear: The Unsettling Histories of Postwar Migrants who Returned from Australia to Britain* based on 250 autobiographical accounts and 30 interviews was instructive for the variety of analyses he has applied. These include looking at reasons why people migrated and returned, how lives are shaped by material, cultural and social forces including family, how gender affects the story of migration and return, exploring the experience and meaning of homesickness, as well as at some of the problems of memory as a resource – the question of silences, and of iconic memories that stand for experience. For many return offered the tantalizing prospect of going back to the past, but this always proved an illusion.

An interesting addition to all this was the perspective from overseas. Alistair Thompson represented the British and European experience and

there were two invited guests from the Pacific. Alistair suggested that despite the need for oral historians to come to grips with changing technology, particularly visual, they also need to get back to the basics of subjectivity and questions of how memory works, especially in the light of recent scientific developments. Alben Reuben from the Vanuatu Cultural Centre described the work of 100 volunteers in preserving oral tradition concerning genealogy and custom, and Jokita Singh from the Fiji Museum spoke of how the political crisis has led to a push to define cultural identity through oral history, and to a rewriting of the history of Fiji. From New Zealand papers were presented by myself and by Patrick McAllister from Canterbury University. Patrick had videoed the Waitangi Day commemorations at Okain's Bay, Banks Peninsula, and later interviewed participants about the events recorded on video, analysing the performance of the event and its effects on social reality. He has done a similar analysis for the Australia Day celebrations which there was not time to present.

The many points of similarity between NZ and Australian history and society throw into relief the points of difference, and I found this conference immensely valuable with much to reflect on and ideas to bring to our own situation. Are we over-sensitive about cross-cultural interviewing or have the Australians (and others around the world some of whom who even interview with the help of translators) got it right? Do we too, as Peter Emmett suggested in his keynote address, hold conversations with the past in the form of other places, and with the future in the form of other peoples, but presently live in a landscape of ruin, surrounded by fragments awaiting reconstruction? To what extent will what rises from the rubble be influenced by the way we do oral history?

Conferences

Oral History Society (UK)
 'Oral History and Performance'
 15-16 June, Stantonbury Campus, Milton Keynes, UK

There are many ways of developing and staging theatrical events using oral history as source material. This conference will look both at successes (and failures) as

well as exploring the processes of putting together a presentation. How do you involve people in the development of a play? What are the ethics of using oral testimony and adapting it to a wider audience?

As well as the more conventional conference presentations and papers, there will be a series of themed workshops exploring the different and varied uses of this source material. Conference delegates will be invited to participate in and comment on work in progress during the two days through a number of workshops. This will culminate in a presentation on the first evening in the performance area within the campus. Workshops planned so far are:

- Playback theatre
- Story telling
- Song writing
- Play writing and performance

The various presentations planned for the conference will include one from young people based locally, older peoples' theatre and practitioners relating their experiences. There will also be presentations on the indirect effects of this method of working, such as community development and regeneration, the health values and the personal development of participants. For more information, contact:
 Robert Wilkinson
 robert.wilkinson@camden.gov.uk

Germany

'The Presence of the Past: Transformation and Dealing with the Past in Eastern and Central Europe'
 23-25 May 2002, Berlin

The Institute for History and Biography at the Open University in Hagen, as the German representative of the International Oral History Association, supported by the Stiftung Aufarbeitung der SED Diktatur in Berlin, will hold a conference on the transformation process in central and eastern Europe. The subjects of the conference will be:

- individual and collective remembrances of the time before, during and after the transformation process
- subjective dealing with the 'new time'
- the investigation and archival and judicial treatment of the past.

Besides a keynote speech and overviews of historical and political developments in different countries in the region, the preliminary programme includes the following sections:

- life story and personal communities
- problems of new orientations
- changes in family and everyday life
- oppression and opposition.

For further information, contact:
 Dr Alexander von Plato
 alexander.vonplato@fernuni-hagen.de

Australia
'Life Writing and the Generations'
International Auto/biography Association
conference
15-17 July 2002
La Trobe University, Melbourne

Call for papers: We have in mind the ways in which the generations write about one another. And indicative—but by no means exhaustive—list of some ways in which the title might be construed is: gender and the generations; generations of life-writing criticism and theory; cross-cultural dimensions; indigeneity and the generations; Australia and the Pacific; generational writing in Asia and the Pacific; science, life-writing and generational change; psychoanalytic dimensions; oral narrative and generational memory; papers reflecting various philosophical/theoretical orientations on the self/subject and its representation in the life-writing narrative; individuals writing at and/or about different stages of their lives.

One session of the conference will be devoted to Australian content, specifically to the 'Stolen Generation' of Australian aborigines and their narratives.

For further information, contact:

Richard Freadman
Tel: 00 61 3 947 92 406
Fax: 00 61 3 947 93 637

www.latrobe.edu.au/english/usba/generations.html

United States

'Global Linkages: The Internationalization of Everyday Life'

Oral History Association Annual Meeting

October 23-27 2002

San Diego, California

For further information, contact:

Teresa Barnett
tbarnett@library.ucla.edu
(310) 206-2454

or

Jane Collings
jcolling@library.ucla.edu
(310) 267-4754

The Australian Sesquicentennial Gift Trust for Oral History

is offering

AWARDS IN ORAL HISTORY

The awards provide financial help for projects using oral resources relating to the history of New Zealand/Aotearoa and this country's close connections with the Pacific. All areas of New Zealand history are eligible although preference will be given to projects which would significantly improve understanding of this country. Projects on the history of the Maori and Pacific Island people in New Zealand are especially welcome. Awards may be made to individuals, groups, communities or institutions. Assistance is not normally available for projects that are eligible for university research funds, nor for university theses. Applicants must normally be resident in New Zealand.

Awards are designed to:

- Provide support to individuals, groups, communities or institutions for a limited period.
- Pay for equipment, travel and other costs related to the project.

Applications close on April 30.

For further information and application forms, contact:

Megan Hutching, Oral Historian, History Group

Ministry for Culture & Heritage

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Email: megan.hutching@mch.govt.nz

www.mch.govt.nz/History/Branch/oral-history.htm