
NOHANZ

The National Oral History Association of New Zealand
Te Kete Kōrero-a-Waha o Te Motu

NOHANZ AGM

Tuesday 12 August

5:30 p.m

National Library, Wellington

Cnr Aitken & Molesworth Sts

Please come along and ensure that we have a quorum

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NOHANZ

Newsletter

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Newsletter: We seek news and views from around the country about what is happening, courses that are being offered, reports on projects in progress or completed.

Send your news to Megan Hutching at:

meganhutching@hotmail.com

Oral history in New Zealand

In the North Otago area approximately 10 oral history interviews are carried out each year on behalf of the North Otago Museum. The interviews aim to record and document the history of the area through the lives of community members. The Museum's director, Rowan Carroll, is very keen to promote and endorse oral history and plans to use excerpts from the oral histories within future exhibitions. I have also carried out two introductory oral history workshops on behalf of the Museum and there are a number of people interested in recording their family histories as a result.

Earlier this year I carried out a project in the Burkes Pass area of South Canterbury. This Pass links the town of Fairlie with Tekapo and the Mackenzie Country. Needless to say it is a stunning area.

The project was carried out on behalf of the Burkes Pass Heritage Trust which has done wonderful work in the village, restoring some of the original cob cottages, as well as the charming community church, St. Patrick's. The interviews were very interesting and topics covered ranged from country dances and social activities, the control of rabbits and the changing methods involved, transport, dealing with the climate – both snow and drought - stories about the Burkes Pass Hotel, dog trials and farming in this area.

The recorded material has been deposited in the South Canterbury Museum in Timaru with a copy also being kept by the Trust. The chair of the Trust, Jane Batchelor organized a wonderful handover ceremony of the material at the cob cottage, completed with veranda and roses growing up the wall, that she and her husband, Graham, have restored. The interviewees were all invited and we had a lovely old fashioned afternoon tea in the kitchen, warmed by a black coal range, the food

displayed on cake stands and tea in china cups! The Trust were a pleasure to work for and are to be commended on the work they are doing. Web site for those interested is:
<http://www.burkesspass.org.nz>.

Jacqui Foley

Wellington Regional Group, April meeting

The NOHANZ Wellington regional group met for the second time this year in April and once again the programme was of interest and value to all who were there. Twelve members were at the meeting to hear Lizzie Catherall talk about her oral history project - 'The Tuis' - and their work in the New Zealand Forces Clubs in Cairo, Bari, Rome and London during World War Two.

The project, begun in 1997, sought to record the oral histories of as many as possible of the original group sent to Cairo in September 1941. This group of 30 women, selected from nation-wide Women's War Service Auxiliary members, was sent in response to a request from Bernard Freyberg, Commander of the 2 NZ Expeditionary Force.

Freyberg had a deep concern for the well-being of his men. He saw the New Zealand Forces Club in Cairo as a place where other ranks especially could go and feel normal in what was an extraordinarily abnormal situation. Viewing the New Zealand Forces Club in Cairo as "terribly drab", he had requested the New Zealand government for 30 young New Zealand women to staff the club lounge and to "give it a touch of home." This group trail blazed because, apart from the nursing service, this was the first time that women had served in the New Zealand Army. There was no army manual on what their role would be and when the women left New Zealand they had no idea what they would be doing. As it turned out, the group, under the protective leadership of Freyberg's wife, Barbara, played a welfare role. This role was formally recognised in 1942 with the constitution

of the WAAC (Women's Auxiliary Army Corps) Welfare Division.

The recollections of the twelve women tell of long hours preparing and serving food, visiting hospitals, shopping, helping men select gifts for families at home, dancing with them at places like the YMCA, and providing sympathetic listening. In Egypt they were called on to provide concerts for the soldiers, especially at times when the New Zealand Concert Party was not available. Later in London the Tuis helped rehabilitate returning POWs.

Once Lizzie had told us about the project we listened to extracts from the tapes and looked at some wonderful period photos which were most evocative of the time.

The group's discussion centred around the management of the project, interview and research skills - as well as the way in which a project such as this reveals social values, language, and cultural norms which are different from those of today. For instance, there were terminologies relating to class and race which are not used today, but were the accepted terms of that time - and as such gave an indication of the prevailing attitudes in those days.

There were various other matters for discussion, including the use of photos or memorabilia as triggers for memory; ways of asking personal questions of women from an older generation on topics such as romance or sexual involvement with the soldiers, and the value of the life-history interview in providing the context of where the interviewee has come from.

I think it is true to say that we all enjoyed the session very much - one of the good things about the group was that it was a nice mix of old and new hands - and everyone was able to give to and take from the group as a whole. We also had a lovely afternoon tea provided by Gillian Headifen - thanks Gillian, your generosity, as always, is appreciated.

Our next regional meeting is being held on 2 July. We will be discussing the Agreement Form, and a report on that discussion will be in the next Newsletter.

Susan Fowke (with acknowledgement of notes provided by Gillian Headifen).

Talking about oral history...

Why We Tell Stories: Connections Among Oral History, Oral Traditions And Personal Narrative



Kristin Bervig Valentine

Oral history, oral traditions, and personal narration are modes of communication. (1) Yet the defined boundaries among them are as leaky as a crocheted boat.

So began the written abstract to a public talk presented by Emerita Professor of Communication, Kristin Bervig Valentine, on 6 May 2008 at the National Library in Wellington. Kristin was in Aotearoa/New Zealand to teach a special topic in Gender and Women's Studies at Victoria University of Wellington: *Dialogues with Women* and to carry out further research with New Zealanders who claim a Scandinavian heritage. NOHANZ was delighted to capitalise on Kristin's short working holiday and have her share her views on how oral history, oral traditions, and personal narration involve people telling stories that can demonstrate how they make sense of their experiences, claim identities, interact with each other and participate in cultural groups. In this report I will

try to highlight a few of the points raised that might be of interest to oral historians.

Kristin discussed how the study of narratives offers a critical way of grasping how people communicate, reflect and change their culture(s). She emphasised how important stories are by referring to New Zealand anthropologist Michael Jackson (not to be confused with you know who):

The narrative forms known to humanity are finite and ubiquitous. Yet in the ways we adopt and enter into these master narratives, we communicate experiences that we feel are singularly our own. As for other human beings, we see them as simply faces in a crowd, as an anonymous mass, until we enter into dialogue with them. Forthwith a stranger suddenly possesses a voice, a history, a name....and what transpires between us may change our lives for ever (2006:288).

Oral historians do need to be good listeners and Kristin emphasized the interactive nature of dialogue. Listening, she insists, involves all of our senses and I'm sure that for many of us it is not until we begin the recording process that we become aware of noises that we had previously unconsciously screened out. I was born close to London (Heathrow) Airport and now live near Wellington Airport so I learned a long time ago to not 'hear' the noise of planes landing and taking off. However, when many years ago I recorded an interview at home I became re-sensitised to my noisy environment and vowed not to record there ever again. This is an example of an experience which I am sure is not mine alone but is a reminder that reinforces the claim Kristin made in her presentation - that the act of listening is all-encompassing, one in which one becomes aware not only of noise but also smells, touch, movement, and things and people in our field of vision.

Kristin went on to discuss the use of standpoint theory for researchers who work with people who have a different culture from their own and how 'through personal narration' one comes to understand what distinguishes one group from another. (2) She went on to describe how different world views impact on our personal relationships as well as how, where and why we do the things we do. (3) She defines culture broadly to include groups or communities based on factors such as religion, class, ethnicity or sexual orientation. To clarify this she used gender as an example - research about middle class women like herself who tend to narrate with much more background detail than men in the same grouping. Using a car accident as illustration, she said that a man would probably explain the experience something like this: 'The guy behind me hit the back bumper at the roundabout', whereas a woman would ask: 'Are you okay? What about the car? What did you do? Where were you when it happened?' From an oral historical perspective this relates to the need to examine not only the content of people's narratives but also the complexities of the process of telling them.



Kristin discussed a variety of research projects she has undertaken but I will focus here on her New Zealand research with people of Scandinavian heritage. Until I met Kristin I had never heard of 'Syttende Mai' (literal translation is 17th May) and this was probably the case with most people in the audience. However, this is a major event for 'Scandis' to celebrate Norway's Constitution Day that involves a town-wide ceremonial all-day event held at Norsewood and also at Palmerston North

(both in the Manawatu) that includes dressing up in national costume, a church service and sharing food. As someone who herself is of Norwegian descent, Kristin has attended Syttende Mai several times in New Zealand. As well as being a participant herself she has been talking to other attendees about the significance of Scandinavian culture to them personally. What she is trying to discover is:

- How much do Scandis separate themselves from other European Pakeha?
- To what extent does public memory leave out details of conflicts?
- To what extent have Scandis been influenced by Maori culture?
- What stories do Scandis tell about their ancestors that they wish to be preserved?
- Is Syttende Mai attendance important? Is attendance at the bi-annual Scandinavian Gathering important? If so, why?



All in all it was a lively lunchtime presentation that provided food for thought for oral historians and others who have an interest in how people use stories to construct identities, memories and meaning. Many thanks to the National Library for supporting the event and to Kristin herself for taking the time to share her extensive experience with us and, more importantly, inform us all about what is happening on our very own doorstep.

1. Oral history tends to focus on history of a person, place or action that has been personally witnessed or experienced by the narrator. Oral traditions: verbal and non-verbal expressions of the culture of a group. These oral traditions tend to be passed down to members of the next generation as an important reminder of their belonging to this culture.

2. Personal narration: an individual's account, not necessarily history or traditional although it may be both. It can be defined as a story composed by someone who is a participant in the events of the story and related to another, usually in an oral mode. Thus, personal narration carries with it a strong sense of personal testimony to the veracity of the events disclosed (definitions provided by Kristin Valentine, 2008)

3. World view: The explicit and implicit beliefs held by most individuals in their cultural group about the nature of people, of the universe, and of a person's relations to the universe and to other people. World view can be described as the manner in which members of a culture see and express their relation to the world around them (Kristin Valentine, 2008)

Otaki Market Gardeners Association

The second presentation in the autumn series of talks hosted by NOHANZ and the Oral History Centre, Alexander Turnbull Library was delivered in Wellington at the National Library by our very own Treasurer, Anne Thorpe. This talk drew on an oral history project with the Otaki Market Gardeners Association (OMGA) and was wide-ranging – it included history of the region, the ethics of oral history projects with people from cultures other than one's own, insider/outsider perspectives, food production and distribution changes in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the use of oral history in museum exhibitions; there was something for almost everyone.

Anne herself is an insider in that she has lived in Otaki for over fifty years and she and her husband have owned and run a family market gardening business begun by her father-in-law for much of that time. However, she was an outsider in that half of her narrators were of Chinese ethnicity whereas she identifies as Pakeha/Ngati Kahungungu ki Wairarapa. When first commissioned by the OMGA, Anne had little doubt about her ability to undertake the project – as a probation officer she 'knew how to interview people'. However, when her friend and oral historian Rachael Selby alerted her to the ethical issues germane to oral history, how it should be 'used and not abused', Anne took a step back to reflect on the implications of her involvement. Two months after consulting members of the Chinese community about the appropriateness of her participation the project was given

the green light; they insisted that they wanted her to do it because of her insider knowledge and close association with the industry. Anne's experience reinforces what I wrote in the last NOHANZ journal: the community consent that should be a prerequisite of many oral history projects means that researchers need to allow for the fact that 'this may take an extensive period of negotiation' but, rest reassured, it is worth the effort as the rewards of doing so can be great.

Anne's research into market gardening that preceded the recording process revealed that horticulture has a long history in the region. Otaki is a very fertile river silt area with a good climate. Ngati Raukawa were the original food producers who grew kumara, potatoes and corn. Chinese people, who had previously worked in the goldfields, moved into the area in the 1900s to 'subsist, live and grow as they had back home' and they were welcomed by the tangata whenua. In the 1920s European market gardeners who had observed the Chinese example started moving to the area, mostly from Lower Hutt. During World War Two land was taken over by the government to provide food for the troopships and many local people were manpowered for this endeavour.

Transport and swift distribution of produce was always a problem and tales of fermenting tomatoes were evocative. Post-war some Maori sold land; some was taken for returned servicemen. Some Chinese then left the area but those with 'soil under their nails' remained. There was a later influx of 'Italian folk' from the 1960s. Anne says that this 'harmonious blending' of people continues to be reflected in the supportive community that is Otaki today.

The OMGA was an amalgamation of a European group formed in 1933 and a separate Chinese association. From the beginning rules stated that 50 per cent of the committee were to be Chinese and 50% European. It has been a powerful organisation in terms of the New Zealand Vegetable Growers Association and the OMGA have been

movers and shakers in the industry. Anne played extracts from her project in which narrators discussed changes such as weed control (she heard 'horrendous' stories of the effect of hormone sprays on plants and people); machinery (more grisly anecdotes) and family life. One narrator sold his land when his wife had 'had enough' as he did not feel able to continue without her. Another talked of how none of his children came back to the business, although they had helped in the business when young. He didn't want them to follow in his footsteps because the work was 'too hard', involving at times picking until 3 a.m. in the morning and up again at 5 a.m. to continue the job.

New Zealand's economic history was a fascinating aspect of the talk. Anne explained the changes that have resulted from produce now being supplied to supermarkets rather than independent greengrocers. Small market gardens (of 68 acres!) are no longer large enough to supply the needs of supermarkets and she gave the example of one supplier north of Otaki that now grows broccoli all year round on 1000 acres of land. Regular, daily supplies are the order of the day as supermarkets do not have the facilities to keep and store fruit and vegetables for several days.

Anne concluded her presentation with a discussion of the exhibition at Otaki Museum for which the oral histories were the backbone. The extensive exhibit, displayed in the now restored Otaki Heritage Bank until the end of June 2008, was bolstered with photographs and machinery used by market gardeners. Many people who now live in Otaki were previously unaware of this history so Anne feels that the exhibition that was the culmination of the oral history project was rewarding both personally and for the community. Her next goal is to interview wives of the male market gardeners. Perhaps then she will confirm, not only their hard work, but also the accompanying boredom she claims is part and parcel of being a market gardener's wife and is

why so many 'run away to do something else'.

Thank you to Anne and Kristin Valentine for two interesting talks that demonstrate the vibrancy and diversity of oral history.

N.B. The Otaki Museum is run by the Otaki Heritage Bank Preservation Trust, located at 49 Main Street, Otaki and is open every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in June, 10am-2pm. Contact: Jill Stallard, 04 364 6886 or otakimuseum@paradise.net.nz

Lesley Hall

Australian Sesquicentennial Awards in Oral History 2008

A wide range of communities and aspects of life in New Zealand will be explored by this year's recipients of Awards in Oral History.

A total of \$60,500 has been granted to the following groups and individuals:

Arts Foundation of New Zealand \$6500

Arts Foundation of New Zealand Heritage Project

Interviews with eight recipients of the Icon Awards – including Diggeress Te Kanawa, Maurice Gee, Margaret Mahy and Ans Westra.

Otaki Bank Heritage Preservation Trust \$2000

The Changing Face of Te Horo

Roger Smith \$11000

Composing New Zealand – life histories of six senior composers in Aotearoa/New Zealand – including Jenny McLeod, Jack Body and Gillian Whitehead

AC Productions (Anna Cottrell) \$12000

Facing the Future – stories of new New Zealanders

Histories of refugees from Africa, Afghanistan, Iraq and Burma.

Damian Skinner, Tairawhiti Museum of Art and History \$3700

Watersheds: Nga Wai Pupu – an oral history of the Tairawhiti Region

Megan Hutching \$12000

Bridge 4232: an oral history of Auckland Harbour Bridge 1959-2009

Margaret McClure \$5800

'When a happy marriage turns to custard'

Women's divorce stories from the 1950s and 1960s

Shona McCahon \$7500

The founding of landscape architecture in New Zealand

'Swimming' - Digital Style

I thought it might be of interest to those who have not yet taken the plunge from analogue to digital to put down the story of my 'conversion'. I 'recently' bought a Sound Devices digital machine and found myself being dragged, kicking and screaming, into the arena of digital recording.

I have been using a digital video camera for some time, but for reasons known only to my inner self, I had an absolute block about using the SD machine. It sat in my drawer for many weeks, unused and waiting for the moment. I was very well aware that I had several thousand dollars worth of equipment languishing in that drawer and my husband, now and again, would make discreet inquiries as to when I was going to use it! Finally with much encouragement from fellow friends and colleagues, I finally made my first recording with the 'Sound Devices'.

First of all, I have to say it was a lot easier than I had anticipated. Overall I have found that the most important thing needed is time, not necessarily weeks and weeks, but just decent chunks of time at regular intervals to become thoroughly familiar with the machine. The SD does heaps of things that I will probably never know about, but I am at least familiar with the half

dozen or so settings that are important for oral history recording. The change over has made me look closely at all of my work practices, which is of course no bad thing.

As with analogue, it is vital to keep good records and tracking for both yourself and the archives or place of deposit. However, the intangible nature of digital files and folders makes this type of record keeping even more vital. I have found the Recording Work Sheet, developed and refined by Pip Oldham and Helen Frizzell, (in consultation with the Alexander Turnbull Library) to be vital. This sheet provides a record of the whole process, from the interview through to downloading, any modification of the original files and finally provides information and details of deposit.

Pip and Helen have been absolute stalwarts on my digital journey and have both been more than generous with information, support and advice. In fact I had a sort of mental image of myself swimming across Cook Strait (far fetched to say the least) with Pip and Helen in the lifeboat along side dispensing advice, encouragement and sustenance as needed! They have also done truly pioneering work with the Sound Devices machine, providing information about the settings which has been invaluable. I would also like to acknowledge Stephen Buckland of Sound Techniques, from whom I bought the equipment. He has been extremely supportive and patient and has a genuine interest in the practice of oral history.

While all of this might sound very traumatic and long winded, and likely to put people off changing to digital, I would really encourage people to take the plunge. While I found it quite hard, or to use that dreadful euphemism, 'challenging', it really is OK. The final result in terms of sound quality is really impressive and once you get into the way of things, the equipment is not difficult to use. The software needed for compressing files and for abstracting is free, and easy to use. All in all it has

been well worth the effort, and arriving on the digital sandy shore is definitely rewarding!

Final word is that there is plenty of assistance around, oral historians are generous people so while the journey might be a bit scary and lonely at times, help is never far away. So, from a very-reluctant-to-change analogue user, I am highly recommending going digital!

Jacqui Foley

Maori & Oral History

Maori and Oral History: a collection is a selection of 20 papers printed in the Oral History journal between 1989 and 2003. NOHANZ invited Rachael Selby and Alison Laurie to edit the collection in 2005 and it has been a very successful publication. The papers focus on a range of topics which are broadly about interviewing Maori participants, whanau, hapu and iwi development, archival research, Maori oral tradition, collecting and using Maori interviews. The book is now in its fourth reprint and available from Rachael Selby - email address r.a.selby@massey.ac.nz Cost: \$25.00.

NOHANZ website

The NOHANZ website is in the process of being updated and we're keen to get members' ideas about what they'd like it to include.

Here are some ideas we've had so far:

- information for people wanting to commission oral history interviews
- a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- a directory of members (with members' permission)
- resources for managing oral history projects
- audio extracts from oral history interviews
- information about electronic interactive newsletters

In case you're stuck for ideas, here are some overseas websites I've come across:

Baylor University Institute for Oral History

http://www.baylor.edu/oral_history/
Based in Central Texas, the Institute for Oral History at Baylor University has created an online workshop, guiding users through the oral history process. There's an emphasis on transcriptions, rather than the abstracts which are more commonly used in New Zealand.

Learn How to Interview Video - U.S. Latino and Latina World War II Oral History Project

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/ww2latinos/training-video.html>

In 1999, the U.S. Latino and Latina World War II Oral History Project began interviewing Latin Americans who served in the armed forces during World War II. Most of the interviews were recorded on videotape and the project website includes a "How To" Video about how to do oral history, with an emphasis on video interviewing.

Center for Digital Storytelling

<http://www.storycenter.org/index1.html>

Based in California, the Center for Digital Storytelling runs workshops to help people create digital stories, which combine first person audio narrative with images and music. There are examples of the stories:

<http://www.storycenter.org/stories/> on the website. Not strictly oral history, but an interesting example of how to combine audio narrative with other media.

King's Cross Voices Oral History Project

<http://www.kingscrossvoices.org.uk/default.asp>

If you've been in London recently, you may have seen the newly restored St Pancras station, now known as St Pancras International. This is just one of a number of developments in the area of London known as Kings Cross. In response, the Kings Cross Voices Oral History Project was set up, creating 'a vital historical record of the life and

times of 'the Cross' as the physical reminders are forever changed, and as the composition of present communities are likely to be altered irrevocably.' The site features audio extracts of the interviews, together with transcripts, and images of interviewees and archival images of Kings Cross. There's also an interesting example of oral history combined with an architectural walking tour: the Argyle Square Sound Trail http://www.kingscrossvoices.org.uk/Argyle_Square_Sound_Trail.asp.

H-Oralhist Home Page

<http://www.h-net.org/~oralhist/>
Finally, a link to where I found these websites: H-ORALHIST, a network of

people interested in oral history. This is an electronic, interactive newsletter ("list") which is free and easy to sign up to. You can get an idea of the sorts of topics posted on the website—you'll see that some are relevant to oral history here in New Zealand. I'll include information about the New Zealand version of this list in the next newsletter.

To conclude, we're keen to hear anybody based in the Wellington area who is skilled in html and interested in helping Pip Oldham and me with the website. If you know of anybody, you can email me at paul.diamond@mch.govt.nz

Paul Diamond

NOHANZ notices

Annual General Meeting

This will be held on Tuesday 12 August at the National Library in Wellington, corner of Molesworth & Aitken Streets.

Please attend if you are able as we need 15 members present for a quorum, and because it is a good opportunity to meet your executive and other oral historians.

Annual subscriptions

Anne Thorpe, NOHANZ treasurer, reminds you to check whether you have paid your sub for 2008. If you have overlooked it, please pay.