
NOHANZ

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

Contents

NOHANZ News

- 2009 conference, 31 October – 1 November, Wellington

Oral History in New Zealand

- project reports
- workshop
- 2009 Awards in Oral History

Conferences

- 2009 Oral History Society conference reports
- 2010 IOHA conference

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NOHANZ

Newsletter

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www.oralhistory.org.nz

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

NOHANZ news

2009 conference

31 October – 1 November

This year NOHANZ holds its conference in Wellington – at the Quality Hotel, Cuba Street. This beautifully renovated hotel has an interesting history which is outlined below. We are delighted to be holding our conference at the hotel. The facilities are superb and the fantastic location will be much enjoyed – especially by out-of-town members. We thoroughly recommend the accommodation. At \$99 per night for a double or twin room we think it very reasonable. More details about the accommodation will be posted to members along with the registration form. *Susan Fowke*



WELLINGTON

The CQ complex, where this year's NOHANZ Conference (30 October – 1 November) will be held, has a distinguished history of its own. The beautiful heritage building dates back to the 1800s.

This site first belonged to Major James Paul, an officer of the British Army. His daughter, Annette, was a well educated, compassionate and strong-minded woman who was attracted by the work of the Salvation Army. She joined their ranks in 1889 and quickly rose to Staff Captain. She worked extensively with those in need throughout Wellington and New Zealand.

When the premises that the Salvation Army used to accommodate needy women became overcrowded, Annette made a donation worth over £3500 to help. The generous donation of the site (where the present hotel now is) allowed for a refuge called Paulina Rescue Home to be built in 1894.

In 1907 the home was demolished and a People's Palace hotel was built on the site. The People's Palace was run by Salvation Army officers and workers. It had 96 bedrooms, slept 134 guests, and fed 180. The Prime Minister, Sir Joseph Ward, opened the hotel in 1908 in a magnificent ceremony. Two more wings were built along Dunlop Terrace in 1917 bringing the number of rooms to 288.

The People's Palace was later called The Railton and operated for 78 years. During a 7-year period in the 1950s and '60s, the average occupancy was 104%. Christchurch ferry passengers arrived in the morning, slept the day, and caught the night ferry. A similar group used the rooms at night. It has been calculated about 6 million people have slept in the hotel.

In 1986, when the hotel required a major refit, the Salvation Army sold the property to Presbyterian Support Services, which subsequently sold it to Burrell Wilkinson. They spent about \$7m refitting the hotel and renamed it Trekkers Hotel. The property was purchased by the current owners, Rex Nicholls and Phil McGaveston, in 1990.

Classified as an earthquake risk in 1995 because of its brick construction, major renovations took place in 2002/2003 which added a floor, earthquake strengthened the whole structure, replicated the original stairway, and added 114 new rooms. The rebuilt hotel was officially opened May 2003 by Prime Minister, Helen Clark.

You can look forward to enjoying this piece of Wellington history at the NOHANZ conference at the end of October.

Oral history in New Zealand

Picton Train Drivers Project
The perils of working in a small community:

1. Get Sesqui Award for 5 oral histories – hurrah!

2. Tell one local person and ask his opinion about an elderly prospective interviewee.

3. Next day, given list of 12 people who all want to be included – they have discussed it between themselves and decided on the order in which they should be interviewed. Over the next week, more names are added. List does not include several of my own original ones, with whom I'd discussed the project.

4. Try to survive life in small community!
Loreen Brehaut

Avon Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust

The recent passing of our dear friend, board member, and long-time river advocate, Ron Dougherty, reminded us to start collecting the oral histories of people with knowledge, views and stories about the Estuary/Ihutai.

Chrissie Williams, Alex Drysdale, Les Batcheler, Elisabeth Stuart-Jones, and Kevin O'Connor have been interviewed by Michele Bradley over the last few months. They have made a significant contribution over recent decades to the improvement of our Estuary/Ihutai and rivers. They have given tirelessly of their time, making use of their talents for the benefit of everyone who lives in Christchurch. Like Ron, these five have been steadfast guardians. It is a wonderful opportunity to have a first hand account for the record.

The archive of audio recordings and abstracts will be held by the AHEIT for future initiatives. They will also be available for research or appreciation at the MacMillan Brown Library (University of Canterbury), and probably at the central Christchurch City library in the 'reference only' collection. The AHEIT will hold copyright for publication purposes.

Environment Canterbury plans to contract Michele Bradley to undertake further interviews during the coming months.

Shelley Washington, Environment Canterbury

The Changing Faces of Te Horo

The Otaki Heritage Bank Preservation Trust (known as the Otaki Museum) was the recipient of a Sesquicentennial oral history grant in 2008. The Trust was established in 2002 to restore a former Bank of New Zealand building and to establish a museum, exhibition space and research facility. The restoration was completed in 2005 and the research facility with the storage of artefacts, photographs and the stories of the people of Otaki has taken on a life of its own.

The Trust mounts four exhibitions each year. A curator for each exhibition is appointed, and a group of interested researchers are gathered together to undertake the task of sourcing and preparing the historical information around each topic. In 2008 the research began on an exhibition entitled '*The Changing Faces of Te Horo*'. Te Horo is a small rural community just south of Otaki on the Kapiti Coast. It was bushclad, with peat swamps, waterways and sand dunes, inhabited by Ngati Toa and Ngati Raukawa people prior to the arrival of Chinese market gardeners and early farming settlers. It is now well known for boutique businesses such as Ruth Pretty's Cooking School. Many city people have moved to Te Horo, establishing life style blocks and substantially changing the nature of the area.

The grant from the Ministry for Culture and Heritage has been used to record the stories of some of the people who have lived in Otaki all their lives, and of the newcomers who have substantially changed the character of Te Horo. A training workshop with Judith Fyfe was undertaken by a group of enthusiasts and the recording began and is continuing. Two members undertook the Abstracting Workshop in Wellington and that is proving invaluable as they transcribe and abstract the material. Some tapes have been deposited in the Alexander Turnbull Oral History Centre, to meet the requirements of the grant but many more will follow. This community project is growing in momentum and the support of the

Ministry for Culture and Heritage's Sesquicentennial grant has enabled the recording of this valuable historical material, for which the Trust is most grateful.

The exhibition '*The Changing Faces of Te Horo*' will open at the Otaki Museum on 8 August and thereafter on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10 am to 2 pm.

Anne Thorpe

1984 Southland Floods

Towards the end of 2008 the Southland Oral History Project (SOHP) was approached by Environment Southland regarding their plans to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the 1984 Southland Floods. The 1984 floods are widely considered to be Southland's most significant and widespread natural disaster. The Southland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group, supported by the Invercargill City Council, Southland District Council and Environment Southland, planned to use the anniversary to highlight Civil Defence awareness through a road show travelling around the region.

It became apparent to the organisers that the anniversary of the floods would also encourage the community to think about their own experiences during this time and hence the SOHP was invited to become involved. A number of the key people involved in the Civil Defence at the time of the flood had since passed away, and it was acknowledged that some effort should be made to capture the experiences of those still living. The SOHP did not hesitate to accept the invitation to help. People interested in taking part can fill in a form from the road show.

One of the first places the road show visited was Otautau which was badly affected by the floods. Our interviewer, Nancy Burnett attended the launch and has since interviewed nine people about their experiences in the flood. She has done a great job in capturing a cross section of people from those involved because of their work, those involved in a volunteer capacity, those employed in

a welfare capacity and those who were affected by the flood on a personal level.

As the road show continues to move throughout the region we hope more people will offer to have their stories recorded to help build on this growing resource. In October the road show will end at the Southland Museum and Art Gallery with an exhibition. The museum has been informed about our collection and has been given the opportunity to use extracts from the recordings as part of their exhibition.

The 1984 flood is also a common subject of study in schools in Southland and our collection will provide a new resource for students to use. It is great that the Southland Oral History Project is becoming widely known throughout the Southland region. Being invited to take part in these projects provides us with many more opportunities to build up our collection of oral histories.

Rebecca Amundsen

Conference reports

Oral History Society conference
Hearing Voice in Oral History
July 2-3 2009
Strathclyde University, Glasgow

'I tape therefore I am.'

So proclaimed renowned American oral historian Studs Terkel, his prolific career and recent passing marked in a moving tribute at this year's Oral History Society conference at Glasgow's Strathclyde University.

Terkel's words, and his seemingly effortless transformation of 'everyday subjects into the brilliantly articulate', struck a chord with practitioners and delegates gathered to explore the significance of voice in oral history.

This was my first international conference, and I was impressed by the sheer magnitude of Britain's oral history 'industry' compared to New Zealand's – more than \$150 million has been invested in community oral history in the UK over the past decade.

The return on this investment was evident in the number and diversity of projects underway in the UK, many of which were showcased over the conference's two days.

Stephen High's opening address *Telling Stories: Life history, digital storytelling and memoryscapes* discussed new media's influence on the collection and dissemination of oral history, and the opportunities it creates for community collaboration.

Delivered by telephone from Canada, High's keynote explored digital media's potential to tackle one of the greatest challenges facing oral history – the imbalance between the time spent gathering, and the subsequent time spent listening, to recorded voices.

He suggested that voice has been supplanted by the transcript (abstracting, I learned, is unique to New Zealand), leaving the most powerful evidence – oral or visual recordings – under-utilised.

Integral to his efforts to restore voice to oral history are digital storytelling and the construction of 'memoryscapes' – methods engaging communities not only as storytellers, but as leaders in the public representation of their own experiences.

High's projects are remarkable – and I can't do them justice here – so check out www.lifestoriesmontreal.ca and http://storytelling.concordia.ca/high/sturgeon_falls/index.html for a taste.

I was one of two presenters in a session on war/conflict and hearing voice in community through oral history, alongside Canadian academic Dr Pamela Sugiman.

My paper examined the influence of political will and public appetite on an upsurge in the recording of war veterans' oral histories over the last decade in New Zealand.

Pamela's talk focused on the influence of a lone discordant voice on her research with Japanese Canadians interred in the Second World War, and the insights this relationship gave her into her interpretive role as an oral history interviewer.

Her account was a reminder that however subtle, the expectations we carry into interviews shape the resulting narrative, and the complexity of interviewer/interviewee relationships was a sub-text of many of the sessions I attended.

One such example was Geoffrey Bell's discussion of how we deal with voices we'd rather not hear – racist, bigoted, sexist or unpopular viewpoints, often dismissed for their discordance with predominant, liberal mores.

'It's the job of historians to explore the complexity of change,' Bell said.

'We shouldn't run away or avoid voices we would rather not hear, or pretend they don't exist.'

He gave examples from a project on anti-Catholic sectarianism within Northern Ireland's Protestant working class, and another with a white community in multicultural East London.

He encouraged honesty in the representation of discordant views, and warned against a search for balance where there is, in fact, none to be had.

Robert Gildea and Rebecca Clifford's work explored gender-based experiences of social activism in France and Italy in 1968. Their interviews with 12 men and 10 women revealed sharply gendered experiences of new left activism.

Female interviewees recalled guilt and shame in abandoning the moral code of their parents and families for that of their comrades. By contrast, men embraced the new left with feelings of fearlessness and bravery, parental concern not for their moral wellbeing, but for their personal safety.

Gildea and Clifford found men equated liberation with political conflict, while women related it to personal freedom and self-discovery. Many women spoke of a tension between their own sexual liberation and the exploitation this engendered from their male counterparts.

But the experience of 'falling out of activism' and the reconstruction of personal identity was painful and confusing for both male and female interviewees.

Carolyn Mears encouraged thinking beyond the transcript in her account of using text-based oral history to represent voice in community.

Mears' research was motivated by her experience as the parent of a survivor of the 1999 Columbine High School shooting.

She found her community constricted by a 'trauma membrane...when you've had an experience you can't explain it's very difficult to find words to explain it.' Oral history was a means of making order of this confusion.

Mears extracted key phrases from interview transcripts to create a kind of poem out of Columbine residents' accounts. She then combined selected lines from poems to create collective 'mosaics' – the community's voice – from individual narratives.

Hugo Manson introduced us to proud Scotsman Johnnie Morrison, in particular his use of the descriptor 'serf' for his people's relationship with the English. A former gamekeeper, Johnnie's story refers to the North Sea oil and gas industry's arrival in his hometown.

Manson presented Johnnie's interview – in both written and oral form – to illustrate the layers of detail, the personal, social and political context the spoken word reveals beyond transcribed oral history.

'The written word is the road sign, the spoken word contains the destination,' he said.

Lindsay Reid spoke of the use – or absence – of Scots language in oral history interviews.

A Scots speaker herself, Reid examined why just a single interview in her series with Scottish midwives was conducted in their native tongue, with interviewer and interviewee instead opting to 'put on a voice' for the purpose of recording oral history.

She described a diminishing of the Scots language following the historic promotion of English in schools. Her tales of children being belittled and punished for speaking Scots, and its gradual marginalization resonated deeply. Reid could equally have been describing Aotearoa's near-loss of te reo Māori, and her evidence gave me new insight into my own experience of losing my first language.

As a child of Scottish immigrant parents and a first generation New Zealander, Scots was my native tongue for my first five years. I abandoned it on starting school, "flattening" my language in a bid to blend in with the other kids.

So a remarkable conference which did a great job of examining voice, both as a core vehicle of the evidence we collect, and of its less obvious influence on the subjective and interpretive roles we play as oral historians.

Claire Hall



(l to r) Anna Green, Hugo Manson, Lesley Hall and Claire Hall (photo: Claire Hall)

I arrived at the British Oral History Conference on the tail end of a combined holiday/business trip to the UK. Britain was basking in a heatwave – on the Thursday before the conference began I visited Scone Palace in Perth, where all the Scottish monarchs were crowned, in temperatures of 33 degrees Celsius. Glasgow was not quite so hot but it was in the high 20s all the same, and this proved problematic in lecture theatres where there was no air conditioning. To counter this we left the door open only to be scuppered by a very noisy Orange march in the street outside. However, let's put a positive spin on this by highlighting that this formed part of the ever-changing and vibrant soundscape of contemporary Glasgow.

Catherine O'Byrne's paper about women in the oil industry was particularly interesting to me as I am currently involved in a project about women in science and engineering. Catherine used extracts of interviews with two very different women (one tertiary educated, the other not) to demonstrate how women discuss or avoid discussion of gender discrimination. She discussed not only how narrators tried to subvert their gender in the workplace but also how they shied away from answering direct questions about sexism. Many distanced themselves from what they perceived Catherine's (stereotypical) feminist stance to be. However, by using extracts from two oral histories she recorded she was able to show that gender differences did emerge once she 'pushed' them a little and that two women of different status and class voiced their narratives in different ways. Voice as performance, transcription, and the effect of the voice of the interviewer on both interviewee and future researchers was discussed. Fascinating and thought-provoking!

Hilary Young's paper was about an oral history of the Open University in Britain and posed interesting questions – many about power relations – such as how does oral history work within an institutional context; whose voices should be recorded – academics, administrators, students etc; how has

the institutional voice been represented, resisted, silenced or changed across the Open University's 40 year history. As we all know there is a tendency in some cultures to interview the elite, but this project has traversed difficult terrain as it has tried to be representative by interviewing people at different locations in the academic hierarchy and people who have studied or worked at the OU at different time periods.

The highlight of many very good presentations for me was one by Pam Schweitzer, consultant and trainer to the "Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today" project. This is a project about reminiscence that has now been running for ten years. It involves people with dementia and their family carers in retracing their life stories with others in a similar situation, supported by reminiscence group leaders and health care professionals. They use creative ways to jog memory including singing, dancing, drawing and writing as well as group discussion. Objects such as photos or things used in paid work are used to stimulate memories. For example, in a DVD preceding the presentation, people were shown putting a nappy on a baby-sized doll and a man who had been a wharfie was shown explaining how a particular tool should be used.

Often the carers of the participants are surprised by what is recalled and expressed (dementia patients' voices are often silent or quiet because of lack of use and confidence) when sufficient stimulation and support is provided. One example is of someone called Dora who was participating in a session on work in the war years. She chose a piece of silk from a Reminiscence Box and showed how she had worked at a sewing machine stitching parachutes during the war. It reminded her of how she had secretly used cloth at the machine at work to make small items of clothing for her little girl at home. Her daughter, the same little girl, had never heard this story before and was very touched. It helped her to persevere in playing a supportive role in the sessions

and working hard to stimulate her mother's memories.

This was a fascinating paper and I really can't do it justice here. If you are interested in learning more I suggest you Google "Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today" for more information about both the project and the book that has been published about it.

I'll finish by telling you a little about the challenging keynote by Anne Karpf of London Metropolitan University that closed the conference. Karpf discussed how the voice and speech have traditionally been considered identical and how in oral history the voice is often seen as a conduit and treated as a source rather than a resource. She claimed that oral historians have internalized the message that the voice is a second class citizen and have consequently prioritized text. She argued that the rush to transcribe, 'to embalm these voices in print', is because oral historians cannot linger too long on orality as they feel more secure with the written form: 'Oral is more elusive, more frightening,' she claimed. Karpf played extracts of a number of interviews and urged us all to listen carefully to the voice. She pointed out how a Holocaust survivor exerted extreme control in constructing a narrative and compared it with a Chilean who is still in the process of constructing a narrative about her experience. An extract from an old BBC interview was illuminating as a demonstration of how social relations can be heard in the voice. The interviewer, who spoke in what in my day would have been called an upper class or "posh" accent, just could not connect (or establish rapport) with the interviewee. In his frustration with being understood he said: 'If I can say anything to please you I will.' In conclusion, Karpf urged us all listen to our narrators with what Freud called the third ear. If you really listen to the voice, to not only what is said but also how you can hear cultural shifts and changes in social values.

As with all oral history conferences I have attended there was a plethora of

interesting papers to choose from. It was great to catch up with old friends including people I had met at the International Oral History Conference in Guadalajara last September. The Kiwi contingent was impressive, five people to Australia's one participant. Straight after the conference I was on a train back to Edinburgh where I packed for my return to New Zealand the next day. The conference had given me lots to think about on the journey.

Lesley Hall

2010 IOHA conference Prague, 7-11 July 2010

The deadline for paper proposals has been extended to 6 September 2009. See websites below for details:
www.iohanet.org
www.ioha2010prague.cz

Oral history courses

FURTHER STEPS IN ORAL HISTORY

Sat 12 Sept and Sat 31 Oct
9.30 - 4.30 pm
Fee: \$35

Location: Risingholme

A course for anyone who has completed an oral history course and would like to sharpen their skills further. Content may include peer critique of interviewing and interview file. Sharing of styles, resources and learning. The day could also include content on digital skills for completion of oral history – Content will cater to what digital equipment resources are available to group for the session. Bring lap tops, portable scanner and recording device if you have any of these - not a requirement though. Bring lunch.

Contact realstories@xtra.co.nz or 332 0421

Tutor/Facilitator: Michelle Bradley

For more information and enrolment:
Risingholme is in Opawa, Christchurch
www.risingholme.org.nz

This year's Awards in Oral History were announced by the Ministry for Culture & Heritage in July:

Australian Sesquicentennial Gift Trust Awards in Oral History 2009

Loreen Brehaut (\$5000)
*Interviews with six Picton train drivers,
past and present*

Nigel Hampton, Chairperson (\$5000)
*Saving Knowledge – Okains Bay Maori
and Colonial Museum*

Caren Wilton (\$6000)
Selling sex: the NZ sex industry

Paulette Wallace (\$1500)
*Somes Islanders: A social history of life
on Matiu/Somes
1965 - 2005*

Whangarei Libraries (Friends of the
Library) (\$10,000)
*'Honouring Seniors' Whangarei District
OHP*

Northland Parents of Deaf Children Inc.
(\$12,000)
Northland Mothers of Deaf Adults

Rev Rangi Nicholson (\$5000)
*Maori language interviews in the
Anglican Diocese of Te Hui Amorangi o
Te Manawa o te Wheke*

Lyne Pringle (\$8000)
*Riding the Crest of a Wave: Early
Members of Impulse Dance Theatre and
Limbs Dance Company*

Gareth Watkins (\$8000)
*So Now We Are Legal (Post Homosexual
Law Reform – Interviews with younger
LGBTI community members)*

Shelley Seay (\$6000)
*The effect of the Wahine disaster, April
10 1968: Personal stories from survivors,
crew and rescuers*

Helen Frizzell, Judith Fyfe, Megan
Hutching, Pip Oldham (\$35,000)
*Mrs Schumacher's Gems: Domestic life
in New Zealand in the 1940s and 1950s*