
NOHANZ

Newsletter

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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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 biennial general meeting was held during the conference in June. A full report is on the back page of this newsletter.

Linda Evans and Megan Hutching recently ran two introductory workshops on behalf of NOHANZ at the Auckland Museum. There will be a video workshop in Wellington at the end of August—tutors will be Judith Fyfe and Tony Hiles. If there is interest, we will organise another one next year.

It is the fifteenth anniversary of the organisation in October this year and we are planning a small gathering in Wellington to mark the event.

Oral history in New Zealand

Tomorrow is too late: the New Zealand Oral History Archive, 1981-1990

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the founding of the New Zealand Oral History Archive, an innovative and creative force in the development of recorded oral history in its contemporary form in this country. Set up by Judith Fyfe and Hugo Manson, later joined by Jean Harton, the NZOHA developed practices and set standards still being followed and built on by oral historians twenty years later.

From their first proposals for an oral history archive, drafted in 1980, Judith Fyfe and Hugo Manson expressed a strong sense of urgency, as shown in their early motto 'Tomorrow is too late'. Their energy, commitment and persistence, combined with effective public relations and the support of key individuals, led to the establishing of the NZOHA in 1981 and its survival for nearly 10 years.

Strictly speaking, the NZOHA was not an archive, but an independent oral history collecting organisation with an arrangement to deposit its work in the Alexander Turnbull Library. The Library undertook to preserve and provide access to the recordings. Although staff of the NZOHA were always interested in presenting the rich material they had gathered and worked on a variety of publishing projects, their emphasis was on recording unedited archival interviews as a resource for the future. The NZOHA completed 56 projects, comprising nearly 500 interviews.

The archive's funding, never plentiful or secure, came from a variety of sources including government grants, grants from charitable foundations and commissions from organisations and individuals to carry out specific projects. The Stout Research Centre at Victoria University and later the National Library provided accommodation and a supportive working environment. Radio New Zealand contributed equipment and other technical assistance.

NZOHA Martinborough Project

In November 1981, Hugo Manson interviewed Mark Hardie, a 99 year old retired watchmaker, in Martinborough. The interview was the beginning of a pilot project, funded by a grant from the Department of Internal Affairs, to explore and develop an appropriate oral history methodology for the archive. In preparation for embarking on their first projects, Judith Fyfe and Hugo Manson had spent much of 1981 researching in New Zealand and overseas, corresponding with and in some cases meeting influential oral historians such as Paul Thompson, Dale Treleven and Ron Grele.

The *NZOHA Martinborough Project* was undertaken at the time of the South Wairarapa town's centenary. Forty-two long time residents were recorded in 35 life history interviews and over 90 hours of recordings.

With a philosophy which emphasised the sound recording as the primary source, rather than the written transcript, and a focus on providing access for future researchers, the NZOHA gave a high priority to the preparation of guides to the contents of interviews. The TAPE (Timed Access to Pertinent Excerpts) method devised by Dale Treleven at the Wisconsin State Historical Society was adopted as the basis for preparing time-coded abstracts.

The NZOHA practice of taking a current photograph to accompany the sound recording of the interview also started with the *Martinborough Project*. In some instances, earlier photographs were also copied.

Although Hugo Manson and Judith Fyfe have continued to develop and refine their techniques and approaches, the methodology established in the *Martinborough Project* provided the basis for all their future work.

Commissioned projects

The Customs Department Oral History Project was the first formal commission carried out by the NZOHA. It was begun in 1983 and done in four stages, resulting in life history interviews with 57 retired customs officers and covering the work of the department from 1915 to the 1980s. This project includes material on a many aspects of life in the twentieth century as well as focusing on changes in border control, transport, the New Zealand economy, and the public service. It was the first of a number of projects commissioned by government departments, businesses and other organisations which together provide fascinating views of personal, working and organisational life just before and during the radical economic and social changes of the 1980s.

Contemporary oral history and the 1984 Snap Election Project

On the evening of Thursday 14 June 1984, Sir Robert Muldoon, then Prime Minister, announced that a snap election would be held in a month's time. The next day the NZOHA began its first foray into contemporary oral history, with a book in mind as well as an oral history project. Arrangements were made to record telephone interviews with party leaders at regular intervals during the campaign on the understanding that no material from the interviews would be available until after the election.

Although all six leaders agreed to participate, Sir Robert was unavailable after the first interview. Nevertheless the project continued and the book was published within a month of the election.

All election campaigns since 1984 have been covered in similar projects, though without publications. The *Political Diary* series developed from this and consisted of regular interviews with Prime Ministers, opposition leaders and their spouses from 1987 until 1999.

The trust and the Sunlight centenarians

In 1984 the NZOHA became a charitable trust and the following year a membership drive was launched by the Patron, Prime Minister David Lange. The launch coincided with the completion of the *NZOHA Sunlight Centenarians Oral History Project*, interviews with 22 centenarians, partly sponsored by Lever

Brothers to celebrate the centenary of Sunlight soap.

Matriarchs Oral History Project

This was another combined archival and publication project, including photographs by Louise Guerin, to document some of the lives of New Zealand women born between 1897 and 1931. Judith Fyfe interviewed eleven women and included ten in a book of transcripts edited 'to retain the sound of the voice'.

Promoting oral history

The NZOHA's aims included educational and promotional work such as establishing standards in the collection, preservation, legal, and ethical aspects of oral history. The archive was also a resource and provided training for those involved in oral history work throughout the country. From the beginning NZOHA staff talked to groups and to the media and presented training workshops around New Zealand. In 1984 the archive carried out the first national survey of oral history recordings held outside the Alexander Turnbull Library.

Hugo Manson and Judith Fyfe were also involved in organising a national seminar which led to the formation of the National Oral History Association of New Zealand in 1986.

On 1 January 1991 the new Oral History Centre of the Alexander Turnbull Library assumed responsibility for the activities of the NZOHA. Judith Fyfe and Hugo Manson have continued working as oral historians as well as training and providing advice to many others engaged in oral history work.

A display in the Alexander Turnbull Library foyer for the month of June featured the work of the NZOHA. Former trustees, NZOHA staff, families and supporters, Library staff and NOHANZ members attended a celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the archive on June 19.

Linda Evans

My Place is about experiences of ageing told through the stories of four characters – Doris (89), Fred (80), Mary (72) & James (92). Insights into their different attitudes to their later years are revealed through glimpses of moment in their life journeys. The stories were developed from oral histories, recorded for a research

project carried out by Presbyterian Support (Otago), and from anecdotes contributed by older people living in the community.

Cassette copies of ***My Place*** cost of \$7.00 and are available from:

Talking House
PO Box 8057
Dunedin

Otago Settlers Museum

The Otago Settlers Museum has received two new Oral History collections in the last month – The Otago Excursion Train Trust (OETT) and the Strath Taieri Agriculture & Rural Tourism Trust Project.

The OETT was formed in 1978 and will celebrate its 25th anniversary in April 2003. In March 2000 it was proposed an oral history be prepared for that anniversary that would provide a record of how the OETT was started. Seventeen people were interviewed representing different activities of the Trust with an emphasis on the founding and early years of development.

The OETT is a voluntary organisation, which operates a fleet of trains, which have historic as well as tourism significance for Dunedin and Otago. The OETT established the Taieri Gorge Limited which is now a key attraction for visitors to Dunedin.

The OETT project was formally handed over to the Museum at an evening function, which was well attended by interviewees and members of the Trust.

The Middlemarch project is an ongoing project with five interviews having been completed and more in the pipeline. This project was initiated to record and preserve the history of the Strath Taieri area. These are life history interviews and cover a wide range of topics.

Second World War projects

Prisoners of war Recording an oral history of prisoners of war will ensure that an important but relatively neglected aspect of New Zealand's wartime experience is preserved for future generations, Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Helen Clark said on 15 August.

Helen Clark announced the oral history project, to be carried out by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, at a parliamentary function for New Zealanders imprisoned by the Japanese during the Second World War.

“Most of the official histories of New Zealand in the Second World War concentrate on purely military matters, with extensive and sometimes rather dry accounts of battles won and lost across the different theatres of war in which New Zealanders participated.

“Thousands of New Zealander soldiers, however, spent much of the Second World War as POWs in Germany, Italy and the Far East. They contended with hunger, misery, and boredom for years on end.

“Over 8,000 New Zealanders were imprisoned by the Germans and Italians, while 300 were captured by the Japanese. POWs and civilian internees held in Japanese camps were subjected to particularly appalling treatment.

“Sadly the passage of time has meant that the voices of many POWs have been lost forever. The oral history project I have announced today represents a last chance to record an essential chapter in New Zealand's wartime experience.”

Megan Hutching at the Ministry's History Group will begin the project at the beginning of September.

Battle of Crete, 1941 A Unique Sort of Battle: New Zealanders Remember Crete, was officially launched by the Prime Minister at Parliament on 9 May. Among those attending the ceremony were veterans of the Battle, including a number of those whose stories feature in *A Unique Sort of Battle*.

“The fifteen stories told in *A Unique Sort of Battle* vividly convey the drama and sheer terror of the battle which began sixty years ago, on 20 May 1941, when German paratroopers landed on Crete and were met with fierce resistance from New Zealand and Allied troops. The ensuing battle left thousands of New Zealanders killed, wounded, or captured as prisoners of war.

“*A Unique Sort of Battle* records the stories not only of frontline New Zealand soldiers, but also of others who contributed to the campaign, such as nurse Jo Adamson and Royal Navy seaman John Blackie. The book also captures the spirit of the enduring, friendship between the peoples of Crete and New Zealand. The story of Ned Nathan is that of a soldier who fought in Crete, returned to the island after the war to marry a local woman, after which they came back to New Zealand and raised a family here.

“More than two hundred people responded to the Ministry's questionnaire, and it must have been a very difficult task indeed to select from these the stories which finally feature in *A Unique Sort of Battle*.

“*A Unique Sort of Battle* is recommended reading for anyone is curious about an episode which ranks as one of New Zealand's most searing wartime experiences,” Helen Clark said. (*A Unique Sort of Battle: New Zealanders Remember Crete* Megan Hutching (ed). Auckland, HarperCollins, 2001. \$39.95)



Oral history around the world

International Oral History Association

IOHA has a new web address and that the new issue of IOHANews (8) is now posted in both English and Spanish. The new website address is: www.ioha.fgv.br

Oral history on the web

From H-ORALHIST

Revised web site for the **Mississippi Civil Rights Documentation Project**.

The URL is :

<http://www-dept.usm.edu/~mcrohb>.

The site now has three components:

1. a bibliography of the nation's oral histories in which people discuss the civil rights movement in Mississippi. These are listed by interviewee, subject headings, and by archive.
2. full transcripts of 40 interviews conducted just for the project and a link to more than 60 complete transcripts (many with audio excerpts) conducted earlier.
3. an interactive timeline of events in Mississippi during the movement years. This timeline includes descriptions of the major events in Mississippi (in concordance with national events), discussions of other important topics during that time (written by an historian), descriptive or explanatory excerpts from oral histories (including audio excerpts), and links to other sites around the nation.

Shana Walton
University of Southern Mississippi

The 1930s Depression in Utah In 1997, students at Richfield High School, in Richfield, Utah, interviewed members of their community about their experiences during the Great Depression. Part of the larger Sevier County Oral History Project that was directed by Richfield High School English teacher Judy Busk, and funded by the Utah State Historical Society, these interviews are now available online at the New Deal Network (<http://newdeal.feri.org/>).

The twenty-four Sevier County residents interviewed for this project were children or young adults during the 1930s, but their memories of the Great Depression are still vivid. While they recount hard times, they also recall the pleasures of small town and rural life in central Utah.

In addition to the twenty-four oral history transcripts, the website includes essays, photographs, and bibliographical and online resources.

Thomas Thurston
New Deal Network



Notes from Biennial General Meeting

The Biennial General Meeting was held on Saturday 2 June 2001 at the National Library, corner of Molesworth & Aitken Streets, Wellington. There were 25 members present, and Linda Evans was in the chair.

Matters arising from the last meeting

Incorporation. Linda Evans informed members that the association is now an incorporated society.

Election of officers. At the committee meeting subsequent to the last General Meeting, Linda Evans was appointed president. We have had three treasurers over the past two years: Megan Hutching, Lilian Fielder, and the current treasurer, Bronwyn Officer.

President's annual report

Linda noted that now we are an incorporated society we will be expected to have annual general meetings. It was agreed that in future we will hold our general meetings annually.

Financial report

A copy of the audited accounts is available to any member—please write to P.O. Box 3819, Wellington.

Election of officers

Linda Evans left the chair while the election for president was held.

The following officers were unanimously elected:

President: Linda Evans

Secretary: Megan Hutching

Treasurer: Bronwyn Officer

The names of the new executive committee are on p. 1 of this newsletter.

Other business

Notice of motion: 'That NOHANZ introduce a special membership rate for students of \$10 per annum, entitling student members to the newsletters but not to the annual journal.'

It was passed unanimously, but members agreed that it should be revisited at the next general meeting to see what effect it was having on finances.

Life membership. A motion from the chair proposed that Judith Fyfe and Hugo Manson be made life members of the association. This was unanimously approved, and it was agreed that the memberships be more publicly conferred in the near future.

Privacy Act. Linda Evans reported on discussions which have been held with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner. She will write a report for the newsletter once she has had some feedback from the Office.

Members were encouraged to email committee members with suggestions for future activities that the association could facilitate.

