

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

Conference

The 2007 conference will be held at the National Library in Wellington on the weekend of 28 – 29 July. We hope that you will be able to attend.

The call for papers is on page 2.

AGM

The annual general meeting will be held at the conference. An agenda will be included in the next newsletter.

Membership records

In order for us to keep these up to date, can you please send your email address to Gillian Headifen:

Gillian.headifen@natlib.govt.nz

Be assured that NOHANZ does not give or sell its membership list to any other organisation.

Snail mail or email

Snail mail in the post or email as a pdf file? How do you want to receive your newsletter? We have asked the question of a number of our members and not received a clear preference. Is it because we still like to find something interesting in the mailbox and/or we like to lie on the couch as we open the mail and read the news? We can meet individual needs, so please email us if you are happy to receive the newsletter by email – it will cut our costs as well!

Email Emma Dewson:

Emma.Dewson@mch.govt.nz

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 peoples 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.

We will consider applications for one large grant of up to \$35,000.

Applications close on 30 April 2007

For further information and application forms, contact:

Megan Hutching:

megan.hutching@mch.govt.nz

or

www.mch.govt.nz/history/oral-history.html

Conferences

Past and Future: Oral History in Aotearoa/New Zealand

28-29 July 2007

National Library, Molesworth St., Wellington

NOHANZ is interested in proposals for presentations at the conference that reflect on how oral history has developed in Aotearoa/ New Zealand. However, although we want to look back and see just how far we have come, we also want to look forward. Therefore we also welcome presentations on ongoing and future

projects that signal the vigour and diversity of oral history in this country.

Some suggested themes are:

- the beginnings of oral history in Aotearoa/New Zealand
- the development of Maori oral history
- the impact of oral history projects in communities and cultures not previously recorded
- the development of oral history in Pacific Island communities
- the effect of government involvement in and/or support for oral history
- the impact of the Sesquicentennial Fund on oral history in Aotearoa/ New Zealand and the experiences of individuals and organizations who received such funding
- teaching oral history (this could include methodological issues)
- the multiple uses to which oral history may be put e.g. films, plays, books
- the impact of new technology on oral history

We welcome the participation of everyone who shares an interest in oral history.

Presenters are also warmly invited to submit their papers for the 2007 issue of *Oral History in New Zealand*.

The deadline for proposals (which should be half an A4 page) is Friday 18 May 2007. Please send to:

National Oral History Association of NZ
Conference

P O Box 3819
WELLINGTON
or email to Lesley Hall or Linda Evans.

For further information, email: Lesley Hall (lesley.hall@vuw.ac.nz) or Linda Evans (linda.evans@natlib.govt.nz)

• **15th International Oral History Association conference**



"Oral History - A Dialogue with our Times"

*September 23 - 26, 2008
Guadalajara, Mexico*

The International Oral History Association in collaboration with the University of Guadalajara and the Mexican Oral History Association (AMHO) invite paper proposals from around the world for the 15th International Oral History Conference in Guadalajara, Mexico. Join us in Guadalajara to celebrate and share the international diversity and common interests of oral history – and to discover the variety of oral history in Latin America. The languages of the conference are Spanish and English, and there will be simultaneous translation for plenary sessions.

Proposals may be for a conference paper, a thematic panel, a special interest group session or a workshop session. Only those proposals clearly focused on oral history will be given consideration. Proposals will be evaluated according to their oral history focus, methodological and theoretical significance and relevance to the conference theme and sub-

themes as listed on the conference website.

Master Classes: Several Master Classes and workshops on oral history will be offered before the conference

Special Interest Groups: Continuing the precedent set in Sydney, Special Interest Groups sessions will be scheduled so that participants can get to know one another, establish contacts and exchange resources and ideas.

Deadline for proposals: 15 July 2007

Please submit a 300-word maximum proposal summarizing your presentation, via the Conference Website:

www.congresoioha2008.cucsh.udg.mx

For advice from an IOHA Council member about a conference proposal, contact your regional representative:

Megan Hutching
(megan.hutching@hotmail.com)

Oral history in New Zealand ...

Coromandel Heritage Trust oral history recorders

About three or four years ago Margaret and Geraldine talked about the importance of recording oral histories in Thames and the wider Coromandel/Hauraki region. With each year that passed we were very aware of the people and stories we had missed. Margaret wanted to finish her university papers, and as that time drew nearer we talked again about making a start on this important project. We spoke to The Coromandel Heritage Trust about forming a sub-committee to record oral histories under their umbrella, and we received their permission to investigate

equipment. This proved to be a minefield, made worse by us being totally ignorant about recording machines and archival quality.

Choosing the equipment was difficult, and we had advice from several sources – all of it different. Initially, analogue was our first preference, in spite of one or two committee members insisting that we should be looking at digital recorders. We were told that cassette tapes were becoming obsolete, cassette recorders were harder to service, and that we would be better to look at digital equipment, but it seemed that no-one we spoke to had first-hand experience of this. We also wanted to be able to use transcribing equipment, especially after hearing about a group nearby who transcribe straight from the tape, stopping every couple of words – a slow and frustrating way to do it. We were advised that transcribing units for the very good analogue equipment this particular group is using are no longer being brought into New Zealand, so we certainly didn't want to buy into that. The shopkeeper they had bought their equipment from also felt that as the equipment needed to make recordings of archival quality, it was outside his area of expertise and we probably needed specialist advice. Everyone we spoke to who had experience in oral history recordings was still using analogue equipment, and all were unsure about recommending digital, although most agreed that they would be changing to this format when they could no longer maintain their current recorders. It was at this stage, feeling very frustrated, we contacted Megan Hutching, who gave us very helpful guidelines, as well as some suppliers we could talk to.

So about a year ago an enthusiastic group of about a dozen people was formed as a sub-committee of The Coromandel Heritage Trust. The Trust

already had a draft Oral History Policy so the first few meetings of this committee concentrated on going through this and fine-tuning it. We wanted members to be aware of some of the issues involved in making these kinds of recordings. At one meeting we listened to two speakers talk about their experiences in recording, and we heard of some of the pitfalls to avoid. We looked at the sort of information we wanted to extract, and questions which might be helpful.

We contacted Protel, who agreed that Marantz was probably the way to go. But once we had made the decision and obtained a quote, the next stage – fundraising – was equally as frustrating. We were turned down by Pub Charities, which really surprised us given that oral history projects are regarded nationally as being of such importance. So again the group had a gap in its meetings. By the time the committee moved to approach a particular funder and passed minutes to this effect, the application was sent in, the funder's meeting to consider applications was held, and the answer had come back, the best part of three months had gone by for each application. It was a year later, in desperation, that we approached the local Toyota factory manager here in Thames who spoke to Toyota NZ in Auckland. They didn't hesitate, and responded immediately with great interest in the project. They saw it as a very important community project and one which fitted in with their place in our community. In the meantime, because of the lapse in time, Protel had to further investigate equipment for us as the model they had initially recommended was no longer available!! Overall, it was well over a year from the first time we spoke to Megan, and to Protel until the equipment arrived! It was with great excitement we held the official "handing over" of this state-of-the-art

recorder and transcriber from Toyota NZ to the Oral History Recorders.

Opening up the boxes and finding a huge manual was scary – not quite so bad when we realized that only half was in English! It was still very daunting to wade through it all, pick out the bits which applied to oral recording (much of the instruction is for music), and try to make a simplified list for people to follow. With all of us not very technically minded, it wasn't easy, and our biggest concern was that if it appeared too difficult to use, people would be put off. The convenor's son kindly spent many hours on the web trying to find answers to some of our early questions. One of the Coromandel Heritage Trust committee members expressed an interest in recording his aunt, and as he had an IT background, he too proved invaluable in helping get the settings right. We also had advice from Bronwyn Officer and Megan Hutching throughout the whole process. We thank them for their patience, and their prompt and helpful replies.

We had a problem with the first flashcard which was corrupted when trying to transfer the first recording from the card to the computer. Feedback from other Marantz users showed that this has happened to other users too. This has been overcome by routinely using a card reader when downloading the interview. We use an external hard-drive to store the master copy, a photo of the interviewee, and any additional material copied. This external hard-drive is used only for oral history recordings. A CD holds just over an hour of recording, so we try to limit interviews to this length of time. A new track needs to be started if the interview is any longer as it will have to be burnt on to a second CD. Our IT experts both queried the need for stereo, which is mostly used for

music studios (great voice variation) but which needs twice as much room for storage. One of them emailed Bronwyn Officer who replied advising continuing to use stereo, "We do need to keep the standards high at point of gathering for the sake of future preservation", and " In the future even voice recordings might need to be analysed for the subtleties of linguistics that may be lost with a lossy compressed format."

Our convenor has spent a lot of time coming to grips with the manual and the machine itself, and then has individually shown members of the group how easy it is to use. Sometimes this has taken more than one session, and with another run-through when the machine is collected for the interview! This time has been well spent, since those now recording are very comfortable with the equipment. Margaret went on to make a first trial recording – a report on a 90th birthday, with a copy of the recording to be sent to family in England. At our next meeting we heard part of this recording. We were absolutely delighted with the sound quality, and loved the content. The lady being interviewed is quite a character and very descriptive, and a better first experimental interview couldn't have been chosen. We could all picture her as she spoke. Her family in England later said exactly the same thing. They felt as if she was in the room with them – and they had been communicating by cassette tape with her for many years.

In the past month four members of the group have interviewed another six people, three of these people twice. The second person to take the plunge sent us this delightful email after her interview:-

"Hi Geraldine and Margaret - Well "managed" isn't quite the word I'd use. I couldn't get the recorder to record. It kept turning itself off as it

was out of battery charge. This didn't make sense as I'd checked it out in the morning and everything was fine. I studied the book which wasn't much help. Eventually I decided to plug it into another socket. That was when I discovered I hadn't pushed the recorder plug fully into the socket of the extension cord. I'd taken an extension cord that had a flange around the end so I couldn't see that there wasn't a proper connection.

After 40 minutes we were away.....Another 20 minutes later I realised that I only had 4 minutes of recording. I should have been watching the seconds tick by not the volume levels. I'd pushed Pause so Don and I could have a talk about what we were doing and then pushed Pause again to start. I should have pushed Record instead. So we listened to what WAS recorded and started again from there.

After 3 hours I had an hour of recordings. All sorts of information mostly connected with his antecedents and mining. I had trouble convincing Don that his life was worth recording too. I'm going to go back again and he's going to describe the houses and land around Thames South School when he was a boy and talk about the New Alaska battery which he helped shift. I'd also like to ask him about how he met Bev and their life together. Don doesn't think the latter is history. Can you confirm or otherwise that The Treasury wants such recordings so I can reassure him."

Obviously all the hiccups didn't deter either the interviewer or the interviewee – she went back and had another session with Don as he had more he wanted to tell her. In the meantime he had been through the telephone book and written down the names of all the people he thought should be interviewed. He can't have

been too put off by this first interview!!

Our convenor gives each interviewer a file envelope which includes the necessary form to fill in, a biographical form about the interviewee and their family, and a checklist to tick off and date which covers the whole interview process. We take a photo of the interviewee at the time of recording, to include with the finished file, and we scan anything additional we may be offered. Once the recording has been made, the machine is returned to the convenor, who removes the flashcard and replaces with a second card so the machine can be used for the next interview without waiting for the first card to be downloaded. At this stage the Coromandel Heritage Trust does not have a 'home' to process the interviews, so another member is in charge of downloading the interview from the flashcard onto the external drive. She also burns three CDs – one for the person interviewed, and one to archive into the completed interview folder, and one to remain with the convenor to be used for research and transcribing. She has also designed a very attractive CD cover, which incorporates a photo of the person interviewed – a lovely idea. She is at present investigating printing a heritage photo directly onto the CD along with the details it is necessary to label the CD with. It is all then handed back to the convenor. The file envelope, finished to this stage, will then be stored in a large concrete walk-in safe which is available to the group to use in the meantime. With three copies and the master on an external drive, all in different places, we feel very sure that the interviews will be safe until we have a permanent home.

Those people who have made recordings have found the machine surprisingly easy to use once they have taken the plunge, and have been

very pleased with their resulting recordings. As different people conduct an interview, we constantly review our procedures for using the machine, and amend the laminated card listing easy instructions for setting up. Once everyone has become confident, we will also review our Policy again as the group are bound to read it differently now with experience in hand.

For anyone considering which equipment to use for oral history recording, we can vouch for the quality of the Marantz PMD-671 Portable Digital Recorder, and its ease of use once you get past all the paperwork. One of our group contacted Marantz on-line with a query, and was extremely pleased with their prompt reply and interest in her query. At this stage we haven't started transcribing on the Philips 7277 SpeechExec Pro Transcription Kit, so we can't comment on this.

Margaret Nankivell, Convenor
Geraldine Dunwoodie, Committee, The
Coromandel Heritage Trust

... and around the world

Oral History Centre, Birzeit University, Palestine

Palestine's history has mainly been written by non-Palestinians, according to the Churchillian dictum that the victors write history.

Oral history accomplishes three essential purposes. The first is to supplement and complement classical sources; the second is to correct, amend, refute or replace them; and the third is to produce knowledge in periods and areas where the traditional tools of the historian cannot. In this spirit, we plan to interview both the ordinary yet representative elements in the society, as well as members of the social, cultural or political elites, first of all those whose advanced age requires

swift action in order to preserve their testimonies. With these materials, we will publish historical volumes based on oral data. We also plan to have a program of public lectures and discussions at Birzeit by and with these various significant and representative historical subjects.

With the rise of oral history, the stories that have always been recounted by numerous Palestinians, are finally being drawn into the circle of the academy. And it is still time to do enormous work on saving the oral accounts of successive periods in the collective experience of the Palestinian people, and to assume ever-increasing responsibility for the telling of the story, even as we place them in context alongside existing, archival-based histories.

Sonia Nimr, History Department, Birzeit University

Canadian Oral History Association

The Association has launched a new website at:

www.canoha.ca

Czech Oral History Association

Miroslav Vanek writes:

On January 8, a Czech Oral History Association, grouping 20 institutes and 65 individual members was established. Using my contacts with colleagues in Slovakia (Slovak Republic), I have already initiated a similar course among them, and I hope that by February 2007 we could be able to form a joint Czech and Slovak Oral History Association.

Ukrainian Oral History Association

The Ukrainian Oral History Association was created on October 28, 2006, at the International conference 'Oral History in Contemporary Social Sciences and Humanities: Research Theory and Practice', held in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

The UOHA web-site is:

http://keui.univer.kharkov.ua/oral_his t.htm