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NOHANZ

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

INSIDE

- Reports of oral history activity from around the country

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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

NOHANZ news

At various times in the history of NOHANZ members have found it useful to have regular get-togethers with other oral historians in their area. Please see Gillian Headifen's report below of a recent very successful and stimulating regional meeting in Wellington, and the format and topics of future meetings that was decided upon. Many thanks also to Gillian for organising the Wellington gathering. The NOHANZ Executive is keen to provide for members' needs and facilitate the formation of regional groupings if that is what members feel would be useful. The recent Wellington gathering confirms that this is the case in Wellington at the present time. If you are keen to organise and/or be part of a group in your own area please let me know so that I can put you in touch with like-minded members in your area lesley.hall@vuw.ac.nz

*Lesley Hall
NOHANZ President*

Oral history in New Zealand...

Wellington Regional Meeting 23 February 2008

Twelve NOHANZ members gathered at Gender and Women's Studies at Victoria University for the first of the NOHANZ Wellington regional meetings, which are planned to be held on a regular basis.

After the introductions were made, everyone spoke about projects they had been or were currently involved in or their connection with oral history. Ideas and issues for future meetings were also discussed. All were keen to hear extracts of interviews and share information about the interviewing process, to be able to discuss issues they had concerns about or had experienced, problems and successes, content, methodology, funding and working with community groups. Inviting other people along to talk to the group was also considered.

Once tea and muffins were consumed, the format was arrived at for future

meetings. The meetings would be held every two months and be two hours in length. The venue and date of the following meeting would be decided at each meeting.

The first 45 minutes will consist of listening to an extract or extracts from an interview, presented by the interviewer, for approximately 15 minutes followed by 30 minutes discussion. This process is designed to provide peer support to oral historians. The remainder of the meeting will be about a specific topic or issue. The idea for this segment included providing information, identifying and expressing concerns, getting clarification, improving processes and sharing other people's experiences.

Topics or issues identified for future discussion were:-

- Digital recording – requirements for going from analogue to digital, recording interviews, computer programmes to support abstracting including time coding, how to manage oral history interviews, i.e. sound files, on computers, hiring digital and analogue equipment.
- Funding issues, and the implications for projects if funding is limited or cannot be obtained, for example, decisions about travel or decisions about the number and duration of interviews on limited funding.
- Impact of restrictions on future use of material in publications and exhibition
- How to get commissioned work.
- Managing projects, including managing volunteers working on a project and managing long or difficult projects
- Managing interviews with issues such as memory fading, interviewees' feeling questions asking for personal information are intrusive and dealing with sensitive issues including possible approaches to questions, treading on sensitive material and being sensitive to cultural issues.

- Training others with equipment if they can't attend a workshop.
- Uses of oral history for the web and exhibitions.

Next Meeting: Saturday 19 April 2008, 2.00pm.

Venue - Gender and Women's Studies, Kate Edgar House, 94 Fairlie Terrace, Victoria University.

Interview discussion - Lizzie Catherall will play extracts and talk about the New Zealand Tuis' contribution to World War II oral history project.

Topic Discussion - the oral history recording agreement form, including style, restrictions, interpreting it to interviewees, issues with long-term restrictions and sensitivities around restrictions.

NOHANZ members visiting Wellington are very welcome to attend.

• **Ministry for Culture and Heritage**

War oral history work is keeping the two oral historians employed by the Ministry for Culture & Heritage busy.

For Alison Parr, work continues on the Ministry's From Memory – war oral history programme (<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/hands/from-memory/from-memory>). The programme is now focusing on veterans from J Force (allied forces who occupied Japan after the end of the Second World War) and the Korean War. There has been a strong response from J Force veterans, and interviewing is underway. There has also been a strong response from Korean War veterans and interviewing is due to start soon.

Alison has also completed interviews about civilian life in the Second World War. It is anticipated that these interviews, as well as those relating to J Force and Korea will feature in upcoming books. Alison has also recorded an interview with a Fleet Air Arm veteran.

Alison is also running a project collecting interviews about the period after the

Great War. A first major round of interviews has been completed. Some further targeted interviews are to be commissioned with people in their late 80s and 90s.

Paul Diamond (together with Jean Sergeant-Shadbolt) is running the Vietnam War oral history project—the first ever large-scale project recording the stories of New Zealand's Vietnam War veterans and their families. The project came about as a result of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Crown and veterans' representatives in December 2006.

The project is in two parts. In the first part, Paul and a team of 12 interviewers around the country are completing interviews with Vietnam veterans and their families. The second part of the project is a digital history (website) where people can contribute their memories and memorabilia about the war. The website (due to be launched later this year) will also be the basis for the development of educational and other historical resources on New Zealand's involvement in Vietnam.

Paul Diamond

Middlemore Hospital

The Counties Manukau District Health Board Library, which is based at Middlemore Hospital, is planning to do an oral history project to capture the memories and reminiscences of staff (present and retired) about their experience of working at Middlemore Hospital. These great 'hospital stories' are presently told by both former and present staff at various formal and informal get-togethers.

The Library already has a collection of hospital memorabilia ranging from the flag that flew the day the hospital was opened in 1947 to nursing badges and trophies, photographs, staff uniforms and old medical equipment. It also has an extensive collection of old medical books. There are plans to make a history room/museum in the new Library. The addition of an oral history component will bring the hospital's history alive!

Jill Unsworth

News from Marlborough

Last year's Award project in which I interviewed whalers' family members, with a particular emphasis on the small school in Tory Channel which served these families, resulted in the usual collection of oral histories archived for posterity. However, there were two extra offshoots: 1) I became fascinated with this remote school which ran for only 12 years, and 2) the ex-pupils became motivated to hold their first (and probably only) school reunion.

I could have done without the hassles of taking minutes at their numerous meetings, collecting moneys for their registration, souvenirs and reunion costs, and accepting criticism of the school and bay history booklet I put together, but all in all it was an interesting follow-up to the oral history project. So often we complete our projects and archive the material then move on to something new. Living in a small community involves becoming part of your interviewees lives forever, apparently.

The Reunion was held over Easter 2008 and was a great success. Ex-pupils returned from Australia and all over New Zealand – the school closed in 1962 and some had not seen each other since. I had been able to trace three of the eight teachers, and all of these attended, and a good time was had by all. A boat trip down Tory Channel to the site of the school (unrecognisable to most participants apart from the hills around which they walked to school) was the high point. The present residents of the property were outstandingly hospitable, and an amazing seafood feast was shared.

Picton Historical Society launched its first publication: the booklet *Whekenui School 1951-1962: 'A Very Remote School'*, and experience in the joys of self-publishing has been gained. I thoroughly enjoyed the intricate research necessary in clarifying this history beyond personal recollection (and presenting it in a diplomatic way). The valuable lesson for this oral historian has been not to move on too quickly to

the next project; people's lives are the material we work with and we mustn't treat their memories too lightly.

Loreen Brehaut

Off tape

BLACK WATCH

In common with others, I expect, I am always interested to see different ways in which first hand accounts are used, either directly or as inspiration, for creative work.

Black Watch, we are told in the New Zealand Festival of the Arts 2008 Programme, is '...based on interviews with former soldiers who served in Iraq' and has been '... hailed by the press as a cultural landmark of the 21st century'. The reasons behind such a claim for this play perhaps say more about contemporary views of the war in Iraq than they do about the quality of the play and its staging, although both are of a high standard.

The most poignant thing for me was not in the play itself but in the exchange quoted by Tom Cardy [*Dominion Post* 3 March 2008] between John Tiffany, the director, and one of the Black Watch soldiers who had been interviewed, in which the soldier said thank you, the director said, 'you don't need to thank me', and the soldier said, 'Well, I do need to say thank you because I didn't

think anyone gave a shit about us. I sat there in the audience and saw an audience care.' The feeling of an audience that cared was physically and emotionally palpable in Wellington the night I attended as well.

We are told that the interviews with the soldiers were done in a pub, on Sunday afternoons, by a researcher for the National Theatre of Scotland. I don't know whether they would have met a strict definition of "oral history" but this does not matter because, as an outcome, the play is a powerful tool for communicating the soldier's experiences and the impact that their service has had on their lives.

Pip Oldham

IOHA news

Registration and accommodation information has been added to the website for the conference to be held in Guadalajara, Mexico from 23-26 September this year.

<http://www.congresoioha2008.cucsh.udg.mx/eng/indexENG.htm>

Other activities for the International Oral History Association include redesigning the website and preparation of the next newsletter.

<http://www.ioha.fgv.br/ioha/>

Megan Hutching

2008 Oral History Awards Application Deadline

The deadline for applications for this year's Australian Sesquicentennial Gift Trust for Awards in Oral History is **Wednesday 30 April**. Information about the Awards and how apply can be found at:

<http://www.mch.govt.nz/awards/history/oral.html>

There will be some changes to the conditions of the Awards this year and these will be posted on the above web site by the end of the first week in April.

If you have any enquiries please contact Alison Parr, Senior Oral Historian, Ministry for Culture and Heritage

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