

NOHANZ newsletter

The National Oral History Association of New Zealand

Te Kete Kōrero-a-Waha o Te Motu

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

Send your news and suggestions to Shona McCahon at: shonam@paradise.net.nz

Executive committee:

Rachael Selby: President
 Anne Thorpe: Treasurer
 Gillian Headifen: Secretary
 Lesley Hall
 Linda Evans
 Michael Dudding
 Shona McCahon
 Taina McGregor

NOHANZ NEWS

EXEC COMMITTEE

The new committee has met twice since the AGM, making a good start on planning tasks and projects. See page 7 for committee profiles.

The 2009 *Oral History in New Zealand* journal was completed and all members should have received their copies, which were mailed out in March. The 2010 edition is currently underway.

Planning the next NOHANZ conference has forged ahead (see page 2), thanks to Penelope Dunkley and other members in the Rotorua area, who volunteered to host the conference. Penelope researched venues so efficiently that we are already booked!

REGIONAL CONTACTS

The following people have kindly agreed to be NOHANZ regional contacts. The Exec is keen to foster a regional network and this will be covered further in the next newsletter. In the meantime, thanks to our contacts, who are:

Auckland: Megan Hutching
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 Gisborne: Susan Fowke
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 Rotorua: Penelope Dunkley
 Whangarei: Teena Jelsma
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NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR ORAL HISTORY CENTRE SERVICES

ORAL HISTORY SERVICES

The National Library Building closed last December for its two-year redevelopment. Access to the oral history collection and services during the redevelopment period is being provided at two locations:

- Archives New Zealand, 10 Mulgrave Street, Thorndon, Wellington.
- 186 Willis Street, Wellington (go to Reception on the ground floor)

Research Services for the oral history collection are being provided by Alexander Turnbull Library staff based at Archives New Zealand. Gillian Headifen from the Oral History Centre is part of the team providing access to a range of Alexander Turnbull Library material at Archives New Zealand. This includes access to the oral history database and access to listening and viewing copies and abstracts. Note that only those recordings that already have listening or viewing copies, or have been digitally recorded are available. Creating new access copies, as requested by researchers, will resume in two years' time. All original recordings are now unavailable until early 2012.

Acquisitions will continue at Willis Street, where the rest of the OHC staff will be available from 26 May.

Information, advice and equipment hire will also be available from Willis Street.

Workshops will resume in the second half on the year.

PROJECTS

During the Library's relocation, Oral History Centre staff will be working with colleagues on projects such as:

- an Audio Retrospective Preservation Project that will see over 2000 sound recordings from all the Turnbull's audio collections digitised and preserved, including many from the oral history collection
- retrospective Arrangement and Description so that all oral history collections will be recorded on the database
- preparing the oral history database to be made available on the web
- reviewing the Turnbull Library's methods of working and staffing.

Thank you to all NOHANZ members for your messages of support and for your patience over these last six months. Please contact us if you have any questions.

HOW TO CONTACT THE ORAL HISTORY CENTRE

The Oral History Centre DDI remains 04-474-3162. Other phone extensions are changing.

Personal email addresses remain the same.

Our collective email address for all aspects of our work—research, advice, training and acquisitions is atl@natlib.govt.nz

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

NOHANZ CONFERENCE 2011

NOTE YOUR DIARIES NOW!

When: 2 & 3 April 2011

Where: Distinction Hotel, Rotorua

The conference theme is still being finalised but it will focus on oral history in the 21st century; the ways that oral history is being used and promoted by individuals and organisations, innovative approaches to collecting and presenting interviews, new innovations and uses of new technologies.

The conference committee comprises Michael Dudding, Lesley Hall and Shona McCahon.

Members are reminded that financial assistance might be available from the Jack Ilott oral history education fund. See the Links page on the NOHANZ website to find the link to online information and the application form.

ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE, AUSTRALIA: 2011

Advance notice

The 2011 Oral History Association of Australia Conference will be in Melbourne, Australia

- 30 September – 2 October, 2011.

A call for papers will be advertised later this year.

AWARDS IN ORAL HISTORY 2010

AWARDS IN ORAL HISTORY, 2010

NOHANZ members should note changes in the 2010 grants as outlined in the Ministry of Culture and Heritage website: <http://www.cultureandheritage.govt.nz/awards/history/oral.html>

2010 is the 21st anniversary of the Australian Sesquicentennial Gift Trust Awards in Oral History. In 1990 the Australian government gifted \$1 million to the people of New Zealand to mark the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi.

This anniversary year we will acknowledge this generous gift and mark its significance by:

- inviting applications from both Australians and New Zealanders this year, only
- accepting applications for projects that explore the history of social, cultural or political aspects of contact between Australia and New Zealand this year only, offering one grant of up to NZ\$80,000 for a major project of outstanding significance (anyone considering applying for this level of grant should first contact Alison Parr at oralhistory@mch.govt.nz)

Depending on the scope of the project, as well as the one-off grant of NZ\$80,000 there are two other grants available which are considered as partial contributions to the costs of a project, i.e. not expected to completely fund a project. They are:

- Grants of up to NZ\$10,000 for smaller projects of fewer than 10 interviews
- One grant of up to NZ\$35,000 for a larger project of up to 20 interviews.

Awards will not necessarily be made in all these categories; decisions will be based on the quality and significance of the proposed project and the track-record of the applicants.

The above changes will be for the 2010 Oral History Awards only, and in 2011 applications will again be accepted for general oral history projects, based only in New Zealand.

Note the closing date is 25th June 2010 and projects must be completed within a year.

SNIPPETS

RECIPROCAL RIGHTS WITH AUSTRALIA

NOHANZ and the Oral History Association of Australia have agreed to granting reciprocal rights for members attending both conferences.

This means that members can attend the conferences of both organisations at member rates.

BLOG ABOUT THE 2009 NOHANZ CONFERENCE

On the Christchurch City Library website there is a conference report from participant Marion Ogier. Marion concluded,

“Based on my conference experience the future holds many exciting possibilities for community storytelling in the digital age.”

See: www.cclblog.wordpress.com/2009/11/04/community-voices/

HINTS ON USING LAPEL MICS

On the Member's Contributions page of the NOHANZ website is a link to hints on using lapel microphones, which has been prepared by Matt Livingstone and Stephen Buckland of Sound Techniques in Auckland.

GUIDANCE ON PAID ORAL HISTORY WORK

Pip Oldham, with input from others, has compiled some guidance notes on undertaking paid oral history work. The notes, which are a series of points to consider, are intended to assist anyone beginning work as an independent oral historian. They can be downloaded from the Members' Contributions page on the NOHANZ website .

Pip says comments and suggestions will be warmly received.

VIDEO EDITING FOR ORAL HISTORIANS

With growing interest in using video to record oral histories, readers might be interested in a paper by the California State University, "Introduction to Video Editing for Oral Historians", that was presented at the 2008 IOHA conference. Lesley Hall organised for this to be linked from the Members' Contributions page on the NOHANZ website.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS

BRIDGE 4232: AUCKLAND HARBOUR BRIDGE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

by **Megan Hutching**

On 30 May 2009 the Auckland harbour bridge celebrated 50 years of being open to traffic. The anniversary made me think of recording an oral history project with engineers who worked on the construction of the bridge, as well as those who worked on the bridge after it was open.

I received an Award in Oral History in 2008 for the project.

The bridge was opened on 30 May 1959 by Prime Minister Walter Nash. Construction had begun in September 1955, and it took over 200 workers around four years to build.

At first the bridge had four lanes of traffic, two in each direction. By the late 1960s this was not enough to cope with demand and two lanes were added to each side of the bridge. They were built by a Japanese company, Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries Co, so the additions became known as the 'Nippon clip-ons'. They were opened to traffic in 1969.

It was originally a toll bridge and the toll of 2/6 was paid by motorists at booths on the northern end of the bridge. After 15 months of operation, tolls were reduced to 2/-, then later made for southbound traffic only, before being abolished on 30 March 1984.

The harbour bridge has been significant in the development of Auckland, particularly the greater area known as the North Shore. Since it opened, the North Shore has developed rapidly, changing from a holiday destination with pockets of settlement, to a collection of modern suburbs.

The bridge carries thousands of people to and from the North Shore each day. Before it was built, vehicles had to cross the harbour by ferry, or go around the top of the harbour through Greenhithe. Once the bridge was open travelling times were greatly reduced, paving the way for the expansion of Auckland into the North Shore.

The bridge is a significant landmark in Auckland. It is 1021 metres long and the gap between its underneath and the sea is nearly 15 stories high. Until the Sky Tower was built in the 1990s, the harbour bridge was the most visually significant man-made construction in the city.

The ten interviews fall into two different categories – engineers (and one labourer) who worked on the original bridge and on the extensions, and men who worked for the Auckland Harbour Bridge Authority once the bridge was completed. The latter worked either collecting tolls and maintaining traffic flow on the bridge, or on the maintenance staff. The bridge has always been kept immaculate by a full-time team of painters, and maintenance workers who change the light bulbs, keep the tarmac in pristine condition and look after the approaches to the bridge.

The interviews contain detailed information about the construction of the foundations for the piers on which the bridge stands and of the southern anchorage, traffic control, toll collection, and the painting and maintenance of the bridge and its superstructure. There are also word portraits of a number of people who worked on the bridge in various capacities, along with anecdotes about dealing with the toll-paying public and people who insisted on trying to walk over (or under) the bridge.

The interviews will be available at the Alexander Turnbull Library's Oral History Centre, subject to any conditions on access placed on them by the individual interviewed.



Image: Construction of the Auckland harbour bridge, looking south from Northcote Point

REVIEWS

ORAL HISTORY AND FILM: A REVIEW OF *HOME BY CHRISTMAS*

by Lesley Hall

Last October at the NOHANZ conference in Wellington a number of keynote and other speakers demonstrated the multifarious ways that oral history can be used, including the production of books, radio programmes, museum exhibits and film. Gaylene Preston gave conference participants a preview of *Home by Christmas* that whetted my appetite for more so, when the film was recently released, I couldn't wait to see it. I have admired Gaylene's work as a woman filmmaker for some years so I expected a high calibre production and I was not disappointed - Gaylene was not honoured by the New Zealand Arts Foundation as New Zealand's first Filmmaker Laureate for nothing! As expected, this is a distinctly New Zealand story and, while it does deliver primarily as one of "our stories", it also contributes to international reflections on World War II.

Gaylene's own webpage describes the film as "a unique blend of fact and fiction that reflects the secret loves and enduring spirit of a generation". The 'fiction' part of the film consists of scenes portraying both sides of her parents' marriage during WWII. Although these segments are Gaylene's own creation they are undoubtedly drawn from her own observations of her parents' marriage as well as the 'fact' part of the film: oral history recordings of Gaylene's mother, Tui, in 1995 and her father, Ed, in 1990. Both are supplemented by archival footage which provides context for the oral histories and fictional scenes.

Tui was interviewed by our own Judith Fyfe for the documentary film *War Stories (Our Mothers Never Told Us)*. This powerful and moving film reveals the impact of war on seven women, most of whom were left behind while their husbands served overseas or, in one case, was incarcerated for being a conscientious objector. My own mother was widowed during the war but, like Ed Preston, she is reticent in talking about her experiences: how as a twenty-year-old mother she coped with the trauma of parenting alone and having her husband reported missing, then confirmed dead. Like Ed, my mother glossed over hard times and evaded discussing sensitive issues and, from an oral history perspective, this illustration of avoidance was fascinating to observe. This may well be a generational trait. Tui's story resonates strongly with that that my mother has shared with me and no doubt other viewers will make similar connections.

In *Home by Christmas* Tui's oral history augments interviews Gaylene conducted with her father about his wartime experiences in North Africa and Italy. Like many of his generation Ed reserved his recollections of wartime experiences for his cronies but mostly kept them close to his chest as far as his family was concerned:

"I grew up after the War and when I was a little girl it felt like there were always three times: there was 'before the War' and 'after the War' and there was another time that was almost like a secret place called 'during the War' (Gaylene Preston).

Gaylene's father finally agreed to discuss his wartime experiences with her when he was terminally ill with cancer. If you have ever conducted an interview with someone who is dying you will be aware that people are often more candid then and want to reflect on their lives and/or set the record straight. As Valerie Yow says, "Near the end of a life, there is a need to look at things as honestly as possible to make sense of experiences over a lifetime".

Ed's story is one of a typical West Coast "Kiwi bloke" who is uncomfortable discussing emotional issues and who uses humour to describe his sometimes difficult experiences. Egging each other on, his whole rugby team signed up for the New Zealand Army thinking that they were embarking on an adventure that would be over before the year was out – they'd all be home by Christmas. Ed tells his story in a very down-to-earth way that does not glamorise war and contains perceptive little gems of wisdom. For example, Ed claims that any serviceman who says they weren't scared is in denial and his take on Anzac Day as something not to be celebrated is an interesting contrast with current practice and perceptions. Ed's war experiences are almost mundane –



Ed Preston

(Source, <http://www.homebychristmas.com/home/media/>)

(CONT)

heroic tales are in short supply. He was captured soon after his arrival in North Africa and spent much of the war in an Italian prisoner of war camp before escaping through Switzerland. However, as oral historians know, every narrator has an interesting story to tell and the almost matter-of-fact way Ed's story is portrayed is compelling.

Tui's war story is a very different one from her husband's. She was in the early stages of pregnancy when Ed signed up and it appears he did so without talking to her first. The film portrays gender relations of the time – what it was to be a man or woman in small town (Greymouth) Aotearoa/ New Zealand in the 1940s. Tui is portrayed as a young wife expected to support her husband's decision, to grin and bear it when she was clearly distressed about his actions. One gets a sense of what it must have been like to give birth without her husband's support, to parent alone as a first time



Chelsea Preston-Crayford plays Tui as a young mother.

Source: <http://www.homebychristmas.com/home/media/>

inexperienced mother, and to cope with the news that her husband was missing and that she might never see him again. Her loneliness is palpable and she eventually has an affair with another man.

Tony Barry's performance as Ed Preston is outstanding. Whether the film totally replicates the original oral history interviews is unknown but, as a warts-and-all depiction is portrayed including minor problems with the equipment, it seems reasonable to conclude that it is a fairly faithful representation. Barry does such a convincing job that it is easy for a viewer to believe that he really is Ed rather than a very good actor speaking his lines. It is Ed's role that is so interesting from an oral history perspective. I so empathized with Gaylene when she tried on a number of occasions to get Ed to open up and talk about sex in the context of war. Ed would have none of that; through a variety of strategies such as laughter and saying he needed a break, he adroitly managed to evade Gaylene's gentle but persistent questions. He told stories of other servicemen using brothels and having sexual relationships but cleverly avoided discussing whether he too had any sexual encounters in the four years he was overseas. When Gaylene gently probed and brought the subject of sex up, again her pursuit of 'the truth' was thwarted. Ed claimed to be more interested in food than sex. The portrayal of the oral history interview seemed to me to be a classic case of what Alistair Thomson describes as someone 'composing' a memory that fits in with what is publicly acceptable and/or what Paul Thompson describes as 'a conscious avoidance of distasteful facts'. As such it is a useful teaching resource for the practice of oral history.



Members of the NOHANZ exec committee enjoy an outdoor meeting in Anne Thorpe's idyllic garden. From left: Michael Dudding, Anne Thorpe, Lesley Hall, Gillian Headifen, Taina McGregor and Rachael Selby.

PROFILES

INTRODUCING THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2010

Rachael Selby (Ngati Raukawa and Ngati Pareraukawa) lives in Otaki, and has had an interest in oral history for nearly twenty years. She has completed over 50 oral history interviews with Maori women and men for a range of interesting projects. Many of these have been for environmental projects focused on memories of life in rural communities and small towns. Others have been based on memories of the importance of particular rivers and streams and the impacts of environmental pollution on Maori communities. Others have focused on customary fishing practices and management of streams. Rachael is currently setting up a project based on the history of the Maori Battalion Hall in Palmerston North. She always works as part of a team and enjoys the collaboration and learning which results.

Anne Thorpe is the treasurer for NOHANZ; her early training working for an accountant comes in useful for this task. Her later work as a probation officer meant she interviewed many people over her career, but she quickly learnt that the ethics and disciplines required as an oral historian were a new skill and she was very glad of the training given by Judith Fyfe. She is presently heavily involved in recording the stories of the people of Otaki for the Otaki Museum, and organizing a group of local oral historians who will assist in this work.

Lesley Hall is Immediate Past President of NOHANZ and the current Programme Director of Gender and Women's Studies (GWS) at Victoria University of Wellington. Oral history is taught as part of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in GWS and many students use oral history as a research method for masters and doctoral theses. Lesley's current ongoing research is with women scientists in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This is an oral history project that examines gender relations in the fields of science, engineering, medicine and technology with reference to issues including the experiences of women in a non-traditional occupation, the two body problem of managing a career and family responsibilities, the so-called "male" culture of science, the impact of current funding regimes, the benefits and limitations of positive discrimination, and possible strategies for the future. Lesley is interested in both the theoretical and practical aspects of oral history and, with Alison Laurie, is currently working on a new book about the theory and practice of oral history in Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

Linda Evans has been the curator of the Oral History Centre at the Alexander Turnbull Library since 1997. She is a qualified librarian and has a long standing interest in oral history and histories of communities. Her oral history training started at a workshop taken by Judith Fyfe and Hugo Manson in the mid-1980s.

She has been involved in NOHANZ since 1995 and was president for two terms. She is also a curator of the Lesbian and Gay Archives Te Puranga Takatapu i o

Aotearoa (LAGANZ) and involved in the LAGANZ Oral History Group.

Taina Tangaere McGregor: I got involved in oral history in 1993 whilst completing Teachers Training College in Palmerston North and became a foundation member of the C Company 28 Maori Battalion oral history project research team. I continued to the Maori Department at Massey University and majored with an MA(Hons) in Education and Maori Studies.

Living in Pongaroa – a one-pub, one-shop, one-garage rural township in northern Wairarapa – I joined NOHANZ about 1995/96 so I could receive the NOHANZ journal and keep abreast of projects and happenings in the oral history domain. It was the right decision as the journal exposed a broad range of people operating in the 'field' and the amazing range of oral history projects being undertaken nationwide. Totally unforeseen, was, that I would be employed in 2001 as the Oral Historian, Maori in the Oral History Centre of the Alexander Turnbull Library. It was here that I and the rest of the C Company research team were trained in the ethical & technical practice of recording oral histories by Hugo Manson.

Gillian Headifen has worked at the Oral History Centre of the Alexander Turnbull Library for over eight years. She is currently working in the library's Reference Services team at Archives NZ where oral history material is available to researchers during the National Library building redevelopment (see page 2).

Michael Dudding is an Architectural Historian and Lecturer at the Victoria University School of Architecture, specializing in New Zealand postwar architectural history, employing oral history methods to record the experiences of New Zealand architects from that era. His current research (toward his doctoral dissertation), investigates the dissemination of US Modernist architectural ideals in postwar New Zealand, via the agency of educational scholarships to the US - and the experiences of those New Zealand architects who followed this path.

Shona McCahon does writing, editing and oral history work from her Wellington home. She has a background in landscape architecture, which has led to such oral history projects as the founding of landscape architecture in New Zealand, the first 30 years of the QEII National Trust and interviewing former curators of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens.