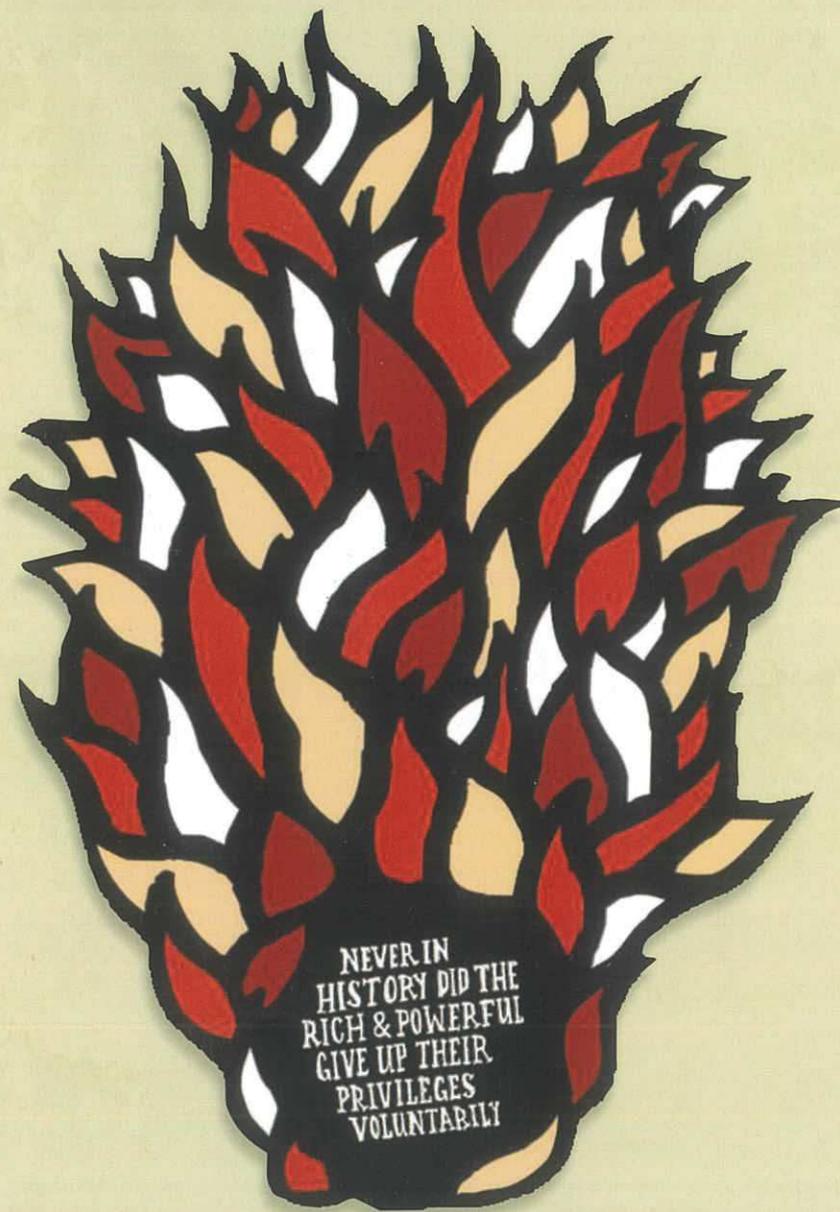


**Oral
HISTORY**
in New Zealand

National Oral History Association of New Zealand
TE KETE KŌRERO-A-WAHA O TE MOTU



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Contents

Editorial ii

What Might Have Been: Kiwi Migrants' Counterfactual Reflections and Regrets

ROSEMARY BAIRD 1

Reports

Framing oral histories as autobiographical accounts in *Raj Days to Downunder: Voices from Anglo India to New Zealand*

DOROTHY MCMENAMIN 8

The People behind the Poster – reflecting activism in Aotearoa

SUE BERMAN 13

Tales of Tairua: reflections on an oral history project 2004-2011

DAVID RUSHFORTH 25

Book Reviews 9

The Occupiers: New Zealand Veterans Remember Post-War Japan

by Alison Parr

Reviewed by Ann Packer, Eastbourne 29

Sons of the Soil: Chinese Market Gardeners in New Zealand

by Lily Lee and Ruth Lam

Reviewed by Megan Hutching, Auckland

NOHANZ

Origins 36

Code of ethical and technical practice 37

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Back cover: People Behind Poster post card collection, Kotare cake stall.

Editorial

This year's issue of Oral History in New Zealand begins with Rosemary Baird's 'What Might Have Been', a well-written analysis of the counterfactual reflections – the 'what ifs' – of a group of New Zealanders who migrated to Australia. Rosemary's interviews drew out much interesting material from her narrators on their migration experience and how they have 'composed' their life narratives as a result.

In a piece based on her presentation at the 2012 International Oral History Association conference in Buenos Aires, Sue Berman reports on 'The People Behind the Poster', a fascinating project in which she interviewed activists associated with a large archive of posters held by the Kotare Trust. David Rushforth provides an interesting account of

the Tairua Oral History Group's experiences recording long-term residents of the area, and gives those of us who are considering recording local history projects food for thought.

Dorothy McMenamin raises some thought-provoking and useful issues regarding the publication of interviews. Her experiences in dealing with interviewees once their interviews had been transcribed for publication provide an extremely interesting case history for others who may be considering the same.

As always, we welcome contributions to future issues of the journal.

Megan Hutching
Michael Dudding

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We welcome contributions, whether long or short articles, book, documentary or exhibition reviews, reports of meetings or conferences, or work in progress. Long articles are anonymously peer-reviewed.

The deadline for contributions to the 2013 issue of the journal is 30 June. A Guide for Contributors is available from the editors and on the NOHANZ website.

Please send your contributions to one of the editors below.

If you are interested in becoming a peer reviewer for the long articles, please contact one of us.

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What Might Have Been: Kiwi Migrants' Counterfactual Reflections and Regrets

ROSEMARY BAIRD

INTRODUCTION

One of the features of oral history is that narrators construct their life stories from the perspective of the present. As Alessandro Portelli writes, 'a life history is a living thing. It is always a work in progress, in which narrators revise the image of their own past as they go along.'¹ As part of this revisionary process, narrators include memories of regrets and counterfactual pasts. This article builds on the investigation of counterfactual thinking in oral history research and also considers the role of regrets. I engage with psychological and personality research in order to explore narrators' reasons for constructing counterfactual reflections. In my oral history interviews with New Zealanders who migrated to Australia from the late 1960s to the early 1990s, many narrators used counterfactual reflections to identify migration as a turning point in their life stories and justify their migration decision. Conversely, considering what might have been caused narrators to identify regrets. Most of my narrators sought to suppress or reconcile their regrets with varying levels of success. Imaginary pasts and regrets enabled narrators to convince themselves and their listeners that their lives and decisions have been worthwhile.

CONTEXT

This article is based on the narratives of New Zealanders who migrated to and from Australia from the late 1960s through to the early 1990s. Selection of participants was two-fold. Firstly, 274 Kiwi migrants from around New Zealand and Australia responded to a call for participants and completed surveys providing demographic and migration details. The majority also wrote narrative accounts of their migration experience/life history. Although participants

were self-selected, the sizeable number of the sample provided a wide range of experience, age, educational background, and location. I interviewed a range of Kiwis from the initial respondents who were as representative as possible of different migration experiences and demographic groups. Over the course of a year I conducted 35 full life history interviews in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Canberra, Brisbane, Wellington, Christchurch, and Auckland.

My research is based on the premise that the three demographic waves of Kiwis who moved to Australia from the late 1960s to the early 1990s constitute a significant migrant group, even though there is little historical research on this trend. From 1967 the numbers of New Zealanders moving to Australia increased, while Australian migration to New Zealand decreased. Although this period is distinguished by sustained migration to Australia, significant peaks of movement occurred at the end of each decade.² From 1967-1971 an average of 21,000 New Zealanders made a permanent or long term move to Australia each year; during the second major wave of migration in 1978-81, this average increased to 32,000 per year and the third major wave of migration peaked at over 44,000 in 1988-89.³ Recent work by demographers Philip McCann, Jacques

Rosemary Baird completed her history doctorate in early 2012 at the University of Canterbury. Her topic focused on the experiences of New Zealanders who migrated to Australia from 1965-1995, and relied heavily on written narratives and oral histories. She is currently working as a researcher and interviewer for several earthquake-related projects in Christchurch. She was also awarded a Ministry for Culture and Heritage Oral History Award in 2012 to do oral history interviews on the construction of the Manapouri hydro scheme.

Poot, and Lynda Sanderson illuminates further trends in New Zealand migration to Australia.⁴ Several sociological studies study Maori in Australia and the motivations and identity of New Zealand migrants to Australia.⁵ But in spite of this migration pattern's significance, historians have paid it scant attention. The exception is New Zealand historian, Rollo Arnold who investigates nineteenth century trans-Tasman migration.⁶ Most probably because of New Zealanders' relatively easy entry, movement and integration into Australian society, Australian academics have not researched Kiwis' migrant experiences. For example, Eric Richard's latest Australian immigration history largely ignores New Zealand migrants.⁷ My research addresses this historiographical gap by studying New Zealanders' movements to Australia through the disciplines of migration studies and oral history. As part of this study, I seek to understand the meaning that narrators give to their decision to migration from the perspective of the present. One way to uncover this meaning is to consider New Zealand migrants' counterfactual reflections and regrets.

Counterfactual means, literally, contrary to the facts. Counterfactuals are conditional statements, which propose an alternative version of the past, present or future.⁸ Some historians deride counterfactual thinking. E. H. Carr dismisses the 'might-have-beens' of history as a mere 'parlour game'.⁹ On the other hand, Niall Ferguson argues that historians need to understand all of historical figures' options and thoughts about the future. Ferguson writes, 'if all history is the history of (recorded) thought, surely we must attach equal significance to all the options thought about'.¹⁰ Ferguson and other counterfactual historians attempt to calculate the possibility of other plausible alternatives to pivotal historic events, and then suggest the outcomes of these alternative pasts.¹¹

Oral historians' analysis of counterfactual thinking focuses on how narrators create alternative pasts in their life histories, especially when recalling dramatic events.¹² Alessandro Portelli, in his 1988 article, 'Uchronic Dreams: Working-Class Memory and Possible Worlds', found that many of

his working class narrators emphasised 'not how history went but how it *could* or *should* have gone.'¹³ Portelli found that narrators used counterfactual history to highlight that official histories failed to describe their own experiences. But Portelli's narrators simultaneously used uchronic dreams to reconcile themselves to their current situation.¹⁴ Angela McCarthy in her book on Irish and Scottish migration briefly considers her narrator's counterfactual reflections. McCarthy finds that migrants used comparisons with family and friends who had stayed behind in Ireland and Scotland to guess the effects of not migrating. A number of migrants felt that if they had never moved they would have remained close-minded and unconfident.¹⁵ Apart from Portelli and McCarthy, few oral historians have investigated counterfactual thinking in their narrators' stories. This paper expands on Portelli's and McCarthy's research on counterfactual reflections in oral history and also considers narrators' regrets.

Regret is closely related to counterfactual thinking. Zeelenberg defines regret as a 'cognitively based emotion that we experience when realising or imagining that our present situation would have been better had we acted differently'.¹⁶ Because regret involves a comparison between what is and what might have been, N. J. Roese describes regret as the emotional offspring of counterfactual thinking.¹⁷ Psychological research distinguishes between regrets over past actions and inactions. Studies reveal that over time people ameliorate the pain of regrettable actions by seeking silver linings and reducing cognitive dissonance.¹⁸ By contrast, the pain of regrettable inactions grows over time as distant failures to act seem more inexplicable.¹⁹

Counterfactual thinking and regrets reveal the meanings that narrators give to memories of past events and how they have come to term with these recollections in the present. In the interviews I conducted, I purposely asked questions like, 'Would you do anything differently?', 'Do you have any regrets?', and 'Do you ever think about what might have been?' At first I suspected that narrators might have little to say to these rather abstract questions. To my surprise I found that

many narrators had already considered these questions and that their answers were useful in helping me understand how they constructed their life stories as meaningful and coherent.

IMAGINED COUNTERFACTUAL PASTS

Many narrators took their departure for Australia as the point from which they imagined alternate pasts. This was partly due to narrators being aware that I was studying migration, and framing their answers in this context. However, it also seemed that migration was a turning point in their life histories. Emma O'Brien, who was a particularly self-aware narrator, commented on this phenomenon:

That's one of the things migration does. I think if you stay in one place you don't think about that because you don't have to. You're living your life and you're just in the one place. I think when you make a big choice – that could be to move cities but it's also particularly true if you move countries – you always wonder about what would have happened had you stayed or done something different. Of course you do. You have a parallel life. And that's kind of the pain of it really. You have your parallel life and you wonder about it. So I think migration is a double-edged sword.²⁰

Migration is often a pivotal moment in life histories. A. James Hammerton, in his oral histories with British migrants to Australia, found that their stories often relied on the moment of migration as the key life turning point.²¹ Portelli also notes that narrators' uchronic ruminations coincide with the peak of their personal life; the moments when they played an important role or were at least involved as a participant.²² New Zealand migrants to Australia consistently depicted their move as a significant moment where they took a different path from what might have been.

When it came to imagining their alternative 'non migration' pasts, narrators acknowledged the impossibility of really knowing what would have happened but still made educated guesses. My findings agreed with those of Angela McCarthy; narrators made their counterfactual reflections by using family and friends as comparative benchmarks. Narrators also used knowledge of their life

experiences before migration to guess how their lives would have turned out if they had stayed in New Zealand. Ben Pittaway moved to Sydney in December 1979 and at the time of our interview was planning his return to New Zealand. He had thought about his alternative history even though he felt it was rather pointless:

We often talk about this but in a sense it's probably a bit unproductive because you made a choice and who knows what would have happened. I really don't know so it's a bit of an impossible scenario. Probably I would have carried on teaching. I probably would have been extremely politically active. I think certainly I would have been very much a part of developments within the Maori community in seeking justice under Te Tiriti O Waitangi. All of those things which are very close to me. I don't think I would have been a quiet person under a bush at all. And in fact some of my very close relations are some of the firebrands of activism in New Zealand history.²³

This reflection reveals the past that Ben hopes he would have had if he had stayed in New Zealand. His guesses are based on his knowledge of his own character and interests as well as those of his family. Narrator's reflections were generally realistic. This finding supports Niall Ferguson's view that counterfactual history is necessarily plausible and possible.

Ben's alternative past was quite unusual in that it was positive; most narrators' counterfactual pasts were plausible but negative. The majority of narrators claimed that if they had stayed in New Zealand their lives would have been less successful than the lives they achieved by migrating to Australia. Gill Walsh compared her situation with her brothers and sisters in New Zealand and felt she had far less financial stress, and consequently, a more positive attitude to life.²⁴ Indeed, migrants often felt that migration changed their character for the better. Diana Harlow reflected that if she had stayed in New Zealand it would have been a terrible mistake:

I think if I had stayed in New Zealand, I would be a very different person. I think I would be less worldly. I would have been shyer, less sociable. Yeah, I was quite a naïve trusting young thing

when I first came here. I soon got that knocked out of me. They're sort of different people here ... They seem to be much more outgoing. New Zealanders I think are more reserved in general. Yeah, they're not quite as out there as Australians are, you know, so to keep up with them you've gotta sort of come out of your shell a bit more. No, I'm glad I did. I think I would have been a pretty dull and boring person if I'd stayed in New Zealand all my life and taken the safe option and stayed in radiography. Oh I don't know, the thought of it makes me feel ill. I think 'Oh God, no, how boring.' I would have felt I'd wasted my life. I really would've. I just needed to get out there.²⁵

Narrators often described migration as an enlightening, challenging experience which made them more accepting, adventurous, and open to new experiences. Such an interpretation revealed narrators' need to validate their migration decision.

DEALING WITH REGRETS

When I asked migrants if they had any regrets, most were adamant that they had few, if any. Some stated that they had a philosophy of never having regrets. Ben Pittaway stated: 'I have a rule in life, never regret anything. You make decisions on the basis of the best information at the time and once you make a decision that's it. I never look back and I never regret anything'.²⁶ Migration was an event which was almost always described positively, even by migrants who had difficult times after moving to Australia or returned to New Zealand. Tori Kawheru divorced her husband after arriving in Australia. At a later stage one of her children was imprisoned. She still misses New Zealand greatly. Yet Tori stated, 'I don't regret that I came here.'²⁷ Some migrants did admit to regrets, but remained adamant that they would not change their past decisions even if they could. Greg Curtin was aware that being away from New Zealand for fourteen years meant he missed out on certain aspects of New Zealand history. He admitted, 'The fact that I missed part of the New Zealand experience, I know, is something that I do regret in part as well.' But Greg continued, 'I wouldn't change what I did.'²⁸

On closer investigation it became clear

that many narrators did have regrets even if they claimed otherwise. The men and women I interviewed regretted past decisions that they felt might have changed their lives for the better today. Just as the research suggests, regrets of past inaction were strongest. The most common regret was not attaining tertiary education. Other narrators missed not having much time with New Zealand family and friends, while others regretted lost business opportunities or romantic relationships. Donald Kevin was one such narrator who demonstrated this tension between regret and no regrets. When I asked Donald if he would do anything differently he responded:

No, no, no, wouldn't change anything. Cos I think it's too much of a lottery. There's – I don't know – it's sort of like it's so random. You can't – if you force it, it's not a good experience ... everything, anything, any experience is the same. If you force it it's not a good experience in the long run cos it's going the wrong way. If you go with the flow and take advantage of it, then it can be a really [great] experience and yeah, you can get a lot of benefits from it. And I think, I've had, well, you know, married, got four kids, got a house.

And yet the following excerpt revealed Donald's regrets about romantic opportunities he had passed up as a young man due to his immaturity:

DK Looking back now, I made in some huge mistakes (laughs). It was just stupid you know.

RB What kind of mistakes?

DK Oh like, probably girls that I should have taken more interest in and I didn't because I just didn't value what I had. And yeah, it's strange, it's sort of like – we were very good friends and I haven't seen them since. I probably could have handled things a lot better. But I think I just wasn't mature enough. I was more interested in partying, having a good time – and they were as well – but I wasn't looking for a long term future and it could have well been a long term future.²⁹

The tension in Donald's narrative does not mean he is currently unhappy and disappointed. Rather it reveals that he finds it difficult to reconcile his positive life philosophy and regrets. Portelli noticed similar contradictions in his narrators' stories. He found that people insisted on the usefulness

and success of their lives by stressing the positive aspects of reality. By saying their history was 'good' they claimed to have made something of themselves. On the other hand, personal experiences also forced narrators to admit at times that their lives contain deferred goals, limited gains, and personal discontent.³⁰

Narrators used a number of positive strategies to minimise their regrets in their life stories and justify their past decisions. The first technique was to count their blessings. Narrators reassured themselves that, in spite of regrets, their current situation was satisfactory. Fred Pawley regretted that he had not started his own business in Australia, however, he comforted himself that he chose not to 'because of the strife and bother of owning a business and trying to look after it with the family.' He then added 'I've made a good life here, doing what I'm doing.'³¹ In Fred's example, we see a second way of minimising regret; counterfactual thinking. He tells himself that owning a business would have been detrimental to his family life. Indeed, as seen previously, alternative pasts are often negative in order that migrants can justify past decisions. Narrators also dealt with regrets by philosophising that past hard times and bad decisions had taught them constructive lessons and improved their character. Beth Jones initially struggled finding work and a place to belong in Melbourne, but she valued these 'tough experiences' as she feels they made her adaptable, resilient and understanding of other migrants' difficulties.³² Other migrants reminded themselves that it was only with hindsight they had regrets. At the time they had done the best they could. Rosa Tanga used this type of rationalisation when talking about the breakdown of her marriage in Australia:

You know, so it's always one of those things that are a matter of perspective. But at the time I would have said to you that when I left him, that I left with a clear conscience; that I really truly believed there was nothing else I could have tried. But you know now we're ten years or so down the track, you know, I'm sure there was different things I could have done. But it doesn't really matter.³³

All these ways of dealing with regret relied

on narrators accepting their past mistakes and understanding that the past cannot be changed. Brian Ranger had a few regrets about business failures and mistakes he had made but concluded, 'You learn to live with that, the good with the bad. On the whole I'm happy.'³⁴

NARRATIVE INSIGHTS

Counterfactual reflections are a key way for narrators to work against regrets. Most narrators portrayed their counterfactual pasts realistically, based on comparisons with New Zealand kin. But, although plausible, their alternative pasts were nearly always negative. Narrators – even those who had not prospered in Australia – reasoned that if they had not migrated, their lives would have been comparatively less successful. This arose from a need to reassure themselves that their big decision to move to Australia and settle there was correct. On the other hand, counterfactual thinking also led narrators to have regrets.

Although narrators avoided framing their migration decision negatively, they usually had other regrets. In accordance with psychological research most of these regrets were to do with past inaction in romantic, business, family, or educational situations. In these counterfactual reflections, narrators felt that if they had chosen differently their current situation might be better. Many narrators tried to ameliorate or justify these regrets. This is a normal aspect of the life review process. Research shows that a life review causes narrators to recognise their regrets and reintegrate them into their mental framework in a way that makes sense to them and fits into their self understanding and world view.³⁵ As my analysis reveals, most narrators were able to deal with their regrets relatively successfully. They identified silver linings or learning opportunities in past mistakes and were able to accept their regrets. Those who continued to absolve themselves of responsibility for past mistakes were less able to create a coherent life story and seemed less contented.

Narrators' attempts to weave a positive migration story are normal and necessary. It is part of a healthy mental state to justify past decisions. Recent neuroscience studies by Tali Sharot reveal our brains are hardwired

to place high value on our past and faith in our own decisions. Sharot writes, 'This affirmation of our decisions helps us derive heightened pleasure from choices that might actually be neutral. Without this, our lives might well be filled with second-guessing. Have we done the right thing? Should we change our mind? We would find ourselves stuck, overcome by indecision'.³⁶ This process of creating a reassuringly positive life story is described by oral historian Alistair Thomson as 'dual composure'. Thomson argues that narrators not only order, select, and construct their memories by drawing on their cultural resources; they also create coherent life stories which provide a feeling of personal composure.³⁷ Indeed, the few migrants who dwelled on their regrets excessively and did not accept or rationalise past mistakes were those who seemed most unhappy in their current lives. In order to live contentedly in the present, migrants needed to convince themselves that their past decisions had no negative effect on who they are today.

CONCLUSIONS

Studying narrators' use of counterfactual pasts and regrets reveals that a life story is more than a factual recollection of past events. Rather, when a narrator tells their life history, they construct a story that will ideally convince listeners and themselves that their life has been meaningful and successful. Narrators use autobiographical memories and reflections to create a narrative that helps them find contentedness in the present, and explains their current situation and character. Narrators use counterfactuals to show that they have made correct decisions. By portraying an alternative past as negative, narrators validate their life decisions.

The downside of counterfactuals, however, is that they also lead to regret. Usually narrators do have to admit that there are instances in their life where a different outcome might have been possible and preferable. Regrets are unpleasant – which is why so many narrators initially claimed they did not have any – but they need to be dealt with in order for a narrator to live contentedly in the present. Narrators' regretful reflections reveal their attempts to make sense of and

come to terms with their doubts about their past decisions and inaction. By doing so, most narrators are able to create a consistent life story which acknowledges, but also finds value in, past mistakes.

Analysing counterfactual thinking and regrets also reveals the place of migration in my narrators' life stories. Migration was generally depicted very positively. Many narrators speculated that moving to Australia rescued them from a comparatively worse alternative past back in New Zealand and claimed to have no regrets about migrating, even if their migration journey had not been easy. There are several reasons for this. Usually, migration was depicted as an active decision, and as such is less susceptible to regret, but more importantly, migration was a key component of narrators' life stories. They identified the move to Australia as a turning point in their lives. Migrants pinpoint their alternative histories as stemming from migration because in reflection they see migration as a life changing decision. But at the time of migration, many Kiwis expected their move would only be temporary and probably did not attach great significance to the decision. It is only years later that narrators sought to validate their move to Australia through their life history.

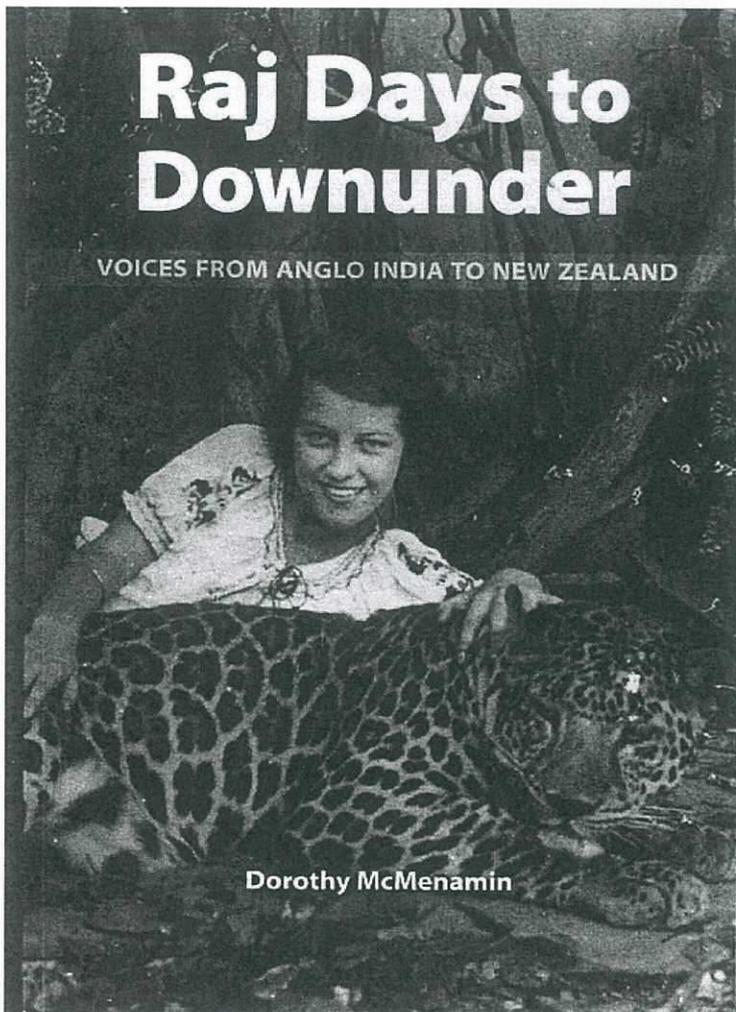
Note: All oral history narrators have been given pseudonyms. All interviews will be archived in the Alexander Turnbull Library in the next few months.

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Framing oral histories as autobiographical accounts in *Raj Days to Downunder: Voices from Anglo India to New Zealand*

DOROTHY McMENAMIN



WHY PUBLISH?

In the decade after 1996 I recorded about 50 oral histories with people who had lived in British India (Anglo India), and who were old enough to remember the lifestyle prior to the end of British Colonial rule (the Raj) in 1947.² These people could also recall important events during the upheaval and violence associated with Independence and Partition of the Indian subcontinent, when up to one million people were slaughtered and

ten million Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were displaced from their homes. Surprisingly, the British and Anglo Indian communities were not targets of attack and, in fact, were often sought out as havens of safety by people and families at risk.³

My motive for deciding to publish these interesting accounts was, firstly, to provide a heritage volume of the stories to thank the contributors and to enable them to share each other's stories. Secondly, as a heritage book it would provide future generations with a record about forebears who had lived under the Raj in Anglo India during the first half of the twentieth century, commonly perceived as an exotic bygone age. Thirdly, my aim was to make the primary sources more readily accessible to individuals and historians working in the field of social history of South Asia by drawing attention to the oral history archive. Fourth, but by no means least, the book identifies a hitherto unrecognised migrant community in New Zealand and describes their resettlement and integration here.

The focus of the anthology is upon migrants to New Zealand, so only 30 of the oral histories (with members of families resident in New Zealand) were to be included in the book. Prior to getting the stories ready

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for publication, I contacted each contributor or, if they had died, their families because I felt an ethical obligation to ensure they would be comfortable with their story appearing in the public domain. It is one thing for interviewees to consent to being recorded for posterity and have their interview deposited in some, imagined, dusty archive and perhaps be quoted in articles occasionally, but quite another to have a fully transcribed version available for scrutiny by extended family and friends – as was soon confirmed with some vehemence! I also wished to obtain family photographs to maximise the appeal of the book and add another dimension to the archived oral history collection.

Over the years most of the contributors and I had become friends because I, too, had been raised in the Indian subcontinent, being a member of the fifth generation of families resident in Anglo India. In 2002 one Christchurch resident asked me to initiate a meeting between the local contributors, some of whom had never met anybody in New Zealand from Colonial India since their arrival in 1950s. We soon held quarterly social gatherings and it became apparent that people thought there was a need for the younger generation to learn more about their heritage, especially as the older generation was disappearing. I had been asked to speak at the funeral of one interviewee about their life in India, and several men had not talked much about their earlier lives, considering it 'irrelevant' in their New Zealand environment. Their spouses became a wonderful spur and encouragement to my project.

THE EDITING PROCESS:

It seemed urgent to begin compiling the anthology but at the time I was engaged in a research project on leprosy in the South Pacific. One of the interviewee's wives, my co-editor Sue Birch, volunteered to continue the hugely time-consuming task I had begun. This involved going through the typed transcripts and removing all the questions, deleting the repetitions which are natural in spoken speech, and reorganising the narratives into chronological order under the topic headings used in my original questionnaire. Sue completed this task during 2008-9,

following which I edited the first drafts, and made small changes to preserve the privacy of some friends, family and other living individuals. Even after deleting the questions and repetitions, the word count remained around a massive 200,000! The task of proof reading by Sue and me was enormous and to my dismay, I still continue to find small errors. This is a problem born of a labour of love, as I had no funding or professional editorial assistance.

The stories contain many overlapping and repetitive descriptions, including some inconsistencies about lifestyles in Anglo India. I deliberately retained the repetitions and contradictions as they form integral evidence for my project by representing important differing views relating to perceptions of life in a hierarchical, multicultural and multi-racial society. As a family heritage and primary historical resource, the book was never intended as a cover-to-cover read, but rather a book to dip into for insights into different ways of life. My long introduction describes the overall project, explaining its objectives and unusual style. It also explains to readers unfamiliar with oral history, that the 'autobiographies' were based on answers to questions rather than being an autobiography of choice, thereby making the stories somewhat repetitious but with critical differences important to an historian. An interview is focussed around the interviewer's interests and might include material which the interviewee does not see as particularly relevant, whilst omitting material which the interviewee might think is very important in their life story. I had hoped to include a CD with the book containing an extract of each voice, and although this did not eventuate, it remains a goal for a future edition.

The title page of each life-story tabulates the interviewee's place and date of birth along with the place and date of the interview and, where applicable, the year of death. From this readers can calculate the age of the interviewee, as well as identify how much time had elapsed between the events being described and the interview.

Once the edited life stories were completed, I contacted each contributor to explain my proposed project, and requested some family photographs for professional digital

copying, the latter being an expensive but very worthwhile operation. There is no doubt in my mind that readers enjoy looking at the wonderful old photographs and they are a great encouragement to read the stories. I travelled to the North Island to borrow, digitally copy and return the precious photographs, knowing that elderly people are loath to part with such treasures – and even so, two interviewees refused to remove photographs from the albums in order to be copied.

I had archived formal consents for public use with each oral history, but I also provided everyone with the first draft of their edited transcript for the reasons mentioned above. For those living in Christchurch, I organised a social gathering to give each contributor the first draft, and asked them to contact me later to let me know their views regarding publication. Copies were posted to the overseas people. Fortunately five people living out of Christchurch, or a close family member, had email which made the ensuing communication process easier. After a few weeks, if I had not heard from someone, I telephoned to enquire whether they were happy for me proceed with their story. As it turned out, the appearance of their spoken narrative in a text for a public audience, aroused much controversy and, in a few instances, some serious difficulties.

CONTRIBUTORS' RESPONSES TO THE TRANSCRIPTS AND THE DILEMMAS:

Thirty transcripts were edited for publication. At the eleventh hour, one person decided their story should be excluded. I was dismayed as we had progressed past the final editing stage but, out of respect for the interviewee's wishes, I reluctantly agreed even though the original consent would have allowed me to proceed. The reason given for withdrawal was that of being 'a private person'. Undoubtedly this was true, but herein is an ethical dilemma.

As an historical researcher and oral historian, an important aspect of my project involved eliciting descriptions of different cultural attitudes towards each other and towards mixed-race groups. Because I was from the Indian subcontinent and part of the mixed-race community, the interviewees felt relaxed and able to speak openly about

issues which are not so easily discussed these days due to changed ideas about racism and differing cultural values and attitudes. Racial differences of a past era remain a sensitive topic not easily conveyed in contemporary contexts, however, the topic was an important part of my research. It is likely that the contributor who withdrew their story was uneasy about their family situation in Anglo India being exposed to a New Zealand audience, particularly to extended family and friends. My introductory comments in the book discuss the inclusion of some terms perhaps now considered politically incorrect, because, I argue, these views and experiences offer valuable insights for today's burgeoning multicultural societies. However, since the interviewee simply wished to withdraw, not identify areas that could be omitted, I had no alternative other than to accept the decision.

Thus the anthology contains only 29 life stories, of which thirteen interviewees resided in the Christchurch area, fourteen in the North Island and two had moved overseas. Of the total contributors, nine had died since the interview, whilst five were too old or suffering dementia so were unable to comment on the edited drafts. Except for one interviewee who had died in 1999 and whose family I had lost contact with, I provided transcripts to each of the contributors, or to a living spouse or close family member.

Of the interviewees who checked the transcripts, only three did not request some change. In principle, most people were happy to have their stories published, but in fact, only one interviewee told me that the edited transcript was what had originally been said, and was therefore totally acceptable – a comment that I had expected from most interviewees!

But no, the vast majority wanted to make changes and corrections because they realised they had either originally made errors, or they disliked how their spoken words read when converted to text. Some wished to incorporate grammatical amendments in conformity with how they might have written their own stories, for example, three were 'horrified' at seeing their spoken words in print because, as one said, they would 'never have written like that'. Another felt that the transcript of their

spoken language made them appear foolish. Despite assurances that it was the spoken style of their oral recordings that I wished to preserve in the text, rather than how they would choose to write an autobiography, these contributors were anxious to amend their stories. Three others wished to correct errors which they had made at the time of the interview, relating to genealogies or details of past events.

After a number of telephone conversations, contributors who lived out of Christchurch mailed the hard copies back to me with their annotated corrections. Even if I was unhappy with some of the passages marked for omission, I accepted their decisions, and was more than pleased to have the corrections.

Initially I had intended the anthology to remain true to the original oral histories, reflecting what people had told me at that time, irrespective of fallible memories. However, after discussion with the people who wished to incorporate corrections, I decided that the changes would add an extra dimension to the archives, and decided that by allowing the contributors to suggest their own amendments, their individual voices were somewhat retained. The original archived recordings and transcripts remain intact, whilst the edited versions in the anthology are a reflection of changing sensitivities.

More problematically for me, three of the interviewees insisted that large extracts be omitted from their stories before they could be published. One deletion was a detailed description of a sibling who had been a controversial figure in New Zealand politics. The interviewee did not wish to ignite a dormant controversy and felt a larger time-gap was appropriate before further publicity. Another contributor deleted all polemics from the draft text describing cultural differences between communities in India, particularly references to Muslims. I can only assume this was due to fear of criticism or even persecution.

The third contributor insisted that the strong opinions given about Hindu caste divisions should be omitted because they were causing serious family disharmony and, furthermore, these views were considered irrelevant in a New Zealand context. In this case, negotiations to delete the 'offending'

passages involved long phone conversations in which the interviewee explained the changes they required me to make because they did not have sufficient keyboard skills to make the necessary amendments themselves.

I sent each of these people their redrafted stories and followed them up with phone conversations until final agreement was reached. Although I tried to persuade the interviewees to retain the original information, when this was in vain I acquiesced to their wishes.

I was dismayed by the latter two deletions detailed above, because they were important and fascinating personal perspectives, but fortunately the original archival material survives. Conversely, another interviewee decided to supplement their family history, and asked for an addendum to be recorded in the second edition of the anthology (2011), giving details of a spicy story of murder and intrigue rumoured to have occurred in relation to a paternal grandparent. If the rumour was true, it meant that the person always assumed to be the grandfather was in fact a surrogate, not the biological ancestor! The story had not been told in the original interview because it was based on rumour, not confirmed as factual, although several older family members believed it to be the truth. Following discussion with family members, the interviewee decided it was important to include the details because they might become a salient genealogical factor for future generations.

RECEPTION OF THE PUBLICATION:

In late 2010 I self published the first short run of one hundred copies and provided each contributor, or their family, with a complimentary copy of the book in appreciation of their participation in the project. I was rewarded well by comments from several family members, many of whom purchased multiple copies for their children and/or siblings. A few typographical errors were also picked up, and these have been corrected in the second edition produced in 2011.

I subsequently discovered that, in some cases surviving family members had regrets or disagreements about the interviewee's memoirs which became controversial issues within their families. However, such contro-

versies should not be unexpected, as very few siblings agree on all the details of common memories! The fact that the stories are recorded and accessible for discussion and debate by extended family members reminds us that memory making is an on-going process and that our interviews preserve the relevance of past lives in the present, and into the future.

I was particularly pleased by a comment made by an avid reader, a New Zealander who had never visited India, who read the book cover-to-cover and told me it had been 'like having a conversation with twenty-nine different people'. I was delighted to know that despite some difficulties, the tone of the original spoken words in the interviews had successfully been retained on the printed page.

Another observation I would like to share with oral historians who may consider publishing transcripts of a specific oral history project, is a result of comments received from a New Zealand PhD candidate embarking on a topic located in Colonial India. Jane McCabe wrote that *Raj Days to Downunder* was an 'amazing example of what can be achieved by ... taking oral histories of a specific period of history and lay them beside each other'. She went on to say that these stories were educating her 'about the subtleties of the Anglo-Indian experience in a way that other texts could never do'.⁴ By publishing the oral histories as a text they have become more accessible, and publication allows the subtle distinctions and details to be easily compared, critiqued, and cited by other researchers. Furthermore, publicity from the publication points researchers towards the original archive where the actual voices convey their unique and invaluable personal resonances.

Feed-back from other readers has affirmed that oral histories are an extremely powerful means of communication, particularly from one generation to another.

The lifestyles described in *Raj Days to Downunder* provide an extremely useful precedent for multicultural societies today by showing how different communities co-existed, irrespective of vastly differing cultural beliefs and practices. The anthology also reveals the personal identities of an earlier migrant community in New Zealand, together with descriptions of their integration into society.

These details constitute an historical model which contemporary policy makers should consider when rethinking policies relating to the large influx of new migrants of diverse ethnic origins into this country.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ D. McMnamin, *Raj Days to Downunder: Voices from Anglo India to New Zealand*, 2010, 2nd edition 2011, available from the author, dorothym@snap.net.nz
- ² Independence from British rule and Partition of the subcontinent in 1947 led to the creation of the independent states India, and East and West Pakistan. In 1971, the latter country split and became Bangladesh and Pakistan, respectively. The oral history archive was utilized by me to identify sub-groups of the wider Anglo Indian community in an article, 'Identifying Domiciled Europeans in Colonial India: Poor whites or privileged community?' in *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. III, No.1, June 2001, pp.106-127
- ³ See D. McMnamin, 'Anglo-Indian Experiences During Partition Violence and its Impact Upon Their Lives' in the *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, June 2006, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 69-95
- ⁴ Personal email from Jane McCabe dated 16 August 2011

The People behind the Poster – reflecting activism in Aotearoa

SUE BERMAN

KOTARE AND THE POSTER COLLECTION
Kotare Research and Education for Social Change Trust (Kotare Trust) is the repository for a wide range of historical posters on social change issues in Aotearoa and internationally. Some date back to the 1970s but mostly the collection is comprised of local activist posters reflecting the struggles in Aotearoa of the 1980s and 1990s. Many of the posters are rare and unique – unique as they document a particular story of activism from grass roots organising, and rare because of the ephemeral nature of the collection. Posters and flyers are not always valued as historical documents and are rarely archived.¹ For this reason alone, the Kotare Trust collection is a real treasure of activist organising and history.

Kotare Trust emerged as a response to a community sector call for a 'school for social change'. This call came in the early 1990s out of a national dialogue of people and sectors known as 'Building Our Own Future' – often less elegantly referred to as BOOF. Kotare Trust is driven by a vision for a future of economic, social and environmental justice in Aotearoa based on Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The work of the Trust is to support community action through participatory education and research.²

The poster collection housed at the Kotare Centre has grown from a number of posters gifted by Auckland Workers Education Association and Auckland Unemployed Workers Rights Centre when both organisations shifted premises. Individuals and organisation have added to the collection and Kotare Trust now houses over 500 posters in the archive. They vary in theme and include the peace and anti-nuclear movements, anti-racism, treaty justice and land rights, unemployed workers rights, feminist activism, environmentalism,

workers education... and more. And they range in scope, too – from protest slogans to advertising of organizing meetings, protests and marches, information and education, calls to action and celebrations. All aspects of organising are reflected in the posters and other ephemera.

Younger generations attending workshops have often sought the stories behind the posters, many of which have decorated the walls at the Kotare Centre. Inspired by these questions, and our own desire to document the stories, the history, and the learning represented by the posters Kotare established an oral history project. A pilot was made possible through the support of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage Oral History Awards.

The Award helped us to begin to record the stories of activists who organised, created and took a part in the actions and remembered the events reflected in the posters. The recorded interviews and notes taken from unrecorded interviews (including information gathered through a participatory public exhibition) have become the foundation of what we hope will become a larger collection of reflective oral history interviews which will sit alongside the poster collection.³

DIGITISING, RECRUITING AND RECORDING

One of the first tasks for managing this project was to find a way to get the posters out of the cabinet and accessible to

Sue Berman is a Trustee of Kotare Research and Education for Social Change Trust. Between 2007-2011 she championed the digitization of the posters, began an oral history project and facilitated a community exhibition of the poster collection.

participants for viewing. There was no budget allowance for posters to be scanned, so digitising the collection was done through high resolution photography. The photo images of the posters were given a reference number and uploaded into a web-based album. Although not always producing the most robust results (due to light, shadow and the occasional framing issue) this method did prove to be an economical and practical way forward.⁴

Having prepared the posters for viewing through the web link, we went about recruiting. Participants have been, and continue to be, identified largely through networking – in fact it was a conversation at a NOHANZ conference that led me to one key informant, Dave Kent from the Wellington Media Collective. Networking through Kotare newsletters and word of mouth has also been successful, although not all leads have resulted in recorded interviews. No interview or conversation has been wasted in building this project.

An element of technical practice was a major challenge, and the initial couple of interviews revealed an aspect of the project design which needed to be improved. I am sure many readers have confronted the juggling necessary to integrate photos or ephemera into the interview process. Given the posters were a major focus of the interview, this was particularly concerning. It turned out that viewing the website via a computer was not ideal as a tool. It proved to be disruptive to the flow of the interview as much and to the sound quality of the audio recording. A new way had to be found. An investment in colour photocopying to produce a booklet of the posters proved worthwhile. The only technical issue that then sometimes arose was the sound of flicking pages.

Initially only 300 posters were digitized and available for the beginning phase of the oral history project. Over 200 posters were added a third of the way through as more posters were digitised and word spread, encouraging people to add their collection to the Kotare archive. Some of the gifted posters reflect more recent activism, and we are looking at mechanisms for receiving material born digitally. We are hopeful that activists

from this generation will one day contribute their stories to the collection.

The project gathered a range of voice and comments relating mostly to activism in the 1980s and 1990s and covered such topics as:

- » life history - biographical information and early influences,
- » comment on the role of the poster as a tool in organising and campaigning,
- » comment on the design of posters – what they tell the viewer – detail on who did the art and what materials were used,
- » recollections and anecdotes of protests, meetings and conferences as advertised in the poster,
- » details on printing and the distribution of posters, and
- » reflections and details on campaigning and organising in social change organisations.

PARTICIPANT VOICES/THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE POSTER

This article makes reference to all five of the recorded interviews conducted as a pilot project; quotes are drawn from just three of the interviews.

Jan Logie⁵ was suggested to the project as an active thinker and a creator of posters focused on young women's empowerment, anti-violence and social justice. Jan talked about her work in the development of education and social change messages. As a first interview for the project it added valuable context and learning, although not a lot of reference was made to specific posters in the collection. As noted earlier the website of poster images proved somewhat inaccessible and this frustrated the flow and possible depth of the interview in relation to the specifics of the collection.

Karen Davis⁶ spent many years working on issues with the Auckland Unemployed Workers Rights Centre (AUWRC). Karen was able to speak about organizing, and posters which reflected the protests held against neoliberal government attacks on workers and welfare during the 1980s and 1990s. Karen spoke in detail about the process and dynamics for creating, sticking up and utilising posters for recruiting, campaigning and education.

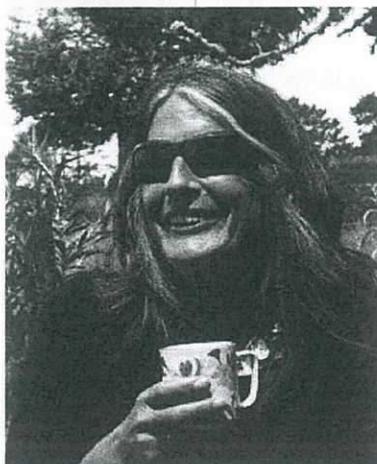
Claire-Louise McCurdy⁷ came to the project through a referral from the

Auckland Workers Education Association (AWEA). Claire-Louise has a background in participatory education and in the development of Women's Studies. She reflected on straddling an academic and activist career and her passion for participatory education. The interview focused on posters that show something of WEA's history in running summer schools and feminist issues.

Taking no chances with faulty equipment or intermittent computer access and armed with the new poster booklet, I found the interview with Kitch Cuthbert went very smoothly!⁸ Kitch spoke only briefly of her family history, with the interview focused mainly on the posters in the collection that reflect anti-racism, anti-apartheid, anti-Springbok tour organising. She added some detail to peace and antiwar, feminist and workers rights posters. This interview was rich because of Kitch's story telling style and her detailed recall.

The final interview of this series took place with Shona Manchester, known as Shona Solomon in her activist days.⁹ Shona had an ability to weave the personal with the political, while referencing the posters, her own personal journey and the political context of the time. She steered the interview through the founding of Rape Crisis, the Homosexual Law Reform Bill, DPB Action, and the protests of the late 1980s and early 1990s, and more. Each phase is told with lively anecdotes.

The interviews generated diverse points of information.



This article is illustrated with the voice and images on four main themes: the personal is political; the political context at the time of organising; strategy and organising; and the art and act of poster-making. These interviews have been deposited with the Alexander Turnbull Library and I encourage the reader to listen to the full interviews there.

DRAWING ON THE ORAL HISTORY RECORDINGS

1. The personal is political
It is fascinating to learn something of what makes a person passionate and committed to social justice work. Participants recalled their family and early influences while growing up, their observations and learning firsthand of social inequalities and injustices which later drove their political work.

Here, Kitch Cuthbert recalls her family journey to New Zealand and the influence of her father, Eddie Kitching:

The Korean War came along and my mother just said to him: "No Eddie you are not going" and the cold war was right at its height and in their fear for what would happen to their three daughters they looked at a place as far away from North America as possible and New Zealand was the place...

Tokoroa had opened up Kinleith with a new paper mill and several of his friends had come before him and basically said: "Look this is a fabulous country" and so they put up the stakes and over we came. That was 1958. My father settled quickly into Tokoroa - my mother never settled - and he quickly was

From the top: Jan Logie, Karen Davis, Kitch Cuthbert and Shona Manchester.

involved in the union movement and for many years was the Chairman of the Pulp and Paper Workers Union in Tokoroa in the 60s, which was of course the time of great dissent. And so, if you like, I learnt a lot of my socialist principles at his knee, and in the family, and can remember the very long strikes and the ostracising I faced because I was his daughter.

All participants made some reference to family or personal influence on their political and philosophical point of view. Jan Logie discussed growing up understanding the notion of being on the wrong side of the tracks in Invercargill and discussed the gender and sexuality issues she confronted as a young woman. Claire-Louise McCurdy shared something of her family dynamic which she believes gave her the tools for confronting privilege and indifference, along with the pivotal role she saw education play in creating social change. Karen Davis described her political awakening through studies at Canterbury University and her exposure to international issues as part of her growing awareness of social justice. She reflected on her lived experience of being unemployed in Thatcher's England where she learnt firsthand the disregard for the welfare of people and the iniquitous nature of capitalism. What is well illustrated in the oral history recordings is the different ways in which people tell their stories, often adding their own analysis as a way of making sense of their world in the process of recollection.

2. Reflecting the political context

The oral histories served to add detailed reflections on the organisations in which narrators were active. Reviewing the posters often sparked colourful recall and detail on organizing, as well as commentary on the political context that drove people to action. Interviews with Karen Davis and Shona Manchester resulted in powerful and detailed narratives on the Unemployed Workers Rights organisations of Auckland and Wellington, covering both the solidarity and the conflicts. They explained how the Unemployed Workers Rights organisations grew as a response to the economically radical neo-liberal policies of the fourth Labour Government, policies which were

entrenched in the 1990s by the National-led governments of Jim Bolger and then Jenny Shipley. Not dissimilar to the current situation, the policies of those governments saw unemployment escalate, wages driven down and employment conditions threatened. Government policies were viewed as serving to massively increase the gap between rich and poor, broadening already existing inequalities between Maori, Pacific peoples and Pakeha, between men and women, young and old.¹⁰

As a response, many organisations committed not only to education, lobbying and providing much needed services, but also to raucous and creative activism and street protest. Shona spoke of starting DPB Action, a lobby group for protecting Domestic Purposes Benefits. Shona had come from a Women's Refuge and Rape Crisis background. Here she explains the connection and her initial motivation for setting up DPB Action:

One of the key reasons that women gave for going back [into a violent home] was "oh no I couldn't go on the DPB", and having raised my child on and off the DPB I thought "woah you'd rather go back to a violent partner than go on the DPB" and that is where DPB Action came from, specifically from the Refuge experience of women preferring a violent home than the stigma of the DPB... and I thought, "that's what I will do, I'll go and be a DPB worker, that will be a cruise after Refuge..." and that was about seven months before benefit cuts got announced. So I had seven months of organising DPB Action days and doing media stuff and doing advocacy and then along came the National Government and along came Jenny Shipley and Ruth Richardson and "hello" it was benefit cuts all round and terrified, really terrified families.

Her recall of DPB Action was sparked by seeing the old posters used for advertising education days, and of the banner used at protest actions. She told how the education workshops focused not only on advocacy and information on rights, but also included seminars to learn life skills including fixing your own cars, cooking on a budget, networks for shared childcare, and managing stress. There was a strong ethos for building a counterculture, for creating solutions, at the

UNEMPLOYED?

FIGHT BACK!



FOR ADVICE & ACTION
AUCKLAND
UNEMPLOYED WORKERS
RIGHTS CENTRE ph 399 482
Pitt St. Methodist Church Hall

CHOGM

WEEK OF ACTION NOVEMBER 1995



• **EXPOSE** the National Government for what they've done to the people of this country over the last five years.

• **CALL** on all Commonwealth countries to urgently address issues of poverty & human rights.

• **DEMAND** the full decolonisation of Aotearoa.

DEMONSTRATIONS - JOIN US

meet at Public Library, Lorne Street, Auckland City

Wed 8 Nov 1pm Fri 10 Nov 8.15 am & 12.30 pm

Thurs 9 Nov 6.30 pm Mon 13 Nov 8.15am & 11am

CHOGM Action Coalition
PO Box 3813, Auckland

poster sponsored by Student Christian Movement Otago.

POVERTY SUCKS

BILLS, BILLS, BILLS AND MORE BILLS!...

I JUST WANT A CHANCE TO PROVE THAT MONEY WON'T MAKE ME HAPPY!

LET'S STICK TOGETHER! LET'S JOIN THE UNION!...

USE YOUR UNION

COMBINED BENEFICIARIES UNION ..764-760

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS UNION ..761-043

UNITY IS STRENGTH

COROMANDEL SHUDDERS : AND BREAKING SILENCE; WEEPS.

STOP OPENCAST MINING

FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK

UNEMPLOYED MARCH

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS MOVEMENT.

BLAME THE SYSTEM NOT THE VICTIM

THURSDAY 21ST JULY AT 1-00 PM

ASSEMBLE AT CPO RAIN OR SHINE DOWNTOWN

"OH! THAT EXPLAINS THE DIFFERENCE IN OUR WAGES"

PRODUCED BY THE CLERICAL WORKERS UNION

Stop, Drop and Organise.

CLIMATE CAMP GATHERING

Building a peoples movement addressing the root causes of climate chaos

APRIL 24 - 26 2009

Parihaka, Taranaki - Register @ www.climatecamp.org.nz

JOBS FOR ALL **A LIVING INCOME FOR ALL**

MARCH AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT MARCH

TUES OCT 18 12.15 PM
MEET OUTSIDE
CARTER HOLT HARVEY
GT STH ROAD (NEAR PUHINUI RD)

PLACED JOBS DEMANDS TO HANGERS IN THE MARCH BY Auckland Unemployed Workers' Support Centre, 7-2 New North Road, Auckland. Auckland Unemployed Workers' Support Centre, PO Box 10000, Auckland.

MOBILISE TO STOP THE TOUR

ASSEMBLE 7:15 PM C.P.O. MAY 1

P.O. BOX 100, AUCKLAND

UNEMPLOYED

FIGHT BACK

RALLY and PROTEST against UNEMPLOYMENT

SHOW YOUR CONCERN - BE THERE!

DEMONSTRATE AGAINST NATIONAL AT MULDOON'S AUCKLAND ELECTION MEETING. JULY 12, 6:45PM, ST JAMES THEATRE, QUEEN ST. (Bring a tin mug or empty beer can to make a noise with)

ORGANISED BY THE UPPER NORTH ISLAND STRUCTURE OF UNEMPLOYED GROUPS ... Ph. 761-04-3 AUCKLAND.

GRAND MARCH AGAINST APARTHEID

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 11TH ASSEMBLE C.P.O. 7PM.
ALL JOIN US MARCH TO AOTEA SQUARE

THEATRE MUSIC & PERFORMANCES
ORGANISED BY AAA ARTISTS AGAINST APARTHEID

March for Freedom

PROTEST SAT 27 OCT 12 NOON
AOTEA SQUARE AUCKLAND CENTRAL

CRD CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS

UNEMPLOYED XMAS FESTIVAL
 11am THURS 1st DEC. ALBERT PARK

WITH!! FREUDIAN SLIPS. NARCS. THEATRE CORPORATE PEOPLE IN PARKZ. AND MANY OTHER BANDS & ACTS

(UNEMPLOYED WORKERS RIGHTS CENTRE)

Dare to Sing

NONVIOLENT ACTION TRAINING

OUR LOCAL POST OFFICE

...where will we stand without it?

Save Our POST OFFICE

NO MORE WAR TOYS

DISARMAMENT BEGINS IN THE PLAYROOM

WARNING: THESE WEAPONS SERIOUSLY THREATEN EXISTENCE

NUCLEAR STRIKE

SAT. 24th MARCH

MARCH from CPO to AOTEA Sq. 11am

RALLY at AOTEA Sq. 12 noon

PEACE TREK: leaves AOTEA Sq. 1pm
 visiting Auckland Military Installations.

Dare to Struggle

same time as protesting welfare attacks on families and workers.

A common understanding within the Unemployed Workers Rights organisation was that it was the *system* creating unemployment and driving unfair working conditions, so slogans such as 'blame the system not the victim' and 'jobs and a living wage for all' were commonly integrated into posters and on picket signs and banners in demonstrations.

3. Strategy and organising

In Karen Davis's recall of her experience of activism in organisations engaged in beneficiary and workers struggles in the late 1980s and 1990s she talked about the slow but purposeful building of networks, of inclusive but cautious organising. She recalls many of the events as well as the design and thinking behind the posters used to promote the services and actions. Here she explains something of the history of the organisation as well as the strategy that was needed for gaining media attention:

The early actions of the Unemployed Workers Rights Centre were targeted against the Social Welfare Department ... trying to get better service for people, trying to get some response, trying to get people's rights. That was the early stuff before I was involved. By the time I was involved in '87 the demos were more on a political side because of the effect of the government changes, the Labour Government, the change to neo-liberalism and the impact of the business lobby groups, and so we were really trying to target them on that political level, and raise that political debate and awareness ... Because we were a really tiny group, we don't have access to all the media and stuff, it was the Greenpeace strategy of doing radical dramatic action often taking it through to an arrest level so that you get the media interest. If we didn't get arrested we couldn't get coverage.

The small group to which Karen refers grew to form collaborations for organising mass marches such as witnessed during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and the Asian Development Bank meeting in Auckland in the mid 1990s. Karen noted that, unlike the work of Halt all Racist Tours (HART) or the Nuclear Free movement, this

grouping of organisations could never really claim an outright victory. But she believes their activism was critical, and may be critical once again, for challenging the government or at least holding the line.

There is no doubt that strategic activism was critical in the success of the anti-apartheid organising of the 1970s, the leg work of which culminated in the success of strong public opposition to the 1981 Springbok rugby tour. Kitch was a key activist with HART and recalled and commented on many of the posters in the collection which reflected the anti-racism and anti-tour position. This lengthy quote recalls the story behind poster number 266 relating to the boycott and disinvestment campaign as it shifted from polite letter writing to direct action and victory.

The Chairman got up to open the meeting at 2 o'clock and he said out of the corner of his mouth – Dick and I were sitting at the front row so we could hear it – "Look at Batman and Robin" and we put our black masks on in the front row and he got up to say "I declare the meeting open" and Dick screamed out "Why are we here?" and I went "Blacks are suffering". "Why are they suffering"? "Because of Apartheid". "What keeps it going"? "Foreign investment". "What should they do"? "Withdraw withdraw withdraw!". And then a hundred people jumped up in the audience – all our people who had been screaming this out, and the South British Company, this Chairman just stood there absolute mouth flopped open. Well that was the beginning of our direct action and it only took two more meetings. The next one, three days later was NZI and NZI was a New Zealand premier company and this was totally blue rinse set, and this time we took in white mice and we took white mice in little yogurt containers up our sleeve, and we had vials, little vials of some kind of compound that when we smashed it under our feet it was the most putrid smell, and so we smashed this on the ground, set off the fire alarms, let the white mice go, jumped on the chairs and started screaming "Mice! mice!" and pandemonium broke out! And there were old ladies vomiting on the floor and the fire brigade running in for the fire alarm, and the cops running out of the back room to grab us, and the mice running everywhere – it was mayhem! Well, six months later Sir Alan Hellaby came and sat

at this very table and said "You forced us out but we want to exit with dignity, and please would you not rub it in our faces", and we said "We would be delighted not to rub it in your face". And so 6 months later they announced they were out, and that poster, at number two hundred and sixty six, is looking at that insurance campaign.

4. The art and act of postering

Changing technologies and access to resources played a key role in the design and manufacturing of posters. Many of the posters in the collection come from a time before computers. There are stories of the use of Gestetner hand-cranked duplicating machines churning out information sheets; the use of stencils, typewriters, cut and paste; how to integrate photographs; and the wonders of the photocopy machine. Apparently finding an artist willing to add graphics was a real bonus, and doing a colour print run a treat. Details are shared of women's printing cooperatives, the work of the Wellington Media Collective and the development at the Auckland People's Centre of an in-house printer. In some of the posters in the collection one can see the literal cut and paste layout: apparently the use of Sellotape with Twink on the edges was the trick for hiding the cut out lines when photocopying.

Posters in the collection range in scope and style. Some make their point through image

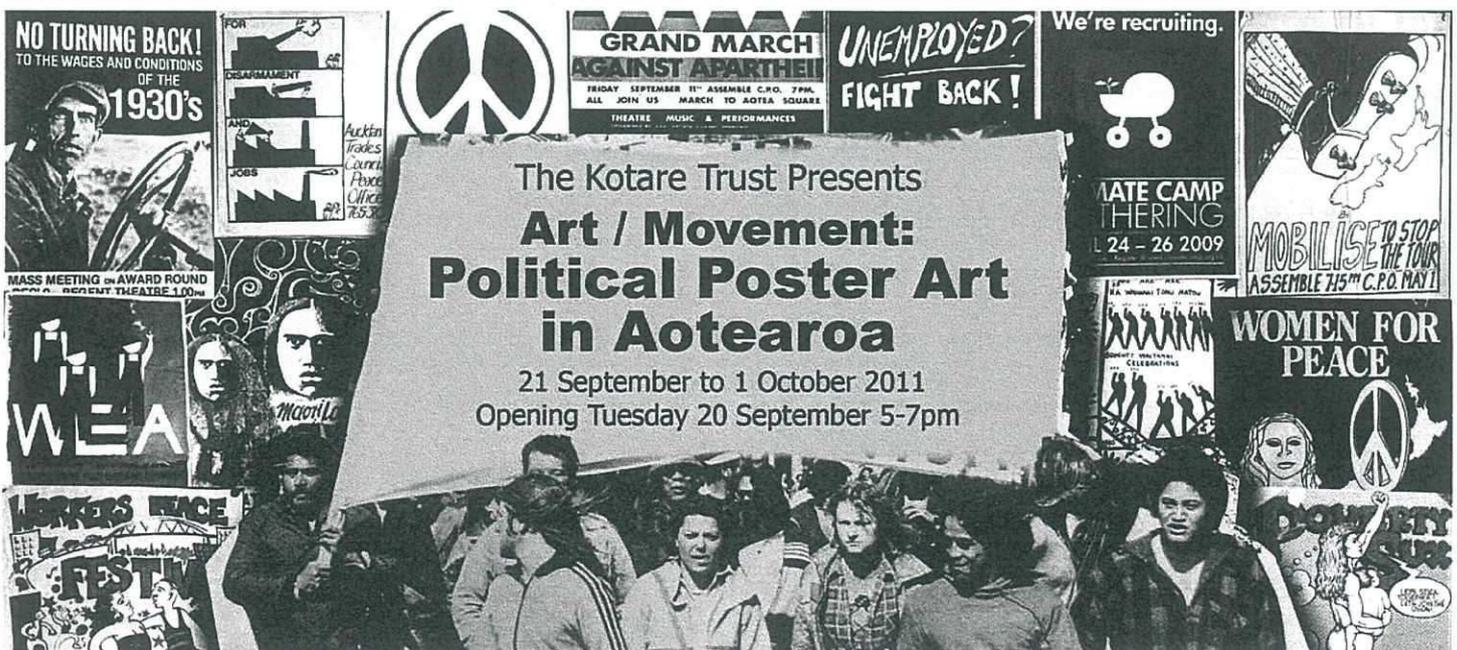
and words, others focus on calls to actions for pickets, marches, or events with meeting dates, times and places, and still others are informational and educational, containing a lot of detail.

In this excerpt Karen talks about how she understood the effectiveness of different types of posters:

We certainly let people know what was happening. Like we didn't have a voice in the media, or a radio station, or anything else so the only way we could let people know what was going on was to put a poster up and then word of mouth. Some people would come because they saw the poster but it would mainly work for the actions like the March of Change and the March of Anger. Those posters went up all over the place and so that was more likely to be more useful. And then I guess the other ones were just ones for letting people know that we existed because people would ring us up for help with their benefits and so on, so the posters were useful for that, letting them know that we actually did exist as a service.

There is the art of poster making and then there is the art of poster pasting. Kitch Cuthbert shared her recall of postering activities and her secret paste recipe:

Postering activities were always fun, and always in the dead of night and always a good team of people. I used to be the glue maker. Special recipe.



The idea was that they stay up as long as possible and the secret was wholemeal flour. So, big pots of glue. I had a special big glue pot and I used to cook it up and we used to use a wallpaper brush. I guess a wee bit like taggers. It was like leaving your mark as creatively and most prominently and visually as you could put them. And there were a few bets laid like, you know, can you put one up on the Ponsonby Police Station without getting caught?!

Karen also recalled pasting posters and the result when, in the late 1980s, Auckland City Council made it illegal to paste posters unless in designated and paid places. Karen says 'the whole poster tradition got quite difficult' and activist groups were left either illegally pasting or relying on shops and community notice boards.

Participants expressed how celebration and creativity were essential for activists to sustain the tireless and often edgy work of challenging the establishment – these posters certainly reflect the creative energy that can sit alongside the deeply political work. The intent of creative activism is well summarized in a painted banner housed at Kotare: 'Dare to Struggle Dare to Sing'. The artists and the poster makers are to be celebrated for their contribution, and there are more interviews to do in this regard.

To bring the participant voice to a close, here is Kitch Cuthbert reflecting:

And seeing these images that you have here brings it back with huge rushes, and a lot of pride and a lot of anxiety and a lot of fear that were attached to a lot of those actions. I mean, it wasn't a cake walk. And I think part of being in those leadership roles also meant incredible challenges to your own personal comfort zones, and the test of your absolute inner fortitude to the point where you just absolutely wonder, you know, how on earth people continue doing this and living this day in and day out. And I guess that was also the reflection at times of great challenges. You know, I thought well I'll have the luxury once I get out of this cell of going home to my nice warm bed. You know, the people in South Africa won't, and so I guess it was just putting it into a framework.

CONCLUSION

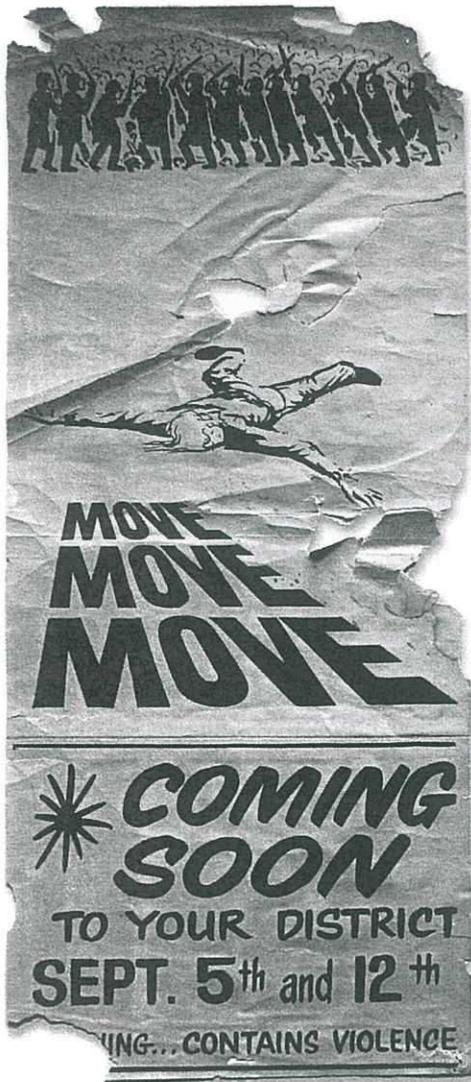
The popular saying, 'a picture is worth a thousand words' is a wonderful basis from which to discuss the impact of the political poster and the power of ephemera as a tool for remembering. Recording the stories of the 'people behind the poster' certainly gave me a fresh appreciation of the saying. The project celebrated the power of the graphic, while the oral histories provided a richness, a contextualizing, an interpretation and a remembering of the adventure and story that sits within this unique poster collection.

In the collection of essays *Oral History and Photography*, edited by Freund and Thomson, various writers explore the use of photos and oral history and the ways in which the dynamic of the sensory experience (sight and sound) can 'help to construct the past as well as reveal, recover, or retell it'.¹¹ Combining oral history recording with reflection on photos or ephemera is not without its complexity, both in terms of the dynamic of remembering but also within the logistics of both viewing material and recording quality oral history. Nevertheless, the key elements of this project came to life through the reminiscence and memories stirred by the poster images. The posters themselves mostly 'help to construct the past' through the detail they offer of time, date, purpose and place, while the recording of story through the narrators' lived experiences 'recovers' something that the weight of the paper could never yield.

David Reichard's article, 'Animating Ephemera through Oral History: Interpreting Visual Traces of California Gay College Student Organising from the 1970s', explores the benefits of using oral history to interpret ephemeral material from archives. He, too, was drawn to seek the stories that sat behind the dog-eared flyers and posters rediscovered within the GLBT Historical Society collection. Reichard comments how adding oral history to the study of historical ephemera helps to triangulate and enrich our understanding:

Being able to interrogate ephemeral evidence through oral histories enhances the historical value of that evidence, connecting memory with an ephemeral artifact in a way that expands an understanding of the importance of both[.]¹²

There was an overwhelmingly positive response to Kotare's public exhibition, 'Art/Movement: Political Poster Art in Aotearoa' at Auckland's Art Station in September 2011. An open catalogue allowed viewers to note their memories and to offer details of artists, collectives and inspirers of posters. The exhibition further inspired a couple of young filmmakers to put together a short film exploring the theme of sustainability, creativity, and political poster art.¹³



The next step for the project is to weave

the resources together – the boldness and beauty of the poster images, the detail and description, the memories and moments of action inspired by a call for justice and a wish for social change. Watch this space!

Thank you to all who offered ongoing support to this project over the years; to those interviewed for their time and wisdom shared; for people's input to the technical support and suggestions and to the Kotare Trustees and the wider activist community of Aotearoa whose energy and passions created this collection in the first place.

This paper draws from previous public talks and conference presentations including the paper presented at the NOHANZ 2011 conference and the IOHA 2012 conference in Argentina.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Tschabrun, S. (2003) 'Off the Wall and into a Drawer: Managing a research collection of political posters' in *The American Archivist*, Vol 66, No 2, pp 303-324
- ² For more details see www.kotare.org.nz
- ³ The initial five pilot interviews are deposited in the Alexander Turnbull Library
- ⁴ See Tschabrun for a full discussion on cataloging and digitising political posters
- ⁵ Jan Logie *The People Behind the Poster Project Oral History Recording* (2007)
- ⁶ Karen David *The People Behind the Poster Project Oral History Recording* (2009)
- ⁷ Claire-Louise McCurdy *The People Behind the Poster Project Oral History Recording* (2008)
- ⁸ Kitch Cuthbert *The People Behind the Poster Project Oral History Recording* (2009)
- ⁹ Shona Manchester *The People Behind the Poster Project Oral History Recording* (2009)
- ¹⁰ For further analysis and reference to the political context of this time see the following: Jesson, B. (1999). *Only Their Purpose Is Mad: The money men take over New Zealand*. Palmerston North, [New Zealand:] Dunmore Press. Kelsey, J. (1995). *The New Zealand Experiment: A world model for structural adjustment*. Auckland, [New Zealand:] Auckland University Press. Kelsey, J. (1999). *Reclaiming the future: New Zealand and the global economy*. Wellington, [New Zealand:] Bridget Williams Books.
- ¹¹ Freund, A. & Thomson, A. (2011) *Oral History and Photography*. New York, [USA]: Palgrave MacMillan, foreword, p. xiv
- ¹² Reichard, D.A. (2012) 'Animating Ephemera through Oral History: Interpreting Visual Traces of California Gay College Student Organising from the 1970s' in *The Oral History Review* Vol 39. No 1, p. 53
- ¹³ The award winning documentary *If I cannot dance* can be found at <http://theoutlookforsomeday.net/films/2011/112/>

Ko Whikitoria te Huihui Ingarani i taua mahana atawai ki nga Rangatira me nga Hapu e
THE TREATY

IS A
Na ko te Huihui e hichia ana kia...
Maori ki te Pakihi e noho tere kore ana...
Na hua pai te Huihui kia tukua a hua a Wiremu Kapehona he Kapilana i te Roiara Nawe hui i
ana me nga wahi katoa o Nu Tirani e tukua aianei. amua atu ki te Huihui e mia atu ana i ki nga Rang
o te wakarungo, nga hapu, Nu Tirani me na Rangatira atu... Ka...
FR

RAUD
Kang... me nga Rangatira katoa hui ki hui...
tuku... Huihui... katoa o ratou...
Huihui Ingarani... Rangatira ki nga hapu... katoa...
Ya... tino rangatira... me... taonga katoa. Otia konyu...
kua... Rangatira katoa atu ka tuku... te Huihui te hokonyu o ena wahi weuna e
na hui kai hoko mona.
Ko te Tuatoru
Ei wakarungo mai hoki teni... te wakarungo ki...
Huihui o Ingarani nga tangata maori katoa o Nu Tirani ka tukua...
me ki nga tangata...
Na ko mata... te wakarungo o ng...
ION... LA... FROM... INJUSTICE...
CH...
DROP THE CHARGES...
MUCH MORE WE CAN...
CHI...
MUCH MORE WE CAN...
CHI...
MUCH MORE WE CAN...
CHI...



Auckland Unemployed Workers Rights Centre

Invites You To A

MARCH FOR CHANGE

Thursday 30th May 1991

12.30 Lunchtime

QEH Square, Downtown



- ✦ Real Jobs for Real Wages
- ✦ Restore Benefit levels
- ✦ Throw out the Employment Contracts Bill
 - ✦ No Work for the Dole schemes
- ✦ NATIONAL GOVERNMENT RESIGN IMMEDIATELY

WEA

EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

AUCKLAND WEA
21 Princes Street
Auckland 1
PH 372-030

EAST AUCKLAND WEA
P.O. Box 3847B
Palmeranga
PH 566-710

Tales of Tairua: reflections on an oral history project 2004-2011

DAVID RUSHFORTH

GETTING STARTED

The initiative for this project came in mid-2004 when the committee which runs the Tairua Information Centre recognised a need to record the memories of the older generation of local residents, 'before it was too late'.

As a result, the Tairua Oral History Group [TOHG] was set up under the umbrella of the Information Centre as an informal but enthusiastic group of novices in recording oral history, with its own bank account. At full strength the group numbered eight volunteers including a professional archivist and a published historian, and it met on a regular monthly basis.

It was very encouraging for us that local press coverage led to many expressions of public support. These included offers to lend equipment, to share old photographs, press clippings and books, and to the generous gift by a local benefactor of a professional tape recorder. (We were at the cusp of digital technology being introduced, but fractionally too early, so after consultation with NOHANZ, we decided upon a Sony TCM 5000 EV cassette recorder.)

The group conducted some preliminary interviews but felt handicapped by its lack of experience and expertise in the techniques required. Accordingly, in 2005, we made an application for funding to assist with training and the purchase of a transcribing machine to the Australian Sesquicentennial Gift Trust for Awards in Oral History, administered by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. We were given the full amount we requested, which gave a further welcome boost to the group's enthusiasm.

The local council (Thames Coromandel District) also came to the party with some funding to help with ongoing needs such as

tape cassettes and other supplies. When the possibility of a publication began to emerge, it was made concrete when an application for some funding from Creative New Zealand's Creative Communities scheme was granted.

OUR TOWN

Tairua is a small settlement on the east coast of the Coromandel peninsula, today less than two hours drive from Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga. For many years Tairua has been a popular destination for holidays – and increasingly it also attracts visitors from overseas who enjoy its spectacular coastal and mountain scenery and the many opportunities for fishing, diving, surfing, cycling and walking. At the 2006 census the town had a permanent population of 1,296 (many of them retired) but that number typically mushrooms to over 10,000 during the Christmas-New Year holiday period.

The town has a long and colourful history. Tairua, which means 'two tides', has a sheltered harbour which was one of the first places in New Zealand to be settled by Polynesians.¹ They found it an ideal spot for hunting moa as well as enjoying the rich seafood along the rugged coast and in the sheltered bays. In November 1769 Captain Cook gave names to many of the off-shore islands as he sailed past to observe the transit of Mercury just 25 kilometres up the coast; and in the early nineteenth century the area was fiercely disputed by a number of Maori tribes.

David Rushforth worked as an urban planner before retiring to Tairua at the turn of the new millennium. His interest in writing and history encouraged him to create the Tairua Oral History Group in 2004.

Then, in the 1830s, European exploitation of the nearby kauri forests began. The first sawmill was built in Tairua in 1864. After that time, large quantities of both timber and gum were shipped from the port which, by the mid-1870s, boasted a licensed hotel, a school, a church and a cemetery. The European population was then 167, nearly half of them working at the timber mill. Shortly afterwards gold was discovered in the hills behind the town, and the Tairua goldfield was proclaimed in April 1875. By the turn of the century, substantial quantities were being mined in nearby valleys.

Telephone wires reached Tairua in 1885, greatly reducing the area's isolation and a dairy factory operated there between 1922 and 1949,² but it was not until 1961 that electricity arrived, and only in 1967, when a new road was constructed over the mountains, that access to the outside world was significantly improved.

OUR PROJECT

The two main aims in creating the TOHG were to establish a permanent archive of recordings which reflect some of the social history of Tairua and its district; and to publish a selection of extracts from the interviews which would give insights into local life in the second half of the twentieth century. We were particularly interested in why people chose to live in this rather remote part of the country, and in what ways life has changed here from the days when a pioneering spirit prevailed.

A list of over 40 names of potential interviewees was compiled and regularly reviewed. Priorities were established based on age, state of health, and ability to comment on diverse aspects of life in the community. These criteria are reflected in the sobering statistic that twelve of the 29 people interviewed had died by December 2011 when the book of extracts from the interviews was published. The selection cannot, however, pretend to be representative of all current residents of Tairua. Younger families, for example, are not included; neither is everybody who has a long association with the town. Only one person was under 60 years old when interviewed and only one Maori person was included.

A first phase of the project was completed in mid 2006. At that time thirteen interviews had been recorded, of which nine were with men and four with women. By the time of the publication the ratio was fractionally more balanced with a total of 20 men and eleven women, including four couples.

In June 2006 master copies of most of the recordings available at that time were entrusted to the Alexander Turnbull Library for safekeeping, and since June 2008 copies of all the publicly-available recordings and their abstracts have been given to the Tairua Library for permanent storage and public access. A member of the Group has also very kindly converted all the tapes onto CDs to help keep abreast of the evolving technology. As well, much of the material assembled by the project, including many of the old photographs which it unearthed, are being loaded into the on-line community repository (kete) being managed by the local library.

With only two exceptions, all the interviews were conducted in the home of the interviewee in Tairua. Preliminary interviews were always arranged to explain the project and its procedures, to obtain background information without doing any recording, and to help fill in agreement forms. These first contacts were invaluable, as those doing the interviews were often relative newcomers to the community and not well known, making it important to establish a good rapport. Usually two members of the Group were present at the interview proper – one conducting the interview using a structure developed from the first encounter, and a second person to take care of the technical aspects. Interview sessions were always a maximum of two hours in length and return visits were organised as necessary. A digital photograph was taken of every interviewee at the time of the interview and a copy offered to them afterwards.

All the recordings have been copied and abstracted, and in most cases transcribed. Those materials were invaluable when the decision was made to compile extracts from the interviews into a publication. By selecting extracts from the interviews it was possible to include material from every interview to some extent, and to reduce the inevitable repetition and inconsistencies which the recollections

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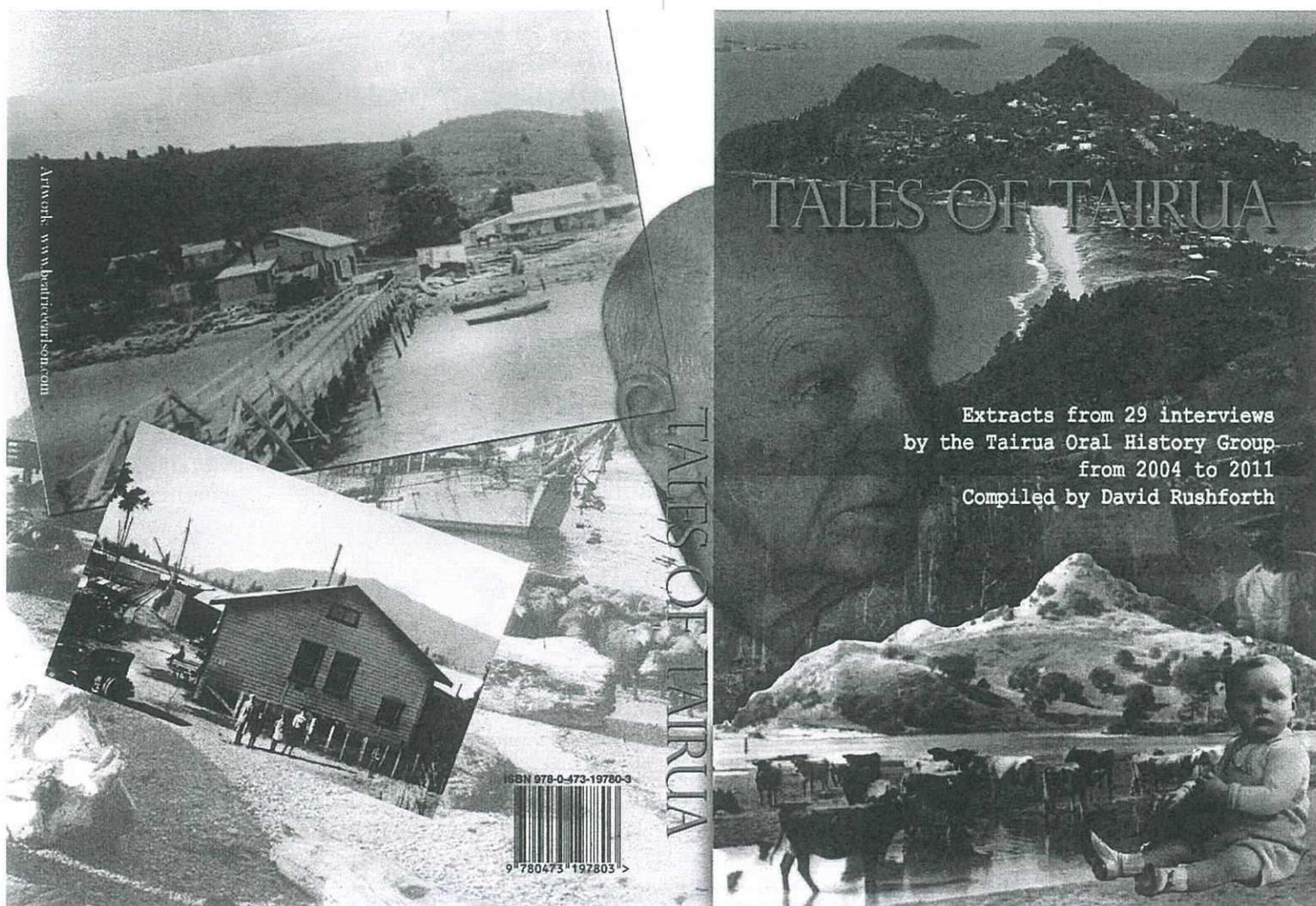
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contained as a whole. Extracting, however, required that every interviewee had to be given the opportunity to review the text proposed to be included in the book – and in particular, those who had placed restrictions on making their recordings publicly available had to be fully in agreement with the material extracted. That sometimes required several iterations before a satisfactory agreement was reached, but that was in itself a valuable exercise.

The publication which resulted, *Tales of Tairua*, has 175 pages comprising a brief introduction to the project and the town; the 29 extracts in chronological order of the date of interview; a gallery of the photographs of each of the interviewees; an appendix with a one paragraph bibliography of each person giving an opportunity to note dates of birth – and sometimes death; a second appendix which reduces the history of Tairua into a twelve-page timeline of key events and dates, and an index.

The index is more correctly an indication of who talks about what. It provides an interesting insight into the events which most impacted on the community and reveals, for example, that by far the most-discussed local event in the last half century was the opening of the new east-west road built across the mountains just south of the town. It significantly reduced the time and increased the comfort of travelling to and from both Auckland and Hamilton. As a result there was a mushrooming of new subdivisions and holiday houses along much of the east coast of the peninsula, but in particular at Pauanui and Tairua which were the two places best served by the new route. Even the arrival of electricity seems to have created less of a stir!

The publication, launched in December 2011 just in time to make an ideal Christmas present, was an immediate success, thanks again to some good local press coverage. A free copy of the book was given to everyone



interviewed, or their family; and the book was then on sale at the local information centre for \$25. An initial print run of 200 was quickly exhausted and in January another 100 copies were printed. By May they too had been mostly sold and another 100 were ordered for the opening of a Tairua History Trail on Queen's Birthday weekend. The latter project was an immediate and logical extension to the oral history work and also led to a Tairua Heritage Month, including an exhibition and many related events being organised in June by the local librarian. Both of those follow-ups were very well patronised by the local community and visitors and did much to keep alive interest in the town's past.

The group now calls itself the Tairua History Group and it is continuing to work on aspects of local heritage, although none of the original members are now involved.

CONCLUSIONS

This project has been notable for the amount of community support and interest it has generated and the way in which it has spawned other related activities over a relatively short span of time (eight years). It has revealed a remarkable local appetite for things historical and provided a mechanism to focus that interest.

In addition to the interviews, which proved to be very timely and a privileged opportunity to share memories with many people in the community, the original project unearthed numerous local collections of old photographs which have now been scanned and archived locally.

The group was fortunate in that a very healthy co-operative partnership was established with the local librarian who has been very supportive and entrepreneurial. Ditto with the local information centre which, in addition to selling the publication resulting from the interviews, is also now the starting point of the history trail and stockist of the free trail guides which include a map, old photographs and a brief history of the town, as well as notes on the 20 sites on the trail.

But these achievements come at a cost. Such projects are time-consuming, especially when the number of volunteers is small and inexperienced, and they require careful co-ordination. Making applications for grants is essential but detracts from direct involvement in the core activity, and although the group was rather successful in that area, there were still some cash-flow problem for funding the publication given that the printer had to be paid before any of the books could be sold!

It has been a great learning curve but also a wonderful experience and a pleasure to share with the community. And although the oral history project has already been a valuable catalyst for other projects, much remains to be done. Having a successful track record is a big positive in attracting new volunteers and in securing further funding for new projects – so perhaps our town can now be more ambitious and confidently work towards having its own museum next?...

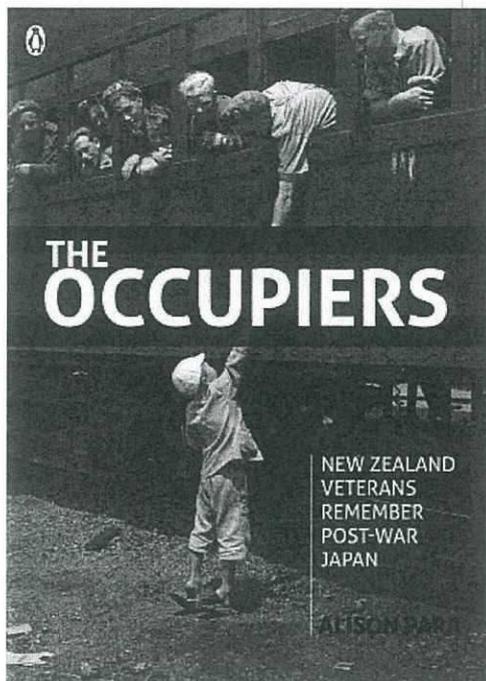
REFERENCES:

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Father Francis Bennett, Tairua, Arrow Printing,
1986

Book Review

The Occupiers: New Zealand Veterans Remember Post-War Japan by Alison Parr
Penguin, paperback, \$44.99

Reviewed by Ann Packer,
Eastbourne



This handsome publication continues the Ministry for Culture and Heritage's comprehensive oral history series covering the Second World War.

Alison Parr, the Ministry's senior oral historian and author of four earlier titles based on oral histories – including *Home: Civilian New Zealanders Remember the Second World War* – coordinated the project, recorded with the help of Susan Fowke, Helen

Frizzell, Jacqui Foley and Erin Flanagan. Parr's text is based on intensive oral histories with 17 servicemen and women, chosen from an initial 100 who responded to questionnaires.

For oral historians with publication in mind, it's always interesting to see how the book designer places the recorded word. This 205-page paperback is large enough in format to allow for indenting to offset speech – without using quote marks or other stylistic devices that impede readability – and flexible enough in its binding to easily dip into sections such as Culture Shock, A Job to Do and On The Loose. The comprehensive index makes it easy to look up a particular topic or interviewee.

Six months after the war ended in Japan, on 15 August 1945 – following the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August – troops of the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force (2NZEF) were sent direct from Italy to be part of an occupying force known as J Force. While their married comrades headed home, 4000 reluctant single personnel, including 36 WAACs (auxiliary army corps) and 30 NZANS (nurses), sailed from Naples.

Meanwhile, back home in New Zealand, 9000 enthusiastic volunteers, including ex-servicemen, responded to army recruiting office posters. For their reformed No 14 Squadron, which had

seen service in the Pacific, the RNZAF had three times as many applicants as they needed for 24 flying and 250 servicing positions on offer.

All this made for a mixed force of conscripts and volunteers whose reactions to what awaited them in the defeated country would be markedly different. Battle-weary soldiers like Ray Schofield and Basil Jamieson were among those who would rather have been going home.

Ray says: "None of us wanted to go. As far as we were concerned the war was over. We wanted to get home. Just get on with living. No, we weren't impressed by going to Japan at all."

Says Basil: "The war was over and we wanted to get back to our jobs. But here we were going, for a time that we didn't know, to do another job, another country. I think that's where the frustration came in."

On the other hand, younger volunteers from New Zealand such as butcher Ian McKelvie, post office linesman Rex Marshall and army librarian Beryl Judd – all of whose efforts to see active service had been thwarted by the end of the war – were pleased to be off.

The occupying forces' response to the devastation of Hiroshima – for which nothing in war-damaged Europe had prepared even the most seasoned warriors – was captured for posterity by poet Hone Tuwhare, a volunteer with the first relief draft from New Zealand, in his unforgettable 'No Ordinary Sun', (p14).

For almost all the J Force personnel, particularly those who had never travelled outside the shores of Aotearoa, the culture shock was huge. Public bathing, communal longdrops – Beryl Judd recalls a “four-holer” – and the use of primitive sewage disposal by way of “honey carts” took some getting used to.

Reactions on arrival depended to some extent on where you were posted – not all regions had suffered destruction from bombing, although all struggled to maintain even a basic standard of living. Malnutrition was rife. Yet the civilian population was surprisingly compliant.

The troops had work to do, restoring infrastructure, repatriating Koreans – some of whom had been working as forced labourers, others arriving as boat people in the contemporary sense – and overseeing the return of Japanese troops, some of whom had never been defeated.

Nurses such as Marie Lochore and Norma Hollis had to learn to use primus stoves to boil instruments before dressing wounds. Temperatures were extreme in some places – snow up to mid-calf in winter, heat in summer – and everywhere there were rats.

The New Zealanders were shocked at how subjugated the women were – they did all the physical work of unloading ships, transporting huge railway sleepers on their backs and carrying rocks to build roads. Ian

McKelvie, the butcher from Mataura, observed schoolgirls constructing their own school, brick by brick.

“I thought it was rather amazing because you wouldn’t see that kind of thing in New Zealand. Children wouldn’t be allowed to do that kind of thing here.”

The upside of women’s subservience was the provision of paid housegirls who looked after the soldiers’ laundry and housework. The inevitable intimacy led to closer relations for some – though the interviewees are somewhat circumspect about that. They’re more frank about the use of prostitutes: although legal, brothels were officially out of bounds to Kiwis, but that didn’t stop them visiting. The STD rate at the end of the first year in Japan exceeded even that in Italy, the previous 2NZEF high. Nurse Norma Hollis says none of the New Zealand Army nurses (all women) had anything to do with the VD ward, where queues of men lined up for penicillin injections. She describes a Christmas carol procession through the hospital thus:

“...and when we went through Ward 4, we all carried lanterns. And all their lights were off so we could not see who was in Ward 4...”

Bill Hopper, a photographer who had worked for the Sports Post and at National Publicity Studios while still at school and was 19 when shoulder tapped for a job as photographer with J Force, recalls a New Zealand officer who kept “his own little lady down the road”. Many of the

photographs used in the book were taken by Bill, including one of Emperor Hirohito visiting the New Zealand barracks in Chofu, where local people were staying after a fire in the town destroyed their homes.

The last Kiwi troops returned home in late 1948. The experience changed people’s lives, giving most servicemen and women an acceptance of the common humanity of their former enemy. But for some there were more profound consequences.

Robert Burgham, like many others, went back to his old job in civvy street but returned to Japan to serve in the Korean War. There he met his future wife, Sado Michiko, whom he brought back to New Zealand; they had three daughters and were married for 27 years until her death in 1981.

Sister Lochore, who died in 2009, served with the World Health Organisation for 24 years. She says: “I think it was remarkable that we could observe the Japanese culture in operation...I think we were privileged people to go there.”

Rod Miller, responsible for a small group of intelligence officers during the occupation, returned three times to Japan as a diplomat; he was New Zealand’s ambassador from 1976 to 1982.

“I used to say ‘I was here after the war.’ That’s all you have to say.”

The oral history recordings along with the initial 100 questionnaires have been lodged in the Alexander Turnbull Library.

Sons of the Soil: Chinese Market Gardeners in New Zealand by Lily Lee and Ruth Lam, Dominion Federation of New Zealand Chinese Commercial Growers Inc, 2012. 556pp., hardback

Megan Hutching, Auckland

This large volume is a history of the men who came to New Zealand from a cluster of counties in the Pearl River Delta region of Guangdong in southern China and made their living as market gardeners, and of their descendants. The history of the early years focuses on men because initially most Chinese immigrants to New Zealand were male, but it also considers the lives of the women who began to arrive in significant numbers at the beginning of the Second World War.

Part of the research for the book involved interviewing 100 Chinese growers and their families, and Lee and Lam also corresponded with and spoke to many

more people. The interviews revealed much more than just the interviewees' origins in China, their gardens and their involvement with Chinese growers' associations. As Lee and Lam write in their preface, 'we also heard accounts of determination and sacrifice, cultural aspirations and family sacrifice. And we came to appreciate how family and clan relationships permeated life on the market garden and how the connections reached all over the country.' [p.9]

The book opens with a prologue which covers the origins of Chinese New Zealanders and gives a brief history of the Chinese in this country. The remainder of the book is 21 chapters covering different areas of the country from Dunedin to Auckland, an epilogue reflecting on the journey taken by Chinese growers in New Zealand over the years, a useful timeline of events relating to Chinese market gardening in New Zealand, a

glossary, maps of the counties in China and a bibliography. It is profusely illustrated with black and white and colour photographs, mostly portraits, but also action shots such as people driving tractors, along with images of farms and gardens. There are also boxes which contain the stories of individuals and families along with interesting snippets about topics such as flying kites and Chinese sporting activities.

The book is a result of intensive research and is a wonderful resource. The authors present information about prominent people in each area and weave the biographies into an account of New Zealand and local history. It is probably not a book that the general reader would read from cover to cover – rather, dipping in and out proves to be a very fruitful way of approaching the material. The bibliography and timeline are also useful research tools for the future.



—from the cover of Sons of the Soil.

NOHANZ Origins

The National Oral History Association of New Zealand Te Kete Kōrero-a-Waha o Te Motu (NOHANZ) was established as result of the first national oral history seminar organised in April 1986 by the Centre for Continuing Education of the Victoria University of Wellington and the New Zealand Oral History Archive, a professional organisation then based in the National Library that worked on major oral history projects.

Objectives

- » To promote the practice and methods of oral history.
- » To promote standards in oral history interviewing techniques, and in recording and preservation methods.
- » To act as a resource of information and to advise on practical and technical problems involved in making oral history recordings.
- » To act as a coordinator of oral history activities throughout New Zealand.
- » To produce an annual oral history journal and regular newsletters.
- » To promote regular oral history meetings, talks, seminars, workshops and demonstrations.
- » To encourage the establishment of NOHANZ branches throughout New Zealand.
- » To compile a directory of oral history holdings to improve access to collections held in libraries archives and museums.

Code of ethical and technical practice

National Oral History Association
of New Zealand
Te Kete Kōrero-a-Waha o Te Motu
PO Box 3819
WELLINGTON

WWW.ORALHISTORY.ORG.NZ

NOHANZ

This Code exists to promote ethical, professional and technical standards in the collection, preservation and use of sound and video oral history material.

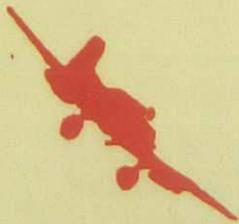
Archives, sponsors and organisers of oral history projects have the following responsibilities:

- » To inform interviewers and people interviewed of the importance of this code for the successful creation and use of oral history material;
- » To select interviewers on the basis of professional competence and interviewing skill, endeavouring to assign appropriate interviewers to people interviewed;
- » To see that records of the creation and processing of each interview are kept;
- » To ensure that each interview is properly indexed and catalogued;
- » To ensure that preservation conditions for recordings and accompanying material are of the highest possible standard;
- » To ensure that placement of and access to recordings and accompanying material comply with a signed or recorded agreement with the person interviewed;
- » To ensure that people interviewed are informed of issues such as copyright, ownership, privacy legislation, and how the interview and accompanying material may be used;
- » To make the existence of available interviews known through public information channels;
- » To guard against possible social injury to, or exploitation of people interviewed.

INTERVIEWERS HAVE THE FOLLOWING RESPONSIBILITIES:

- » to inform the person interviewed of the purposes and procedures of oral history in general and of the particular project in which they are involved;
- » to inform the person interviewed of issues such as copyright, ownership, privacy legislation, and how the material and accompanying material may be used;
- » to develop sufficient skills and knowledge in interviewing and equipment operation, e.g. through reading and training, to ensure a result of the highest possible standard;
- » to use equipment that will produce recordings of the highest possible standard;
- » to encourage informative dialogue based on thorough research;
- » to conduct interviews with integrity;
- » to conduct interviews with an awareness of cultural or individual sensibilities;
- » to treat every interview as a confidential conversation, the contents of which are available only as determined by written or recorded agreement with the person interviewed;
- » to place each recording and all accompanying material in an archive to be available for research, subject to any conditions placed on it by the person interviewed;
- » to inform the person interviewed of where the material will be held;
- » to respect all agreements made with the person interviewed.

"IT WILL BE A
GREAT DAY WHEN
SCHOOLS GET ALL THE
MONEY THEY NEED
AND THE AIR FORCE
HAS TO RUN A
CAKE STALL TO
BUY A NEW
BOMBER."



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