

NOHANZ

Newsletter

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President:

Rachael Selby

Executive Committee:

Michael Dudding

Linda Evans

Lesley Hall

Gillian Headifen

Shona McCahon

Taina McGregor

Anne Thorpe

www.oralhistory.org.nz

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

Send your news to Lesley Hall at:

lesley.hall@vuw.ac.nz

NOHANZ news



Rachael Selby
[Photo: Lynette Shum]

As you can see from the column at the left, NOHANZ has a new president – Rachael Selby – and new members on the executive committee. Gillian Headifen is the secretary and Anne Thorpe remains the treasurer.

At the annual general meeting held on 30 October, it was noted that the constitution allows for co-opting members, and it was agreed that this matter would be discussed at the first meeting of the new executive committee. The past year's distance committee members and the outgoing executive committee members – Paul Diamond, Susan Fowke, Alison Laurie and Lynette Shum – were thanked for their valuable contributions to NOHANZ.

President's report 2008-09

Executive committee: Wellington committee members during the year were: Lesley Hall (President), Alison Laurie, Susan Fowke (Secretary), Linda Evans, Taina McGregor, Lynette Shum and Paul Diamond. Regular attendees during the year from Otaki (north of Wellington) were Rachael Selby and Anne Thorpe (Treasurer). Distance members were Jacqui Foley (Oamaru), Helen Frizzell (Dunedin), and Loreen Brehaut (Picton).

The Executive Committee has continued to hold monthly meetings in order to deal with NOHANZ business. An all-day strategic planning session was held in

early February in Otaki. As all Executive committee members are also active oral historians, often with additional paid work or commitments, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation and thanks for their dedication to NOHANZ in the last year. Susan has stepped down as Secretary as she is soon to leave Wellington for Gisborne. On behalf of the committee I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Susan for her hard work and dedication to NOHANZ. We wish her well in her new home. Anne Thorpe continues to do a sterling job with the accounts. Paul Diamond and Pip Oldham have made tremendous strides with the NOHANZ webpage. Paul is also stepping down from the committee because of his writing commitments. It has been a pleasure to work with Paul on the committee and we wish him all the best for the future. Many thanks to Megan Hutching who continues to produce the newsletter and co-edit the journal from Auckland.



Lesley Hall, NOHANZ conference 2009
[Photo: Lynette Shum]

Newsletter:

Megan Hutching has continued to produce the newsletter from Auckland and I wish to extend appreciation for her commitment to this. The newsletters are compiled and distributed three times a year. Without continuing contributions the editor would have a difficult job so I would like to thank all those people who have provided material for the newsletter in the past year. These have often been committee members but we continue to encourage any and all members to send items in that demonstrate the vitality and diversity of oral history in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

NOHANZ Journal:

The journal, *Oral History in New Zealand (2008)*, consisting of articles, project reports and book reviews was co-edited by Megan Hutching and Alison Laurie. Rachael Selby and Paul Diamond are editing the 2009 journal and Megan and Alison will edit the 2010 edition. Executive committee members Rachael Selby and Alison Laurie's edited publication, *Maori and Oral History: A Collection* continues to sell.

NOHANZ Website:

The website has been maintained by Paul Diamond and Pip Oldham. In 2008/9 they have introduced additional material to the website.

Email Discussion List:

Alison Laurie, on NOHANZ's behalf, set up an email discussion list < nohanz@lists.vuw.ac.nz >. We continue to aim to increase the use of the list.

Regional meetings: One of the aims of NOHANZ is to provide a means of contact between oral historians. Gillian Headifen has convened several regional meetings in the Wellington area and these have been very successful. Thank you Gillian for all your hard work in getting local oral historians together. Christchurch has also set up a group who are keeping in regular contact. Other members have expressed an interest in making contact with other oral historians in their area. It is hoped that the conference will provide a forum for people to get together and discuss the formation of groups in their regions.

New agreement form:

A group has been formed to look at revising the current form. The subcommittee consists of Pip Oldham, Paul Diamond, Judith Fyfe and Linda Evans.

IOHA Conference:

The International Oral History Association Conference will be held in Prague in 2010. I will ask Megan Hutching (Oceania IOHA representative) to talk about this and other IOHA matters under any other business.

In conclusion I would like to thank each committee member for their efforts this year. I would like to give particular recognition to Wellington and Otaki members: Susan Fowke, Linda Evans, Taina McGregor, Lynette Shum, Paul Diamond, Alison Laurie Rachael Selby and Anne Thorpe. All have contributed to NOHANZ's functioning in many different ways and have played a significant role in NOHANZ discussions and tasks. For those who are stepping down this year – Paul, Lynette and Alison – many thanks for your input in 2009 and previously.

Lesley Hall

Conferences

NOHANZ Oral History Conference 2009

The theme for this year's conference was 'using oral history in communities'. Over the two days, attendees heard about many different uses of oral history—including books, video, film, museums, schools, musical composition and broadcasting. Audio, video, and still photos were used to support many presentations.

Some of the uses (for example, video recordings) enable the surroundings in oral history to be taken into account. These 'visual clues that allow us to reveal potentially hidden or obscured meanings that are denied by the sole use of oral recordings' were the focus of a presentation by Nēpia Mahuika. One of the video clips played by Nēpia (of two Māori interviewees explaining their kōrero with dramatic facial and body language) was a powerful example of the non-verbal communication which isn't captured in an oral interview.

Video also featured in a presentation by film director Gaylene Preston, who talked about the process of 'reconstructing' an interview with her father about his war story. The interview is part of Gaylene's latest feature film, *Home By Christmas*, due for release next year.

Gaylene's starting-point was an oral history interview she did with her father in 1990, and it was fascinating to see how this interview evolved, and to see a preview of part of the film. Also interesting was the relationship between this project and a separate interview Gaylene did with her Mother, Tui (featured in the 1995 film *War Stories our Mothers Never Told Us*).



Nepia Mahuika speaking at the NOHANZ conference
[Photo: Lynette Shum]

The relationship between filmmakers and oral history was also considered by Russell Campbell, in a session about using interviews done by others. For his 2005 documentary film *Sedition: The Suppression of Dissent in World War II New Zealand*, Russell drew on oral history interviews with conscientious objectors and pacifists archived in the Turnbull Library. While some of the points raised by Russell (for example, regarding interviews as performances; asking interviewees to do 're-takes'; avoiding excessive detail; and 'stirring-up' interviewees to elicit emotion) are contentious for oral historians, the

session was an interesting insight into what filmmakers are looking for when they approach oral histories as a resource.

The conference also heard from historian Kate Hunter about using interviews recorded by others for her recent book *Hunting, A New Zealand History*. Kate's comments about what was missing from the interviews (for example, interviews sometimes referred to hunting, but had little detail about the process of hunting and butchering meat) are interesting, highlighting a need to reflect on how we as oral historians decide what to cover in our interviews.

These are just a few examples of the incredibly rich and varied range of presentations at the conference. By illustrating some of the myriad uses of oral history, Linda, Rachael and I hoped to add to the case for the value of oral history (as well as for its own sake) and encourage us all to reflect on what these varied uses mean for our practice as oral historians. Feedback following the conference suggests we've gone some way to achieving this.

Paul Diamond

The stimulating and interesting presentations at the conference showed us how many ways oral history can be used, from recording for archival purposes through to using your own interviews as source material for books, to satisfying an urge to find out more about your own history. Sometimes all these were combined in one project.

Pip Desmond's moving keynote address on the process of writing her book, *Trust* was a terrific opening to the conference. Pip had recorded interviews – and been interviewed herself – with a group of women she spent time with in the 1970s. These young women organised themselves into a work trust, Aroha Trust under the Temporary Employment Programmes which ran in those days to provide work for the large number of people who were unemployed. Many of the young women had terribly abusive childhoods, and had gang affiliations at the time Aroha Trust was in existence.

The book's title works on many levels – it is descriptive of the Aroha Trust, but also reflects the huge trust that these women gave Pip when she first recorded the interviews, and then used them to write the book.



Pip Desmond giving the first keynote address at the NOHANZ conference, October 2009
[Photo: Lynette Shum]

Jonathan Kennett told participants about a project which grew out of a book he had helped produce on the history of cycling in New Zealand. His interview with Tino Tabak for that book led Tabak to ask Jonathan to write his biography. The recently-published biography is the result of hours of recording over a long period of time, and research in a wide range of other sources. Tabak was very frank in the interviews he recorded with Jonathan and was insistent that they include the bad as well as the good aspects of his career. Jonathan reminded us how collaborative the oral history process is, and should be.

In an interesting session on using oral history in Maori communities, Rangimarie Mahuika, Taina Tangaere McGregor and Mihi Harris-Brown spoke about how oral history can be used to assist communities realise their aspirations in a practical way through the basic act of recording life histories and training people how to achieve the best results from their interviews. Rangimarie's presentation arose from her thesis on Ngati Rangiwihewi

education, and her interviews have been used to help with the development of iwi-centred educational models and objectives. Taina has spent much of her working time over the past few years giving training workshops to hapu and iwi groups to help them develop their recording skills. Mihi works for the Crown Forestry Rental Trust, based in Northland, and spoke about how the Trust helps claimant groups develop land-claims based oral history projects.

Judith Fyfe and Tony Hiles ended the conference with reports on their different but associated projects involving artist Michael Smither. Over ten years, Judith went through Smither's sketchbooks with him, asking him about the images and what had inspired them, how he might use them and why they were drawn in the way they had been. The recordings are a goldmine for researchers into Smither's work. Tony Hiles also expects to spend ten years recording Smither, as he discovers the joys of 'retirement'. Tony's films – two DVDs will be made each year – will document Smither as he paints, but also his interest in music and conservation.

It was a great conference with a huge range of presentations, almost all of which included excerpts from interviews. The traditional Project Showcase slot allowed us to hear short reports on projects which are still in their infancy – tasters of presentations at future conferences perhaps?

Megan Hutching



L to r: Anne Thorpe, Teena Jelsma and Rene Bester at the OHAA conference in Launceston.

Oral History Association of Australia

The 16th National Conference of the Oral History Association of Australia was held in Launceston, Tasmania from 17-20 September 2009. The theme of the Conference was 'Islands of Memory – Navigating Personal and Public History'. Three members of NOHANZ, Rene Bester from History and More, Teena Jelsma of Your Legacy and Anne Thorpe, treasurer of NOHANZ, attended this very well presented conference. They all found the presentations to be stimulating and wide ranging, with presenters from around the world.

Richard Whiteing, the curator of Robben Island museum in South Africa, described the work that is being carried out to preserve the history of the place where Nelson Mandela and his comrades were detained. Alan Harris Stein presented a moving tribute to the work and achievements of recently deceased American activist Studs Terkel which was shown with a movie of the work of the 'boat rockers' of his country. The boat rockers changed history from the bottom up; meaning they were ordinary people who refused to sit back and allow things to happen to them. They were instrumental in achieving an eight-hour day and Studs's interviews and recordings of thousands of hours of material is now a national treasure. A number of Australian speakers gave moving accounts of the struggle to give voice to the indigenous peoples of that land, and their history. Discussions took place regarding university protocols and ethics that surround the retention and archiving of oral history materials.

Meeting a range of different oral historians from all over the world and learning of the work that is being achieved in Australia was a highlight of the conference. It was heartwarming to hear of the benefits that participants of oral history projects receive. Challenges and advantages of moving into the digital world were highlighted as well. The next OHAA Conference will be held in 2011 in Melbourne.

**Anne Thorpe, Teena Jelsma,
Rene Bester**

IOHA conference, Prague, 2010

The website for the IOHA conference in Prague next year will have information on registration and accommodation from December until the end of February.

Around 700 proposals for papers were received, so this is going to be a big and exciting conference with the opportunity to hear many of the leaders in the oral history world, along with new and upcoming scholars.

The website is: www.ioha2010prague.cz

Megan Hutching

Oral History in New

Zealand

Vietnam War Oral History Project Update

www.vietnamwar.govt.nz

The Vietnam War Oral History Project is one strand of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Vietnam Veterans' representatives and the Crown in 2006. The project encompasses veterans and their families, and is being run by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

Vietnam veterans are readily coming forth to share their memories with us, and this project is a unique chance - at the right time - to respond. Of the 3,890 New Zealanders who served in Vietnam between 1964 and 1972, more than 600 are estimated to have passed away.

A little over two years into the project, we've recorded 100 interviews, and next year we'll exceed our initial target of 120. The first 60 project interviews - or 233 hours of audio and associated research material - have been deposited with the Oral History Centre.

The project's success in engaging such a diverse, in places philosophically divided, community speaks volumes of the effort the project team has invested in establishing relationships, and earning the trust of veterans and their families. This was achieved by good old fashioned leg-work - attending reunions, fronting up to speak at RSAs, drinking tea and

the occasional pint in communities from the top of the North to the bottom of the South.

From there, word of mouth has been the project's greatest ally.

Over two years we've dispatched 270 questionnaires to Vietnam veterans, their wives, ex-wives, partners and children, with around half of these returned. To date, these questionnaires have been the primary selection tool for identifying potential interviewees. Using this method we've achieved a good spread of veterans. We've recorded gunners, riflemen, SAS soldiers, pilots, nurses, medics, officers and infantrymen.

Families are proving more challenging interview subjects. Of our 100 interviews just 14 are with family members. Wives, partners and children are taking a little more convincing to come forward and share their stories. Often they don't consider the Vietnam story theirs to tell.

This is the first Ministry project to include family members, and our challenge over the couple of years is to more actively engage them. They were included at the behest of veterans, and we need to make sure their voices are justly represented.

Digital divide

Digital technology has created a significant shift in traditional practice - both in the capture of voice and possibilities for end use - over the life of this project. At the outset, the majority of interviewers were working on tape. Since then, they've boldly traversed the digital divide, producing interviews of consistently high technical quality on a variety of digital recorders.

Rather than judging the size of our first deposit by the number of cassette tapes we handed over, it was instead rated in gigabytes - around 250 to be precise, or the equivalent of 52 DVDRs.

Digital audio processing, handling, and burning for archive or listening has emerged as a significant work stream in

a project of this scale, and to manage with this we've added the expertise of a specialist audio engineer to the project team.

There's also a digital archiving component to this project, the website www.vietnamwar.govt.nz Modelled on the BBC's People's War site, it's a chance for all New Zealanders to contribute their memories to the project. The archive will be open for public contributions until mid-2011, and become a static archive at the project's conclusion. So there's less than two years left for memories to be added.

It's emerging as an excellent research tool, and material being contributed will be used to develop educational resources. It also contains some good examples of how interview extracts and memorabilia can be used in a digital archive without compromising the integrity or ethics of the oral history recording process.



*This photograph reveals an Australian SAS soldier's relief at being extracted under fire from the Vietnamese jungle in 1971. It's illustrated in an extract from New Zealand helicopter pilot Brian Senn's oral history interview on www.vietnamwar.govt.nz
[Photo: courtesy Ministry for Culture & Heritage]*

One such example - a multimedia slide show of a helicopter hot extraction of SAS soldiers from the jungle in Vietnam - was highlighted by State Services Commission as an example of how

multimedia should be used on Government websites.

This is also an excellent example of how we can use oral history in conjunction with images, or other such media which sparks memories or aid reminiscence, to engage a wider audience with some of the compelling historical narratives we're gathering.

Digital archives don't replace our national or community repositories, they complement them. And anything that boosts awareness of this rich collection, perhaps even spurs more people into listening to the raw, first-hand recordings, should be embraced.

In the project's final year we'll be looking at ways to integrate our oral history collection within the archive, making sure these voices of Vietnam are accessible beyond the project's active lifetime.

Claire Hall

What's happening at the National Library?

At 5 p.m. on Thursday, 3 December the National Library - which houses the Alexander Turnbull Library - closed for building redevelopment. The library building on Molesworth Street in Wellington will be closed to the public for two years. This means there will be changes to the access to collections during this time.

From **25 February 2010** there will be access to some of the Alexander Turnbull Library collections at Archives New Zealand in Mulgrave Street, Wellington. This includes selected **oral history** materials, including abstracts and access copies of some sound and video recordings.

Some Alexander Turnbull Library collections will be closed to the public for the duration of the building redevelopment. This includes all the original analogue sound and video recordings in the oral history collection. Oral history recordings that do not have

analogue or digital access copies will not be available for the next two years. During the relocation period a retrospective audio preservation project will digitise selected items from all the Turnbull Library audio collections - oral history, Archive of New Zealand Music and the New Zealand and Pacific published sound collections.

Most original items within the ephemera, maps, photographic and drawing, paintings and prints collections will also be unavailable. The Turnbull books, newspapers and serials collections will be closed but a service will be provided from newspaper microfilm and the National Library books and serials collections. Most of the manuscripts collection will be available.

The Turnbull Library will continue adding to its collections throughout the next two years, and encourages donors, including oral historians, to keep in touch despite the building closure.

Oral history advice, workshops, project support and equipment hire will also continue so do contact the Oral History Centre as usual.

For more information, visit the National Library website: www.natlib.govt.nz or email atl@natlib.govt.nz or telephone the Oral History Centre staff on 0800 474 300.

Information

Websites

Robert Warren, Curator of Anthropology at the Illinois State Museum writes: The Illinois State Museum's Oral History of Illinois Agriculture project has launched its 'Audio-Video Barn' website: <http://avbarn.museum.state.il.us>

The site contains 139 interviews, totalling over 300 hours of digital interview recordings. Transcripts are posted for most interviews as PDF files. They have also digitally indexed the recordings to make them searchable online by theme, topic, name, date, and location.

- Forgotten Australians
<http://forgottenaustralianshistory.gov.au>
The website set up by the Australian government to give voice to and information on the Australian children who experienced institutional care in the 20th century.

Choosing recording equipment

Stephen Buckland of Sound Techniques in Auckland has posted his notes on choosing digital recording equipment on the Sound Techniques website: www.soundtq.co.nz

Oral history and poetry

In response to a query on the H-ORALHIST email list about turning oral history narratives into poems, people have responded with various suggestions:

- Dennis Tedlock's work, including his book, *Breath on the Mirror: Mythic voices and visions of the living Maya*
- Francis Good's article, 'Voice, Ear and Text: Words, meaning and transcription' in the second edition of Perks & Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*
- Dolores Kendrick's *The Voices of Plums: Poems in the voices of Black women*
- Paul Thompson covers the issue in his *The Voice of the Past*, 3rd edition.

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