

# Oral HISTORY in New Zealand

National Oral History Association of New Zealand

learned that word if there's a lot in it  
it's, there's just so many ifs, it's just so



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*Oral History in New Zealand* is an annual publication of the National Oral History Association of New Zealand (NOHANZ). It publishes articles on the theory and practice of oral history. Unsolicited articles are welcome, but authors are advised to contact the editors beforehand concerning format, length and layout.

NOHANZ also publishes a quarterly newsletter. Its editors welcome news, letters, notes on sources, articles or reviews relevant to the principles and practice of oral history.

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# Editor's Foreword

As there was no NOHANZ conference in 1993, and no conference papers for publication, we have taken the opportunity in this edition of *Oral History in New Zealand* to explore the variety and the potential of oral history. Debate persists on whether the discipline should be called oral 'history', 'testimony', or just plain 'evidence'. No answer emerges in the following pages: indeed quite the opposite. Oral history is an extraordinarily flexible and malleable discipline.

Historians Ian McGibbon and Ben Schrader describe how they used oral evidence to support or amplify their historical researches; genealogist and oral historian Peggy Crawford describes the potential of oral history to plumb the more personal and emotional depths that might otherwise be lost to the family historian; and historian Tony Nightingale has used oral testimony to explore the lives of a New Zealand minority, gay and bisexual men, whose lives are not well represented in the written record. Actor Miranda Harcourt, in describing the oral interviews with prison inmates and their families that she and co-author William Brandt conducted for their dramatic works, reveals the creative and imaginative uses to which the oral interviewing method may be put.

It is this very diversity in the applications of the oral history method which sometimes leads people to denigrate its worth. However, it is precisely this diversity and flexibility which give the discipline its power. But it also means that oral history practitioners need to be correspondingly vigilant in maintaining the integrity of the discipline by rigorous attention in the conduct of oral history projects. More strictly technical articles, by Megan Hutching and Judith Fyfe on video history methods, and Monty Soutar's examination of the underlying assumptions and cultural conditioning of just two researchers in Maori tribal history, remind us of the significant body of theoretical and practical issues which surround the practice of oral history.

**Brigid Pike**  
Editor

# Writing it down:

## The Historian and Oral History

Ian McGibbon, Ben Schrader

### USE OF ORAL HISTORY IN THE KOREAN WAR OFFICIAL HISTORY PROJECT

Ian McGibbon

Nearly 4000 New Zealand men served in the Korean War between 1950 and 1953. They did so either as crew members of the two frigates which New Zealand maintained in Korean waters for the duration of the conflict or as part of Kayforce, the Army contingent despatched from Wellington on 10 December 1950.

These men are the primary focus of the history of New Zealand's combat operations in Korea which I am currently preparing as the second volume in the official history of New Zealand's involvement in the Korean War. It is a history of their experiences not only in battle but also in an unfamiliar environment. After Jayforce, in which nearly a quarter of Kayforce members had previously served, they were the second significant body of New Zealanders to have prolonged contact with Asia and Asians.

The primary sources for this history are the war diaries of the units and the files of the

Army and Navy departments, all now lodged in the National Archives. These records provide the barebones of the activities of New Zealand's servicemen in Korea – the factual base. But a history prepared from these sources alone would be very tedious, and I have been anxious to flesh out the story with material that provides a personal perspective.

I have sought to do this in two ways: by seeking personal diaries and letters of men who served in Korea and by interviewing Kayforce and naval veterans. Of the two methods, I prefer the former. Documentary records written at the time have a greater immediacy and relevance than recollections forty years later.

My problem is a lack of such documentary material. Veterans have inundated me with photographs, but few have provided diaries or letters. I have about half a dozen collections of letters or diaries, which have been extremely useful. I suspect that further material exists, but perhaps not a lot. Study of the personal files of the initial Kayforce indicates that the overall educational level of the men was quite low: they were not men who were accustomed to expressing themselves in writing. Some have indicated that they threw out their letters and diaries during shifts of residence over

the years. Despite pleas in various media outlets, I am not sure, therefore, that I will obtain much more personal written material before completing my project.

In these circumstances, oral history becomes more important as a source of personal experience. The best form of oral history is undoubtedly to interview veterans on the spot. In April 1992, I was fortunate enough to visit Korea with a party of fifteen veterans. Among other things, I attended an ANZAC Day ceremony at Kap'yong, the site of Kayforce's most important action during the Korean War. Although I did not formally interview any of the party – believing this would be an intrusion in the circumstances – I did gain many insights into their experiences through talking with them, discussing various incidents and listening to the interplay between them as we proceeded around the battle sites. These insights have assisted me when considering the documentary material at the National Archives.

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I have also been using traditional oral history techniques to broaden the personal base of my history. So far I have interviewed the commander of the artillery regiment (he has since died), a frigate commander, a troop commander, the commander of the original transport detachment, and several other more junior officers and NCOs. In one instance, I interviewed three officers together, and this proved highly successful: the collegial atmosphere was conducive to frank discussion, and one officer's recollections often sparked further elaboration by the others. Most of the interviews have been conducted at the homes of the men in places as far apart as Paihia and Dunedin, but some of the interviewees have come in to the Historical Branch for the purpose. I intend to extend these numbers considerably before completing my project. Among those whom I will be focussing on are the fifteen men who went to Korea with me in 1992: I believe that that shared experience will increase their confidence in me and willingness frankly to discuss their experiences, especially the less pleasant aspects of them.

Because of my extensive research in the field, I do not feel the need for any specific preparations for the interviews in terms of the war itself. However, I do consider beforehand the subject's particular role, and the areas in which he might be able to help me. (Such considerations will in fact have underlain my decision to interview the veteran in question in the first place.) There is little point, after all, in

asking a transport officer about the problems of artillery fire control or the relative merits of the 25-pounder gun. I may formulate some particular questions that bear on aspects that I know the subject to have been involved in. For example, I interviewed a troop commander who had been attached to an air observation unit at the time of the Kap'young battle. I wanted to know in particular whether he had been involved in directing the fire of the New Zealand guns during this hectic action. But generally, in conducting the interview, I adopt a chronological approach, beginning with how the person came to go to Korea. This approach gives an informal framework to the interview,

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The main benefits of my oral history interviews so far have been in providing personal flavour. The interviewees are often rather vague on matters of fact, but they all remember, often vividly, the conditions in which they served

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without preventing digressions into other time periods as the interviewee recalls particular aspects. I can always come back to it when the recollections of any particular incident dry up. I

use open-ended questions to encourage the interviewee to be expansive in his comments, but will prompt or ask specific questions if he fails to refer to something that I know happened. In this respect, my extensive knowledge of the activities of the men in Korea allows me focus on issues that might have been overlooked by an interviewer with less background. It is certainly an advantage, but lack of this background would not preclude a well-prepared interviewer from obtaining much valuable information from these men.

The main benefits of my oral history interviews so far have been in providing personal flavour. The interviewees are often rather vague on matters of fact, but they all remember, often vividly, the conditions in which they served – extreme cold in winter and extreme heat in summer. With prompting, they can provide quite useful information on how the servicemen coped with the situation. They have also provided valuable material on reactions to the terrain, the people of Korea and Japan, other contingents in the UN forces and the nature of the war. I have obtained some excellent anecdotes about various incidents in Korea, which will enliven my account.

Although I transcribed several of these interviews, it became clear that this would be far too time-consuming. So I have now merely adopted the practice of taking notes from the tapes as and when required. I have not attempted any indexing of the tapes, but rely on my memory and the notes

for the retrieval of material, as and when required.

In a general sense, the interviews I have conducted allow me to write with more authority and confidence about the conditions that were experienced by the men. They contribute, in short, to that broad underlay of knowledge that allows useful conclusions to be drawn about events or developments. More specifically, I use the material in a similar way to the personal diary entries, with due regard to the differing perspective between immediate and distant (in time) observation. Personal comments, whether written or verbal, can help to enliven the manuscript. Wherever possible, therefore, I introduce individual viewpoints to illustrate or emphasise the points I am making. A reference to the name of the interviewee and the date of the interview is provided for each oral statement used in the text.

Like all historical evidence, oral history evidence must be treated with scepticism and due regard to its provenance. The historian must carefully consider what weight to give to any particular utterance. This is a matter of judgment. At times it will be obvious that the interviewee has confused particular incidents or has forgotten certain things; at others, it might be necessary to follow up a point in an attempt to find corroboration in other sources, perhaps other oral history interviews. This problem can also sometimes be got round by making it clear in the manuscript that any particular statement is merely a personal

opinion, given long after the event – in other words, by ensuring that the reader is aware of your weighting of the evidence.

I have also had to contend with the problem introduced by the reluctance of men to speak ill of their former colleagues and, now, fellow veterans. There is a conflict of interest between my desire to get at the truth and the veterans' desire not to blacken the name of the unit in which they are proud to have served. During my trip to Korea, I heard a number of disparaging comments about certain officers or men, but always with the clear injunction to me that such comments were off the record. ('Hope you haven't got your tape recorder on, Ian!')<sup>1</sup> Considerable skill is required in approaching controversial subjects in a way that will encourage veterans to place their views on record. It may be necessary to turn off the tape recorder to obtain certain information. In such instances in the past – not related to my present project – I have concentrated very hard and tried to write down as soon as possible after the interview a verbatim account of what was said in these 'blank periods'. Unsatisfactory as this may be, it is better than not having the information at all.

Another drawback is the time required to carry out such research. The veterans live all over New Zealand. While it would be impossible and futile to try to interview all of them, the key people have the annoying habit of living in the least accessible places in retirement. The historian, faced

with a deadline, must make choices about who will be the most useful. Sometimes it is not evident until after the interview begins whether a veteran can contribute anything useful. A certain amount of preliminary contact can reduce this danger. But just getting to places can be time consuming.

Oral history is an important secondary source for the Korean War history. It provides flavour, and as such personalises the story. It also can point in directions that can be followed up in the documentary records. I believe that for any historian working in a similar area, such personal witnesses must be an important source, to be weighed against material gained from other areas. They provide an opportunity to test conclusions and to gain new insights.

<sup>1</sup> Of course, such remarks were made in jest. At no time did I record ordinary conversations. Surreptitious tape recording is akin to bugging, and is an inappropriate way of obtaining oral historical evidence.

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# THE USE OF ORAL HISTORY IN AN MA THESIS

Ben Schrader

## The Purpose

My MA thesis looked at the ideology supporting the first Labour Government's state housing programme in Naenae (Lower Hutt) during the 1940s. It was part of Labour's vision for Naenae to construct a 'Brave New World' based on the nuclear family, a suburban quarter acre section, and the (now) ubiquitous state house. A corollary of this ideal was the hope that each family would also become fully integrated into the community of which they were part. The study was devoted to examining the origins of these twin ideals and showing how they were implemented in Naenae. Originally I had intended to carry out a community study to discover how far the 'idea' of Naenae differed from what actually eventuated in the suburb. However, it soon became clear that such an exercise was beyond the scope of an MA thesis, so I decided to focus my efforts on exploring the ideology.

At the same time, I felt that the study would suffer if nothing was said about the 'reality' of Naenae and no attempt was made to explain why the suburb failed to live up to the expectations of its designers. I therefore decided

to address this issue in the last chapter of the thesis. Based largely on interviews conducted with contemporary Naenae residents, architects and planners, the chapter uses oral testimony to construct a picture of what it was like to live in Naenae during its first decade as a state suburb. Called 'The Real Naenae?' the chapter goes some way to counterbalance the ideological bent of the rest of the study.

## The Methodology

Because my use of oral history was not central to the overall argument of the thesis I decided I need not bother with 'how to do it' manuals. As I saw it, the only requirement was to ask a series of open-ended questions and flip the tape at the end of side one. In retrospect, I feel my complacent attitude was, to say the least, regrettable. I am now certain that my blood pressure would have been significantly lower over the interview period had I learnt a few tricks of the trade before running off to purchase two long-life batteries for my pocket tape recorder. To all those well-versed in the techniques of the oral historian my methodology will probably seem clumsy. It was, so I will not attempt to justify it, other than to say, that my learning curve was steep and all findings drawn from the interviews are far from conclusive.

I divided my sample into two groups, the residents of Naenae, and the designers, that is, the planners and architects, who if not directly involved in the programme, were around at the time of its implementation. I tracked down the residents

through the efforts of a local historian and the designers by way of contacts in the Architecture School. I then drew up a list of separate questions designed to elicit information on particular aspects of the housing scheme from each group. The major difference between the two groups was that the designers were interviewed separately, whereas the residents were interviewed as a group. All interviews were conducted in the subjects' homes.

## The Interviews

The interviews with the designers were probably the better executed. Being able to work one to one meant each interview was easier to manage than the one conducted with a whole group. A notable exception was a former teacher who, before I could pose my first question, delivered an (unwanted) 40 minute lecture on the history of Western architecture from ancient Greece to modern Germany. Not to be sidetracked from his self-allotted task, he skilfully managed to avoid all my attempts to regain control of the interview and only gave me his full attention when I insisted that my tape was running out and I did not have any others. Needless to say for the next interview I came prepared with extra tapes. However, this precaution turned out to be quite unnecessary because the subject was a

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retiring, monosyllabic gent, who mechanically answered all my questions in less than 20 minutes. The third interview went smoothly and was the best up to that time. Only later, as I listened to a tape full of shortwave radio static and felt my heart free-fall through my limp body, did I realise I had flicked the wrong switch on the damned tape recorder.

In contrast, the interview with the residents contained no technical hitches, yet it was not without particular problems of its own. Foremost among these was knowing how to avoid offending the host by saying no to the fourth cup of tea and politely declining round six of the pikelet tray. With this skill secured under my (loosened) belt, the next major task was trying to prevent the subjects drifting down memory lane and dredging up stories totally unrelated to the question at hand. I must confess I failed miserably on this front and nearly half the tapes consist of disconnected anecdotes. Fortunately, I was more successful controlling the 'loud-mouths', that is, those people whose story is always better than everybody else's and who attempt to dominate every conversation. I found a good tactic was to interrupt the

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loud-mouth and say, "That's very interesting, subject A", and turning towards somebody else ask, "could I get subject B's opinion on the matter". This (premeditated) strategy meant that almost everybody had an equal say throughout the interview.

#### *The Results*

I found the interviews very rewarding, both in terms of the material collected and being able to talk with people who lived through the time I was studying. From the evidence given by these people I was also able to proffer reasons as to why Labour's ideal of community integration (or local community) was not fulfilled in the Naenae. Furthermore, these

reasons led me to formulate a working hypothesis regarding the nature of suburban society, which I hope to test in later studies.

The other major benefit I gained by using oral history was that I was able to test the ideas which were mulling around in my head on people who had some familiarity with the period. Quite often people would confirm what I already thought, which was satisfying, but sometimes my preconceptions were challenged and I would have to go away and rethink some of my ideas, which was even more satisfying. In the long run I believe this process of testing and retesting of ideas significantly improved the quality of my thesis and made it a stronger piece of work than would otherwise have been the case.

My only note of caution for the novice is that before one says yes to that first cup of tea in the interviewee's living room, one should take time to learn some of the ins and outs of conducting an oral history interview. Not only will this save considerable time in the long run, it will also relieve one of much unnecessary stress and anguish. If only I had taken my own advice.



# ORAL HISTORY AND GENEALOGY

**Peggy Crawford**

Oral historians are fully aware of the advantages of recorded accounts of events that happened long ago and are used to hearing remarkable interviews relating to specific social issues, but at the same time fail to realise how interesting their own family members may be. Very few genealogists (family researchers) use recorded interviews to enhance their research. Most family historians are entrenched in the theory that "information must be proved to be used". With this advice repeated over and over again many genealogists bypass one of the most valuable insights into the past history of their own family.

One has to consider the importance of absolute accuracy versus personal interpretation. When the actual facts of an event do not quite match up with a first-hand account, it is easy to reject that information as being unreliable. What is not generally understood, is that there are other considerations to be taken into account. The advantage of listening to a verbal account of events is to gain an understanding of feelings experienced, despite

the possibility of some inaccuracies; something that can never quite be captured on paper. Documented facts will not give descendants any idea of the personality or character of a forebear. For instance, if there had been a sudden accidental death, a Coroner's Inquest held at the time will give exact details, accounts from close relatives and witnesses. What it will not give is the effect such a tragedy had on individuals in the family. It may well be that two family members recall the same events differently depending on how it impacted on their lives. If there is a conflict between accounts of stories or events it will make for a lively insight into relationships. Family members seldom agree entirely on everything, therefore if it is possible, interview more than one relative.

A little known fact is that traumatic events often play a large part in memory loss for certain periods in one's life causing selective memory. A child (for instance) who experiences the sudden death of a mother and the subsequent removal from the family home to an institution, may not recall home-life preceding the tragedy, or for particular episodes in his/her childhood, yet have clear recall of other events. An older person's memory is often better for early

periods in their life than more recent happenings.

To have the opportunity of hearing the spoken words, to listen to the intonation of voice, to discover an accent and perhaps particular colloquialisms of a deceased forebear, perhaps months or years after death, is a unique and moving experience. A recorded voice of a deceased family member will bring a named photograph to life, it will put 'flesh on the bones' of a name on a cemetery headstone. It will also add to understanding the personality of that person and give a wider dimension to the family narrative. How many times have we heard people say, 'If only I could remember all those wonderful stories Grandma used to tell me about her life in

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the old country,' or similar?

Recounting a precis of various stories from taped interviews in a published family history will enhance it many-fold. For obvious reasons it would not be practical to attach audio tapes to a book; however, if taped oral interviews have been carried out, a reference of how to access them should be included.

Before embarking on an oral family history, some basic genealogy (the tracing of direct lines of descendancy with dates

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## Do you rush into a great-aunt or grandmother's house, whip the tape-recorder out and demand they start talking?

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and name) should be carried out. When much of the factual evidence of births, deaths, marriages, immigration, occupations is documented and a draft chart of a family tree drawn up, you have reached the ideal time to begin audio-tape-interviewing. Unfortunately, ideal times do not always present themselves. If there is a likelihood that time is running out for a potential subject owing to advanced age and frailty, rather than miss an opportunity to have a first-hand family story, just go ahead anyway. Recorded interviews should complement the conventional researched documentation of a family history and not be the sole means of gathering informa-

tion for that purpose.

How to go about recording appropriate family members' recollections? Do you rush into a great-aunt or grandmother's house, whip the tape-recorder out and demand they start talking? Of course not. As with any other oral history undertaking there should be careful preparation and a tentative approach. (It is common knowledge that women generally have a more retentive memory for details of family events and wives usually have been known just as that – somebody's wife, yet these women are often an unexpected mine of information.) If you do *not* have a close relationship with the family member you feel is the appropriate subject, you must develop a rapport. An introductory visit with some family photographs, the draft of a family tree, some flowers or other little gift, often paves the way. Demonstrate what you intend doing and why you feel a recorded interview would be such an important contribution to the history of the family. Also add why you think they (the relative) is the best person to do this. It may be taken as flattery in which case cooperation will be forthcoming – but always be very tactful.

During an initial visit ask general questions about the family, invite views and opinions, but do not blurt out all the gossipy knowledge of family skeletons! Such actions could produce a defensive attitude and may result in a flat refusal to answer any more questions, thus losing an invaluable store of untapped memories. Explain the type of

questions that you would like to ask during the recording session and show a tentative printed list of questions to leave behind to be examined at leisure.

A family history interview is unlike other oral history undertakings. To carry out the procedure with a very close relative can be fraught with emotional difficulties; it may be prudent to have a complete stranger proficient in oral interviewing and with a good background knowledge of the family history, as a viable option. Whatever the decision and whoever the interviewer, the session should be carried out on a one-to-one basis if possible. Once a good rapport and cooperation is gained, make arrangements for a further visit fairly soon to record the interview.

If your subject is very elderly and tires easily, a preferred option would be a series of interviews. Be aware that deafness is very common with the elderly; however, this difficulty can be overcome by using techniques such as sitting in a face-to-face situation and speaking slowly and clearly. A male with a beard is not recommended for interviewing a hearing-impaired subject, as lip-reading is difficult when the mouth is obscured. The voice level may be very loud and feed-back a problem if the subject uses a hearing-aid, requiring recording equipment to be adjusted accordingly. If during an interview, personal or sensitive topics are broached, be very matter of fact and do not offer personal opinions. It is quite likely your interviewee will provide plenty!

How to deal with the frustrating dilemma of an interviewee who digresses into an entirely different topic during the course of relating a story and becomes completely side-tracked. Does one stop them in mid-flight and lose the momentum or just let the words flow on? Generally, it is better to let the story run its course rather than lose a possible gem of a story. All oral historians have encountered this problem. One has to use one's own judgement to gently guide the conversation back on track. As a family member/interviewer, you may feel like challenging some statements. Always remember, the story is from the subject's point of view – not yours.

The ultimate family history would be for two descendants of a mutual

forebear, one an experienced genealogist and the other an oral practitioner to work in collaboration.

The number of tapes and the length of the interviews will depend entirely on circumstances and the interviewee. Following completion, tapes should be accompanied by brief biographical details, a copy of the family tree with the subject's name highlighted and ideally, a series of photographs at different stages in the subject's life. A rate-counter index of topics is desirable for future listeners. The tapes must be labelled with the names of interviewee and interviewer, and the date of the interview, and then stored in the recommended way. A reminder; even though your subject may be a close family member, the NOHANZ *Code of Ethical and*

*Technical Practice* should always be observed.

Anecdotal stories recorded for posterity for one's own grandchildren and other generations who follow, make an oral family history undertaking worth the time and trouble. Think about it – it may be later than you think.

### Recommended Further Reading

**Anne Bromell** *Tracing Family History in New Zealand* (1991, revised edition; Wellington, GP Publications)

**Megan Hutching** *Talking History* (1993; Wellington, Bridget Williams Books)

**Peggy Crawford** (ed.) *Genealogical Resources in the Hutt Valley* (1992; Hutt Valley Group, New Zealand Society of Genealogists)

# Hidden Histories: Oral Research on Gay and Bisexual Men

**Tony Nightingale**

I have written before in the NOHANZ Newsletter about a small oral history project I was involved in, interviewing a dozen gay or bisexual men. The project was new ground for me both as an interviewer and as a historian. Some of the issues it threw up were significant in the design of interviews, and it made me, as a historian, consider the nature of the historical evidence gathered, its unique qualities, and some of the issues associated with verifying and/or weighting oral material. In putting my ideas down on paper I will try and look at the project from two perspectives: firstly, from the perspective of the interviewer setting out to interview a group of subjects, and secondly, as the historian taking the evidence supplied and using it as source material for an article or book. In fact the processes are often undertaken together, and the co-existence and interaction of the interviewer's roles as prompter of memory and confidant, and then as historian, need to be considered.

In getting together a group of people to conduct interviews of older gay and bisexual men there were the same confidentiality issues involved in any taping project. These had to be coupled with traditional scene practices as they have existed in the past. For example, no one ever "springs" (reveals) another's homosexuality except where the person concerned has already revealed it. The codes clash somewhat in that while a person can talk about their own sexuality in the process it is likely they will reveal the sexual orientation of others. This is an issue which one needs to approach during the discussion on the release form. How the interviewee decides to resolve this issue before the interview, will dictate the use of names and events. This is not an insurmountable problem in that with older gay and bisexual men some contacts may be dead, others may be happily "out" and can be consulted, or an interviewee can decide not to mention, or change the identity of, an individual. Another alternative is for the interviewee to talk frankly about individuals and then put significant restrictions on how

the material can be used. While this latter alternative is preferable, historically it may leave anyone who publishes what can be termed private information about a living individual, vulnerable under the New Zealand Privacy legislation, but more about that later.

A second issue in setting up the project was how to approach older gay and bisexual men and encourage them to overcome a reticence to talk about a side of their lives that many have spent their life downplaying and hiding. It is well to remember that for any gay or bisexual man in his sixties or seventies, his sexual activities have been illegal for much of his life. It was only eight years ago (1986) that homosexual acts between consenting males were decriminalised. Luckily most young men coming out today do not think about the legal significance of the change or

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have to worry about police harassment. For some older men this mindset of secrecy is still a barrier. It can be overcome by ensuring that the release form process is undertaken, that material is stored in a reputable archive, that the purpose it is collected for is made abundantly clear, and that restrictions on use can be offered. One should not overplay this reticence, since there are many people out there who want to talk about the past, to record how the legal status of their sexuality has impinged on their life. Some older men have only just come out and so have not been part of the intensely private culture associated with the older gay and bisexual scenes.

In interviewing an individual on their sexuality one is dealing with a particularly sensitive area. I do not believe that it is valid to focus solely or even primarily on an individual's sex life. Sexuality is of course a much wider concept and the most interesting aspects, historically, for me, that came out of the interviews were the accommodations that gay and bisexual men and their partners made to adapt to their situations. Sexuality was often a reason for a young man to come into the city, to escape isolation. At the same time it is clear that some provincial and rural areas have had substantial, if hidden, homosexual communities. The DINK (Double income no kids) status of those in relationships created opportunities for a few, while for many others, relationships were impossible because of the hidden nature of their sexuality.

There is always the issue of insider versus outsider roles for the interviewers. In dealing with an area such as sexuality an insider role has some advantages. These include an understanding of sensitivities involved, and a significant knowledge of the social structure in which gay and bisexual men operate. The disadvantage is that this common knowledge may not be stated explicitly and so is not made accessible. Secondly it is

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difficult for someone involved in an interviewing situation to be seen as impartial. The interviewer's sexuality and personality will impact on the content. This creates a problem later for the historian who must assess this impact. This is not impossible and is part of the value judgements historians make all the time. However, it is much easier if the researcher has access to information on the interviewer, particularly whether they are an insider or an outsider.

For some interviewees the terminology and labels can be problematic. Some gay men define themselves quite rigidly as gay and deny the existence of others who are bisexual or whose sexuality appears to change over their life time. This kind of prejudice is ironic given

the problems gay men had in having the validity of their sexuality recognised, but it is relatively common. In interviewing some men who have sex with men it is well to remember that some define themselves as heterosexuals or eschew labels altogether. The greatest number in this category are those who do the "beats" and then return to a heterosexual relationship. In terms of taping these people, they are relatively inaccessible yet their expression of their sexuality is an important outlet, and one which may have been even more significant in the past. The only way our group found to access these people was by interviewing those who had later come out. But it was clear that many never do and that it had to be a special person who had travelled a long way in terms of their own self awareness and confidence, who was able to dispassionately describe their earlier situation.

The final area of concern is the Privacy Act. It relates to the comments I made above about how an interviewee can sign a release form for material on themselves but not for material that relates to another. Obviously there is a need for this definition to be developed via case law but at its most extreme it rules out anyone keeping an archive that has material about or reflecting on a living person. Such an interpretation would rule out oral history and bring into question anyone except journalists (who are basically exempt) from researching the recent past. This is offensive to the concept of open and objective historical research

and an accommodation, preferably via an amendment to the legislation, needs to be sought. I do not think the law as it stands precludes oral history but by the same token it is open to that interpretation and I feel sorry for the person who is ultimately taken to court over

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...oral history provides a key into an, up till now, hidden area.

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the issue, because they will be paying the price for poorly thought-through law. It is of special significance for research on sexual orientation because of the danger that someone's homosexual orientation will be accidentally revealed. Anti-discrimination is all very well in theory but in practice there are still a lot of scared people out there.

From the point of view of a historian looking at New Zealand's social history and sexuality issues, oral history provides a key into an, up till now, hidden area. Older gay and bisexual men's insights are invaluable for social researchers of this century because, as with most minorities, homosexuals' history and culture has not been committed to paper through diaries, letters or the media. The only significant exception to this is material collected by the police or medical personnel in the execution of their duties. By contrast oral testimony is

positive and far more insightful. It is important that a considerable body of oral recordings are developed. This is not to provide statistical material – sexuality research is an area where statistics are often impossible, or simply unhelpful. However, a considerable body of recordings would at least give some depth for researchers against which to corroborate material. It is unlikely that written material will ever be able to provide this opportunity and a large number of recordings undertaken now is the only way we will be able to have ongoing research access to this area.

Oral history recordings must be assessed against other possible techniques of gathering information and evaluated in the same way that written sources are considered. Some of the questions that need to be asked are: Firstly, what are the likely biases or perspectives of the interviewee and/or interviewer? In the case of gay oral history they are generally evidence supplied by persons who have come to terms with their sexuality sufficiently to be happy to make a recording. This precludes a large number of persons whose perspective might be important. Secondly, how might the time factor interfere with the evidence? For instance, now that homosexual acts between consenting adults are no longer illegal it is amazing how many people have recast themselves in the role of an activist or prominent person who was never scared

about being out. Thirdly, how much of the evidence is affected by hindsight? For example, from the tapes done so far it is clear that gay men were harassed and put under surveillance in the 1950s and 1960s. It is easy to surmise that there was a groundswell of public opinion against this that led to decriminalisation. In actual fact I suspect that these are at best only slightly related, yet it is easy to draw out a monocausal relationship from insufficient sources.

One also has to think about the perspective of the individual – how typical is it, were they in the position to see what they have stated, how perceptive was the person about what was going on around them? One of the tendencies I have already noted in those who are willing to be taped is a desire to set the record straight. One has to be wary of these kinds of agenda, but they are not a grounds in themselves for rejecting a perspective.

None of these qualifications are designed to undermine the importance of oral history in the study of gay and bisexual men and women. It is certainly true that there is no other way to find out about gay activity prior to 1970 and that we currently face an opportunity to collect material that will have disappeared in the near future. I believe there is a pressing need for a substantial study to be done, and done quickly, to overcome this gap.

## Miranda Harcourt

# A Walk in Someone Else's Shoes

Oral interviews with prisoners convicted of murder and rape, and with families both of the victims and of the prisoners, have formed the basis of two plays – *Verbatim* and *Touch and Go*. Miranda Harcourt talks with Brigid Pike about the process and the results.

*Verbatim*, first performed in 1993, was devised by Miranda Harcourt and William Brandt and written by William Brandt. It addresses the issue of murder, not who, but how and why? A solo performance with six characters, it focuses on one character, Aaron Daly, and his family. *Touch and Go*, which is being devised and co-

written by Miranda Harcourt and William Brandt, will be first performed in late 1994. A more complex structure, with two actors and four characters, it examines rape and its impact on the family of the offender.

**Q: What has been the nature of your projects?**

People tend to see our work as community work in prisons, that we interview prisoners. We do interview prisoners, we do work in prisons, but what I think we are trying to do is to communicate to a wide range of people. We try to convey the reactions of the family of the offender, in *Verbatim* in a situation of murder, and in *Touch and Go* rape. They are the two major themes that we have approached in our

research work.

But we don't just talk to people who have committed rape and murder. We talk to families of offenders and that is really where I see our work, how I define our work, as representing the reactions of the family of the offender. That includes wives, husbands, children, mothers, fathers, cousins, the whole range of family.

**Q. How did you come to be interested in this work?**

I did a drama therapy course at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London for a year, and I had opportunities to work in a wide range of drama-therapeutic teaching situations. The work was activated, three-dimensional, a more interesting form of physiotherapy in a way; using hands-on drama, using drama in a vibrant way, in a way that it has direct contact in an educational sense.

One of the projects that I worked on was at Wormwood Scrubs Maximum Security Prison. I went there to do a drama project; the woman who was convening the project decided that these maximum-security inmates should do a production, *Charley's Aunt*. At the end of it I thought, this project has been a wasted exercise, but what an amazing opportunity, coming into a prison and working with a group of inmates. Wow, I could do some really interesting stuff with this idea. I thought, when I go back to New Zealand, the land of opportunity, I will try it.

So, back in New Zealand, I rang up Arohata Women's Prison and asked whether I would be able to go there and

do some voluntary drama therapeutic work on Sunday afternoons. They said, yes, sure. I went out and did this work with inmates. This was two or three years ago now and I am glad to say a lot of the women have since been released. We had a really great time, and I did a show with them called "This is Life".

The show was based on conversations with this group of women inmates who committed themselves to a period of six weeks of workshops and they told me stories about things that concerned them or interested them. The dialogue and the situations in it were drawn from improvisations that we had in this group of women; then we worked on defining what they wanted to talk about in their own piece of work. It was a moving and interesting show, because it was performed by the women who had devised it, and it gave them a voice (very similar to oral history), and enabled them to stand up in an official situation in front of some big-wig head-honchos from the Justice Department and say this is what hacks me off, this is how I feel emotionally about the way I am being treated by the prison system, and these are the songs I have chosen to sing about it.

That project was straight drama therapy. I moved away from that project and thought, well, that was a really neat experience and I am very glad I did that, but fundamentally I am an actor and I am also a deviser of theatre, someone who works in an area of theatre where I want to poke into the dark cob-webby holes, as opposed to the areas that are lit

up very brightly in terms of people's experience. I thought we have dealt now with the experience of being in prison. Why are some of these people in prison? I thought it might be interesting to think about why those crimes were committed, how people came to be in a situation where they are pissed off with being in jail, and not only how those people are responding to it, but also other people in their immediate family. They were victims in their own way – mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and wives and children – people who might think, did that guy, my husband, rape that woman because I wasn't satisfying him sexually? or mothers who might think, did my son go out and kill that person because I brought him up wrongly? People find themselves in the position of being a victim through the choices made by someone else.

**Q. It must also affect the attitude of the relatives, the family, to the person who has committed the crime?**

Absolutely. There is a huge rift that is created. You can't say that this happens to everyone, but to a lot of the people I have spoken to there is an enormous rift, a reassessment of the person and the relationship. They step back and say, I love this person, I still love this person, but can I come to terms with the horrific-ness of what they have done? And that is a really tough decision. It's a decision Danica has to make about her brother Aaron in *Verbatim*. She is saying, of course I love him, but he's done this terrible thing. Can I find it in myself to be able to find a

way past the crime that he has committed, back towards finding him as he becomes another kind of person?

As one person said to me in a prison where I was performing *Verbatim*, 'Look, it's a life-changing experience, for you, the person who has committed the crime as well as for the family of the victim. Things are never the same again; you've broken some kind of social and moral boundary, and you can't undo that.' Then on the other hand, I read this morning in some of the material we have gleaned for *Touch and Go*, one of the guys says, 'I raped somebody, I have come to terms with that, but I have to believe in the capacity of human-beings to change,' so that he wants to be able to say to people, 'Yes, I was a rapist, I've committed this crime in my past, I'm working very hard to ensure it won't happen again. I don't want to label myself or be labelled by other people a rapist for ever and ever amen. I want to be able to go beyond that definition in to some new way of behaviour for myself, and a new way of presenting myself to the world.'

I am not saying that that is possible, or that it is morally acceptable, or that his behaviour makes him into a repugnant person for ever, but what is interesting is finding out what people have to say about it. What I find most interesting about the oral history that we practise is that everyone believes that they are telling the truth, when they are talking to you. When there is a microphone there, people feel a responsibility to tell the truth. Now the truth that one person



tells might be completely not the truth as far as I am concerned. They might be very mistaken, they might be saying something which is the direct opposite of what their wife or husband or child or parent has said in an interview only a couple of days before. They don't know that; they believe at that moment that they are telling the truth. That is where

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I don't care whether people tell the truth or not; what is interesting is the reasons that they choose for not telling the truth.

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interesting drama lies for me – in representing what people actually said. It is the audience who can make that decision about who they believe, and whether they agree with them. So that when the audience leave, it is the audience who have the interesting arguments amongst themselves.

Some people believe they are telling the truth, because they haven't got to a point in their lives where they are able to recognise what the truth is. But what is the truth? Some people have told themselves their story, their alibi so many times, that they have actually come to believe it, so they believe they are telling the truth, but according to police records, or the testimony of an eye-witness, they are not telling the truth. Other people are not telling the truth because they believe that we shouldn't hear

the truth.

I don't care whether people tell the truth or not; what is interesting is the reasons that they choose for not telling the truth. Maybe they don't choose those reasons consciously, but what is interesting is that interface between what we hear and what actually happened, and all the complicated swirls and eddies of consciousness that go on between those two points. That is where the interesting parts of drama lie.

**Q. When interviewing, and you get a different account from one person and then another, do you challenge them on the discrepancies?**

No. We just record it. I am very aware that when you go in and interview somebody, you are having a big impact on their life, because you're asking them to tell their story and to give you something, to give you a bit of their soul. And people get really churned up when they are asked to go back over their territory. People make that choice. If someone says no, I don't want to be interviewed, we are not going to force them. But if someone says, yes, I would appreciate that opportunity, then they are giving us something. I don't feel I am a counsellor, I am not going to be coming back next week and picking up the pieces from the impact that we made this week. So I don't feel it is appropriate in our position to sit there and challenge people or try and change them in any way. We are simply there to record something and go away with it, and to build another building out of the original building material that we collected.

**Q. So, having decided on a change of direction after the Arohata exercise, what did you do next?**

I had already done a solo performance about a heroin addict *Kaz, A Working Girl* by Leah Poulter, and what made me move on from the work that I had done, and eventually work with William on stuff like *Verbatim* was an interest in character. There is a woman called Anna Deavere-Smith, a theatre professor from Stanford University. She's 42; she's a black woman; she's left Stanford and has been undertaking oral history projects, verbatim projects. The first one was about the Crown Heights contre-temps between Hassidic Jews and Blacks, and that was called *Fires in the Mirror*: it was a huge hit, and was up for the Tony Awards in 1992, and this year or last year she's dealt with the Los Angeles riots, and the play that she has evolved about them is called *Twilight*. I saw her performing a couple of weeks ago in Los Angeles, and she is amazing. She calls her work the search for American character, and in a similar way what I am interested in is the search for the New Zealand character in various ways, and you can trace that through most of the work that I have done in my acting and producing career: for example, *Oracles and Miracles*, and *Kaz, A Working Girl* and *Verbatim* and now *Touch and Go*, and even *Gloss* which was someone else's project that I took part in. All these things are part of the search for New Zealand character. I think in the arts we are all embarked on this search.

**Q. How did you go about**

### getting *Verbatim* off the ground?

William and I got together and approached the Justice Department and asked for permission (and funding) to go into the prison system and talk to various inmates, anybody who wanted to talk to us about their experience of murder. The Justice Department, in a very enlightened choice, said yes. So we were able to go to various prisons all over the country – Paremoro, Mount Eden, Mount Eden Women's, Rimutaka, Arohata, Wellington, Christchurch Men's, Christchurch Women's, Dunedin, Invercargill – we went to a lot of prisons and talked to people about their experiences of violent crime and particularly murder. And then, from those people, we contacted other people, their family members, and through various other avenues we contacted victims of violent crimes and families of victims. Through the police for example, or through the *Woman's Weekly*. That magazine is a great encyclopedia of information. Often I am thumbing through it and I think, that sounds like a really interesting person to talk to, and I'll ring up the journalist and say, Look, can you get hold of so-and-so for me and see if they are interested in talking to us for our project?

At the end of this random data search, which took about two or three months, we had about 30 interviews with various ages, various sexes, individual people, family groups, groups of strangers. Throughout the whole research process, and especially in

making our applications to the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, Theatre Initiatives Panel, the Justice Department, the Lottery Grants Board, all sorts of different funding bodies, we couldn't say what was going to happen, and who was eventually going to be in the play, because we hadn't finished our research. We didn't want to make those decisions until all the material had percolated through our imaginations. That was kind of difficult but people, to their credit, had faith in the project and the way we had loosely described it.

#### **Q. What about the people you interviewed? How did you present the project to them?**

We just told them we were writing a play and would they be willing to talk to us about their experiences of violent crime. On the whole they said yes. I think one person out of the maybe 50 we talked to said, look, it's not my cup of tea.

#### **Q. Did they have expectations of getting anything back?**

No. Well, they did in that we said that we were going to make it into a play and we would try as hard as we possibly could to enable them to see the play. We did go back to every single prison, 18 prisons, and we performed at every single one of them. I am really glad we were able to do that. But of course some of the people had left prison by the time we were able to perform the play. Two people that I can think of didn't take up the opportunity, because they found it very traumatic talking to us and retelling their story and they didn't necessarily want to watch it being played

back to them in a theatre. But they didn't find the experience dreadful; I've spoken with both of those people since and have kept them up with what's been happening.

I think you make a contract with the people that you interview, where you say, you tell me your story, and because your story is the fundamental base on which our play is based, plus the stories of the other 49 people, then I will do my best as a purveyor of drama to see that you're kept up to date with what's happening. In a couple of cases we were unable to trace people, or loopholes happened in the communication process.

The experience with *Verbatim* has taught me that you have to be more structured about the work: you can't just go and do this random Jackson Pollock approach to research, and then put the play on, and send out a few letters. You have to be very responsible in how you gather the research, and how you implement it, and how you feed back to the people who were the researchees in the first place. Even though we had no clear purpose or shape in mind, it was still important that we should have clear parameters of how we deal with the people who we are researching into and with. For *Touch and Go* we have had a more sophisticated organisational structure, with contracts or agreements with the people we interviewed.

#### **Q. Given the unstructured approach that you adopted, what types of questions did you ask during interviews?**

We didn't have particular questions. We went into each

interview and said, You structure the interview the way you want it. Here is the microphone and you tell us about whatever you want. And some people would say, Oh, well, that makes it a bit difficult for me. I'd rather you asked the questions. And so we would agree and ask them to tell us about the circumstances of their crime, or their relationship with their dog ...whatever.

There was only one question that we tried to ask everybody, and that was, Are you a violent person? And everybody said no, which is really interesting. There is a line in *Verbatim* where Aaron says, 'I am not a violent person. I never laid a finger on her. Oh, yeah, yeah, she was being smart and that, but nothing serious.' That more or less encapsulates the attitude we found with everybody, whether it's wives, parents, offenders themselves: they are all saying, I am not violent, or he's not violent. And that was a discovery we made, that our definition of violence was quite different from that of the people we were interviewing. My definition of violence is if someone comes up to me in the street and spits at me, that's violence, or deliberately hits me in some way, or denies me the right to exercise choice. That's all violence to me, but not to everybody.

**Q. Is this related to the question I asked earlier about perceptions of the truth?**

Yes, and I was finding that very difficult to explain. There is no truth, and what the interviewing process brought home to me was that these people were saying, well, no I am not violent person, i.e., I

would never stop by the side of the road, pick up an unknown hitchhiker, hold a knife to her throat, drag her into the bushes and do her in, and drive off. I wouldn't do that, because I am not a violent person. But by the same token, that person would not consider that holding a woman down on a bed and forcing her to have sex, despite the fact that she is crying and saying no, I don't want to, is violent. There is no weapon involved, so it is not violent. Perceptions of violence differ greatly between mine and that of somebody's mother, and that mother's son who is in jail for committing some violent assault. According to his lights, no, he is not a violent person. And how do you change that perception? Or even, should you try to change it?

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**Q. Could you talk about how you used the interviews that you collected to develop the text of the plays?**

We interviewed a large range of people. For instance, there is a character that we are developing at the moment: she is called Chrissie and she is a character in *Touch and Go*. She's the wife of somebody who is convicted of rape. For that one character of Chrissie we have gleaned everything that relates to her in many different interviews with a

variety of different interviewees. So, at the moment there are probably ten people who have bits and pieces of their interviews cut into the character of Chrissie. She is very much a composite character, as are all the characters that we've devised. I don't think there is any character in either play who is not composed of more than one person. Eventually there might three or four people who have sentences or words or ideas or images which reappear inside that one character of Chrissie.

So we do not go out and search for the perfect person, and think, yeah, this is the perfect person, the perfect situation, we will just put that person lock, stock and barrel into our play, and knit the play around that situation. We are not historians, we are not presenting what really happened; we are editors, and fictionalisers of reality, in that we are taking bits and pieces of reality and stitching them together in our own version of events. We are providing the essence, as opposed to providing the whole range of smells we originally encountered.

It is like the difference between a woollen rug and patchwork quilt: the rug is all of a piece, whereas in the construction of a patchwork quilt you have a bit from aunty's old sofa in the living room, a bit from your old jumper, a bit from your experiments in sewing class in the fourth form, a bit from the dog's blanket, and all these are stitched together. As a whole it is a blanket and it functions to keep you warm, but if you look at it more closely, there are different

bits and pieces of your own personal history in the quilt.

We are not trying to pretend that we are presenting real people; we try to proclaim the composite nature of our characters, that each of those characters is a patchwork quilt. The way we describe it in prisons is that it is like a pudding: you come up with a chocolate cake at the end, but in order to make that cake, you go to different cupboards to get the flour, the sultanas, the cocoa, the butter, all the different ingredients. They are valid ingredients on their own, but when they are mixed together they make something which is really flavoursome, and that is how I like to see *Verbatim* and *Touch and Go*, something which is essential and very flavoursome.

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“There were elements of myself that I saw in that character Aaron. It was great: it gave me a walk in someone else’s shoes.”

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**Q. It sounds rather like a chemical transformation, which leads on to the question, how do the original interviewees respond when they see what has happened to their stories?**

Their responses are very positive. For instance, in *Verbatim*, there is a character Aaron, who is the main character, and he was made up of about four young men, and

we performed it to three of them. One of them chose not to see it. Their response was fantastic. One of them said, ‘I sat here and watched the show, and that was my own mother talking to me, and that was my own sister talking to me. There were elements of myself that I saw in that character Aaron. It was great: it gave me a walk in someone else’s shoes.’ That is what I think we tried to set out to do. As someone else said, ‘It opened a different window for me.’

I think it is a different insight, sitting there watching it as a prison inmate. There is a prison inmate talking to you about his experiences, but there is also his mother and his sister and the husband of his victim, and his wife. These various people are saying, ‘Well, this is my perspective on the whole thing. I wouldn’t talk like this if Aaron were in the room, but with him not in the room, I can say quite frankly, this is the way I feel about him.’ In the context of our drama he is in the room, because he is the audience, and the audience can hear all these different perspectives coming at them at the same time. I think that’s why this guy said it gave him a walk in someone else’s shoes. That is my favourite comment so far about *Verbatim*. It describes so neatly what it was that we set out to do.

**Q. What were the responses of the mothers, fathers, sisters, wives, the other interviewees?**

There have been a variety of different responses. One woman – she was the mother of an inmate – gave us an extensive interview about how she felt having her son inside and

she said at one point, ‘I felt like I was living in a fishbowl.’ So we put it in the play: what a great line. She came to see the play and said afterwards, ‘I loved that show; I especially liked the mother, I really understood what she meant when she said, I felt like I was living in a fishbowl.’ And I thought, but you said that yourself, that’s why it’s in the play! But she hadn’t been able to make the connection between herself and the character in the play.

And that is the risk you take: some people are going to say there are elements of me in the character that I am watching, and there will be others who have not come to terms with their situation to the extent that they cannot make the connection; even when they hear their own words with their own inverted commas coming out of the character’s mouth, they are still going to listen to it as if the character is a stranger.

**Q. What’s it like for you researching the material?**

People say it must be really traumatic listening to terrible things that people have done, and it can be disturbing from time to time, but you have to be able to sit back and say, well, here is the information, what is the emotional message that can be effectively gleaned from all this material, that can be made into a drama that will have some sort of positive impact in the three target audiences, which are prison inmates, schools, and theatre audiences, in that order?

**Q. What are you trying to achieve for the theatre audience in general with these plays?**

William and I tried to

collate it into something which would enable our audience not to be objective, but to be subjective. That audience, in a school for instance, should be able to sit there and think, I can really relate to that guy Aaron, and all the other people, because they are like me and they are like my family, or like the person sitting beside me or four rows behind me.

There are some people who go to the theatre to be objective. They already have their strategy of willing suspension of disbelief before they leave home. They set off thinking, I am going to the theatre, I have paid my money, and I intend to have a good time, or to be intellectually stimulated. That is their intention, and sometimes it can be hard to surprise those people into having a response other than the one they intended to have when they left home. Theatre has to be pretty terrible for someone who intends to have good time to say, that's terrible, and it has to be pretty powerful for someone who has gone out saying, I intend to be objective about the whole issue of murder and violence in our society, to persuade that person to say, I intended to be interested but what I ended up being, was moved. That is the impact that we want to have on theatre audiences: to say to them, don't be objective; we are trying to present to you a subjective experience of what you might experience if you find yourself in the same position as one of these characters. We're trying to promote empathy.

**Q. But despite seeking to elicit a subjective response from the**

**audience, would you agree that you did still objectify the material in so far as what was presented on stage was artificial, had been crafted, made out of different experiences and that come together in a different experience for everyone?**

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Yes, possibly. It is more like a separating process to me, where you separate something out and put it where it is not accustomed to being and you say to people, well now look at this object. Take the work of Merylyn Tweedie: she designed the set for *Verbatim* and her style of work chimes very appropriately with what we are trying to do with the material. She takes an old filing cabinet and a dirty old shoe and a hearing aid and paints them all white very badly and puts them all together, and people look at it in a gallery and see the objects in a different and new way than if they were in their usual hiding place which might be a school locker-room or in the back of somebody's

wardrobe or in a tip.

Merylyn encourages a new way of seeing things, and that is what we are trying to, and what I think you mean by objectifying. We are taking something out of prison, and we are taking something out of a living room in Lower Hutt, and we are taking something out of a rape crisis counselling room, and we are putting them all together and sticking them into a theatre or into a performance area, like the chapel of a prison, and we are saying to people, by putting these things in a new environment, it enables you as an audience, whether you are a prisoner, or a school pupil, or a theatre goer, to look at these things in a new light.

I also think that the editing process, which is invisible, is the most important part of *Verbatim*; that is where William and I become very important creatively in the way the interviews are presented. William wrote *Verbatim*; we are writing *Touch and Go* together. But William's editing and cutting decisions, for instance when he decided to have the victim's husband say, 'I wonder would he do it again?' and this is juxtaposed with Aaron saying, 'I did it because it gave me a buzz', make a very strong statement. That editing process is the invisible but all important one in devising this kind of theatre.

**Q. Most people have a fascination with crime. I wonder is it partly because there is a very thin line between those of us that commit crimes and those who don't.**

Yes. There is a thin line between those of us that

commit crimes and those that don't. Danica, for instance, Aaron's sister in *Verbatim*, says at one point in the play, 'Anybody can kill somebody; it is just whether you act on what you feel. All you have to do is grab a knife or something. But most people control that.' I think that is very true: anybody can kill someone given sufficient provocation or under whatever circumstances. The most unlikely people could commit a murder.

Committing a crime is a transgression of a social and moral code; you just don't kill your wife, even if you are really, really seriously pissed off with her. Some of us don't do it because we have sufficient imagination to be able to conjure up for ourselves, even in the midst of fury, the repercussions that would happen if we were to commit a crime, to hit somebody or to kill them, or to knock them over, or to give them a bleeding nose. I think it is an issue of imagination, and also a concept of investment. Some people have a concept of emotional and behavioural investment, where they think, if I do this, this will follow. Some people have this concept in terms of religion: if I go to church every Sunday and I am a good person, I will go to Heaven forty years down the track. Some people think in a more nihilist way: forty years down the track who gives a damn what I do? So now, I will do whatever I want.

A lot of the people that I have talked to in prison are people who are saying, Now I have huge remorse because I am aware of the emotional impact of what I did, not only

on my victim and my victim's family, but on my own family, my kids, the financial repercussions it has had for my wife. These kinds of things have engendered remorse directly related to the crime. But there is also a feeling of regret in that I wish I hadn't done it, because from my own personal point of view, it has really screwed up my life. The choices I made, the actions I took, have screwed up my life. Given the opportunity again, I would try to find a way of avoiding that. And it is often those people who didn't have that stretch of imagination, that sense of behavioural investment, who I end up talking to in prison. They are saying, If only I had thought, if, if, if...

That is where *Verbatim* finishes: Danica says, 'If, if. If is such a big word. I've learned that word. There's a lot in that word. If, if, there's just so many ifs, there's just so many ifs... it's just such a big word.' And that is what 'if' is all about: if I had done this that night, if I hadn't taken a taxi, if it hadn't been

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The only artifice  
we have imposed  
is not content but  
structure.

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raining, if I hadn't caught up with my mates in the pub, if I hadn't had that extra six or seven beers, then none of this would have happened. But who made those decisions? Who made the choice to have six or seven extra beers? Who was the person who made the choice to link with a whole bunch of drunken mates? Who was the person who made the choice to

take those particular drugs that night, to carry a knife in their sock? Ultimately, the responsibility comes back to yourself, and the choices and decisions that you yourself make. Maybe that sounds like a very glib answer to the question of who's to blame, but it's the people who made those decisions, who made those choices, who are sitting in prison telling us these things.

**Q. We have talked about the impact the work had on the interviewees and the various audiences. What about the impact of the work on you and William? And what did you find out through this work about the New Zealand character which you have mentioned you were in search of?**

You have asked why are we all fascinated with crime, and I think that is very similar to our search for the New Zealand character. We didn't discover anything specific: we didn't exclaim, My God, sodium nitrate can cure influenza, or anything like that. But we extended our own boundaries of comprehension of the ways other people behave, and also of the ways we ourselves could potentially behave.

**Q. I am reminded a line from Katherine Mansfield, when she said that New Zealand would never produce really great writers until it became more artificial. In what you have done, by imposing some artifice on the way New Zealanders behave, have you enabled us to think a bit more clearly about ourselves?**

I don't think we have imposed any artifice on the way New Zealanders behave and

act. What we try and do is present material the way it appeared to us initially. The only artifice we have imposed is not content but structure.

A Katherine Mansfield quote that I thought you were going to use and that I do think applies to our work in some way is, 'I began to experience something quite other'; Cathy Downes used it in her play about Katherine Mansfield. Rather than just reading about a crime in the paper, and exclaiming in horror that New Zealand has produced all these monsters, and exclaiming that they must all be mad, we thought, well, everyone can experience something quite other, and given the right circumstances, anybody could behave like that. That I think would be the only discovery that I would have made in the process of interviewing these people, that in the right circumstances I would be equally as capable as they of committing a crime such as that.

There is a quote in *Act of Murder*, the video documentary on *Verbatim*, by a guy who says, 'Am I a murderer? I wasn't one yesterday.' And that to me raises the issue of definition: is somebody a Rapist, or a Murderer, or a Victim? What we are trying to do is to muck up the edges of those definitions, muck up the parameters of people's experiences. It's not concrete: none of the people we talked to, especially for *Touch and Go*, none of them, identified themselves as being a Victim of Rape, a Wife of a Rapist, a Rapist, a Parent of a Rapist, a Child of a Rapist, a Child of a Victim. Those are

artificial categories into which real people do not fit: everybody we've spoken to, especially in terms of Chrissie the main character, is, for example, a rape victim, but also the daughter of someone who has committed a rape or incest; people might be the wife of a rapist, and also the mother of a child who has experienced some sort of rape situation, or they may be a rapist and also a subject of sexual abuse from way back in childhood. The parameters of people's experiences are really mucky, and people don't fit into that kind of pigeonholing, traditional way of approaching history.

**Q. Did the interviewees' perceptions of themselves and their situations alter at all when they saw the play?**

Maybe, but I think real, permanent change can only come through the instrument of time. That is an important aspect of this work as well: with these two plays we publish an

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education kit, very extensively researched and put together by a professional educationalist. We do what I call passing the baton, which is sending the education kit to the appropriate person in the school or prison hierarchy and saying, we

are going to bring in our play, but it's only an hour and a half's worth of material. The play goes for an hour, and then we will talk for up to an hour with the audience afterwards, and we might have a good set-to and an argument, or there might be a really good argument between members of the audience about the nature of violence. Then we leave and go on to the next prison, or the next school, or the next theatre. And, then, the passing the baton is subsequent to that initial experience. The person with the education kit has to use the resource material, and the drama, in a way where it can become educational, and it can be an instrument for change. It can become a tool as opposed to a piece of pure entertainment. So, it is really important to realise that time is the main instrument of change. I can't make that change by performing a play for only an hour, but the person who has made that time commitment to working on a full-time basis with these guys, or school-kids or whatever, that person can use our work as a resource in their efforts to effect behavioural and social change.

Education Kit: Available from Miranda Harcourt, The Community Theatre Trust, PO Box 11-597, Wellington, New Zealand, Fax 04-473-2511

Video Cassette *Act of Murder*, on making of *Verbatim*: Available from Shirley Horrocks, Point of Views Productions, PO Box 78-084, Auckland, New Zealand, Fax 09-360-1044

# Just Women: interviewing women in the Justice Department

Megan Hutching  
& Judith Fyfe

In 1993, in celebration of the centenary of women's suffrage in New Zealand, the Corrections Operations Group of the Department of Justice commissioned the Historical Branch to record ten oral history interviews with former members of staff, write a booklet of biographies based on those interviews, and produce a video. Megan Hutching, oral historian at the Historical Branch, recorded the interviews and wrote the booklet. Judith Fyfe and Tony Hiles were respectively the interviewer for and director of the video, ***Just Women***. The interviewees were chosen by a committee of women in the Corrections group and reflected a range of female experiences over a period of nearly sixty years: the eldest interviewee began work at Mount Eden Prison in 1934 and two of the women retired only in 1991.

The Corrections Operations Group covers three sections – Penal, Community Corrections (Probation), and Psychological Services. Megan began the project by reading the annual reports of the Secretary for Justice and carrying out other research at the National Archives. This helped her devise a series of questions to ask the interviewees. The questions were circulated among the members of the steering committee at Corrections Operations, who made comments and suggested additions. The questions formed the basis of interviews recorded between January and March 1994. The biographies in the booklet, *Just Women*, consist mainly of transcripts of the interviews which were, of necessity, edited in order to make them easier to read. Each woman saw a draft and made corrections and alterations.

This article is based on a conversation about the project between Judith Fyfe and Megan Hutching, recorded on 28 June 1994 – particularly the process of making the video. The transcript has been edited.

Megan Hutching (MH)

There were two parts to the project and two different sets of people doing each part. I'm sure that helped with the

interviews because the women didn't feel that they were repeating information.

I started off doing ten interviews with women who had worked in, what they call now, the Corrections Operations Group – so that's Probation, which is now called Community Corrections, Penal Division and Psychological Services. It was a combination of women who worked in the field and in administration. I recorded the interviews and then recommended to Judith and Tony Hiles who I thought would be the best interviewees for the video.

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**Judith Fyfe was a founder member of the New Zealand Oral History Archive and is one of New Zealand's best known oral historians. Current studies for a law degree at Victoria University have not diminished her involvement in oral history as this article demonstrates.**

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**Megan Hutching is Oral Historian at the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs where she is responsible for recording oral history projects for government departments. Megan is also president of NOHANZ.**

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**Judith Fyfe (JF)** How did you decide?

**MH** It was partly the things they told me, and partly how they interacted with me. Some people are quite lively when you interview them, and others, while they're quite happy to be interviewed, don't give you a great deal back. They give you the information but they don't go the extra distance or get enthusiastic. I'm not quite sure what the reason is for that but it's partly personality.

**JF** The interviewees were all people who were enthusiastic, articulate and descriptive. They'd thought deeply about their experiences and were able to describe them.

**MH** And I think they were used to interacting with other people, which helped because they were able to carry off the show business part of it – because it is a performance really.

**JF** I came into the project after you'd recorded the material and made your recommendations. I listened to all the tapes and noted stories or events, or things I found interesting. Basically most of the women were involved with people who were being punished by the state, people who'd broken the law.

I was interested in the sort of people they were, their attitudes, and also their experiences. It was a combination of things that they thought were unimportant – but to outsiders are fascinating – and those things that they themselves perceived as being significant. I went through the tapes, isolated material and gave it to Tony, recommending that he listened to some of the

material to get the flavour and feel of it. I think it is really important to hear the voices. From that we worked out the areas we would cover.

Tony then decided that he would allow about an hour of video for each woman, which is a lot when you're going to make a 50-minute film. But, in fact, that's what we did, covering the themes and events and issues that had come up on tape.

**MH** Did you talk to them for long before you started filming?

**JF** No, I didn't, because it was quite clear what I wanted to get. I thought some areas were quite sensitive and potentially dicey, but because they had already described them or revealed them to you and you hadn't fallen over in a faint with shock and horror, it meant that they expanded on them with me.

**MH** What sorts of things are you thinking of?

**JF** Well, there were often incidents where I suspect, in some cases, it was the first time that they'd ever discussed them with anybody, and they'd got a very good reaction from you so that when I raised it they had thought about it, and were prepared to volunteer more information. There's that lovely thing of having heard somebody else's material – you can always think of another direction that you can take it.

**MH** That's one of the really good things about oral history when it's done by somebody who comes in from outside. It does have its disadvantages, but often interviewees will be prepared to tell you things that they

wouldn't bother to talk about to their colleagues because they'd each experienced the same sorts of things. It often works really well with an interviewer who is a well-informed outsider, in the sense of being properly prepared and having researched the topic, and therefore able to ask the right sorts of questions.

**JF** I know it's one of the most debated issues in the oral history community – who should be asking the questions. There's no answer to it, except that the material is always quite different. But the outsider is, to some extent, going to be educated, so that, often, in order to explain, the informant will expand, whereas if they're talking to somebody who's a member of the 'family', they shortcut.

**MH** Getting back to the video, when you started each interview did you record a tape identification at the beginning?

**JF** Yes, you have to with film. You have to mark it up for the purposes of editing. I started each interview with the same sets of questions, so that there was an opportunity for them to get used to the situation. Questions they can easily answer and become confident: "I got the first question right, now I can do the second!" Almost exactly the same techniques as I would have used for audio except, by this stage, I had narrowed it right down. I was also using statements: "You were doing such and such at such and such a time. Why?" I think it would have taken us about three times longer to get the depth of material that we got if we hadn't had the audio inter-

views. That hour of video included pictorial and visual material. In fact, we were going to shoot a lot of photographic stuff, but didn't in the end because we felt that the stories were strong enough.

The video was to be archival, so we didn't have to do what is the current fashion, in terms of editing, that is, very quick cuts, very small bites of information. The video consists of about three stories per person – three completed accounts. It takes a while – it's a fascinating process, going with the memory. I like the process.

The whole project took four to five months which is a very fast turn around. It was a very efficient and, I suspect, cost-effective way of working. The people who commissioned that project now have about 60 hours of audio tape material which is excellent for research purposes.

**MH** What about when you first got in touch with the women and broached the idea of the video. I had already softened them up a bit, although I tried to keep it general in case we decided not to choose them.

**JF** That's important too, because it was like starting a month down the track. It worked well. The women knew there was a possibility, so I didn't have to go through lengthy explanations, but the most important thing was that, clearly, they'd really enjoyed the other interview. They felt confident, they'd found it interesting. It had gone well and so they felt no hesitation. Usually you get a bit of resistance, a bit of uncertainty. If that first experience had not gone

well, it would have been a different story altogether. But it had worked well, so they were ready to go the next step.

**MH** I found it easy too because when I first got in touch with them to talk about doing the audio interviews, they had already been contacted by the Justice Department. They had a pretty good idea of what it was going to be all about – or as much as people can before it happens.

**JF** A lot of oral history material is superficial – not enough probing and pursuing, not enough peeling back the layers. The material is of interest, and of value, but it is limited. You don't get that depth of insight. The more people know exactly what's going to happen and why it's being done, the more they're prepared, and the better the quality of the material.

It was one of the most satisfying and successful projects that I've worked on. I've worked on several now where oral history has been the resource for a film, and each one has worked well. When people start off with the big picture, with the movie, there's often a terrific lot of wastage. This system is much more efficient, much more economical, and results in far better quality material. The project that Gaylene Preston recorded with women in World War II was really interesting. We were able to get material on film that we wouldn't have got if we hadn't have gone through that process – not with that generation of women. Having said it once on tape, they then had the courage to expand on film. They became almost embar-

rassingly bold. Twelve months ago I said to Gaylene, "You'll never get them to talk like that on film." I proved to be absolutely wrong but it was only because they had gone through the audio process.

**MH** What about when you were filming – how many of you were there present?

**JF** I think we may have set a record – it was a bit like the von Trapp family. They were all people with the same surname. Tony and I are partners. Christopher, who is Tony's son, was the camera/sound operator. Jo [Hiles] went as production assistant, got everything organised, did all the liaison, and some research. I did the interviewing and had done research. Tony directed. We kept it very small, very tight. We wrote to the women, saying who everybody was, what their function was, how long we'd be at their place, what was required, and also some idea of the areas that we were going to focus on. They were pretty well informed. There were no surprises. Being filmed is very different from being taped. There is a whole part of your personality which is being sucked out, in a way, and the more people can feel that they know exactly what's going on, the more relaxed they are. They were talking about powerful

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Being filmed is very different from being taped. There is a whole part of your personality which is being sucked out...

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stuff and frequently it was very emotional.

**MH** You filmed at everybody's house, didn't you? People are used to home video cameras now, and to people running around the place with their video cameras filming things, so it must seem quite strange to them that you take so much time to set up.

**JF** Yes, I think people are fairly startled. We went in and re-arranged their furniture for a start, and set the place up. We filmed in each one's living room. Minimal lighting – kept it quite small – but it does take time to set up even minimal lighting. That's something to remember about filming – you're dry, in terms of conversation, by the time you start. However, the results are always worth the time that's been put into it because things like lighting do make a difference. It's important to make it clear that we were using broadcast quality equipment and a professional crew.

People are still using video very badly and I do think they have got to raise their standards. It's similar to the way we talk about standards and quality of sound – that it should be faithful to the voice. Well, it's exactly the same with the visual: it should be faithful to that person. It should record an image – fossilize them at that point in time – in a way that they are comfortable with. It does take time. I've worked with people who have a background in film and people who haven't, and there is no question about the difference in the quality. The trouble is that people often shoot material on video and are very

happy to look at what is not particularly well shot material because they're reliving the moment. That's why people can sit through hours of family videos. They were there.

**MH** If someone is thinking of archiving videos, other people aren't going to have that emotional connection to the whole situation of it being filmed. So what the person who filmed it is prepared to put up with, in terms of technical inadequacies, researchers who want to watch it, are not.

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**JF** I think people should be careful before they fly into it. It always amazes me that there are projects that have got very little money, and the first thing they do is buy themselves camcorder gear, without any experience or any training. The results are often very disappointing. It's necessary to get some training. This material is going to be so important in the future. I'm quite sure that every archive that has sound material is going to be underused if there is no video component as well.

**MH** What about actually using video though? I've often thought about that – if I wanted to use a video interview, I'd find it quite distracting to be watching something while I'm trying to get information from it. I'd get fed up with

watching a person talking all the time, whereas, if it's an audio tape, you can concentrate on what you're hearing, and so it's easier to get the information from it.

**JF** In terms of getting factual information, probably the worst way is visually. Because the visual is always the strongest sense – it supersedes anything else. That's why your picture has to be really good otherwise people simply don't hear. It has to be extremely good so that people are no longer mesmerised or distracted but are listening, and even then people don't listen particularly well with film, as we know. It's an impressionistic medium. One of the things I went to look at when I went to the United States in 1987 was how the visual was being incorporated into oral history. There were some projects where they were recording everything on video and they found that researchers always asked, "Could we just have the sound tape?" These places found that they were having to make audio copies of all their film. They also had other terrible problems because the video format changed every three years or so. They had equipment that was obsolete and you couldn't get access to the interviews until they had been put onto another video format. It was disastrous in lots of ways.

There were two places where it worked well. One was where video had been used to record visual information that supplemented and complemented the audio interview. For archival purposes, I think the ideal is to do the sound

interview, and then do about five minutes on video – showing where the person lives or works, what they look like walking up the garden path, perhaps a few of the artefacts that may have been described, things that are relevant to the material. It works beautifully that way.

**MH** Or if you film them doing something that is difficult to describe.

**JF** Absolutely. It's a wonderful way of getting material that you just can't get any other way, and for showing something about their body language.

The best use of video that I ever saw was at Gallaudet University for the Deaf in Washington DC, where it was literally giving a voice to people. They used two cameras in a small studio and they had a split screen. The shot was wider than you would normally have because they were signing. It was right down to the waist and you could see their hands. The person asking the questions and the person answering the questions were on the screen at the same time, so you weren't missing any information. The procedure was similar to the methods we use. The interviewee was visited in their home, and basic biographical information was collected. It was a day's work to get the interview recorded. The people at Gallaudet estimated that it took about eight hours to generate an hour and a half of tape. I think the use of a split screen is potentially the best for recording an ordinary interview, if you are going to use video, and there are several advantages with a static camera

and a wider shot. The viewer isn't distracted by camera movement, therefore they can listen and absorb information, and the picture doesn't feel static because there is natural movement from the two bodies on screen. They can also see the expressions and reactions of both interviewee and interviewer simultaneously.

*Oral historians interested in using video may find the following hints useful. The Oral History Centre at the National Library may also be able to help you.*

### **Video Checklist – helpful hints for video virgins (courtesy of Tony Hiles)**

- *Turn on the power and take the lens cap off.*
- *A white balance may be required. This simply sets the camera sensor system so that whatever colour it 'reads', it will read correctly. Usually a sheet of white paper, well lit, in front of the lens for five to ten seconds does the trick.*
- *Focus. The most accurate way to check focus is to zoom the lens as tight as possible onto the subject, adjust the focus till sharp, then zoom out to the required shot.*
- *It is better to shoot with the camera closer and the zoom wider than to place the camera well back and use a tighter zoom. When the zoom is tight (the equivalent of a long lens), depth of focus is reduced, so if your subject moves back and forth, they will drift in and out of focus. A long lens may also increase any vibrations through the floor.*
- *Light. Try to avoid shooting into windows as your subject may become silhouetted, or the image will burn out. If you want them by a window, try to shoot along the wall so that they are lit by the light from the window but the window itself is out of your frame.*
- *Eye-line. Generally, the closer the camera is to a subject's eye-line, the better. Presuming they will look at you during an interview, the camera should theoretically be alongside you. The final position is at your discretion so that it does not intrude.*
- *Shot size. Aesthetically, the most pleasing shot is the Medium Close-up: the bottom of the frame cutting through the top of the chest, the top of the frame above the subject's head. A good tip for establishing head-room is to have the subject's eyes approximately two-thirds of the way up the frame.*
- *Depending on the amount of movement your subject makes (including hand movement), you may wish to widen the shot. Another rule of thumb is 'hands in or out'. It can be quite distracting if bits of hand frequently appear, so either loosen the shot to get them in, or tighten the shot to lose them.*
- *Presuming that the camera will be locked off and essentially unattended during interviews, it is probably safer to err very slightly on the side of a wider shot. Subjects in a close-up may shift in a chair (often*

triggered by a tricky question) and end up in the wrong side of the frame, which is then disconcerting to watch.

- Remember there is a microphone on your camera which will hear you better than it will your subject, so when you

ask questions, don't shout.

- Shooting moving pictures can be great fun. As with all oral history, become thoroughly acquainted with your gear – you will get better results.

**See you at Cannes ...**

# Monty Soutar Tribal History in History

During the past ten years there has been a marked increase in the number of published tribal histories, particularly from within universities (1). More significantly these have been the work of Maori writers perceptively aware of tribal readership. One hundred years ago there arose another spate of published material relating to tribal histories. The authorship of these earlier works was made up almost completely of non-Maori, male settlers whose views were determined by their intellectual, political and moral beliefs. The changing visibility of tribal histories over the past one hundred and fifty years indicates the necessity for a clear historiographic understanding.

In this paper an analysis of two tribal histories is undertaken from the point of view of historical methodology in an attempt to determine what each historian's objectives were in writing tribal history and the extent to which each compromised the historical method to meet their objectives. Taking as its central focus two publications which draw extensively on aspects of Ngati Porou history, the writer will argue that tribal histories exist only as they are interpreted by their authors during a particular historical period and that this interpretation is influenced by the author's personal background and experience (2).

The history of the Ngati Porou tribe forms an excellent context in which to demonstrate this claim. While no definitive publication on the history of this tribe exists, there have been several sporadic attempts to place on record facets of its history. These include articles, books and unpublished theses by writers inside and outside of universities. The writers have been of both Maori and European descent, and collectively they are a fair representation of the types of historians who have published tribal histories in New Zealand throughout the last one hundred years. The two publications which I have selected are interesting

methodologically because they reflect the distinct periods in which their authors wrote and the diverse backgrounds from which they came. The publications are Walter Gudgeon's 'The Maori tribes of the East Coast', and Robert Drummond's 'The origins and early history of Ngati Porou' (3).

In order to analyse the historical methodology used in these publications I have found it necessary to construct a framework from which to assess the factors present in each author's personal and societal background, that influenced the way in which they interpreted the past. These factors are grouped into two major categories: those that determined which source material was made available to the historians and those which influenced the way in which

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**Monty Soutar lectures in the Maori Studies Department at Massey University. His special area of interest is tribal research methodology, of which oral history is a component. He is currently engaged in a large oral history project interviewing members of "C" Company of the 28th Maori Battalion and their families. All the members of "C" Company came from the region between Opotiki and Gisborne.**

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they processed them. A thematic approach is undertaken in applying this framework to the two Ngati Porou publications.

### Factors regulating the totality of material available to the historian

Before historians have the opportunity to select their source material, certain predetermined factors (e.g. their credibility within tribal society) are at work governing the total array of material which they are able to access. The flow chart diagram illustrated in table 1 suggests that all source material can be separated into two sorts. The first of these are resources of tribal scholarship. Access to tribal resources, whether they take the form of oral history, the possession of which belongs to the present tribal authorities, or jealously guarded manuscripts held by almost every family of note within the tribe, depends largely on who the researcher is and for what purpose they require the material.

If the researcher is a member of the tribe there are any number of attributes they may be required to possess if they are to obtain the full cooperation of their kaumatua (elders). Whakapapa (genealogical connections) determines which members of the tribe are privy to historical records. While a direct genealogical link with one's informants is preferred it is not essential. Descent from the families who have been the repositories of history within the tribe increases one's right to the role. Background knowledge of how the researcher has

been nurtured or groomed for the task is also important. Thus, the historian who is known personally to the kaumatua is more likely to receive approval to access their records. Those who are chosen are the type kaumatua are confident can be guided in the use of that information. I recall, as an undergraduate, a young woman who set out to write a history of her hapu (sub-tribe) as part of her MA thesis. At first her kaumatua were enthusiastic and gave lots of assistance. However, because she did not want to include certain mate-

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### The qualities of the good researcher are best exemplified by the tupuna (ancestor) Maui-tikitiki-a-Taranga...

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rial, which her informants felt was necessary for the history, access was soon closed to her and the project came to a halt. To this day it has never been completed. Her informants had their own agenda and they wished to use her as a mouth-piece to advance that agenda. Researchers who belong to the tribe know the sorts of requirements for recording tribal history. They are often at pains trying to find a balance between meeting these demands and remaining faithful to a western historical tradition. Anne Salmond found this to be the case with Maori graduates writing tribal histories at universities throughout the 1980s. She wrote that they were:  
...actively trying to

reconcile material from a political tradition of knowledge, with the demands of an academic tradition that looks for definitive accounts with a strong and simple plot. (4) Some researchers, Pakeha and Maori alike, have a superficial understanding of the pragmatics of contemporary Maori society or feel that cultural sensitivities should take a backseat to the needs of scientific advancement. Hence, they have refused to be held to the task of presenting their informants' view as the view, or of leaving out material of a sensitive nature at the request of their informants. Like the young woman above, these historians have ended up gaining little access to tribal repositories.

The notion of seeking knowledge from one's elders as expressed in the whakatauki (proverbial expression) whakarongo ki te kupu a tou matua (5) is inherent in Maori society. Advice on the way one can best obtain this knowledge is recorded in Maori oral literature. The qualities of the good researcher are best exemplified by the tupuna (ancestor) Maui-tikitiki-a-Taranga:

*In his encounters with his ancestors when seeking knowledge from them, Maui dramatised the ambivalent relationship of tension and indulgence between young and old ... Maui's kuia had primeval forces at their command which could destroy him should he try their patience. Therefore, he had to tread carefully and use all his guile to get the information he wanted. Above all, he had to be*

patient and persistent to achieve his aims. (6)

However, if the historian is not a member of the tribe, patience, and persistence, may not be sufficient. Connections through marriage may give them further credibility. One European writer received access to authorities within the Ringatu faith throughout the 1970s partly because of his marriage to their near-kin relative. More often than not the sympathetic ear and the unquestioning belief which a good interviewer is often able to proffer is enough to gain cooperation on the part of

some kaumatua. In some cases where their own relatives have shown little interest in them or the history they possess, outside observers keen to listen have found themselves exposed to a goldmine of information. If the researcher is a member of another tribe this will generally work to their disadvantage. Iwi (tribes) are strongly suspicious of the motives of Maori from other tribes. Even within a tribe informants may elect to withhold information from a researcher of a neighbouring hapu or whanau (family group) in case it is used for a purpose for which it was not designed.

Age and gender are other determinants which advantage or hinder the historian in search of tribal history. Knowledge in Maori society has always been associated with maturity, hence the whakatauki:

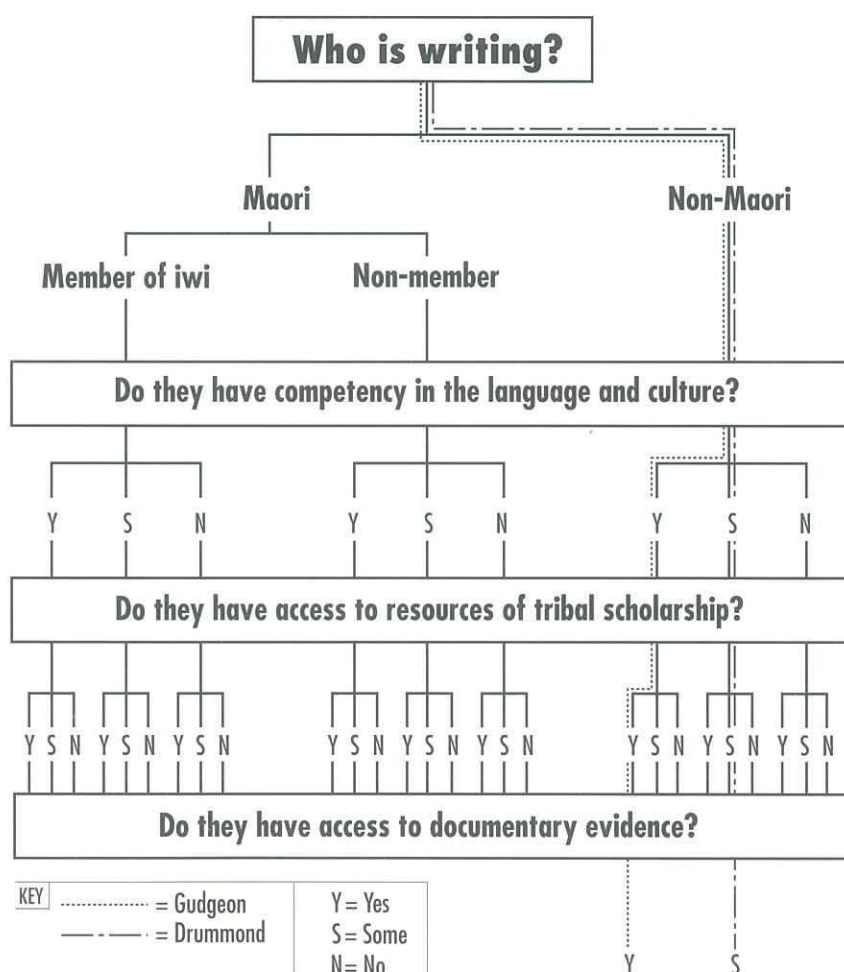
*E tu huru ma, e noho huru pango.*  
(Let the grey-headed man speak, while the black cropped hair remain seated.)

It is highly unlikely that a tribal history written by a young person, without the guidance of elders, will be accepted by a Maori audience. The cultural acknowledgment of historical tradition as a male domain has often meant that many women are neither encouraged nor assisted in pursuing this field. Today this attitude is changing as can be seen in the recent success of Judith Binney's *Mihaia* and Ngahuia Te Awekotuku's critical history of tourism in Rotorua (8).

When all these factors are taken into consideration how did our two historians of Ngati Porou history fare in terms of access to tribal resources?

Walter Edward Gudgeon was born in London in 1841. He arrived with his parents nine years later in New Plymouth. Lacking a formal education it was a credit to his character that he was later to aspire to such positions as Under Secretary for Defence, Commissioner of Police and Resident Commissioner to the Cook Islands (9). Inducted into the army in 1865, the young Gudgeon first came into contact with members of the Ngati Porou tribe while serving alongside them during the

**Table 1: Framework to assess Historical Methodology**  
(Factors regulating the totality of material available to the historian of tribal history.)





Taranaki land disputes. As early as 1869 he had visited the Ngati Porou region and met with some of their foremost chiefs. In 1874 as a Sub-Inspector of the Armed Constabulary he took up residence in the Poverty Bay district and began a rapport with the tribes in that region which was to culminate in his publication of their history some twenty years later. As Resident Magistrate in the area from 1878 to 1880 he came in contact with many Ngati Porou elders at a time when authentic oral traditions were available to those Europeans who showed the necessary attributes.

But it was as a judge of the Native Land Court that Gudgeon gathered most of the material he used for his publications. Throughout the early 1890s he adjudicated upon numerous land disputes held at Waiomatatini in the heart of Ngati Porou territory. The minutes recorded for these cases fill hundreds of pages of minute books (10). Each book is rich in traditions and tribal history since those who came before the Court 'had to prove their claims by citing traditional evidence' (11). When the Court sat for months on end in the one place, it is easy to imagine the opportunities Gudgeon had to study the world of Ngati Porou oral history. His enquiries within the community were most likely helped by the fact that he exhibited an appreciation for the Maori and their traditions. As a young man he once wrote:

*I knew but little Maori, but had a natural sympathy with them and association with all ranks of a very fine tribe, gave me a*

*knowledge of their language and customs that have been of incalculable benefit to me all through life and has given a position that nothing else could have done. The highest degree of Oxford could not have been of the same assistance as my knowledge of Maori (12).*

Commenting on his association with a Taranaki rangatira (chief) he noted 'The old man has evidently taken a fancy to me, probably because he finds me a devourer of old Maori legends and traditional history, and on these subjects he is great' (13).

These two statements indicate that Gudgeon was in possession of two of the attributes discussed above, namely, a sincere interest and an attentive ear. It is also certain that he enjoyed the confidence of at least one tohunga for in the introduction to part two of his article he wrote 'many of these genealogies are given under the authority of the most learned of all the Ngati Porou *Tohungas*, viz: Mohi Ruatapu' (14). Because of the interest he showed in Maori history and the position he held within the community, it may be assumed that Gudgeon had reasonably full access to the authorities on Ngati Porou tradition. What is not known is whether he gleaned information from repositories who participated on the side of the Hauhau during the wars of the 1860s. Many Ngati Porou during this period did not identify themselves as loyalists but rather as sharing a common interest with members of the Hauhau movement. It can be assumed that if personal relations with

these groups were broken off or never begun as a result of the intervening war, Gudgeon's history might reflect the views of his Queenite informants as opposed to a tribal view of the past. Why, for example, is he encouraged in his article to single out for commendation the Aitanga-a-Mate, one of the few hapu who had sided with the Government during that period? Of old they evidently were not considered high-class warriors; but in 1865, and up to the end of the war between the Maori and the Government, no tribe was more reliable in the field than the Aitanga-a-Mate (15).

What also remains speculative is whether Gudgeon was sanctioned by the tribe to publish this material. Considering this was a period in which such courtesies were often ignored it is highly unlikely. If this was the case, then there is no certainty that Gudgeon's dissertation is presented in a form characteristic of Ngati Porou thought.

Twenty-three-year-old Robert John Hugh Drummond of Masterton presented a thesis on the early history of Ngati Porou to the University of Victoria. During his research he had received information (mainly by correspondence) from several Ngati Porou authorities. A brief perusal of the list of Drummond's informants seems to indicate his preference for academic authorities. The five informants he named were Sir Apirana Ngata M.A., L.L.B., M.P., Rev. Poihipi Kohere, Mr. Henare Poananga L.L.B., Mr. Wai Te Awarau L.L.B., and Dr. Wi Repa M.D. (16). Drummond had first

been introduced to Ngati Porou traditions by various members of the tribe some years earlier when teaching in the district (17). However, he did not indicate who those persons were, perhaps because their stories were dismissed by the authorities mentioned as 'over-fanciful', or 'inaccurate' (18).

While it is certain Drummond had recourse to resources of tribal scholarship he cannot be said to have had the same degree of access as Gudgeon. Much of Drummond's material was gleaned from correspondence and this may have limited his access to the potentially rich data which oral discussion can often provide: in particular, it could have furnished corroborative evidence for his particular conception of Ngati Porou history. Whether or not he was aware of the regional similarities of his informants is open to conjecture. It is quite possible that he was mindful of the fact and overlooked or suppressed its implications. However, it is equally possible that he was simply naive.

Returning to table 1, it can be seen that the second

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The historian's level of competency in the Maori language determines the form in which oral information will be made available.

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type of source material which the tribal historian may access is documentary evidence. This includes official, semi-official, archival and public documents or literature. While one might think that all potential historians have this access, this is not always the case. Some Maori, schooled in the oral traditions, for example, may not be aware of what is available in print. If they were to write a tribal history they might leave out important literary evidence simply because they do not know it exists. Some official records are in turn restricted by the governing authority with whom they lie. No tribal history today should be written without some recourse to the records of the Maori Land Court (formerly known as the Native Land Court). Their value as documents of the past have been emphasised numerous times throughout this century by various historians. Sir Apirana Ngata, who made a thorough study of the records held in the Gisborne regional office, stated that the Court minute books particularly, would 'provide the research student with the richest sources of information' (19).

Until very recently these records could only be accessed by a member of the public after they had paid a rather costly viewing fee. Drummond met with this problem. He wrote, 'owing to the policy the New Zealand Government has adopted and maintained, of demanding a "search fee" from anyone wishing to examine the records of the Native Land Court, this valuable source of information has been closed to students' (20).

Drummond did not reference a single note in his thesis as having come from Maori Land Court records. As a result much of the detail about particular events, which later writers were able to draw from Land Court records, is absent in his writing. In contrast, Gudgeon had ready access to those records which had been documented prior to his taking the judgeship in the East Coast region and he scribed several minute books himself. With the exception of the minute books the two writers appear to have made maximum use of all other public documentary evidence available to them at the time.

Research on tribal history is often complicated by language barriers. The richness and idiomatic information which one language carries is often not able to be translated satisfactorily into the other. Therefore language competency has a major role to play in the research and interpretation of source material. The historian's level of competency in the Maori language determines the form in which oral information will be made available. Gudgeon was well versed in the Maori language. Members of Hugh Drummond's family have no recollections of their brother being able to converse in Maori. (21). Nor is there any indication throughout his thesis to suggest otherwise. One can expect then, that Gudgeon would have had access to information in Maori that Drummond did not.

In terms of the total array of material available to each historian we can now surmise the following: Gudgeon was in the ideal position in that he spoke Maori and had access to

evidence both of tribal scholarship and of a literary nature. For all intents and purposes he had full access to the sort of material which is required for a tribal history. Drummond was not so lucky. He did not speak Maori and had no access to the minute books. But he was able to approach a number of knowledgeable kaumatua. On this basis Drummond can be said to have had less material than Gudgeon to work with.

### **Factors influencing the selection of source material and the way in which the historian interprets it**

Faced with these varying quantities of source material our historians came to write their tribal histories. Each selected from their emporium of material the major facts which they considered relevant to give tone and shape to their history. Having selected their facts, they exercised further judgement when they evaluated and interpreted them. We may now ask what can be discerned in each of the historian's lives that widens our understanding of how they selected their facts and why they came to edit the material in the way that they did? To this end, the second part of my framework (table 2) asks four questions: why are they writing, who is writing, when are they writing, and what literary tradition have they inherited?

#### *Why are they writing?*

The historians' objectives are the first of the catalysts which determine what goes into a tribal history. In most cases there will be more than one

reason why they are writing and some of these, the historians themselves will not be conscious of. As an illustration consider Drummond. He relied heavily on his Ngati Porou informants for much of the material he presented in his thesis. But these informants also edited the past in the interests of family or hapu

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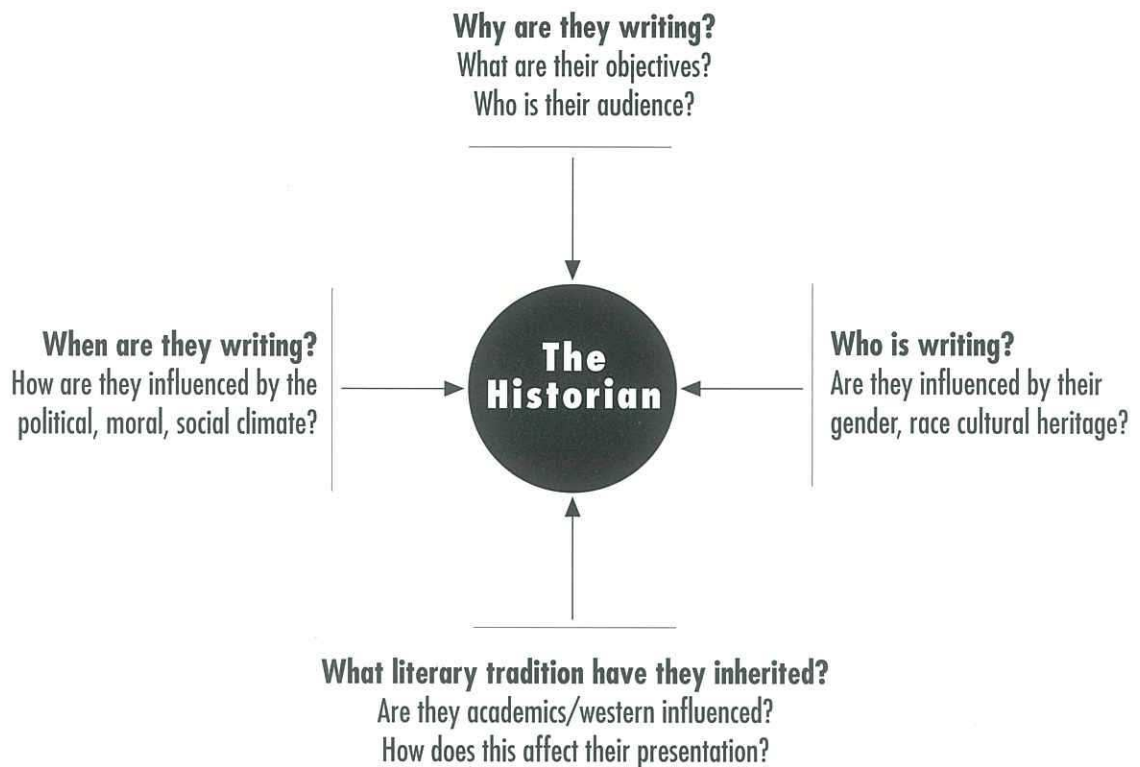
### **The validity and form of any piece of history is dependent not only on who transmits the message but also who receives it.**

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pride. If the areas to which Drummond's informants belonged were mapped out one would see that they represent hapu within the central and northern areas of Ngati Porou. Consequently the history Drummond presents carries a heavy bias towards those hapu. It briefly mentions the two southern hapu, Te Whanau-a-Ruataupare and Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti. Incidentally, Drummond states that there were ten hapu 'that go to make up the modern Ngati Porou' (22). Yet only eighteen years earlier Ngati Porou voters had enrolled under no less than twenty (23). No doubt Drummond would be surprised and probably angry at such an analysis of his work. And his anger would in a sense be justified since he did not set out with the deliberate intention of putting up a smokescreen to mask his informants' self-interest.

In his dissertation, Gudgeon was reacting to and challenging a theory which held that prior to the arrival of the Hawaiki settlers led by Kupe, New Zealand was uninhabited. According to him, this supposition was supported by Europeans and maintained 'even among the most learned Maoris' (24). Much of the focus in Gudgeon's articles then, relates to the origins of the hapu within Ngati Porou and their neighbouring tribes. Any history that he includes which cannot be related directly to the evolution of these groups appears to be incidental and is given by Gudgeon only to explain how particular groups were ousted from the region. In order to prove his point, Gudgeon offered genealogical and traditional evidence which was intended to show that most of these groups were descended from ancestors who had been in New Zealand generations before the Hawaiki immigrants. To this end he was not successful. Of the fifty-two genealogical charts which Gudgeon published, only four can be said to trace back to ancestors beyond Kupe and of these, only the Maui line (25) contained tupuna for whom there exist traditions supporting their residence in New Zealand. In more than one instance Gudgeon was biased in order to achieve his objective. In the case of the Whanau-a-Rakairoa people at least two versions of their origins exist and both of these were recounted before the Native Land Court in 1886 and again in 1890. Yet only one version was admitted by the Judge presiding over the case and Gudgeon gave this as the

**Table 2: Factors influencing the selection of source material and the way in which the historian interprets it.**



definitive version in part two of his article. As a historian he should have brought to the reader's notice the second version regardless of the Court's findings.

The validity and form of any piece of history is dependent not only on who transmits the message but also who receives it. Thus, the audience for whom the historian is writing has a major role to play in what finally goes to print. Judging by the academic tone in both histories they were intended for an educated audience. They were histories about Maori but for Pakeha readership. Gudgeon's audience was certainly a select one. Given his appetite for personal authority one might attribute

part of his motivation for writing to the opportunity he had of enhancing his standing among the members of the Polynesian Society, a group that included among others Percy Smith, Edward Tregear, and Gudgeon's brother-in-law Elsdon Best, the leading figures in Maori ethnohistory at that time.

When one considers Drummond's use of western interpretive mechanisms, it becomes obvious that he was definitely not writing for tribal or even Maori readership. His presentation is locked into periods and overly concerned with dates. No use is made of the Maori language. In fact, barring two phrases, the only Maori given at all throughout

the whole thesis are the proper names of the places and the characters involved. Much of the detail which a Maori reader would want to know has been passed over or summarised, illustrating that Drummond decided what was important for his audience to know about Ngati Porou.

*Who is writing?*

E. H. Carr once said that in determining the historical worth of any work of history we should first be concerned not with the facts it contains but with the historian who wrote it (26). It is important to know, for example, such fundamental information as the writer's gender, race and occupation since anyone of these can

influence the editing process.

The average tribal history carries a heavy male bias being mostly about men as seen through the eyes of men. It is only recently, in response to western historians' attempts to place women in mainstream history, that some writers have brought gender issues to the fore when writing about selected periods of tribal history (27). Both histories can be said to be characteristic of the former style, including women only in so far as they figured in the cause of battles or as progenitors of well known hapu. Drummond, for example, does not make reference to any female until well into the second chapter of his thesis.

Race and cultural upbringing can also influence the way in which historians interpret their source material. If writers are European it is important to know what they thought of Maori people and their culture? Did they impose their own system of values on the iwi's history? Or if they were Maori, what sorts of sympathetic identifications did they make? As has been seen, Gudgeon was of English extraction, a farm labourer who rose 'to the heights of power' (28), a power which he believed was his 'manifest destiny', and which he relished never more blatantly, one writer claims, than as Resident Commissioner to the Cook Islands. 'His carriage raced around the island, flags flying, four outriders in attendance – and his appetite for executive, legislative and judicial power so out of control, that several Europeans asked the Governor and the New Zealand parliament for

relief from his "tyranny" (29). This pathology of power is at times reflected in his writings on Ngati Porou where he tends to take the point of view of the superior person making a judicious analysis of their history.

To take the impression given in his biography and say that Gudgeon was without racial blemish I think would be naive. Dick Scott has drawn from Gudgeon's journals numerous racist statements referring to both the New Zealand and Cook Island Maori. The Minister for the Cook Islands, Sir Maul Pomare, for example was described as 'a wretched half-caste Minister... like all of his breed' (30). Condescending remarks such as 'blood-thirsty' and 'untutored savages' are scattered throughout his Ngati Porou articles. Disbelieving one tradition he wrote:

*We are than treated to one of those childish stories, with which the Maoris delight to ornament their traditions, and are expected to believe that dried crayfish, that had been steeped in salt water, were collected and presented to the Ngati Ira, and that the tribe in question ate those fish with child-like confidence .... We may however, pass over these little embellishments... (31)*

There is no doubt that Gudgeon's experience as a magistrate had a major influence on the type of history he produced. Although it is agreed that he had access to most of the tribal authorities of his time, his work may not be a composite of all of their evidence. This is difficult to assess since at no stage

throughout his articles does he cite his authorities. However, an analysis of his rulings on cases set down in the Waiapu minute books for the period 1890 to 1893 does suggest that a good deal of his material was drawn from evidence given in those land cases. As to what degree the judge faced evidence fabricated for the purpose of claiming land would require inestimable research. In the absence of such research many would expect that considering his experience in Maori society up to that time and also the availability of cross-references, that Gudgeon was in a position to distinguish fact from fiction. However, it is clear from a reading of these cases that Gudgeon chose some of his information from disparate versions, some of which were manufactured to enhance the witnesses' case.

Some sorts of 'cannons of verifiability' need to be applied to his work to determine whether the version he came up with is in fact history. Were his authorities those claimants whose cases were upheld in Court? To use the evidence of those who lost the cases would be to discredit his own Court judgements. If they were, was he justified in accepting their version simply because men of an outside culture had deemed it correct? We are informed by the lawyer and parliamentarian E. G. B. Moss that a number of Gudgeon's decisions with regard to land were suspect to say the least. Speaking in parliament he indicated that Gudgeon had a vested interest in more than one land case that came before his Court.

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Many Maori people themselves regard dates as inappropriate since for them the verity of their history has never been in question.

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*I contend, Sir, that this Judge was the Judge of the Native Land Court in New Zealand who held the record for decisions reversed on appeal. I say, Sir, that when this Judge was in Poverty Bay he purchased from the Natives to whom he awarded it the Wharekirauponga No.1 Block, and is still, so far as I know, the happy proprietor of that block. I say further, Sir, that this is the Judge who recently sat in his Court and validated the lease for 500 pounds. (32)*

In a harsh critique of his service in the Cook Islands, Dick Scott paints Gudgeon as one who operated with dual incentives, that is, working toward the objectives set down in the terms of his employment while at the same time expanding his own personal authority and profit.

Drummond, appreciative of the Maori contribution to society, was beyond making supremacist remarks. However, having had a rather sheltered life in the Wairarapa, sheltered from Maori contact that is, and although he made great strides to understand how Ngati Porou thought about their past, his work only partially reflects that

thought. As an illustration, he records: 'about the year 1460, Poroumata, his brother Haukore and his sons, whose names are not important, since they were going to an early death' (33). Yet a Maori, writing about the same event in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, felt it of enough value to list the full names of the six boys and produce a genealogy to this effect (34). It is a well known fact that in Maori oral tradition even those tupuna without issue are recorded by name, particularly where they have contributed to the enhancement of tribal mana. Here Drummond has overlaid the tradition with what he feels is important and in so doing imposed his own views on that history.

#### *When are they writing?*

Tribal histories have followed an ebb and flow pattern where the style of writing and themes emphasised have altered according to the political, social and moral climate of the period in which they were written. Allan Hanson has shown how at the turn of the century when the immediate political aim was to 'assimilate Maoris into White life and culture', historians and anthropologists reconstructed and sometimes reinvented aspects of Maori culture and its history (35). Post World War II writings have reflected a sense of guilt on the part of Pakeha, where writers have now adopted a Maori oriented view of New Zealand's early past, seeing Maori as intelligent and an initiative-taking people. It is essential to the task at hand then, to know as much as possible about the period in

which our historians were writing and how it affected the way in which they wrote.

The 1890s had been preceded by several decades of literature devoted to the problem of the origin of the Polynesians. The earlier writers attributed the Maori a Semitic origin while the decade immediately preceding the 1890s proposed an Aryan origin. While these hypotheses have been dismissed as absurdities it is interesting to consider the effect such literature had on our two historians. The focus of Gudgeon's dissertation certainly harks back to these earlier publications. The whole of his work was dedicated to clarifying the origins of Ngati Porou and its neighbouring tribes. Drummond related more than Gudgeon about the events concerning the development of modern Ngati Porou, but could not dismiss theorising on how they came to be.

In the 1890s most Pakeha historians believed the Maori to be a dying race and thus saw themselves as bound to the duty of recording the Maori past before it was lost for ever. Hence we find the formation of the Polynesian Society by Percy Smith and his peers. As Gudgeon was a founding member of the society, it is likely that another factor in his motivation was this race to save the Maori record from extinction. Reading between the lines one senses that Drummond was writing with this same sense of duty to record the Maori past not only for posterity but also so that Europeans might understand and appreciate it better.

*What literary tradition have they inherited?*

As a western-trained academic Drummond was particularly concerned with such peculiarities as dates and years. There is the assumption that dates help justify the validity of Maori history but it has been argued that any framework which attempts to order Maori traditions in these terms is inaccurate by virtue of the fact that there is insufficient reference material to arrive at anything other than conjectured dates (36). Many Maori people themselves regard dates as inappropriate since for them the verity of their history has never been in question. Gudgeon used the generations in genealogies to unravel the order of events for his histories.

With regard to the size of group studied, Gudgeon followed on from the example of earlier writers who had cut across tribal boundaries and lumped groups into regional pockets, studying them collectively. Drummond looked at the early development of Ngati Porou from a tribal perspective. Initially the Maori were conceived of as a single group and a valid category for the study of past life in New Zealand. Tribes were lumped together in both national and regional studies. The focus was then narrowed to a study of single tribal units. Because of the complexities involved in representing each hapu's interests in a tribal history writers have now turned to studying particular sub-groups within the tribe.

Both writers were influenced in some way by those who had written before

them. For example, Drummond relied on Gudgeon for much of his source material. The Gudgeon influence in Drummond's work is perhaps most obvious and is made clear in the very title of his thesis. Drummond was heavily influenced by Smith's theory of the Great Fleet and also perpetuated the hypothesis of an Ayran origin for the Maori which most scholars of his time believed (37).

### Summary

In summary then, we have looked at two histories which relate to the Ngati Porou iwi. While acknowledging the tremendous work undertaken by the men who wrote them, I have endeavoured to show that in their writings both of these historians inevitably presented their own views about the iwi's history and that these views were coloured in optimistic or

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...the surest way of minimising the factors which work in opposition to the historian trying to portray an objective view of the past is to produce composite histories. By this I mean tribal histories which are the product of not one but many writers.

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pessimistic fashion by the political or moral atmosphere in which they wrote. The informants from which they gathered their material were also guilty of editing their information for hapu or family pride and it has been suggested that these writers may not have been aware of this.

Walter Gudgeon produced a history which was heavily influenced by both the mood of the day and his own personal biases. Following a hapu by hapu analysis he attempted to prove a pre-Kupe derivation for the people living in the Tairawhiti district. Although he made the most use of the genealogical method he was unable to substantiate his hypothesis and in more than one instance he did not use all the available evidence to test and corroborate his arguments.

Robert Drummond set out to record the origins and early history of Ngati Porou. It appears, however, that he was not totally familiar with the pragmatics of tribal society. His naivety led to an unbalanced record of the Ngati Porou past. It reflected the ancestors from which his informants descended in good light, but did little or nothing for the rest of Ngati Porou. The emphasis on origins was a carry over from what Gudgeon and earlier writers felt was important to know about the Maori past. Genealogies were used sparingly and out of unison with the text suggesting that Drummond did not really appreciate the crucial role whakapapa plays in the relating of tribal history.

The framework introduced in this essay and its application to these two works

has disclosed the writers' limitations in dealing with tribal history. Even Gudgeon, who met all the requirements regarding access and consultation, was unable to produce objective histories. Underlying this criticism, of course, is the assumption that a 'perfect' tribal history is attainable. The various social factors which were acting on these writers suggests the opposite, that a 'perfect' history is only a theoretical ideal which can never exist in practice since all history is limited by the human context in which it is produced. This is a plausible argument especially in these modern times where we must accept that adequate and complete evidence for the reconstruction of iwi history no longer exists.

Indeed, a 'perfect' tribal history such as Ngati Porou's may never ever be realised. However, that should not stop historians from trying to achieve this ideal. Historians today do have the advantage of hindsight and by avoiding the pitfalls into which our two writers fell they may yet come closer to producing objective tribal history. In my view, the surest way of minimising the factors which work in opposition to the historian trying to portray an objective view of the past is to produce composite histories. By this I mean tribal histories which are the product of not one but many writers. Consider, for example, the merits of combining the two case illustrations discussed in this essay. Would this result in a more objective overview than any single publication has given? Or even more interesting, what about a tribal history

which compounded the views of every hapu within the tribe?

This is the direction in which I envisage tribal history heading. At present some Ngati Porou pakeke have proposed the idea of co-opting the services of a group of researchers representing each of its hapu, to produce not one book, but a series of volumes. This provides a much broader view of their history than any individual could give and should meet with the approval of all the sub-groups which come under the Ngati Porou umbrella. Such an undertaking raises the question however, 'Is there a place for the professional historian in tribal history?' I believe there is. Of course, if they are members of the tribe, then they have every right to contribute to their hapu's perspective on their history. But I see the historian's role as more of an editor or facilitator. Already there are moves afoot in the Taranaki region: professional historians have been taken on board to assist researchers in the preparation of historical data for Taranaki land claims. It is in this role that I see the historian being of most benefit to the iwi in the future.

While the editor might be Maori or Pakeha, the hapu perspectives could only be given by members within the hapu since in this day and age it is highly unlikely that the non-Maori researcher can achieve the same degree of access to resources of tribal scholarship. Nor is it expected that the non-Maori can fully penetrate the psyche of the tribal member or fully appreciate the intricacies which explain the views each

hapu holds. It is important for such projects then, that more Maori seek training in history at an academic level.

As a final note, it must be said that from a cultural perspective the two publications analysed in this essay do not appear to serve the needs of the tribe about whom they were written. This is because they try to fit tribal history into a Western model of history. Should we ever achieve the ideal tribal history, it will be ideal only in that it will have satisfied the research criteria from a European perspective. It will have added to the existing knowledge that we have about the Maori past, but it will have done little for Maori people. Therefore while this essay has focused on tribal history written for public consumption, sometime in the future consideration will need to be given to a framework which analyses the criteria required for tribal history written specifically for a tribal audience.

## Endnotes

**Abbreviation** *JPS* *Journal of the Polynesian Society*

- 1) See for example Ruka Broughton, 'Ko nga paiaka o Nga Raura Kiihahi', MA thesis, (Victoria University, 1979); A. C. Lyaal, *Whakatohea of Opotiki*, (Wellington, 1979); Jane McCrae, 'Participation: Native Committees and Papatupu Block Committees in Tai Tokerau', MA thesis, (Auckland University, 1981); D. D. Munn, 'Ngati Manu: an ethnohistorical account', MA thesis, (Auckland



University, 1981); Gail Dallimore, 'The Land Court at Matakaoa', MA thesis, (Auckland University, 1983); Wharetoroa Kerr, 'Te Tahaaroa a Ruapuutahanga', MA thesis, (Auckland University, 1983); J. A. W. Steedman, *Nga Ohaki o Nga Wharau o Tauranga Moana*, (Tauranga, 1984); Neil Grove, 'Te Whatanui: traditional Maori leader', MA thesis, (Victoria University, 1985); J. Sissons, 'Te Mana o te Waimana: Tuhoe history of the Tauranga valley', PhD thesis, (Auckland, 1985); J. M. McEwen, *Rangitane; a tribal history*, (Wellington, 1986); Peter K. S. Waaka, 'Whakarewarewa: the growth of a Maori village', MA thesis, (Auckland University, 1986); S. Melbourne, 'Te manemanerau a te Kawanatanga: a history of the confiscation of Tuhoe lands in the Bay of Plenty', MA thesis, (Waikato University, 1987); Henare Tate (ed.), *Karanga Hokiangā*, (Auckland, 1987); Wiremu Hohepa, 'Nga marae o Te Mahurehure', MA thesis, (Massey University, 1989).

A tribal history in this paper refers to a published secondary work or an unpublished thesis which uses primary and/or secondary sources to present a view of the development of a tribal group. These are considered published accounts since in practice the public has access to them.

2) The tribal boundaries of Ngati Porou are roughly defined as the rural district between Gisborne and Potaka (west of Hicks Bay). It is a land of formidable hills and rocky coastline where the population is largely Maori. It is perhaps for this latter reason that its history is not widely known.

- 3) W.E. Gudgeon, 'The Maori tribes of the East Coast', *JPS*, 3 (1894) pp. 208-219; part II, 4 (1895) pp. 17-32; part III, pp. 177-182; part IV, 5 (1896) pp. 2-12; part V, 6 (1897) pp.177-186. R.J.H., Drummond 'The origins and early history of Ngati Porou', MA thesis, (Victoria University, 1937).
- 4) Anne Salmond, 'The study of traditional Maori society: the state of the art', *JPS* 92:3(1983), p.323.
- 5) Pay heed to the words of your parents.
- 6) Ranginui Walker, *Ka whawhai tonu matou: struggle without end* (Auckland, 1990), p.17.
- 7) Pers. comm., Frank Davis, Palmerston North, 1980.
- 8) Judith Binney (et al.), *Mihaia: the prophet Rua Kenana and his community at Maungapohatu* (Wellington, 1979); Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, 'The sociocultural impact of tourism on the Te Arawa people of Rotorua, New Zealand', Ph.D thesis, (Waikato University, 1981).
- 9) E.W. G. Craig, *Destiny well sown* (Whakatane, 1985) cover page.
- 10) Waiapu Minute Books 13(1891), 14(1891), 15(1891), 16(1891), 17(1891-1893), 18(1893), 19(1893), 20(1893), held at Tairāwhiti Maori Land Court, Gisborne.
- 11) Walker, p. 136
- 12) Craig, p.20.
- 13) *ibid.*, p.37.
- 14) Gudgeon, 'The Maori tribes...', *JPS*, part II, 4 (1895), p.17.
- 15) *ibid.*, p.28.
- 16) Drummond, p.8.
- 17) His family state that Drummond gathered most of the material for his thesis while engaged as a teacher at Ruatoria (see cover page of his thesis).

- 18) Drummond, p.8.
- 19) Sir Apirana Ngata, 'The Genealogical Method as Applied to the Early History of New Zealand', 1928, (An address delivered to the Wellington branch of the Historical Society; copy in possession of author), p.10.
- 20) Drummond, p.9.
- 21) Pers. comm., Mrs R. W. Agar, Otaki, 1991.
- 22) Drummond, p.8.
- 23) Maori electoral roll, 1919.
- 24) Gudgeon, 'The Maori tribes...', *JPS*, 3 (1894), p.208.
- 25) Gudgeon, 'The Maori tribes...', *JPS*, part II, 4 (1895), p. 18.
- 26) E. H. Carr, *What is history?* (London, 1961), pp. 16-17.
- 27) cf: Apirana Tuahae Mahuika, 'Nga wahine kaihautu o Ngati Porou: female leaders of Ngati Porou', MA thesis, (University of Sydney, 1974); Binney (et al.); Te Awekotuku.
- 28) Dick Scott, *Years of the Pooh-Bah; a Cook Islands history*, (Auckland, 1991), p.71.
- 29) *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- 30) *Ibid.*, p.126.
- 31) Gudgeon, 'The Maori tribes...', *JPS*, 3 (1894), p.217.
- 32) Scott, p.95.
- 33) Drummond, p.61.
- 34) Mohi Turei, 'Tuwhakairiora', *JPS*, 20 (1911), p. 18.
- 35) Allan Hanson, 'The making of the Maori: culture invention and its logic', *American Anthropologist*, 91(1989), p.891.
- 36) Monty Soutar, 'I te wa i a mea ...', MA thesis, (Massey University, 1990), p.i.
- 37) Edward Tregear, *The Aryan Maori* (Wellington, 1885).

# Code of ethical and technical practice

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*

# NOHANZ

## Origins

The National Oral History Association of New Zealand (NOHANZ) was established as a result of the first national oral history seminar organised in April 1986.

### 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 co-ordinator 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 improve access to oral history collections held in libraries, archives and museums.*

