

Oral HISTORY

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TE KETE KŌRERO-A-WAHA O TE MOTU

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Cover image: Lynette, her wardrobe of clothes, and a photo album made up the visual part of the installation. Sound was played through speakers (in the background). BRONWYN OFFICER

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Oral History in New Zealand is an annual publication of the National Oral History Association of New Zealand, Te Kete Kōrero-a-Waha o Te Motu (NOHANZ).

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

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Editorial

In this year's issue of *Oral History in New Zealand* we have published some of the presentations given at the 2009 NOHANZ conference in Wellington.

In 'Hunting Histories', Kate Hunter discusses the limitations and methodological concerns which researchers must consider when using archival interviews recorded for other projects. She reminds us that when we do so we are arriving as latecomers to a conversation and must take note of the reasons that the archival interviews were recorded in the first place.

We have published Pip Desmond's keynote address from the conference in which she spoke about the collaborative process of making her book, *Trust*. A great deal of trust was required, both on Pip's side and from the women she had interviewed, before the book could be finally ready for publication. Jonathan Kennett also gave us an insight into a collaborative project, speaking about his interactions with Tino Tabak when he was writing Tino's biography. He usefully reminds us of possible conflicts between the role of interviewer and writer, and writer and interviewee.

Bronwyn Officer's presentation on her sonic art installation which was a tribute to her grandmother, shows us how innovatively oral history can be used. Her installation included sound effects, excerpts from interviews recorded with her mother and aunt, and the presence of her doll, Lynette – who is represented in this issue by beautiful photographs where she is dressed in the clothes made for her by Bronwyn's grandmother.

We have a good crop of book reviews this year which reflects the growing publication of material using oral history interviews. We trust that you will be both interested and stimulated by this issue of the journal.

Megan Hutching
Alison Laurie

Oral History in New Zealand, vol.23, 2011

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

The deadline for contributions to the 2011 issue of the journal is 15 July. A Guide for Contributors is available from the editors and on the NOHANZ website. Please send your contributions to one of the editors below.

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

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Hunting Histories:

Using third party interviews as sources

KATE HUNTER

It is both inevitable and desirable that oral histories recorded by past researchers will become sources for current researchers. As the informants of the 1970s and 1980s age and die, their interviews remain as rich records of the twentieth century. In the case of interviews with surviving veterans of World War One, for example, the imminent centenary of the war will bring renewed interest in how these men, now all dead, recounted their experiences of war and its aftermath. Current and future research will be significantly enriched by access to the evidence contained in interviews already lodged in repositories. There are, however, limitations to and methodological concerns surrounding analysing or re-analysing material collected by others. In her foundational discussion of these questions, Joanna Bornat has argued that in re-analysing oral material it is essential to recognise that 'data is produced within a social and historical context, and that our revisiting is itself a social act'. This recognition, she continues, 'should be part of the repertoire of skills and understandings of the researcher'.¹ While the onus should be on the researcher to, as much as possible, recognise what the informant intended to say as much as what they did say, there is also a responsibility on the part of the depositor to attempt to shield the informant from misrepresentation while not closing off potentially fruitful uses of material.² It is a fine line. My aim here is to explore how we encourage researchers to make use of existing oral history collections while upholding robust processes around collecting and depositing interview material. Broadly, I argue for the continued use of the life story approach to interviewing, thereby making interviews as useful as possible to a variety of researchers. I also suggest, from my own experience, that responsibility for protecting the informant needs to lie not just with the original interviewer and the repository, but with the ethics committees governing the 'later' researcher.

In two recent projects I made use of a range of oral histories recorded by other people, and

mainly recorded in the 1980s and 1990s. The first researched Aboriginal participation in travelling shows in early twentieth-century Australia and ended up focusing on rough riders or rodeo riders. The second project was a history of hunting in New Zealand in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Third party interviews – those recorded by others – were essential to both studies which were significantly enriched by access to the evidence contained in interviews already lodged in repositories.³ In neither case, however, was I dealing with what my university-based human ethics committee would have called 'sensitive material'. In addition, because I was not conducting the interviews myself I was not required to apply for ethics approval.

The seemingly disconnected topics of Aboriginal horsemanship and New Zealand hunters had some important aspects in common: they both dealt with groups who were largely invisible in the historical record (certainly in published sources), and where they were apparent, historians had made them visible in very particular ways. In the case of early twentieth-century Aborigines, historians have made indigenous Australians visible as a community under siege: a great proportion of the archival sources about indigenous people is evidence of control, manipulation and degradation of Aboriginal people by the state, and the vast amount of history published about the early twentieth-century focuses on the removal of indigenous children from their families, which was in full swing between 1920 and 1970.⁴ The oral history record too has focused on indigenous families affected in some way by the removals. I am not in any way criticising the focus on this trauma; it was the defining feature

Kate Hunter teaches in the History programme at Victoria University of Wellington. She is the author of numerous journal articles about rural life in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Australia and New Zealand. Her most recent book is *Hunting: A New Zealand History* (Auckland, 2009).

of the twentieth century for a large number of Aboriginal communities. Nonetheless, it represents a particularly dominant narrative to the exclusion of agency, humour, spirit and imagination in the lives of indigenous Australians.

The other group, hunters, are visible in the historical record through the publication of their own reminiscences, through websites and magazines with historical content, and in books by hunters-cum-amateur historians such as D. Bruce Banwell and Philip Holden. While there are shelves of these books (there are over 400 titles of this sort in the National Library of New Zealand catalogue), they are not read outside the hunting community, and they are very particular version of the history of hunting, tending to cluster around the 'hard man' narrative, or around men's experiences as government shooters, commercial meat hunters or pilots in the game meat industry of the 1960s. They are almost entirely silent on their lives outside the bush.⁵

Both projects then, required me to deal with very fragmented evidence from a wide variety of sources, and one of those sources was third-party interviews. In the case of Aboriginal rough riders, interviews recorded by folklorist Chris Sullivan in country NSW in the late 1980s were helpful, as well as a very few interviews in the Drovers Oral History Project and the New South Wales [NSW] Bicentennial Oral History Project conducted in 1988. All of these collections are housed in the National Library of Australia in Canberra.

The lives of rural workers are notoriously invisible in the written historical record; indeed one of the first projects conducted by oral history pioneers Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, was with village workers including 'country work girls', harvesters and 'horse lads'.⁶ In the Australian historiography, Aboriginal rural workers have been partially visible in the work of historians since the mid-1970s, variously as slaves or indispensable 'black pioneers', but the focus has been of the labour of indigenous people, not on their leisure.⁷ Rodeos, travelling shows and bush carnivals were a feature of the lives of many Aboriginal people and this information was revealed through interviews. Tom McNeven, a drover and station hand interviewed by Chris Sullivan in 1991, recalled going to town at showtime as a child to see buckjumping shows featuring the celebrities Tex Morton, Lance Skuthorpe and Kitty Gill.⁸ Tom Roberts, interviewed by Inge Riebe for the NSW Bicentennial Project in

1988, grew up in northern New South Wales and began going to buckjumping competitions as a young man. Buckjumping 'was going on a lot... but there were no [Aboriginal] champions, you know... but I kept at it, I was good... it's the one thing I could stick to meself on'.⁹ It was revealed in other interviews that many Aboriginal stockmen rode 'in the yards' rather than in competitions but were well known despite this. Billy Crawford described his uncle, Billy Lovelock as a great buckjump rider but noted that he never rode in shows. His brother, Cyril Crawford on the other hand, 'was a good horseman, but he rode in shows. He rode in the show at [the NSW town] Walca there, he won the buckjump competition there one year he did. Then he come to Armidale here. But there was a dark bloke come from Queensland, he did, Billy, Billy Cleveland. He beat him here'.¹⁰ Clarrie Grogan told Peter Ellis and Kevin Bradley in 1990 that he also grew up 'mad on roughriding' but, like Billy Crawford, spent more time trying his luck in the boxing tent, another feature of rural shows.¹¹

The use of these interviews collected variously by those interested in folklore and 'the bush', and in recording a variety of life stories in NSW revealed indigenous men as agents in their own lives. Alongside poverty and dispossession were the stories of, and self-identification as, skilled stockmen and horsemen. Taking on white stockmen in the rough riding arena was revealed as an event where skill transcended race, albeit for a brief time. All of these interviews, however, were conducted before 1993 when the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission were charged with inquiring into the removal of indigenous children from their families. That some of these informants grew up on missions was not interrogated in these interviews; indeed, the fact that some of them *did not* grow up on reserves or missions was equally unremarked upon.

My other project that involved significant use of third party interviews concerned a different country and a group about whom a great deal more had been written. Even so, in the case of hunters in New Zealand, there were two kinds of oral histories that yielded information useful beyond the hundreds of books of anecdotes and reminiscences. The first was what I call 'pioneer histories' collected by community groups in the 1980s and early 1990s. These were projects aimed at capturing the history of early settler families in regions such as Nelson, Southland and the Wairarapa. The other kind of projects that yielded interviews with hunters were

those based on place, particularly the Arthur's Pass oral history project and the Tongariro Forest oral history project. These different types of histories were helpful for slightly different reasons in the hunting project.

Pioneer histories generally aim to capture the life histories of elderly members of the community and, as such, they make visible family life and the lives of the informant's mother and father, albeit through the eyes of a child. Features of this type of interview (and I listened to a great number, and read through the abstracts of many more) included daily household life, school life, and life away from the supervision of adults, be they parents or teachers. Household technology was also usually discussed, especially the mechanics of washing and cooking. Indeed, the focus on cooking and meals was particularly useful for me as I sought to move the history of hunting out of the bush and into the kitchen. The other aspect of particular usefulness was the detailing of a range of strategies used within the informant's family to make life more comfortable. An example of this was in an interview recorded by Alison Thompson in 1991 with Wairarapa man, Jack Bull.

Jack Bull's family moved to the Wairarapa in the early 1930s when work became so short in Wellington that his father was being offered only one week in four – his employer was using stand-down periods to try to avoid outright redundancies. The family rented five acres from local Maori and planted it out in onions. Jack was 20 years old at this time and had constant work, both paid and unpaid – he worked at home and in the gardens, and he and his brothers went deer shooting in the evenings: 'I'd go out with my brothers, we'd get 5 or 6 deer, miles of meat, you know, that we'd give it away. It was there for the taking if you had the ability to get there. So, while the Depression was terrible for some, we had it free and easy'.¹² The interviewer, Alison Thompson, then asked Jack if they had any way of keeping the meat, and he replied in wonderful detail:

No fridges in those days but venison kept very well. Depended how you butchered it. If you cut the hind quarters off and put them in the sun they'd get a hard skin on them, and left the hair on, then they could hang for 3 or 4 days or even a week. Then you'd skin them properly, cut all the hard skin off and the venison was beautiful. The old safes – they were always on the south side, plenty of ventilation and everything kept well. Then there were the ones underground, you'd put a crock down, something like that and that'd keep cold... but with a big family, you

didn't have to keep it long. We'd just go and get some more.

Jack and his mother also earned money during the early 1930s shooting shags for the Wellington Acclimatization Society.

While I was in Wellington there was a chap, Wiffen, he'd been to the Boer War with Dad and was secretary to the acclimatization society in Wellington... I went and saw him and I said there are shags up the Waiohine, up the Waingawa, the Ruamahanga [rivers] and he said, well, we're prepared to give you 2/6 a pair for their feet. Then he wrote to me and said would you be prepared to give us the stomach contents so we can analyse them and see what's there? Oh yes, I can do that. So he gave me the jars and we went up the Waiohine and I gave him the stomach content and he was thrilled to get them... They became quite enthusiastic about this to the extent that they gave me a permit to take my shotgun and a .303 into the forest reserve... My mother and I used to go up the Waiohine, Waingawa and Ruamahanga and I found it a great experience, a great outing...¹³

While shags were numerous, and the money could be good, this was not always easy work. Jack decided, after one particular episode, to draw the line at some recoveries. 'I found being in the Waiohine in October, November, if you knocked a shag down and trying to recover it, the water was ice cold. I remember knocking one down it was only 10 feet away from me and I stripped off, dived in and got it, but I had to break the ice before I could get through the water. After that, I said recovery of shags in very cold conditions is not on'.¹⁴

As well as outlining various strategies for managing the 1930s Depression, this interview also revealed a great deal about hunting for bounties. Bounty hunting is not often recorded outside histories of acclimatization societies. It is not the glamorous or adventurous hunting of pigs, deer and chamois, for example, and it is also the kind of hunting that has come to be seen as highly distasteful as ideas of conservation and the valuing of indigenous fauna have changed. Also, being accompanied by one's mother might also not be the kind of detail that hunters were likely to include in their reminiscences, but you can see that it might have been necessary for Jack, both to have a helping hand with the birds and for safety.

Jack's example also demonstrates what, almost more than any other source, pioneer histories manage to reveal so well: the enmeshment of people within families. Jack's interview painted a picture of

a twenty-something-year-old man who was contributing to a family economy and to family comfort and prosperity. I have argued elsewhere that the success and prosperity of rural and farming families and communities relied on family labour, reciprocity and sociability.¹⁵ All of these aspects of rural life were revealed in the life history interview conducted by Alison Thompson.

Pioneer histories are produced, on the whole, in a particular set of circumstances and at a particular time in a community's life. As with the written genre, the production of local oral histories often coincides with the 'passing' of an older generation of settlers. In the Australian context, historian Helen Doyle has remarked that there is an intertwining in these projects of the overwhelming colonial narrative of progress, with the centrality of decline of local rural communities. She argues that, 'writers [of local histories]... adopted a sentimental attitude towards the decline of the pioneers and expressed serious concern that "old Australia" – both its old ways and its old landscape – were disappearing'.¹⁶ Pioneer histories can be a little rose-tinted with community and a simpler way of life emphasised over hardship, hard work and sorrow. A focus on the Waiohine outings from the perspective of Jack's mother, for example, may have cast quite a different light on them. A possible clue to this different perspective came from another interview. One of the informants for the Southland Oral History Project was Muriel Henderson, an extremely keen duck hunter whose story had featured several times in the local paper and even, in the early 1980s, in the *Woman's Weekly*. In her oral interview, however, Muriel did not portray herself as a stereotype-defying heroine, indeed duck hunting had taken a toll on her and had required a great deal of fortitude. The interview did not focus on her hunting particularly, and other than this comment, the interviewer did not pursue the point. Hearing Muriel's own voice was a revelation because she had this to say:

I don't know how I managed when I think back because I went duck shooting even though I was raising 5 children, and I used to have a big family breakfast before we left at 5 o'clock in the morning. Everyone would come to my house for a cooked breakfast – it had to be a really good breakfast. Then we'd go out shooting and we'd get home just at dark, tired and hungry, wet clothes and whatnot [and] hang the ducks up. But then I'd have to pluck them and cook them too later. And I had to make the lunches! I think I must have been fairly strong.¹⁷

Place-based projects were also particularly useful for finding hunters' stories, especially when the places in question had long histories of outdoor recreation, as was the case in the Arthur's Pass and Tongariro Forest oral history projects now lodged in the National Library of New Zealand Oral History Centre. Interviewing those who lived and worked in and around Arthur's Pass almost guaranteed hunting would crop up. One interview conducted by Kay Holder for the Department of Conservation project, that with Harry Scott, revealed the way hunters pieced together an income over years, involving all sorts of hunting: government shooting, private skin or meat hunting, pest control, trapping and guiding. Harry's recollections were remarkably detailed and, from what I could verify from the Department of Internal Affairs' wage books, accurate. In 1933, when Harry was 15 years old, he went to the local deer cullers' camp where Frank Yerex, the head of Internal Affairs' Deer Control Section, and his deputy Bert Vercoe were in charge; Harry lied about his age and asked for a job.

Captain [Yerex] asked 'how many deer have you shot?' I said 300 and I said I can show you the receipts for the skins I've got from Dunedin. OK, away you go, so I started off. I think I was the youngest culler, because in those days the cullers were mainly musterers and high country men...¹⁸

Harry was sent to the Matiri Valley block (in what is now South Kahurangi National Park).

There weren't many deer there; we spent three months in there, I got about 300 deer... Well I complained there was no deer, so Bill Chisolm – he was our field officer – he moved me onto the Victoria River, from the Buller – that was the Brunner River – right through to the Rahu. Well it was virgin country, never been shot. I took 860 tails off there in 4 months, and skins, a few skins I'd carry down... I had two other chaps with me but I was the leading hand.

I realized later, after research at Archives New Zealand, why Harry had detailed all the bits and pieces of tails and skins and why he'd mentioned his status as the leading hand. Being the leading hand was materially important as well as being a marker of seniority and experience: Harry was missing out on the department's skins bonuses (paid on each skin brought into the depot) because the remote country made carrying out skins impracticable, but the Deer Control Service wage books show he made more in modest tail bonuses and his 'overriding bonuses' for being the lead man, than in base wages that season.

Kay Holder's interview with Harry had been with an older man reflecting on a life in a particular piece of the country. The focus on Arthur's Pass meant that indoor life away from the bush was not discussed. The discovery in Archives New Zealand of a letter from Harry to Frank Yerex, the 'Captain', dated October 1935 was another reminder of the interview as a reconstruction of a life. In his loopy, schoolboy handwriting, Harry was assuring Yerex that he'd done a good deal of shooting over the winter on the farm and he had much improved. He felt certain he would have a better season this year if the Captain took him on again. It was a reminder that Harry might not have been the confident young hunter he portrayed himself to be many years later.

There are many more examples of the important information that was gleaned for both of my projects, however, there are also limits to using third-party interviews. The greatest disadvantage was that the interviewer's preoccupations and purposes rarely directly coincided with my own. One area where this was very apparent was in the process of hunting. I am sure this is partly to do with interviewers' discomfort, indeed most people's, with the processes of killing animals or butchering. Or perhaps, as is often the case when I listen to an interview I conducted myself at the beginning of the research project with one I did towards the end, interviewers may not have known the questions to ask. It was noticeable, however, in the pioneer histories particularly, that while there was often quite a lot of detail about milking, separating, butter-making and the use of the various milk products (whey, skimmed milk or cream, etc), there was rarely the same level of inquiry about meat – gutting, skinning, the use of offal or not, or the kinds of equipment involved, for example, rifles or knives.

Using interviews recorded by others, while often essential (and indeed likely to become more so) raises the question of your relationship with the informant and your responsibility towards them as a listener rather than an interviewer. While oral historians have argued that interviewing makes transparent the participation of the historian in shaping the evidence,¹⁹ the role of the historian who is listening to interviews later is much more opaque. Bornat's solution here is to place the interview within its social and historical context: the interviews become products of their time collected by oral historians with motives as diverse as empowerment to exploring the workings of memory.²⁰ Using third

party interviews requires transparent treatment rather than treating them as resources to be mined for primary material.

Making recordings available, too, creates a responsibility to set in place safeguards against such 'mining'. The third-party researcher who approaches the interview material with different questions, and often many years after the interview has taken place, has not had to go through ethical consent procedures with the informant; indeed, the informant may no longer be alive (as is the case now with all of the World War One veterans interviewed by Jane Tolerton and Nicholas Boyack in the 1980s, one of the most highly used collections at the National Library of New Zealand). While my own institution demands that researchers interviewing human subjects go through the Human Ethics approval process, no such equivalent process exists when using interviews already recorded. Even in cases where the informant is still alive, there is no framework for considering this 'use' of a human subject. The example cited by Bornat, in which interviews with Perth housewives were reanalyzed to reveal the racism ingrained in Perth society – a purpose never intended by the original interviewers or an overt subject of the original interviews – raises the question of ethics around third party interviews.²¹ Is it perhaps time for ethics committees in institutions to be considering the use of third party interviews for purposes substantially different from their original intent? Should questions around anonymity of informants in cases of 'sensitive' topics be asked of researchers even when they are not the original interviewer? I suggest it is time to recognize more formally the relationship into which 'listeners' are brought with the interviewer and the informant.

In the case of my research, the ethical safeguards rested with the repository and the original interviewer. To use the interviews with Aboriginal informants in the National Library of Australia in publication, permission had to be sought from the interviewer and the correspondence was through the library. Folklorist Chris Sullivan required an outline of the project and a full list of the interviews from which I wished to quote. In the case of some of the hunting interviews, the procedure was similar. Interviewers remained the guardian of informants' words; the interviewer had to judge if the researchers intended to approach the interviews with sympathy and whether they would appropriately contextualise the data.

Interviews protected by institutional copyright were slightly more problematic and raise the question of long-term responsibility for all recordings. In all cases the contact person listed at the time of the interview – usually the heritage officer – had left the job. One of the heritage officers I contacted was quite new in his role and was not even aware that the interviews came under his care, while other officers were knowledgeable and able to point me to additional sources in their institution. It signals a need for interviewers working for institutions to insist on some protocol around access to the interviews that will have a life beyond the staff who commissioned the research.

Nearly 40 years ago now, Raphael Samuel wrote in the British journal *Oral History*,

Research can never be a once-and-for-all affair, nor is there ever a single use to which evidence can be put. Historians in the future will bring fresh interests to bear upon the materials we collect; they will be asking different questions and seeking different answers.

He continued that recordings needed to be freely available for other researchers to consult or they will be 'incapable of serving as a base for continuing enquiry'.²² There is no doubt that using third party interviews allows a researcher to

get beyond the published and written story. Oral interviews illuminate the lives of those less visible in the historical record and should be an essential source for all those researching twentieth-century topics. In addition, life story approaches open a range of questions for researchers especially around those aspects of life that have been unremarked upon, that are literally unremarkable and have been ignored as historical topics. Using oral histories recorded by others requires care on the part of the researcher, however: you are a latecomer to a conversation. Contextualising the interviews, as Bornat argues, is essential.²³ The protocols of applying for permission to publish from the interviews are also of great importance because they force the researcher into the relationship between interviewer and informant. There is also a case for third party interviews to be more thoroughly considered by institutions employing researchers, especially where the interview is to be used for a purpose substantially different from why it was recorded. When one researcher uses an interview recorded by another, the conversation is widened and the current, silent researcher should not also be invisible.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Joanna Bornat, 'A second take: Revisiting interviews with a different purpose', *Oral History* (UK), Spring 2003, p.50.
- ² Carol Dawber referred to the importance of informants' intentions as well as their actual speech in 'The possibilities and pitfalls of using oral history in the written text', unpublished paper, NOHANZ annual conference, Wellington, 29 October 2009.
- ³ 'Third party interviews' is the term used by Corinna Peniston-Bird, 'Oral history: the sound of memory' in Sarah Barber and Corinna Peniston-Bird, eds, *History Beyond the Text: A student's guide to approaching alternative sources*, Routledge, London, 2009, p.114.
- ⁴ The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report, *Bringing Them Home*, Canberra, 1997, was punctuated by many testimonies from indigenous people. Subsequently, there have been several publications using the oral testimonies of people removed from their families by the state. See for example, Anna Haebich, *Many Voices: Reflections on experiences of indigenous child separation*, Canberra, 2003.
- ⁵ See for example: Philip Holden, *The Golden Years of Hunting in New Zealand*, Auckland, 1983; Joffi Thomson, *Deer Hunter: The experiences of a New Zealand stalker*, Auckland, 1952; Brian Burdon, *Hunting For a Buck*, Auckland, 1994.
- ⁶ See Raphael Samuel (ed), *Village Life and Labour*, London, 1975.
- ⁷ See for example Ann McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*, Sydney, 1987 and Henry Reynolds, *With the White People: The crucial role of Aborigines in the exploration and development of Australia*, Ringwood, 1990.
- ⁸ Tom McNeven, interview by Chris Sullivan, 1991, Chris Sullivan Collection, National Library of Australia, TRC2750/672.
- ⁹ Tom Roberts, interview by Inge Riebe, 1987, NSW Bicentennial Collection, National Library of Australia, TRC2301/189.
- ¹⁰ Billy Crawford, interview by Chris Sullivan, 1989, Chris Sullivan Collection, National Library of Australia, TRC2750/569.
- ¹¹ Clarrie Grogan, interview by Kevin Bradley & Peter Ellis, 1990, National Library of Australia, TRC2604. Clarrie became a professional boxer.
- ¹² Jack Bull, interviewed by Alison Thompson, 1991, Wairarapa Archive, Oral Archive 31.
- ¹³ Jack Bull interviewed by Alison Thompson. It is unclear which Wiffen brother Jack was talking about: Arthur had been to the Boer War, but E.J.C. Wiffen was in the Wellington Acclimatization Society.
- ¹⁴ Jack Bull interviewed by Alison Thompson.
- ¹⁵ See Kathryn M Hunter, *Father's Right-Hand Man: Women on Australia's family farms in the age of federation, 1880s-1920s*, Melbourne, 2004.
- ¹⁶ Helen Doyle, 'Local history and decline in country Victoria' in Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie (eds), *Struggle Country: The rural ideal in twentieth century Australia*, Clayton, Victoria, 2005, p.04.5.
- ¹⁷ Muriel Henderson, Southland Oral History Project, National Library of New Zealand Oral History Centre, OHInt-0464/08.
- ¹⁸ Harry Scott, interview by Kay Holder 1992, Arthur's Pass Oral History Project, National Library of New Zealand Oral History Centre, OHC4957.
- ¹⁹ See for example, Alessandro Portelli, 'What makes oral history different?' in Robert Perks & Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader*, London, 1988, p.71.
- ²⁰ Bornat p.50; Alistair Thomson, 'Making the most of memories: The empirical and subjective value of oral history', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 9, 1999, pp.291-301 discusses the multiple theoretical underpinnings of oral history and the debates about them.
- ²¹ Bornat, p.47.
- ²² Raphael Samuel, 'Perils of the transcript' in Perks & Thomson, p.392.
- ²³ Bornat, p.50.

'...and all the trimmings'

Using oral recordings to build community memories through sonic art

BRONWYN OFFICER



This report is based on a presentation given at the NOHANZ conference, 'Using Oral History in Communities', October 2009

My presentation was a personal account of recording oral histories specifically for use in a sonic art installation tribute to my grandmother, Maythal Welsh (married name

Roberts), who had a life full of creativity that radiated out to all her friends and family. Born out of a functional need to feed and clothe her family, her works were far from ordinary.

I wanted to make a creative work that acknowledged her diverse creative activities, while focussing on material that was created by her for me, and I wanted to bring a personal tribute to a wider community.

The title, '... and all the trimmings' comes from the fact that my grandmother added extra touches to everything she did. She always made it seem effortless, even when she was very ill at the end of her life.

This work came together for two weeks in March 2006 at the Thistle Hall in Wellington, in an exhibition called 'Candle on the Moon', with two other artists, ceramicist Phillipa Durkin and artist Nina Zimowit.

I created a nine-minute soundscape from excerpts of interviews with Maythal's two daughters, Edna Officer (my mother) and Audrey Falloon (my aunt,) and other things that remind me of my grandmother. I used the mechanics of the doll itself, with my niece Yvette playing with her and commenting, as well as knitting needle sounds, the doll's wardrobe door and Royal Doulton china bowls struck and played back at different pitches, to construct the piece. This soundscape was played through speakers into the exhibition space near the physical installation.

I thought that by recording oral interviews with

Edna and Audrey I would have a unique view on my grandmother and her creative life – and I did. Both interviewees knew that I was going to use the recordings in a soundscape and were well prepared and willing to speak.

I was new to this side of oral history (I have always been on the side of preserving it), and was not carrying out a life history but rather subject-based interviews – the subject being my grandmother through the eyes of her daughters

My inexperience showed. I knew the people and prepared the same questions for each but found the artificial nature of interviewing them made me feel and sound rather self-conscious. This was easily fixed by cutting me out of the excerpts.

I was using a new digital recorder, and discovered that the act of interviewing distracted me from the technical issues of maintaining the balance of the recording and keeping the levels high enough to make a good recording. I also have the classic fridge noise in the background. I therefore had to carefully select material to use in the installation.

The format of each interview evolved differently due to the different subjects, but what linked them was the detailed recall of the sewing, cooking, and painting activities of their mother. There was a wonderfully serendipitous moment where both referred to the Belgian biscuits Grandma made

Bronwyn Officer currently holds the position of Senior Sound Conservator responsible for the preservation and conservation of audiovisual recordings at the National Library. Bronwyn specialises in composing field recording based electroacoustic music. She is on the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives Technical Committee and the Australasian Sound Recordings Association Board. Bronwyn is a member of NOHANZ and has previously served on the Executive.



Lynette's tutu and sundress both exhibiting extraordinary detail.

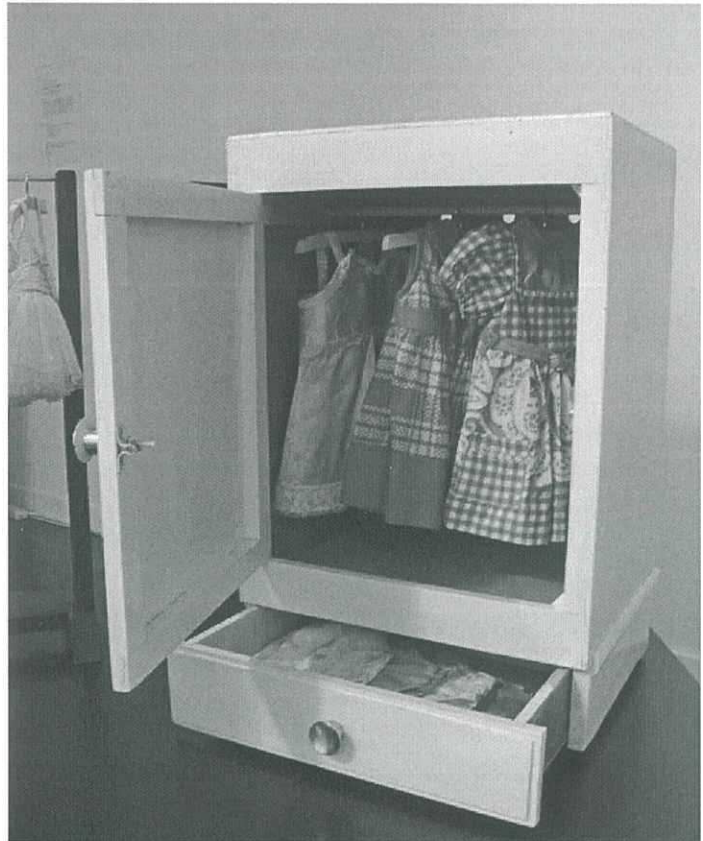


with smooth icing. I used excerpts from these interviews and was able to play the Belgian biscuit example from each person simultaneously in each speaker for a 'stereo effect'.

The essence, though, is the tone of nostalgia and the loving recall which comes from the oral history excerpts, and the silences in them. The power of using oral history in this way can then feed back into itself through the display which, as part of a community exhibition, then has its own life and history.

I love the qualities of the voice, its expression, and the way it portrays memory – a very powerful force and a loving tribute.

The installation centred around my doll Lynette and her wardrobe of clothes, handmade for me when I was about six years old. The clothes for Lynette are a tangible link with my grandmother and show the love and care she put into creating everything.



A perfectly balanced little brushed wool coat. Note the lining and coat hook (designer label), and pocket flaps.

Trust the Process

PIP DESMOND

The following is a keynote address given by Pip Desmond to the NOHANZ conference on 31 October 2009.

Kia ora koutou katoa

Thank you for inviting me to address the NOHANZ conference. It is a great honour to be asked to speak to such a knowledgeable audience. Eight years ago, I presented a paper at the same conference on an oral history project I had just completed about a group of young gang women. Today, I want to share with you how I transformed that project into the book, *Trust: A True Story of Women and Gangs*, published by Random House in July [2009].

The book is not a straight oral history compilation. It is a combination of memoir, biography, social and oral history, in the genre commonly known as creative non-fiction. It tells the story of Aroha Trust, a work cooperative for young women in the gang scene in Wellington in the late 1970s, interspersed with the life stories of 11 of the women from that time.

I was not a dispassionate interviewer or writer. As a young Pakeha woman, 22 years old, not long out of university, I became involved with the women through the strong social justice network operating in New Zealand at that time.

Taking advantage of relief work rules that allowed groups to work together on government projects and supervise themselves, and taking the lead of the Black Power and other gangs who had set up work cooperatives, we decided to set up one for the girls.

We had two work teams employing up to 12 girls at any one time, one with the Wellington City Council, one with the Wellington Education Board. We set up an all-woman house, sports teams and a collective bank account, went on trips together, and applied feminist and democratic principles to everything we did. For three years, against a backdrop of drugs and alcohol, police and gang harassment, and societal indifference, Aroha Trust provided work, housing, support and a sense of identity for around 30 young women with strong gang connections. Most were Maori, aged between 15 and their early 20s: their only university was the

streets. Over time, we became a formidable force, strong enough to confront the Black Power about their practice of gang rape. And if you want to know how it all turned out, I suggest you read the book!

Twenty years later in 2000, I found 13 of the women from that time and recorded their stories. What motivated me initially was wanting to know more about them. As I explained in the book:

'In those days, no one talked about their pasts. Young people arrived as if from nowhere, and were accepted – myself included – no questions asked. We worked, lived and partied together, shared clothes and confidences, good times and bad, without ever saying where we'd come from or why we were there. This unspoken pact suited me as well: I was as keen to hide my background with all its privilege as others were to hide theirs with all its pain.'

But time had moved on and everyone I tracked down was now willing to talk about the childhood experiences that had led them to the gangs and what happened to them as adults after Aroha Trust folded. In fact, for many the process became a way to make sense of their pain, and to help others understand and be healed too.

A STRONG FOUNDATION: GATHERING THE STORIES

I am not going to spend a lot of time explaining the process of gathering the stories using oral history methodology. Most of you will be familiar with that and I talked about it in my last address, which was written up in the NOHANZ journal at the time. I just want to stress that everything

Pip Desmond is a freelance writer, editor and oral historian. In 2006, she did the MA in Creative Writing at Victoria University. There she wrote the first draft of *Trust: A True Story of Women and Gangs*, based on her experiences in a work cooperative for young gang women in Wellington in the late 1970s. *Trust* recently won Best First Book of Non-Fiction in the 2010 NZ Post Book Awards.

I learned in Judith Fyfe's amazing oral history courses, and later from Linda Evans and Jocelyn Chalmers – about doing your research first, going gently into people's homes and lives, asking open-ended questions, getting consent for the use of the material you record, using high quality sound equipment, abstracting the interviews, and storing them in New Zealand's national archive is fantastic. It is that strong foundation that I believe gives my book its richness and integrity, and enabled me to trust the process from then on, and I will always be grateful to the oral history community for setting me on the right course.

WAITING FOR THE RIGHT TIME

I had always thought about the project in terms of writing a book but, after recording the women's stories, it was five years before I came back to the material. I had good personal reasons – the offer of a job at Parliament and three hungry teenagers – but with hindsight, I think both I and the women needed time to come to terms with the next stage. It had been very emotional meeting up again. Talking about the past brought up unresolved issues for all of us, and a number of them told me about experiences in their lives that they had never told anyone before. Instinctively we were right to wait, I think. Only now – in our late 40s and early 50s – do we have the individual and group resources to deal with such public scrutiny of our lives.



Nayida and Amelia outside the Orange Hall in Newtown: Ready to paint...or skiving off to have another smoke? COURTESY OF PIP DESMOND

THE CREATIVE WRITING PROCESS

I got the ball rolling by doing an undergraduate course in creative non-fiction at Victoria University in 2005, using my portfolio to apply for the MA course the following year. When I was accepted, I let the women know, told them that I would come back and consult with them when I had something concrete to show them, and promised them that none of their material would be published without their permission.

At that stage, I had no idea how to transform 52 hours of recorded oral history interviews, along with my own experiences in Aroha Trust and getting to know the women again 20 years later, into a page-turner. All I knew was that I wanted to write an interesting story that ordinary people – including the women and their whanau – could relate to, a story that people who do not usually read books might read.

I wanted to highlight the women's individual life stories as a way of understanding why they ended up around the gangs and what happened to them in later life.

And I wanted to tell the story of Aroha Trust because that story is unique, the only time as far as I know, that a group of women in New Zealand have constructed a separate, positive identity within a gang scene.

My tutor, supervisor and classmates quickly convinced me that the story had to be told through my eyes. It took a long time for me to feel comfortable with putting myself in the centre of the frame but I believe it was the right decision, both from the creative point of view and the ethical. It provided the all-important 'voice' that every good story needs. I had been a member of Aroha Trust, so I couldn't write as if I was an impartial observer. More than that, I needed to declare my colours. I don't presume to speak on behalf of Maori women or gang women or even the women in the book. All I am saying is that I was there for that time, this is what I saw, this is what they told me, this is what I have learnt.

Another reason why I revealed my own experiences was that the women were incredibly honest and courageous in telling their stories. I felt that I had to be honest too, and not hide behind my power as the author to leave myself out when it got uncomfortable. This was particularly hard on my husband, who struggled to understand why I had to disclose so much of my past.

The four years that it took me to write the book were a huge personal journey. When I had left Aroha

Trust at the age of 25, I was burnt out. Within 18 months I had married and had a baby. While I knew the experience had been life-changing, I had never gone back and processed what had happened. During the MA year, I remember wailing at my supervisor, 'But I don't know what I think about all this stuff.' 'Good,' she said. 'If you had it all neatly packaged up in your mind, your writing would have no energy.' And she quoted E.M. Forster, who once said, 'How can I know what I think till I see what I say?' As writers – and oral historians – we are all fundamentally on a voyage of self-discovery. That is what drives us and gives our work passion; it is also what makes it so painful at times.

THE CONCEPT OF TRUTH

While the story of Aroha Trust is told through my eyes, I was determined to retain the women's voices as well. They are fantastic story tellers; they have an original, poetic turn of phrase that I couldn't hope to match, and it is a tragedy that the voices of women like them are hardly ever heard.

Before going any further, I want to give you a taste of those voices. I have chosen the subject of clothes to show you the layer upon layer of meaning that different women articulated around seemingly ordinary topics. As you will hear, clothes were a personal expression of our identity. They were functional for the physical work we did, and part of our staunch image. They were also a way of denying our femininity, and a practical element in our protection.

In the first excerpt, Georgie recalls meeting the Aroha Trust girls before she joined the trust. She was 20, a bit older than most, and was working as a barmaid at the Royal Oak Hotel. She came to our all-women house in her work clothes – a short blue dress and stilettos – in sharp contrast to what we wore, and describes both parties' reaction:

Georgie: (side 3, 2.40-4.10):

Well, my first impression was, oh, you know, they'll be wondering who the hell I am. Who the hell's this suave-ay hip chick walking into our house and all that sort of thing. And then I thought oh what the hell, this is me, this is who I am. Yeah, so, that's where I got to meet them. And I'll never forget this cheeky broad standing by the door. Her name's Charmaine actually. And she had this scarf halfway wrapped around her face and she stood there leaning up against the wall looking me up and down. Yeah, so that's how I met.

P: What was your impression of the women?

G: *That's who they were. I had no, nothing really. I*

thought, that's who they are.

P: What did they look like?

G: *Young, hard, staunch and like, shit I hope I never get in a fight with any of them, eh.*

P: What were they wearing?

G: *Swannies, boots, jeans, berets, hats, scarfs. Yeah. The main colour was the blue and black swannies.*

Next, Jane describes her attachment to the work boots the city council provided us with for the manual work we did painting, gardening and renovating community facilities:

Jane (side 4, 12.30-13.50):

So they actually bought us these real flash fur lined steel cap boots which I have still got in my shed out there, sitting there. All these years later, it's the one thing I've kept. Amazing eh. I just loved those boots. I really loved them.

P: What did they represent, do you think?

J: *Having something that, just having something special. And I guess the image too. Like it was definitely part of the image. Part of being a bunch of tough sheilas. And I guess, it kind of stood for the fact who we were, sort of like part of our identity. It was, I guess, the strength, like it was a visible emblem that we were powerful, we did have some control of our lives and stuff and I think that was. You know, I didn't really understand all that but it was, you know 'look out world, don't fuck round with me. Yeah.*

Now Gini talks about why she dressed the way she did.

Gini (side 4, 11-12.40):

I had very low self-esteem. I didn't think much of myself at all, let alone being a girl. That didn't come into my identity. I was like a tomboy. I wore jeans. I was anti-dresses and any make-up and any form of. I was like a little boy, a tough, rough, scruffy boy.

P: Why was that?

G: *I'm not sure. I'm not sure if it was another way of hiding that incest thing that my father had done, to even in myself deny that I was sexually abused, by cutting off in my mind thinking that I'm a girl, that I should be feminine, dress like one. I didn't want that ownership of being labelled a female because all those attributes came with it. I wanted to be hard and tough and strong – mostly to handle that way of life. I saw it as a means of survival and to be out there living and surviving in that way of life, I had to be tough and I couldn't run around in a pretty little dress – you know, jeans, anything to run away from police on the spur of the moment, or shoes – you know, you had to be tough and it all sort of came with the lifestyle. And there weren't any girls in our group that*

dressed like girls. They were all sort of tomboyish.

Finally Charmaine explains the importance of clothes for a 15-year-old woman in the gang scene, and the effect of seeing a young Nomad prospect beaten to death in the Tramways Hotel after an incident involving Jane.

Charmaine (side 4, 12.40-14.40):

So it was about safety. What I learnt is that women that wore – like with Jane when she wore a bikini top to the pub that night – these were my little indicators of what was safe and what wasn't safe – this was how I learnt, my learning. And I remember this Samoan guy harassing her for her body and then I



Gini cuts grass at a local school: 'I really enjoyed that sort of work. It was outside. It was in the fresh air. There wasn't someone standing over you to make sure you were doing it perfectly, wonderfully, how they expected.' HILLARY WATSON

remember one of the Blacks – and actually one of the Mads stood up for her and pulled her back and said 'leave her alone' and the brawl started and that guy fell to his death. So in my mind, very young mind, very unsafe to dress like that. People die. So that's how I interpreted that whole night. You dress like that and people die. That was my whole assumption, my whole picture. So women who were able to be women, you weren't allowed to be that in terms of the trust. You weren't allowed to be that in terms of the lifestyle and the people we lived with. You weren't allowed to be that person. You had to cover up. And

prior to the messages I'd got from my aunty in terms of slut, in terms of her sexuality, her understanding of it was that you weren't allowed to be any of that stuff. So I wasn't allowed to be a woman. I wasn't allowed to be attractive. And I wasn't allowed to be feminine. And I wasn't allowed to be any of these things if I wanted to survive without being raped.'

BEING FAITHFUL TO THE MATERIAL

Before I began writing the book, I transcribed every interview myself as a way of organising, remembering and having easy access to the material. At first I agonised about changing the women's quotes in any way but as time went on, I became more cavalier in the interests of the reader – taking out the ums and ahs and repetitions of speech, sometimes even changing the order of sentences to make more sense (though never the actual words), building in comments the women made subsequently. I came to see the oral history interview as simply that person's words and thoughts on a particular day, not something that is sacred or untouchable. Where further feedback or explanation can give the words added depth and complexity, that has to be a good thing.

Of course, I was always able to check back with the women to make sure they were happy with the final result, and that I had not skewed their meaning or vernacular.

THE INNER CENSOR

A big issue for me was how much to reveal of what I had been told on tape. I found I had an inner censor that wanted to remove things I felt uncomfortable about or thought the women might not be happy to see on paper. My MA tutor urged me to write as if everyone was dead and worry about publication later. It was excellent advice, and it enabled me to use the material freely and experiment with my voice, judgements, characterisation, narration. Later, when I went back to the women, I was surprised at how little they took out and how I could not predict what those things would be, although they were most often to protect family members rather than themselves.

One of the women, for example, asked me to change the words 'my mother was a housie addict' to 'my mother loved playing housie'. Housie addict was just a bit of slang when spoken, but written down, it took on all the implications of addiction.

The same woman left in the details of her partner's abuse that had made her leave him, even

though by the time the book was published, they were back together. When I felt compelled to ask her how public disclosure might affect her relationship, she said: 'I can't pretend it didn't happen.' And as for her children's reaction, she said: 'They know'. As a footnote to that, her partner came to the book launch, spent the following morning with his nose in the book, and then told me, 'Everything in here is true'.



Working for the council: Pip in the girls' trademark swannie and steel capped boots. HILLARY WATSON

TRUTH AND MEMORY

The thing I agonised about more than anything in my MA year was the nature of 'truth'. If I was going to breathe life into the story of Aroha Trust, I had to recreate scenes from the past. But I couldn't remember exactly what was said in a conversation that took place 30 years ago, or what someone was wearing, or the colour of the curtains. I had to make these things up, using everything at my disposal to ensure that my descriptions were as authentic as possible. A diary Jane had kept at the time and the old photos were a godsend, but still I struggled.

Everyone else in my class was writing fiction and

they mocked my discomfort about making things up. We had endless debates about the meaning of 'truth', and I gradually adopted the idea of 'emotional truth' as my litmus test. This did not mean I could say whatever I felt like – quite the opposite. It forced me to dig deep to uncover the essence of what had taken place.

I was always looking for ways to verify the truth. There are some disadvantages to the solitary nature of the oral history interview, particularly the way it focuses on individual lives rather than our social connections. But in terms of independently verifying what had happened, I found the technique of gathering information – not asking leading questions, not prompting, just drawing out a person's own memories – came into its own. I was amazed at how often the women's stories concurred. When Bubbles told me they could earn \$2000 at a time following the postie round Wellington and taking social welfare cheques out of people's letterboxes on benefit day, I was a bit sceptical. But when Nayda, without prompting, explained how they stole the stamp from the social welfare office and forged the signatures (there were no computers in those days), I was convinced.

The same was true of the women's experiences of solitary confinement in state institutions. One after another, they described when they were little more than children being kept in isolation in barren rooms with a steel bed, potty in the corner, barred window, absolutely nothing to do. Gini described it most poignantly as 'locked up loneliness'.

Slowly I realised that while I was growing up in Godzone, young people in the care of the state were routinely isolated for days, weeks and sometimes months, with no stimulation, no visitors, no time limits and no right of appeal. Later I also found a Human Rights report from the early 1980s which verified all the things the women told me. Indeed, that report led to the closure of large institutions and the introduction of community care for young people.

At the same time, I was also amazed at how our memories could differ. When I interviewed her, Gini went into great detail about stealing our work van on the night of her 21st birthday, rolling it and coming back to the party with her face all bruised and her teeth up in her gums. But until she reminded me of that, all I had remembered was the fur coat we had clubbed together and bought her. How soft and sleek it felt. How I desperately wanted one for myself.

I learnt to allow all these things. As I write in the book:

I find this disturbing. From a night when three girls nearly died, all I remembered was an item of clothing I desired. Had I seen so many young women with lumpy faces by then that I'd become immune to their pain? Did the smashed-up van slip my mind because I was leaving the trust and it wasn't going to be my problem? These don't seem like good enough reasons but they're the best I can come up with.

When I started reconstructing the story of Aroha Trust, I imagined that I would arrive at the end waving the truth proudly above my head, like a child retrieving a stone from the bottom of a swimming pool. I see now that all I've brought to the surface are fragments: isolated pictures lit up for an instant like a night scene in a camera flash, vague feelings nagging at me till I name them. And when I try to assemble these small trophies, wondering how much to trust them, they fade into the fog of what is missing or contested or remembered by each of the women through her own eyes and heart and herstory.

Like the blind men who argue about the nature of an elephant depending on whether they touch its tail or trunk or tusk, our view of the world is one-eyed and incomplete. My job has been to put together as many pieces of the picture as I can find — more patchwork quilt than jigsaw puzzle — hoping that the whole will end up being greater than the sum of the parts. And indeed that was Aroha Trust: unknown, imperfect, yet somehow containing the power of all our lives.

And we were powerful. Here is Gini again, talking about how she felt when, after one of our members was put on the block (gang raped), our group decided to go to a meeting of Black Power Wellington and confront the boys.

Gini: Side 5, 20.50–21.30:

And I remember when we as the women were trying to make a stand against some of the things they were doing like raping the women and putting them on the block and all those blinking horrible things that they thought they could just do and get away with, and I was real supportive of us as a girl's, a women's trust to stand against those things, regardless of whether we were going to get our heads knocked off or you know, discriminated or whatever. I was prepared to go all the way because by this time I had formed another family, with the women. And that's probably when I started to realise there was such a thing as women's lib out there in the world, not being open to anything like that. Thinking, yeah, these guys have

got no right to do this — let's make a stand together.

The make-up of the trust made it possible, she said:

Gini: Side 5, 22–23:

I think there's no way an individual could have did it. I think there's no way a European women could have did it. And I think, like for us, the Maori women, without the European women, wouldn't have been able to do it either, because we sort of needed their guidance and their know-how to be able to come together as a group to form that unity and that strength to hit those guys with what we knew was right. If we were just Maori women, we'd probably just try and hit them with our best shot but then get thinged out, you know, because I suppose we didn't really know at the end of the day what our rights were — and how much power we did have. But it was a real strong time. I felt like I was part of a group of women that were going somewhere.'

After the meeting, Charmaine said, we went to the next Black Power disco with crowbars up our sleeves, and stood around the walls, ready to take on the first man who tried to drag a woman out.

Powerful words. There was only one problem. While everyone remembered the meeting, no one else remembered the crowbars. This was most unusual and I agonised about whether to include the story. In the end, as I write in the book, I decided it was true, at least symbolically:

The Aroha Trust girls had flexed their muscles. The boys were on notice to treat women better. They knew we were watching them.

OTHER THINGS ABOUT TRUTH

A few other things about truth:

We can never really know or capture another person. At best what the women told me — and what I was open to hearing — was incomplete; at worst, it was wrong.

Then there were things I knew about the women that they did not tell me on tape — sometimes big things like getting pregnant or going inside. At first, I took this as a personal reflection on my interviewing skills, but I came to see that they had their own reasons for leaving things out. Some may have been about their perceptions of me, including the fact that I am Pakeha. Others were out of consideration for other audiences not in the room but in their heads, such as their whanau and communities. I realised I had to respect that, and that not everything had to be included.

In fact, I gave the women complete control of their life stories and quotes. They could change

anything right up until publication, and while I might try and explain why I thought something was important, at the end of the day, the decision was theirs. That did not mean I couldn't add my own judgements, though I tried to tread softly (these were real people with real feelings, not made-up characters), and as far as possible, let the stories speak for themselves.

There was one exception – I would not put in something that contradicted what I knew to be true from other sources. One of the women, for example, wanted me to say that her partner was marvellous, but I knew that she regularly had to take out protection orders against him. Unable to give the full picture (for her own safety, amongst other things), I opted to say nothing about him.

Most writers I spoke to told me I should never show the women what I had written about them. It would cause nothing but trouble, they said. Even if the women were OK about it, they would show it to family members who wouldn't be.

My experience has been the opposite. As trust grew between us, and as they heard each other's stories (which mostly they had never known either), the women began to open up more and more. Nayda, who had described a near-rape in her original interview, paid me a special visit to explain that actually she hadn't scared the guy off; he had raped her. Jane, who only alluded to sexual abuse in her first interview, subsequently disclosed multiple cases of rape, and made an extremely moving and courageous public statement at the book launch about her abuse as a young woman.

As well as accepting there were some things the women did not want to say, there were some things I did not want to hear. In her stunning book, *Shaping History: Narratives of Political Change*, Molly Andrews, co-director of the Centre for Narrative Research at East London University, reminds us that 'not only are some stories more tell-able than others, some stories are also more hear-able than others'.

She issues this challenge to researchers: 'If we do not feel ourselves to be personally at risk when we interrogate the lives of others, then we are not doing our jobs. For listening must be just that: a risk of one's self, taking the journey to enter into the life experiences of someone else, lowering the resistances that so often keep us at a safe distance from those who we consider "other", knowing all the while that our capacity to understand fully is inevitably impaired.'

I was halfway through the interviews before

I summoned up the courage to ask the women if they had ever been blocked. During these conversations, several told me about young girls they knew who willingly went on the block. I didn't want to hear this, and never pursued it in my questioning, something I now regret. If I had been braver, I might have been able to tease out the reasons why they said that, including whether there are young women so desperate to belong that they will do anything, and whether the women who told me that were trying to make sense of their own powerlessness to intervene or justify their indifference at the time to those young women's plight.

A final warning about truth. There is a danger that once something is written down, it assumes a weight it may not deserve. There is also a danger that Aroha Trust itself assumes greater significance in the re-telling than it actually had at the time, something I felt compelled to warn against at the end of the book.

By the end of the year I had my first draft and a fight on my hands with the university to get my MA awarded without having to make it publicly available in the university library – which, for me, represented a breach of confidentiality since it was not yet good enough to show the women and I had promised them nothing would be published without their consent. To cut a long story short, I won that fight but only after a lot of unnecessary distress and work, and finally taking my case to the Academic Grievance Committee.

INDIVIDUAL ORAL HISTORY MEETS GROUP PROCESS: KAWHIA

I spent another year writing the second draft of the book. I had ongoing contact with many of the women but I knew I only had one shot at getting their consent to publication. I had to be far enough down the track that what I showed them would have credibility, but not so far that that I couldn't bear to change things.

Finally, I took the plunge and invited the women to a three-day hui at Kawhia on Labour Weekend 2007. A small group of us raised funds so that there was no cost involved for individuals to attend.

Of the 11 women whose stories were in the book, eight came. Where possible, I couriered each of them the story of her childhood in advance. Once there, I gave each woman her own copy of the whole draft, with her name highlighted every time it appeared.

To my surprise, the women asked me to read the draft to them, something I found extremely daunting.



Gini, Jane Nayda and Pip, June 2009. REPRODUCED WITH KIND PERMISSION OF MANA MAGAZINE

At the end of the first day, mayhem broke out. That night and the whole of the next day were taken over by the power of the past, and for a while, I thought I had blown it. But remarkably, the women regrouped.

At the end of our time together, everyone agreed to publication, with the proviso that I come back to them with major changes. All wanted to use their own names and all agreed to publication of photos.

Afterwards, I followed up with hours of phone calls to different women as they revised the material, and talked through their concerns. I also visited the three women who were not at the hui, and went through the same process of getting their informed consent to the draft. In line with the group's wishes, at least one other woman accompanied me on these visits. The group also nominated a smaller steering group I could consult with about wider matters relating to publication.

PUBLICATION

It took another year before Random House accepted the book. Once again I called the women together. If anything, this gathering was even more fractious than the previous one. Suddenly a 10-year highly consultative process came hard up against individual author contracts, a Pakeha publisher's deadlines and commercial considerations, the need for quick decisions about titles and cover design, issues of intellectual property rights, a fair division of the pittance that writers get between the author and the women whose stories are told in the book. Most of these issues have been resolved; others are ongoing. All I know is that we have continued to trust the process, are learning along the way, and forging new ground as we go.

And so the book finally came out. But now there are new tensions. While the book is able to hold the complexity of individuals' lives and the dynamics of the group within its pages, the media – and most audiences – want to make everything neat and simple. They struggle to deal with the multiple messages I have tried to get across:

- That gangs are violent and abusive but also places where young women found protection and a sense of belonging.
- That the women's tales of redemption (today they are mothers and grandmothers, social workers, nurses, educators), contain the wounds of the past so that they often see positive change in terms of their mokopuna, rather than their own children, who may have been exposed to the same violence and abuse.

- That the women's tales of redemption do not negate the fact that too many young people today continue to be abused, alienated and culturally disconnected.
- That, although acknowledging pain is a precursor to healing, and silence always benefits the oppressor rather than the oppressed, nevertheless disclosure comes at a price. Publicly reliving the past can be unsettling at best and re-traumatising at worst, particularly if there is not enough support in place – which is why we held a three-day wananga for the women and their whanau at the time of the book launch. However, we remain acutely aware that, day to day, they are alone as they deal with their own and other people's reactions to their stories.
- Which brings me to the tension between the women's stories and my book: the cult of the author, or the author as invisible. Implicit in this is the meeting place between Pakeha and Maori, and all the nuances in that interaction, both then and now.
- And finally, the message that stands out above all others: that as young women, against the odds, we trusted the process of coming together, and experienced the strength of our common humanity. Doing, not just being done to. Power, not just powerlessness. Together, not alone.

From Oral History to Biography

Tino Tabak: Dreams and demons of a New Zealand cycling legend

JONATHAN KENNETT

This is an edited version of a presentation given at the NOHANZ conference held in Wellington in 2009.

When I first interviewed Tino Tabak, he was essentially hiding out because he'd had enough of being a celebrity. Although I hadn't realised it, he'd been very, very famous in New Zealand in the 1960s, and then very famous in Europe in the 1970s. I first interviewed Tino for a day and got three hours on tape. It was an absolutely fascinating interview and, at the end of it, he surprised me by pointing at me and saying, 'Jonathan, I want you to write my biography.' I was taken aback and fumbled around, and said, 'Maybe it would be a good magazine article.'

As I was driving away from his place, I thought, He's the sort of character that Shakespeare would have had fun with because he's just so open and honest. And so I decided, after a while, that I would write a biography about him.

To give you a flavour of Tino, here is an excerpt from an interview:

I'd be going out training, and when I was going out training, I'd be thinking I was in a Tour de France stage, or a world championship. I'd have this fantasy, I'd have this weird film in my mind, and if I'd go out training with the boys – hardly any of the boys wanted to go out training with me because all I'd be doing was wanting to get rid of them. I wanted to get rid of them. I just wanted to be the best – out training, in the race, everything. So they'd say, 'Oh Tino, you going out training tomorrow?' I said, 'Nine o'clock, I'll be there.' I'd never ever stop, never wait for nobody. If they were there, they were there. They'd hook on the back because that's all I wanted them to do. They weren't allowed to ride beside me because I'd also sort of, what we'd call, 'half wheel' them.

Interviewer: What's that?

Half wheeling someone is that you'd always have your wheel in front of their wheel. If they were riding beside you, you'd always stay that little bit in front of them. It's most annoying if someone does it to you

because it's quite hard.

Eventually they'd just sit in behind me. ... I'd just want to get rid of them. ... But that gave me a good feeling of: I've done a good training ride. That's what it was about. All I wanted to do was to be the best.

I've interviewed a few national champions in New Zealand and the attitude that Tino had of wanting to be the best is common amongst the really top level of cyclists. Very self-centred, very strong-minded, and they have a presence that's just slightly intimidating.

I've gone back year after year and interviewed him, staying at his place for a day or two. Each time he has revealed a little bit more and been doing an awful lot of thinking, because cycling for him became all-consuming, and almost killed him. He absolutely had to be the best. He absolutely had to ride the Tour de France, and his self-esteem was built upon succeeding on a bicycle. He needed to succeed. When I went back the second time, he started revealing quite a few things that made me nervous. He started telling me about drugs in cycling:

[from p. 60 of book]

As we were getting changed, someone asked, 'Tino, do you want a bit?' By this time I knew what they were talking about, so I said, 'Yeah, I'll have a bit.' [It was amphetamine.] I didn't know what it was but within a minute I felt I could walk through a wall, and I was talking like a machine gun. They say it's bad, but what's bad? It wasn't good, of course, but that day I was in fantasy land and could have taken

Jonathan Kennett is one of three brothers who make up the company Kennett Brothers Ltd. Jonathan has published a book on the history of cycling in New Zealand, and completed a number of oral history projects on recreation, parks and conservation, including Tongariro National Park and the Wellington Botanic Gardens.

on the whole world. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone combined. I was invincible.

When I returned to Wellington after that interview, which was probably about four hours on tape and a day and a half at his place, I sought advice. One of the reasons was because at the end of that second interview, just as he was dropping me off at the Ashburton bus stop, he said to me, 'Jonathan, next time we've got to go deeper.' He'd been telling me about drugs and things and I thought, You want to go deeper? I said to people, 'This guy is really opening up a lot to me. What should I do? Should I be warning him not to tell me too much, because I'm wanting to write a book about him?'

So the next time I went back, for the third interview, I explained to him again, very clearly, that he was going to sign copyright over to me at the end of the interview. I wanted to use the information that he was telling me, although I did tell him that if there was something that he really didn't want to go in the book, then I wouldn't put it in. That was an agreement that we made.

He had obviously done a lot of thinking about what he was going to say in that third interview and he covered a lot of things which were really interesting and were useful, not only to driven people but also to people who have been drug addicts in the past. There were quite a few things which I found very valuable, but this is a favourite one.

He's talking about what he did the week after finishing cycling. Leading up to the last couple of years of cycling, he was having to take pills to get up in the morning, pills to race, pills to go to sleep at night. His life was just hell and he hated it, but he couldn't think of anything else to do because that was what his life was built upon. He finally had a big crash and the crash took him to hospital. In hospital he didn't have any pills for a few days and that was enough for him to think, Right, that's it. I'm never going back to professional cycling.

He got a job the next week on the wharves, unloading fishing boats, and in an interview he said:

On the wharves, there was no time for pills. I wasn't completely cured, but mostly over it. You're never completely cured. There's always some time, or time of year when I'm craving and I have to make a choice. That will always be with me. You can't take memories away. They won't go, but the willpower to say no – you can create that.

I continued interviewing him and eventually decided that when I wrote the book, I would divide the oral history section from the general narrative,

which is something that I hadn't done before. I decided to use two fonts in the book. One font depicts his words which had been recorded over a period of seven years. The other font is the narrative which is my voice. It is passive, more researched – filling in gaps and providing some objectivity which Tino obviously cannot provide for himself.

He was a sex magnet. He had a lot of affairs and I had to decide whether I was going to cover that in the book. It was an ethical issue because it was somewhere that Tino obviously didn't want to go, so I decided not to include that material. There was enough in the book, and it was a cycling book. Although I didn't need his permission, I felt that I was dealing with someone who was so open and honest, that what would be the point of annoying him by including something he didn't want there.

Then came the nervous moment of sending a draft of the manuscript to him and finding out whether he would say, 'No. No, no, no, no, no. I know I said those things but there's no way I want that in black and white.'

I waited for about a week, a week and a half, and then finally I thought, I've got to phone him, I've got to find out whether all that oral history was worth it. I phoned him up and he said, 'Jonathan, Jonathan. I read the book. I sat in the armchair and I just read it from cover to cover. And then I wept, and I realised what a terrible man I'd been.' I waited for a while and then I said, 'You're a different person now, Tino. Do you want the book to carry on the way it is?'

He said, 'Yes. People will learn from it. People will learn from what happened to me.'

I carried on interviewing him for another six months, filling in gaps, making the whole narrative flow properly, and never struck any resistance to what was being written. There were probably only two things in the book he wanted changed. One was when he had got a little bit too close to mentioning another person taking drugs. He explained to me that some stars in cycling are just too big, and you can't bring them down. I think there was one other small thing that was changed.

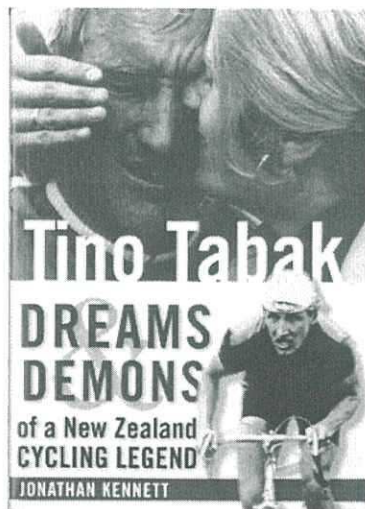
Some people have suggested that perhaps this whole process of the oral history interviews and writing the book was somehow cathartic for him. I was very appreciative of the strength that he showed and the openness.

TINO TABAK: DREAMS AND DEMONS OF A NEW ZEALAND CYCLING LEGEND IS REVIEWED BY DAVID GREEN IN THIS JOURNAL.

Book Reviews

Jonathan Kennett, *Tino Tabak: Dreams and Demons of a New Zealand Cycling Legend*, Kennett Brothers, Wellington, 2009. Paperback, 158 pp. \$20. ISBN 978-0-9582673-1-1.

Reviewed by: David Green, History Group, Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Wellington



This biography is the fifth in a series on 'New Zealand Cycling Legends' that was spawned by a history of cycling in New Zealand, *Ride*, published by the Kennett Brothers in 2004. This coffee-table volume included their selection of 'ten of the best' New Zealand road racing cyclists of the twentieth century. Since then the Kennetts have published biographies of four of the ten, plus another who didn't make the original cut.

Each book in the series begins with a prologue. The other four

describe a crucial moment in their man's racing career. This one is pure Jentinus Johannes Tabak – a terse personal statement: 'This is my story. I'm only going to tell it once and then it's done. Not for a million dollars will I do this again.'

I'm glad Tino Tabak decided to open up to Jonathan Kennett. I grew up in his heyday and have wondered occasionally what had happened to him. He arrived here with his parents from grim postwar Holland as a small child and – still a teenager – dominated New Zealand road cycling in the mid-1960s. Aged just 21, he went back to Holland to seek fame and fortune in the toughest cycling environment of all, the European professional scene. Though he won a Dutch road title and finished a Tour de France inside the top 20 – achievements for which any other New Zealand cyclist would have sold their soul – he never achieved the greatness which he seemed not so much destined for as driven towards by sheer strength of will.

This book explains, largely in his own words, why Tabak's career stalled. The extensive use of quotations from interviews is often a strength, sometimes a weakness. The most effective sections blend Tabak's voice with those of others, and with press reports. The chapters on his later career rely on Tabak's recollections 30 years on. The only other direct quotes about his decade racing in Europe come from a magazine interview with his then-wife that was titled tellingly, 'My Wife Brings Me Bad Luck'.

Tabak comes across as un-flinchingly honest, but the story would have benefited from

the input of others who were presumably unwilling to go on the record. And more use of press reports and magazine articles might have provided a better sense of how Tabak was seen by his peers. Clearly, like many athletes constantly on the brink of over-training, he was an obsessed and sometimes troubled human being. But just how typical was his willingness to seek pharmaceutical assistance, or his enthusiasm for making – and breaking – deals with other riders, regardless of team instructions?

Relying on the memories of a man whose willingness to talk must have been a dream come true for the author has had a paradoxical, yet predictable, outcome. I finished the book with my eyes on stilts over the grimy realities of professional cycling in the era before effective drug testing and video replays, and with a greater appreciation of the psychology of success – and failure – in elite sport. Yet in some ways I still know less about Tino Tabak than I now do about, say, Bill Pratney of Tainui, whom I'd never heard of before reading Jim Robinson's companion book in this series.

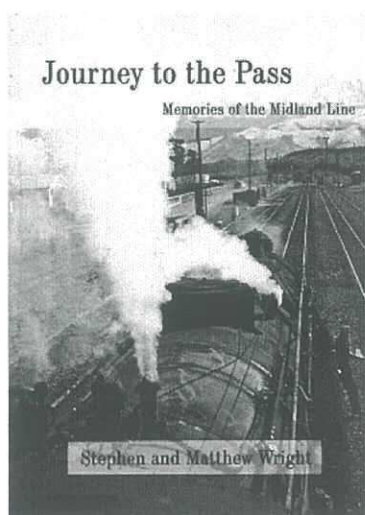
Pratney died in 2001 after a long life during which he was undisturbed by the attentions of oral historians. Robinson was able to interview family members and friends, and mine newspapers and magazines, including for sound-bites from the man himself in the days before media training reduced most such utterances to banality. This necessarily indirect approach has given us a more nuanced portrait of Pratney's life than we have of Tabak's. But of course Robinson did not have a living subject looking keenly over his shoulder...

All the books in this series, as well as *Ride*, have been produced with loving care. The numerous photographs are evocative, glossaries educate the uninitiated, race results are itemised, and there are source lists and indexes. Best of all, the prose is both careful and lively. None of these things can be taken for granted in books about New Zealand sport – or biographies based on oral history. Long may the Kennett brothers' ride through our cycling history continue.

Stephen and Matthew Wright, *Journey to the Pass: Memories of the Midland Line*, published by the authors in Southbridge, Canterbury, 2009.

ISBN 978-0-473-14641-2, 211 pp, A4 format, soft cover. \$45 + p&p
info@twowrightbooks.co.nz

Reviewed by Loreen Brehaut,
Picton



This father-and-son venture was begun by Stephen Wright as a private oral history project in 2004, with some funding from Malvern Community Board. Stephen had begun recording oral histories in 1999 with the Ellesmere Historical Society and was mainly self-taught,

although he does acknowledge a later valuable two-day course run by Presbyterian Support in Dunedin.

The present project developed from work done restoring and printing railway photographs for the Information office in Springfield railway station. People associated with the railway connection between Christchurch and Arthur's Pass were interviewed and additional material researched. According to the authors' foreword, when the project was getting out of hand, Stephen's 15-year-old son Matthew was asked to help compile a book. His teachers at Ellesmere College are credited with passing on useful skills.

The book contains much more information than the edited oral history interviews, with a history chapter and a lengthy photo section as well as copious illustrations throughout. The eight main oral histories are prefaced by brief biographies and give the human side of railway life. Each informant had a different job or connection with the line and the individual voices and personalities have been maintained through the editing. The longest and most memorable interview, at 35+ pages, is with Jimmy Dillon, engine driver, but station masters and train examiners, refreshment-room women, guards and passengers are all represented.

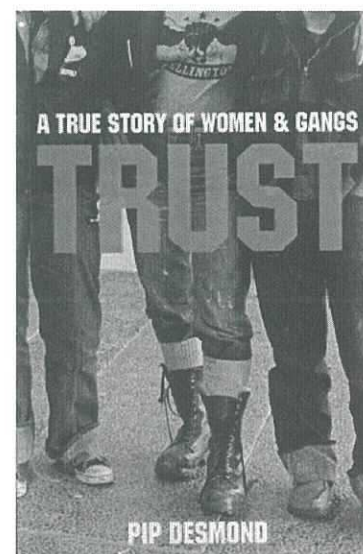
There is something to interest all historians and tickle a few memories here: Archie Brown describing boys picking up bottles from beside the line and selling them to the local shop for pocket-money; Dorothy Dudley scrubbing the whole floor of the refreshment rooms on hands and knees every day,

and Bid Elson learning to be the manageress: 'you can't be friends and a boss. I learned that very fast.' Malcolm Innes as guard describes many incidents, including honey-dew on the line stopping a train! Jimmy Dillon tells of icicles in the Southern Alps tunnels – they would drop and smash the windows of the first locomotive through.

For a railway enthusiast or person interested in the districts covered, this book would be an attractive asset. Photos are captioned with plenty of detail, properly credited, and reproduced in excellent quality. There is no index, but the well-spaced layout makes it easy to find one's way around the book. Printed on good quality paper, this is good value compared with today's throwaway paperbacks for almost as much. The intention is to complete a series of four books, of which this is the first.

Pip Desmond *Trust: A True Story of Women & Gangs* Auckland, Random House, 2009. 319 pp, paperback, \$39.99

Reviewed by Megan Hutching,
Auckland



Readers of *Oral History in New Zealand* will remember Pip Desmond's report, published in the joint 2000-2001 issue, on the oral history project which provided the primary source material for this book. Since recording the interviews, Pip has done an MA in Creative Writing at Victoria University. *Trust* is one of the fruits of that MA.

I do not need to write about how Pip came to record the interviews or write the book because her keynote speech to last year's NOHANZ conference, which covers that ground, is published in this issue of *Oral History in New Zealand*.

She has used the genre of creative non-fiction, that is to say, the book is a mixture of biography, memoir and social history. The story of three years in the life of Aroha Trust, a women's work co-operative in Wellington, is told by Pip in the first person. The combination of the first person, and the skilful use of the interviews, means that the reader is immediately engaged by Pip and the women with whom she worked and played. We come to know their personalities, their foibles and about their terribly destructive childhoods.

Most of the young women who were part of the Aroha Trust had affiliations with the Black Power gang. As a result, they lived lives of danger and violence. Some of them were psychologically and emotionally fragile but they managed to find strength in working together in the Trust.

This could have been a book about awfulness – and there are many incidents of violence and danger in it – but the resilience of many of the women means

that it is, instead, a book about friendship, the satisfaction that working together brings, and empowerment.

The back stories of some of the women is a strength of the book, as is the information about what has happened to them in the years since the Aroha Trust folded. These are not all happy stories, but they are honest and reflective and paint a nuanced picture of the characters and lives of these women. The book presents a world that many New Zealanders would not have any experience of outside the pages of newspapers or from television news shows. As such, it is both familiar and unfamiliar. It is familiar in that it has been presented to us through these media in a stereotypical way – alcohol, drugs, violence, rape, incest and most of the faces are Maori or Pasifika. It is unfamiliar because Pip has presented these stories using the voices of women who were there. As a result, the narrative becomes personal and immediate. The women are able to explain how they felt and why they reacted in certain ways. Things are no longer good or bad, black or white, right or wrong because these are young women who are trying to make sense of their lives. For many of them, they are for the first time in an environment where they have the support and the opportunity to be able to begin to do so.

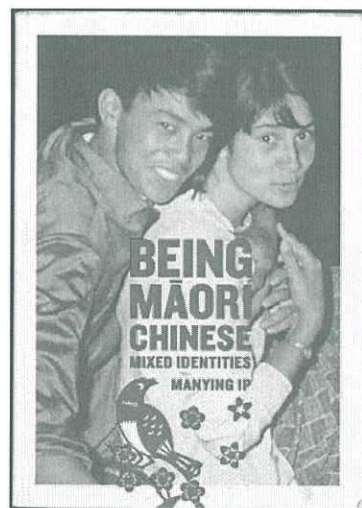
This is not a fairy story, so some of these women take a long time to be able to make a life for themselves in which they are secure and safe. For some of them, this has never happened.

It is the women's voices which have come from the interviews that Pip recorded, which allow

her to present these women's lives – and her own – with such insight and understanding. The book does many of the things that we are used to saying oral history does well – it illuminates a part of our history which has been overlooked in social histories, it gives voice to people whose voices are typically silent, and it gives readers an insight into the lives and motivations of others. Pip has written a fine book which uses oral history in an innovative and intelligent way.

Manying Ip *Being Maori Chinese: Mixed Identities*, Auckland University Press, 2008 272 pp, paperback, \$44.99

Reviewed by T. H. Tangaere-McGregor, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington



Written from a selection of oral history interviews, this book captures the emotions, joys and impact of a dual identity on the people who shared their stories with Manying Ip. Known to many through her roles as a writer, researcher, community advocate and dedication to improving race relations, Manying developed a relationship of trust that

enabled her interviewees to relate information that would otherwise have been left unsaid – in particular, derogatory comments directed at people of Chinese descent. Of the seven families who shared their stories with Manying, the Joes, Lees and Goddards were already known to her. The Thompson, Hauraki, Keung-Nin and Tuang families became known through various contacts, such as her students and their families, her research of archival papers and the historical photographic collection of the Tung Jung Association, through her work among the Chinese community as co-founder of the Chinese Lifeline telephone counselling service, and Chinese mental health workers.

Preceding each chapter are the Chinese and Maori genealogy charts; they help to identify where each narrator fits within the family and provide some understanding about the period of Chinese migration to New Zealand. The introduction gives an overview of the earlier Maori-Chinese families of the 1920s and 1930s. Chinese are widely known for being 'hard workers' and Maori as being 'laid back'. Living in close proximity to each other in the rural areas not too distant from townships, the market gardeners needed casual workers and Maori of those districts needed work. Relationships developed and eventually marriage. Alice Jean Kiriona Williams and Joe Kum Chee's marriage is an example.

Waerata Rangitooto of Wanganui sent each of her four teenage daughters to different Chinese market gardeners to work when she found it a real struggle to care for her family after her husband's death. Alice

Jean, the eldest daughter, was not happy being matched with a much older man, Joe Kum Chee. He was already married with a wife and two children back in China whom he supported with regular remittances. The relationship in New Zealand produced 14 children. Not until after his wife in China died did Joe Kum Chee and Alice Jean marry on 21 July 1981. Although a competent speaker of her Maori language, according to one of her grandchildren she didn't like to use it and hated Maori things. Nor did she encourage her children and grandchildren to speak it. Even so, Alice Jean was very close to her Maori family and her descendants now treasure both cultures of their dual ethnicity. Several family members have travelled to the homeland to grandpa's village and his original house is still occupied by family.

Each family's story is unique and the book captures this uniqueness in their telling. It is generally expected that the male partner of a Chinese-Maori marriage would be a Chinese man, however it was not the case for the Thompson-Wong marriage. Horatio (Hori) Thompson and Suei-Jung Wong were both from Wairarapa; she a market gardener's daughter and he a farmer's son. Drawn together through their love of sport, their relationship developed. Suei's parents were opposed to their friendship and objected strongly to their marriage. Her pregnancy was the catalyst for them to marry. It was a quiet family affair, attended by Hori's sister and brother and officiated by his father who was an Apotoro (minister) of the Ratana faith. Because she married a Maori she

was made to feel inferior by the Chinese: 'sometimes they think they are above you'. The Maori never degraded her: 'they've always accepted me'.

Nancy Wai Lan Kwok was born into one of Wellington's longest established Chinese family's. Her husband George was of Scots, Jewish, German and Maori ancestry – a Pakeha-Maori who was adopted by the Goddard family. Danny was the youngest of their three sons, raised in a pro-Communism political household. George and Nancy's support for, and membership of the New Zealand Communist Party meant their family was exposed to their parents' beliefs regarding communism. The impact of such an environment benefited Danny in many ways among his Chinese, Maori and wider communities – as his wife attests, 'Danny has skills to draw people together ... good at writing submissions and always helped to create structures for various organisations. On our marae the elders respect him'.

In chapter four Jenny Lee and Awi Riddell were long time colleagues in education, and married in 2003. Jenny's first marriage of 30 years to David Lee dissolved after their four children grew up. Lily is Chinese and David Lee was Chinese-Maori – a Chinese father and Maori mother. As with most early Chinese and Maori parents, marrying outside of one's own ethnic group was frowned upon and every possible method was used to deter their relationship. Lily was sent in the first instance to her sister in Hong Kong and then to her parents' home villages in China as David was considered not 'pure Chinese' – not university educated,

unsuitable and undesirable.

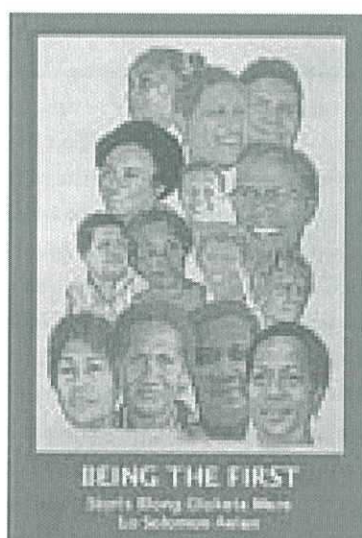
Like the other family stories in the book, racism is something all have experienced. Hurtful comments such as, 'Get back on the boat. Go back to China, Ching Chong Chinaman' – comments that unfortunately are still heard targeted at the young Chinese and Asian generation. Danny Goddard spoke regarding new immigrants' lack of knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi – a subject shared by Awi Riddell. It is a historical event in New Zealand, is still very much alive and should be taught in schools. The three Keung-Nin children, whose parents are both Maori-Chinese, grew up in a household where education was encouraged from when they were youngsters, not only because their father was principal of the Mormon College at Temple View in Hamilton but more due to the work ethic their paternal goong helped to instilled in them at an early age working in his market gardens – that is, 'work hard now, or work harder later'. Each are professionals in their own right.

Education is a key feature among the families as indicated by the determination of parents to send their children to university. Growing up as a Maori-Chinese person is interesting in that many of the children share the same views and are candid in their responses regarding their dual identity. As Jennifer Hauraki says, 'Dual heritage is not just an advantage, but it's also a responsibility – I can be a bridge ... my ethnicity is my reference point.' The Keung sisters feel positive about the future of the country being shared by different ethnic groups and realise their Chinese-Maori ancestry opens doors of opportunity for them.

Readers are given a broad range of opinion in the chapters because not only the couples contribute to the stories in this book but also their children. Topics touched on in chapters refer to the history of the early Chinese immigrants, visiting the home villages in China, racism, discrimination, politics, the Treaty of Waitangi, the foreshore and seabed, and religion.

Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard and Marilyn Waring (eds) *Being the First: Stories Blong Oloketa Mere Lo Solomon Aelan, Honiara and Auckland*, RAMSI and Institute of Public Policy and Pacific Media Centre, AUT, 2010. Paperback, \$27

Reviewed by Lesley Hall, Victoria University of Wellington



This book is about women breaking new ground. It is a first about firsts in the Solomon Islands: the first and only woman member of parliament; the first women to become permanent secretaries or deputy permanent secretaries of government departments; the first public services commissioner. It is the first book for, by and about Solomon Island women and

as such it shares many of the beliefs of feminist oral history: 'a recognition that traditional sources have often neglected the lives of women, and that oral history offer[s] a means of integrating women into historical scholarship'. (Sangster, 1998:87) It is also an example of giving back that resulted from a discussion by the editors about how best to make material from academic theses accessible to a local readership.

A women-only production, 14 interviews were recorded on an mp3 digital recorder in pidgin English (an oral not written language) by Catherine Adifaka, translated by Cynthia Wickham whilst working on a tuna boat, then edited by the authors above. Some of the themes that emerge from the individual stories are the importance of family and the Church, education, battling tradition, the difficulty of balancing private and public lives, women and leadership, and the need for young women to take up the mantle. As the interviewer says:

We hope that this [book] will give [the next generation] courage to break down barriers to equality which remain.

The first chapter by Ruth Basi Afia-Maetala with Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard gives a historical overview of women's history in the Solomon Islands from 1948 to 2009 and demonstrates how barriers to women's participation in the public service are rooted in 'colonialism, culture and attitudes of Solomon Islands people, and those men administering the systems.' Elizabeth Kausimae tells how her boss claimed that women were not 'fit for long term training' and Hilda Kari, who contends that

leadership is a lonely place for women, 'could not name any real men supporters – none at all' in her career as a public servant. Her boss reprimanded her when she asserted women's rights to maternity leave and holidays.

Many of the stories resonate with those of Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand. For example, Ruth claims that traditionally, women's work gave them status and respect in their societies and tribes but that both colonialism and Christianity served to marginalize women. Jane Waetara tells about being disciplined for not speaking English when students were in the school compound. Educational experiences are a dominant theme of the narratives and Hilda Kari's story, while not unique, is particularly moving. Hilda talks about her relationship with her parents and how being sent away to school at age 7 with trips home only every two years resulted in both emotional and geographic distance: 'I can feel the love they had for me but I was not really close and working with them, relating to them'. Activist Ruth Liloqua discusses her struggle against being the only woman in her agriculture class and how she marched to the Minister of Education in protest against unfair government scholarship selections.

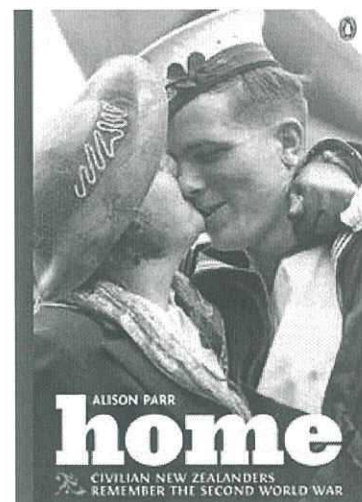
Most of the narrators married and had children at a young age and stories emerge of arranged marriages, unmarried pregnancies, family violence, and improper behaviour that "sends the wrong message to people" and so can lead to pressure to marry. Jane Waetara would not bow to such pressure and told her father that it was better to talk to a boy

in public than in secret: 'Thanks to my father's understanding, there was no further action, but rather some very stern warnings. This was a strong reminder for me to continue to acknowledge traditional and cultural obligations...'.
Overall, the book provides an opportunity to learn about Solomon Islands' history and culture from the perspective of women in leadership positions; it recovers women previously 'hidden from history'. This is an important book for Solomon Islanders and is likely to be integrated into the secondary school curriculum. Whether it achieves the mentoring role it aims for remains to be seen, but sharing these stories is an important first step. To paraphrase Emily Teaitala this book 'refreshes the knowledge you have and builds on it' while for contributor Ethel Sigamanu, 'it is about people looking at where they are now, and seeing that women can indeed rise up... and can do great things for this country'.

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Alison Parr: *Home: Civilian New Zealanders Remember the Second World War*. Auckland, Penguin, 2010. 292 pages, paperback, \$50

Reviewed by Susan Jacobs, Auckland



Books about the Second World War usually focus on the citizen soldiers who went away on active service overseas. Places like El Alamein, Cassino and Crete have become symbols of battles won and lost where New Zealand men bonded into a formidable fighting force that helped shape the identity of a young nation.

In contrast, New Zealand and the overwhelming majority of its people left behind have played a contextual, supporting role in these narratives of war. Although deemed significant, the home front has never held the urgency, fascination and drama of the active war experience. For tiny New Zealand, more geographically isolated from the conflict than any other Allied country, it appeared to be business as usual.

Yet, as revealed in this timely, meticulously presented book, dislocation and its subsequent disruption to traditional social and economic patterns had a powerful effect. By giving

centre stage to the voices of those at home, Senior Oral Historian Alison Parr has redressed the imbalance and shifted the parameters of our understanding of how New Zealanders responded to and made sense of the challenge. Her interviews with eighteen home 'veterans' now in their 80s and 90s provide a compelling glimpse of their memories over these years. Representing both Pakeha and Maori from every part of the country, they reveal with disarming honesty how life was for them and simultaneously expose priceless nuggets of social history. Tellingly, most of the interviewees are women, and this is reflected in the domestic detail of many activities discussed.

The war years brought chronic uncertainty, food rations, anxiety about loved ones overseas, and a certain frisson of excitement. The country had to be run, shortages endured, and women took up many jobs the men had vacated. When my mother used to talk of being 'manpowered' I

struggled to understand what she meant. She was reluctant to elaborate on the work she actually did, I suspect because it was menial and low-paid. Women were conscripted to work in cigarette factories, woollen mills and as land girls on the farms, doing the same work as the men, but for half the pay. The mentality of the time meant they accepted this with cheerful, unquestioning stoicism, yet the upside was they learned new skills and gained a sense of independence. One woman learned to play the bagpipes in a pipe band. Others went tramping together and made their own entertainment.

Particularly poignant are the accounts by men who stayed behind, especially when they did not do so by choice. For them these years were uncomfortable, as they felt conspicuous and judged for being 'dodgers'.

Divided into 12 chapters that follow a loosely chronological pattern, *Home* seamlessly interweaves the interviewees'

words with Parr's unobtrusive, yet incisive commentary. Many aspects are covered: among them, the arrival of the Americans, conscientious objectors, engagements and marriages that survived six years apart and those that were irrevocably affected.

Beautifully designed and illustrated, this book facilitates accessibility, partly due to the boldly headed segments within each chapter. Sporting unconventional titles such as 'Lying Low', 'Mince and Offal' they are designed to stand alone, and can be dipped into at random. This can be both a strength and a weakness. They capture the immediacy and the significance of these experiences but at times, and this is a small quibble, it can feel rather piecemeal.

Above all, it is a richly informative tribute to the spirit and resilience of the last generation to ever refer to England as 'home'. Yet home, as this book makes abundantly clear, was always located firmly in New Zealand.

NOHANZ Origins

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

Objectives

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

Code of ethical and technical practice

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

WWW.ORALHISTORY.ORG.NZ

NOHANZ

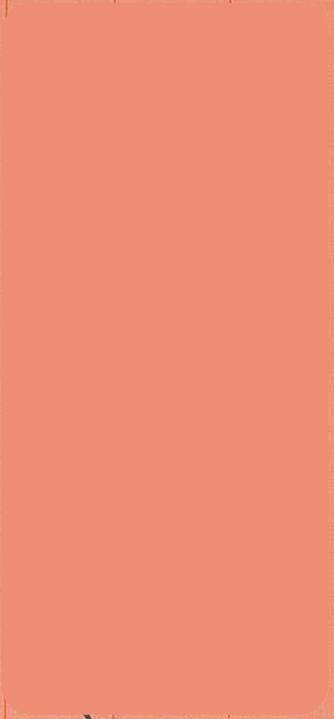
This Code exists to promote ethical, professional and technical standards in the collection, preservation and use of sound and video oral history material.

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

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

INTERVIEWERS HAVE THE FOLLOWING RESPONSIBILITIES:

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



NOHANZ

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