Oral HISTORY in New Zealand

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MEGAN HUTCHING III

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

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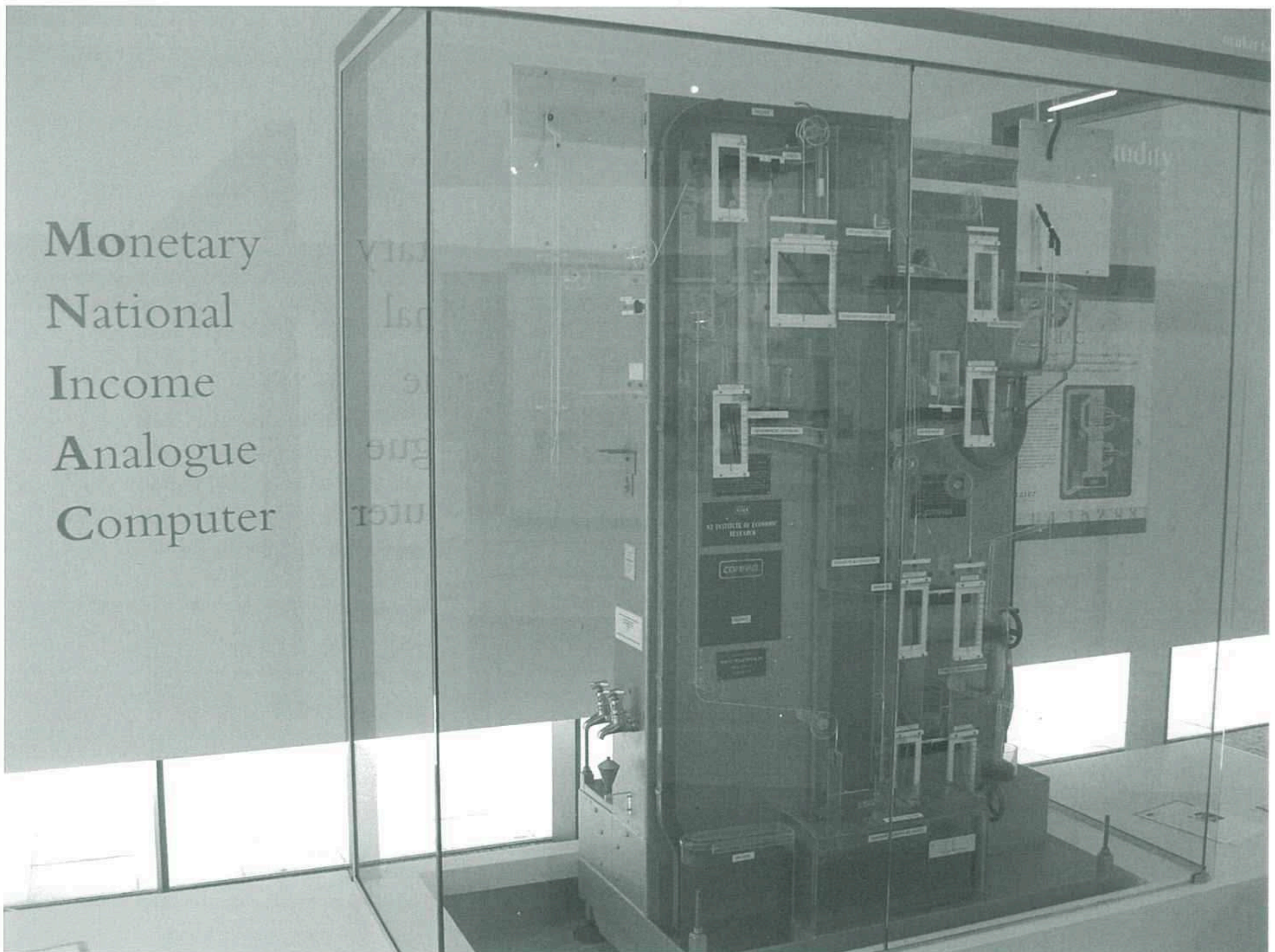
THE FIRST ECONOMIC MODEL WAS A SERIES OF TUBES

This series of pneumatic tubes is, in fact, the first complete model of the economy. Add water (which represents money) and watch it flow through the economy. It enters the top as "income", and as it flows down, various levers allow you to see the effects that government spending, tax, savings, investment, imports and exports might have. The levels in different tubes rise and fall to represent fluctuations in different sectors of the economy.



This crazy machine, called MONIAC (the Monetary National Income Automatic Computer), was invented by the New Zealand economist Bill Phillips, for whom the famous economic relationship called the Phillips Curve was named.

There's a working version on display at Cambridge University, and another at the University of Melbourne. While today's economic models exist in computers instead, they're very much based on similar principles.

Marketplace Learning Curve, posted by Justin Wolfers

Editorial

In this year's journal we are publishing a number of reports on projects which have received funding from the New Zealand Oral History Awards.

Shona McCahon reflects on a very interesting aspect of oral history interviewing – why do people agree to be interviewed for projects? This is something which would benefit from further thought and discussion perhaps at a conference or regional meeting.

Jeanette Thomas and Kathryn Masters write about the Mercer Museum oral history project. This project was commissioned by a small museum which has a great deal of community support, and which encourages people to share their memories of Mercer when they visit. Jeanette and Kathryn decided that a range of different types of interview would suit their museum best. This, again, is something that might be useful to consider when planning our projects.

Marina Fontein has been interviewing people of Lebanese descent in the Wellington area and has found, as oral historians so often do, that her interviews have helped her come to understand her heritage more fully.

Our refereed article this year is by Janet Toland and Jim Whitman and discusses an interview project with pioneers of computing in this country. It is a fascinating area of our recent technological history, and one which lends itself to interviewing rather well.

As always, we note recently published books which have used interview material or are based on oral history projects.

We welcome contributions to future issues of the journal.

MEGAN HUTCHING

Oral History in New Zealand, vol.28, 2016

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 2016 issue of the journal is 30 June. A Guide for Contributors is available from the editor and on the NOHANZ website. Please send your contributions to the editor below.

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

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Frank March in 1980

Jim Higgins in 1990

Liz Eastwood in 1980. Photographs: Janet Toland

Wellington's Computing Pioneers 1960 to 2010

Reinventing the wheel? There was no wheel!

JANET TOLAND AND JIM WHITMAN

Introduction

The original motivation for this project was sparked by the 50th anniversary of the New Zealand Computer Society in 2010, which was a reminder that computing now had a significant history in Aotearoa.[1] We felt we could make a significant addition to that history by collecting the voices of individuals who had been active in the New Zealand computing world for a significant proportion of that period. We wanted to let them tell their stories using the oral history methodology. Over the two years following the anniversary, eight oral histories were collected from pioneers of computing based mainly in the Wellington region.[2] This article presents their stories.

The first computer brought to New Zealand was delivered to the Treasury in 1960, although the Computer Society actually began its work six months before that.[3] As time went on, the early bulky mainframe machines used mainly by public sector organisations became smaller and more widespread, until by 2010 computers were practically ubiquitous. They spread from the workplace to the home, and today's young people are regarded as 'Digital Natives' who confidently navigate their own way around a wide range of computing technologies.[4] The people we interviewed have lived through these changes and we asked them for their personal stories about their involvement in computing, and for their wider reflections on how information technology has changed the society we live in.

Our eight interviews are part of a growing historical collection. Twelve oral histories were deposited in the National Library following the 25th anniversary of the Computer Society, and two books were published to mark the 25th and 50th anniversaries respectively.[5]

Researching and creating the oral histories

Computer Society members have made a significant contribution to computing in New Zealand. Our oral histories were collected in the Wellington region, where computing was first introduced to New Zealand. A panel consisting of the two interviewers and two senior members of the Computer Society selected potential interviewees working in a range of different sectors: tertiary and secondary education, public and private sectors, and both small and large computer systems. We looked for people well-regarded within the region and prioritised those whose stories had not already been collected, mostly excluding people who had already been interviewed in 1985 or who had contributed a chapter to the two books. Selection was not limited to Computer Society members, but most interviewees had some connection with the society. As computing is a notoriously male dominated profession, we also made sure we included two women in our eight interviews.

All interviewees were of Pakeha ethnicity. Most had university education – two to PhD level. Four were born in New Zealand, four were immigrants, and all had spent time overseas. The participants had been involved with computers for most of their working lives, though for one

Janet Toland is a Senior Lecturer in Information Systems at Victoria University of Wellington. Her PhD research, completed in 2010, analysed the historical contribution of IT to regional development in New Zealand over a 20 year period from 1985 to 2005. Together with Jim Whitman she has been collecting oral histories of individuals working in the IT industry in Wellington.

Jim Whitman got his first computer when studying for a Diploma in Social Work. Despite the machine-nature of study and work, he discovered that people and history were still at the centre of everything that we do. The oral history of computing in New Zealand has not disabused him of this belief. He has an MSc in Information and Records Management and a degree in Social Studies.

of the female interviewees, education was her primary focus. All participants, apart from one, were over 50.

The recordings adhered to the ethical standards of both the National Oral History Association of New Zealand and Victoria University of Wellington. The interviewing team consisted of the two authors, and together we developed an interview guideline (included as an appendix to this article) that allowed each interviewee to tell their own original story. Interview recordings were abstracted according to the National Library's guidelines and from there we identified common themes and unique insights. Context was provided by previous oral history interviews and the two books published by the Computer Society. Other materials were also utilised, such as Keith Newman's timeline of telecommunications history.[6]

Several common themes emerged from the interviews. When the interviewees were starting their working lives, computing was in its infancy, and the participants discussed what attracted them to work in such a new area, and the fun and excitement they experienced that made them stay with it. A lot of their enjoyment was derived from the fact that they were working in a highly innovative area, and many interviewees took a leading role in setting up new technologies and projects. A particularly significant development in Wellington was when CityLink became the first city-wide broadband network in the world, and the interviewees reflect on both the setting up and the ongoing effects of CityLink.

Computing is dominated by men, and the role of gender is briefly explored. One striking characteristic of all participants was their role as leaders, both within and outside their own organisations. Some leadership occurred within the context of the New Zealand Computer Society, but often extended far beyond it. The interviewees were asked what they thought was the most significant development in computing in their lifetime, and all agreed that it was the Internet. Their thoughts on how the Internet has changed the fundamental nature of computing form the final section.

First impressions

Many of the interviewees came to computing from a mathematics, science or engineering background. Professor John Hine recalls.

> *I went to a university called Union College which was founded in 1825 in Schenectady [USA], I did electrical engineering and in my third year there, they got their first computer, an old IBM 1620 and that's where I learned to basically stay up all night trying to get programs to work.* [7]

Others fell into computing by chance. At the age of around 17 Jim Higgins felt he just happened to be in the right place at the right time, as he tells it:

> *I went to work for the Palmerston North City Council when I left school and had a number of jobs in the office, and eventually ended up running a fleet of accounting machines, which were enormous great clanking contraptions, and from there really it was just a natural into IT [...] it's almost a classic 'right place at the right time' really. We just had so many problems trying to get the accounting work done that we were sort of forced into looking at something else, and that's how I got into it.* [8]

Now in his sixties, Andy Linton remembers the first time he saw a computer, though it didn't make much of an immediate impression on him:

> *I can remember vaguely when I was at school [...] we went to Queens University in Belfast [Ireland] and we saw THE computer, and it was a great big box, and there was memory that was made by threading copper wires through graphite cores, and it was just a strange world and it certainly wasn't something that was an everyday thing and I don't think I thought very much about it at the time or for a very long time afterwards.* [9]

For a young Nat Torkington, however, a trip to Auckland to see his first personal computer had a lasting impact.

> *I remember going to Whitcoulls with Dad, back when a trip to Auckland [from Leigh] was a big deal [...] big deal to go down to Whitcoulls on the main street, in Queen Street, head in there, on the upper level and they've got a display of different types of computers. There wasn't just a PC [personal computer], there were heaps of different varieties back then. So there were people with their BBC micros and their ZX81s and their Commodore 64s and stuff, and while Dad was looking around, I was looking at the computers. Some older man said, 'Ah, interested in this, here watch this,' and he went 10 PRINT HELLO. He said, "What's your name"? Nathan. Hello Nathan 20 GOTO 10. Prrrrrrr up it goes up the screen, I thought far out [...]. Dad had seen the way I reacted to that and thought, Hmmmm there's something in that. So went and asked my Uncle [Jeff]. 'I think the boy's interested in that stuff and could have a future in it, what would you recommend?' So Jeff picked the Commodore 64 and that was my poison.* [10]

Whatever their pathway into computing, many interviewees mentioned the job satisfaction and interest that kept them working in the area.

Jim Higgins explained why he likes designing computer systems: 'Starting with a problem, and having to come up with a solution to that problem that will work and actually benefit someone, and that's the challenge I like'. In contrast to the rather dry image that computing has in the mind of the general public, Liz Eastwood, Jim Higgins and Frank March all talked about the fun they had in the early stages of their career. Reminiscing about her first job in computing at International Computers Limited in London, Liz Eastwood comments:

I look back on that time, and I think I was incredibly lucky to have walked straight into a brand new industry, it really was, in that respect, and I was given opportunities to work at the coalface in places like Swiss Bank Corporation, IPC Business Press, Marks and Spencer's, those were companies that were sticking their neck out, if you like, really just experimenting, putting their toe in the water to see what this new technology could offer them, and I embraced that. We used to work really long hours, but it was such fun, and that's what the IT industry was all about back then: it was absolutely fun.[11]

As well as enjoying the work itself, Jim Higgins also appreciated the status that came with working in such a new area.

I did very much enjoy system design work, it was quite a lot of fun, and of course in those days, we were gods. There were so few people working in that area, that if we said, 'Oh yeah, we're in information technology,' people would go 'Wow', so that was sort of fun as well.

Another aspect mentioned by interviewees was the excitement experienced in being on the edge of new developments. John Hine talks about the first time he realised the potential of email for New Zealand when on study leave at the University of Connecticut in 1982:

I remember sitting down the first day at the University of Connecticut, which would have been right after New Year's Day, and sending a colleague at the University of Illinois an email. Now we'd been sending emails around the Department at Vic [Victoria University of Wellington] but we had no, even national, connectivity really. We had a little bit of an experimental link between our Burroughs [mainframe computer] and the Burroughs at Massey and a few emails had gone over it but only between the people that were playing with the link. So anyways I sent Roy an email, and BOOM got a response back, more or less the way you'd expect today, within a minute or two, and we had a couple of quick emails. He was asking how we were, had we enjoyed the holidays [...] and right then the penny just sort of dropped, because in those days in New Zealand communications outside of New Zealand, well communications, was hard work [...]. Communicating with an overseas colleague, typically took three to four weeks [...] and at that point a real light bulb, in the sense that this is going to change the way New Zealand operates, it can actually make us be part of the rest of the world.

John Hine had seen the light and was one of New Zealand's first proponents for the Internet and its first 'killer application', email. He undoubtedly was 'can do', but as we hear later, not everybody was an instant convert.

Innovation

Interviewees talked about New Zealanders having a pioneering spirit, and the attitude of not being afraid to try something new. As Jim Higgins pointed out, 'There wasn't anyone around to tell us we couldn't do something, so we didn't know that we couldn't build big systems on tiny machines so we built them anyway [...] people just made it work'. Originally from England, Liz Eastwood found this "can do" attitude refreshing and contrasted it with her experiences when she moved back to England for four and half years in the early 1990s, to work for the West Midlands Police:

It reminded me again that England has a class structure and New Zealand doesn't. I had two people working for me on that team, one of whom had been at British Leyland, and he liked to work within a set of parameters, and if you asked him to do something that was not in his job description, he would get extremely rebellious about that, and I was totally taken aback. New Zealand and their 'can do' attitude was what I was used to by then, and to find someone in England saying to me, 'No I can't do that, it's not in my job description' was another little eye-opener for me.

Despite being a small country, computing in New Zealand was seen as competitive at a global level, and even world leading in some areas such as education and local government. Jim Higgins developed local government computer systems for Palmerston North Council, and during the early 1980s visited many local councils in the United States, concluding that, 'Most of them were no further ahead than us, and many were nowhere near as advanced as we were. So I think New Zealand Local Government has always been ahead of the game'. Marg McLeod pointed out that one of the reasons the New Zealand education system was quick to pick up on using computers in schools was because the whole

system had a history of innovation: 'We've [New Zealand] always been very innovative in the education space [...] the philosophies New Zealand has held around student-centred learning have been, I think, quite world leading [...] We are a highly creative nation in that space'. [12]

Frank March was working for the Department of Science and Industrial Research (DSIR) during the Muldoon era (1975-1984) when computing was heavily centralised. He was one of a group working to develop a network for DSIR scientists working all over the country, from Kaitaia to Bluff, who wanted access to the central computer in Wellington. The project connected teletypes using a system called Nodecode that was developed by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in Australia.[13] Frank regards being part of the team that got this project to work as one of the major achievements of his working life, but finds the challenges they faced are not always appreciated by today's young computer scientists.

> *There were a team of about six of us working on this. About two weeks after I joined, the first successful string of characters was transmitted from the Cumberland computer centre [Wellington] to Gracefield DSIR. It was a wonderful day, and everybody went to the pub to celebrate, because this was a very, very significant breakthrough, but the interesting thing was just how pioneering this was, because it's very difficult for today's computer science students to understand. I was telling somebody about this, very proud of this story, and this young computer science punk, basically, said, 'Well, stupid bloody idiots reinventing the wheel.' Trouble was, there was no wheel to invent, at that time.* [14]

After John Hine returned from his study leave in the United States in 1983, he had been promoting the idea of networking. However, he found it hard to convince people of the benefits of this, even in the university.

> *I've had that light bulb moment, but you'd be surprised how hard it was to sell. All we were looking at initially was [...] just basically trying to get what was called the UUCP network, Unix to Unix Copy, which was a dialup network which sent email by doing a copy [of the file] from one Unix machine to another [...]. It took several years to sort of sell that [...] you could send somebody a one page letter, so to speak, one day and have the answer back when you came in the office the next morning, and we could do that for about 25 cents, in the mid-eighties [...] pretty similar I guess, to the cost of posting a letter, but of course the letter would have been lucky if it left Auckland by the next day, much less having your answer back. And this was a really hard sell [...] people just looked at you, 'Why would I want to do that?' It was actually '86, it took three years [to set up the UUCP network].*

Eventually, in 1989, working together with John Houlker from Waikato University, he succeeded in connecting New Zealand to the Internet.[15]

Andy Linton describes the shift in thinking from a centralised telecommunications network to a distributed internet that permitted everybody to 'join the game'. Eventually, as a result of this early innovation, the telecommunication companies began to realise that the internet protocol had business potential after they learnt that traffic over the Internet was increasing exponentially. Andy recalls:

> *I remember a point where there was a clear recognition that data was actually going to pass voice [...]. It was in the mid 90s when the data traffic on the networks started to exceed the voice traffic [...]. It began to sort of bite and make the telephone companies realise actually our market is going to be different [...]. You think about a voice conversation, you and I can have one conversation [...] and we can consume a certain amount of bandwidth. We don't need any more, as a human being I can't have six conversations going on [...] but with computer stuff you can be having many simultaneous connections, and that was the joy of the packet network [...]. When I came here [...] we tried to talk to Telecom about this and they went, 'yeah, yeah, yeah, very interesting, you know lads, but we're working on the real stuff here, you get on playing with your little toys' [...]. For me there were some interesting data points along the way when you could see telephone people going, 'Oh, wait a minute.'*

Much earlier, as people started to realise the potential of this new internet network, a range of innovative ideas came out, and the early 1990s was an exciting time for Wellington. Jim Higgins worked with Richard Naylor and Charles Bagnall at Wellington City Council to develop what was arguably the world's first publicly available city wide internet network, CityLink, together with CityNet, the first free-to-use Internet Service Provider (ISP).[16] As Jim comments, 'this has been just magic for Wellington'.

Much of the innovation which followed in Wellington was due to the presence of CityLink. Don Christie, from open source firm Catalyst,[17] explains how CityLink enabled a small software house to compete with major players:

> *One of the real enabling technologies for Catalyst was when the City Council formed CityLink and*

rolled fibre optic cable round the CBD [central business district] and was probably the first city in the world to do that, and we had no money, but we still paid for it, the princely sum of $8000 to get a connection up to the office we were in, which allowed us to suddenly compete with much bigger companies like Datacom or Telecom in terms of the service, the internet systems we could build and host.[18]

CityLink was also instrumental in setting up the Wellington Loop, a broadband network connecting Wellington secondary schools. Marg McLeod recalls, 'We [Wellington Girls College] were approached by CityLink [...] who said, "Let's see what we can do for education in this space. Do you want to form a partnership?"'

Leadership

All of our interviewees had held multiple leadership roles, which was unsurprising, as we set out to collect the stories of people highly regarded within the Wellington IT community. However the participants' contributions across numerous different organisations was impressive. As well as being leaders in their everyday work, all had taken on voluntary roles within the wider community. As well as leadership roles within the New Zealand Computer Society, many were involved with other organisations, such as InternetNZ, NZRise, New Zealand Open Source Society, and the Association of Local Government Information Management.[19]

Marg McLeod puts her leadership skills down to 'being the fourth of four children, and of being an only girl in a family of boys. In fact, my primary school teacher [...] said I was a born organiser, and that I showed leadership traits from the time that I was six'. All demonstrated forward thinking and strategic awareness. Frank March's first actions when he joined Victoria University in 1988 are a good example of this.

The first thing I did when I joined the Computing Services Group [...] was to organise a bit of a forward thinking, strategic planning series of workshops basically, and out of that developed this idea of what I called seamless integration from desktop to mainframe computing, so that you didn't know where your computing was actually being done any more, it didn't matter. You were just connected to the system, and then we set about setting that up.

Don Christie, drawing on his experience of the Open Source sector, stressed the importance of collaborative leadership. 'I've always been brought up to believe, and see, that you can achieve much more through forming alliances with people, than you can on your own'. Andy Linton reflected on how his leadership skills have changed with age and experience:

One of the advantages you get with age with that stuff [leadership], is that I've seen how that worked then, and I've seen how that cycle came round again and hopefully you can steer people into ideas. I used to get very nervous about people talking about having good policy and so on, but I actually think it's part of strategic thinking as well as tactical thinking. Maybe when you're younger you like to be the tactical stuff, the soldiers on the front line, and as you get older you might want to be a General, saying let's direct [...] but it is the bigger view and I hope there's still a bit of contribution to be made there.

As well as being a natural leader herself, Marg McLeod was keen to develop leadership skills in others. When working as Principal of Wellington Girls College, she set up the Tech Angels scheme, where school students with good IT skills helped their not-so-digitally-literate teachers. One of the outcomes of this project was the opportunity for the girls to build their leadership skills. 'It was another way for girls to show leadership, it was another way for them to give service'.

Gender

An ongoing issue in the computing sector is the under-representation of women.

Liz Eastwood recalls that, *'in the early days, to some extent I was a novelty [...]. I did find that because I specialised in data communications, that I was one in many. I do recall going to one particular conference, or several actually, networking events: I'd be one woman and there'd be 500 men'.*

This imbalance is an issue for science and technology generally and has been discussed by Lesley Hall in a previous issue of this journal.[20] In the early days of their careers, neither of our female participants found their gender a barrier to career progression. However, when the time came for them to start their families, life became more challenging. Liz Eastwood noted that:

I would say that in terms of my career progression, here in New Zealand, I found my 20s absolutely fine, no barriers, until I got towards the end of my 20s, and you'd apply for a job that was fairly senior, and discover that I was not chosen because there was a perception that I would probably be leaving to have children, and they actually did tell me that. Now, it wouldn't be tolerated in this day, but certainly back then you just accepted it, and carried on with life. I wasn't happy about it, but you just had to accept it.

Both Liz Eastwood and Marg McLeod kept working while they had their children, but it was not easy. Liz discovered,

'It is really, really tiring working from home because your life is 24 hours, 24 by 7, looking after everything you need at home, not just being a mother, but also looking after the house, and running a business at the same time'.

Marg McLeod relied heavily on the assistance of her husband, who became chief caregiver at times.

Impact of the internet

To conclude the interviews, we asked our participants what they thought was the most significant change in computing during their career. There was unanimous agreement that it was the development of the Internet and the World Wide Web. In the opinion of Jim Higgins, 'The most significant change has got to be the net [Internet]. It would have to be. I think it's had more impact than pretty much everything else'.

Frank March was more specific in his comments, pointing out that the real impact was made by the World Wide Web rather than the Internet itself.

As far as New Zealand is concerned, it's more like twenty years old, the Internet, but the real revolution in terms of communication was, of course, the World Wide Web [...]. One day I put Mosaic up on my Macintosh computer [...] and lo and behold, a new world opened up, and the World Wide Web became hugely accessible in an instant, and it was at that point, that I realised myself, that the Internet was not going to be restricted to geeky people in universities or scientists as a communications tool. It was going to be critically important for everybody.

Don Christie and Marg McLeod also stressed the way the Internet has changed the way we work by opening up possibilities for communication and collaboration. The open source movement is based on collaboration, and Don Christie comments, 'The big eye-opening event for those of us who like to collaborate is the advent of the Internet, the relationship between the Internet and open source software has been symbiotic.' For Marg McLeod working in education, 'The advent of the Internet has to be the most profound thing, the ability for people to collaborate, that move from communicating one-on-one to being able to communicate as part of a group, and to be able to collaborate as part of a group'.

However, Andy Linton pointed out that the Internet has negative as well as positive effects,

'There's certainly a sort of struggle for control, if you like, but then that's the nature of big social change I suppose, you know? How is it going to pan out? We may end up in the hands of a bunch of major multi-national corporations, or do we keep looking after our own destiny? I know where I'd like it to be. I'm not sure that's where it's going to end up. Who knows, you know?'

He reflected on losing control of a technology that he had helped create, and questioned where it is going to end up in the future:

I remember, early in the piece, mid-nineties, one night, one of the guys I work with over in Australia and I were up working late, you know, working on stuff. He sort of went, 'Phew, damn this, you know. Why are we here at eleven o'clock at night? Just so people can look at porn, you know, and that's not what we built this thing for, and of course it's not ours. It's not ours anymore. It wasn't ours anymore even then [...]. You built this thing and so much of it could be used for positive stuff, and yet there's a bunch of negative nonsense on it.

Conclusion

Our interviewees gave highly informative insights into their own unique, creative, and innovative work in computing. They have each made invaluable contributions to the history of computing in New Zealand. What had often started small, such as the setting up networks to carry everything from email to raw data, the use of the 'new' Internet to facilitate collaboration between teachers in schools, starting a small business to create open source software, or the use of computers in local government, has become a social and technological revolution, and big business.

Our interviewees were on frontiers that were both scientific and electromechanical, and on the frontiers of conventional human social communication. It is clear that although many recollections were about striving to create the technological means for networked computing, our interviewees also had to persuade people of the implications of these new technologies for jobs, organisations and for society in general. Institutions, both public and private, were often slow to follow and needed proof before they were ready to commit. Our interviewees show how they tackled both the technological challenges of setting up the infrastructure and demonstrating the value of these developments. Once a territory has been established, those that follow can easily fail to appreciate the determination of the pioneers who built the first outposts. That is one of the messages we hope has been an outcome of our oral history making.

Appendix: interview protocol

List of potential questions

The idea is that each oral history interview will be carefully planned. This means that for each individual interview a unique set of questions will be developed. However some general questions that could be asked of all interviewees are given below.

1. Biographical information
   Where were you born?
   Where did you grow up?
   What were your parents' occupations?
   What did you study at school/ university?
2. When and why did you first become interested in computing?
3. Did you have a mentor or somebody who inspired you?
4. What was your first job (in the computing industry)?
   Can you describe some of the equipment/ procedures involved in that job?
   Can you give any information about the different people you worked with?
5. What do you consider the most significant project(s) you have been involved in?
   Can you describe what was involved in the project(s)?
   Can you describe some of the equipment/ procedures?
   Who were the people involved in the project(s).
   Why do you consider this project was significant?
6. Could you tell us about a project you have worked on that has gone not so well?
   Describe the project.
   What went wrong and what were the reasons behind this.
7. What have you found the most enjoyable/ satisfying thing about working in the computing industry?
8. How have you managed your work/life balance?
   Would you do anything differently?
9. What are the most significant changes you have seen in the computing industry over the course of your career?
10. What has been our involvement in the New Zealand Computer Society?
    What have been the benefits to you personally of membership of the NZCS?
11. What do you feel the NZCS has contributed to computing in New Zealand?
    What direction should the NZCS take for the next 50 years?

Early PC advertising for Apple Computers

Endnotes

1. The New Zealand Computer Society was renamed Institute of Information Technology Professionals (IITP) in July 2012.
2. Interviews were carried out from July 2010 to February 2012. In 2015 the interviews were deposited in the Oral History Centre, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand
3. A.C. Shailes, 'The Impact of Computers on the Public Sector' in W.R. Williams (ed), *Looking Back to Tomorrow: Reflections on Twenty-Five Years of Computers in New Zealand*, New Zealand Computer Society, Wellington, 1985
4. Marc Prensky, 'Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants Part 1', *On the Horizion, vol. 9, no. 2, 2001*, pp.1-6.
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6. *Taming the lightning*, http://www.wordworx.co.nz/Telecommhist.html
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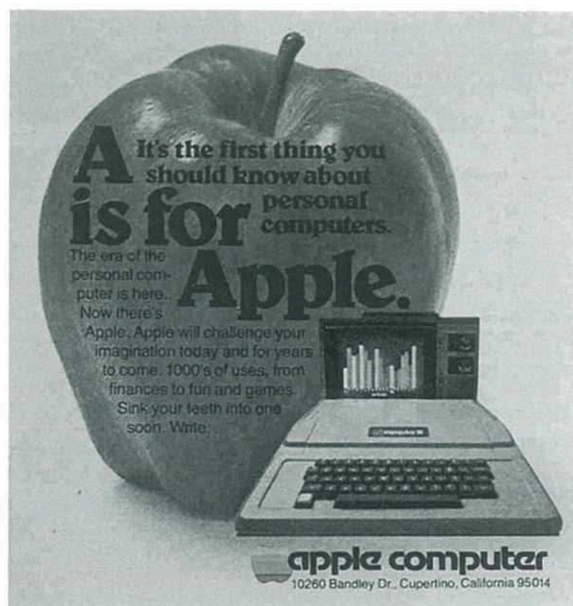

Early PC advertising for Apple Computers

'A Personal Gift of Memory' Wellington's Lebanese community

MARINA FONTEIN

I remember as a child staying on the farm with my grandparents at Puketapu. It was always exciting if I was there when Mr Khoury came with his car full of goodies – including I think, sewing notions.

Ann Packer

Who were these mysterious individuals? My interest in the Lebanese community in Wellington stems from my own family history: my grandfather arrived in New Zealand from Lebanon with his family as a very young child.

In 2009, I began research for a thesis on the experience of Lebanese migrants in Wellington in the mid-twentieth century. According to the stories I had heard, it seemed that many Lebanese families made a significant contribution to Wellington's cultural diversity and special character – but where was the information?

Lebanese migrants formed communities in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin and also in smaller centres, including the Wairarapa and Palmerston North. Lebanon was not recognised as a separate country until 1946, so the birth-place of Lebanese migrants was often recorded as Syria on official documents, and census information is unreliable. Akoorie suggests that the lack of existing records is partly due to the fact that, with the exception of the Dunedin community, 'the Lebanese in New Zealand were religiously and geographically diverse'.1

Mementos, documents and photographs, oral and written family stories, are kept in some family collections throughout New Zealand. In Henderson, the Corbans kept meticulous records of their family history, and their progress as they strived to turn their viticulture business into 'a stake in the country'.2

Members of the Dunedin Lebanese community have shared their collections in the form of oral histories, written publications, and websites. Thanks to the efforts of many, these wonderful legacies are available to a wider public. When I began work on my thesis, the archived oral histories of Dunedin Lebanese provided comparative accounts of events and personal experiences that would otherwise have been unavailable. This indeed, was 'valuable information about aspects of the past inaccessible through other written sources'.[3]

The Walker Street Oral History Project included interviews with older members of the Dunedin community which were undertaken by oral historian, Helen Frizzell between 1988 and 1991. My experience of listening to these sessions gave me insight into both the challenges of recording, and the inestimable value of oral history.

I recall everything about the oral history suite of the Alexander Turnbull Library that first afternoon I began my research, and listened to the clear recordings of voices from the past. Headphones on, I would turn my head at the echo of rattling teacups from twenty years before. The elders told their family stories, interspersed with Lebanese Arabic words and phrases they learned from their parents and grandparents. The energy of generations filled the room for a while. 'Oral history....offers almost the only feasible route for the perceptions and experiences of whole groups, who did not normally leave a written record'.[4] My own memories of recording interviews for the first time in 2009 – the checking of equipment and the nerves – have all been caught on tape as part of my own history. The sessions of intense listening, and connection to one or more interviewees, interpreting the words and the silences, and aiming for understanding, would inevitably result in a crashing headache – an indication that I had succeeded.

After completing my thesis, I aimed to construct a central archive of oral histories for

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Richie Romanos was born in Wellington in 1928 to hard-working Lebanese parents, Saada and Joseph. Here is Richie, sitting on the runner board of his parents' Dodge around 1935 – a time when very few families owned a vehicle.

The family used this car to run their business, buying small goods and haberdashery from Wellington wholesalers and selling the merchandise to farmers in Johnsonville and Makara, and eventually, up through the Wairarapa to Featherston and Dannevirke, and beyond. At that time, Lebanese who sold goods were known as hawkers; travelling by train, or on foot, or as my own ancestors did, by horse and cart.

Richie was too mischievous to be left with his older siblings at home in Wellington, so would accompany his parents on their trips. They would live in a makeshift tent attached to this vehicle for two weeks of every month, in every weather. To my knowledge, Richie is the last living person in Wellington, if not New Zealand, to experience this culturally specific way of life.

Richie's mother Saada, sister Johanna, father Joseph spreading wheat on canvas.

Photographs: Marina Fontein

all the descendants of Lebanese migrant families who settled in Wellington. My thesis supervisor, Dr Annette Beasley, inspired me to follow through with this plan, and I am very grateful for her guidance and support.

In 2012, I received an award from the Ministry for Culture and Heritage which enabled me to run a pilot for this project, recording and abstracting two interviews. I also attended the excellent training workshops run by the Alexander Turnbull Library: 'The Essentials of Oral History Research' and 'Abstracting Oral History'. New Zealand Oral History Awards in 2013 and 2015 have allowed me to continue working on the main project.

So far, I have lodged more than 25 hours of oral history recordings with the Alexander Turnbull Library. These voices are now kept safe, in a central repository, where future generations will find them. As I make progress, I recognise oral history as an energy which carries personal testimony, through shared experience, towards a wider audience. The complex reconstruction of past and present in each interview continually challenges my understanding of the changing face of cultural identity.

Memory reconstructs the participants' experience of belonging to a community with a shared sense of culture and history. For a wider public, this gift is insight into a community's shared culture and historical social circumstance.

Clan and family naming customs did not translate well in Wellington. The Anglicisation of names on official records was inevitable and understandable, and reflected the British ideal of the times. Lebanese history is an oral tradition, and the interviews have answered many of my questions, untangling clan origins and family connections.

These are the stories of grandchildren kept close, and grandparents who were first teachers; of values, religious beliefs, language and traditions, these were story-tellers, business people. Children listened to their family stories, learned to cook, learned about hard work. Remembering the 'dialogue between interviewer and interviewee'.[5] I have gained insight into the fundamental importance of the relationship between Lebanese grandparents and their grandchildren for the transmission of culture. In my case, the link was broken by my grandfather's accidental death before I was born, and the personal gift of memory for me has been the interviewees' treasured memories of their grandparents.

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Spreading the Word: Private nature conservation in Victoria

Shona McCahon

In May 2011, I travelled to Australia where I recorded eight oral history interviews with landowners in the State of Victoria.
One purpose was to investigate the landowners' motivations in undertaking private nature conservation on their land. Looking back, it is interesting to glean from the interviews another question of motivation. Why did these rather private people, who undertake their conservation without fanfare, agree to be interviewed – to not only share their stories with a complete stranger from New Zealand but to also allow their interviews to go into public archives? I have also reflected on my own motivations for undertaking the project in the first place and how that may have affected the outcome.

Background

First, to backtrack...
In 2007 I carried out an oral history project for the QEII National Trust, a non-profit organisation in New Zealand that enables private landowners to place covenants over areas of their land to protect natural and cultural features in perpetuity. That project marked the QEII Trust's 30th anniversary and its primary purpose was to capture the recollections of individuals (covenantors, Trust employees and directors) who had been influential in the Trust's growth and development.

An aspect that intrigued me at the time was hearing why landowners chose to take out covenants – effectively deciding to voluntarily restrict their own and future landowners' options on all or parts of their properties, and commit to ongoing management programmes and periodic inspection.

I was aware that a similar organisation – Trust for Nature – existed in Victoria, Australia, with a roughly parallel history and thought it would be interesting to compare the covenanting motivations and experiences of landowners in Victoria with those in New Zealand, given the similar historical context in both countries of colonisation and large-scale land clearance. It was merely an idle thought, however, until 2010, when the New Zealand Oral History Awards were that year open to projects that explored 'the history of social, cultural or political aspects of contact between Australia and New Zealand'.1 I saw my chance and successfully applied for a New Zealand Oral History Award and a Churchill Trust Travel Fellowship which, together, enabled my project.

Where to begin?

After the initial excitement, I soon realised the daunting nature of what I wanted to do. Firstly, I had to do a lot of research to familiarise myself with Australia's very different geography, fauna and flora; the history of settlement and land use in the State of Victoria; and the relevant government, regulatory and non-statutory administrative and funding frameworks at both the federal and state levels. It was far more complex than I had anticipated (though fascinating) and induced me to travel to Canberra and Sydney at the start of my four-and-a-half week trip to visit some useful contacts in government and NGOs.

Secondly, I had to find suitable interviewees who fitted my criteria and were available within my tight travel schedule. Fortunately, Trust for Nature (TfN) assisted me greatly by critiquing my selection criteria and interview questions,

Shona McCahon is a self-employed oral historian, writer and editor based in Wellington. Her oral history work is often related to conservation and resource management, stemming from her former career as a landscape architect, a field in which she worked for 18 years. Shona has a BA in literature and American studies and a post-graduate diploma in landscape architecture.

This 500 year old ironbark tree was felled by vandals. *"To have someone cut it down for no reason whatsoever – I was just absolutely devastated."*

Searching for signs of the elusive mallee fowl on a covenant, where the owner had found it "very exciting" to have found a nest.

A picnic/camping shelter provides basic facilities to groups of bird watchers, bush walkers and volunteer helpers who visit this 30-hectare covenant in inland Victoria.

A grassland conservation property in New South Wales.

A ridge-tailed eagle nest on one covenant. Photographs: Shona McCahon

and then assisting me to contact potential interviewees. This was tricky, because privacy rules meant TfN had to gain permission from their covenantors before giving me contact details. Ideally, had I had more time and budget, I would have conducted a survey of covenantors via TfN to obtain more background and a wider range of potential interviewees. However, feasibility ruled and I selected my interviewees from a shortlist of twenty that TfN provided. Although I was able to get a representative sample of age, gender, background, geographical location and covenant characteristics, nevertheless, my sample comprised people that TfN considered to be 'good' covenantors. More on that later.

The interviewees

Among the interviewees there were two farming couples, who interwove their conservation efforts with their farming operations. Another person managed a private wildlife sanctuary on a small covenanted urban fringe property. Three were absentee owners, who had bought rural properties for the specific purpose of nature conservation, and managed their covenanted land in their weekends and holidays. One other had bought land for nature conservation and had moved from the city to live on the property. One was an entrepreneur who earned carbon and biodiversity credits by buying large tracts of land around Victoria to revegetate, protect with covenants and then sell.

So, what did I find out about their motivations for undertaking nature conservation and committing themselves and all future owners of their land to the permanent restrictions of their covenants?

While their backgrounds and individual stories varied, all of them wanted to do something practical, to 'do their bit' to combat local and global environmental degradation. They shared a fundamental conservation ethic by which they viewed human beings as one small part of a much bigger natural world, and they wanted to help achieve a sustainable balance in that world. For some, particularly the farmers, the covenanted land also provided practical benefits such as shelter, improved water quality and even sources of income from carbon credits or seed collection.

Interestingly, eight of the ten interviewees had been educators or advisors in sustainability or ecology during their working lives, and the other two had been vocal activists for wildlife protection. It was important to lead by example, as one put it to 'be putting my money where my mouth is'.

They had all invested considerable money and effort in their protected land. I asked why they chose private conservation rather than, for instance, donating money and time to public or philanthropic conservation organisations. Most of them did that too but they all said that covenanting their own land was important because they wanted to make a commitment to conservation in a context where they had control – a situation that several described as being 'custodians' or 'guardians'. Several also saw a need to help protect the vast areas of privately owned land in rural Australia from 'bad' landowners by setting a good example and actively protecting at least one area. The covenants were a way of ensuring that the land and its natural values – to which all the interviewees had developed strong emotional attachments – would be safely passed on to suitable custodians in the future.

Why be interviewed?

As an oral historian, I have never specifically asked my interviewees why they agree to be interviewed, even though their motivation must influence the outcome. Most of my oral history work has comprised commissioned career stories where people have been pleased to help and to have their life's work recognised through the interview, to perhaps put the record right on particular issues and, in many cases, to have their story available for their families. Of course they talk about aspects of their personal lives but, by and large, the career stories relate to the non-private parts of their lives.

My Australian project was a little different in that, even though the interviewees' careers were an important aspect, their conservation efforts were, at heart, very personal and deeply felt. Why go public? The most obvious and clearly stated reason was to support Trust for Nature by exemplifying largely 'good news' through their covenant stories and sharing their experiences of dealing with the Trust.

However, I think there was a wider motivation which may not have been a conscious intention at the start, but certainly came out in the interviews: that of 'spreading the word'. As mentioned earlier, the interviewees had wanted to lead by example through their covenants and had found it extremely fulfilling. As one put it, 'I've been spiritually and intellectually and aesthetically greatly satisfied'. They felt their conservation ethic very strongly and I think there was a desire to inspire others, as they had been inspired themselves, particularly because all of them thought that the success of private conservation depended on voluntary action rather than statutory requirement.

So, it was important to explain, through their own stories, the benefits of their conservation efforts and why it was worth doing. Yet, they

were by no means 'rose tinted' stories. Everyone had experienced setbacks including, variously: trespass and vandalism, bush fire, drought, persistent pests, hostile neighbours, financial risk and difficulty in dealing with authorities. These setbacks were cause for reflection and, it seemed, ultimately strengthened their commitment to what they had taken on – nearly all experienced moments of epiphany which highlighted their sense of purpose and connection with something much bigger than themselves. These moments arose from quiet observation when getting to know their land intimately, seeing the results of their efforts while also observing the ability of nature to recover.

For instance, 'I remember sitting up in bed one morning and seeing two Rufous fantails on the tree and...the whole day feeling uplifted.'

Or another, recalling the process of recovery after narrowly escaping death in a bush fire that destroyed his house and forest, 'It was just a succession of wonder...how things appeared out of the ground – all these species.'

When talking about the future, an important message for generations to come was that of passing on a legacy bound up in their vision of lasting environmental stewardship: 'It would be nice to think that perhaps in 400 years people will look at these trees and say, "Wow."'

One interviewee reflected that the interview was the first time he had talked publicly about his unique approach to conservation. He realised that it would be something he could come back to, so as to revisit his plans and hopes.

The interviewer

In speculating about why these covenantors were willing to be interviewed, I have also found myself thinking about my own motivations. This project was completely self-generated. Why did I do it?

As I explained earlier, it was a rational follow-on to my earlier QEII National Trust project, enabling me to compare examples of covenanting in New Zealand and Australia and report back to the Trust on my return. Moreover, it is widely recognised that private nature conservation is an increasingly important aspect of nature conservation in Australasia and world-wide, so it is important to record representative personal stories about it for posterity.

There were also personal reasons. I share with the interviewees that 'conservation ethic' and, like my interviewees, I would love to have my own 'patch of bush' to protect. It is unlikely I will be able to do that, so these interviews were a way for me to vicariously share that experience and connect with people sharing similar values. The fact that the interviewees were recommended as 'good' covenantors by Trust for Nature played into my motivation, of course, in that they were suitable for 'spreading the word'.

My personal motivation, of course, raises another question about the project. To what extent did my own inclination to like and connect with these people influence the way that I interviewed them? Was I sufficiently objective? Did I have to be? What would the outcome be if I were to interview some of the people my interviewees mentioned, who had deliberately set out to oppose conservation efforts and destroy last vestiges of natural habitats? Would I be able to overcome my own perspective and establish enough of a rapport with them to be able to give their stories a fair hearing and enable them to reveal their motivations?

Perhaps that is my challenge for the future.

Endnote

1 The 2010 focus of the New Zealand Oral History Awards was to acknowledge the 21st anniversary of the Australian Sesquicentennial Gift Trust for Awards in Oral History, when the Australian government had granted a million dollars to the people of New Zealand in 1990 to mark the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. My interviews are archived at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington and at the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

Mercer Museum

Jeanette Thomas & Kathryn Manners

Mercer is a settlement on the east bank of the Waikato River, 34 kilometres north-west of Huntly. Originally known as Point Russell, Mercer was renamed after a British officer who was mortally wounded during the New Zealand Wars at the battle of Rangiriri in 1863.

The Waikato River looms large in everyone's recollections of life in Mercer. People have been using the river ever since humans first settled on its banks.

In the early days of Pakeha settlement, Mercer was a shipping port, with steamers leaving for Port Waikato and Hamilton almost daily. It became more of a transport hub when the railway from Auckland reached Mercer in 1875, thus shortening the two-day journey to Hamilton. People could travel by train instead of coach to Mercer, and then board a riverboat. The Auckland–Mercer section of the railway later became part of the North Island main trunk line.

There was a marae at Mercer called Te Pou O Mangatawhiri. Here Te Puea Herangi lived until 1921 when she and her people moved to Ngaruawahia where Turangawaewae marae is now. Te Puea's husband, Tumokai Katipa managed a farm on Mercer Ferry Road, so the family maintained its connections with the township, and Katipa whanau still live in the area.

In the days before roads, the Waikato River was used to move goods between Auckland and Cambridge. The name Roose is synonymous with transport on the Waikato River and became a big part of Mercer's history.

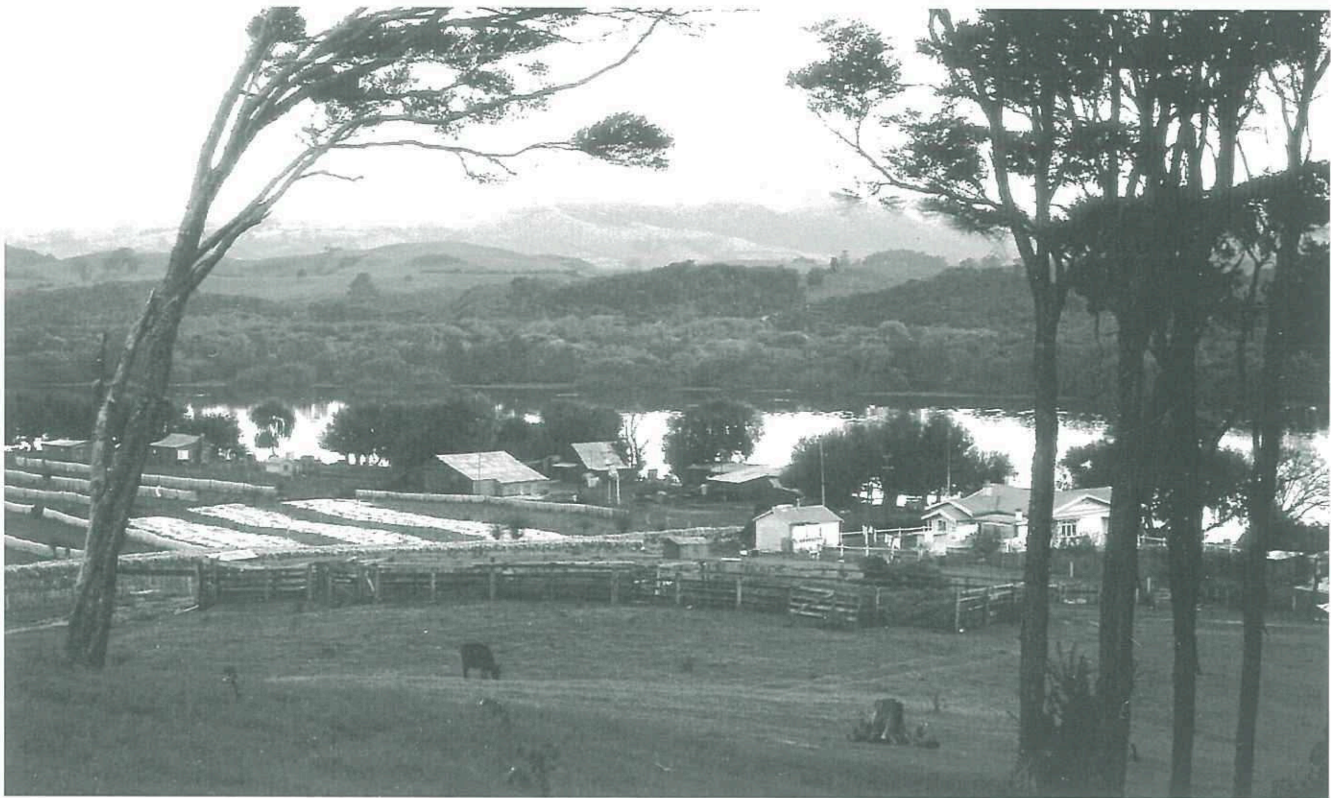
In the early part of the twentieth century Caesar and Maurice Roose ran a family business from their home on the Tuoro Island in Mercer. Their small boats delivered mail, passengers and cargo up and down the Waikato River and its tributaries – the Waipa, Whangamarino, Maungawara, Opuatia, Mangatawhiri, Maramarua and Kopuku rivers. After the First World War, Caesar continued the business, forming the Roose Shipping Company in December 1922. Roose's, as it was always known, was involved in flax milling, timber milling, quarries, sand mining, coal and more. Our oral history interviews follow the stories of families whose lives were intertwined with the Roose Shipping Company, the Waikato River, the railways and rowing. We are thankful to these families for giving their time to the project.

In the early days there was a flourishing flax industry in the area. Flax cut from the banks of the Waikato and its tributaries was taken to Mercer and processed in the flax mill run by several different owners. Reg Douglas, one of the owners, was interviewed for the oral history project, and gave a detailed account of how the flax was transported to the mill, processed and dried before being shipped to rope makers in Auckland.

Until 1972 there was no bridge across the river at Mercer. Instead, people relied on a ferry which, during the day, was run by the youngest staff member at Roose Shipping Company, or people rowed themselves across. Many people talk about the fatal accident when the ferry sank with a truck on board, drowning two people. Bob Hills, who was the 'boy' serving his motor mechanic's apprenticeship at Roose's – and therefore was responsible for running the ferry – explained in his interview not only how the ferry worked, but also what happened to cause the fatal accident. In her interview, Jeanette has recorded the story of the long struggle to persuade local and national governments that the bridge was needed at Mercer.

The river near Mercer has been used for rowing competitions and regattas since the nineteenth century. There used to be an annual regatta of Maori waka combined with races

Jeanette Thomas established the Mercer Art & History Museum in 2010. Her daughter, **Kathryn** was responsible for getting funding for the oral history project.



Douglas flaxmill, Mercer

Franz Douglas bought the flax mill on Tuoro Island at Mercer in the 1920s, and it was worked by Franz and then his son, Reg until the late 1960s. Reg recalls that the area along the Waikato River was very good for growing flax, which was cut by contractors and barged to the mill at Mercer. There the flax was fed through a stripper – which stripped the fibre from the green material – and into the flax washing machine. After washing, the fibre was hung on poles and taken by horse and dray to the bleaching grounds. Bleaching took up to six days, depending on the weather. Then it was dried on fences, and after drying, the fibre was taken to the scutching shed for finishing before being sent to the rope works in Auckland. This photograph shows (from left) the drying fences, flax being bleached on the ground and the buildings of the Douglas flax mill. To the right is the Douglas family home and flowing past in the middle is the Waikato River.

Bob Parker (left) and *Reg Douglas* after winning the New Zealand in a coxless pair championship at Karapiro in – Reg thinks – 1955. The effort that was involved is obvious. Reg and Bob represented New Zealand at the British Empire Games in 1954 (Vancouver) and 1958 (Cardiff) in the coxless pairs, and won gold medals in both events. Reg and Bob also won a silver medal in the double sculls event in Vancouver. In 1956 they represented New Zealand in the coxless pair event at the Melbourne Olympic Games. Photographs: Reg Douglas

Roose's, Mercer
Taken from Mercer, looking over the Waikato River to Tuoro Island, this photographs shows 'the works', as Roose Shipping Company's engineering works were known locally. Norm Cox served his apprenticeship as a fitter and turner at the works between 1949 and 1954. Barges and boats for Roose Shipping Company were built and repaired there.

Mercer ferry in trouble.
Norm (like Bob Hills) was responsible for running the ferry during his apprenticeship. Here a truck is in trouble - not only is it carrying too much timber, but it is not sitting in the middle of the ferry. Photographs: Norm Cox

organised by the Northern Rowing Union. Mercer Rowing Club, which was established in 1909, is famous for several oarsmen including the current pair oar world champion, Eric Murray who is a graduate of the club. Reg Douglas and Bob Parker (jnr) were champion rowers in the 1950s and won gold for New Zealand at the Empire Games in 1956. From the interviews recorded for this project, it seems that everyone in Mercer either rowed or went to dances at the clubrooms.

Up until the 1970s, Mercer was a thriving little township with two grocery shops, a butchery, the Railway Hotel, a post office and police station, and a tea rooms. The township became even more lively in the 1950s while nearby Meremere power station was being built. Peggy Bourne and Bob Hills both remember how busy the Railway Hotel was in the evenings until six o'clock, when the workers from Meremere came to town to have a drink after work. Mercer school, established in the 1870s, was originally one room with a roll of around 70 children. Te Puea Herangi and Caesar Roose were past pupils. The original school building on Koheroa Road was sold in the 1950s, and a new school was built further out of Mercer on Glass Road. Teachers, such as Annie McGuire, who taught in the original two-room school were remembered with great fondness.

Mercer is now a shadow of its former self – there is the Mercer Cheese shop, a motel and the service centre for the traffic which hurtles up and down State Highway One, and which divides the houses from the businesses and the river, and the Mercer Art and History Museum.

The story of the establishment of the museum takes us full circle from Caesar Roose's shipping business to the time, over a hundred years later, when his daughter Jeanette formed a charitable trust on 13 August 2010, to set up the museum. Jeanette had heard the old house opposite Mercer Cheese, in the main street of Mercer was up for sale and advertised incorrectly as the Roose homestead. She went to the auction to clarify this and ended up buying it. Later, she decided to turn this house into a museum to display the photographs and artefacts she had been collecting, and had stored in houses, sheds and barns. At the age of 76, she virtually single-handedly established the Museum which officially opened in November 2013. It had taken her three years.

We needed the stories to go with the photographs. Jeanette was telling the same stories to visitors about the photographs in the museum, sometimes two or three times a day, and we wanted to make sure that these story treasures were not lost either. In 2014 we applied for and received a New Zealand Oral History Award to record some oral history interviews about Mercer for use in the museum and as a resource for researchers. Megan Hutching was our interviewer.

We thought long and hard about who would be good interviewees and eventually came up with a list of names which covered all the areas we were interested in recording information about: the river and its industries, rowing on the Waikato River, Roose Shipping Company, the railways in Mercer, farming, and Maori connections with the river and with Mercer.

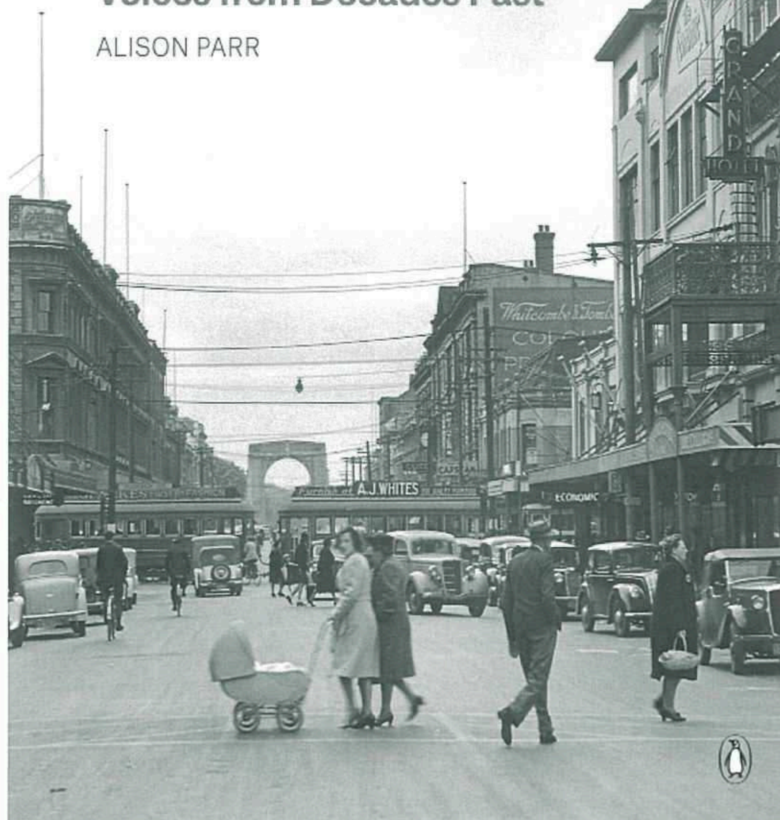
The grant was not large enough to record interviews with everyone on our list, so we talked about how we might record these people. We decided that we would do three types of interview; five standard, long, life history interviews, a number of shorter interviews of between one and two hours, and a range of short interviews. We held an open day at the museum in March 2015 and invited around twenty people for these short interviews. Megan sat in one of the rooms with her recording equipment and recorded interviews which ranged from about 10 minutes in length up to about half an hour.

The combination of the different types of interviews will provide a rich resource both for the museum itself and also for researchers. The interviews will be archived at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington and at the Mercer Art and History Museum.

Review

ALISON PARR: *Remembering Christchurch - Voices from Decades Past.* Auckland, Penguin, 2015. 256 pp, paperback, $45
ISBN 978-1-14-357337-1

Reviewed by Pip Oldham, Wellington



Alison Parr is the author of four previous books from oral history.[1]

The Remembering Christchurch Oral History Project, undertaken with Rosemary Baird, a Christchurch based oral historian, is a public history response to the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010 and 2011[2] by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, where Alison Parr is Senior Oral Historian. A lot of oral history was recorded in the immediate aftermath of the quakes; Alison Parr waited and consulted widely before deciding how to frame and focus this project.[3] The nineteen interviews were recorded in 2013 with older residents of the city[4] who were identified as a priority - their memories, 'a legacy - the human heritage of Christchurch', stretched back furthest.

In this book based on the interviews Alison Parr departs from the thematic format she has used so successfully before; and expertly deploys another of the three ways Megan Hutching identifies for disseminating oral history more widely via in the printed word: individual chapters based on each person's account.[5]

The book begins with a seven-page introduction (brief background to the project and brief account of the interview content with some historical context), and ends with a list of the interviews and associated interviewer, historical notes arising from the interviews (these are limited), and an index. There is no bibliography or mention of research sources. The opening two pages of each chapter show a contemporary photograph of the interviewee with a short 'sound bite' from the interview, printed in large font and red ink - the marvels of the bicycle, the gallons of milk the milk bars went through, the smell of the sea, early married life - and a brief biographical summary as a pointer to the part of Christchurch the person was familiar with and their fields of endeavour. The interview material follows, presented in chunks without mediation, with images and further brief highlighted extracts. Topics are covered in depth, and are anchored by place, home and around the city and its environs, childhood in all its forms, The Depression, the Second World War, school and work, social life and domestic activities, transport, and much besides. The unavoidable context for the life histories is acknowledged by the inclusion at the end of each chapter of a post earthquake reflection - these are short, poignant and varied.

The finished book is handsome and eminently readable. The images collected from interviewees and public sources are a particular strength. The secondary title - *Voices of Decades Past* - gives a clearer clue to the broader social history content than the more place-related title, *Remembering*

Christchurch. The titling perhaps indicates a particular intended general audience to which the book would certainly appeal. Alison Parr has spoken about the memories it has already triggered with readers.[6]

Perhaps for this reason there is only brief mention of methodology, in the introduction. We are told that interviewees were chosen for the diversity of lives and experiences that they represent[7], and by word of mouth.[8] All the accounts are lively; experiences and recollections leap from the page and the transcription makes it easy to 'listen' as you read, imagining hearing the words.[9]

A sample of nineteen interviews cannot be expected to reflect every aspect of a complex city society and, as Judith Fyfe points out in *Matriarchs*, there is no such thing as the *right* person, but I suspect that these interviewees are ones who, like Judith Fyfe's matriarchs, will arouse smiles of recognition for their connection with aspects of Christchurch life and the depth and range of their experiences. [10] Nevertheless, it would have been interesting to have more insight into the process of looking for interviewees, if any criteria were considered essential, and even if any aspects were felt to have been difficult to represent in the circumstances. Alison Parr has particular expertise in the field of post traumatic stress. It would have been fascinating to know if the widespread incidence of post quake trauma influenced the project in any way.

David Morell, who spent 22 years as a City Missioner, offers an interesting reflection on being 'positioned where the rubber hits the road, between the two very different ends of the Christchurch community'. His discussion of the emergence of unemployment and people living on the streets is typical of the broader social history content of the interviews. His more contemporary comments contrast with the focus of many of the interviews in their childhood years in the 1920s and 1930s, and early adult lives in the '40s, '50s and '60s.

Only one disaster, the Ballantynes fire (which several interviewees recall), had caused significant loss of life in Canterbury prior to the earthquakes.

It has been said that it is impossible now to see the histories of Canterbury and Christchurch except through the lens of the earthquakes.[11] For this reason, and given the frequent references in the accounts to earthquake damage, demolition and loss of built heritage, some readers might have appreciated a short statement of the geography of the earthquake events and the areas and manner in which they were affected. A map would have been extremely helpful for readers not so familiar with the location of the suburbs interviewees recall, and the growth of the city in the period covered in the book.

In her introduction Alison Parr quotes lines written by William Wordsworth that appeared as graffiti in central Christchurch after the quakes:

The things which I have seen
I now can see no more [12]

in the context of reflecting on the loss of buildings and environment.

The memories recorded in the oral histories prove a prefect medium for exploring that lost physical world still vivid in the minds of the interviewees. Jan Currie recalls a song her family sang for a bed-ridden aunt; it talks of the house.

Built on the Rock, the Rock that ever stands
Oh, built on the Rock, and not upon the sands.
You need not fear the storm, or the earthquake shock,
You're safe for everyone if you build on the Rock. [13]

Anon

That house, built by Jan Currie's maternal grandfather in 1911 and lived in by five generations of her family, became uninhabitable as a result of the February 2011 earthquake and was demolished soon after Jan Currie was interviewed. The cruel irony is that neither rock nor sand proved safe in the earthquakes. It would have been interesting to know whether Jan Currie and other interviewees had experienced earthquakes in their younger lives - two were alive in 1929 when the Murchison earthquake produced a large number of tremors in Christchurch, and all may have experienced the 1968 Inangahua earthquake, which also had widespread effect. [14]

Readers are not told about the editorial process of preparing the interviews for publication, presumably on the basis that sufficient accountability is provided by archiving the interviews in the Oral History Centre at the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington. Others have commented on the value of thoroughly documenting the research process in the published work[15] and Alison Parr's co-interviewer has herself commented on the approach of minimal intervention.[16] In the new edition of *Anzac Memories,* author Alistair Thomson discusses the shortcomings of a written transcript for translating an interview. Some of his interviews and their transcripts can now be accessed online to address this difficulty.[17] This is a welcome development where it can be done.

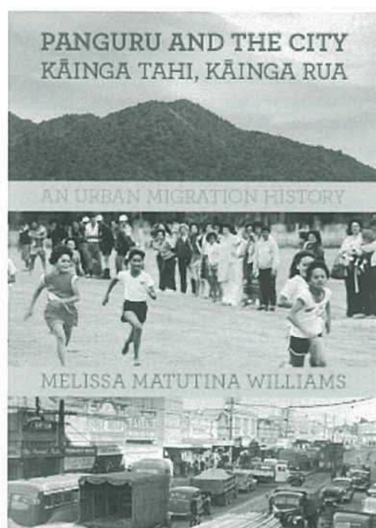
The account of the interviews in *Remembering Christchurch* offers a detailed and engaging insight into a range of subjects presented with scrupulous care. The interviews and the book will be a valuable resource for general audiences and social historians alike.

Endnotes

1. *Silent Casualties, New Zealand's Unspoken Legacy of the Second World War*, 1995; *The Big Show: New Zealanders, D-Day and the War in Europe*, 2006; *Home*, Civilian New Zealanders Remember the Second World War, 2010 (reviewed in *Oral History in New Zealand, vol. 22, 2010*, p. 27) and *The Occupiers: New Zealand Veterans Remember Post War Japan*, 2011
2. A magnitude 7.1 earthquake occurred west of Christchurch at 4.35am on Saturday, 4 September 2010. The quake caused considerable damage in central Canterbury, especially in Christchurch, but there was no loss of life or serious injury. The quake was followed by an aftershock sequence that included a devastating 6.3 aftershock on 22 February 2011 centred south east of Christchurch. 185 people died and many buildings collapsed: *Te Ara, The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/historic-earthquakes/page-12*
3. Alison Parr, Interview with Jim Sullivan, Radio New Zealand, *Sounds Historical*, 13 September 2015, Part 2
4. Born between 1921 and 1942
5. Megan Hutching 'The Distance between Voice and Transcript', in *Remembering: Writing Oral History*, Anna Green and Megan Hutching (eds), Auckland, 2004, pp.168-169
6. Alison Parr, Interview with Wallace Chapman, Radio New Zealand, *Sunday Morning*, 6 September 2015
7. *Remembering Christchurch, Voices from Decades Past, 2007*, pp. 9 and 12
8. Ibid, Acknowledgments, p.9
9. Jim Sullivan, *Canterbury Voices, Memories of Canterbury Past*, Christchurch, 2007, pp.11-12
10. Judith Fyfe, *Matriarchs, A Generation of New Zealand Women talk to Judith Fyfe*, Penguin, 1990
11. John Wilson, *Historic Canterbury*, Auckland, 2012, p.150
12. Ode, Intimations of Immortality from *Recollections of Early Childhood, 1804*
13. Jan Currie interview, *Remembering Christchurch*, p. 106
14. *Te Ara*, Historic Earthquakes and reports, e.g. in *Papers Past*, of shocks felt in Christchurch after the Murchison earthquake
15. Lyndon Fraser reviewing Long Journey for Sevenpence: An Oral History of Assisted Migration in New Zealand, *New Zealand Journal of History, 2000*, vol. 34, no. 1, p.178
16. Rosemary Baird reviewing Home: Civilian New Zealanders Remember the Second World War in *New Zealand Journal of History*, 2011, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 132-133
17. Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, Melbourne, 2013, p. 3

Books Noted

Melissa Matutina Williams
Panguru and the City: Kāinga Tahi, Kāinga Rua Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 2015. 304 pp, $49.99. Available as eBook in November 2015
ISBN: 9781927247921

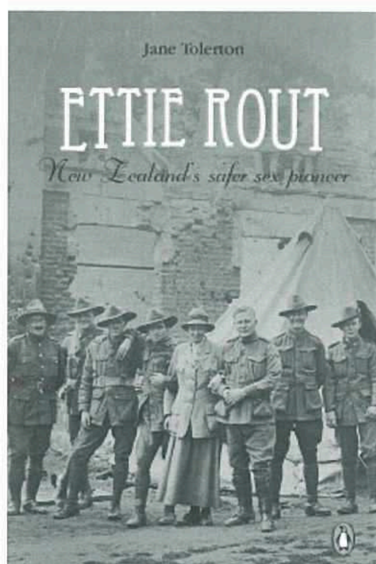


Travelling from Hokianga to Auckland in the middle decades of the twentieth century, the people of Panguru established themselves in the workplaces, suburbs, churches and schools of the city. Melissa Matutina Williams, the daughter of a Panguru family growing up in Auckland, writes a perceptive account of urban migration through the stories of the Panguru migrants.

Through these vibrant oral narratives, the history of Māori migration is relocated to the tribal and whānau context in which it occurred. For the people of Panguru, migration was seldom viewed as a one-way journey of new beginnings; it was experienced as a lifelong process of developing a 'coexistent home-place' for themselves and future generations. Dreams of a brighter future drew on the cultural foundations of a tribal homeland and past.

Panguru and the City: Kāinga Tahi, Kāinga Rua traces their negotiations with people and places, from Auckland's inner-city boarding houses, places of worship and dance halls to workplaces and Maori Affairs' homes in the suburbs. It is a history that will resonate with Māori from all tribal areas who shared in the quiet task of working against state policies of assimilation, the economic challenges of the 1970s and neoliberal policies of the 1980s in order to develop dynamic Māori community sites and networks which often remained invisible in the cities of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Jane Tolerton
Ettie Rout: New Zealand's safer sex pioneer, Auckland, Penguin, 2015. 256 pp, paperback, $35. Also available as an eBook
ISBN: 9780143573241



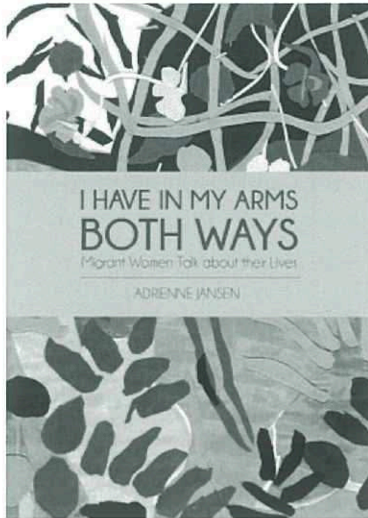
This is a reissue of Jane Tolerton's biography of Ettie Rout, originally published in 1992. While the book is not based on oral history interviews, Jane was a founder member of NOHANZ.

Ettie Rout gave New Zealand the best sexual health system in the First World War when its army adopted her prophylactic kit in 1917 and made every soldier going on leave take one.

In July 1915, during the Gallipoli campaign of the First World War, she set up the New Zealand Volunteer Sisterhood and invited women between the ages of 30 and 50 to go to Egypt to care for New Zealand soldiers. In spite of government opposition, she sent the first batch of 12 volunteers to Cairo that October. The women worked in the New Zealand YMCA canteen in the Esbekia (Azbakiya) gardens and in hospitals; one ran a cookery school.

Ettie Rout arrived in Egypt in February 1916, and immediately became aware of the soldiers' high venereal disease rate. She saw this as a medical not a moral problem; one which should be approached like any other disease – with all available preventive measures. She recommended the issue of prophylactic kits and the establishment of inspected brothels, and tried to persuade the New Zealand Medical Corps officers to this view, with no success.

Adrienne Jansen
I Have in My Arms Both Ways: Migrant women talk about their lives, Wellington, Bridget Williams Books, 2015. 160 pp, $39.99.
Also available as an eBook.
ISBN: 9780908321773



I have in my arms both ways. I can see my Tokelau way, it's good. I can see the papalagi way, it's good. I don't want to put one down, and lift the other one up, or put the other one down and lift that one up. I can carry them both. Valeti Finau, Tonga

This new edition of Adrienne Jansen's great book is to be published in November 2015.

Immigrant women bring to New Zealand rich experiences of lives spent in other cultures. In this book ten women, who have come to New Zealand through three decades from the 1960s, speak in depth about growing up in their first countries, and their lives in New Zealand.

They talk about childhood, marriage, discrimination, language, their aspirations for their children, and the role of women in their first culture and in New Zealand. They also, often poignantly, point to what they cannot speak about.

The ten women come from India, the Philippines, Tonga, Tokelau Islands, Chile, Iran, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Vietnam and Laos. With portraits by Gil Hanly.

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

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.

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