




Oral HISTORY

 New Zealand

2017

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

Contents

| | | |
|---|--|-----|
| Editorial | | |
| MEGAN HUTCHING AND PIP OLDHAM | | III |
| Reports | | |
| The New Zealand Antarctic Society's Oral History programme | | |
| JACQUI FOLEY | | 1 |
| The Crescent Moon, Penang | | |
| ADRIENNE JANSEN | | 5 |
| Articles | | |
| Shared Life, Shared Memories? | | |
| ELIZABETH WARD | | 13 |
| New Zealand Women Judges Oral Histories Project | | |
| DAME JUDITH POTTER | | 19 |
| Book Review | | |
| <i>Surviving 7.8: New Zealanders Respond to the Earthquakes of November 2016</i> , by Phil Pennington | | |
| REVIEWED BY MARINA FONTEIN, WELLINGTON | | 22 |
| Books Noted | | |
| Australian Lives, An Intimate History | | |
| ANISA PURI AND ALISTAIR THOMSON | | 23 |
| Make Her Praises Heard Afar: The hidden history of New Zealand women in World War One | | |
| JANE TOLERTON | | 24 |
| Broom To Boom – 20 Lives 20 Years | | |
| TAUPO ORAL HISTORY GROUP | | 24 |
| The Unwomanly Face of War, An Oral History of Women in World War 11 | | |
| SVETLANA ALEXIEVICH | | 24 |
| NOHANZ | | |
| Origins | | 25 |
| Code of Ethical and Technical Practice | | 26 |

Cover image: First camp on Polar Plateau - home for 95 days.
Photographer, Peter Otway

ORAL HISTORY IN NEW ZEALAND 2017, VOLUME 29

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).

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.

Membership is open to individuals, students, unwaged and institutions.

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NOHANZ

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Jenn Falconer



Ethel Rebecca Benjamin (19 January 1875 — 14 October 1943) was New Zealand's first female lawyer. On 17 September, she became the first woman in the British Empire to appear as counsel in court, representing a client for the recovery of debt. She was the second woman in the Empire to be admitted as barrister and solicitor, two months after Clara Martin of Canada. (Wikipedia)

See New Zealand Women Judges
Oral Histories Project by Dame
Judith Potter, page 19.

Ethel Benjamin, S13-315a, Hocken
Collections, Uare Taoka o Hakena,
University of Otago

Editorial

Megan Hutching and Pip Oldham have worked together on this issue of Oral History in New Zealand.

It is the usual mixture of short reports, longer articles and reviews. We are publishing the paper which Elizabeth Ward gave at the 2016 NOHANZ conference in Christchurch on the All Saints Children's Home in Palmerston North. Elizabeth reminds us that even though people experience the same places and events, their memories of those places and events may differ markedly. Some have commented that this makes oral history testimony dubious and difficult to use, but the theory and practice of oral history is sophisticated enough now that we understand that these different memories add richness to, and allow us to present a fine grained analysis of, the areas that we are studying.

Jacqui Foley also presented at last year's conference on the New Zealand Antarctic Society's oral history programme which she has been involved with for many years. Many of the reports published in previous issues of this journal have been about one-off projects, so it is interesting to read about a

series of interviews which have changed and developed over the years. As has Jacqui as the interviewer, she acknowledges.

Adrienne Jansen's report is on a very different sort of interview project, recorded in Malaysia. From the beginning, oral history has been used to record the voices of minorities whose stories are often lost in the narratives of communities, and Adrienne's work with the Muslim community in George Town in Penang is a fine example of this aspect of our work.

Both these articles have beautiful photographs.

We have also included Dame Judith Potter's remarks made at the handover of the Women Judges oral history project to the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington in August. This was a large project that involved a number of interviewers for different parts of it. Again, even though the voices of judges are hardly those 'from below', these interviews illustrate the experiences of a minority in a community.

To finish, we have noted a number of books which will be of interest to oral historians.

Thanks are due, as always, to Jenn Falconer for her work on producing this issue.

MEGAN HUTCHING
PIP OLDHAM

Oral History in New Zealand, vol.30, 2018

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 2018 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 Editors using email link below.

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

journal@oralhistory.org.nz



Survey Station at the head of the Liv Glacier. Photographer, Peter Otway



Steve Edbrooke biking on Lake Vida. Photographer, Trevor Chinn

An oral historian's perspective of a long running project – The New Zealand Antarctic Society's Oral History Programme

JACQUI FOLEY

The New Zealand Antarctic Society's oral history programme began in the 1990s and was initiated by Dr Margaret Bradshaw, geologist and University of Canterbury lecturer. Dr Bradshaw has had extensive experience in Antarctica and was aware of the importance of documenting New Zealand's record through firsthand accounts of people who had lived and worked 'down south'. As potential interviewees were growing older, she recognised there was some urgency in recording the oral histories. Dr Bradshaw sourced funding, and the first 14 oral histories were recorded by Julia Bradshaw. These interviews were with members of the Trans Antarctic (TAE) and International Geophysical Year (IGY) Expeditions, which took place in the late 1950s.

In 2003, I took over from Julia and recorded my first interview for the programme in 2004. I was able to talk to Julia and read the abstracts from her interviews before I began. I am still involved in the programme 15 years later and am proud to be the official oral historian for the New Zealand Antarctic Society Inc. To date, 50 interviews have been recorded, ranging in length from three to nine hours, and the project is ongoing. Funding has come from the Lotteries Commission, New Zealand Antarctic Society, Canterbury Museum and private donations. The oral histories are firsthand accounts of life and work in Antarctica over a 60-year period. They provide a substantial record as well as documenting changes in science and scientific methods over that time.

The oral history programme is structured chronologically, starting from the two initial expeditions in 1957/58 when Scott Base was

erected, and continuing to the present day. Interview content covers the planning and erection of Scott Base, living and working there, wintering over, field expeditions, transport, working with dogs and later mechanised transport, as well as food, collaboration with the Americans at McMurdo Base, communications, and the maintenance and expansion of Scott Base. Changes in scientific focus and the later large drilling projects involving international co-operation are also covered. For the 1950s period, Dr Bradshaw was particularly keen that interviews were recorded with the wives of the TAE and IGY members. These interviews document the women's supportive, and often unrecognised, role 'keeping the home fires burning' while their husbands were away for long periods of time.

Reflecting on my first interview recorded in 2004 with geologist, Dr Bernie Gunn, I feel now that I was a fairly 'raw recruit'. Dr Gunn put me through my paces, but while there were some large gaps in my knowledge of the geography of the Antarctic continent, I had done enough research to be able to carry out an extensive interview. His initial misgivings about my understanding of the subject matter faded, and we recorded a wonderful seven-hour account of his time as a member of the Trans Antarctic Expedition, which covered wintering

Jacqui Foley is a freelance oral historian, working in the profession for around twenty-five years. She works on a variety of projects, both locally and in other areas of New Zealand. Jacqui has recorded interviews for the New Zealand Antarctic Society Inc., for fifteen years. Outside of her oral history work, Jacqui has an interest in photography and filmmaking. She lives in Tokarahi, North Otago.



Helicopter loading. Photographer, Trevor Chin

over at Scott Base, a four-month long summer field expedition, working with and his bond for the dog teams, geology, mapping and Dr Gunn's general impressions of his experiences in Antarctica. I have no doubt he enjoyed the interview and was pleased to be included in the Society's programme.

This first interview served to remind me, yet again, of the importance of in-depth research – that solid platform of knowledge which underpins the interview and allows the oral historian to carry out a good interview while providing an opportunity to explore 'highways and byways' during an interview. Research also shows respect for the interviewee. Having a good understanding of the subject matter is crucial, even if topics being covered are somewhat outside the interviewer's sphere of knowledge. I have recorded many interviews

with scientists and other specialists for the Antarctic Society's programme, many of whom were, and still are, at the top of their respective professions. I was concerned, initially, that my questions from a lay person's perspective would not draw out information that might be of interest to professionals as well as the general listener, however I have learned to be upfront about not fully understanding subject matter. It is impossible to have a full understanding of a career stretching over many decades but I have found, without exception, that interviewees will generously fill in any gaps in my questions about their work in Antarctica, as well as providing additional detail.

One of the many benefits of having been involved with this oral history programme for such a long time is that I now have a better knowledge and understanding of New

Zealand's work in Antarctica. The earlier interviews, covering the 1950s and 1960s, focused heavily on surveying, mapping and geology. Geology involved extensive fieldwork expeditions covering huge distances. Scientific methods have changed from those early years – from collecting geological samples with dog teams, for example, to more specific drilling projects concentrating in one area and, more recently, sophisticated and expensive drilling programmes, involving international collaboration, such as ANDRILL.

It is extremely helpful to be able to extend and re-use research associated with earlier interviews. Interviewees often straddle different eras within their long careers, and temporal lines in the interviews move backwards and forwards. Because of my long engagement with the project, I am able to move with them. I have expanded the questions – and so the content of interviews – in response to changes over time. While the same questions are often used in different interviews and can be relevant to any era – such as, food, communication, transport, equipment, clothing, science, scientific methods – the answers to these same questions are often very different. Different topics assume importance depending on what is happening, not only in Antarctica but also outside it. Such factors include the involvement of universities in Antarctic science, governance – The Antarctic Treaty, Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) – environmental concerns, such as the handling and disposal of waste, the fragility of the Antarctic environment, climate change, collaboration with international partners and how science is conducted and utilised. My research for the interviews is always ongoing and expanding, and, like some giant snowball, utilises information from the very first interviews while gathering additional material as the oral history programme continues.

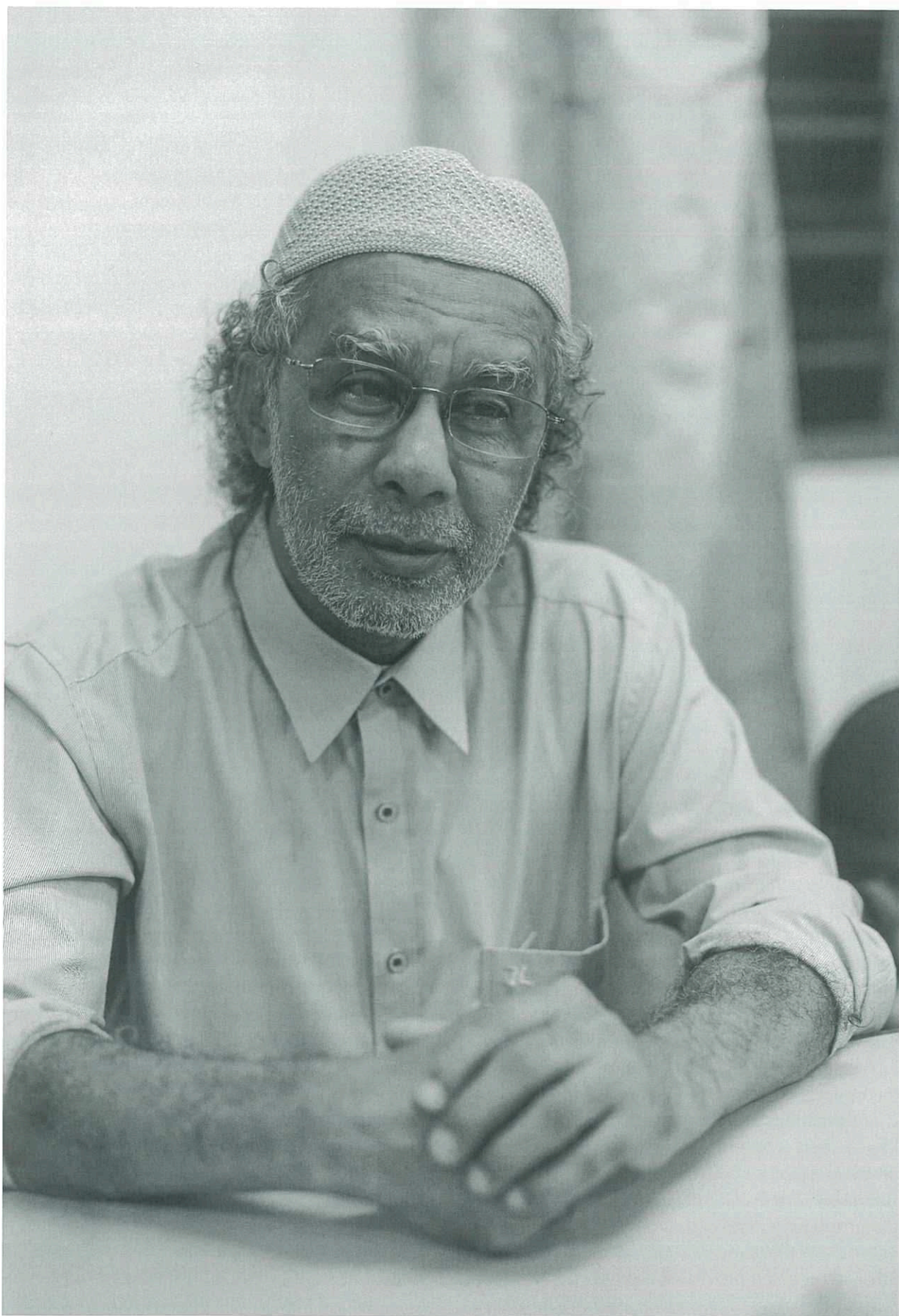
As the main practitioner for this programme, I have been extremely fortunate in having ongoing support and help from Margaret Bradshaw. She has been the driving force for the programme, and has spent many hours putting together funding applications, selecting interviewees and providing me with background information. This support is invaluable. So often, as freelance oral historians, we work on our own, but with such a big ongoing project, it has been really important to have Margaret walking

alongside me. Other members of the New Zealand Antarctic Society have also been very supportive. I have noted that interest has grown about what is now a significant resource, and I have given a number of presentations about the oral history programme which always draw great interest and response.

Through this long involvement, my role as oral historian has changed. Although my primary role is still as an interviewer, I find I also assume other duties. I might be contacted to comment on oral history material for the Antarctic Society's web site, I sometimes provide contacts for students undertaking research theses and, on occasion, put interviewees in touch with each other. I have discovered that the Antarcticans' world is a very loyal one where bonds are forged, often for life, and it is wonderful to assist if people want to contact each other. It is also lovely to be on the periphery of this close-knit family.

Oral historians feel a duty of care towards their interviewees' stories and this responsibility does not change with a long running project. Some of the earlier interviewees have since died and it is comforting to know that their stories and experiences have not been lost. Almost all of the interviews have been archived at the Alexander Turnbull Library and the Canterbury Museum, and I am pleased that the material will be managed and cared for under the conditions of the NOHANZ Code of Ethical and Technical Practice. I feel very fortunate to be involved with such a responsible organisation as the New Zealand Antarctic Society, which has a good understanding of the importance of correctly archiving and caring for this important resource. The interview process can also be a catalyst for interviewees donating their personal material to the archives, in the form of diaries, memoirs and photographs. This additional material richly complements and supports their stories and experiences.

I count myself as being extremely fortunate to have been involved in this project for such a long time. While the work is not exclusive, it is dear to my heart, and I now have an ongoing interest in Antarctica. Looking back, I feel sure that the late Dr Bernie Gunn would be confident that I know a bit more than I did all those years ago, when he was the first in a long line of interviewees. He might think I am still a bit shaky on Antarctic geography, however.



Dentist Dr Ameenul Hussaini, who says, 'I am interested in art, but I also studied science. Now I tell my patients, dentistry is art and science combined'. Photograph: Mas Mohd Farid Rahman

The Crescent Moon, Penang

ADRIENNE JANSEN

In 2015 I was the writer for an exhibition about the Indian Muslim community in George Town, Penang, Malaysia. It was an exhibition of portrait photographs of people from the community, accompanied by a small personal story from each of them, in their own words. It was a companion exhibition to *The Crescent Moon*, a book and a photographic exhibition about Muslims of Asian descent in New Zealand which had earlier toured New Zealand and parts of Asia. I had been the writer for *The Crescent Moon*, and Ans Westra was the photographer. That project, showing 'snapshots' of Muslims in everyday New Zealand life, was intended to counter prejudice and stereotyping that had become more prevalent since 9/11.

The Crescent Moon exhibition, and the Indian Muslim exhibition, both supported by the Asia New Zealand Foundation, would be exhibited together as part of the George Town Festival, an international arts festival.

So here I was, living in a small house on one of the most historic streets of George Town. When I left open the shutters on the ground floor window, tourists would stop and peer through. I don't know what they expected to see, but I doubt that they expected to see me, sitting in front of my laptop, sweat literally dripping off my face onto the keys (there was air conditioning upstairs but just a fan downstairs and I preferred to work downstairs), and surrounded by piles of handwritten transcripts.

The brief

This was the brief. To interview about 30 Indian Muslims from the community centred on the large Kapitan Keling Mosque in the middle of George Town, and to write personal stories

of 150-200 words about each person, in their own words. I was part of a team, with a local photographer, researcher/historian, translator/personal assistant, liaison person with the mosque, and one of the Festival administrators. I had two weeks. It was May, and the exhibition would open in August.

In many ways the work was familiar territory to me. I have spent a large part of my life working alongside people from a range of cultures, enabling them to tell their stories. As the interviewer and writer for *The Crescent Moon* project. I had spent much of one year meeting and recording conversations with about 40 Muslims of Asian descent throughout New Zealand – which is why I was asked to be the writer for the George Town exhibition.

On the other hand, Penang, and the Indian Muslim community in George Town, were completely new territory.

The Indian Muslim community in George Town

The community is a close knit one, and is made up mostly of Tamil Muslims from South India. The first to arrive in the late 1700s were traders, looking for new opportunities, and many of their descendants still practise the businesses established by those first migrants: I met a young man who was a money-changer, and he was the fifth generation of money-changers in his family. Those early traders were followed by non-traders escaping from harsh conditions in South India

Adrienne Jansen is a writer, editor and teacher. Her books include *I have in my arms both ways: life stories of immigrant women*; *The Crescent Moon: the Asian face of Islam in New Zealand*; and *Migrant Journeys: New Zealand taxi drivers tell their stories*. She lives in Titahi Bay, north of Wellington.
www.adriennejansen.co.nz

and looking for a better life. Their family stories were often of severe early hardship, and of strong links with specific cities in Tamil Nadu, South India, where their families originated.

The Kapitan Keling Mosque, located at the heart of the community, has been its religious, cultural and social centre, and was also the focal point of the new exhibition. But George Town itself – with its colourful past, its astonishing diversity of churches and mosques within a stone's throw of each other, its history of trading, its food, its large port – is the stuff of the imagination.

The interviewer: insider or outsider?

There is an important discussion around the role of the 'outsider' in a project of this kind. Before I agreed to be the interviewer for The Crescent Moon, I initiated that discussion with Asia New Zealand. I was neither Asian nor Muslim; did my taking on that role imply that there wasn't a competent person within that Asian Muslim community, or were there advantages in being an 'outsider'? I also asked that question of many people I met during the project – was I an appropriate person, being neither Asian nor Muslim? Of all the people I questioned, one strongly believed that I was not. But overwhelmingly, the view was one of pleasure that the project was happening at all. And as one person said, the Muslim community in New Zealand is itself extremely diverse in every way, and is full of 'outsiders'. I received strong and warm support. Similarly, the Indian Muslim community in George Town welcomed me warmly. They saw the project as a unique opportunity to give them visibility and respect that they feel they often lack. There was some perceived status in having a 'foreign' writer, and it mattered that I had met with and written about many Muslims in New Zealand.

For this project, my Te Papa experience was invaluable. I worked for 11 years as an exhibitions writer at the museum. I was accustomed to taking large pieces of text and reducing them to, or in this case finding within them, essential information, within a very tight word length; I was accustomed to thinking about the relationship between image and text; and I was used to working to a rigorous standard of editing. I also understood how exhibitions were put together.

Methodology

My approach to the work was a standard one. I would record each participant, transcribe the interview (or parts of it), selecting the excerpts I wanted to use, then edit them. Each participant had a distinctive story to tell, so I selected the text which told that particular story. I wanted to use each participant's own words, and retain their voice. On the other hand, exhibition text has its own requirements. I believe that with very careful editing, one can both retain the voice of the participant (which resides in the vocabulary and syntax) but at the same time craft a piece of text which has a quality I think of as 'grace'. The exhibition would be in English, and I think for people for whom English is not their first language, there is an art in editing their words to retain their voice but not represent them as less than they are.

Selecting the participants

From experience, I didn't expect this to be a straightforward process, and it wasn't.

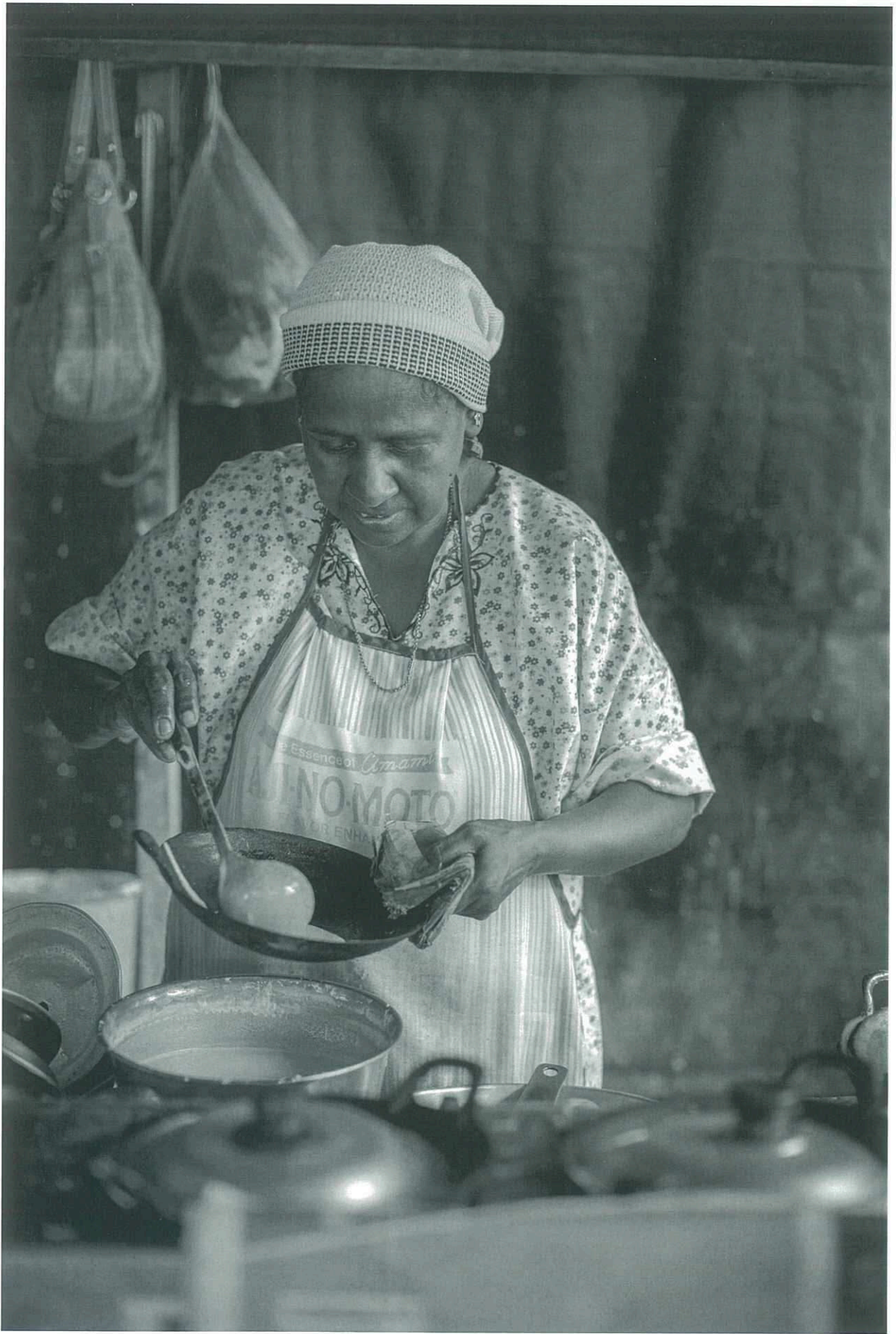
In The Crescent Moon project in New Zealand, I was initially given a list of men associated with the mosque in Kilbirnie, Wellington, to interview. But the Muslim community is hugely diverse and varied, and I believed that my brief was to represent that range and diversity. Through links and contacts, and with much advice, I was able to at least give some impression of that diversity.

In George Town, there were two distinct points of view about the participants for the new exhibition. The mosque community provided a list of senior men. But the George Town Arts festival coordinator (who had commissioned the exhibition) wanted more young people, and more women. The team agreed that for the first week I would meet primarily men suggested by the mosque. At the end of that week we would review the list, and plan for the second week.

I began by interviewing four older men who would talk about the history of the community and the history of the mosque. It was essential in terms of respect that I begin with these men. It was also essential in terms of my understanding of this community. Although I had read as much background material as I could, these were personal stories which brought that information to life. I transcribed all of these interviews, albeit hastily. Later, I would only transcribe the parts of interviews that I intended to use, but for these



Beautician Diyanah Abdul Kadir. Photograph: Mas Mohd Farid Rahman



Aisyah Beevi bt Majid cooking apom in her street café. Photograph: Mas Mohd Farid Rahman

first interviews, transcribing was a way of fully paying attention to the remarkable stories of these men, and to the history of the community.

For these first meetings, the researcher, who was also a historian, translated where necessary, although English was generally used. There was a lot going on during these interviews: often several people were present, there were sometimes interruptions and discussion from others, people came and went, and the researcher himself was very knowledgeable and expressed his own opinions. The notion of me sitting and talking in an orderly manner to one person was non-existent!

But as much as I could, I wanted to make these 'interviews', and all the later interviews, conversations. The participants needed to know who I was, as much as I needed to know their stories. And discussion proved to be one of the most effective ways to tease out information.

The broader group of participants included a young man running his own IT company, a beautician, a street café owner, a pediatrician, an industry leader, and many more. They were selected for their specific experience, and the way they added to a comprehensive picture of the community.

The pace of the work

There was a huge amount of work to be done in a short time. It was only possible because the project team were arranging all the interviews: they were making contacts, setting times and places, transporting me by car – or more often, walking with me to the interview, because many of the participants lived within walking distance of the mosque (and I was living about five minutes walk from the mosque). I quickly developed a pattern of working. I would interview in the morning. During the very hot afternoons, I would work in my small house, transcribing and editing. About 4pm, I would interview again. Then after I'd eaten, maybe about 8, I'd watch TV – mindlessly! In the morning I would often wake about 5am – I was living close to three mosques, and the call to prayer was stereophonic – go for a walk, eat, then work again until the first interview of the day at about 9. The pace was intense. But it was one of those very rare times (for me) of being completely immersed in one single project with no interruptions or distractions at all. It felt like a luxury.

As well as the fact that all the arrangements were made by the team, it was my previous experience, including my Te Papa experience, that enabled me to work at such an intense pace. But there were risks. I depended on the mosque liaison person to brief me well on each person I was about to interview. On one occasion I found myself having to interview a high-profile international environmental activist with virtually no briefing at all. It's difficult to wing it under those circumstances. In fact I felt very embarrassed. A larger problem emerged later. By the end of the two weeks, I had 27 pieces of text, of the required length, edited and proofread (eventually 25 were used). But I had to leave the final checking of the text with each participant to the researcher. I am meticulous about this, not only in checking factual accuracy, names, dates, etc., but also in checking that the participant is at ease with the text. For some reason – probably several quite complex reasons – the researcher didn't do this, and I was left scrambling to get it done by others before I returned in August for two weeks to help set up the exhibition. As a result, one label went up with a significant error, and had to be reprinted. Under the circumstances, I think we all did very well to have only one error, and one required reprint.

Observing cultural/religious protocols

I have consistently found that goodwill and respectfulness go a long way in bridging cultural gaps. In Penang, I, of course, always observed the fundamental protocols – to be dressed appropriately, always remove my shoes, not offer men any physical contact such as shaking hands. The photographer (a young man) and the translator (a young woman) were almost always with me, and discreetly advised me from time to time. Being part of a local team in this way provided me with a great deal of protection from potential mistakes.

The stories

In a project like this, I often pinch myself at my incredible good fortune in listening to such extraordinary stories: the jeweller who in his youth travelled regularly to Bombay (as it was then) to buy diamonds; the very young beautician who taught herself from YouTube videos; the collector of vintage bicycles who organises a Classic Bicycle ride for each festival;

a man whose family for three generations has maintained one of the saint shrines in George Town; a man whose family has been cooking roti bakar over a charcoal fire in the same shop for 60 years; the young couple married by arrangement whose engagement was conducted through WhatsApp and Skype. I could talk about every one of them!

An unexpected outcome

The two exhibitions (the New Zealand and George Town exhibitions) were shown together in a large gallery space at the Kapitan Keling Mosque. I had always felt that the New Zealand exhibition, because it presented a very broad, personal picture of Muslims here, certainly challenged stereotypes, but I never saw it as being particularly radical.

But when I saw that New Zealand exhibition in George Town, and read the text as local people might read it, I read the words very differently. For this conservative Muslim community, it would have been both surprising and challenging: the mother (in the photo she is ten-pin bowling in her hijab) who sent her children to a Christian Sunday School so they could learn to make their own decisions; the imam (leader of the mosque) who asks, 'How can I practise Islam in New Zealand in the best possible way without making any inconvenience for this society?'; the woman psychologist who describes herself as a 'kiwi Muslim' – her faith is Islam, but her culture is 'kiwi'; the several women deeply committed to changing discriminatory practices against women; the Pizza Hut manager who developed his own ways of having to work with pork; the young man interested in architecture who discussed how the design of a mosque might reflect the Māori whareniui or the Pacific fale.

The Crescent Moon exhibition had brought to the Indian Muslim community in Penang a range of views, expressed by New Zealand Muslims in their own words, but shaped by their experiences of living in a Western society.

An untidy project

My experience in a number of cross-cultural oral history projects is that the conditions are rarely optimal. In George Town I met people wherever it was arranged for me – in a room off the mosque, in a shop, in a noisy café, among a

crowd of children. The recorded conversations were nearly always interrupted by background noise, traffic, curious other people, etc.

In New Zealand, when I have interviewed a person in depth, I have consistently found that a second interview delivers insights and new information that only come from both of us having thought about the previous conversation. In George Town, there was no opportunity for a second interview, or even for additional questions – I had to find out everything I needed in that first conversation.

The power of the story

I have just re-read the text of that exhibition. When I think about the speed at which we all worked, I am amazed at how well it reads. I think of those people with great affection. It is a gift of an oral history project, that we spend time with people not at the small-talk level, but instead speaking about what's at the heart of our lives.

I spoke at several openings of The Crescent Moon exhibition when it was touring New Zealand (and also at openings in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur). A striking feature for me of that exhibition and book was the way in which people – Malaysians, Indonesians, Afghans – found themselves in it, recognizing friends and acquaintances. Instead of being part of small not-very-visible minorities, suddenly they were part of the mainstream. That's how one person described it to me.

In Penang, the exhibition opening was a very large occasion at the Kapitan Keling Mosque. Apart from a lot of dignitaries, including the New Zealand Ambassador, there were crowds and crowds of family members. There must have been hundreds of photos taken of families grouped around the portrait photo of one of their own. There was a lot of pride in the exhibition, and it was an absolutely memorable event to be part of.

The project in George Town was one of the most demanding I have ever done. I felt as though it drew on every bit of experience and skill that I have. But it was immensely rewarding. To say that something was a privilege can sound like a cliché, but indeed it was. And it was a powerful reminder of that fact we all know – the power of the personal story.



Butcher Jafaar bin Nagoor. 'Once I bought 25 goats for \$300! That's my best memory from 30 years as a butcher. It was in the early 1980s when I worked for another butcher and used to travel to villages to buy meat. Now I'm my own boss, and I'm the major supplier of meat to the Muslim community.' Photograph, Mas Mohd Farid Rahman



All Saints Childrens Home, Ada Street, established in 1906.
Ilan Matheson
Palmerston North City Archives



Children of the All Saints Childrens Home, Ada Street. Agricultural and Pastoral show, Palmerston North showgrounds



All Saints Childrens Home, 74 Pascal Street, Palmerston North. The All Saints Childrens Home Trust was established in Palmerston North in 1906, to provide a home for children who were orphaned, destitute or otherwise unable to be cared for within their own families. New building date 1931. Photographer, A S Pope, 1950. Palmerston North Libraries and Community Services, Palmerston North

Shared Life, Shared Memories?

ELIZABETH WARD

Shared experience does not necessarily mean shared memories. When using multiple oral histories as one of the sources for a piece of research, the writer faces the question of how to represent conflicting memories about the same event and experiences. The challenge lies in building an overall story that does not appear to contradict, diminish or exclude any individual oral history. This is particularly true of using oral history in an academic work, which requires rigorous scrutiny of sources. In 2014, I wrote a case study of the All Saints Children's Home in Palmerston North¹ for my Master's thesis and collected oral histories as part of the research. By using oral histories, I hoped to enhance my understanding of what it was like to live in the Home. Yet I found that when I came to use the interviews in my thesis the participants had very divergent memories of their lives in the Home. This was despite the fact many of the participants were in the Home at the same time. I faced a further challenge in that some of the participants' experiences were contrary to received ideas about what it was like to be a child in care. In this article, I plan to examine why shared experiences do not always mean that the memory of those experiences is the same. I will explore how I tried to use seemingly contradictory memories to build an understanding of what life in the Home was like from the perspective of all the children who had lived there.

One of the issues that historians have traditionally had with oral history is the unreliability of memory.² When dealing with multiple participants who are recalling the same events, this unreliability can become more noticeable, as each participant presents their

own memory of what happened. Therefore, each oral history can be viewed as a version of 'the truth' rather than a definitive 'truth'.³ Another aspect to consider is the way in which memory is made. As Alessandro Portelli argues, memory is 'not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings'.⁴ Memory can be contaminated by subsequent experiences. Portelli points out, 'today's narrator is not the same person as took part in distant events which he or she is now relating'.⁵ Memory is also affected by class, race and gender. The cultural values that come from the participant's place within society are reflected in the way they choose to construct memory, what they emphasize in the narrative, what they downplay and what they leave out.⁶ As Lesley Hall explains, 'How people make sense of their lives is affected by complex negotiations between theory and practice, and awareness of social norms usually leads to re-interpretation or re-presentation of the 'facts' relating to past'.⁷

When I began to search for sources for my thesis, it became apparent very early on that oral histories would add depth to the research. Most of the available archival material was left by the trustees who ran the Home. This consisted of minute books, accounts, and an admission book kept from 1906 to 1919.⁸ I was also granted access to the government inspection reports for the Home, which initially took place under the 1907 Infant Life Protection Act and then the 1927 Child Welfare Act.⁹ These provided a picture of the Home which was entirely dominated by those in authority, and I was able to gain considerable insight into what it was like to run a children's home. However, I felt that this was not a full picture.

Elizabeth Ward is a PhD student in History at Massey University, with a strong interest in collecting and using oral history as part of her research.

Joanna Penglase, an ex-resident of a children's home, points out that by using only official documents the researcher's perspective can be distorted. She likens using the official documents to a window through which the researcher can look, but adds that by adding oral histories to the research material, the window can be opened and the researcher can glimpse what is invisible in the official papers.¹⁰ My aim in gathering oral histories for my thesis was to try and catch some of those glimpses. I hoped to be able to build an understanding of what it was like to be a child in the All Saints Home.

The attempt to understand the Home from a former resident's point of view was not something I undertook lightly. It is well documented that children who experienced life in institutions were often neglected and abused. The idea that children's homes were unpleasant places, where nothing good ever happened, is prevalent in our cultural conversation. These ideas stem from very real abuse that occurred in homes and this, deservedly, often gains media attention.¹¹ There is also the strong belief in our culture that placing children in institutions is harmful to their development and that the past system of removing children from their families was a barbaric practice that we have rightfully moved away from.¹² I felt that, as the interviewer, I needed to be mentally prepared for what the interviews might reveal, and that I needed to challenge my own ideas about children's homes. Even though I might believe that children's homes were unhappy places, it was possible that my participants experienced the Home in other ways. Therefore I needed to be sensitive to their understanding of the Home.

As part of the research process I sought approval from the Human Ethics Committee at Massey University and my project was given clearance.¹³ I also talked to the Ministry of Social Development Historic Claims section and let them know about my research. They provided information brochures about the counselling services they offer, which I gave to each of my participants.

The first challenge I faced was finding participants for the interviews. As the Home had closed in 1964, I knew it was likely that most of my participants would have been there after the Second World War. Furthermore, the records of the Home were patchy and no

admission registers for that period had survived. One piece of archival material which helped were the records of a 'family' reunion for ex-residents held in 1990. At the time, a list was made of those who attended and the years they had lived in the Home. However, most of my participants came from an article that appeared in the *Manawatu Standard*,¹⁴ and subsequently by word of mouth, as news of my project spread among the former residents. I was able to gather eleven interviews which represented a reasonable span of the life of the Home. My oldest participant entered the Home in the mid-1930s as a three-year-old, and my youngest were in the Home when it closed in 1964. For the purposes of this article I have chosen to use nine of the interviews,¹⁵ and also an interview with a staff member and the former principal of the school which the children from the Home attended during the 1960s. I was not able to record all the participants who came forward, due to distance or reluctance on their part to be recorded.

The interviews were mainly used to inform three chapters of my thesis which covered the families, parental agency, and life in the Home. When I began to focus on how to use the interviews I hit an issue that I had not expected. Each interview had given me a different view of the Home. Rather than getting an overall picture of the families that used the Home and what life was like in the Home, I had eleven different families and eleven different Homes. At this point I felt that there was a conflict between my desire for the academic pursuit of 'truth' and the sometimes very contradictory nature of the interviews.

I was fortunate to interview two men who had been in the Home at almost exactly the same time, as they had entered it within nine months of each other. One of the first things that struck me when I processed these two interviews was the very different memories these men had of the food in the Home. When describing the food, participant one said, 'Yeah, we didn't want for anything, the food was good, we had all the food from the harvest festivals, Kairanga School used to give us food, there was plenty of it.'¹⁶ However, participant two had a different memory. He called the food 'bland, plain, there was never any butter, there was never enough, I was always hungry.'¹⁷ Considering that these two men had been in the Home during the same period, they had

remembered the quality and quantity of the food in very different ways. After considering the influence that societal background can have on memory I realised that this had affected how these men had viewed their experience. Participant one was the second youngest in a family of five children, he had a working-class background and he was placed in the Home because his parents' marriage had broken down. By contrast, participant two, prior to admission to the Home, had lived with his mother and her family, his mother having been abandoned by his father. By his own account, participant two came from a wealthy background, his mother's family had servants and they lived in a large house. He was placed in the Home because his mother had multiple sclerosis and the local vicar thought his unmarried aunt was not coping with the task of raising boys. It is probable that these two men had very different experiences of food prior to entering the Home and this had then shaped their memory of what the food in the Home was like.

A more difficult and contentious area that the interviews covered was discipline. It was in this area that the gender of the participants and what their narratives emphasised became an important consideration. One of the first aspects I noted when collating what the participants told me about discipline in the Home was that it varied over time. Those who had been in the Home in the 1940s remembered a lot more corporal punishment than those there in the 1950s. Those from the later period, the early 1960s, reported some terrible incidents. However, this is a generalisation because in each period there were participants who did not remember any corporal punishment.

There were obvious gender differences reflected in the narratives from the 1940s. Both my male participants reported similar experiences. Participant one remembered 'the staff didn't punish us, the other boys were a bit rough, it was school where we got it'¹⁸ and participant two, 'corporal punishment was part of the deal, I was thrashed at school.'¹⁹ These boys experienced their worst punishments at school, and these were much more significant than any punishment they received in the Home. A female participant who was slightly older than the two male participants, but was also in the Home in the late 1940s, remembered that it was very strict 'like *Oliver Twist*'.²⁰

She could not recall any specific instances of corporal punishment given to girls, and she had no memory of being punished herself, yet she did recount incidents of corporal punishments given to other children. This suggested to me that during this period girls and boys were disciplined in different ways in the Home, and that the gender of my participants could account for the divergence in their narratives.

However, I struck a different issue with the interviews of those who were in the Home during the early 1960s. I had two female and one male participant for this period of the Home, with a shared period of about three years. The variation in memory with these participants was not based on gender. Female two had quite different memories from female one and the male participant, and from the memories of the ex-principal of the school the children from the Home attended during the 1960s.

The male participant had some very vivid memories of his time in the Home. In the Home archives, I had read about a specific incident of violence that involved him and during the interview, I asked him about it as a lead into discussing discipline in the Home. He responded:

That was unfair, (another boy) was, because there's a structure okay, he was a bit further up the pecking order than I and when we play fought I could beat him, but when we had a real ding dong he always gave me a hiding. And he decided he was going to give me a hiding one day and I had this steel bar and I threatened him with it. I said (boys name) if you come near me I'm going to hit you with this, well (boys name) being (boys name) he wouldn't take no for an answer and he was fairly determined young guy. He came forward and I just lashed out and hit him with it, because I knew he was going to hurt me if he got hold of me, so it was actually self-preservation. It wasn't a wilful act of trying to hurt him for the sake of doing it. I think it was above his left eye I gave him a good whallop. In the years that have gone by I have been terrified by the thought that I could have taken his eye out.

So, do you think that kind of fighting you described was common place and the staff let it happen?

We might have been living there but we bought ourselves up. There was no structure, they had the bells they would ring the bells [...]

Are you saying that they weren't really keeping control of you?

No, no, most of the Matrons didn't.²¹ Female one concurred with my male participant. She recalled being strapped, locked in a cupboard and having food withheld as punishment. This particular form of punishment was also confirmed by the ex-principal. He told me that he and his staff became concerned about the children from the Home as they were often hungry, bruised and poorly dressed. He began providing food at school for the children and eventually his concern led to him gaining a position on the Board of Governance of the Home. He was a strong advocate for closing it, as he believed that a smaller home or foster care would provide a more appropriate environment for the children.²²

These three narratives gave a stark picture of the Home in its last years. It was portrayed as a place where the staff had little control and the children were at best neglected and at worse abused. Yet female number two had quite a different recollection. When I asked her about the behaviour in the Home she said:

'They seemed to have pretty good control. The Matrons were quite strict. We all knew what we had to do, we all had our jobs to do, we were all disciplined. I remember every morning having to line up and we were given cod liver oil tablets, every morning we were given a handful of these pills with our porridge. I always felt we were well fed and well looked after.'²³

Her narrative contained mainly positive memories. She had been in a smaller Home before she came to All Saints and thought it was 'a fun place, with older children and big trees to play on'.²⁴ Her only negative memories seemed to be about lack of personal possessions and some of the restrictions she had.

In an attempt to explain such varying experiences, I first examined the background of my participants. Female one and the male participant both came to the Home because of unsupportive or dysfunctional families. Female one came from an abusive family and the male participant had been placed in the Anglican Home system at birth by his mother, who rarely visited, but refused to let him be adopted. By contrast, female two had been placed in a Home because her mother had left the family home. Her father could not work and care for his children, yet he remained active

in their lives and visited often. This difference could have been part of the reason why the participants had such divergent views. It is possible that the staff were not as harsh on female two as she had a father who may have noticed mistreatment. This could have led to her having what Hall calls an 'exceptional story',²⁵ that is, she did not experience the same level of punishment that other children did. However, this could not explain that an external source, the ex-principal, held a view much more in line with other two participants. Added to this was that the first two participants' narratives were more in keeping with the experiences reported by other children who had been in Homes.²⁶ Furthermore female two did not recall any incidents of cruel or abusive punishment given to other children, unlike the female participant from the 1940s. I felt this to be unusual, and thought that there was a further explanation for the divergence in her narrative.

At this point I could have pressed her for more details in an attempt to gain a more reflective memory of the Home. Yet I felt that the topic was sensitive and that further probing may not have been beneficial and in fact could have been seen as hostile, preventing the interview from progressing in an honest and open way. Instead, after listening to the interview, I thought that perhaps her narrative had been shaped by the tendency of women to downplay their experiences. As Sangster notes, women tend to remember the past differently. She found when discussing sexual violence against females with a group of women who had been working in the same factory during the 1940s that they minimised it, claiming, for example, that in their youth it had been safe to walk home in the dark. However, Sangster states that she knew from other sources that violence against women was part of everyday life. So, she concluded that the evidence that her participants attached little importance to violence had been shaped by other factors.²⁷ I then re-examined my female participants' narratives about their experiences in the Home. I noticed that they would start by giving me an example of what they saw or experienced, and then following up with statements like, 'but we were lucky' or, 'I was much better off in the Home than with my family' or, 'I had a much better upbringing than if I had stayed with my mother'. Yet I thought the treatment they had

experienced in the Home was unacceptable. I concluded that the female participants viewed the neglect or abuse in the Home differently. Like Sangster's factory workers, they wished to minimise it. I thought that this desire had affected how female two had constructed her memory.

Furthermore, I think 'studying up' also affected some of the participants' narratives. This term is usually applied to narrators who are referred to as 'elites'. These participants have a conscious desire to make their version of history known and they see the interview process as part of promulgating their version of history.²⁸ The neglect and abuse of children in homes is well-known and well publicised. Because of this, the public view of children's homes is largely negative. I think that this knowledge shaped the way that some participants wished to present their time in the Home. I first encountered this when I interviewed an ex-staff member. Although she could not be described as an 'elite' in the societal sense of the word, within the context of the Children's Home she represented those who held power. She had worked in the Home in the late 1940s. Yet, when I attempted to probe her about any mistreatment or any issues the Home may have had, she was absolutely adamant that All Saints was a well-run Home and no child was ever abused. Even when confronted with the government reports of the Home she was insistent that they were wrong and that they must be made up because 'All Saints would not have needed inspections, there were no inspections while I was there'.²⁹ I came away from this interview feeling frustrated, asking myself how someone could deny the obvious, I had government reports with her name on them. I came to understand from this interview that the participant's knowledge of abuse claims against other children's homes had shaped her narrative. Her main motive was to protect the Home and the Anglican Church from any allegations and this led her to present a view of the Home which would not discredit it in any way.

I also think that 'studying up' affected the former residents who I interviewed. I felt that some participants may have wished to distance themselves from a general perception that all children in Homes were mistreated. Female two was, like the staff member, quite adamant that the Home was a happy place, appropriately run and that she was well treated. She did not

want herself identified as an 'abused child'. I noticed this tendency in other participants of distancing themselves from 'abuse stories'. This was more prevalent in those participants from the 1950s when the Home had a particularly kind Matron, who treated the children well and did not use corporal punishment. The two female participants from this period were sisters and I interviewed them together. They both wanted to make clear that they were treated well in the Home and it was a much better place to be than with their natural family, and that their experiences were better than what their younger brother had experienced in foster care. In the words of one sister, 'compared to children in other homes, we were lucky'.³⁰ The male participant from this period had an older brother who was moved to another Home within the Anglican system, and he was taken to visit his brother by a family from the local Anglican church who had taken an interest in him. He expressed shock at the way his brother was being treated at the other Home and wanted to make quite clear that he never experienced abuse while in All Saints. This desire by some participants to refute the perception that most children in care were abused, meant they shaped their narratives in a way that defended the Home.

After considering what factors maybe have contributed to way my participants remembered their time in the Home, I was able to build a picture of life there which was more like a kaleidoscope than a window. Rather than aiming to provide a definitive picture of life in the Home, I tried to show that each ex-child's experience of it was shaped more by their life circumstances than by the Home itself. Initially, when writing my chapters, I looked for points of agreement. For example, the gendered nature of chores was a common memory. The female participant from the 1940s recalled that her job was to prepare the packed lunches, as did female two, who was in the Home in 1960s. The Trust which ran All Saints owned a holiday home which the children were sent to every summer, and all the memories of those holidays were positive. It also became apparent that some different experiences could be explained by the time period the participant was in the Home. For example, those participants who were in the Home in the 1950s had a distinct experience due to the presence of a kindly Matron.

Lastly, I decided that each participant's narrative represented an individual experience of the Home, and that it was not contradictory to present these as such. Using terms like 'participant one experienced hunger, but participant two did not' gave each a voice without the need to make a value judgement about the obvious difference in the recollections. The purpose of my chapters was not to present a definitive account of life in the Home, but to explore the experience of those who were willing to speak about their life in the All Saints Children's Home.

During my research, I came to realise that even though people have shared a life together they may have made very different memories. The process of 'making' memories is complex and is affected not only by our place in society but also what we perceive as 'social norms'. Taking time to understand what effect participants' social status and gender may have had on how they remember their experiences can help the researcher to process the seemingly

contradictory narratives. Another factor to be considered is that public perceptions may influence how the participants wish to present their memories. With my particular topic, children's homes, this was very relevant as some participants not only wished to defend the Home but also to separate themselves from a generally held belief that children in care were abused. Having an understanding of what drove participants to downplay or emphasise certain aspects of their memories helped me not to see the difference as contradictions, but rather as individual experience. This then enabled me to use the oral histories in a way that allowed all the participants' narratives to be used in the relevant chapters of my thesis, even when these were seemingly contradictory. Sharing a life together does not always mean that the memories of that life will match. By understanding each participant as an individual, part of a multi-faceted story, we can build a richer understanding of the lives they shared together.

Endnotes

- ¹ All Saints Children's Home was run by the local Anglican Church and was opened in 1906 and closed in 1964.
- ² Toni McWhinnie, 'Missing the point: oral history and historians' *Oral History in New Zealand*, vol 8/9, 1996/7, p.10.
- ³ Lesley Hall, 'Looking for answers: striking the right balance', *Oral History in New Zealand*, vol.21, 2008, p.1.
- ⁴ Alessandro Portelli, 'What makes oral history different', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, (eds) *Oral History Reader*, (2nd ed.), 2006, p.37.
- ⁵ Alessandro Portelli, 'The Peculiarities of Oral History', *History Workshop* vol.12, 1981 p. 102.
- ⁶ Joan Sangster, 'Telling our stories: feminist debates and the use of oral history', *Women's History Review*, vol.3, no1, pp.7-8.
- ⁷ Hall, p.2.
- ⁸ All Saints' Children's Home Archive, Ian Matheson City Archives, Palmerston North.
- ⁹ All Saints' Children's Home Administration File, R11356687, Archives New Zealand.
- ¹⁰ Joanna Penglase, *Orphans of the Living*, Freemantle: Curtin University Books, 2005 p.33.
- ¹¹ As I was preparing this article the topic of children abused in while in state care was again in the news see: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/political/334866/govt-accused-of-looking-for-cheap-way-out-of-state-abuse-inquiry> retrieved 12 July 2017. Although most children's homes in New Zealand were privately run, there is generally no distinction made between the treatment of children in state or private care.
- ¹² Bronwyn Dalley, *Family Matters: Child Welfare in Twentieth Century New Zealand*, Auckland. Auckland University Press, 1998 pp.171-176, details some of the shifts in thinking away from institutions.

- ¹³ Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 14/14.
- ¹⁴ *Manawatu Standard*, 17 May 2004, p.2.
- ¹⁵ For the purposes of this article I have grouped the participants into three time periods: Three from the 1940s, three from the 1950s and three from the early 1960s.
- ¹⁶ GH, Interview with author, 19 November 2014.
- ¹⁷ CC, Interview with author, 24 November 2014.
- ¹⁸ GH, Interview with author, 19 November 2014.
- ¹⁹ CC, Interview with author, 24 November 2014.
- ²⁰ MH, Interview with author, 25 June 2014.
- ²¹ HE, Interview with author, 26 June 2014.
- ²² KG, Interview with author, 12 August 2014.
- ²³ CR, Interview with author, 6 November 2014.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Hall, p.3.
- ²⁶ To gauge this, I used previously published accounts, for example: Peggy Crawford, *Only an Orphan*, Lower Hutt: MJC Publishing, 1995. Kay Morris Matthews, *Who Cared? Childhoods within Hawke's Bay Children's Homes and Orphanages 1882-1988*, Napier: Eastern Institute of Technology, 2012. Ann Thompson and Fiona Craig, *Say Sorry A Harrowing Childhood in Catholic Orphanages*, Auckland: Penguin Books, 2009.
- ²⁷ Sangster, pp.7-10.
- ²⁸ Hall, p.3.
- ²⁹ LC, Interview with author, 1 July 2014.
- ³⁰ CJ, Interview with author, 20 June 2014.

The New Zealand Women Judges Oral Histories Project

DAME JUDITH POTTER

Writing in the 2013 edition of this journal, Dame Susan Glazebrook described the New Zealand Women Judges Oral Histories Project, which she convened with Dame Judith Potter on behalf of the New Zealand Association of Women Judges (NZAWJ). The first stage of the project was nearing completion at the time. The project aims to provide the first national record of the lives and legal careers of trailblazing women judges who overcame gender barriers to succeed in the legal profession and in the judiciary. It hopes to provide insight into the challenges of the past and present, and inspiration to young women for the future.

The first cohort of judges were interviewed by Megan Hutching. A second cohort were interviewed by the judges themselves after training from Megan. Two further interviews, with male judges who were involved with the early appointments of women judges, were carried out by Pip Oldham.

The New Zealand Association of Women Judges (NZAWJ) held a function in August 2017 to mark the symbolic

handover of the oral histories to the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington, where they will be archived. Representatives of every element of the project addressed an audience of members of the judiciary and the legal profession: the commissioners, funders (the New Zealand Law Foundation and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage), interviewers, and interviewees.

Against the background of a continuing statistical gender imbalance in large law firms and on the bench, with less than a third of the judiciary being women, the speakers shared a common view of the value of the project. Dame Susan Glazebrook expressed the hope that as well as shedding light on the factors that led to the interviewee's success in the law, the oral histories would also highlight factors that might inhibit women's progression, and particularly those from diverse backgrounds. The NZAWJ hopes that the project as a whole will make an important contribution to increasing diversity in the legal profession, and it plans to continue to share experiences and insights with colleagues.

Four women judges spoke about their experience of being part of the research and the challenges they had met as women in the legal profession.



Dame Judith Potter



Dame Susan Glazebrook



Dame Silvia Cartwright

Dame Judith Potter, the fourth woman to be appointed to the bench, has kindly allowed us to reproduce her remarks.

"Nineteen sixty four, when I graduated, was the first time that two women graduated from the Auckland Law School in the same year. This year, 2017, the number of practising certificates issued to women will outnumber those held by men for the first time. It may already have happened or be happening as we speak.

The 50 plus years in between have seen huge change relating to women in the legal profession and I realise I have been part of that change through those 50+ years.

This is the incredible aspect - for those years seem just to have flown by.

The realisation and recording of important change and its significant impact in our profession and the community, can be overlooked while we are busy being part of the change. This is why the oral histories project is so relevant and so important.

In the 1960s when I was at Law School no one was aware of Ethel Benjamin and I doubt anyone cared very much. It would be a couple of decades before interest and research by women revealed the courage, determination and ability of this young woman admitted to the Bar in 1896 after the enactment of the Female Law Practitioners Act made it possible. I wish I had known of Ethel Benjamin when I was an apprehensive and often lonely young female law student. She would have given me great confidence. But I was mainly on my own.

In 1977 I was elected to the Auckland Law Society, the first woman to be elected to a District Law Society Council. I vividly recall a senior practitioner, who I respected and admired, calling to congratulate me and saying: 'We are so pleased with your election, Judith, because you're just like one of us.' It was kindly meant,



Dame Augusta Wallace

but to me, deeply concerning and, yes, hurtful. I realised intuitively - rather than being able to assess or analyse the situation - that I would have to proceed with caution and work very hard to earn the confidence and respect of my Council colleagues, Queens Counsel and senior practitioners who certainly weren't short on confidence or the experience of power. I was an unknown quantity - different.

The 1980s saw an important advance. There was now a small but critical mass of women in the legal profession. Auckland Women Lawyers Association and Otago Women Lawyers' Society were formed in the mid-1980s. Women in the profession had a recognisable and recognised voice. While I had enjoyed support from my male colleagues, I had not realised the added strength groups such as these would provide.

But still, in 1991, when I became the first woman President of the New Zealand Law Society (NZLS) in 120 years, the NZLS council comprised me and 28 men. By 1994, when I completed my term, the number of women council members had doubled - to two.

And what a term of office it turned out to be - the defalcations of Renshaw and Edwards of Lower Hutt, revealed in 1992, amounted to about \$60 million, with a charge on the Fidelity Fund, after recoveries, of about \$25 million. A levy on solicitors of \$10,000 each had to be imposed to meet the shortfall in the Fidelity Fund. And I - unwittingly and unwillingly - became a media phenomenon overnight. It turned my life upside down, but I learned a lot very fast about leading in a crisis situation.

It was not until 1993 that the first woman High Court Judge was appointed - Dame Silvia Cartwright.



Dame Sian Elias

Dame Augusta Wallace had been appointed to the District Court bench in 1976. My appointment to the High Court bench

in 1997 was another significant challenge for me - a commercial, not a litigation lawyer - but an important challenge for me to accept. Women in the judiciary do make a difference. My observation and experience are that women's participation in the judiciary and the judicial process has a profound effect. Our Chief Justice, Dame Sian Elias, speaking to a conference of the International Association of Women Judges in 2011 said:

'Women and judges from minority backgrounds often come to the bench without prior experiences of the exercise of power.'

She observed:

'It is not fanciful to see in the work of Judges from such diverse backgrounds an emphasis on human dignity; a greater scrupulousness not to wound or slight; a willingness to express doubt and to change one's mind, and a sense of obligation to lay out the full reasons for decision and to confront any influence openly.'

She also observed that women, and those drawn from outside the traditional recruitment pool, can upset, in a good way, the comfortable

equilibrium of mutually reinforcing values and assumptions. Those are astute and, I consider, accurate observations. Women understand power, but I like to think, do not abuse it.

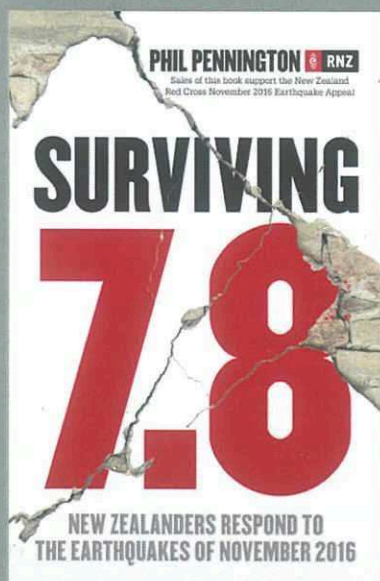
I believe the oral histories of women judges we hand over today to the Alexander Turnbull Library support and confirm the Chief Justice's observations. Equality is the lifeblood of justice; freedom opens up horizons and pathways. With equality and freedom comes confidence. Much has been achieved for women, but the challenges are ongoing.

As I reflect on the last 50 years, I know that over the next 50 years women's leadership will be critical in our profession, our justice system and the economy.

The oral histories inform understanding and respect for the hard won freedoms and for the traditions and values of our profession, our judiciary and judicial system.

We can look to the future and all the change it will inevitably bring, with strength and confidence."

Book Review



The 7.8 earthquake that jolted New Zealanders awake on November 14, 2016 was the world's second-equal most powerful quake of that year, according to Radio New Zealand (RNZ) journalist Phil Pennington, who distilled his reportage on the event for this book. While two lives were lost, it was widely believed that many more deaths would have occurred had the earthquake happened during daylight hours.

Surviving 7.8: New Zealanders Respond to the Earthquakes of November 2016, by Phil Pennington. Harper Collins, paperback, \$35, 288pp

Reviewed by Marina Fonteijn, Wellington

Pennington's book addresses the journalist's 'who, what, where and when' of the event in admirable detail. At its heart are the people he and his colleagues met and recorded. Pennington describes "trying to grasp the whole picture, rather like a jigsaw puzzle" and this metaphor is reinforced as he goes on to navigate and document the devastation of the land and its people in words and photographs. Alongside the testament of locals and tourists, he includes tweets and other communications from overseas, reflecting the way the news of the quake spread rapidly in social media shockwaves.

Pennington begins by relating the shock to himself and his family as they react to the quake at his home, in Lower Hutt. Vicki MacKay, RNZ's presenter that morning, stays staunch and the journalists rush to back her up

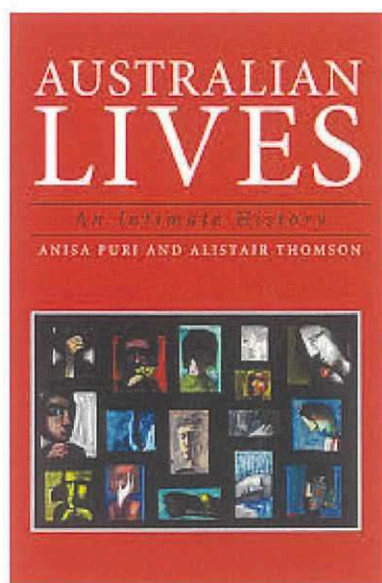
with as much information as they can send. What follows is a step-by-step account of Pennington's experience of walking through Wellington's streets then flying above Canterbury in a helicopter, chartered by 'cash-strapped RNZ', to witness the unfolding reality of the damage.

In some ways, this book may be seen as a documentation of the event itself. In the tradition of oral history after a catastrophic event, it gives 'voice to the disaster', as Abigail Perkiss puts it. Another strength is its author's acknowledgement of the place of this event in the life stories of the animate and the inanimate, including seashores, roads, buildings and animals, alongside damaged human hopes and dreams. Along with their owners, the experiences of a pet goat and Joey the galah provide some light relief.

Books Noted

Anisa Puri and Alistair Thomson
Australian Lives, An Intimate History

Monash University Publishing, 2017, 425pp. Available as an eBook with additional features ISBN: 9781922235787



Academic historians, the National Library of Australia, and ABC National collaborated on the Australian Generations Oral History Project.

The 300 interviews recorded between 2011 and 2014, taken with nearly 600 interviews recorded in the 1970s for the Australia 1938 oral history project marking the bicentenary of European colonisation, provide an archive of memories stretching from the late nineteenth to early twenty first century.

Outputs from the Australian Generations project include a series of radio documentaries produced by the ABC exploring the changes and the continuities in life for Australians born decades apart,¹ a dedicated volume of the journal *Australian Historical Studies*,² and this

dual format book, *Australian Lives*.

The authors have selected 50 narrators, representing a range of lives and stories, to illuminate change and continuity, how individuals lived with and against the economic forces, cultural expectations and legal constraints of their times, and how different types of Australians have managed their lives and faced distinctive challenges and opportunities.

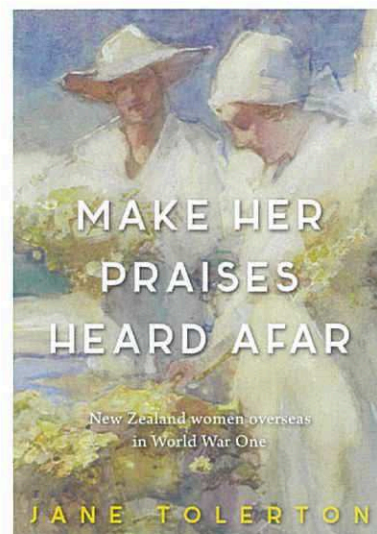
Readers of the eBook can explore the ways in which “stories are told through voice as well as word,”³ as extracts are hyperlinked directly to the audio in the NLA online listening system. The anthology is arranged according to topics in Australian social and cultural history.

Endnotes

- ¹ Australian Generations Oral History Project <http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/australian-generations/radio/>
- ² *Australian Historical Studies* v47, 2016, issue one with Guest Editors Katie Holmes and Alistair Thomson.
- ³ Raphael Samuel, ‘Perils of the Transcript’, in *The Oral History Reader*, p391, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds)

Jane Tolerton
Make Her Praises Heard Afar: The hidden history of New Zealand women in World War One

Booklovers Press, 2017, 320pp
ISBN: 9780473399658



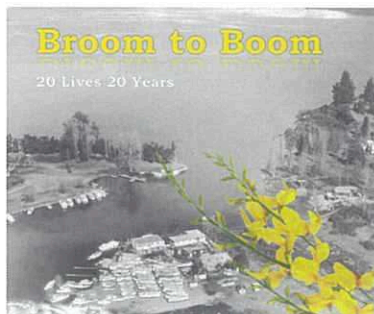
Many women, other than the nurses which we know more about, went overseas in World War One – as doctors and ambulance drivers, munitions workers and mathematicians, civil servants and servicewomen in British units, and in many other roles. They mainly paid their own fares and worked for very little. Some provided amenities for soldiers and others, and these have often been attributed to the military or men’s groups.

The clever use of a line from the national anthem for the title of Jane Tolerton’s new book invites us to consider this contribution of women to the war effort overseas.

Jane is well known to oral historians as an interviewer, along with Nicholas Boyack, of a number of World War One veterans in the late 1908s, and as the author of *Convent Girls* and *Ettie*, the biography of Ettie Rout.

Broom To Boom –
20 Lives 20 Years

Taupō Oral History Group, 2017,
153pp. ISBN: 9780473406639



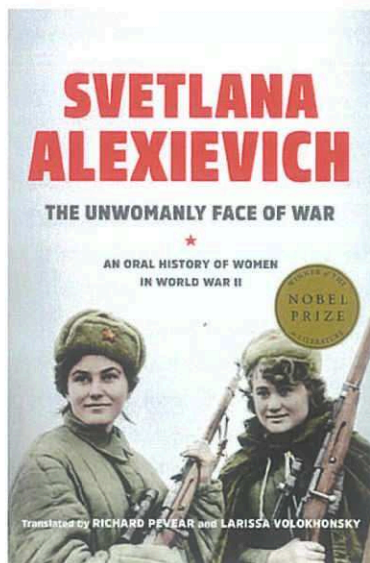
The book is a compilation of personal reminiscences featuring twenty individuals who lived in and contributed to Taupō in the 1960s and '70s.

In the early 1960s Taupō township consisted of a population of 2000 and was renowned for its pumice roads and surrounding broom. In the following 20 years with the establishment of forestry, farming, hydro and geothermal power schemes, the town experienced a marked increase in growth and development.

A team of oral historians have captured this fascinating and valuable record through the narratives of some of the residents who helped shape this town's growth. Those interviewed in the book speak of their love of Taupō and their excitement with being part of a developing town.

Svetlana Alexievich,
The Unwomanly Face of War, An Oral History of Women in World War II

Random House, 2017, 331pp
ISBN-13: 9780399588723



The 2015 Nobel Laureate for literature, Svetlana Alexievich, has published five books based on oral testimony. The *Unwomanly Face of War*, an Oral History of Women in World War II, first published in Russian in 1985, is now available in English.

Born in the Ukraine in 1948 Svetlana Alexievich grew up around women, listening to stories. She became interested in what she calls the conversational side of daily life, and developed a fascination for the human voice. A journalist and teacher by training, she believes that when 'people tell their own, little histories, ...big history is told along the way'.¹

Her books² depict Soviet life from the perspective of the individual, beginning with the memories of people who witnessed the 1917 Revolution, through the wars and Stalinist gulags, up to the present.

More than a million Soviet women saw action at the front lines in the Second World War. *The Unwomanly Face of War* is an account of the war absent from official narratives. Hundreds of narrators recount small details, 'the warmth and vividness of life: a lock left on the forehead once the braid is cut; the hot kettles of kasha and soup, which no one eats, because out of a hundred persons only seven came back from the battle; or how after the war they could not go to the market and look at the rows of red meat... Or even at red cloth'. Stories are arranged by theme, interspersed with excerpts from Svetlana Alexievich's 'Journal of this book, 1978 to 1985', to create 'the novel chorus', a literary method that the author believes allows the closest possible approximation to real life.³

Endnotes

- ¹ Svetlana Alexievich, Nobel Lecture, 7 December 2015
- ² *The Last Witnesses: the Book of Unchildlike Stories*, war reminiscences of children aged seven to twelve; *Boys in Zinc*, officers and soldiers who fought in the Soviet-Afghan war; the *Chernobyl Prayer: Chronicles of the Future*; *The Wonderful Deer of the Eternal Hunt*, male and female stories about people's desire and failure to find happiness.
- ³ Svetlana Alexievich, *Voices from Big Utopia*, http://www.alexievich.info/biogr_EN.html

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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