



On Tape

March 2007

Editor: Suzanne Mulligan

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Hello Everyone!

Well 2007 has gotten off to a busy start as our Committee works towards hosting our National Conference in September 2007. As well as the conference itself, we have planned an excursion on Wednesday 26 September to North Stradbroke Island where visitors will see the Museum, learn about the islands cultural heritage, enjoy the beauty of the scenery and likely see turtles, dolphins and whales.

The Call for Papers has closed and our program organiser, Helen Klæbe, tells me there is a great variety of proposals submitted. We are now working as quickly as we can to have registration information finalised to put on our web site. So please keep your eye on our web site <http://www.ohaaqld.org.au> for updates. Notices will also be posted out, so if you don't have internet access, you will not be "left out."

Our President, Sue Pechey, ran a very successful workshop on 3 March 2007. Despite the fairly short notice, she taught 17 enthusiastic people about oral history, all with a variety of intended projects.

My own oral history has got off to a good start for the year with a lovely interview with a lady who worked for the American navy during World War 2 and also worked in the early days of the Brisbane's ABC studios at Toowong.

Our committee is canvassing for members who might be interested in collecting Indigenous oral histories, or working with community people to show them how to do it. So if you are interested, please email me.

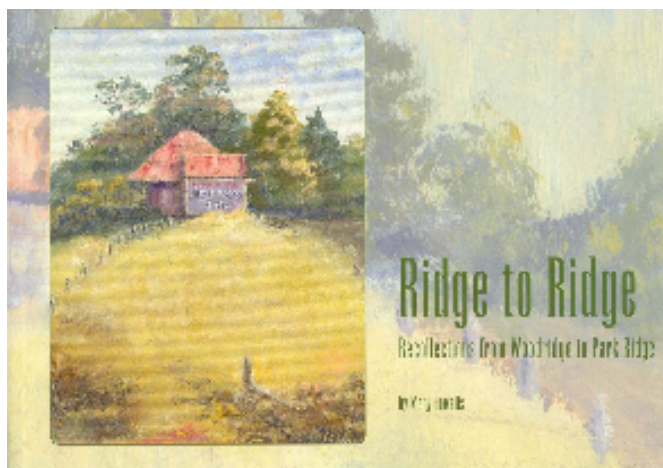
Our member, Mary Howells, has launched a new book on the history of the Logan city area. Her book should give other local history groups ideas on how to present their own histories.

Another member, Suzanne Gibson, has recently completed a project on Cyclone Larry. This innovative work has preserved the memories about the cyclone while they are still fairly fresh in the minds of those involved. The DVD ensures these oral histories will be readily accessible.

So, we have some wonderful work happening which may inspire us all.

Suzanne Mulligan
Editor

Ridge to Ridge – Recollections from Woodridge to Park Ridge
Mary Howells



Mary's new book was launched on 2 March 2007.

This publication documents the western region of Logan City, which is one of the fastest growing in Queensland. The book provides residents with an in-depth analysis on its development from first settlement through to 2006.

Tracing the history of Woodridge, Kingston, Marsden, Crestmead, Browns Plains, Greenbank and Park Ridge, *Ridge to Ridge* is fully indexed,

includes a bibliography and 150 historic photographs. Excerpts from oral history interviews with twenty local residents have also been included. Their memories provide a personal perspective on life in the region and add to the extensive primary source research.

Copies of *Ridge to Ridge* are priced at \$15, including GST, and are available from all Logan City Council Libraries and Logan Art Gallery. Alternatively you can download a *Ridge to Ridge* order form at www.logan.qld.gov.au after 1 March, and post it to "Logan City Council, Attention: Libraries and Cultural Services Branch, PO Box 3226, Logan City CD 4114." Due to the high quality production, postage and handling charges are \$9 per copy.

Review by Sue Pechey

A couple of Fridays ago I went down to the Browns Plains, very new and extremely pleasant, Library for the launch of Mary Howell's latest book. The Mayor and even a cabinet minister were in attendance, hopefully because they fully recognise the importance of a well-written local history.

Ridge to Ridge: Recollections from Woodridge to Park Ridge touches briefly on the Indigenous history of the area and goes on to document European settlement from the beginning of first incursions into the area, in about 1842, up to the opening years of the twenty-first century—the development of one of the most socially diverse areas of Queensland. The work is a balanced, well documented and thoroughly researched account of the growth of an area that has moved from timber getting, mining and dairying, to light industry and poorly-serviced scattered rural subsistence life styles to its present closely-settled prosperous residential community.

Amongst the documentary history, Mary has collected much oral source material—which she uses judiciously, with a light editorial hand that does nothing to impede the natural flow of

her speakers. Just these three extracts will give you some idea of her delicate touch in dealing with transcript.

First a snippet of a very familiar Australian activity:

“Of course there were two hotels in Waterford, and they couldn’t all drink at Logan Village, and they’d head out towards Jimboomba and hotels around. They liked to get around the hotels and that. They spread themselves around quite a bit in the areas. Like everything else, you struck some real decent fellows, and you’d always strike one or two smarties, too.” (*p 63*)

Then a brief description of just one European life amongst the great many that make up the present community:

“I think a lot of the people who came out after the war were assisted. Those who came before the Second World War came of their own accord. They came with nothing and took any job. Like Mrs Petroski, for example – she had never cooked in her life, and she went as a cook on a sheep station. She was given a dead sheep to cope with on her first night.” (*p 69*)

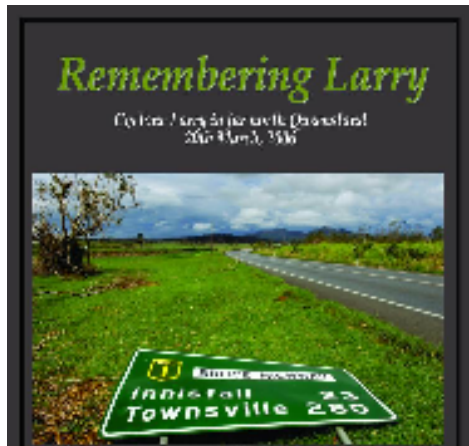
And lastly an example of how people ‘made do’ as they struggled with lower incomes and fewer expectations—not something we are all that familiar with in 2007—

“We thought we would get a caravan to live in while we built, but then we came across a repossession mobile kitchen and bought that instead. We built a shed round it. The mobile kitchen had been used by a kitchen designer. It was taken round shopping centres so people could plan their new kitchens. The bloke wanted to get rid of it, so we got it cheap, but we have a brand new kitchen with all the gear – new stove and everything, so we lived in that.” (*p 123*)

The text is wonderfully supported by photographs, a time line, bibliography and index. My only criticism is that it is too big a book to take to bed! It is available through the Browns Plains Library for \$15.

“Remembering Larry”

Suzanne Gibson



DVD – cover photo by Kerry Trapnell

When the World Trade Centre's collapsed back on 11th of September 2001, I've been told that oral history groups were on the streets within hours, collecting the immediate, urgent and emotional responses to a major traumatic event in their community.

We can, over time, revisit these impressions with the benefit of hindsight but if they haven't been recorded at the time, they can never be recovered. It's a moment taken or a moment lost.

As an oral history practitioner in Far North Queensland, I had reason to think about the oral history community in New York in the light of a traumatic event a little closer to home. On the 20th March 2006, a severe category 4 Cyclone, Cyclone Larry, crossed the Far North Queensland coast near the small town of Innisfail, causing extensive damage from Cardwell in the south to Cairns in the north. The cyclone then moved inland, maintaining cyclonic intensity as it crossed the Atherton Tablelands, before ultimately petering out down near Mt Isa.

As I sat at home listening to the ABC on the morning of the 20th March 2006, I was very conscious that what I was listening to was

important material. People ringing-in to their local radio station, recounting what they were seeing, hearing and feeling. Responses to the sound of the cyclone, to being in the eye of the cyclone and to the destruction around them. The unforgettable sound of shock in the Mayor of Innisfail's voice, just out from the cyclone bunker, as he appealed to his staff to come to work and help, if they could. I have another life as a broadcast and feature producer for the same radio station – I rang them and asked if they were taping the programs. Mercifully they were.

It struck me that we may not have the reserve of equipped oral historians ready to take to the streets, but what we did have was talkback radio, mobile phones and a region with enough people in it to provide diverse commentary on their direct experiences. You can't take to the streets in a region of a couple of hundred square kilometres but on this occasion, the street was coming to us.

That realisation became the genesis of "Remembering Larry", an oral history based project to record, preserve and archive some of the many stories of Cyclone Larry in Far North Queensland.

The project had a number of aims. The first was to preserve what was already there in terms of ABC broadcasts from the actual event itself. The second was to collect fresh oral history interviews – in some cases revisiting some of the people who rang the ABC – but also to record the stories of people who either experienced the cyclone or who played a part in the clean-up and recovery process. The third was to make the material accessible and the fourth was to make sure it was archived properly, so it would be available into the future.

With this in mind, I approached both the Queensland Government, through the

Department of Communities and also the ABC, through its Regional Production Fund.

My argument was simple. This was a significant event in this part of the world and it should be recorded. From a broadcast perspective, the existing archival material was compelling listening, while an oral history based series about the cyclone had a ready-made local audience. From a community perspective, the telling and listening to stories can be, at best, a healing experience; and at the very least - a means of getting your own story recorded for free! From an archival perspective, digital technology makes the collection and reproduction of the material on a DVD simple and very user-friendly. What would serve as an archive, could also be distributed as a resource, through the library service.

I was aided in my discussions by the fact that the ABC Far North staff had tried to find material on the cyclone everyone compared Larry to – Cyclone Winifred, a large Category 3 system that hit Mission Beach back in 1986. A mere two minutes of audio existed in the ABC archives from that event. I think that would be typical of many big events in regional areas – there haven't been the skills, the resources or the technology available to make the recording and archiving of material possible in any systematic way, beyond the reaches of the capital cities.

To cut a long story short, both the Queensland Government and the ABC agreed to support "Remembering Larry". The Queensland Government funded the recording of fresh interviews, the collection of stories, video and photographs, and the production of the "Remembering Larry" DVD, which is set for launch on Friday 16th March. The ABC funded the archiving of its own material, the recording of some oral history interviews and the production of a series of radio programs that will go to air through the week beginning 19th March 2007.

The DVD will not be sold and will only be distributed through the Queensland library service. Archival quality recordings of all the interviews will be lodged with the State Library of Queensland

It's been a fantastic process and a real delight to share the stories of so many people across the regions affected by the cyclone. In all over 80 people were interviewed for the project, and my requests for interviews were only knocked back twice. The project wasn't perfect and as my first attempt at "public access" oral history, - where you go out to the community and record anyone with a story to tell – there's a few things I'll do differently next time. It's about finding the right event at which to be present, finding the right place to record and having the right mix of static and roving interviewers. There's also the challenge of including indigenous perspectives and those of communities from non-English speaking backgrounds, who require a more time intensive engagement than that on offer in projects with lean budgets and non-negotiable deadlines.

Nonetheless, in terms of my own practise, a couple of things are clear to me as a result of this project. The first is that there is a place for "public access" oral history recording in small towns in North Queensland, just like there is on the streets of New York. The other is that new software programs have a great deal to offer the presentation of oral history. Programs like Flash make possible the simultaneous presentation of audio, text and photos in ways that can be as simple, or interactive, as your budget will allow. Maybe it's the broadcaster in me, but I feel there are enormous possibilities for making oral history more accessible contained in these digital formats. (My apologies if I'm speaking to the already converted!)

I'd be happy to talk with anyone who wants to know more about the project. My email is sgibsonrwp@gmail.com or phone on 07 4041 1551.

Virtual Voices **Glenn Pass**

Virtual Voices highlights useful Internet resources related to oral history. In this issue I highlight a number of online guides to conducting oral history. My focus is on web-based guides although I also feature some print-based manuals that are available in full text as PDFs. The resources below are useful for individual oral historians, managers of oral history projects and anyone wishing to evaluate projects. I do not claim these are the best available, although I have selected them on the basis of their comprehensiveness and the authority of the publishing organisation/individuals.

As you might expect most of these items are from the United States. Unfortunately there appears to be very few Australian guides available on the Web, although there are many references to the excellent printed resources available here. This lack of online presence, perhaps, provides an exciting challenge for Australian oral historians and our associations.

Capturing the Living Past: an Oral History Primer by Mary Kay Quinlan, and Barb Sommer (2005) available on the Nebraska State Historical Society's Web site at:

http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/audiovis/oral_history/index.htm

The primer's contents are divided into twelve sections providing extensive advice on all aspects of the oral history process; planning, setting up and conducting the interview, use of equipment and transcribing. A useful feature is an appendix with sample forms and documents for interviewers and managers of oral history projects.

Oral History Evaluation Guidelines by the Oral History Association (Rev. Sept. 2000)

http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/pub_eg.html

Rather than providing indepth advice on oral history, these guidelines are organised in checklist form and offer reminders of the many issues involved in conducting, processing and preserving oral history interviews. The guidelines and standards provide a basis for peer and institutional review of oral history projects, as well as a guide for individual oral historians and project managers.

Oral History Workshop on the Web from the Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

The site covers all aspects of planning and carrying out an oral history project, including tips for effective interviewing, guidelines for organising a project, a style guide for transcribing, and an extensive bibliography.

http://www.baylor.edu/oral_history/index.php?id=23560

Native American Veterans Oral History Manual, by Barbara W. Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Foundation for the Preservation of Oral History, 2005).

http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/audiovis/oral_history/Native%20Americans%20Vete%238D971.pdf

Although the focus is on a particular project, this comprehensive 106 page oral history manual covers standard oral history techniques and provides a wide range of background information of particular relevance oral history project managers.

Talking History: Oral History Guidelines by Sharon Veale and Kathleen Schilling. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (2004).

http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/PDFs/Talking_History_Oral_History_Guidelines.pdf

A comprehensive 53 page oral history manual that brings together: background literature about oral history theory and practice; practical information on designing interviews, interview techniques, recording equipment and project evaluation; and links to a range of websites that include oral history.

Oral History Program Guidelines. National Film and Sound Archive (2004)

http://www.nfsa.afc.gov.au/oral_history/guidelines_print_copy.pdf

A useful 31 page document outlining a wide range of issues relevant to undertaking oral histories, including issues relating to recording and preservation, conducting the interview - presentation and discussion, transcription, and release forms.

If you are aware of any Australian online guides to oral history please forward the details to me at g.pass@curtin.edu.au As always, I welcome your suggestions for future articles.

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Editor's Note – the above reprinted with kind permission from *Playback*, Newsletter of the West Australian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia, November 2006 Volume 26 Number 4.

Here a couple more that I found, including one from Australia:

An Oral History Primer from California State University. This covers designing the project, preparing for interview, conducting the interview and processing the interview. There are also links to a sample outline, transcription and agreement form.

<http://www.csulb.edu/colleges/cla/departments/history/programs/oral/oralprimer/OHprimer.html>

Assistance with Oral History Projects from the University of New South Wales. A step-by-step guide looks at equipment, preparation for interview, procedure checklist, legal agreements and obligation, copyright, transcription and storage.

<http://www.oralhistory.unsw.edu.au/assist.htm>

Here's a good site that looks at digital recording and compares with analogue:

Digital Recording: Here to Stay from the Tape Transcription Centre. This site explores the benefits of recording digitally and emphasises that some of the basics still apply. For example, you still need a good quality external microphone.

<http://www.ttctranscriptions.com/Digitalvsanalog.html>

March Oral History Workshop – QUT

Sue Pechey

Our first workshop for the year was on 3 March 2007. It is some time since I have run one of our ‘beginners’ workshops, and I had forgotten what an interesting day these events are. As usual, we seemed to be on the brink of disaster in terms of class size, but this time we ended up with 17 participants in an extremely pleasant room in the brand spanking new Hub, on Kelvin Grove Campus.

People come to oral history workshops with plans for widely divergent projects, but in this one the range of interests was wonderful—

- architect with windmills, of a historic kind, on his mind
- someone with an interest in the history of small boats
- three Minjerri elders from Stradbroke Island
- a woman interested in the lives of people from Greek Asia Minor
- two women from the public service sector, professionally concerned with Indigenous history
- a mother and daughter team pursuing family history
- one participant will document the activities of the volunteers in the Botanic Gardens
- another, the lives of nurses
- one participant is still in search of a project.

For me the day followed a fairly normal pattern, introductions all round, with brief descriptions of what each person is interested in—then talk about equipment. This part of the conversation is a far cry from even ten years ago, when the recommendation was for the best cassette player one could afford, a good external mike, C60 tapes, and not much else. Now the choice is technical, confusing and requiring a look at more than the budget. The 5th edition of the *South Australian Handbook* has a very clear section on recording devices—not so much what equipment to buy, but what to look out for, and what to avoid. We discussed everything

from cassettes to direct recording to a computer, and came to the conclusion that it is fairly much horses for courses—make your own choice, seek technical help (a knowledgeable partner seems the very best way to go but, alas, only one of us seems to have gone down that track) and get the best you can afford.

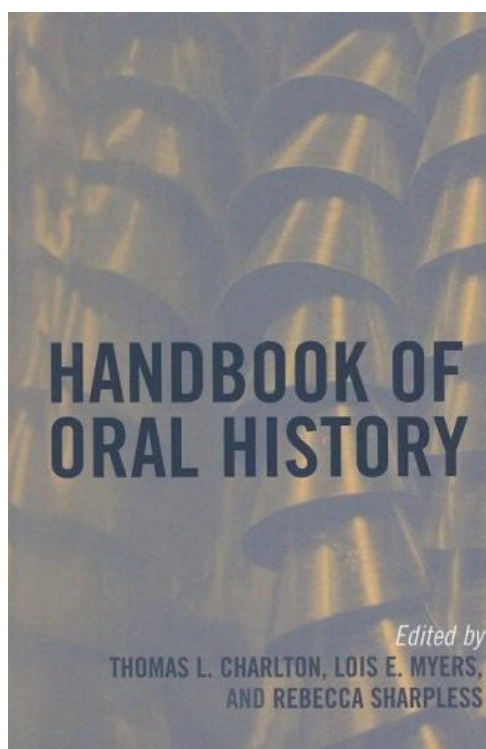
We then discussed legal matters, copyright and defamation, and looked at a few examples of release forms; doing the research (into one’s potential informants and also into the subject matter you need them to talk about); and then ‘questioning technique’ (nasty description for a guided conversation—slightly guided?)

Then we came to what was, for me, the sticking point of the whole day—transcript. On this matter discussion was lively and my little sample texts were critically picked over. I came to the conclusion that I interfere with the spoken word rather roughly at times—my only defence is that I do take it back to the author before it goes into the public arena. Unless the project calls for audio outcomes, there is no way of preserving the spoken voice in other media—something must go, and it seems I have taken out too much at times. And even the original audio is usually edited before going public. I was left feeling that I will be a little more careful in future.

We wound up with a quick look round the table at each potential project and ways forward for each participant.

I learnt a lot at this workshop, and hope the other people there did likewise. It is clear we need another workshop on the transfer of digital material to CD or some other transportable format, and in sound editing—the Association will look around for a tutor for that workshop possibly later this year.

Our collective thanks must go to QUT Kelvin Grove for the use of its very comfortable room, so conveniently close to nice places to eat—and not least to Helen Klæbe for arranging its use for us.



Handbook of Oral History, edited by Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless (Walnut Grove, CA: AltaMira Press, 2006), is available. This research handbook is for the serious scholar and includes sixteen articles by eighteen recognized oral historians. Topics focus on both the theoretical backgrounds and practical applications of the craft, including the history of oral history, oral history as evidence, research design, legal and ethical aspects, interviewing technique, transcribing and editing, and archival considerations. Other articles discuss the roles of memory, communication, life stage, feminism, and narrative studies in interpreting oral history. Also included are articles on the applications of oral history in print publication, biographical writing, performance, and sound documentary. An extensive oral history reference list accompanies the handbook.

About The Editors: Thomas L. Charlton is Professor of History at Baylor University. He is Director of The Texas Collection library/archive center and author of *Oral History for Texans* (1981, 1985). Rebecca Sharpless is Director of the Institute for Oral History at Baylor University and president of the Oral History Association. Lois E. Myers is Associate Director of the Institute for Oral History at Baylor University.

List of Contributors: Mary Chamberlain, Thomas L. Charlton, Pamela Dean, James E. Fogerty, Jeff Friedman, Sherna Berger Gluck, Ronald J. Grele, Charles Hardy III, Alice M. Hoffman, Howard S. Hoffman, Mary A. Larson, Elinor A. Mazé, Eva M. McMahan, Charles T. Morrissey, Kim Lacy Rogers, Rebecca Sharpless, Linda Shopes, Richard Cándida Smith, Valerie Raleigh Yow.

In recent decades, oral history has matured into an established field of critical importance to historians and social scientists alike. *Handbook of Oral History* captures the current state-of-the-art, identifies major strands of intellectual development, and predicts key directions for future growth in theory, research, and application. Compiled from provocative essays by the field's most prominent members, this book is an essential manual for both newcomers and veteran researchers.

Hardcover: 640 pages
Publisher: AltaMira Press (April 28, 2006)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0759102295
ISBN-13: 978-0759102293
Product Dimensions: 9.1 x 6.3 x 1.5 inches

Editor's note: I advised members about this book about a year ago when it was awaiting publication. The above information is from the Oral History List and Amazon.com where the book is available for \$125.00US. You may also like to try your nearest University library.



Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA)

Membership of the OHAA includes a subscription to the Journal of the Association, published annually. There are branches of the Association in all Australian States. Northern Territory members are attached to the SA Branch and ACT members to NSW. Branches hold regular meetings, run workshops and publish regular newsletters, and also provide a friendly and informative forum for those interested in oral history from any perspective.

Membership Fees (1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008) (please tick the appropriate box)

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