



On Tape

September 2007

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Hello Everyone!

The National Conference is only a couple of weeks away and we've been working hard to present a Conference that you will find enjoyable and inspirational. It is not too late for those who have not already registered to do so. See our conference web site at <http://www.ohaaqld.org.au> as soon as possible.

We are pleased to announce that Ms Bonny Barry MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Training and the Arts has accepted our invitation to speak at our Welcome Reception on the first evening of our conference.

There are only a few places left for the North Stradbroke Island excursion on 26 September which promises to be a wonderful day where delegates will get an "introduction to the Island's history and culture". We'll pick up delegates in Brisbane by bus and take the barge across to the Island. We will visit the Museum to see the history and heritage work undertaken there, with particular interest in the oral history recordings. The Council will host our group for morning tea and a 'walk and talk' of Dunwich cemetery. We will follow this with a trip to the Gorge where hopefully we will see turtles, dolphins and migratory whales. Delegates will have the opportunity for a swim at Cylinder Beach, followed by lunch at a cafe/restaurant overlooking the ocean.

We welcome new members:

Leonie Hunter
Anne Ross
Donald Watson
Valerie Donovan
Dawn Montgomery
Dee Martin & Jessica Martin-Green
Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum

Sadly, one of our members, Lesley Hargraves, passed away suddenly in August. She was very active with the North Pine Historical Society and Leith Barter has written a tribute at page 3.

There has been a great response from members to our drive to update membership fees. Thank you as your membership fee is vital in keeping our Association financial and therefore greatly appreciated, particularly in this busy conference year. All currently financial members will receive the 2007 Journal in the first mailout.

Please support your conference and therefore your branch by registering and coming along. I look forward to seeing you there.

Suzanne Mulligan
Editor

Interviewing technique: Five common errors!

There was some lively debate recently on the Oral History List about transcribing. Martha Healy made the following observations from her experience as a transcriptionist, which we may all benefit from:

1. When the interviewer is so anxious to say something, they talk over the interviewee. I cannot tell you how common this is. The interviewer is so intent on being prepared to ask their next question that if the interviewee hesitates a second, the interviewer jumps right in.
2. Placement of recording devices, especially with multiple people involved. I love it when they do a "voice check" first and then listen to the recording to make sure. Usually they introduce themselves, tell what they do or something so I also can pick up their voices. A second part of this is re-checking when people get up for a break, or lunch or whatever. Also being aware of outside noises, sirens, lawnmowers, etc.
3. Again with multiple people when the interviewer loses control of the situation so that multiple people are talking at once. Of course, that sometimes happens, but the interviewee can say things like--"that's important, could you repeat it?"
4. The all-too-frequent paper turning, (or other noise-making activities) usually right near the microphone. These include opening candy wrappers, pouring drinks, etc.
5. I love it when the interviewer is aware of things like when people turn their heads away, or answer a question while getting a cup of coffee, or uses their hands to talk. The good interviewer sometimes repeats it or says something like: "The tape can't pick that up for us, the fish was how big?" (the speaker had obviously used their hands to indicate a size.)

More technically, I have also become aware of when the interviewer is missing stuff, they get off on a tangent and I know they missed a follow up. Often that is caused by the interviewee telling some interesting story and pulling the interview down a path (that might be wonderful) but somehow they never get back to the original items.

I have also been impressed with the importance of the preparation, the briefing materials, or whatever. They really influence the quality of the interview.

Then there's the intangible ability of the interviewer to create the atmosphere that most encourages the interviewee to talk -- and of course that may be different for each person. Some are formal, some are very informal, some use humour, etc.

LESLEY NITA HARGRAVES (1949-2007)

Members of the Association have been shocked and saddened by news of the recent death of Lesley Hargraves. Although she was only 58 years of age, Lesley suffered a stroke and passed away suddenly and unexpectedly on 14 August. Having been a member of the Queensland Branch for a number of years, Lesley was intending to participate in this month's national conference.

Lesley was particularly well-respected in the Pine Rivers Shire. After commencing a Local and Applied History Course at the University of New England as a mature-age student some years ago, Lesley regularly visited the Strathpine Library to make use of the Local Studies Collection and to undertake a number of course assignments based on the history of the Pine Rivers area. Lesley completed several local projects which proved to be of great value to the Pine Rivers Shire Council, including a conservation study of the Samsonvale and Districts Hall and an historical study of the Anzac Memorial Avenue. The Anzac Avenue study, in particular, has been extensively utilised by later readers and researchers.

Lesley's period as a student also saw the beginning of her very significant involvement with a number of local historical groups. Around this time, she commenced attending meetings of the Petrie Historical Society, now known as the North Pine Historical Society. She spent many hours as a volunteer in the Strathpine Library helping people with an interest in genealogy and family history. She further developed this expertise by becoming a Library volunteer with the Queensland Family History Society. She also became a volunteer at the Pine Rivers Heritage Museum. Although she was a Petrie resident with no direct ties to Dayboro, Lesley became a foundation member of the Dayboro District Historical Society and has been of invaluable assistance to the development of this new society by attending most of their meetings and regularly offering advice and assistance. Likewise, Lesley was well-known to the members of the Samford and District Historical Museum Society.

During her time as a student, Lesley also developed a strong interest in recording and transcribing oral history. In her own time, and not as a requirement of her studies, she very professionally transcribed a

number of old cassette recordings held in the Local Studies Collection. It was around this time that Lesley also developed a special interest in the history of the Australian Paper Manufacturers, later Amcor, Cartonboard Petrie Mill, the most significant of the industrial enterprises to commence in our region. In 2001, Lesley was encouraged to undertake a videorecorded interview with the late Gus Gehrman, the engineer who masterminded the development and construction of the Petrie Mill and who became the first Resident District Manager. Gus later became the Deputy Chancellor of the University of Queensland. Gus was a decorated war hero and a man with enormous charisma and a towering intellect, but Lesley was not daunted by this and she was able to capture a remarkable interview. Over the past seven years, the Pine Rivers Shire Council, working in partnership with Bluegum Media, has been able to collect nearly 80 videorecorded oral history interviews, but this is one of the most significant interviews in our collection.

Only last year, when the Petrie Historical Society decided to reform as the newly incorporated North Pine Historical Society, Lesley was the obvious choice to become the group's Secretary. This year, she was elected as joint President/Secretary and she was spearheading a number of very important initiatives. One of these, perhaps the one most worthy of mention, is the Society's involvement in a photographic display which will be held from December in the Pine Rivers Heritage Museum to celebrate 50 years of the Amcor Cartonboard Petrie Mill. Although it seemed that it would be impossible for the Society to continue its involvement without Lesley's guiding hand, the members have determined that, in order to respect her enthusiasm for the project, the display must go ahead as planned as a tribute to her hard work and commitment.

Lesley will be sorely missed by her husband, Rick, two sons, Craig and Andrew, two daughters-in-law, Joanna and Katerina, and two grandchildren, Jakob and Tomas.

Leith Barter,
Local Studies Librarian and Historian,
Pine Rivers Shire Council.

Kissing Cousins: Journalism and Oral History by Mark Feldstein

Abstract This article explores the similarities and differences between journalism and oral history. Where does one end and the other begin? What might each learn from the other? The author compares both print and broadcast journalism to oral history, examining issues of evidence, purpose, technique, empathy, and ethics. He writes that oral historians and journalists are like "kissing cousins," related but separate, whose very similarities showcase their differences—and the ways each can improve their own discipline by borrowing techniques from the other. Specifically, the author argues that journalism would do well to emulate oral history's exhaustive and nuanced approach to research evidence, especially its preservation of interview transcripts that allow public inspection and verification. Conversely, the oral historian should sometimes emulate the journalist's more seasoned approach to interviewing—increasing the quantity of interviews and expanding the range of approaches, including use of adversarial encounters.

The slave narratives poured out with illiterate eloquence. One by one, more than a dozen African-American men told an interviewer what life had been like when they were field-hand slaves in the South. Despite the sweltering summer heat, the interviewer reported that a chill went down his spine as he listened to the slave narratives. It was an emotional experience on both sides. Some of the former slaves wept; others shouted; many seemed hardened to their core. Later, the interviewer wrote of his encounters with a passionate intensity, fuelled by an angry self-righteousness, a crusading desire to describe the terrible injustices of slavery which he felt the world had ignored. Young and impressionable—white, middle class, and sheltered—the interviewer had graduated from college just three years earlier; finally, he felt, he was getting an education in life that had not been part of his bookish university curriculum.

But the compiler of these slave narratives was not James Agee, author of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, nor another oral historian from the 1930s. And the slaves were not ancient survivors from the Civil War. In fact, these interviews took place nearly a century after Emancipation. The subjects were migrant farmworkers during the 1980s who had been illegally held as slaves by their violent crew chief. The interviewer was not an oral historian but an investigative reporter—the author of this article.

Thus the forum here was not oral history but journalism. Yet the similarities raise some inevitable questions: What is the difference between oral history and journalism? Where does one end and the other begin? And what might each learn from the other?

"Journalism," Washington Post publisher Philip Graham famously said, "is the first draft of history." Historian Stanley Kutler, writing before the advent of the Internet and all-news cable television, defined news writing similarly: "history with a 5:00 p.m. deadline." But if journalism is a kind of instant history, what is history itself, other than journalism delayed and interpreted?

Editor's Note: This is part of an article from Oral History Review Vol 31, Issue 1. You will find the full text of this interesting article at:

<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ohr/31.1/feldstein.html>

Oral History Web Sites

Oral History Techniques: How to Organize and Conduct Oral History Interviews Barbara Truesdell, Ph.D.

Introduction

Oral history interviewing is one more tool in the larger repertoire of methodologies used for research in history, anthropology, and folklore. Oral history collects information about the past from observers and participants in that past. It gathers data not available in written records about events, people, decisions, and processes. Oral history interviews are grounded in memory, and memory is a subjective instrument for recording the past, always shaped by the present moment and the individual psyche. Oral history can reveal how individual values and actions shaped the past, and how the past shapes present-day values and actions.

Every interviewing experience is unique; this is part of the charm of fieldwork. So while there is some validity in the adage, "The only way to learn how to do it is to do it," there are things you can do before, during, and after your interview to make every interview more successful.

Other sections to this article:

- Before the Interview
- At the Interview
- After the Interview
- Bibliography and Contact Information

Editor's note: This article is from the Indiana University Center for the Study of History and Memory. See <http://www.indiana.edu/~cshmt/techniques.html>

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A guide to recording oral history

What is oral history? Oral history is a method of gathering information. It is the sound or video recording of an interview with someone who speaks from personal experience about a subject of historical interest. It can also be the printed version of the material that has been recorded, whether a verbatim transcript or one that has been edited for publication.

Other sections to this article:

- Preparation
- Preliminary meeting
- The interview
- Processing the interview
- Equipment

Editor's note: This article is from New Zealand History On Line. See <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/hands/a-guide-to-recording-oral-history>

NORTH STRADBROKE ISLAND ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Suzanne Mulligan

The biennial National Oral History Conference in September will commence with an introduction to North Stradbroke Island's history and culture at the North Stradbroke Island Historical Museum. The Museum features the North Stradbroke Island Oral History Project, a large collection of oral history recordings by indigenous and non-indigenous residents on the Island. The project was funded by the Redland Shire Council.

Project Co-ordinator Elisabeth Gondwe said this valuable collection was initiated due to the efforts of Redland Shire Council historian Tracy Ryan who identified a gap in the Council's collection in that it had no indigenous interviews.

"Tracy came to the Island, got the consultation right and established a project then I started co-ordinating it for the Quandamooka Land and Sea Management Agency. Initially the attitude of many people was "They've stolen our land, and now they want to steal our stories" so we did things differently. The most important and exciting aspect of this project is that the copyright resides with the narrator of the story where normally it resides with the collecting institution. We had indigenous and non-indigenous interviewers and interviewees and we really engaged the community in this long-running project. It provided sustainable employment and training, with one of the most prolific interviewers being Donna Ruska who recorded 49 interviews. Donna is a traditional owner from North Stradbroke Island and in the course of her interviews she captured some wonderful stories, many of which have formed the basis for the website *Stradbroke Stories*." See

<http://www.redland.qld.gov.au/Corp/Residents+Info/History/Stradbroke+stories.htm>

Elisabeth became involved with oral history many years ago when she first started working as a researcher on a native title claim. A lot of indigenous informants used oral accounts and so she recorded some oral history stories. She

then became involved with the Paddington History Group which published a book on the history of Paddington, based on oral histories recorded. Since then she completed a Masters degree in Cultural Heritage and when she moved to the Island, she took on the role of co-ordinating the North Stradbroke Island Oral History Project.

Local Minjerribah woman Colleen Costello, an interviewee with the project, has grown up with a strong oral tradition listening to her Elders and for the past year has had an extensive interview recorded describing her life and culture for the benefit of history and her descendants. At first Colleen was reluctant to tell her story fearing misinterpretation, but then she met Elisabeth and entrusted her memories to her.

"Elisabeth was like a breath of fresh air that came along and asked me if I was interested and so we built a friendship and it has been great because I've gone right through growing up on the Island through my eyes. Oral history is part of our culture because we didn't write things down, we passed stories down verbally and that's why I'm able to tell my parents' stories. Even the Dreamtime has been passed down through oral history and now with new technology we've become more urbanised and enjoy modern facilities of recording."

Colleen is looking forward to the conference where she expects to learn from others as well as informing delegates on the process of collecting aboriginal oral histories. She said it was very important that people doing recordings return the transcripts to the interviewees for editing to ensure that the end product reflected the correct information.

Elisabeth, Colleen and Tracy will be presenting a session about this successful and ongoing project at the National Oral History Conference in Brisbane in September 2007.

