

Oral History Association of Australia

On Tape

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Editor: Karen L. Barrett

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Letter from the Editor

Hello Everyone!

Yes, I'm afraid you're stuck with me for another year.

Apologies for the absence of a December Newsletter, the Committee was busy updating our memberships list and before we knew it, Christmas was upon us.

The AGM came and went with about a dozen members joining us for both the meeting and a lovely lunch. The Committee has changed, both in form and function. More on this in our News section.

It is unfortunate but we did not receive any applications for community liaison officers to represent North, Central, North-West and South-West Queensland. This is a great pity and means that the Committee will remain mostly Brisbane-oriented in its representation. For all that there were voiced criticisms of this fact at the 2007 Conference, if no one will step forward then the status quo will remain.

As usual, if you have any comments to make about the Newsletter, please send them directly to "The Editor, On Tape", at

karenlbarrett@bigpond.com - I promise I don't bite and have rather thick skin. The Newsletter is only as good as its last edition, so comments, critiques or recommendations are very welcome. I would love the opportunity to listen to your thoughts or concerns. Feel free to email me with suggestions, submissions and so on at any time; if it doesn't make one Newsletter it will make the next. When attending workshops, conferences or seminars, please keep the Newsletter in mind....maybe even write down some thoughts while they're still fresh in your mind. It doesn't have to be an expose; even a quick email telling me what you thought of the workshop (etc.) can be used.

Finally, thank you to all the contributors for this issue of the Newsletter. Without you, it would just be a series of blank pages.

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and a safe and joyful New Year. I hope 2009 will bring us all interesting Oral History projects to work on.

Karen L. Barrett
Editor
Email: karenlbarrett@bigpond.com

President's 2008 Report

The year 2008 was a busy year for our branch. After hosting a very successful Biennial National Conference in Brisbane in September 2007 the committee naturally wanted to have some rest. But we couldn't afford one. The conference stimulated a lot of interest in oral history and we had to be up in arms to satisfy this interest. The conference increased awareness of the diversity of applications of oral history which included poetry, digital storytelling, web sites, books, and DVDs. Our committee was challenged to come up with a plan that will match the expectations of our members and will provide them with sufficient training and services. In approaching this challenge we focused on three main directions.

Digital equipment for members

One of the major challenges we all face is the advent of digital technologies. We all know that the requirements of major collecting institutions – and in our case, the State Library of Queensland and Queensland Museum are such that only high quality and preferably digital recordings are accepted for donations. To stay abreast with modern technologies, and to improve the standard of oral history practice in general, our committee decided to apply for the grant to purchase digital recorders. As you know our application was successful and the equipment is now purchased. It includes two Fostex digital recorders, Sony video camera, two Senhaisser headphones, two dynamic and one lapel microphones, tripod, memory cards and carry bags. The equipment is assembled in three kits ready for work and if required they can be sent to a member elsewhere in Queensland. The acquittal report was completed and sent to the Gambling Community Benefit Fund – with gratitude. The next step will be to insure the equipment and to write Loans' Policy and Agreement where we can specify the conditions of Loan and our fees. This equipment will be available to community group members as well as individual members and we believe will boost their work. One of the important incentives is the opportunity to donate their work to the State Library of Queensland to compliment the growing collection of oral histories.

Training of members and non-members

We have always run workshops and provided training to our members in the art of oral history. We were committed to continuing this work and we had two very successful workshops in March and April. Both workshops were conducted by Lesley Jenkins.

We had a variety of people attending the March workshop, both members of OHAA and non-members. There was a professional writer and editor, students, a group from Charleville interviewing locals on their knowledge of the river system, members of the Australian Lebanese Society keen to build that society's history, members of the Embroiderers Guild who will interview elderly members on the Guild's history and a representative from a regional history group.

After an overwhelming response to our first workshop in March, we ran a second one in April with the "overspill". Again the workshop brought people with some interesting projects. Most of the participants will be collecting stories from their local communities. A group from one city wants to capture the stories of recent immigrants before they become immersed in their new culture. Others are gathering stories of the effect of World War II on their community and earlier life in their suburb. Another member plans to have the youth in her area collect the stories. All these projects demonstrate the important contribution oral history makes to our communities.

This is very encouraging for oral history in Queensland and there is an obvious demand for more workshops. With that in mind, we set in motion plans to run a variety of workshops that would help all attendees to get some valuable skills in interview techniques, recording using digital equipment and expand their knowledge in various applications of oral history and digital storytelling. This series of workshops has just been completed. We successfully delivered training in: organising a community OH project (facilitated by Dr Helen Klaebe); editing of the sound materials (Sue Pechey) which consisted of two parts and included homework for participants. To cap off a brilliant series we had Australian expert in digital recording, Peter Kolomitsev, run a workshop on the nuts and bolts of recording. In addition to these workshops we also asked State OH & DS coordinator Gavin Bannerman to speak. He kindly agreed and spoke about:

- the ways oral histories and digital stories might come to the Library and what are the steps involved in acquisition and management of these stories;
- policies and procedures related to oral histories and digital stories;
- new technologies and new practices present new challenges – from which file formats is accepted in the collection to how we can help capture people's stories before they are lost;
- a strong public desire for relevant, interesting, online content and how to respond to it - streaming oral histories online and other possibilities;
- donation of oral histories to the Library;
- copyright issues, consent & release forms;
- introduction to digital storytelling: script-writing, storyboarding, editing images, video and sound, piecing together a digital story;
- loan of equipment.

Training workshops is our long-term commitment and I am confident that in the year to come we shall have even more exciting training programs.

Communication with members (through Newsletter and website)

Everybody will agree that staying in contact with members, exchanging ideas and know-how, exchanging useful information and assisting those from remote communities in creating their own project is exactly what we are for. It's in our job description. So following the success of our conference that was achieved partially due to a well designed website we decided to keep the website and build on it basis an information portal for our members. This task was assigned to our new Newsletter Editor, Karen Barrett. This is a very exciting project! We are planning to turn this website into a real forum where we can discuss emerging problems, share our knowledge and know-how, get some useful tips from the masters in the field, talk about our projects ...and receive some "peer counselling" if something goes wrong. Despite a heavy workload Karen produced three Newsletters which were very informative and interesting. Well done, Karen! Keep up the good work. *{Editors note: I had a lot of good help}*

In line with this third point, I would like to offer for discussion the idea of appointing/ electing community representatives in far North Queensland, North Queensland, North-West, South-West, South-East and Central Queensland. This will allow us to be more in touch with what is happening in these communities and how we can provide leadership in the field of OH, facilitate workshops in these communities rather than centrally, provide timely support either technological or know-how. Recently I saw a program on ABC (?) about a Daintree community. They come with an idea to record their stories, fables, rituals. A brilliant idea – and who is helping them to record their intangible heritage? An American Christian group! With all due respect, what are Americans doing on our turf? This is the type of projects where our Association should be involved but I have a

feeling that nobody knows about us in the Daintree community. If we have representatives who will keep their ears to the ground and be more proactive then we could better serve wider community of Queensland.

In this instance I would like to stress that the appointment of Gavin Bannerman as the Oral History and Digital Storytelling Coordinator in the State Library of Queensland is very timely. The purpose of his position is to coordinate programs designed to document and record Queensland history in all its forms. His main responsibilities are the addition, management and usage of oral histories and digital stories within State Library's collection as well as provision of services to people looking to make digital stories or oral histories by making available training resources, online guides and advisory services.

We are planning to work with Gavin on a number of directions including provision of training in OH, facilitation of donation of completed projects recorded on our equipment to the SLQ and also we need to join efforts in serving our remote communities better.

I think it is also a time to discuss a possibility of running a State OH conference, in Toowoomba.

As usually, members of our vibrant oral history community were involved in some very interesting projects. Suzanne Gibson was contracted to record and produce a series of oral history interviews to commemorate 100 years of National Parks in Queensland. The aim of the project was to record the recollections of 15 former and current National Parks and Wildlife Service officers, and to produce two audio products. The first was an audio installation for a display in the Queensland Museum; the second is a 50-minute audio documentary.

Suzanne Mulligan and I prepared a proposal for the Department of Defence to record a series of interviews with former Defence personnel who had trained in Canungra Field Training Area. This will be an integral part of a broader project designed to capture the history of the area and to highlight its heritage value. I also recorded several interviews with Australian peacekeepers for the Australian War Memorial.

Conclusion

I would like to thank my colleagues with whom I worked this year, my first year as a President of our branch. First, I would like to thank Maxine Kendall, who is retiring this year from her position as a Treasurer, for her valuable contribution, support and guidance in all financial matters. I would like to thank our new editor Karen for her efforts – I know it was a difficult year given her workload but she managed to overcome it. And I would like to thank our Secretary Suzanne. Without her presence in our committee, and sheer determination in getting things done, we wouldn't have succeeded.

I would like to thank also the facilitators of workshops for their valuable contribution in and continuous generous support of the development of Oral History programs in Queensland.

I hope you had a Merry Christmas and 2009 is a happy and successful New Year for us all!

Lena Volkova
President

News

Election of Office Bearers

President	Lena Volkova	Non-management positions	
Secretary	Suzanne Mulligan		
Treasurer	Kate Roberts		
<i>On Tape</i>	Karen Barrett		
Newsletter Editor			
		Loans Officer	Maxine Kendall
		Web Master	Karen Barrett

As you can see, we've added new positions which will aid the Association's continued growth and a new Committee member, Kate Roberts. It would be lovely to see community liaison officers next year. *{Hint Hint}*

About Kate

My involvement in Oral history seems only natural when I look back at my University days; for a second year social work assignment I submitted an unedited interview with one of my neighbours looking at her life during the Second World War.



It was in my fourth year of University that I worked with others, helping them to write anecdotes from their lives while on practical assignment. I followed that up with work as an accommodation support worker and during that time came across a group of Oral Historians at a history fair and bought Beth Robertson's handbook. In 2000, the Oral History stars aligned again when I was part of the *Journey to Tomorrow* project that Sue Pechey was involved in. Later that year, I joined our association as Secretary, and then did a stint as Treasurer and General Committee Member before leaving in 2005 to have my son.

It was during those years that I was able to get more of a grasp on Oral History and work within the field. I especially like doing life histories with people. I believe they help leave a legacy through sharing knowledge, unearthing ancient wisdom, preserving voices, capturing lasting memories, helping others to grow, increasing understanding, nourishing family identities and gaining new perspectives.

Others members who were on that first Committee included Sue Pechey, Lesley Jenkins and Niles Elvery; now the Committee is quite different. I'm looking forward to working with everyone on the 2009 Committee and honoured to serve as Treasurer, utilising my bookkeeping experience.

Overdue payment of OHAA membership fees

There are many members who have not paid their 2008-2009 dues. Remember, if you've received a 2008 Journal but the last time you paid was in 2007, you're overdue in your membership fees. I, was guilty of this (a Committee member being slack!) but it's easily fixed.

At the back of the Newsletter you will find a Membership form which you can use to renew your membership and update any details which might have changed since you renewed in 2007.

Please note the payment methods the Association now offers. When using either method (1) or (2) remember to send the Treasurer an email regarding your payment. Kate Roberts is our new Treasurer. Her email address is brizkate@tpg.com.au

For those without email please send notification to:

The Treasurer
OHAA Queensland Inc
PO Box 12213
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4003

The methods approved by the Treasurer and Committee are:

1. Members paying via direct deposit a la Internet banking from their own account with an e-mail sent direct to the treasurer confirming transfer.
2. Members paying via direct deposit into the account, by way of going in to a Bank of Qld branch and making a deposit to the account. Again, notification to the treasurer of the transfer is mandatory, otherwise there will be no way of knowing who did the deposit...
3. Members paying via cheque.

The banking details are:

Bank of Queensland
BSB 124001

Account number 20355175

Account Name: Oral History Association of Australia Qld Division Inc

National Meetings

The following items were discussed at the November National Meeting

1. Membership fees
 - \$45 for individuals
 - \$75 for institutions
 - \$35 for unemployed/concession
 - \$55 – household

Some committee members were concerned that increased fees will turn away members especially in the present economic climate. But on the other hand, maintaining low fees reduces the number of publications. Another idea that was discussed is the future of the annual Journal and a possibility of the electronic version which will allow saving on printing. Any thoughts and ideas on how we can save and thus reduce the fees are welcome. We have another 10 months to decide.

2. Francis Good is retiring from his position of Convener of the annual Journal. A position description was distributed amongst members and by May 2009 it is hope that a new Convener will be appointed.
3. The 2009 National Conference in Tasmania. The program will be on-line in January.

Conferences, Seminars and Workshops



Oral History Association of Australia National Conference

17–20 September 2009 Launceston Tasmania
(Note change of dates)

Call for papers

The Tasmanian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia invites proposals for presentations on the theme:

Islands of Memory: Navigating Personal and Public History

Sub-themes include:

- navigating truth and memory
- navigating through generations
- navigating new technologies

We encourage proposals from people who have worked with oral history in a wide range of environments such as family history and community projects, museums, heritage agencies, academic institutions, radio and television, law courts and performing arts.

Proposals (maximum 200 words) are invited for individual papers, thematic panels, workshops and performances.

CLOSING DATE FOR PROPOSALS: 31 OCTOBER 2008

Proposals should be sent to:

Jill Cassidy
President OHAA (Tas) Inc
Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery
PO Box 403
Launceston Tasmania Australia 7250

Jill.Cassidy@qvmag.tas.gov.au

Legacies 09 Conference
Public Memory Research Centre
February 13-14, 2009
Toowoomba, Australia



The Legacies '09 Conference will be held over two days from the 13-14 February 2009 at the [Downs Club](#), in Toowoomba, Queensland ([map](#)). The conference will be hosted by the [Public Memory Research Centre](#), University of Southern Queensland.

Key speakers include:

- Professor Marilyn Lake, historian from La Trobe University
- Sylvia Lawson, writer, historian and cultural critic.

Papers will be based on the interdisciplinary topic of Public Memory, which could incorporate themes such as (but not restricted to):

- culture, retrieval and revival
- memory and the practice of everyday life
- history, ideology and refashioning the past
- colonialism and its aftermaths
- Indigenous, ethnic and multicultural memories
- public memory and national identities
- memory and myth
- public memory as false consciousness.

As a regional centre for the Darling Downs, Toowoomba is known for its beautiful gardens and parks, as well as its rich sense of heritage, particularly in the built environment. Located in the centre of the city, the conference venue itself is over 100 years old, and features an award-winning wine cellar, established gardens and all the technological requirements for professional and academic conference presentations.

<http://www.usq.edu.au/legacies09/>

The Talk about Town: Urban Lives and Oral Sources in Twentieth Century Australia

27-28 August 2009 at the State Library of Victoria and Melbourne Museum

Sponsored by the State Library of Victoria, the Monash University Institute for Public History, Museum Victoria, the University of Melbourne's School of Historical Studies and Macquarie University's Department of Modern History, and the School of Historical and European Studies, LaTrobe University.

The Talk about Town: Urban Lives and Oral Sources in Twentieth Century Australia invites researchers and professionals working on life in Australian cities since 1900 to come together and reflect on their projects. It hopes to encourage participants to think about the significance of the urban context, whether or not it is the primary focus of their research. In particular, researchers working with personal sources in fields such as oral history, life history and immigration, are encouraged to look at the way that urban settings have shaped the stories they have been told. Postgraduate students and professionals working with history are particularly encouraged to participate.

We are delighted to welcome two distinguished oral and urban historians as keynote speakers.

Alessandro Portelli, Professor of American literature at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza', is the author of a number of influential studies in oral history and popular memory including *The Order Has Already Been Carried Out: History, Memory and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) and *The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (State University of New York Press, 1991). From 2002 to 2008, he served as advisor to the mayor of Rome for the preservation and promotion of the city's historical memory, and is currently co-manager of Rome's House of History and Memory.

Professor Janet McCalman is perhaps the most prominent Australian historian to have worked between urban and oral history. 2009 marks the 25th anniversary of the publication of *Struggletown*, her landmark history of the working class Melbourne suburb of Richmond. *Struggletown* blended these two approaches to the past, telling the history of a generation and a place. Professor McCalman holds joint appointments in the History & Philosophy of Science and in the Centre for Health and Society at the University of Melbourne, as Director of the Johnstone-Need Medical History Unit.

This two day conference will feature our two keynote speakers; followed by parallel sessions; workshops on themes relating to the practice of urban and oral history, led by experts in the field. Additional events will include walking tours of inner Melbourne and a guided tour of 'The Melbourne Story' at Melbourne Museum.

Following the conference, participants are encouraged to submit articles based on their conference presentations for consideration for publication in a special issue of a refereed journal.

Enquiries or proposals for panels, please contact the organising committee via talkabouttown@gmail.com, for further details visit our website at: <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/public-history-institute/conferences/2009-talkabout/index.php>

Persons wishing to present, please send 200 word abstracts to kerrie.alexander@arts.monash.edu.au (closing date 31 December 2008).



International Oral History Association

The International Oral History Association (IOHA) held its Fifteenth International Conference in Guadalajara, “Oral History—A Dialogue With Our Times” in Mexico from the 23rd to the 26th September 2008. It is hoped that a report of some highlights will be available for the next issue of *On Tape*.

Alistair Thomson (Monash University) was the retiring President of IOHA, and the new President is Pilar

Dominguez, who teaches Contemporary Social Movements at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain.

Hosted by the [Czech Oral History Association](#) the International Oral History Association the **Sixteenth International Oral History Conference, "Between Past and Future: Oral History, Memory and Meaning"** will be held in Prague, Czech Republic from 7 to 11 July 2010.

IOHA has a new interactive web-site:
<http://www.iohanet.org>.

The COHA website in
English can be found at:
http://www.oralhistory.cz/index_engl.htm.

Thanks to Francis Good, Editor of Rewind (OHAA Vic. Branch newsletter) for providing a timely reminder of this news.

In Memoriam

Studs Terkel Remembered

Suzanne Mulligan



The world's oral history community mourned the loss of pioneering oral historian Louis “Studs” Terkel in Chicago on 31 October 2008, aged 96. His broadcasting and writing career spanned more than half a century. He is remembered for his recorded interviews with well-known as well as “ordinary” Americans from whom he was able to draw out insightful and fascinating stories.

I was first “introduced” to Studs Terkel during a Master Class conducted by Dean Rehberger and Michael Fegan at the International Oral History Conference in Sydney in July 2006. Dean and Michael told us about Studs’ work and played an excerpt from one of his interviews. They recommended we check out his web site Studs Terkel: Conversations with America – <http://www.studsterkel.org/> At that site you can listen to interviews Studs conducted for many projects including the 1985 Pulitzer prize winning *The Good War – an Oral History of World War II* which features interviews done from the perspective of looking back to those events of 40 years earlier. He coined the term

“guerrilla journalism” to describe his oral history interviews and is widely credited with having oral history recognized as a serious literary and historical form.

He began broadcasting with his own radio program on Chicago’s WMFT station in 1952 and over the next 45 years became a Chicago cultural icon. His radio interviews led to the publication of several books based on those interviews including *Giants of Jazz* 1957 and *Division Street: America* published in 1967 which told the stories of people from all walks of life, providing an insight into a cross-section of American lives. The success of this book led to the publication of *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* in 1970 for which Studs interviewed hundreds of Americans about their Depression experiences. Many of these interviews were featured in his radio program and explored, among other things, how their personal circumstances affected their own value systems.

Other books included *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* 1974; *Talking to*

Myself: A Memoir of My Times 1977; *Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel About the American Obsession* 1992 and *Coming of Age: The Story of Our Century by Those Who’ve Lived It* 1995 which told through interviews, the story of growing old and also race relations in America.

He described his interviewing style as “an exploration, usually an exploration into the past.” with his favourite question being “And what happened then?”

Terkel died with a copy of his new book *P.S.: Further Thoughts From a Lifetime of Listening* 2008 beside his bed. He once said “I don’t have to stay curious, I am curious, about all of it, all the time. ‘Curiosity never killed this cat’ — that’s what I’d like as my epitaph.”

See the following links for more on Studs Terkel:

Google Video “Rocking the Boat”

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1141734559388187113>

Chicago Tribune obituary

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-studs-terkel-dead,0,2321576.story?page=1>

New York Times obituary -

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/01/books/01terkel.html?scp=1&sq=studs&st=cse>

Guardian obituary

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/01/studs-terkel-usa>

Interview with Studs Terkel

http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=80BEAAB2D73EB565

B&W Image Source:

<http://www.studsterkel.org/bio.php>

Projects

150 Sounds of Queensland

~ Re-imagining the State's Cultural and Natural Diversity through Sound ~

Please find attached information about a call for nominations for a project "150 Sounds of Queensland". This is one of the projects selected for the celebration of Queensland's 150th anniversary of statehood (2009) and funded by the Q150, Department of the Premier and Cabinet (www.q150.qld.gov.au). The aim of the project is to compile "150 important sounds of Queensland" through community nomination (individual or group). The sound source can be natural or built environment and from present or past. The key element of the nomination is not only the description of the sound itself but also its significance (social, cultural, ecological/environmental) and conservation strategy either already in place or suggested by the nominee. It is planned that selected sounds will be professionally recorded and become a Queensland Sound Archive.

We hope to have participation from groups and individuals diverse geographical locations, ethnic and language backgrounds, and across generations, so that the outcome will reflect the State's rich social, cultural and environmental profile and history. An attention to sound, we hope, will allow us "re-imagine the State's cultural and natural diversity" in a creative and enjoyable way. The nominations will stay open for 6 months till the end of March 2009. We hope this will allow sufficient time for school and community groups to incorporate this project into their activity

To achieve the widest possible participation, we seek your assistance in distributing this information. We would be grateful if you could distribute this through your website, e-mail network, newsletter, flyer, poster, noticeboard etc. The project details, nomination forms (on-line and PDF) are on the project website: www.ecco.org.au/150sound and the project poster, and nomination forms (PDF) are attached for your information.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Dr Kumi Kato
150Sounds Coordinator
School of Languages & Comparative Cultural Studies (SLCCS, Bld 32)
The University of Queensland, St Lucia Qld 4072
150sound@ecco.org.au



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA



ecco exchanging culture for conservation
~ creativity & diversity for a sustainable future

Education Opportunities

Master of Oral History and Historical Memory *Monash University's School of Historical Studies* *from 2009*

This innovative new postgraduate course, taught by international leaders in the field, integrates the study of oral history and historical memory. Oral history illuminates the lived experience of hidden histories and produces riveting historical documentary in books, radio and television, museum exhibitions and multi-media production. Historical memory is central to the contemporary cultural politics of witnessing, commemoration and reconciliation. Graduates of the Master of Oral History and Historical Memory will be fully prepared to undertake research degrees involving historical memory and may go on to work in the wide range of professions that make significant use of oral history and historical memory, including museums, television, radio and multi-media production, heritage and corporate history, community and family history.

This course is linked to three other innovative, applied Masters courses in: Biography and Life Writing, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and Public History. Core units from each course are offered as electives on the other courses and thus facilitate interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation, for example between oral history and life writing, or oral history and public history. The linked courses offer students a wide range of choice and the opportunity to put together a program that meets their own interests. Joint research seminars introduce students to diverse and complementary research theory and method. Most students will take 'placement' units with partner organisations that develop work experience in a range of applied history contexts, including museums, community history, heritage work, oral history, native title and the history media.

Course structure

Students will complete a total of 72 points of study comprising 48 points at level 4 (two compulsory core units and two elective units), and 24 points at level 5 comprising either a major research project or a research project and Public History Placement (HYM5170). Taught units include:

Recording oral history; theory and practice (HYM4660) – core unit

History & memory: oral history, life stories & commemoration (HYM4200) – core unit

Family history and genealogy (HYM4620/5620)

Genocide and colonialism (HYM4470/5470)

History, biography & autobiography (HYM4900/5900)

History and heritage (HYM4095/5095)

History and the museum (HYM4510)

Holocaust memories (HYM4290/5290)

Local & community history (HYM4820/5820)

Public History Placement (HYM5170)

Reading and writing Australian history (HYM4120/5120)

Reading and writing biography and life stories (HYM4280/5820)

Research methods in biography (HYM4270/5270)

or another elective from the History graduate program.

Not all units are taught each year. The course duration is three semesters full-time. A fast-track option (in which a research project is completed over the summer period) reduces Master's study to one year full-time or two year part time. Student may enter mid-year. Students can exit with a Graduate Certificate of Arts (with 24 points) or a Graduate Diploma in Oral History and Historical Memory (48 points).

Teaching team

Professor Alistair Thomson (course convener) came to Monash in late 2007 from the University of Sussex where he established an international reputation for teaching and research in the fields of oral history and life history research, co-edited the British journal *Oral History* from 1990-2007, and was elected President of the International Oral History Association. Al's oral history books – *Anzac Memories* (Oxford University Press, 1994), *Ten Pound Poms* (Manchester University Press, 2005) and *The Oral History Reader* (Routledge, 1998 and 2006) have pioneered new approaches to memory and oral history.

Professor Bain Attwood's principal interests are Australian and New Zealand indigenous history, cross-cultural history, and history and memory. He is one of the leading scholars in the field of Australian Aboriginal history. Bain's publications about historical memory include *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand*, (Allen & Unwin, 2001) and *Telling the Truth about Aboriginal History* (Allen & Unwin, 2005)

Associate Professor Mark Baker is the recently appointed Director of the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation. Mark is the author of the prize-winning book about Holocaust memory, *The Fiftieth Gate* (Harper Collins, 1995) and has taught widely in the area of genocide studies.

Professor Barbara Caine has published extensively in women's history, the history of feminism and biography including, most recently, *Bombay to Bloomsbury. A Biography of the Stracheys* (Oxford University Press, 2005). She is writing a book on *History and Biography* for the Palgrave MacMillan series on History and Theory.

Dr Seamus O'Hanlon is an urban historian who has worked across several fields of public history. His publications include *Together Apart; boarding house, hostel and flat life in prewar Melbourne*, (ASP, 2002) and *Go!: Melbourne in the Sixties* (Circa, 2005).

Entry requirements

The completion of a Bachelor's degree in a relevant discipline area (eg. History, Anthropology, Sociology, Social Psychology) with at least a 70% average in the final year, or a Bachelor's degree with demonstrable professional experience (three years in a relevant field or relevant publications), or with the permission of the course coordinator. Credit may be granted for prior learning.

A limited number of Commonwealth Supported Places (HECs) are available for this course. For application and fee details contact the administrative officer Liisa Williams listed below.

Graduate culture - a new venue in a vibrant city

From 2009 the four linked History graduate courses will be formally linked as part of a new History Graduate Course Centre at the Monash Caulfield campus. Graduate course staff and students will enjoy the social and intellectual experience of learning in a supportive and inter-disciplinary

environment. History graduate course teaching will take place at Caulfield on Monday to Thursday late afternoon and evenings and students will be encouraged to study and socialise with students and staff from the different courses, and to develop a collective history graduate student identity. History graduate courses recruit both full time and part time students, including many students who combine study with work and other commitments. For these students, the Caulfield campus, with its central position and excellent public transport links, is readily accessible, and advance timetabling within afternoon-evening teaching slots will help students to plan their study to fit in with busy lives.

Graduate students will also have ready access to Melbourne's rich array of cultural and historical institutions, including the State Library of Victoria, the Melbourne Museum and Immigration Museum, the Jewish Holocaust Museum and Research Centre, the National Sports Museum, the National Gallery of Victoria and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

Further information

Course convener: Professor Alistair Thomson, School of Historical Studies, Monash University, Melbourne 3800, Australia; phone 03-99059785; email Alistair.Thomson@arts.monash.edu.au

Administrative officer: Liisa Williams, phone 03-99052199; email Liisa.Williams@arts.monash.edu.au

For further details about the Monash history graduate courses, see the School of Historical Studies website (<http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/historical-studies/pgrad/coursework/>).

OHAA Journal No. 31 2009 Islands of Memory

Contributions are invited from Australia and overseas for publication in the 2009 OHAA Journal.

Contributions are invited in the following 3 categories:

A. Articles on a range of themes found in the full *Call for Contributions* on the OHAA national web-site: <http://www.ohaa.net.au> (limit: 5,500 words)

B. Project reports: articles describing specific projects, the information gained through them, and principal outcomes or practice issues identified in the process. (limit: 4,000 words)

C. Reviews of books and other publications in Australia or elsewhere of interest to the oral history community (limit: 1,500 words).

This may include reviews of static or internet-available exhibitions, or any projects presented for a public audience. Photographs, drawings and other illustrations are particularly welcome, and may be offered for any of the above categories of contribution.

Deadline for submissions: **30 April 2009**

Forward to: Dr Jan Gothard

General Editor, *OHAA Journal*, 2008

Email: j.gothard@murdoch.edu.au

All submissions must conform to the requirements detailed in the 'Information for Contributors to *OHAA Journal* document, which is available on the OHAA web-site:

<http://www.ohaa.net.au> or contact Jan Gothard at the above email address.

Peer Review

If requested by authors, papers offered for publication in the OHAA Journal may be submitted to the Editorial Board for academic

peer-review. Papers for peer-review should be forwarded to the Editor for referral to the Board.

Thanks to Francis Good, Editor of Rewind (OHAA Vic. Branch newsletter) for providing a timely reminder of this news.

Reviews

December Oral History Workshops

Karen Barrett

In December 2008, the Association held 4 workshops, covering Oral History Basics, Editing, Application and Digital Recording. I was lucky enough to attend two of those workshops: Editing and Digital Recording.

Firstly, I have to say, I don't know which was better: the workshops or the conversations had with other participants. To everyone who joined me in the workshops, thank you for helping to make it such an enjoyable experience.

Editing

The workshop on Editing was run by Sue Pechey who has been in 'the business' some 30 years. Her workshop, split into two sessions on separate weekends, was aimed at developing editing skills applicable to oral history transcripts. Why the separate weekends? She gave us homework! We were all required to complete our homework and bring it in to the second session to discuss.

The first session involved the making of a transcript and touched on copyright, non-verbals, mannerisms, reasoning and swearing. We also talked about the idea of retaining the speaker's voice, punctuation and how to pick the dross and know when to remove it. What I particularly enjoyed about the workshops was the style in which Sue teaches. Sue encourages lively discussion in the workshops, drawing from the experiences of the participants. She doesn't claim to be an expert, rather a lifelong student.

After a week, we were back for our second session. Having taken a transcript home, we were expected to work on it in the intervening week but unfortunately, I hadn't done my homework. Bad Karen! No matter, there were plenty who had, so we forged ahead, looking at how others treated the transcript, the problems and the outcome.

I came away from the workshop with a great deal of information. Sue expanded my knowledge and provided a strong framework for future work. Without doubt, one of the best things I learnt was that every transcript is different; but if you can find the voice, it's clear sailing.



Digital Recording

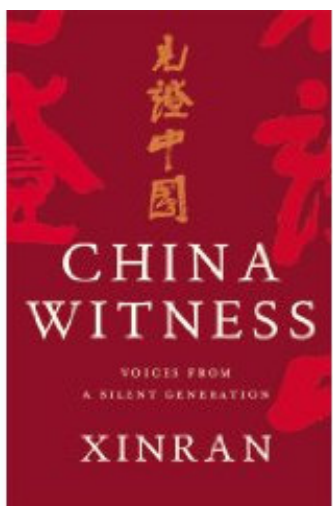
The second workshop I attended was by Peter Kolomitsev. I first met Peter at the 2007 Conference and then cornered him at the cocktail party afterwards to talk digitisation. From that conversation I pushed to have him involved in digitising oral histories used in the exhibition here at the Main Roads Heritage Centre. Why? Because for the first time, since trying to contract a company to look at our histories, I was finally talking to someone who didn't go "Huh?" upon mentioning DAT tapes....or alternatively said..."hmm, it'll cost you". Peter was fair in his quotes and even though he was based in South Australia, while I'm in Toowoomba, he was able to provide 'draft' versions of the finished product. I hope to use his services in the future for the digitisation of the entire collection...provided he doesn't retire before I get the funds to do so.

When I heard he was presenting this workshop I jumped at the chance to attend and boy, am I glad I did. Peter was able to set me straight on some "rookie" assumptions I'd made and was able to provide a lot of material about the whys of things (as in, why record at the highest possible quality....and no, not just because it sounds better) as well as the how to use the Fostex FR2-LE. I think the only drawback to the whole thing was that it wasn't enough time. Should we repeat this workshop in the future (and I certainly hope we do), I'd be recommending more of Peter's workshop.

I found them an excellent reality check for aspiring oral historians; it's back to the drawing board.

I found the workshops to be very informative, practical and interactive. They provided me with a lot of practical knowledge and insight which I hope to apply for the benefit of the DDF oral history project. I was also pleased to make contact and share ideas with other workshop attendees who are engaged in or embarking upon oral history projects. I would recommend these workshops to anyone embarking upon an oral history project!

All sessions were very useful and each one provided something new to think about as well as very practical tips on how we might tackle our project.



**China Witness
by Xinran**

**Reviewed by
Suzanne Mulligan**

This book, subtitled – *Voices from a Silent Generation*, tells through oral history accounts, the story of China's history through the 20th century. Born in China, Xinran, a journalist and writer now based in England, conducted extensive background research prior to visiting China to record the interviews. She travelled extensively around China, to remote corners of the country as well to the cities and towns. She wanted to record "the emotional responses to the dramatic changes of the last century"¹ She was told that many Chinese would be reluctant to open up and tell the truth about their lives as

¹ p. 1

they were cautious about exposing themselves, following a lifetime of being careful about what they said. Xinran decided it was too important to be discouraged by the possibility that the truth would not emerge, as “China’s younger generations are losing touch with the earlier generations’ struggles for national dignity.”² The present generation take their lives for granted and many do not know or understand the struggles that previous generations endured to bring about the life they enjoy today.

Over twenty years, Xinran compiled a list of 50 people she had encountered who had interesting stories and then culled this down to 20 people, after eliminating some well known people who would have their story told in another arena. She concluded “it would be of greater historical value to record the stories of ordinary people, of people who would otherwise lack the fame, money and rank to get their equally astonishing experiences heard.”³ The interviewees averaged in their 70s with the oldest being 97 so there was a sense of urgency to get these interviews done. She maintained some flexibility as she interviewed some she encountered that were not on her list.

Each chapter is devoted to an interviewee, beginning with the name and a photograph, then a short summary of the interviewee’s life. Then before we read the interview, Xinran contextualises the story by providing extensive background to the historical events that touch the interviewee and shows the interviewee’s place in those events. In her first interview with Yao Popo, the Medicine Woman of Xingyi, Xinran says “I’d like to hear about your life.” Yao Popo immediately dismisses her request as she believes she has nothing of consequence to tell and nobody wants to hear anyway. However, when Xinran persisted and said she was not leaving till she had heard her story, she relented and began to speak.

While conducting her interviews, some painful memories were unearthed. However, “many of them manage to forgive the terrible things that history has done to them, the callous, unjust treatment they have received at the hands of the

Party But while we should commend their refusal to pass the bitterness of their tragedies down through the generations, we still need to commemorate their suffering.”⁴

Xinran had some interesting comments about the process of collecting oral histories. For example, when interviewing Mr Lin in the second chapter, he requested they meet outside his home. “I agreed, as sometimes overfamiliar surroundings and associations can inhibit the process of remembering.”⁵ She begins the interview by asking Mr Lin to describe his personality and what shaped it. As Xinran is Chinese, the interviewees felt more comfortable “than they would have been with the same questions coming from a foreign face as soon as somebody opens the gates of their hearts a great river of stories flows out.”⁶

Many of the people of the generation interviewed carried a huge burden of guilt because of the treatment of their children. This was emotionally expressed during several of the interviews. “Now my children think badly of me because they had no chance to go to school, they missed out because of me...”⁷

These people were building a nation and did not have the time to devote to their children, who were sent to grandparents and others to be cared for. “Their children had become the victims of their parents’ devotion to duty, their innocent years of childhood sacrificed on the altar of politics.”⁸

Xinran had many Chinese university students helping her with the oral history project and these students learned a great deal about their own history and culture from the experience. They questioned why more attention had not been paid to the interviewees’ stories and “How come we didn’t know about these

² p. 2

³ p. 3

⁴ p. 31

⁵ p.32

⁶ p. 47

⁷ p. 120

⁸ p. 121

things? The stories of our grandfathers and grandmothers are doors that will close and be destroyed one day soon: how many of them have been passed on to their children and grandchildren?"⁹

Xinran's book is a valuable contribution to the history of China in the 20th century particularly for the young people of China as they "listen" to the voices of previous generations. For those outside China, this book gives a new perspective on the struggle of the Chinese people.

Xinran. 2008. *China Witness – Voices From A Silent Generation*. Great Britain. Chatto & Windus.

The Web

Oral History Around The World

[Take an oral history from a family member](#)

Lawrence Journal World, KS - Jan 11, 2009

By Andy Hyland Pattie Johnston of the Lawrence Public Library suggests some questions to ask family members while conducting an **oral history**. ...

• [Build your own rink](#)

The Post-Standard - Syracuse.com, NY - 15 hours ago

I'm looking at a copy of "Memories: A Collection of **Oral History** Stories from the Town of Brookfield." This book, the latest in a series, is "recorded, ...

[Lessons from the 'ancient one': the conflict between tradition ...](#)

Western Front, WA - 17 hours ago

14 Consider Native American **oral history**, with its rich and powerful stories, equally legitimate as empirical scientific evidence in determining the events ...

[George W. Bush's Farewell Newser](#)

Reader's Digest, NY - 12 hours ago

You can see the latest evidence of that phenomenon in Vanity Fair magazine's **oral history** of the Bush years, which is out now. I believe this link will let ...

[Rez Issues and Forum: Geronimo, Hero or Killer?](#)

Arizona Silver Belt, AZ - 3 hours ago

Chiricahua **oral history** also tells how in April of 1882 a large band of them were surrounded by Mexican forces but during the night the whole group sneaked ...

[StoryCorps, the National Oral History Project, Partners With San ...](#)

International Business Times, NY - Jan 5, 2009

StoryCorps is the largest multi-year **oral history** project ever undertaken. Since its launch in October 2003, StoryCorps' has collected over 23000 stories in ...

[StoryCorps, the National Oral History Project, Partners With San ...](#) PR Newswire (press release)

[Ordinary people talking: StoryCorps captures heartfelt moments in time](#) New Haven Register (subscription)

⁹ p. 400

Web Sites

Vermont Folklife Center Archive: Field Research Guides. In an effort to provide useful information to fieldworkers, students, community scholars, and others interested in cultural documentation, ethnography and oral history, the Vermont Folklife Center archive provides online access to a series of research guides:

<http://www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/archive/archive-fieldguides.html>

Living Stories: a UK site where you can read and hear the stories of people telling their stories of haemophilia and HIV

<http://www.livingstories.org.uk/>

When History gets Personal: Post-War Britain is about to come dramatically to life in a major TV history by Andrew Marr. The Magazine is teaming up with him to compile a users' history - written, photographed and filmed by you. Andrew explains why personal history matters.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/6658705.stm>

Columbia University Libraries: Oral History Research Office shows a number of interesting oral history projects that are underway.

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/oral/>

The Washington University School of Medicine Oral History Project is an ongoing series of recorded interviews and transcripts dating from 1959. The project was envisioned to capture and preserve first person accounts and reflections on the history of the medical school, medical practice in St. Louis, and developments in the field of medicine. Interview subjects include faculty, staff and alumni of the School of Medicine, as well as family members, friends and others associated with Washington University. Users can listen to audio recordings or read transcripts of the interviews, and view images of the oral history subjects.

<http://beckerexhibits.wustl.edu/oral/index.html>

StoryCorps: the conversation of a lifetime. Our mission is to honour and celebrate one another's lives through listening. Since 2003, almost 30,000 everyday people have shared life stories with family and friends in our StoryBooths. Each conversation is recorded on a free CD to share, and is preserved at the Library of Congress. Millions listen to our broadcasts on public radio and the web. StoryCorps is the largest oral history project of its kind.

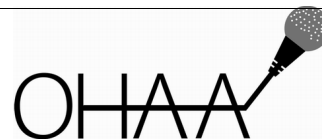
<http://www.storycorps.net/>

Digital Audio Best Practices has a guide for those undertaking converting their analogue collections to digital. Although it's a North American site, most of the information will help us.

http://www.cdphheritage.org/digital/audio/documents/cdp_dabpv2_1.pdf

MemoryArchive: a site where people can submit their own stories.

<http://www.memoryarchive.org/en/MemoryArchive>



Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA)
ABN 16 832 377 060

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 2008 to 30 June 2009) (please tick the appropriate box)

Individuals \$35

Institutions \$55

Students, Pensioners, unemployed \$25

Household \$45

I wish to join OHAA (please tick) _____

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