



Oral History Association of Australia

On Tape

Volume 9, No.2

Editor: Karen L. Barrett

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Letter from the Editor

Hello Everyone!

Well, Easter is almost upon us; where on earth has the time gone?

The plan to utilise the webpage developed for the Conference into our own OHAA (QLD) website is finally underway. The Committee have decided upon a plan of action and have signed with a Brisbane company to develop a website. Finalisation should occur by the next Newsletter so look out for our grand opening soon. If anyone has anything they would like us to keep in mind with regard to the proposed website, please let me know. I cannot promise that all your suggestions will make it to the final version of the site, but I do promise to listen to all suggestions.

In this issue, look out for opportunities to attend conferences and workshops and apply for grants. Also, the Committee has outlined the role members can play as community liaison officers. Loan details of our new recording equipment are also available.

There are many members who have not still paid their 2008-2009 dues. If the Treasurer does not receive your payment this will be the last Newsletter you receive and you will not receive the 2009 Journal.

We welcome two new members. Malcolm Campbell joined after attending one of our workshops and Gillian Colclough, who may/may not have joined after a suggestion from yours truly. Gillian recently presented at the 2009 Public Memory Research Centre Conference and I've twisted her arm into

writing a review of the conference as well a paper. Any mistakes with regard to formatting are my own.

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.

Apologies for the lack of variety in this issue, however I'm always on the lookout for suggestions and submissions. This includes anything you find on the web, or an interstate Newsletter. Please do not assume that I've seen it. Feel free to email me regarding Website/Newsletter suggestions at any time.

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.

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

News



Gambling Community Benefit Fund

I am pleased to announce the OHAA Committee has now finalised the Loan Agreement for the lending of the recording equipment to members. The equipment may be collected from two points – in Brisbane City or Ipswich, or can be posted. Please email Suzanne Mulligan to make a booking to use the equipment. Below are descriptions of Kit 1 (audio equipment) and Kit 3 (video equipment). (Kit 2 is the same as Kit 1)

A copy of the Loan Agreement is available from Suzanne Mulligan.

Recording Kit 1:



- Fostex FR2-LE Field Memory Recorder
- Headphones SEN-EH150, closed, dynamic
- Lapel microphone AKG C417, omnidirectional
- Microphone AT804, dynamic, handheld
- Microphone stand KM-23 105-500-55
- Bag, Tamrac Aero 50
- Memory card, Sandisk 2GB Ultimate
- Microphone lead
- Microphone cable Proel Bulk 250LU6 (for lapel microphone – not shown on the picture)



Recording Kit 3:

- Sony Camera Digital HDD Memory Hybrid 1080
- Sony High Capacity ACCY Kit for Handycam
- Sony Tripod
- Bag, Tamrac Aero 50

Website! Full Speed Ahead

As previously mentioned, website production is underway. After accepting a number of quotes for consideration, the Committee decided to accept the quote from Brisbane Company, Teckogecko. You can find their website here:

www.teckogecko.com.au

Overdue payment of OHAA membership fees

There are many members who have not still paid their 2008-2009 dues. Please note, that if the Treasurer does not receive either your payment (or an email stating your intent to pay) your name will be removed from the membership list.

This would then be the last Newsletter you receive and you will not receive the 2008 Journal.

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

Bursary 2009 OHAA National Conference 17-20 September, Launceston, Tasmania

One of the Committee's main functions is to provide support to you in your work in the field of Oral History.

To that end, the Committee would like to offer three bursaries of \$500 to help members attend the 2009 National Oral History Conference being held in Tasmania from Sept (17-20).

We would like to stress that at least one of the bursaries will be allocated to a regional member as part of our continued endeavours to provide adequate support to all areas of Queensland.

To be eligible for the Bursary, please provide the OHAA – Queensland Committee with the following information:

1. Half a page (no more than 250 words) about yourself indicating your involvement and/or achievements in oral history
2. Overview of your current oral history project
3. Community benefit: describe how your project will benefit the community (a sentence or two)
4. Describe how your project will enhance the development of oral history in our state (a sentence or two)
5. How are you going to acknowledge the OHAA – Queensland chapter?
6. Did you seek funds anywhere else?

If your application is successful you will be also required to contribute an article about the conference to our Newsletter or make a presentation on our AGM. The article should be submitted no later than two months after the conference.

Although the number of bursaries are limited we strongly encourage you to apply.

Please, send your applications to our Secretary, Suzanne Mulligan, on mulligan@gil.com.au no later than 30 May 2009. Applications from unfinancial members will not be accepted.

Good Luck!

Conferences, Seminars and Workshops

Constructing the Past

Australian Historical Association Conference
Sunshine Coast, 30 June–3 July 2009



The 2009 Australian Historical Association's conference will be held at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. The conference theme is 'Constructing the past', encouraging reflection on the dynamic connections between the past and the present; the roles of historians and others engaged in the practice and presentation of history; and the ways in which individuals, organisations and communities have sought to preserve or change their societies, yearned for a lost past or imagined a different future.

<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>



Islands of Memory

Oral History Association of Australia
16th National Conference
17-20 September 2009
Launceston Tasmania

Navigating Personal and Public History

The 16th OHAA National Conference with 55 speakers will be held in Launceston 17–20 September 2009.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Richard Whiteing, research manager/archivist, Robben Island Museum, South Africa
Remembering Nelson Mandela on Robben Island

MAJOR SPEAKERS

Alan Harris Stein, archival oral historian, Chicago State University
Rocking the boat: Studs Terkel's 20th century

Gwenda Beed Davey, AM, Research Fellow, Deakin University
Fish Trout, You're Out: sound recordings of childhood in NLA's Oral History and Folklore Section

Christobel Mattingley, AM, author, DUnivSA
A country postmistress, women artists, Aboriginal people, a tin miner, a Lancaster pilot and a refugee - publishing their stories

TOPICS INCLUDE:

Greek 'aliens' and Yolngu people in WWII
Life and social relationships in the 1930s depression
Indigenous people and place
Memories of migrant hostels and Displaced Persons
Oral history and community
Response to the Apology
From campfire to computer
The Anzac myth and the Vietnam War

Oral history in the workplace
Fact v fiction in oral history
Family photographs from late raj India
Oral history and the reconciliation process
Issues with interviewing
Giving voice to Down syndrome
Oral history on the web
Memories of Hazara refugees

EARLYBIRD REGISTRATION closes June 30 – earlybird fee for members \$295

Further information: www.qvmag.tas.gov.au/oralhistoryconference

Enquiries: OHAA@qvmag.tas.gov.au

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

OHAA (Tas) gratefully acknowledges the support of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, the Launceston City Council and the University of Tasmania.

**Prairie Centre for the Ukrainian Heritage, St. Thomas More College
University of Saskatchewan, Canada
The Kowalsky Eastern Ukrainian Institute
Kharkiv V. N. Karazin National University, Ukraine
Ukrainian Oral History Association
Announce
International Scholarly Symposium**

**“IN SEARCH OF VOICE: ORAL HISTORY AS THEORY, METHOD, AND
SOURCE”
Kharkiv, Ukraine, 11-12 December 2009**

The two-day conference will begin with plenary sessions by leading specialists in the field of oral history from Canada, Germany, Russia and Ukraine. Papers are invited for three round tables to be held during the second day of the symposium:

Institutionalisation of oral historical research. In this round table presentations will deal with the organization of research activities in already existing centers of oral historical research.

Oral history as a source. Papers presented in this round table will deal with methods of organizing and preserving oral historical data, archiving the collected material, transcribing interviews as well as with general principles of collection development.

Research dissemination. The presentations in this round table will deal with questions of methods and principles of presenting, publishing, and exhibiting oral history projects. The presenters are invited to examine from this perspective their own published interview collections, research monographs, video and audio projects, exhibits and websites they created on the basis of oral historical research.

The prospective presenters are invited to submit their paper proposals (not exceeding 2,000 words, in Ukrainian or English) as well as personal information (full name, electronic address, postal address, telephone numbers, academic credentials, institutional affiliation, scholarly interests) to the email addresses:

info.uoha@gmail.com

natalia.khanenkofriesen@stmcollege.ca

Proposal **deadline** is April 15, 2009, after which the organizers will inform you about the status of your submission. Presenters whose papers will be accepted will submit the final version of their paper by November 12, 2009. The best papers, in which the authors successfully employ both theoretical and empirical material, will be considered for the inclusion in the special post-Symposium collection currently considered by the conference organizers for publication.

Meals and accommodations will be provided by the symposium. In some cases, the organizing committee may consider partial or full reimbursement of travel expenses within Ukraine.

For further questions please contact conference organizing committee:

Gelinada Grinchenko,

Associate Professor of the Department of Ukrainian Studies,
Kharkiv V. N. Karazin National University, Ukraine

gelinada.grinchenko@gmail.com

Natalia Khanenko-Friesen,

Associate Professor of Anthropology
St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan, Canada

natalia.khanenkofriesen@gmail.com



International Oral History Association

Between Past and Future: Oral History, Memory and Meaning

XVI. International Oral History Conference

Prague, Czech Republic

Clarion Congress Hotel Prague

7 – 11 July, 2010

CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers are invited from around the world for contributions to the XVIth International Oral History Conference hosted by the International Oral History Association in collaboration with the Czech Oral History Association and the Institute of Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic.

This year our attention will focus on finding and making meaning of the past and human identity through oral history. We will focus on number of research fields where oral history can contribute to better understanding not only of our past but our lives in general. Also, for the first time our conference will take place in an ex-totalitarian country. This enables us to analyse the specific role of oral history research in societies where other, especially official records about the past have been submitted to censorship or have been discarded.

We encourage scholars all around the world and all those who have worked with oral history in a wide range of settings such as museums, heritage agencies, academic institutions, law courts, radio and television, performing arts and community projects to participate in XVI International Oral History Conference in Prague, Czech Republic.

PROPOSALS

Proposals may be for a conference paper or a thematic panel. Only those proposals clearly focused on oral history will be given consideration. Proposals will be evaluated according to their oral history focus, methodological and theoretical significance and relevance to the conference theme and sub-themes.

Individual papers - these will be grouped by the conference organizers into panels or workshops with papers which have a similar focus

Thematic panels - proposals for a thematic panel should contain no more than four presenters, representing different countries

During the conference **Special Interest Groups** will take place. These network sessions are intended for oral historians to meet, establish contacts, share resources and ideas. The places and times of SIGs will be announced in the programme of the conference. Suggestions and offers about possible themes are invited (please contact the local organisers).

Master classes led by internationally recognized oral history scholars and practitioners will be held before the Conference. To apply to these paid classes or workshops, please follow the Master Classes link at our website.

PROPOSAL SPECIFICATIONS

Please submit a 300-word maximum proposal summarizing your presentation, via the Conference Website: www.ioha2010prague.com

Proposals (and subsequent papers) must be written in English or Spanish.

You will also be requested to supply the following information:

- **Name**
- **Institutional or Academic Affiliation (not compulsory)**
- **Postal Address**
- **Email Address**
- **Telephone and Fax numbers**
- **Theme/s for your proposal**
- **Indication if the proposal is an individual paper or a thematic panel**

Deadline for proposals: 10 July 2009

Presenters will be required to send their final paper in idiomatic English or Spanish, with a summary in both languages. Summaries will be published in the conference Book of Abstracts. Translations should be of publishable quality, preferably written or reviewed by a native speaker or professional translator in that language. The Organizing Committee will notify acceptance or rejection of proposals by **October 31, 2009**.

The Conference will allow as much as possible to the conference audiences to hear the voices of narrators and will provide all the necessary technical equipment.

THEMES

1. Memories of violence, war and totalitarianism. The persecuted, civil rights, trauma and forgetting
2. Memory and Politics: Experiences of political participation
3. Islands of Freedom: The role of subculture, folklore and oral traditions in society. Alternative culture, music, dance and identity.
4. Memories of Family: Motherhood, fatherhood and generational exchange
5. Migrations: Exile, migratory movements, diaspora and the search of identity
6. The World of Work: Memories and experiences. Gender and the perception of labour
7. Gender/ing memories and the making of sexual identities. Oral Histories of gays and lesbians.
8. Health and Healthcare: health centres, the elderly and disabled; health workers
9. Ecology and Disasters: Environmental issues, natural heritage and cultural change
10. Sharing/Passing on Beliefs: Religion and oral traditions
11. Organizing Oral History: Institutions, archives, museums, organizations and grassroots groups.
12. Methodological, archival and technological issues Theory and Method in Oral History: Legal and ethical issues.
13. Teaching Oral History: Experiences in formal and informal education
14. Oral History and the Media

The Conference website (www.ioha2010prague.com) and online-registration system will be launched at the beginning of March, 2009.

TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIPS

The International Oral History Association (IOHA) has a small Travel Scholarship Fund aimed at providing partial financial support for travel to and/or accommodations at the Conference, particularly for those participants from developing countries. Unfortunately, the fund is small so only a part of the costs can be covered. Therefore we suggest the potential applicants to start their fundraising at the same time of sending in their paper proposal. All IOHA Scholarship applicants will be asked to explain from where else they expect funding.

To be eligible for a travel scholarship, candidates must first have their paper proposals accepted. To receive a scholarship, finalists must submit their final paper by the published deadline.

Related information ON IOHA Scholarship and application forms will be available on the IOHA Website (<http://www.iohanet.org/index.html>) from May 2009.

DEADLINES

DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS	10 JULY 2009
Acceptance or rejection of proposals	By 31 October 2009
Receipt of papers for publication on conference CD-Rom	By 28 February 2010

DEADLINE ACCEPTANCE SHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS	30 NOVEMBER 2009
Notification of award	By 5 December 2009

CONTACTS

If you have questions or would like advice from an IOHA Council member about a conference proposal, you may contact your regional representative as follows:

Oceania: Megan Hutching (New Zealand) - meganhutching@hotmail.com

To contact the Conference organizers in Prague, please email or write to:

Pavel Mücke

mucke@usd.cas.cz

Oral History Center

Institute of Contemporary History

Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

Vlašská 9

118 40 Praha (Prague)

Czech Republic

Reviews

Legacies 09 Conference

Toowoomba, February 12-14 2009

Gillian Colclough



Facilitated by the University of Southern Queensland's Public Memory Research Centre, the Legacies 09 conference in Toowoomba itself produced many memorable moments. To begin with, the late nineteenth century venue – The Downs Club – in central Toowoomba provided an ambient setting for a conference with themes that encompassed the many dimensions of public memory. The conference began with recognition of the country's traditional owners and a warm welcome from local Elder Brian Tobane. Respected and erudite historian Marilyn Lake followed with a paper titled 'Australia: Pioneering Democracy or Military Nation?', setting standards of scholarship and oratory that were followed and matched by speakers from Queensland, other parts of Australia and overseas over the next two days.

A personal highlight was the dialogue between USQ's Peter Goodall, and writer Sylvia Lawson. "This wild democracy": Retrieving May '68" was a vibrant presentation that moved freely between Peter's and Sylvia's individual experiences of the time concerned and Sylvia's work. It held particular significance for oral history or public story-telling that involves elderly people: guided by prearranged points of interest, Peter and Sylvia worked through her memories so smoothly that Sylvia was able to keep to her various topics and still deliver engaging and entertaining reminiscences without any of the hesitation or tangents that one might expect of an older person. Then again, Sylvia is unique, and the room was practically still throughout the session.

The conference ended with a splendid dinner nearby at Gip's Restaurant, made all the more special by Russell Bauer's tribute to the late Peter Rorke OAM in a delightful pre-dinner performance. The collegiality seen at the dinner served to remind all of us present of the benefits of a small or regional conference: in the relaxed environment, new friends were made, professional contacts secured and a feeling of camaraderie was present throughout. My only criticism is that the conference so aptly highlighted the talent and scholarship of those present that it merited publication. Perhaps next time: the organisers are apparently considering making the Legacies conferences an annual event.

Education Opportunities

Creative Industries Faculty, QUT, 2009 Continuing Professional Education and Short Courses in **Digital Storytelling**

Digital Storytelling is a powerful means for enabling communication and social participation. Ordinary people work with expert creative practitioners to create first person narratives for a wide and growing range of purposes, including community building, cultural engagement, brand identification, education, and public communication. This form of co-creative media takes advantage of newly accessible technologies but is based in the ancient and universal tradition of storytelling.

A digital story usually combines 15-30 still images and a recorded script of 100-250 words to create an original personal digital story in the form of a 2-3 minute digital video. Creative Industries Faculty researchers at QUT have an internationally recognized track record in adapting Digital Storytelling to a variety of contexts and purposes including poverty reduction, public history, and youth engagement. From 2009 this expertise is made available to the wider community through Continuing Professional Education courses.

2009 Schedule

CPE units	Dates	Mode
CPE 1	7 April, 14-17 April	Intensive workshop consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour introduction on the evening of 7 April • Workshop 14-17 April (9am-1pm daily) • Seminar program 14-17 April (2-4pm daily – for academic credit option only) • Screening of stories on the evening of 17 April • Additional one-on-one consultation by appointment for academic credit option only – see study level options below.
CPE 2	11 June, 23-26 June	Intensive workshop consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour introduction on the evening of 11 June • Workshop 23-26 June (9am-1pm daily) • Seminar program 23-26 June (2-4pm daily – for academic credit option only) • Screening of stories on the evening of 26 June • Additional one-on-one consultation by appointment for academic credit option only – see study level options below.
CPE 3	10 Nov, 16-27 Nov.	Evening program consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour introduction on the evening of 10 Nov • Workshop on 16, 18, 24, 26 Nov (5-8pm) • Seminar program 17, 19, 25, 27 Nov (5-7pm – for academic credit option only) • Screening of stories 27 Nov 7pm • Additional one-on-one consultation by appointment for academic credit option only – see study level options below.

In addition to the scheduled workshops, it is possible for additional workshops to be delivered off-campus and customized to address specific professional, community, cultural or commercial objectives of host organizations.

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.

Papers

Musings on Oral History

Gillian Colclough

Although more an oral history analyst than oral historian, I have been thinking about the relationship between facilitator or recorder and narrator in oral history. Many others have done similarly – discussions about objectivity and the nature of relationships within the oral history environment have been extensive and decisive. But oral historians nonetheless are restricted by temporality no matter how informed their approach, and I wonder if we might need to pay more heed to the ways that ideas can shift over years and decades so that our objectivity becomes clearer to those who hear or read our work later. This should be particularly so when we deal with the elderly and especially when they address socially sensitive subjects.

I base these thoughts on two personal encounters: one in the 1990s, and my more recent analysis of a collection of interviews with elderly women made around the 1980s for the North Queensland Oral History Project (NQOHP).¹ I suggest that personalities, age and semantic confusion contributed to the ways in which socially sensitive material was heard and that these effects may

¹ North Queensland Oral History Project, James Cook University, Townsville

become more salient as we begin to review oral histories collected over the past decades. While it may not be possible to achieve complete cultural consensus between narrator and oral history facilitator, it remains as important as ever to recognise the influences that oral historians may have upon the final product of their interactions. After a quarter of a century, a significant body of work and theory is available for methodological analysis, and in this paper I consider some ideas developed for specific environments and clients, and propose that specialist approaches may have broader applications.

This story begins in West Australia in the 1990s, when as a mature woman I set out to write a first year tertiary essay on Aboriginal spirituality. Through a series of circumstances, I ended up in the lounge-room of Betty, a Noongar (or Nyungar) woman in her seventies who had made notes about what I should know, based on stories handed to her by her mother, grandmother and other old women.² She was keen to talk: and before long, her stories turned to sex.

That shift caused almost instant discomfort on my part – should I be hearing this sort of thing, I asked; should these stories not be told to an Aboriginal historian? The answer was firmly negative – Aboriginal historians, she said, did not want to hear; her own daughters did not want to hear. This ‘political correctness thing’ had Aborigines everywhere trying to pretend that they were civilised before the white invasion, when in fact, she argued, life had been difficult and often brutal for her forebears, particularly the girls and women.³ The important thing was for someone to tell the truth before it was all forgotten. A keen gatherer of stories herself, Betty wanted her story told and on record. I suggested an anthropologist, but she was not interested. We proceeded, with me writing notes.⁴

The process was an uneasy one on my part, and I suspect that I wriggled in my chair far too often despite being from a generation of Anglo women who were supposedly one of the most liberated for many years. My discomfort at times placed Betty in the position of facilitating her own stories, for she paused occasionally to ask if I needed to stop for a while. The truth was that like her own daughters and peers, I did not want to hear her stories either – but she insisted they be told, and often waited while I made notes before resuming her stories about pre-white contact life for a Noongar female. It is important also that these stories exposed another problem, more generational than cultural: I simply did not know some of her idiom.

This aspect of the story-telling and hearing process was emphasised when I later relayed parts of the stories to my mother, obtained new meaning and realised that regardless of their different ancestry, the two shared a language of 1930s and 1940s experience to which I might have been quite deaf. My generation had developed vastly different jargon; there was much that I would have missed. Consequently, there were three difficulties at play in my interactions with Betty: my discomfort with what she was saying, my lack of connection with Noongar culture and my inability to grasp all of the cadences of her generational language.

The latter insights returned to hover in the background during my PhD research, as I worked through many hours of NQOHP recordings and once again encountered socially sensitive content in the tales of old women as I searched for stories from white women who reached adulthood before or during the 1920s.⁵ In terms of detail, these tales were incomparable to Betty’s and by present

² This generally refers to the indigenous people of South-West Australia, as preferred by them. However, people from a particular dialect group may prefer the term Nyungar. See Bob Howard’s Home Page, ‘Noongar (Nyungar) Language Resources’, <http://www.omninet.net.au/~bhoward/language.html>

³ Betty, pers. Comm., August 1997, Wagin, Western Australia

⁴ I took a tape-recorder but she did not want it used.

⁵ I did this in order to examine the findings of Raphael Cilento’s 1924 Sociological Survey of White Women, published in R Cilento, 1925, *The White Man in the Tropics and its Dependencies*, Government Print, Brisbane.

criteria hardly explicit. Nonetheless, they were told with a combination of candour and control that accentuated and corroborated their mutual claims that sexual conduct and sexual information were unmentionable topics in their young womanhood. Uneasily, I began to recall Betty's stories of the same generation, which in this regard bridged white and Noongar worlds: Betty too had described such discomfort, and emphasised the probable rarity of frank sexual stories. Intrigued by the pauses, breaks and interruptions in the unedited NQOHP collection, I listened to them again with more attention to changes in intonation.

The recordings that I selected were made in the 1970s and 1980s and often involved young recorders and missed moments. On analysis it seemed that these were more likely when the recorders were young women – but at same time, the likelihood of frankness also increased. It occurred to me that some older narrators might feel that a person from a supposedly more modern generation would be more receptive to their stories, but that this came at the potential cost of semiotic gaps where cultural change over the generations increased the likelihood that some meanings might be missed.

For example, when I pause momentarily before answering a question or expanding upon something I have said when I lecture, it is because I have detected a puzzled look or I want to be diplomatic in the way that I phrase my response; I might also be just searching my memory for the best factual answer. When I see others do the same, I expect that they are engaged in similar processes. However, this is not always the case with my mother, now in her eighties, with whom a pause might also mean that the question or comment has over-stepped a personal or social boundary: silence, even momentary, is her way of saying stop. Such subtle statements can be overlooked. It is easy to forget the layered society and non-confrontational way in which women of my mother's time were socialised: a 'lady' did not betray her feelings publicly; it was enough to withdraw emotionally. Consequently, an excited voice or actions conveyed a message of something with special significance for the orator, while silences might reveal a past or ongoing pain, or draw boundaries. Hear Barbara speak firstly of a cyclone:

Barbara: They just said, "Your home's gone." And when he came over to us he said, "Now, you've got all your valuables, haven't you?" We haven't got any valuables! We never had valuables! They were all gone! [Laugh] Ah, dear. [Pause] I've been in two cyclones. Yes, I seen Sigma! I was a baby, coming from Brisbane, and Sigma, the big flood in Townsville... *I was the baby!* [Excited emphasis, more volume.] I think we'd been to Brisbane. I was the baby on board. You wouldn't remember Sigma.

Facilitator [entirely misses significance of 'I was the baby' and moves to another time and another cyclone]: When was it that the Yongala was....?

Barbara: Oh, yes. We saw the Yongala out here at Cape [illeg.]⁶

Facilitator: You saw it, did you?

Barbara: Yes. We went out there, way out it was. It was nearly to Townsville, nearly here. Yes. Poor Yongala. We were on a trip going south once. My hubby and I, we saw the Bombala, on the rocks too, somewhere around – the Bombala.⁷ We had a lovely lot of ships coming to Townsville, you know.⁸

The opportunity to hear the important story about the baby is lost; the inflexions and pauses go unrecognised. Later:

Facilitator: When you did have your family, did you give birth to your children in a hospital?

⁶ March 1911, last seen near Dent Island lighthouse. Found in 1960 near Cape Bowling Green. See W. Torrance, *Steamers on the River. From Ipswich to the Sea*, Brisbane, 1986, p.68

⁷ Bombala (3539 tons, b. 1904, Sunderland). Hit Salamander Reef on 7 December 1919, refloated and on to Townsville for repair. Torrance, *Steamers on the River. From Ipswich to the Sea*, p.56

⁸ NQOHP, ID 3, CD 6-1

Barbara: [Emphatic] No! I saw every one of my children born, watched, everything done. And I think if I had the material, I think I could confine a baby. [Matter-of-factly:] I watched every one born, without the aid of the doctor.

Facilitator: Or by a midwife?

Barbara: In my own room!

Facilitator: In your own room.

Barbara: Yes, in my own bedroom. And we were not, in our day, we were not let out of bed until the tenth day. We just laid and didn't get out of bed. And on the tenth day, we got up.

Facilitator: Did you know what to expect?

Barbara: No, I did not! [Pitch and volume increases...] I'll never forget it! Never! Never forget it, you know. [Quieter...] See, our parents those days never talked to us. They didn't tell me anything.⁹

There have now surely been enough vocal changes or pauses for the facilitator to recognise Barbara's cues for thought, anger, frustration and excitement. Indeed, she did so after the excerpt above, successfully obtaining important details about 1920s sexual knowledge; but later, she misses a cue again and persists when Barbara is clearly unhappy with the direction she is being taken. A conversation about the nurses who helped new mothers is going well:

Barbara: But they were lovely nurses, they were really nice. They stayed with you; they stayed with you all the time.

Facilitator: They'd help out, wouldn't they, with the washing and things like that?

Barbara: Oh, no, not washing. They might help out with doing little odds and ends, you know, things.

Facilitator: Tell me –napkins and things like that that women wore those days, those were cloth, were they? Not the disposable ones like we have today.

Barbara: Yes.

Facilitator: Not like disposable ones we have now.

Barbara: [Pause, then quiet response.] No.

Facilitator: And I suppose they'd be boiled would they?

Barbara: [Flat] Oh, yes, you washed them, by hand.

Facilitator: Things have certainly changed in that direction, haven't they? Do you think many girls knew much about things like sex, and children...?

Barbara: I don't think so. [Pause] I – well, I didn't know much about it. I didn't know [brief pause] – and I was 22! [Flat, rising to emphasis on last phrase. Barbara clearly does not want to discuss this.]

Facilitator: And I suppose you had your friends, and you never talked about it.

Barbara: Oh, no, you didn't talk about nothing! [Emphatic, then moves smoothly into a more comfortable zone; voice changes again...] And another thing: people didn't put on rouge and cream like they do today. You didn't use all that on your face, you know. If you wore it, or I wore it, they'd think I was no good.¹⁰

Barbara's peers, betters and inferiors understood the messages. We might not.

The reminiscences and self analyses of pioneers of oral history as we know it now are valuable in considering possibilities such as those described above. For example, Sherna Berger Gluck remarks she 'did not pay sufficient attention to exploring the meaning of the historical moment' behind some of her late 1970s and early 1980s projects.¹¹ Similarly, Valerie Yow refers to Amy Tobol's

⁹ NQOHP, ID3, 6-6

¹⁰ NQOHP, ID3, 6-6

¹¹ Susan H Armitage and Sherna Berger Gluck, 'Reflections on women's oral history. An exchange', in Perks and Thomson, 2006, *The Oral History Reader*, Taylor & Francis, London, p.76

observation that in the 1990s she may have been ‘speaking in “nineties language” about “sixties” experience’.¹² The age of a narrator is a factor, as Joanna Bornat has noted, with oral history sessions sometimes providing ‘a first opportunity to make sense of past experience.’¹³ In some cases, opportunity may facilitate frank disclosure, and oversights or omissions as a consequence of generational difference may not be as apparent in the final product. Other NQOHP participants with the same facilitator who worked with Barbara divulged more freely and in more detail, markedly so when they recalled events about which they had long carried anger. These stories were often related to sexual conduct: they covered such matters as sexual knowledge, prostitution, personal hygiene, abortion and extra-marital pregnancy and revealed lives that had flowed less smoothly than Barbara’s, whose stories of hardship (while important to her) tended to centre on physical chores.

Despite the disclosure that might happen when the narrator has immersed themselves in the past, some topics are enduringly sensitive from a social perspective; drug use, or sexual conduct or preference, for example, might still cause discomfort for narrator or listener. In regard to sexual stories, Ken Plummer’s observations are informative. Plummer argues that timing is crucial for disclosure – social change might mean that a story that might once have been deemed too sensitive or shocking by either narrator party to oral history can be told in a new environment or to an interested and uncritical listener.¹⁴ Had Betty and the NQOHP women said what they did thirty or even forty years earlier, they might have found neither courage nor audience.¹⁵ Similarly, stories of drug abuse (or use, dependant on perspective) might now have an audience, but still require careful listening if a knowing and knowable account are to be obtained.

It seems that the approach of the oral history interviewer or facilitator cannot easily be standardised: individuals as narrator or facilitator bring too much to a session, and have too much at stake. Yet Rob Pattman and Mary Jane Kehily might have provided us with a method that not only recognises the social forces at play in interview situations but could facilitate identification of an interview facilitator’s social and cultural place, making retrospective analysis of oral history offerings and exchanges less complex. They argue that interviewers need to engage in critical self-reflection before entering into interview situations, because ‘the sorts of feelings interviewees evoke in interviewers must be acknowledged and addressed’ for the ‘important insights they provide into the dynamics of the interviewer- interviewee relationship.’¹⁶ Extrapolating from their approach, it seems worthwhile for any interviewer or facilitator to complete a questionnaire or be interviewed themselves before they begin working with others whose time and language they might not fully understand: in this way, although decades might pass, meanings lost or carried might be more evident. I did not really appreciate the cadences of the woman who worked with Barbara and a number of other women until I learned about her as a person too: learned that she was about my age, learned her social and educational background, and learned that she was as likely to miss special moments with her interviewees as I had been with Betty, and probably others.¹⁷ Once I understood her, however, I approached my analysis in a much more informed manner: I now knew what language she spoke, and could evaluate the recordings anew.

¹² Amy Ruth Tobol, 1995, in Yow, ““Do I like them too much?””, in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* pp.64-5

¹³ Joanna Bornat, ‘Reminiscence and Oral History. Parallel universes or shared endeavour?’, in Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, pp.457, 461

¹⁴ Ken Plummer, *Telling Sexual Stories. Power, Change and Social Worlds*, London, 1995 (2004 edn), p.120

¹⁵ For more on the experiences of an oral history analyst, see Barry Godfrey, ‘Self-Identity, Empathy and Sympathy in Reading Transcripts’, in D Robinson, C Horrocks, N Kelly, B Roberts, (eds) 2004, *Narrative, Memory & Identity. Theoretical and Methodological Issues*, University of Huddersfield

¹⁶ Rob Pattman, Mary Jane Kehily, ‘Memories of Youth and Interviewing Young People: Reflections on Young People’s Understandings of Drug Use’, in Robinson, Horrocks, Kelly, Roberts, (eds) *Narrative, Memory & Identity. Theoretical and Methodological Issues*.

¹⁷ Name withheld. Pers. comm Diane Menghetti, Townsville, 2003

As historians, we all accept that stories from the elderly demand special attention. This is more so when they contain disclosures on topics considered sensitive in the past or current social environment. However, what is evident to a narrator may be less clear to an oral history facilitator at the time, leading to occasional gaps in understanding that may affect the meanings produced in relation to special topics. It might not ever be possible to completely culturally align interviewer or interviewee, however as decades pass, what made sense to an interviewer or facilitator at the time of the interview might endure just as poorly as that which they overlooked or preferred to avoid. Analysis of stories obtained in the distant past should be balanced with exploration of the potential influence of those who engaged directly with them: a challenge that would be made easier by having an understanding of the person, who respectively guided, enabled, encouraged and engaged the narrator.

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<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>

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

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



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