



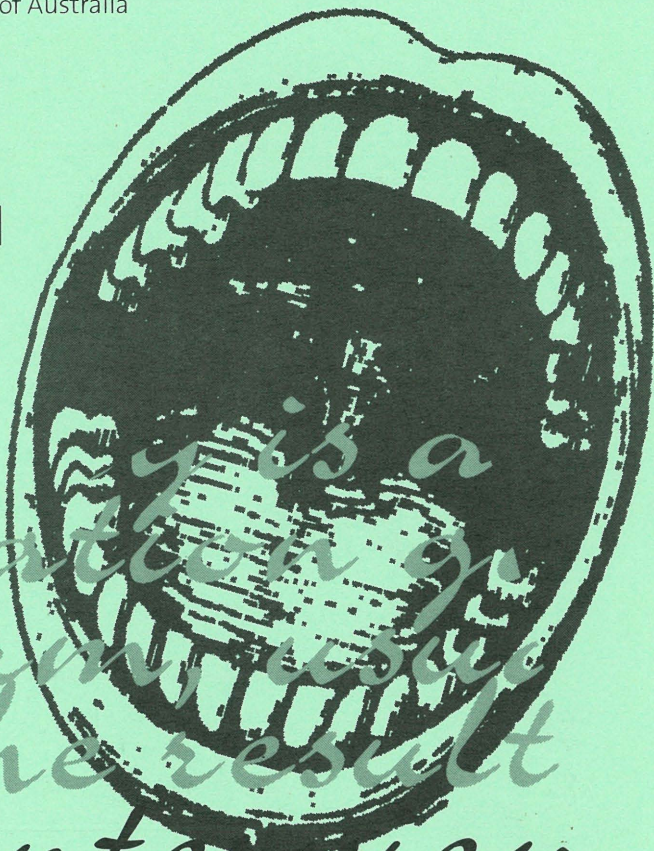
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Newsletter

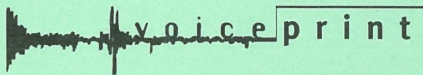
of the New South Wales Branch
of the Oral History Association
of Australia

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February 1996



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Editorial

As I was sifting through my twenty year old makeshift filing system recently, I was suddenly struck by my own mortality, and the way that, although nothing seems to change – it does! All those papers, so important at the time, documenting houses I lived in, people known, children grown.

This led me to muse on what a wonderful tool oral history is – enabling us to capture in time the lives of people; ordinary people, living their ordinary lives; yet whose lives in hindsight are unique and diverse and extraordinary, and whose stories provide the reader, the historian, the researcher, with a window into the past, or simply gives the ordinary folk like myself the opportunity to make sense of our own lives.

So just do it! Explore those ideas, collect your stories. For like all other precious resources, human existence is finite and the fabric of society ever changing.

I hope you will enjoy reading the offerings in this edition of *Voiceprint* as much as I have. On behalf of the editorial group and our readers, I would like to thank our talented contributors, without whom **Voiceprint** would not be.

You will soon have an opportunity to make suggestions for change or improvement to **Voiceprint** as the oral history survey is in its final draft and will make its way to you next issue. In the meantime – happy interviewing!

Shelley Barwick

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New Members

New Members:

Nessy Allen	School of Science and Technology, UNSW
Bill Bottomley	Oral historian, Kulnura
Jack Dickenson	Killer Whale Museum, Eden
Margo Droulers	Organisation development consultant, Sydney
Denise Durbin	Sydney
Institution of Engineers Sydney	Michael Clarke, Chair, Heritage Committee
Linda Kruger	Editor, Sydney
Liverpool Museum	Veronica Macno (oral history)
Margaret Long	Archivist, MBF Sydney
Justine McGill	Freelance radio journalist
Susan Marsden	Historian, Canberra
NSW Fire Brigade	John Richards, Historian
Dennis Patterson	Australian Business Ltd.
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners	Dr. Neville Andersen (archivist)
Babette Scougall	Editor (retired), Canberra
Annelise Thomas	Social Worker, Sydney
Ruth Wilson	Education consultant, Sydney

The November seminar was very successful with Di Ritch presenting a moving and interesting account of her mother Hazel de Berg, Australia's oral history pioneer. The text of this talk will appear in the next issue of *Voiceprint*.

We are looking for assistance with the expenses of producing *Voiceprint*. If anyone has contacts or proposals for sponsorship in a small way, could you please contact Rosie Block at the State Library.

OHAA Draft Policy Statement Re: Fees

From time to time the Oral History Association of Australia is asked to provide guidance on what fees could be charged by those undertaking private oral history work.

This matter was fully considered by the national committee where it was decided that the actual recommending of fees was not possible for the following reasons.

- the lack of formal qualification in oral history
- the varying qualifications and experience of people involved in the field
- while the Association has ethical guidelines and promotes correct methodology, it has no power to insist on certain practices and people undertake oral history in different ways which affect the standard of the end product.

It is therefore up to individuals to establish the fees they consider suitable. For the research and preparation of oral history the fees recommended by universities may prove a useful guide for graduates.

In some states the local branch of the Professional Historians Association provides guidance on fees to its

members. These are tied to formal qualifications and experience.

Some specialised libraries and genealogy societies, suggest a range of fees for research. For example the Image Library, State Library of New South Wales and State Library of Queensland offer research services. Many libraries provide a list of professional researchers for consultation.

Membership please note:

For some time now the national executive of the Oral History Association of Australia has been asked both by members and by prospective employers for information about fees for oral history projects.

Since we have no professional criteria for membership there is of course a wide range among our members of expertise and experience. However, we do feel that the Association ought to be able to comment on fees – even if it is to say why we have no schedule of fees!

We are circulating to the Branches for comment the following draft of a Policy Statement on Fees and should be most grateful for any comments and advice you can give us. If you feel you would like to be involved in a small sub-committee to discuss this matter please return the form at the top of the opposite page.

Please photocopy this and return to Rosemary Block, Oral History Program, State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Yes. I should like to be involved in considering the Draft Policy for Fees

Name

Address

Telephone

Fax



Notes from the Mitchell Library Oral History Program

The Institution of Engineers, Sydney

An important acquisition of over 90 cassettes was received from The Institution of Engineers, Sydney. Michael Clarke of the Heritage Committee has been coordinating an important oral history project interviewing engineers in New South Wales.

Behind every piece of construction be it a bridge, sewer or piece of machinery there is of course an engineer. If you're talking about building history, interview an engineer!

Congratulations to the Institution and its Heritage Committee under Michael Clarke for recognising that there is more to history than even the engineers' meticulously kept written record. There are so many stories about the Snowy

Mountains Scheme, Centrepoint Tower, wind tunnels, computers, aeroplanes, chemistry, roads, rivers and earthquakes. Richard Raxworthy, long time member of OHAA (NSW), has done the interviewing to date. The process is on-going and the collection grows even as we speak!

Writers Festival 1996

The Oral History Program co-ordinated recording sessions during the Festival which took place at the Library in late January. Di Ritch, member OHAA (NSW) and Kitty Bray did their usual splendid job of capturing the fleeting moments of writers-talk. The cassettes are already copied and available for those who may have missed the session or may like to have copies of their favourite writers' tones.

Ultimo/Pymont

Cath Edmondson of the Community Centre and Philippa Major of City West are to be congratulated for setting up an oral history project in this area. On Saturday 10 February residents were invited to attend a presentation on the history of the area (Shirley Fitzgerald) and how oral history works (Rosie Block). After this, three very lively and vocal groups advised Judy Wing and Margaret Park, both members of OHAA (NSW), and me on topics they would like to be included in the eventual questionnaire. Judy and Margaret will be conducting the interviews.

City West is to be commended for their generosity in funding the project

which the Community Centre is undertaking to document change in an area where there has always been some change on the go. The history of the 1920's, 30's, 40's, and 50's and to date will be preserved before Ultimo and Pymont change their character profoundly. However, in addition it is hoped that the tradition of wonderful neighbourliness will be carried on with the new residents who will be moving into the area. Helping each other has always been a feature of peninsula life and this is to be preserved also!

**Rosemary Block, Curator of Oral History,
State Library of New South Wales**

Ronda Jamieson

I have requested permission to reproduce here an excerpt from the Friends of the Battye Newsletter (No. 71 of December 1995) in which they bid farewell to Ronda Jamieson of the Oral History Unit at the Battye Library, State Library of Western Australia. This gives a good background to Ronda's career in oral history.

"The Winds of Change

Have blown through the Oral History Unit. Ronda Jamieson, Coordinator of

the Unit, has been appointed Manager: Preservation Services. Ronda has been working for the Battye Library Oral History Program and Unit since 1978, and has been Coordinator of the Unit since 1989. Teaching oral history method since 1980, Ronda has been a driving force in setting professional standards for the collection, use, and preservation of oral history during that time. Her work in inspiring local communities to organise their own oral history groups

has led to groups operating in many urban and rural centres throughout Western Australia. Ronda's enthusiasm and efficiency combined with long and hard work has engendered much work for the Unit, which is currently managing or involved in 12 projects (help!). A foundation member of OHAA, she was national president for four years and convenor of the national conference in Perth in 1989. At State level Ronda has served on the WA Branch committee for all but two years since its inception, with two years as president, and five years as editor of the branch newsletter Play Back. She was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in oral history in 1991 and made a life member of OHAA at their 1995 Conference. Ronda will be sorely missed from the field of oral history, and we wish her every success in her new career".

We add the thanks of the Oral History Association of Australia to Ronda for all she has done for oral history in Australia during the many years she was one of its leaders. Her good advice, incisive judgement and notable energy will be much missed.

I met her first by letter and phone when I came into the field and indeed save for two meetings this has continued to be our principal contact over the years.

Among the many things for which we are grateful to Ronda, it was she who instituted the teleconferences for the national executive and thus opened a new era in communication for our widespread branches.

It is to Ronda and to Beth Robertson, (OHAA, South Australia) that we owe our thanks for the excellent questionnaire drawn up for the forthcoming National Directory of Oral History and Folklore Collections. It was easy to manage and was very successful in gathering in the data we required.

As the Friends' article correctly notes, Ronda was made a Life Member of the Association at our 1995 Conference in Launceston, Tasmania. At that time we did not know that she was about to move on. We rejoice that our conferring of this honour was so timely. Of course she carries with her all of our good wishes for her future, and we hope she will not be losing entirely the contact with her – and our – past!

Rosemary Block, President, OHAA (National) and (NSW Branch)

ARTICLES

Australian Women and Children in Papua New Guinea Before the Japanese Invasion:

An Oral History-based Study of an Australian Colonial Society

This oral history project began informally one day in 1989 when I was asking my elderly mother about one small segment of her life, when she was a young bride and newly-wed in New Guinea. The fact that that conversation led into completely unexpected new directions is, I suspect, the experience of most such endeavours.

At the time I had just finished years researching and writing the biography of a remarkable long-dead-and-forgotten Australian feminist reformer (*Maybanke Anderson, sex, suffrage and social reform*, Hale & Iremonger 1993); now I had to learn how to work with talking feeling, living women who were, to use that cliché expression, ordinary women who had led extraordinary lives.

After interviewing several more women who lived in PNG before the Japanese invasion, the 'befores' as they have come to be known, it was apparent that the topic was of both general and academic interest. I enrolled in the Doctoral programme at the UNSW School of History where Martin Lyons was conducting a postgraduate oral history course, and where I could be

supervised by Associate Professor Beverley Kingston who had greatly assisted me with the Maybanke Anderson work. The School of History supported my application for a postgraduate research award and later provided a travel allowance. Thus I was able to employ a transcriber and build up a useful PNG book collection, and work full time interviewing and researching, then, when I was ready, make my first unforgettable exciting field trip to PNG. Speed was essential because obviously the interviewees were elderly, the last of their small tribe of white Missus, as they were called in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea, or Sinabada, the Papuan term. My family connections quickly gave me access to a relatively unexplored and, I thought, untape-recorded chapter of Australian women's history.

While in this brief re-telling the project may sound straightforward, romantically adventurous, speedy and successful, it was frequently a stressful, seemingly interminable ordeal. For example, when interviewing in the Brisbane-Gold Coast area where many ex-PNG residents now live, I discovered

that two Queensland-based women academics were working along similar themes; they would most likely be completed and in print first, and perhaps invalidate my years of work. Also I was a somewhat naive newcomer to the politics of black and white PNG-Pacific history; at times debates on the roles of white anthropologists, mercenaries, missionaries and misfits appeared little removed from those of the Malinowski-Mead era. And of course inevitably small-town tropical paradises incubate feuds and gossip about lost or stolen fortunes, ex-lovers and husbands. One had to learn fast what was on or off the record, how to quickly find the tape-recorder switch, and on writing up the work, when to use the word processor delete button after being carried away. These were some of the nightmares which kept one awake at night juggling the roles of journalist, therapist and historian – and hopefully pre-empting law suits!

However, 'my' sample of thirty women and two men (who were both New Guinea-goldfields born) interviewees were patient teachers. I learnt so much from each of them. They opened my eyes when they led me into their lives on lonely plantations and mission stations, goldfields, pubs and townships, hospitals, schools and the much-loved Burns Philp ships which were their umbilical cords to the outside world. The first part of the questionnaire

provided a detailed profile of the women's pre-PNG lives as daughters in Australia or Europe: the usual date and place of birth, parents' occupations and religions, their family lives, education and work experiences. They were born across the globe and across the class spectrum, and illustrated the mobility of many families at the turn of the century as well as the dislocations caused by World War I and the Great Depression.

This vivid oral testimony of those who were born and/or grew up in PNG soon made it clear that the study would have to change its emphasis from 'women' to 'women and children'; three of the eight chapters deal with childhood memories, 'Growing up in Papua', and a chapter each on white and mixed race children 'Growing up in New Guinea'. This enabled contrasts to be made, for example in the different relationships the children and their parents and adult friends had with native (I used the then-prevailing term throughout) household servants. The following is Diana's recall of a childhood outing with Hannah, the mixed-race teenage girl who was her second mother.

"I remember going in [to the Rabaul picture theatre] at night even with Hannah. It was quite a social event for her. It was just a one-storied thing, a lot of lights outside with coloured pictures of the movies. Inside the back rows were for the whites or for the

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more superior whites perhaps. I remember Lady McNicoll [the Administrator's wife] sitting there in evening dress, and all the whites looking rather grand and fanning themselves. And I was going with Hannah, holding her hand firmly – Hannah always put on lots of Yardley's Lavender Water on social occasions – and going past these ladies and hearing one of them saying, 'Fancy Rhoda letting Diana go to the pictures with that half-caste!'"

Glenn's first memories are of his childhood in the isolated Upper Watut goldfields in New Guinea, on the very edge of unexplored lands belonging to the feared Kukukuku tribespeople. His successful prospector father had the reputation of being very violent with 'his' native labourers; he served a prison term for murder (which he tried to conceal) when one died from a ruptured spleen, not that his young children knew that at the time.

"There was a jabbering noise of language being spoken, and my father was always angry, telling people to be faster. 'Come on, plenty too much, hurry up! hurry up, hurry up!' he used to say. Everything was 'Hurry up!' spoken, and Pidgin. My recollection is of my father driving these people mercilessly. They were actually convicts, they were very

young people, they weren't much older than me when I left really. They were all boys, all from different areas of PNG. My father talking about such-and-such a boy, 'He's going to get a hiding – he's giving me trouble!'"

A great deal of rich primary and secondary material by and about women in the pre-World War II Australian colonial period is integrated with the oral testimonies. Photographs, newspaper articles, published and unpublished letters, histories and accounts, many of which were written by observant women residents and visitors, bring a diverse range of perspectives to traditional man-centred versions. In 1924 Dr. Phyllis Cilento went to New Guinea when her husband was appointed the Territory's first Director General of Health. Years later she wrote of those years in her autobiography *My Life*. "We were there as the wives of Government officials or heads of businesses and had little part to play in the work of the country. It was different in the outstations and plantations where women had to help and support their husbands in every phase of their lives. In Rabaul, however, there was little to do except maintain some of the civilities of civilised life: go to parties and relieve the monotony by playing bridge, give and attend little dinner parties and try to amuse themselves one way and another. This

was the usual situation in all British colonies at that time. In fact, with all our native servants we did not have enough to do and that is why I had returned to my practice”.

One third of the women interviewed worked as nurses in PNG, on missions, in Government service or as unpaid assistants. Thelma, a highly qualified nurse married to a doctor who worked for the Administration, describes assisting her husband amputate a leper woman’s gangrenous leg the very day she arrived in the colony, a dramatic start to her years of dedicated voluntary service.

For white women of child-bearing age in the tropics, their own health was often precarious. Malaria and childbirth were the two most dreaded health problems. The women in this study showed a relatively low fertility rate, with many suffering miscarriages which were probably brought on by the high dosage of quinine they were forced to take to offset malaria, or their general ill-health or untreated pelvic inflammatory diseases.

The study concludes with the hurried 2 day evacuation of European women and children to Australia just ahead of the Japanese fighter planes and bombs; the three Marist sisters stayed on Bougainville, two were interned in Japanese camps in New Guinea, the other escaped in an American

submarine. It was the end of an era, a time of great anguish. Most had 24 hours to pack a few possessions and farewell their loved ones. Some of their Rabaul menfolk died in the Montevideo Maru, the first time I had heard of this terrible war-time tragedy.

When Edith was being evacuated from Port Moresby with two small children and pregnant with the next, her soldier husband advised her.

“He said: ‘I don’t want you to stay in Sydney’, he said, ‘I want you to go to the country’. So I went to Moree – a lot of people were evacuated up there – of course I was expecting Judith then. That Tokyo Rose, the Japanese girl, she used to broadcast, and she said, ‘All you people who were evacuated from the islands,’ she said, ‘and living in Moree...’ Of course they used to go to Moree buying wool so that’s how they knew so much about it... ‘that you’re evacuated to Moree. We’ll get you just the same!’ You know, before my baby was born, and hearing all this was terrifying!”

An oral history-based methodology is appropriate for documenting a contemporary society whose written records, homes and public buildings were largely destroyed. Also the “befores” inhabited a social world where the art of conversation was just that, where people talked for hours in clubs, aboard ships,

and in the cool of the evening on plantation steps and verandahs. Story-telling at parties and gatherings and letter-writing to family and friends were highly valued skills, and communication was what you did with other people, not a tertiary education course. The monuments of the “before” women and

children are in their words.

Copyright Jan Roberts 1996

This work will be published by Millenium Press in Mid-1996 as part of its series on pioneering Australian women.

Youth at School and at Work in New South Wales

Allyson Holbrook, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, The University of Newcastle.

As an education historian who had done her Ph.D. thesis on youth unemployment and vocational training schemes in the 1930s, I was very keen to explore what it was like to go to school, move between schools, and then go on to work during the first half of this century. We know so much about young people's experiences today, but the historical record prior to the 1970s is terribly patchy.

When I moved to The University of Newcastle in 1987 I had the opportunity to become involved in some oral history with my History of Education classes, and my love of the method, and recognition of its great potential to answer the research questions that excited me, grew from there. In 1993 I received what is

called a 'small' Australian Research Council grant (less than \$20,000) to explore the 'School, work, and school to work transition experiences of adolescents in NSW 1930s-1950s', this was followed by a large grant for 1994 and 1995 and a further small grant to complete the project in 1996. The grants totalled about \$50,000, which enabled the employment of research assistants, the purchase of equipment and the services of a technician to copy the tapes and any photographs borrowed by the researchers. Some 300 people from a great variety of backgrounds and schools volunteered to be interviewed for the project and the interviews have been conducted (and are continuing this year) over the four year period. The target number of interviews is 400. The interviews cover a range of childhood experiences (including use of leisure

time, family life and the like), but pay particular attention to school and work experiences. The result is a really rich archive of material that captures childhood in NSW.

Most of the interviews have taken place in Sydney and surrounds and the Hunter region, although the researcher is still seeking interviews with current or past residents from country districts, particularly Wagga, Orange/Bathurst and Broken Hill, and also Sydney's West. Indeed I am still seeking virtually anyone who has some detailed memories of their schooling and early working life. The study is limited to people who **completed school between 1928 and 1956.**

The project has proved a terrific training ground for future researchers, and a small team has assisted the author, organising the interviews, doing interviews, typing and preparing the transcribed interviews for coding. The study uses a text analysis computer program with the incongruous acronym of 'NUDIST' (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing) software. Without such a program it would take many more years to analyse all the information thoroughly. One PhD student (Jo May) is working as a research assistant on the project. Jo is specialising in the 'selective school experience' for her thesis. Another PhD student (Peter Brandon) is drawing on information about those

interviewed who became teachers. Peter is using the information as valuable background for his 'History of Teacher Training in the Hunter Region'. It is helping him to devise research questions and provide ideas for his own set of oral history interviews with ex-students of Newcastle Teachers' College. Yet another student (Trish Truelove) has been working on the information collected so far, and engaged in newspaper searches for information on childhood and school. She will be doing her Honours Thesis on an aspect of the project starting this March.

Much groundwork went into the design of the project, including a pilot study based on one hundred interviews collected with the help of Masters students. The pilot study helped the author develop an appropriate theoretical framework, set of research questions, and method and style of interviewing. The amount of effort that went into ensuring the project was very sound proved a large factor in its success in gaining the much competed for Australian Research Council grants. The project received the approval of the Newcastle University Ethics Committee and conforms to the useful ethics guidelines produced by the OHAA.

Each person interviewed since the start of the project has received a copy of their tape and a regular Christmas card and update on the project and its

personnel. A great feeling of friendship and sharing has grown out of the interviewing experience and the author and some of her team receive regular correspondence from some of those interviewed. Talks given by the author to local historical societies has helped communicate some of the early findings from the project to the community, for example on the topic of 'School discipline in the 1930s and 1940s'.

A very recent and extensive article that explains some of the author's views on oral history and outlines the method of analysis used in the project can be found in the December issue of the *Australian Educational Researcher*. It is called 'Methodological Developments in Oral History: A Multi-layered Approach'.

Each interview we have completed so far differs in some important way from the others, testimony to the amazing variety of experience of youth in the past. The fascinating outcome is that we are beginning to reconstruct, in great detail, what classrooms were like in the past, what opportunities there were for the young, their trials and tribulations, the way they entered work and 'learned' their work tasks; what their expectations were, and if they were met. We are integrating the oral history material with autobiographical material and documentation from the period to help improve the integrity of our interpretations.

At least two books are intended. The first, pinpointing transition from school to work, will be written during 1997 (the author has study-leave in which to complete the task). It will contain information that will make a serious contribution to our understanding of youth employment this century. The second, which will really be great fun, will be about schools in the past, in particular what went on in classrooms. Everyone who reads it who grew up during the period will no doubt feel they have experienced many of the types of teachers, pupils and routines that are described.

If you feel you have something to contribute to the project, particularly if you would like to be interviewed and went to school in the districts named in the third paragraph, please contact me by phone (or the secretary in my office if I am out) or by letter (preferably as soon as possible and before July 1996). It will be great to hear from you. Similarly the author would be delighted to be invited to talk about the project to your group or gathering where possible.

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Secretary (049) 215904 Fax (049)21 6896
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A WWII Oral History Project: Private Perceptions: Public Pronouncements

Marrickville Remembers

Have you ever looked at a World War I Memorial and wondered why, in some cases, the Great War is listed as 1914–1919? Surely the war ended in 1918, that is what we were taught! Yet in the minds of some at the time, perhaps the Armistice was not the end of the war; perhaps it ended with the signing of the peace treaty or when the troops arrived home? Can dates be that flexible?

I am writing this article as a 'work in progress' report and, while I will describe the organisation of the project, I want to concentrate more on my changing perceptions of the project and the nature of war time memories, as they were recalled 50 years on.

The Marrickville Heritage Society received a grant from the Federal Government as part of the Australia Remembers Project. The money was allocated to recording oral histories and subsequent publication of Second World War 'home front' experiences in the Marrickville Local Government area.

A steering committee of four was established early in 1995. We were fortunate to have 15 enthusiastic

members of the Society who wished to be interviewees and were able to attend a seminar conducted at the State Library of New South Wales by Rosemary Block for the Oral History Association of Australia (NSW Branch).

The first hurdle was to locate the interviewees. We were aware that many people who had lived in the area during that time had moved away in the years following the end of WWII. Newly married couples wanted their own home, their quarter acre block; how could we contact them? Much thought and effort went into advertising: RSVP in The Sydney Morning Herald, speaking engagements, War Widows' Guild Digest, etc. We were afraid there would not be enough respondents. The result was phenomenal with over 120 responses.

Meanwhile, the committee had devised a one page questionnaire that would give us basic information about the interviewee: education, occupation, voluntary work, most vivid memories of the war, etc. The Marrickville Local Government Area has a number of factories that were involved in war related production and this was an important part of the local area's war

effort. This page was given to the interviewer and the interviews began.

We committed ourselves to interviewing all people who had replied. We may live to regret this decision but so many people I spoke to said things such as "I don't have much to say, I was very young at the time. I remember the troop trains going through Hurlstone Park Railway Station and the girls standing there with their names and addresses on long sticks. The soldiers would take the names". Not much to say, indeed!

We are doing interview logs and partial transcripts that will be the basis of the publication, and all tapes and interview logs will be deposited with the Marrickville Local Studies collection.

But what was in my mind, what did I expect, what ideas did I have? My parents had lived in the area during this time; they were married during the war; my father was a soldier; an uncle was killed.

I expected memories of shortages; emotions of loved ones away, dying, being taken as prisoners of war; air raid precautions; voluntary activities; sense of nationhood; commitment to a cause; memories of the Americans; animosity to Italians/Germans living in the area. In the interviews conducted so far, there have been many of these experiences related but there have also been a great

number of stories of normality, life went on. Yes, I *knew* life went on but it came as a surprise how unaffected some people were.

I *knew* when the war started and ended and, because of the number of interviews we needed to do, the committee realised the need to concentrate on WWII experiences and not be diverted to other interesting areas that may emerge. I have a time line in my head which has barriers at 1939 and 1945, the people who lived it probably do not.

If you ask many people what they were doing on 15th August 1945, they may not know. If you ask what they were doing the day the war ended, the memories flow. Some people do not remember by date but by event. Likewise, the memories cannot be turned on like a tap at 1939 and stopped at 1945 because peoples' lives are continuous and for many the declaration of war in 1939 was in far distant Europe and most people interviewed agree that 'the war' was not brought home to them until the bombing of Pearl Harbour or even the entry of the Japanese submarines into Sydney Harbour. If your husband did not come home until 1946, when did the war really end for you?

I discovered that memories are not only dictated by the age of the interviewee at the time of the event but also by his/her 'level of responsibility'. For example, not all people interviewed were

equally aware of shortages: for a person (of any age) who lived in his/her parents' home, the knowledge and experiences of shortages were minimal; the mothers protected their children and bore the brunt of having to 'make do'. Yet a person of the same age who was living away from home, perhaps as a student, in charge of his/her own household, would provide great detail of shortages.

There was a huge variety of experiences: for people who had no close family member or friend killed, there was no great emotion, neither sadness throughout the war nor adulation at its end. Voluntary work was undertaken for a variety of reasons: some became involved because it was what they could do for the War Effort; for others, it was a social occasion, an extension of after work activities. Did this surprise me? Yes, I think it did.

Two memories typify the range of what our Project has captured:

Imagine the two young girls manning a First Aid Station in a local Primary School overnight. They receive a signal that an unidentified plane has been observed over Sydney. Is this an attack? Will their First Aid skills be called upon? What carnage will they witness? What is their first move in the gloom of the early morning to ready themselves and the Station for the probabilities: of course, what all self-respecting young ladies of 1943 would do: put on their corsets!

Imagine the 15 year old girl, she's a telegram girl. She rides her bicycle along the street, looking at the house numbers. She sees a woman out the front of a house, sweeping the path. The girl feels sick, she knows this is the house and she knows what is in the telegram; the woman looks up, sees the telegram and ... stops sweeping. The woman says 'Do you know what's in it?' 'No', the girl lies. 'It's for my daughter-in-law'. The telegram girl rides away and only later thinks, if it was for her daughter-in-law, it means that her son ...

As I write out that memory, I feel a chill; it is a simple story and it was told with no embellishment of drama but the effect on me was significant; the effect on that 15 year old telegram girl was profound.

There is a large amount of work still to be done with editing the transcripts for publication and, who knows, perhaps my perceptions will change yet again.

Angela Phippen



BOOK REVIEW

Talking for Tolerance

CHILD SURVIVORS SPEAK OUT. RACISM, THE HOLOCAUST, ORAL HISTORY. A multi-media teaching resource for use in English, History, General Studies & Jewish Studies, Year 7–11, Sydney. Edited by Ruth Wilson and available from RW Consultancies, PO Box 1392, Bowral 2576.

ISBN 0 646 24204 0. Resource package \$150; extra copies of Teachers Handbook, \$38.95 each; copies of Anthology \$25 each.

This thoughtful and valuable resource consists of an anthology, a teachers handbook, two audiocassettes and a video. The dedication to the anthology begins with these lines:

The colour of this candle is symbolic.
it symbolises the sun;
the sun which continued to rise
over Auschwitz, Majdanek,
Theresienstadt
bringing hope.

This was written by the school students who interviewed Esther Buncel who was ten years old when the Russians liberated the ghetto in Chernovitz,

Romania. During those long war years in the ghetto, she had cared for her own sister and for a little blind friend. The colour yellow of the dedication is reflected in the Jewish star which this courageous child wore concealed inside her coat – against the rules – so that she had more freedom to move around. Freedom! It was this attachment to freedom that enabled her to scheme, to duck and to weave to save herself and the two little girls in her charge.

If Ruth Wilson had offered us only the inspiring Anthology edited from the interviews conducted by the high school children we would have been rewarded indeed. That she has added the Discussion pieces at the end of each narrative, included the cassettes with excerpts from the interviews and also a videotape of the presentations by one of the schools, makes us even more deeply in her debt. And we are profoundly grateful. And would that not have been enough? Wait – there is more. For with all of this she has included a Handbook for Teachers which draws the entire project together and enables the interviews,

their sound, their viewing and their text to be shared by schoolchildren and their teachers everywhere.

Child Survivors Speak Out. Racism, the Holocaust, Oral History does therefore so much more than offer us the stories of the survival of a group of resourceful, enduring and fortunate survivors of the Holocaust. It endeavours – and succeeds – in assembling a model for the study of racism and racial discrimination for all schoolchildren in Australia. The Holocaust is an historical event of enormous importance and hopefully never to be repeated. However, surely there is much that later generations can learn from it. What is prejudice? What is racial discrimination? What is survival? Ruth Wilson's answers lie in offering to these students and their teachers, the context and guidelines for exploring these sensitive and important issues.

In saying all this I would like readers to know the history of this finely finished product. Some three years ago the planning team under Ruth Wilson's able direction gathered in one of the high schools where this project was to be initiated. Members of the training team brought with them a wide range of expertise – oral history, group dynamics, history and background of the Holocaust. There was a psychologist and facilitators.

The Year Ten students sat, some with their arms folded, and all with that long cool teenage gaze, daring us to capture

their imagination since we had apparently captured their time. We spoke of the background to the Holocaust, the dynamics of group work, the techniques of oral history, the positive aspects of inter-generational contact – and they listened, but with the gaze not markedly warmer.

Later they were introduced to the survivor who was to be “their” Living Historian. This person was to be interviewed by an arranged group of students who had already done some study of the Holocaust. Each group met their survivor informant three times in interview and the material was recorded on to cassette. Those of the training team who supervised this activity knew that it was a winner before the rest of us did. We met again only at the presentation of the work by the students to their individual Living Historians, their families and friends.

The young people, as readers will already know from the Dedication, were inspired and inspiring. Each group had a unique way of offering the fruit of what they had learned, and what they had indeed taken for their own, to an audience enthralled. Long gone was the cool gaze. These were young people who had been through an experience of epiphany, whose eyes had been opened to unimaginable sights and who were passionate to share all of this with us. We were profoundly privileged to have been

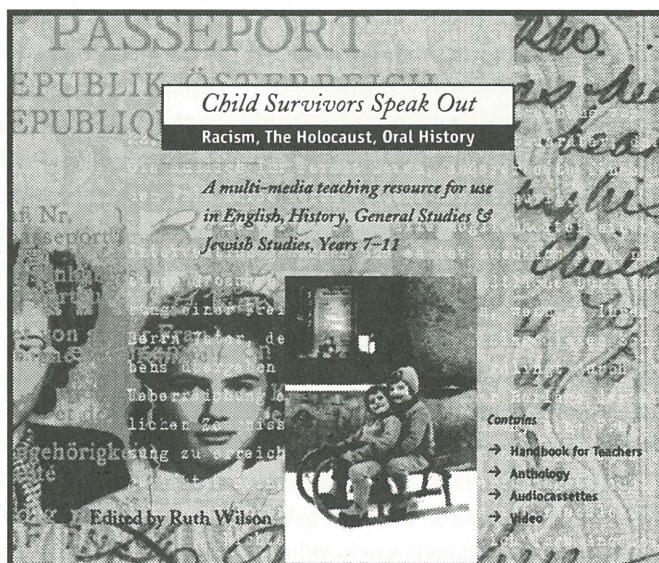
there when they did. And now Ruth Wilson has enlarged that first audience to all of you by publishing her multi-media teaching resource.

It seems right to conclude with the last lines of the Dedication:

As long as the sun
continues to rise
may we never forget
and never ever
lose hope

Rosemary Block

*(This review appeared in **History the Magazine of the Royal Australian Historical Society** Number 43 October 1995.)*



Diary of Events



March 2

Seminar. "Australian Women and the Travel Experience". Speakers include Suzanne Falkiner, Julia Horne, Beverly Kingston, Ros Pesmen and Jill Roe. Library Society in association with Department of History, University of Sydney. Mem. \$30, non-mem. \$35, full-time students \$10. Metcalfe Auditorium, State Library. 10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Bookings ph. 230-1500.

March 6

Lecture. "The Quarantine of Female Immigrants at North Head in the Nineteenth Century". Speaker is Lady Foley, author of the history of the Quarantine Station. Royal Australian Historical Society. Mem. \$4, non-mem. \$6. History House Auditorium. 1.00 p.m. Bookings ph. 247-8001.

March 14 to 16

Short Course, Heritage and Conservation Planning: an introduction. School of Planning and Urban Development, University of New South Wales. Enquiries: Rob Freestone ph: 385-4836; Fax: 385-4531.

March 19

Lecture. "Irish Heritage: Strokestown Park House". Luke Dodd, curator, describes the rescue of the house and its development as a museum. Adult \$12, Conc. \$8. Elizabeth Bay House Library. Bookings essential ph. 692-8366

March 24

Tour. "Vernacular": What's So Special about Rouse Hill's Farm Buildings? Curator and architect led tour of the outbuildings and remains of Rouse Hill Estate. Sturdy shoes required! Cost \$10. Rouse Hill House. 10.30am - 1pm. Bookings essential ph. 692-8366.

June 15

Oral History Workshop with accompanying talk.

October 10-13

International OHA (USA) Conference at Philadelphia. Theme: "Oral History: Memory and the Sense of Place". The conference will feature visits to special sites in this historic city.

(Earlier items courtesy of Joy Hughes PHA.)