



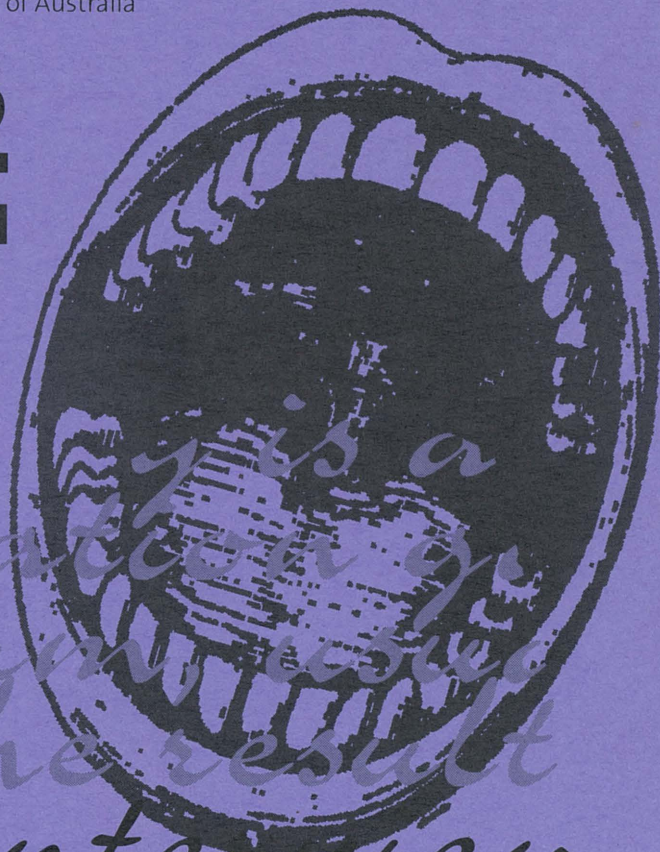
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Newsletter

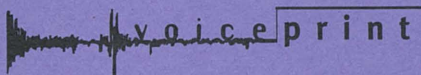
of the New South Wales Branch
of the Oral History Association
of Australia

12

May 1997



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Voiceprint is the newsletter of the NSW Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia and is published quarterly
ISSN: 13224360

Issue No. 12 – May 1997

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Editorial

*This is the second **Voiceprint** for 1997 and we are hoping to receive contributions from our members to fill the pages in the next two editions. Thank you to all members who have sent us letters and information recently. Among the letters we have received is one from John Richards, historian for the NSW Fire Brigades, and another from Bob Pauling, each reporting on their work in progress. At this stage of the year, many of your projects must be well under way – drop us a line with the details. We do want **Voiceprint** to reflect the views and ideas of members.*

In this issue, we continue the memoir of Bob Mitchell as he relates the life experiences of his father. This episode covers his teen years and his experiences as a young adult, including a spell in New Guinea during World War II. Katja Grynberg has written an account, 'Secretaries of Life', of the extensive project undertaken for the Spielberg foundation. These histories reflect very different experiences during those war years. It is interesting to reflect how very personal experiences are.

We are sure members will be pleased to read the report of Ruth Wilson on the work she is doing with school students in oral history. Are other members working with young people?

*Angela Wawn in February **Voiceprint** asked "What is the place of oral history in the scheme of things?" We often look at history and think of it in a collective way, the broad picture of what happened to many people. It may be a history of the war between "the—" and "the —". If we think of people as "the —" we have immediately depersonalised that particular group of people and the individual is entirely unknown. History is something from the past, interesting, but not connected to us as individuals in the present.*

If we reflect on oral histories, we find they often tell of how individuals have survived and overcome tremendous hardship in their lives. Oral history, I would suggest, allows the voice of the individual to be heard and we can relate to the experience. We can understand the pain, the joy, the whole range of emotions felt by the individual and the way an individual felt at a particular time in relation to a particular event. Surely the stories, the voices of individuals to which we can personally relate are a vital and necessary part of the overall history of great and tragic events. These voices will help us all to understand the past and hopefully approach the future with compassion and understanding.

*We hope that you enjoy this edition of **Voiceprint**. Please keep sending your letters and contributions.*

Joyce Cribb

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New Members from February to May 1997

We are so fortunate to have such varying talents and interests among our members. Welcome to these new ones! The number of our members in the country is growing – we are so pleased that oral history is alive and well outside the cities too.

In our new membership application form we now include an 'interests' inquiry so that we can enlarge our initial acquaintance with our members.

Please note that Dr Jan Henderson of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation turned into Dr Ian Henderson in our February *Voiceprint* list. Sorry, Jan!

Antoinette Buchanan	Student and archivist
Joan Merrell	Transcriptionist and editor, interested in aboriginal and family history
Lance A Box	Teacher
Helen Thompson	Dietician
Louise Forster	Transcriptionist
Eva Byrne	Interested in history
Janice Gentle	Dietician/writer
Alan Veenstra	Architect
MLC Burwood – Robyn Watkins	History teacher
Geoff Huard	Minister of Religion
Brenda Heagney	Librarian, Royal Australian College of Physicians
Dr Jan Roberts	Historian/Writer
Heather Clarey	Student
Robyn Rayner	Social worker
Carolyn Craig	Private tutor and oral historian
National Parks & Wildlife – Sharon Veale	Historian
George Main	Student, interested in rural and cross-cultural history

Nuts and Bolts: short items of interest to members

Hay POW and Internee Research

The Centre for Community History is currently engaged in assisting the Council of Hay Shire to preserve and develop the Hay POW and internee site. The site is perhaps best known as the first Australian home of the 'Dunera Boys', but it also housed many Italian and Japanese POWs as well as Australians interned for the duration of the Second World War.

The Centre and Hay Shire Council are very anxious to hear from anyone who may have lived in Hay during World War II, or who was interned there at that time. If required, absolute confidentiality can be assured.

The objective of the research is to ultimately develop the site as an interpretive introduction to Australians at War and to the experiences of POWs in Australia. Other results being considered include publications and displays.

If you would be willing to share your memories for this project, please contact Hay General Manager, Mr Rex Mooney, on (069) 931 003, or write to Council, 134 Lachlan Street, Hay NSW 2711.

Oral History in Australia: a list compiled by Janis Wilton

Published by the Oral History Association of Australia (NSW Branch)

You may already be aware of this publication, but for those who are not, this useful list divided into subject categories provides instant access to published works based on oral histories – and also includes works on method and theory.

Janis Wilton remarks in her introduction to the list, "It could offer a place to begin for beginners, a checklist for those already involved, and a survey and sample of the range of oral history activities in Australia. It could also provide the basis for a regularly updated list of oral history products on Australia...The concern in this list is to provide examples of the different ways in which oral histories have been used to inform and shape history making, community arts' products, and other documentary and creative endeavours".

The price, including postage and packing, is:

Posted in Australia:	OHAA members	\$10.00 each
	Non-members	\$12.50 each

For further information, please telephone Rosemary Block on (02) 9273 1697.

Letters from Readers

One reader's projects

I'm responding to your editorial request for comments on Voiceprint. I enjoy reading it and appreciate the amount of work which must go into producing it. In addition to the things you are already doing, I'd be interested in reading about:

- a summary of seminar talks (which I never seem to get to despite good intentions)*
- brief details on projects in which members are involved*
- details of any special deals on equipment. I know that Rosie Block has an arrangement in Sydney but this may be of interest only to those of us here.*

The most recent project I finished was interviews with some retired police on what the NSW Police Force, police stations and police work used to be like. These tapes are at the Justice & Police Museum in Sydney.

I'm now working on interviews with people who were/are associated with movie theatres past/present in Manly, Warringah and Pittwater. These tapes will be held by Manly, Warringah & Pittwater Historical Society with copies at either Manly Library, Warringah Library or Pittwater Local History Resource Unit depending on the location of the theatre.

The project I'd think about doing next is interviews with Aborigines or others who can talk about Aboriginal history in Manly, Warringah and Pittwater.

Keep up the good work.

R (Bob) Pauling, Neutral Bay Junction

Articles of interest – Fire Related for *Voiceprint*

It occurred to me recently while reading Voiceprint that you may wish to publish from time to time articles of fire related history. This may include:

- History of Fire Stations*
- Occurrences of major fires etc*
- The unusual: Fire Station Ghosts, The Fireman's Pole, Horses of the NSW Fire Brigades and Others*

If the proposal is of interest to you, please contact me and I will forward the articles you think relevant and that members may enjoy reading.

John Richards, Brigades Historian for Commissioner, NSW Fire Brigades Historian, Museum of Fire, Penrith NSW

[We have written to John Richards accepting his offer, starting with the unusual]

We also want to share with you a letter which we have found among various documents relating to *Voiceprint* which have somehow managed to hide themselves until now.

This an 'old' one, dated 20 November 1996 from Bill Bottomley to Janet McCalman, OHAA Tasmanian Branch, which we thought you would like to read.

I've just finished reading your paper Oral History and Writing History in the latest edition of Voiceprint [Voiceprint 10: November 1996], and I thought it was so good that I just had to write to you to tell you how impressed I was.

I've been thinking about writing something similar for some time now, and now I won't have to because you've already done it – and so much better than I could have. As I read it I was struck by the way you addressed each of the areas that I had increasingly been feeling were being largely ignored – like the problems associated with memory, and the messy human factors that impinge on the way we all make sense of the world and our lives within it. I'm reminded of a quote from the sociologist Peter Berger here:

“Most of us do not set out deliberately to paint a grand portrait of ourselves.

Rather, we stumble like drunkards over the canvas of our self-conception throwing a little paint here, erasing some lines there, never really stopping to obtain a view of the likeness we have produced.”

And your treatment of social class, our responsibilities to those we interview, and the social dynamics of the interview process had me quietly cheering you on as I read.

You've brought a breath of fresh, uncompromising honesty to the methodological debate – and I find that most welcome. What a shame you live so far away – I'd love to chew over these sorts of considerations with you in more detail. Your article really enthused me.

And boy! you do write well! Thanks.

Bill Bottomley, Kulnura NSW

Work and War

IN THIS EPISODE OF HIS FATHER'S LIFE, BOB MITCHELL GIVES US AN INSIGHT INTO THE HIGH SPIRITS THAT ENABLED 'DAD' TO TAKE EVERYTHING IN HIS STRIDE – INCLUDING A SPELL IN NEW GUINEA DURING WORLD WAR II

Dad got up to all the normal teenage antics, including the occasional drink and smoke at a fairly early age. He remembers being about 10 years old when he had his first drink: *“a small shandy at home with the family at Christmas time.”* The shandy progressed to something a little stronger, and Dad recalls one particular night when he and his mates knocked off a bottle of port: *“We got home about 5 a.m. Did we get rotten!”* Dad was 15 at the time.

Unknown to his parents, Dad had been smoking on and off since the age of 10 or so. Dad recalls an incident about four years later when his father thought it was about time to introduce him to cigarettes:

“The old man had just finished rolling a smoke (‘Town Talk’ or ‘Log Cabin’ were the brands he liked best), and he threw it down on the table in front of me. When he asked me if I’d like to try it, I said I didn’t feel like one now as I’d only just finished smoking one in the shithouse.”

At the age of 16 he left home and got a job as a general hand on a sheep station. He worked hard six days a week and, being on his own from a fairly young age, now considers himself lucky not to get into too much trouble at that time.

On his day off (a Wednesday) he would sometimes go into Sydney for the day. It was on one such trip that he got conned!:

“A bloke stopped me as I was going past the Anthony Horderns building and told me that there was a lot of good stuff going cheaply inside. He said if I gave him five quid he’d go in and get it for me. I told him I’d never had five quid in my life, and that all I had on me was a quid. He said that that would be enough, so I gave it to him. I waited outside while he went in, but he never came back. I complained to a copper. When he’d heard what had happened, he put his hand on my shoulder and said, ‘Son, you’ve just been conned – it’s been going on a lot lately – they prey on youngsters like you – after you hand over your money, they go in one door and go straight out through another – one thing though, you’ll never forget this and you’ll never be conned again.’”

During his time away from home Dad had little contact with his family, and no encouragement from his parents to look for a better job. He moved to another sheep station, at Moree, and worked there for a couple of months. Then he heard that the Railways were looking for people, so he applied and was asked to attend an entrance exam in Sydney. Dad believes that it was his pro-active approach that got him the job:

"There were four of us for one job, at Moss Vale. The man said to sit outside on a stool and wait until we call you in. We waited and waited – and after about half an hour of this I'd had enough, so I got up and went in. I told the bloke that I was really keen to get the job, but that I was short of time as I had to get back to work. He said to go away and we'll let you know. The others were still sitting on their stools when I left. I got the job, because I'd shown I was keen.

Moss Vale was cold, and Dad didn't like the cold. But it was not the weather, nor the Railways that Dad recalled about his two years at Moss Vale – it was the sport he played, and the women he came across (or came across to him?):

"I used to run to work, and run back home again – I ran everywhere to keep fit for hockey. I would have liked to have been able to play golf then

but couldn't as I didn't have enough money.

The only spectators we got were teenage girls. I cottoned on to one and finished up boarding at this girl's place, with her family."

Dad was 20 years of age at the outbreak of World War II, and he enlisted in the AIF. He was flown over to New Guinea, where he landed a desk job in the orderly rooms. Dad's duties were to look after the provisioning of the various units stationed there. However, as he found that he had time to spare, Dad volunteered to do a variety of other tasks as well:

"We built an airfield in three weeks. It was a rush job as the Japs were then coming at us from over the Kokoda Trail. I did everything from driving tractors, to operating jack hammers, to screwing nuts on aircraft parts. I went up with the biscuit bombers (DC3s) a couple of times. We dropped food parcels out to the troops on the ground. Sometimes the parcels would break open on the way down, and the food would be spoilt before it got to the troops. We had to stand in the open doorway and hold on with one hand while we pushed the packages out with the other. I heard that on earlier trips a few of the blokes accidentally went out with the parcels."

The closest Dad got to action was when the Japanese were about 30 kilometres away. They were all given rifles and issued with ammunition and, even though they were not fully trained for active action, they were *“prepared to have a go at them, if necessary.”*

The war was not all work and no play – a couple of times Dad and the other blokes in his unit got a beer ration. However, the beer was warm and rather than drink warm beer, Dad would sell his two bottles to the Yanks. The beer would cost him one and six a bottle, and he would sell a bottle for a quid. Because of the money he was making on the side, Dad was able to leave his pay untouched for a while. Games of poker and pontoon added to his funds – one all night game netted Dad ten quid.

The personnel in Dad’s unit were constantly changing, so he did not spend enough time with any one person to form any lasting friendships. The only bloke he could remember was George Sprod, who used to work with Dad in the aircraft repair depot. George was a cartoonist of some note, who was later to become resident cartoonist for the *Bulletin* newspaper in London. George was quite a character, and was always playing jokes on others. Dad said George was good for the unit, as his amusing antics helped keep everyone’s spirits up.

Towards the end of his eighteen month posting, Dad started to feel crook

in the guts. However, he made it through and, when he had served his time, flew back to Sydney with the rest of the blokes. He was sent to Waterloo, from where he was to receive a local posting. While there, Dad went to the medical officer and complained that he was crook. The M.O. more or less said to go away and stop bludging. Dad was posted out to Wagga.

Dad’s brother Max and wife Flo were living at Wagga at the time, and Dad was visiting them (with current girlfriend Tasma) when it happened – his ulcers blew up! Dad described it as:

“Everything inside me came out into my system. Six hours later and I would die if not operated on. If it had happened in New Guinea I may well have died.”

This ended Dad’s involvement in the war. A nine week stay in hospital was followed by three months’ sick leave. He was discharged in 1944.

Bob Mitchell

Secretaries of Life

KATJA GRYNBERG RECOUNTS ENTIRELY
DIFFERENT WAR EXPERIENCES, AS TOLD BY
HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

In 1994, not long after seeing 'Schindler's List', I first read of Steven Spielberg's dream to videotape every survivor's eyewitness account of the Holocaust. Cynically, I did not believe the possibility of such a mammoth project. Not only was I wrong, but I was to become intimately involved with The Survivors of the Shoah Visual History foundation. Fifty years of silence were to be broken. Many Survivors wanted to speak now, for as Spielberg said, the window of opportunity was fast closing. The Foundation was also to videotape those rare individuals who had been honoured as Righteous Gentiles. These were extraordinary people who had not stood by. They had risked not only their own lives, but their families', when they hid Jews or helped them escape.

After World War II, Survivors fled far from their ghostly memories and Australia became home to large numbers of Europe's fragments. Sydney became the first city outside the United States to which the Foundation came.

As the Australian Regional Co-ordinators, my colleague and I began by making lists – alphabetically and

geographically, according to age and location, profession and gender, birth places and death sites. We contacted communal groups, sent newsletters and spoke to gatherings. Throughout, we were supported by an amazing team of volunteers. Our aim was to interview everyone who wanted to speak with us and to this end a hundred interviewers and a hundred volunteers were trained. Every day, four crews would interview in the morning and afternoon. Every day, interviewers would travel to wherever Survivors lived.

As we organised our schedule, irony itself seemed to sit on our shoulders. We were in balmy Sydney, under its bluest sky. Harbour breezes gently mocked the sails we glimpsed. But we compiled very different lists to the Nazis' meticulous ones. As we became more adept, our computer spilt out names that *reunited* school friends of more than half a century ago, *rejoined* concentration camp survivors who thought they were alone, *refound* people on different continents, and miraculously *reconnected* families to understand each other's silences.

The testimonies were structured in such a way that during the first segment, Survivors would describe life before the War. Many were to speak of communities that no longer existed, or lost places and customs, of a disappeared world. The

second and major part of the narrative was to deal with stories of hiding, ghettos, labour and death camps, of partisans and false documents. Often Survivors were transported back to the fear and the hunger, to the child remembering, to the daring and courage of back then. The last part of the videotape recorded life after the war and the difficulties of migration.

At the end, families were encouraged to appear together. This part we all loved. Even those of us who thought we were hardened, shed tears with the family, as pets, grown adults and grandchildren milled around. These were the miracles. This was the light after the darkest night.

I remember one of my first interviewees. She was a wonderful person who continually asked if I was OK. At first she told me joyously about her grandchildren, her sons and daughters-in-law. She plied me with apple strudel and very black sweet coffee. She would insist that I nibble the nuts and chocolates she had prepared. Often, as though to reassure herself of their existence, her eyes would dart to photos on the shelf. This little woman would laugh uproariously as she remembered the daring of the latest babe. And then she sighed, asked me if I was OK, and we began.

I remembered her most of all when I was busy with my lists, for I remembered she had had no choice. She had survived that frozen northern winter because she managed to organise a desk job. She escaped starvation that December because she hid the odd potato her friend stole – for which her friend was shot, she whispered. And as I sipped my coffee, I remembered the boiled cabbage leaf she told me of. She had said its vitamins had probably saved her from typhoid.

And while I wrote familiar names, I remembered her dignity as she revealed how she typed her brother's name into the interminable death list she kept during those chimney belching days and nights. She could not show emotion as she printed his name, as she smelled the sickly white crematoria smoke. Not then.

She told me she was known as one of 'The Secretaries of Death'. She was one of those women who typed and typed names; names she came to know in her sleep, names she had loved in her other life; names she dared not recognise nor grieve. Not there.

Back in my office, I would always look outside in disbelief. Which world was surreal? Hers or mine? Beyond our window, the sky really was blue and in the morning, kookaburras had actually laughed as I backed the car from the drive!

People have asked me if our work was harrowing. They wanted to know if we were depressed by what we heard. Perhaps strangely, we began to see our job in terms of *life*. We learnt not only about despair, but about hope and miracles. We learnt not only about evil, but goodness. And as I thought of Lottie, her irrepressible laugh, I started to think of my colleague and me, as “*secretaries of life*”.

Survivors believed with all their hearts that these stories would help change the world. Such monstrosity should never happen again. Therefore, today’s children had to know the truth to guard the future, many said. And today’s children were the live proof that Hitler had lost. Miracles do happen. How could we not marvel at their strength, at their belief in a future worth living?

And so it was that a generous benefactor lent us a wonderful office which we furnished with scrounged desks and hijacked chairs. We became part of a world wide team of listeners.

Up to January 1997, a total of 25,622 interviews had been completed globally. The task facing the Foundation now, is not only completing the recordings, but to digitise and cross reference the data. Teams of cataloguers, historians and technical experts are at work so that the testimonies will be secured and accessed

through multi media in specially designated institutions.

As more funds become available, the scope of the project has widened. Testimonies of gypsies and homosexuals have also been told.

Anyone whose life was threatened from 1933 because of Nazism, wishing to contact the Foundation, should ring Melbourne (03) 9681 9666.

Only through the past, can we hope to go forward.

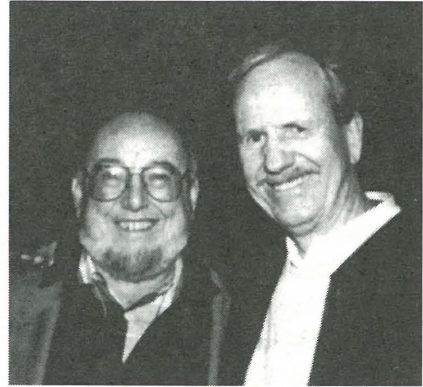
Interviews by Region – January 1997

Argentina	362
Australia	1,551
Austria	17
Belarus	4
Belgium	11
Brazil	124
Canada	1,896
Colombia	15
Costa Rica	8
Croatia	202
Czech Republic	450
Denmark	11
Dominican Republic	1
England	239
Equador	9
France	1,150
Germany	371
Greece	36
Ireland	3
Israel	3,193
Lithuania	113
Mexico	51

Netherlands	933
Poland	485
Russia	253
Slovak Republic	281
Slovenia	3
South Africa	239
Sweden	73
Switzerland	19
United States	13,093
Ukraine	165
Uruguay	57
Venezuela	138
Zimbabwe	1

Interviewers World Wide	3,050
Videographers	1,454
Volunteers	3,201

Katja Grynberg



Thomas Keneally, author of *Schindler's List* with Jerry Molen, executive producer of the Shoah Visual History Foundation



Liam Neeson with Steven Spielberg

Photos from *Past Forward*, the Newsletter of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, December 1995 issue.

Teaching Oral History

RUTH WILSON SHARES HER EXPERIENCE OF INTRODUCING YEAR 8 STUDENTS TO ORAL HISTORY

It seems that history teachers in Sydney's secondary schools are developing a taste for the oral history method (often inspired, they say by "Rosie Block's wonderful introduction"), and some are building oral history projects into their students' activities. A history teacher from one such school assigned her Year 8 students an oral history task as part of a unit of work on *The Changing Roles of Women in the 20th Century*.

I was requested to conduct a workshop to prepare the students for their interviews which they were to arrange themselves.

The workshop goal was to provide students with an understanding of the nature and the purpose of oral history by:

- giving them the experience of interviewing and being interviewed
- demonstrating the techniques of a 'good' interview
- introducing them to the protocols and the practice of oral history
- formulating interview questions relevant to a given focus
- identifying the skills required to process an interview

The workshop approach was experiential. Before discussing oral history as a concept the students engaged in the experience to give them a context for considering the purpose and outcomes of the method. Their first task was to write down six questions that would provide them with the information they would need to create a brief biography. Having done this they broke into groups to try out their questions on each other. Several of them volunteered to report back to the class on what they had learned in the course of the interview.

Lively discussion was generated by the embryonic oral history experience.

Students shared views about:

- what it felt like to be an interviewer
- what it felt like to be interviewed
- the sort of information gained from different types of questions
- the structuring of questions that resulted in information about facts, opinions and feelings, respectively
- the unique opportunities provided by the interview method

As this stage students were in a position to receive an account of oral history to which they could relate. We looked at a range of definitions of oral history, from very simple ("an exciting way of recording the present and the past") to quite complex ("a method which records three

major categories of information – sensory, complementary and original”). In presenting the background of oral history and the revival of this traditional form of preserving history, emphasis was placed on two aspects:

- (a) the tools of trade of the contemporary oral historian, and the need to understand the technology;
- (b) the ethics and protocols of oral history, which covered the relationship with the interviewee, the need for authorisation, and the need to return personal records and to provide copies of interview tapes and documents that are created.

A demonstration interview, using the tape recorder, provided me with an opportunity to model oral history ‘best practice’. This led naturally to comments on the use of the recorder, the role of the external microphone, the counter and the pause button; as well as the benefits of good quality tapes and proper labelling.

I deliberately avoided the ‘life history’ interview in order to encourage insights into the role of oral history in looking at specific events and patterns. The interviewee was the class teacher, and the students were asked to work out the focus (‘changes in relationships between teachers and students’) from the questions themselves. This again led to

informed discussion from which we were able to draw conclusions about the structure of the interview, the formulation of questions, and the strategies available to the interviewer to maintain relevance as well as to encourage relaxed and interesting reflections.

In dealing with the processing of interviews we discussed the ways in which the information on the tapes can be accessed without transcribing the tapes, as a prelude to reflecting on specific questions concerning the events and experiences described by the interviewee.

The workshop concluded with an exercise in which the students once again formulated questions for an interview, this time on the assignment theme (‘the changing role of women in the 20th century’). Volunteers took turns in interviewing me, using the prepared questions, and there was evidence of an increased understanding of how to probe and explore promising responses.

Ruth Wilson

Oral History, Memory, and the Sense of Place

Oral History (USA) Annual Conference 1996

MARGARET PARK ATTENDED THE ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION (USA) ANNUAL CONFERENCE FROM 10-13 OCTOBER 1996, WHICH WAS ON THE TOPIC ORAL HISTORY, MEMORY AND THE SENSE OF PLACE:

Attending the American Oral History Conference in October was a rewarding and enriching experience. The conference program was a very full one, with speakers and presenters representing both the international and national scene and all aspects of oral history work and endeavours. The conference was set in the historic city of Philadelphia, the home of Benjamin Franklin, the symbolic Liberty Bell and the American Constitution; and while the conference program was jam-packed with numerous sessions competing for your time and attention, the programmers still provided ample opportunities to tour the city of brotherly love and savour some of its exciting history. The conference itself was held in the heart of the city in the Holiday Inn Select Hotel. This was very central and an extremely efficient venue as far as attending concurrent sessions and generally finding your way around, considering there were over 600 registered delegates.

The sessions were varied and ranged from the stories of tap dancers (Philadelphian African American women hoofers) and centenarian Yugoslavian tribal women, to community identity projects: oral history and working class life in America, changing neighbourhoods and urban renewal and oral history as storytelling. In total, 103 sessions were held over the five days, the earlier sessions featuring workshops and meetings, similar to our conferences. There was a closing session which acted as feedback and a think-tank for the 1997 New Orleans Conference committee to work with on programming and paper submissions.

Many of the papers worked on the conference theme of memory and a sense of place and featured the use of oral history in interpreting historic sites. One such site was the Howell Living History Farm in New Jersey where a government grant has enabled a community to establish links with its farming history and recreate a farm using the knowledge of a retired farmer. Memory also played a vital part in most of the sessions, such as the stories of blue collar workers in the remote mining towns of western Pennsylvania; 19th century interviews conducted by contemporaries of Abraham Lincoln on

his life and work; the memories of an unstructured women's group (the first Thursday girls' club), whose commonality was their husbands' factory work and their neighbourhood, the changing nature of the New York City street gangs, and the effect of urbanisation of a Mexican Barrio, to cite just a few!

I had the privilege of chairing a session on producing oral histories entitled 'Reports from the Field' and met two delightful and enthusiastic oral historians: Sylvia Arden and Zorka Milich. What made this session unique was that these historians produced their separate and equally distinct videos utilising the services of their sons, Dan Arden and Mark Milich, both of whom are talented media experts. Zorka Milich interviewed 30 tribal women from Yugoslavia about their lives and cultures, while Sylvia Arden conducted a history of the Scandinavian pioneers of Lander County, Nevada. Both projects have resulted in quality educational documentaries.

The conference was highly successful and an exhausting exchange of thoughts, ideas and projects. Like our work in Australia, it demonstrated a wealth of information out there to be tapped into as valid and valuable sources of our history and a means of documenting our culture and heritage.

My only criticism, and one shared at the closing session by others, was the uniquely American way of extending the Chair's role to act as commentator at the end of each session. While this could be viewed as a constructive use of a Chair's time to a degree, I found that it took time away from the presenters, leaving us with the words and thoughts of someone who was not an expert on the topic. It also left less time for Q & A which most of the delegates desired to enter into.

If anyone has the time and the opportunity, the next US Oral History Conference will be held sometime on October 1997 in New Orleans, another exciting and fascinating American city.

Contact address for further information:
Oral History Association
Baylor University
PO Box 97234
Waco, Texas
USA 76798-7234

Margaret Park

Manager, Historical Services
Stanton Library, North Sydney

Promoting Reminiscence

There are many things which will trigger our memories. At times our memories may be triggered when we find 'the unusual' in quite strange surroundings. The trigger may be a long way from its original purpose and place – such was my experience recently.

Monday Mornings

Browsing through a local decorator shop my attention was taken by a small shelf unit made for displaying knick-knacks. Surely the back of the unit couldn't be a washboard? Mine would have memories, just memories as my mind raced back to washing day in my childhood home in country NSW.

Memories of the Monday wash day, the copper boiling, the glowing coals giving out a glorious heat to warm small hands and feet on cold winter mornings. The huge concrete tub, with the washboard at the ready, filled with its white froth of suds inches thick. Memories of standing on a box to reach into the tub and lifting up handfuls of snow to shape and mould in all manner of figures – people and wild animals similar to those in my story books and beautiful fairies living in the bubbles, then in the next instant – gone! Wash day was fun when I was four! But for my mother?

Other memories of the heat, scrubbing and rubbing away until the clothes were clean and my mother exhausted in the summer heat. In winter, the cold wind whipping the clothes as they were hung on the line, and her hands were frozen. The seemingly endless heavy loads which my mother lifted as the huge pile of washing was transferred to the clothes line.

Who wants a washboard? Do I really need to spend \$39.95 to put my memories on? I prefer to share them with you!

Joyce Cribb

Diary of Events



National Conference

3-7 September 1997

Plaza Hotel Alice Springs

From the time of registration between 4.30 and 5.30 pm on Wednesday, 3 September 1997 until the closing session between 4.00 and 5.00 pm on Sunday, 7 September 1997, this should be a wonderful conference.

Topics include keynote addresses on the opening day on **Crossing Borders** by Pat Mamanyjun Torres, artist and writer, Co-ordinator, Cultural Centre, Bachelor College, NT and Bill Gammage, History Department, University of Adelaide, S.A.

This will be followed by sessions during the rest of the conference on topics such as

- Oral Traditions and New Technologies
- Oral Traditions and the Law
- Voices from Across the Tasman
- Cross-Cultural Implications of Oral History
- Speaking and Listening: the Implications of Interviewing
- Who will Hear?: Ethical Implications of Sensitive Interviewing Programs
- Competing Voices: Reviewing the
- Cross-Cultural Implications of Oral Traditions

- Reports Forum
- Forum: **Our Places** including **Childhood Places, Changing Places** and **Going Places**.

Social events include an evening at the Araluen Centre for the Arts and Entertainment on Thursday, 4 September 1997, a discussion evening on The Future of Oral History at Radio National and the Australian Heritage Commission on Friday, 5 September 1997 and a conference dinner under the stars at the Telegraph Station Historical Reserve on Saturday, 6 September 1997.

For further information and registration details, contact:

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