



voiceprint

Newsletter

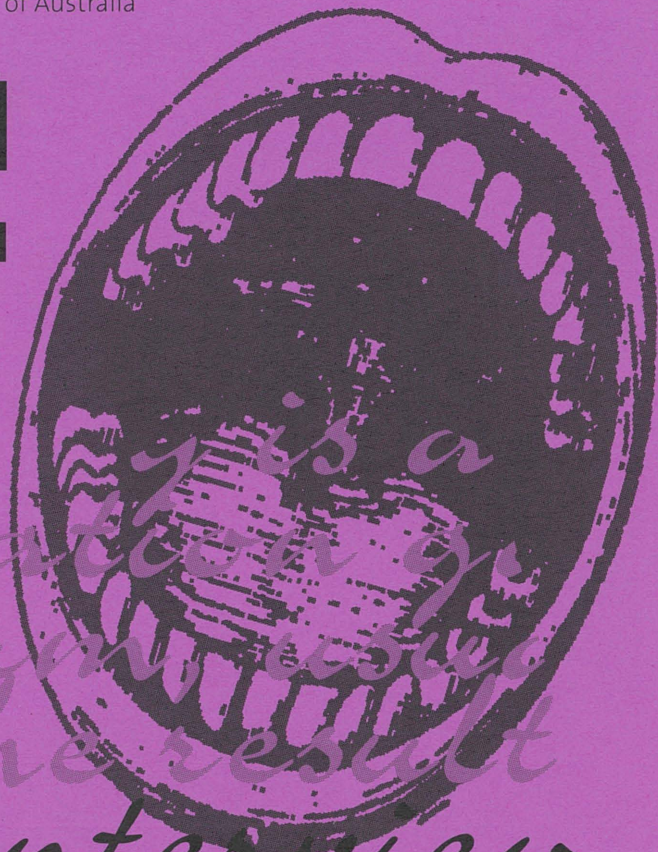
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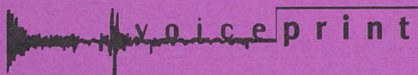
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March 2000



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The views expressed in articles in this *Voiceprint* are not necessarily those of the NSW Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia, nor its editors



Editorial

There seem to have been a great deal of looking back over the past year. "Tales of the Century" provided the theme for our conference last year. In this edition of Voiceprint our articles for the most part follow a similar theme. The record of the past is important, it is said, because we need to know where we have been to know where we are going. Hopefully the articles in this edition will allow some opportunity for reflection that brings inspiration to all oral historians.

The story of the life of Patrick Saul is an illustration of how one person's drive and inspiration can establish a whole collection of recorded sound (in this case mostly music) that will benefit future generations. The collections of recorded sound if they are to inform future generations have to be preserved and accessible in the years ahead. It is very pleasing to be able to report that the Stanton Library of North Sydney has received a grant from the National Library of Australia to transfer their audio tapes to CD-ROM format. Thus here we see the beginning of the process of looking to the future by preserving the sounds of the past in an accessible format. Congratulations to Margaret Park and her team – hopefully other collections will follow their lead and move to digital technology.

The other two main articles in this edition reflect stories of very different lifestyles from the past. The struggle of the people from Tokelau (I had to go to the atlas to find where it is!) to keep alive their culture and traditions in a very different Australian setting. It is interesting to note how the head of the family now accepts the need to use modern technology to keep their stories alive – it is not good that "many stories were buried with grandfather".

How sport has changed! Can anyone imagine that in 1999 the great 'one Tony Lockett' would have marched up and down George Street on a Friday evening! However my dear son in law will undoubtedly tell and show the video footage of that famous record breaking kick, and the crowds who raced onto the ground, and say, "I was there among the crowd on the ground". The supporters of football in Melbourne in the 1930s have their memories and those of 1999 will have the help of technology to illustrate their stories. Times have changed.

Enjoy the stories, and keep recording the current stories. I have been promised reports of a number of current projects by members for the next edition. Do you have anything to report? We would love to hear from you. Good luck with the technology!

Joyce Cribb.

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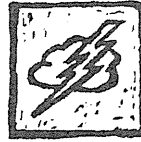
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New Members since November 1999

Hail to all the members of 2000 and welcome to these new members.

RTA, NSW

interested in conducting interviews with past employees.

Carol Pearson

interested in oral history.

Portia Eubanks

Research assistant – nursing

Radio Media Networks

Radio program production

(Peter Rubinstein)

Antoinette Buchanan

Local studies librarian

Susan Kennedy

Archivist

Anna Cole

Freelance researcher

Esther Rothfield

Historian

Megan Payne

Customs Officer

Joy Woodhouse

NSW government history

Ruth Balint

Historian, Strathfield Municipal Library

Nuts and Bolts – short items of interest to members

The Merle Coppel Oral History Collection receives National Library of Australia Community Heritage Grant

North Sydney Council's Stanton Library has been co-ordinating an oral history program for over 10 years now and its aim is to document the history of the North Sydney area by capturing the voices and memories of the people who have made it such a unique and special place in which to live and work. Some of our recordings date back beyond 10 years and many of these master tapes are in need of preservation for the future. In order to ensure their survival as an important historical and cultural resource we applied for a National Library of Australia Community Heritage Grant in 1999 seeking funds to reformat the master audio tapes to CD-ROMs.

In order to satisfy the NLA's criteria to receive this grant we had to provide evidence that our collection was nationally significant. It is indeed rewarding that the selection committee (over 200 applications were received but only 20 granted) clearly identified Stanton's collection as comprehensive and significant on a national level.

We received \$4,200 and North Sydney Council will support this with an additional \$1,800. These funds will not be sufficient to reformat the entire collection to date as we have over 200 recordings with over 300 hours of recording time, but will enable us to work on preserving the most fragile, some of the oldest in the collection and those that we consider the most significant.

For further enquiries about this collection contact Margaret Park, Council Historian at North Sydney Council on (02) 9936 8411.

Statement of significance submitted in the grant application

The Merle Coppel Oral History Collection dates back to the late 1980s and it is the age of a large proportion of the collection that has led us to apply for a grant to reformat it digitally.

The collection focuses on North Sydney – its history, growth and development and it is unique in this sense. The interviews collected over the last 10 years, whilst relating directly to the local area, also reflect issues which relate to state and national significance, such as the depression years, the war years, the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Luna Park, etc.

The people who have been interviewed range from long term residents who have lived in one place for over 50 years and who have seen significant changes in our urban environment and in the wider Sydney region to some of our more well known celebrities, e.g. Hayes Gordon (theatre), Sir John Cramer (politics), Stuart Murray (architecture), Roger Pegrum (swimming), Ted Mack (politics at all levels), Dulcie Holland Bellhouse (music), to name just a few.

The collection is a rare and comprehensive one. It is still ongoing and we endeavour to interview at least 10 people per annum if time and resources permit. From time to time we embark on specific projects for publication and our exhibition program: "Down the Bay: the changing foreshores of North Sydney" (publication, soon to be a CD-ROM), "That's the way we did medicine in those days" (exhibition), "Building a Bridge for Sydney: the Sydney Harbour Bridge from a North Sydney perspective" (exhibition); and currently we are working on interviews for our 2001 Centenary of Federation publication – North Sydney's Planning History.

The collection is used in conjunction with our other historical collections at Stanton Library and can be accessed by the same subject search used for finding books, photographs, ephemera and vertical file material. This provides easy public access to the collection at all times the Library is open.

Discover Australia's oral History Collections

This website contains a National Directory of Australia's Oral History Collections which you may visit at the National Library website at <www.nla.gov.au/ohdir>.

Premier's History Awards – 1999

Of interest to members will be the Premier's Audio Visual History Prize awarded to Michelle Rayner of ABC Radio National. The award was made for *Passes and Pathways*, an audio history of the Blue Mountains.

The Australian History Prize was awarded to Ken Inglis for *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*.

Some 163 books, films, CD-ROMS and radio and television documentaries were received in five categories, with prizes totalling \$75,000. NSW is the only state to reward historical research in this way.

Announcement from Sussex

(Alistair Thompson has sent us information about the new Centre for Life History Research).

This centre has opened at the University of Sussex, Brighton, England. The centre supports a portfolio of life history research and teaching activities with an outstanding international reputation. Life history research uses life stories – whether written, oral or in other forms – as a primary source for social, cultural or historical research. The University houses the Mass-Observation Archive, a unique research collection focusing on twentieth century British life and the base for an ongoing research project in autobiographical and documentary writing. The new centre also has close links with oral and community history projects in Sussex, Britain and abroad. The Joint Directors of the Centre are Dorothy Sheridan, President of the European Association for Autobiography and Mass-Observation Archivist and Project Director Alistair Thomson, co-editor of the British journal *Oral History* and Vice-President of the International Oral History Association.

MA in Life History Research: Oral History and Mass-Observation

This pioneering, inter-disciplinary University of Sussex MA (next intake October 2000) gives graduate students a thorough grounding in theory and practice of life history research, and provides training and support for students' own life history research projects.

For MA applications and further details contact Alistair Thomson, Centre for Life History Research, CCE, University of Sussex, Brighton, BN19RG, England or email <a.s.thomson@sussex.ac.uk> or explore course details on the University website <www.sussex.ac.uk>.

New Book on Greek-Australian History

(Our Member Leonard Janiszewski has sent us a note about a recent publication)

This is to inform you of our recently published major new book on Greek-Australian history, which would be of interest to all practitioners of oral history. The publication contains sections from numerous oral history interviews we have undertaken over the years.

The book, based upon, and bearing the same title as our successful national touring exhibition, *In Their Own Image: Greek-Australians* was launched at the State Library last year. Greek-Australian history is observed from 1810 to the present day.

Best wishes,

Effy Alexakis and Leonard Janiszewski

REPORTS

Giving Voice – Oral Historians and the Shaping of Narrative

– 6-10 October, U.S. Oral History Conference, Anchorage, Alaska

Report by Barbara Erskine, North Queensland representative and On Tape editor. (I am most grateful to my Queensland colleague for this report. Barbara's paper presented at this conference appears in this edition of Voiceprint. Thank you Barbara)

The thing I want to say most is “you should have been there!” For me it was nostalgia that got me there. Jim and I were married in Alaska, (1967), 32 years ago and came to Australia 5 years later. Alaska is just as grand as it ever was and I was fortunate enough to fit in a trip to Mt McKinley National Park. The mountain is called Denali, the highest peak on the north American continent. I saw moose, Dall Sheep and grizzly bear tracks (which is close enough for me).

The conference was held at the Hilton Hotel, a fine venue. However there are plenty of Bed & Breakfasts to choose from and mine (The Arctic Poppy) just far enough away for a healthy walk. The weather was clear and zero Fahrenheit. Perfect for anything. The night sky was full of the aurora borealis (opposite of our aurora australis).

The day of conference registration there was an introductory workshop for the ‘newbies’. There was also a workshop “Preservation of Audio, Video and Film Materials” while exhibits from Native American Oral History set an authentic

scene. These are always a good drawing card for the general public.

The following four days were such a smorgasbord of choices, most of us found ourselves in total overload by the end of the first day. I was fortunate to be given a spot on the first day to present my paper “Vanishing Peoples of the Pacific: Tokelau”. I was in the session “Documenting Migration”. Mine was not an academic paper and was warmly received after a short geography lesson of the South Pacific. It is encouraging for us non-academics who are professional Oral Historians to be taken seriously, especially after having traveled so far. All academics but me, at this session, the others fascinating in their difference and academic approach. “Black Americans Who ‘Returned’ to Africa”; and “GI War Brides” and “Austrian-American Marriages in the Post World War II Period”. What a variety. The two sessions running concurrently with these were “Interviewing Spies, Liars and Suspects” and “Rock beneath the Sand: Documenting the Rural Texas Church

through Oral History and Photography".
Anybody get any good ideas looking at these titles? I did.

There was a reception on the first evening at the Anchorage Museum of History & Art, funded by the Museum. I supped near an amazing looking preserved Musk Ox. Have you ever stood next to one? Do you know that Qiviut is hand knitted into socks and sweaters by a Native owned cooperative since 1969? This is the only place in the world where qiviut is gathered and made into useful products.

A free breakfast for newcomers was hosted on the top floor of the Hilton. Only problem was, this time of the year the sun doesn't come up until 9:15am. Therefore we did not get the wonderful view of Mt McKinley as planned. But the congeniality made up for the lack of view. Australia is always of interest to the 'other side' and I would encourage more oral history work to be offered. Francis Good was there from Darwin and a few from south of Queensland. Email me for any more information, <jerskine@ultra.net.au>

Barbara Erskine.



Ordinary Heroes – Personal Recollections of Australian at War – by Barry Dickins

(published by Hardie Grant Publishing, South Yarra, Victoria).

(This review by Suzanne Mulligan was first published in On Tape, Newsletter of the Queensland Branch of OHAA, November 1999).

Barry Dickins is the son of a World War II veteran who served in New Guinea. Dickins grew up hearing snippets of stories about the war from his father and his father's fiends. As his father grew older, Dickins resolved to learn more about the war first hand from the people who experienced it and began recording their memories. He explains in his introduction "I wanted to go for a close-up, to write like a camera so that others could see the speakers as I myself saw them."

He interviewed veterans from World War I, World War II and Vietnam. Each interview is accompanied by a photograph of the subject taken at the time of his or her service. The subject is introduced, describing the location and the subject's appearance. As the interview progresses, Barry intersperses the subject's story with asides, which enable the reader to learn more about the subject's personality – "he beams a twinkly smile"; "he chuckles, a hand over

his laughing mouth." We learn not just about the experiences of the subjects but the sort of person they are.

Most of Dickins' World War I interviewees have passed their century and tell us about life before the war as well as their wartime experiences. One talks about his life growing up in the bush, taming large tracts of land and the struggle to survive – and then he went to war. Another talks about his family, his mother's love and the shame he feels even today that he forged her signature so that he could enlist.

A large part of Dickins' book is devoted to World War II veterans, particularly the experiences of prisoners-of-war. The story of Ray Wheeler who was taken prisoner at Singapore is particularly moving as he describes his life at Changi and on the Burma railway. He observed what the monkeys ate and then ate the same. Later he was aboard a Japanese troopship when it was sunk by a torpedo. He survived this horrific

experience while many died in the sea around him. Jack Elliott was also a Changi prisoner and he started the Changi cemetery after a mate died. He approached the Japanese to have an area set aside and Jack with four others kept a proper order in the cemetery and buried the dead with as much dignity as possible in the circumstances. When the prisoners were freed “the war graves people came up” and were surprised to find “a well-organised cemetery.”

Dickins interviewed two nurses who became Japanese POW's – Wilma Young and Vivian Bullwinkel. Vivian was shot by the Japanese after being ordered with 21 other people to walk into the sea. Her survival ensured this atrocity became known.

Another subject was Wal Johnson who was immortalised by Damien Parer when Johnson was photographed being guided while blinded through the New Guinea jungle. Wal Johnson had never given an interview before because he was “down on the press.” Department of Veterans' Affairs liaised between Dickins and Johnson so the reader is treated to an “exclusive” account of the circumstances, which led to the famous photo.

Dickins' book is an excellent collection of first-hand war memories as well as an insight into other parts of their lives before the horror of war and the consequences of it. His style draws in the reader so that we learn about the subjects' physical characteristics, their surrounds and their personality so we see a whole picture of the subject not just their words. His subjects are brought to life. We see them as real people, ordinary people who became “ordinary heroes”.

Women of Ku-ring-gai – a Tribute – by Helen Malcher

Published by Ku-ring-gai Historical Society Inc. – \$29.95

This local historical society felt that the achievements of the women of the district had been somewhat neglected over the years and deserved greater acknowledgment. *Women of Ku-ring-gai* tells the stories of 100 women. Those chosen to be featured in the book have lived for at least 15 years in the area and are mostly over 65 – born in the 1930's or earlier. Women born in the second half of the 20th century await their turn, if, and, when a further publication appears. It is hoped that this excellent publication will in time be followed by another!

The book tells us a little of the women of the Gurungai tribe who lived in the area long before, when in 1825, Mary Fidden came to live in her hut near the Lane Cove river and Matilda Fish farmed land in what is now Killara. The stories of other pioneering women who came to the area over 150 years ago make interesting reading along with the talented women who have lived and worked in the area since these early times, pioneers too, in many professions and artistic and charitable fields.

The brief biographies are gathered from a wide variety of sources, there are over 30 authors, and some have excerpts from personal memories of the younger women included, and family diaries and memories have been used for many of the biographies. However, all reflect something of the spirit of the women featured. Despite the brevity of the biographies they do capture the interest of the reader, and with the photographs and other illustrations the book makes a delightful addition to any library – a book to keep and return to time and time again – stories that a current woman of Ku-ring-gai finds inspiring!

Joyce Cribb.

ARTICLES

VFL Football in Melbourne in the 1930s

(Rob Kingston was the speaker at the OHAA – Victorian Branch meeting, in May 1999. This article is reprinted from Rewind No 47, Newsletter of the Victorian Branch of OHAA)

I have just completed a master's thesis at Melbourne University, and my topic was Victorian Football League support in Melbourne in the 1930's. As a lifelong fan of Australian Rules, it was perhaps not surprising that I should undertake a study of the game. As well, it has always seemed to me that one of the most interesting features of Melbourne, which sets it apart from other cities, is the enormous interest and fervor its inhabitants display for this one sport – Australian Rules football. This enthusiasm can be established statistically as well as anecdotally, in that attendance rates at VFL games in Melbourne have generally far exceeded those of most other cities and their main football code. For example, in 1934, nine percent of Melbourne's population attended VFL games on a weekly basis, while the comparable figure for Sydney and rugby league was two percent.

It seemed to me that to do justice to the topic I would have to speak to actual football supporters. There is much print source material available on the game through the years, but most of it focuses on the players and the matches, and offers little insight into the experience of the barracker. In recent times, there has been a growth of scholarly writing on the game but this also tends to allot only limited space to the supporter. So, it is a curious fact that, although Melbourne football is notable for the high level of engagement and enthusiasm of its followers, one gets little sense of this, from writings on the subject. Hopefully, this is where oral history can play a role.

The decision to employ oral history actually decided the era I would study. I wanted to choose a time when Melbourne was a very different place than it is today. In particular I believe the city was transformed in the years after World War II, by immigration, by the urban sprawl resulting from population growth and increased prosperity, and by the policies of the Housing Commission. So, it was desirable to focus on a period before the war. But, at the same time, it

would be difficult to find enough people who could speak at first hand of the years before 1930. Also, I thought the decade 1930-1939 would give interviewees a clearly defined slab of time to concentrate on, between the onset of the depression and the start of the war. Although, in practice, I found supporters' memories often slid easily between different decades. This was actually reassuring in a way, in that it indicated that, at least in terms of football support, the depression years were not atypical. The influence of the economic crisis of the 1930s could not be ignored, but it was not all-defining.

In all, I recorded conversations with twenty-nine people who had memories of 1930s VFL football, and obtained four taped interviews on the topic from other sources. Most of the subjects were found through friends and contacts, and by approaching senior citizens clubs. The passion with which many people spoke of their association with the sport certainly made my task easier, and, as well, seemed to confirm the subject was one worthy of study.

My thesis examines how, in the 1930s, Melbourne was possessed of a vibrant street culture, particularly in the inner suburbs, and how interest in football

arose from this culture. As well, the study looks at how support for the game reflected the strong sense of local, suburban identity, which also then prevailed. Other themes examined are the importance to football culture of the players and the local football grounds, and how the poverty and social stigma of much of inner-Melbourne helped shape supporters' attitudes to their teams.

As was hoped, my oral sources were extremely useful in illuminating the football culture of 1930s Melbourne. They were particularly valuable indicating how the sport was such an integral part of the city's intimate street communities, a link difficult to establish by other means. For example, in my discussion with Jack Waite, who grew up in West Footscray in the 1930s, he showed an extensive knowledge of the lives of his neighbours, and their involvement with VFL football. After a detailed rundown of these connections Jack concludes: "So, in a street of no more than twenty houses, we had seventy five kids, and probably laid claim to about five League footballers and two umpires." Other interviewees also showed themselves to be products of the pre-war street communities, often remembering which VFL team their neighbours barracked for, and illustrating how football was part of their neighbourhood's frequent, informal interactions.

A firm sense of regional identity and suburban self-containment also came through expression in football, where the people barracked for their team against other, rival suburbs. Gordon Carlyon, who grew up Collingwood before the war, and later became Collingwood football club secretary, shows his strong sense of connection with his locality, as he vividly recalls the scene at his local shopping centre at its busiest time: "On a Friday night, late shopping night, that was a night out, you'd go up Smith Street, just to walk along, you'd meet everybody ... and the Collingwood footballers would go along. Many occasions they'd start from Johnson Street and walk up to Laxton's shoe shop – he was a committeeman – then they'd walk back. They had everybody following them, talking to them." In the 1930s, for Gordon Carlyon, as with other people I spoke with, street culture, local identity and football were all closely intertwined.

So, in these and many other examples oral history illuminated my study in a way printed material could not. I think, also, that 'live' subjects can give a work a special immediacy and humanity. However, of course, all this does not mean there are not problems in assessing oral sources. For example, as referred to earlier, it could be alarming for the interviewer when the interviewees slipped seamlessly through

several decades in the space of a sentence, as they sometimes did. However, at least in terms of verifying chronologies, the nature of the subject did have its advantage. This is because football presents a detailed calendar of 'great events', such as grand finals, and the career spans of well-known players, which can be readily used to crosscheck supporters' recollections.

As well as the usual vagaries of memory, discussions of football are particularly prone to descend into nostalgia, a vice with which oral history is often associated. This is partly because, for the barracker, football was a pleasant, voluntary experience, which would not be the case if the topic under investigation was people's memories of, say, a war, or some other crisis. The tendency to idealise a footballing past is also strong because the sport exists today, but with a very different structure. So for some it becomes an irresistible metaphor for how life was better in the 'old days'. However, other interviewees were prepared to concede that the present is of some value, and there was enough plurality in their responses to allow for comparison with each other. The nostalgic viewpoint did not alone prevail.

Apart from the problems of accuracy and nostalgia in assessing sources there is the broader issue of whether or not such sources offer a valid pathway into the past at all. Rather than being concerned with 'what happened', many recent oral historians have tended to focus more on how people construct narratives of the past. And some would argue that, in fact, interviewees' distortions of memory are the most significant part of their remembering. However, while offering important insights into the process of memory there are also problems with an approach which views people's stories as most worthwhile for the mistakes they contain. To discount people's memories as a way into the past in a way devalues those memories.

Aside from the topic of the thesis, I found the whole process of seeking out and speaking with older football supporters educational in many other ways. For one thing, I learnt a lot about the outlook of the pre-war generation. Their worldview is, in some ways, perhaps limited, but they have more directness and fewer neuroses than the baby-boomers who followed them. And their confined view can be largely explained by prewar limitations on income and educational opportunities, which were much more restricted than I

had realised. But perhaps the fact that most struck me during the course of the study was the complete transformation of inner-Melbourne since 1930. What had been VFL football's 'heartland' before the war has changed from a slum to a socially desirable address. The few people I spoke with who have remained in the inner-city throughout tell of the twin phenomena of spiraling property prices and diminishing sense of community.

So, oral history was an essential part of my thesis. It illuminated my argument in a way that printed material could not, although, as with all sources, there were problems of assessment. I found the whole exercise to be an absorbing one, in which I learnt much more than just about football.

Rob Kingston

The Life of Patrick Saul

From the Independent, July 1999

(Thank you to Mark McGinness for drawing the following obituary to our attention)

Anthony Patrick Hodgins Saul, sound archivist: born Dover, Kent, 15 October 1913; OBE 1971; married Diana Hull; died Kingston upon Thames, Surrey 9, May 1999.

PATRICK SAUL was a classic example of the visionary outsider who, through a lifetime's personal dedication, leaves a lasting legacy of national importance; in Saul's case the British Institute of Recorded Sound (BIRS) now the National Sound Archive at the British Library. Saul felt that a national sound archive should record everything and a major discussion point in the early 1960s was whether pop music should be collected. It was. This inclusiveness was extended to the classical music traditions of the Far East, to dialect recordings, to folk music, and the British Library of Wildlife Sounds.

He was born in 1913, the son of a dental surgeon whose house overlooked the Dover seafront from where in the summer the family was constantly serenaded by the band. This and his education at Dover College, then a tough public school that only cared for games and the officer training corps, did nothing to develop his musical understanding, which came from records and listening to European radio stations, which he later described as "a kind of musical university".

Saul started his working life as a bank clerk, and was a conscientious objector during the Second World War. Afterwards he read for a degree in Psychology as an external mature student at London University.

In his mid-teens he made the realisation that records could go out of

print. He went to the British Museum, seeking to hear a cherished performance, only to find that they did not collect recordings. Appalled, he determined that something should be done, and it became his life's work.

The path for the establishment of the BIRS was set in 1947 when the Association of Libraries and Information Bureaux (Aslib) held a conference on the need for a national sound archive and a working committee, chaired by the music critic of The Times, Frank Howes, was established.

The institute was formally constituted in 1948, with Saul as Secretary, the holdings building on Saul's personal collection, and first moved into public premises in 1955, becoming a registered educational charity. Appeals for recordings resulted in rapid growth and

many composers allowed the BIRS to copy their private off-air recordings, often from pre-war broadcasts.

The BIRS was at first housed at 38 Russell Square, in premises owned by the British Museum, where Saul would loom from an inner room through chaotic piles of recordings of all descriptions to greet visitors. Even in 1999, historical sound recording is still a discipline where the amateur collector and enthusiast is the focus of scholarly knowledge and research.

In 1960 the scholarly importance of sound recording was recognised by few academics, and Saul accumulated a circle of distinguished habitués at the BIRS whose expertise he drew on shamelessly. Specialists soon found themselves sucked into his web, as unpaid helpers, and contributors to the massive card index of the never-to-be-published fourth supplement of the *World's Encyclopedia of Recorded Music* maintained by Eric Hughes, who has himself recently, died.

From the outset, Saul recognised that any successful scholarly organisation needed to publish a journal to underline its national and international standing, and the humble typescript format of the bulletin that was issued in 1956-60 belied its enormous ambition and high intellectual content, and after 18 issues it soon flowered into *Recorded Sound* (1961-84). Its cessation is possibly the

only regrettable downside of the absorption of BIRS by the British Library.

Also from the first, Saul organised remarkable lecture-recitals, with leading speakers, the lectures always underlining the documentary value of sound recordings. After his degree, Saul had worked for Birkbeck College organising London University extension lectures, and, drawing on this experience and his good relations with the college, joint lecture programmes were started, later expanded after elegant premises in South Kensington were purchased, where the by then substantial collection moved in 1968. There the BIRS was able to organise and host its own lectures. Saul went for the big names, and not infrequently one found that the chair – such as the soprano Dame Eva Turner, or the pianist Claudio Arrau – was even more distinguished than the speakers were.

Saul had strong Francophile sympathies, and he repeatedly promoted the distinguished baritone Pierre Bernac to visit the UK to give master-classes organised by the BIRS. Later, supported by the composer Sir Lennox Berkeley and others, he was the founder of the *Friends of Pierre Bernac*.

When wanting to cover Debussy, what more natural than for Saul to use his French contacts to persuade the composer's stepdaughter, Dolly Bardac, to recall her family life, illustrating her

published text in Recorded Sound and with a wonderful selection of photographs from her family collection.

One of Saul's early coups was to negotiate a formal agreement that the BIRS could record BBC programmes off the air, and it also became a depository for BBC transcription discs.

He was keen to publish specialised catalogues, and, recognising the responsibilities of a national collection to its countrymen, in 1966 he issued a catalogue of off-air recordings of music by 20th-century British composers, remarkable for its coverage of what are now historic performances, including the first performance of Britten's War Requiem in 1962.

Trying to develop this collection in the mid-1960s, he proposed that the BBC and Radio France should systematically broadcast the otherwise unrecorded music of a leading composer, and exchange copies of the tapes, and he commissioned me to compile a list of unrecorded Arnold Bax as the UK's contribution. The scheme failed to fly when his attempts to persuade the radio stations to implement the plan ran into the sand.

Saul was fortunate in attracting a board of governors who shared his vision. Although the institute's early years at Russell Square were funded personally by Sir Robert Mayer, supplemented by occasional Treasury

hand – outs, in 1961 representations to government by leading figures in the world of music, including Myra Hess and Yehudi Menuhin, secured an annual Treasury grant-in-aid.

It has to be said that Saul was a canny operator in extracting the maximum funding from his various sources, but I am not sure he understood government finance. He rang me one evening asking me urgently to call at BIRS; when I did so he produced his annual budget bid documentation from the DES. "What do I do?" he demanded. I asked what the budget had been the previous year, I seem to remember it had been 75,000 pounds. "Why not ask for 85,000 pounds?" I suggested. "What we need is three million," he retorted. "But you cannot multiply a government budget bid by 30," I replied. "Why not?" he said, "it's what we need; these government people don't understand!"

During his working life, he never appeared to be affected by even minor illnesses and never missed a day at the institute. He enjoyed a strong constitution that continued long after he retired in 1978, but in 1995 he suffered an incapacitating stroke.

Lewis Foreman

Vanishing Peoples of the Pacific: Tokelau

(Paper presented by Barbara Erskine at the US Oral History Conference, Alaska, USA).

My presentation here could be considered only a prologue. This story is not a study. It is a sharing of friendship extended from a family group of Tokelau people to my family. They first arrived in Townsville, North Queensland in 1990. We have been friends since then.

This paper is based on interviews with the mother, grandmother and mother-in-law of the Kelemetti family. This matriarch, Mamma Luta, born in the early 1920s is the eldest child from a family of 5 children. Both of her parents come from large families. She has produced 9 sons and 2 daughters. Her first daughter drowned at a young age. Now at the age of 74 she lives with Cecilia, her daughter, and family where I met her in Townsville. Religion plays an important role in the lives of Tokelau and the mix is interesting. The atoll her father comes from is all Roman Catholic. The atoll her mother comes from is mostly Presbyterian. The third atoll that makes up Tokelau is a mixture of these 2 religions. She grew up with her mother's family, as a Presbyterian but married a Catholic. A tolerant society, they respect

each other's religion. An example of this was pointed out to me one evening at funeral prayers. They said that "when her sister comes to visit and we have prayers, we have them without the sign of the cross with respect to her."

When I decided to offer a paper to this conference I knew I would need a translator for my discussions. Mamma Luta speaks no English but does understand some. Her daughter Cecilia, now with children and a household of her own was a careful translator under the watchful eye of her big brother Michael. Therefore the quotes that are used belong to the daughter and her brother 'retelling' the mother's story for the benefit of the tape.

Cecilia's home is the average household with a few small children, squeaking doors, flushing toilets in the next room, a small fan and nearby neighbours who use lawn mowers and electric saws. As most of you know this can be a challenge for someone conducting Oral History interviews. Mamma Luta had no objections to me taping her story and was pleased to have a chance to tell her story. The home has a clean scrubbed look about it, with the minimum of furniture. There seemed to be enough beds to go around with

perhaps the small children doubling up. Most of the time I could count 12 people of the extended family living in the 2 bedroom house. The enclosed verandah has a few beds partitioned apart with curtains. The Queensland house is high set and 2 adults sleep in the open space under the house. Being together as a family for this culture is a priority. Grandmother has a small room at the back of the house, close to the toilet for convenience. Her room furnishings were a single bed, a suitcase with her clothes piled neatly, a small fan, a straight back wooden chair and the smallest refrigerator I have ever seen. She lay quite still, talking of her memories and letting the tears flow when the spirit willed them. A gracious woman she told me "I am an old woman and I am made slower by sugar and failing sight. I am very happy to talk to YOU."

Before I continue her story I would like to note the circumstances for the second interview which took place the next day. This aroused some interest from other members of the family. That day I arrived to find 2 of her sons; the youngest Kelly (26) and the eldest Michael (49) awaiting my arrival. We have been fiends with Michael for a few

years. Kelly has only recently migrated from New Zealand with his wife and child. Michael is a quiet person and I try not to overwhelm him with my enthusiasm and long uncalled for explanations. However, today I carefully explained to them my purpose for visiting, about oral history and about this conference. This was not the first time I had talked about any of these but I knew it was not chance that had brought them to be there while I was there.

The brothers had both finished their formal education at 16. The education they received was quite different and there is a 20 year age difference. All of this is apparent in conversation. Educated in New Zealand the youngest has a much better command of English. But it was the eldest who had the authority to speak and question me. He had been taught at the church school in Tokelau 40 years ago. Taught at school in the 'Samoaan' language, not Tokelau. Intuitively I could sense a feeling of mistrust in the air, but I wasn't sure why. (Thinking we are friends aren't we?) After some silence I thought perhaps it best to turn the tables and asked "do you have any questions of me?" Michael spoke softly as he told me a story.

"In Tokelau when grandfather gathered us around him to tell stories, it was always inside a house. This house in Tokelau has 6 windows and 4 doors. All the windows were shut and all but one

door. Grandfather said the stories are to stay within the family and I would always ask why. Grandfather finally told me one day, the reason why only one door was open was so that we could see 'the others' if they came to steal the stories. If 'the others' heard the stories they would steal them and make them their own. We would then lose them and they would not be ours." He continued "I have been told there is a book in Hawaii that has many stories of our people in it. The Samoans tell stories of long ago and how all the islands in the Pacific have been peopled from Samoa." I waited. I wondered what path to take next? I waited in silence for enlightenment. Body language can be all in a situation like this. Finally these words came and Michael spoke. "I am now not so sure this was such a good idea. Many stories have been buried with grandfather." So that day 8 of us including 3 wriggly children gathered in the warm sunlit room to hear grandmother speak.

I wanted Mamma Luta to remember back as far as she could, so I began by asking about her childhood. What she remembered most was the love. "I was very much loved and spoiled as a child.

The children in Tokelau belong to everyone. But I was so spoiled that I learned no handicrafts or even cooking to prepare me for marriage and raising children." Quite probably there was no other option for life in the islands.

WW II had an effect on many people in the Pacific. Much has gone unrecorded. Her daughter continues the story. "She became pregnant to an American serviceman at 14 or 15". I couldn't help but wonder how this situation was accepted by her family and the close knit community and I asked if she had been ostracized. "Not at all. All children belong to everyone and this child was no exception". She married a few years after the child was born and moved to her husband's island. I asked if she had ever heard from the soldier again. Cecilia continues "She sent a letter. She sent him many letters. These were handed to the school teacher for posting. She never got any answers. The soldier came back to Tokelau a few years later and found her. By this time she was married and had another child. The soldier had sent many letters and asked her why she never answered them. She had never received even one of them"

I asked her about her wedding, hoping to hear about the ceremony. "She got married first on her island, in a Presbyterian service and with all the family in attendance. Later they moved

to his island where he had a home ready for her. But they were not allowed to live together until a proper Catholic wedding took place. She had to live at his uncle's home until then. The priest taught her Bible Study everyday and had them live apart for 3 months." I couldn't resist to ask if she saw her husband at all during these months of 'separation'. Deep laughter rocked her frail body. "The uncle knew when her husband visited her but the priest didn't". The priest was Samoan and she understood the Samoan language because it was the language used and taught at school. Finally after 3 months of instruction in the Catholic Faith, they were married in another big ceremony and moved in together. A large smile spread across her face.

At this stage I asked a question and upon reflection it seems like a dumb ethnocentric question. "What sort of work did your husband do." She was kind to me. "It is hard to pinpoint because I was so busy learning handcrafts and the women's things that I should have already known how to do, I didn't pay attention to what he did. I do remember he sold fish for 1 cent a piece. There were lots of fish and he sold a lot of them. In Tokelau there are 'like clubs' for the

children. Some special nights the children had to clean up and he would have a dance for them. He took them camping. He was also the mayor at one time and was looked up to by the community. All their children were born on his island and went to her island to visit. I was curious how far apart these islands are and the answer was "about 3 nights by boat."

Daily life and work on the atoll was divided into women's work and men's work but her husband was a kind man and liked to help collect weaving materials for the women's craft work. Once a week the women would weave together and there were special people to cook so they did not need to stop weaving. The palms had to be soaked, then dried. There was dye to be made from ashes and wild berry like seeds. The island is small and one could walk around it in a day to collect the materials needed.

I asked her to tell me about the house. "It was a low set house made of wood. The roof was made of woven coconut leaves. The kitchen was always built separate from the house. There was a rain water tank nearby." Research has shown that after the war water was brought to Tokelau from Samoa by ship on a regular basis. The daily food consisted of breadfruit, fish, sweet potatoes and other root vegetables. Paw paw and banana were easy to grow and

of course the coconuts. Especially the coconut and many of the other plants had medicinal uses. There was a chicken like bird she recalls. But no one knew how to translate the name. I believe this bird may have belonged to the pigeon family.

Her daughter Cecilia adds to the conversation here in the form of an apology. "She tried to teach me to weave. It is very difficult because I am not good with my hands. I know she is passing on important things. She has taught my sister in law to weave. She feels bad because she was so spoiled as a child; she couldn't weave or do the housework so her husband taught her how to do these things. Her sister in law was jealous of her but she had the father-in-law's blessing".

Mamma Luta wanted me to take note that "what we did in the islands we are doing here as well. We have brought our traditions and culture here." She is very proud of the way her son Joseph is teaching dance and songs to all of the children. Every Sunday there is a practice for 2 hours. The family dance at many events in the city. She recited the list of all her children's names and points out that they each have a name from their

culture and also a Christian name. Usually people had only one name in Tokelau. Her husband's name was Clement. The family now uses that as a last name; Kelemetti. Some of the sons are Clement. Which means their name is then Clement Clement.

Grandmother's name was Ruta, pronounced Luta and she is known to all of us as Mamma Luta. I don't know what is on her passport. One son is named Kaleopa. I was told to call him Kelly, which means he is Kelly Kelemetti. She continues the story. "The pastor was the teacher and he was Samoan. He taught reading and writing in Samoan. At home we spoke Tokelau. Now there is a written Tokelau language but it was not taught at school. The Bible was written in the Samoan language. Samoan was learned by all the children." From my research it appears that Tokelau has an oral tradition and only since WW II have linguists captured it to paper. Once the missionaries from Samoa realized the Tokelauns understood the Samoan language, they felt there was no need to translate the Bible into Tokelau.

Her daughter mentions there is a written Tokelau language, but she is 30 and from what I can find there has been a written language only in her lifetime. "A Handbook of the Tokelau language" first printed in 1989 says, "we still know very little about changes in the Tokelau language since until quite recently we

have no written sources where we can compare the language of different generations". But there is a word list of the language from 1841. Most of the words of that list are still used in Tokelau and that proves that the language has not undergone fundamental changes in the last 150 years. I have seen a Tokelau Catholic Missal first published in 1973.

Mamma Luta continues her story "Sundays were special and no one was allowed to work. The day would be spent reading the Bible, Bible Studies they called it or some singing. No one was allowed to go swimming and the children were not allowed to play." It was not clear if these were religious restrictions, or Tokelau custom. This mention of Sunday seems to have triggered a memory for Cecilia.

"It was Sunday when my father died. I knew I shouldn't have gone swimming but I did. I heard mum screaming and my brother was sent to find me. He told me to go home but I thought I might get a hiding. So I stayed at the beach. The other brothers came looking for me and finally I went home and I saw the priest there. I didn't believe my father was dead. It was 12 December. I remembered I told my father I wanted a bike for Christmas. He told me I didn't need one because my brothers carried me everywhere." This is her last memory of her father. She was 7 years old.

Here began a new chapter in the life of the family. Mamma Luta was widowed in 1973. At this point the eldest son was 30 and Cecilia, the only daughter was 7. The eldest son Mauni, had gone to New Zealand. He was her husband's son from his first wife who had died. Also both of Mamma's parents died about this time. As a widow there was a marked change in the family structure. At this time there was also a change in the government's attitude to the islands. They were beginning to take a proactive role in governing the populace and improving their lot in life. "They should be prepared to take charge of their own destiny and adequate provision should be made for their development and welfare regardless of cost" (Huntsman p.316). Opportunities were opening up in the job market in New Zealand.

One son won a scholarship to New Zealand and had his fare paid by the Scout Association. Two sons went to Samoa for a holiday and stayed when they found a trade in boat building. Most of the family made their way to New Zealand looking for better education and jobs that are so scarce on Tokelau. In NZ two of her sons married two sisters from another Tokelau family and migrated to Sydney. One son followed his wife to Australia where she had absconded with their children. He asked his sister to come over and help care for the children



Photos of the Kelemetti family
at a festival in Townsville

while he worked. Mamma Luta would not allow her only daughter to come to Australia on her own. She was 19 at the time. She did come and she brought Mamma Luta with her. By this point all but one son, the eldest, Mauni, had moved to Australia. The families were gradually making their way up the coast where the climate is much more like that of the 9 degrees south latitude of Tokelau. Townsville is 19 degrees south. Many times I have asked the question "Why have you come to Townsville?" The answer is always "for the coconuts".

The 7 sons and 1 daughter have all lived in Townsville since 1990 and have more than 35 offspring between them. The eldest son, Mauni recently died of a heart attack. He was 56, single and left no offspring. The tradition to have 10 nights of prayer and rosary was attended by all members of the family. "It is our way", I was told. A communal meal was served afterwards each night. It was a good time to observe who in the family does what now. The adolescent males were helpful with the young ones; serving them supper and carrying them about. The women appeared to have done most of the food preparation (the men tend the gardens). The young women did the washing up. In past meal experiences with these people I have noticed the order of eating never changes. First the eldest, most respected and visitors are served. Then the

youngest children who I have never observed clamouring for food but quietly waiting. Then the remainder of varying ages of children and the adults serve themselves last.

The Kelemetti's have come to Australia for a better future for their children. They are working hard to cling to the Tokelau culture. This has often meant work outside the home to pay for basic needs. Most of the men have found seasonal work at the meatworks in Townsville. It wouldn't surprise me to find out that they pool their paychecks. They go fishing when there is money for fuel and split the catch according to each family's need. Every family has a vegetable garden and everyone keeps a look out for the plentiful coconuts. A niece is studying nursing at University and another computer science. The future belongs to the children.

Diary of Events



Executive meeting Dates for 2000

Members are welcome to attend the Management Committee meetings held at the State Library at 5.30pm – 11 April, 13 June, 8 August, 10 October, 28 November. The AGM will be held Saturday 29th July prior to the seminar.

Seminar Dates for 2000

8 April, 29 July, 28 October.

The seminar on the 29th July will be preceded by the Annual General Meeting. Doreen Mellor who has taken over the National Library's Bringing Them Home project will speak at this Seminar which will have a focus on family history. A very interesting day is promised. Note the date in your diary now!

National Biennial Conference 2001

(Date to be announced)

2000 Oral History Association Annual Meeting

"At the Crossroads: Transforming Community Locally and Globally"
Marriott Hotel, Durham, North Carolina
October 11 – 15, 2000

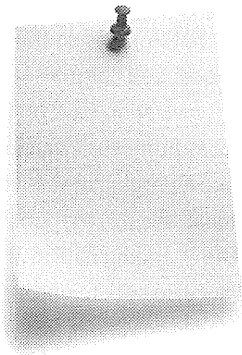
The theme of the meeting is "At the Crossroads: Transforming Community Locally and Globally."

As we turn to a new century, we take this opportunity to examine the many ways in which oral history can explore

how globalization affects communities and cultures. What impacts do the social, economic, political, and cultural processes of globalization have on local and regional communities? What kinds of narratives are emerging at the local, regional, national, and international levels about the changing nature of community? We also seek to encourage a re-examination of the ways in which oral historians work within communities. What is the role of oral history in documenting and understanding the transformation of community? How does the practice of oral history change community or community members, including oral history practitioners? Have recent concerns over shared authority altered the ways in which oral historians are shaping history and interacting with communities? Proposals on all aspects of the practice and interpretation of oral history are also welcome.

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