



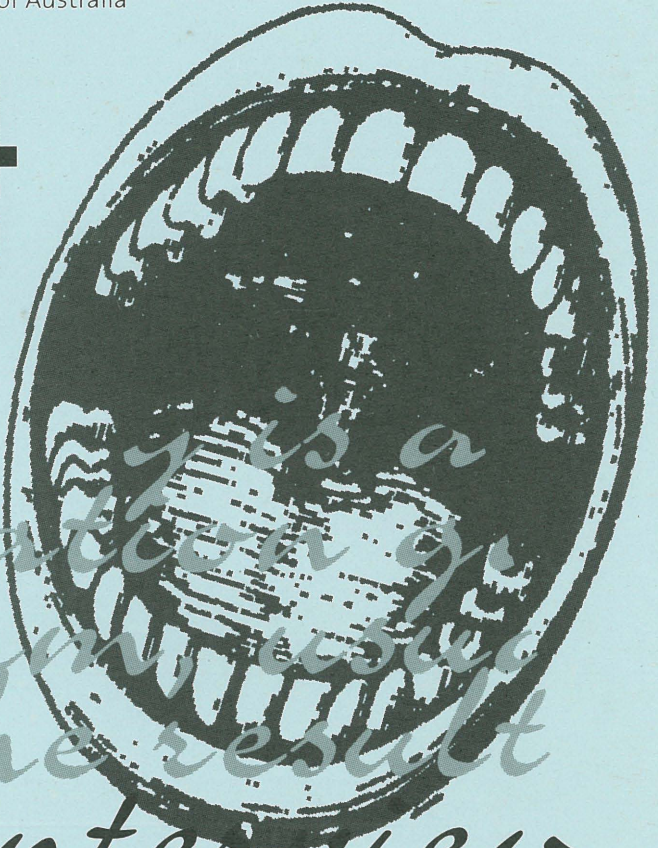
# voiceprint

Newsletter

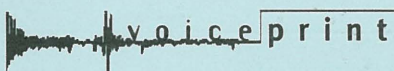
of the New South Wales Branch  
of the Oral History Association  
of Australia

# 24

March 2001



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## voiceprint

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

### **Issue No. 24 – March 2001**

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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

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# Editorial

*Here is Voiceprint Number 24, the first of the two newsletters due for publication this year. We hope that circumstances may change and next year we will have the resources for three publications. In our next publication we will report on the forthcoming National Conference – note the dates 30 August to 2 September. It is a great opportunity to meet other oral historians and exchange ideas. See you in Canberra?*

*Thank you to those who have responded with reports and contributions. It does so lighten the load for your editorial committee. We do hope you enjoy reading about some of the projects that have been undertaken. Jill Baxter has detailed the process of putting together a book from their interviews. Hope it inspires others to do the same. What wonderful work underway in Saudi Arabia to preserve the country's heritage – we did want to share their charming report with you. We are pleased that we have been able to bring some rural interest among the reports. We have such a wide and diverse nation to report on and of course as reported in Alfie's story, so much is changing – time may soon run out!*

*There are some events for which time is not yet running out – in fact it has hardly past. Oral history does of course allow us to record the reflections and the views of ordinary people in relation to specific great events. Currently it would seem that there is no official project to record the reflections and the feelings of Australian people in relation to last years great event – the Olympic Games and the Paralympics. Were you there? Do you know someone who was there? Can we produce some 'I was there the night/the day that...' and these can be filed away for future generations so they may recapture and understand Australia's pride and enjoyment at that time. Your challenge for next Voiceprint – an 'I was there' reflection.*

*Ruth Wilson and Katja Grynberg are both retiring from the editorial committee. Many thanks to them for their many written contributions and their ability to persuade others to provide us with copy. All the best Ruth and Katja in your future endeavours – it has been a pleasure to work with you.*

*Is there a member/s who would like to join the editorial committee? All offers very welcome! Contact Rosie or Joyce.*

*Here's hoping...*

**Joyce Cribb**

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## New Members

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As always a warm welcome to you. We are very pleased to have you and your interests add lustre to our branch. We are also very glad that some of you are institutions – this means that oral history is broadcast even more widely – and so we will receive even more new members! Thanks to you all.

### **Waverley Library**

### **Australian-Lebanese Historical Association**

### **City of Sydney**

### **Orange District Historical Society**

<b>Tiiu Tarmo</b>	Teacher
<b>Judith Steanes</b>	History of TAFE
<b>Diana Covell</b>	National program liaison
<b>Helen Fong</b>	Chinese- Australian history
<b>Jo Henwood</b>	Historic Houses Trust – guide
<b>Peter Williamson</b>	Occupational therapist
<b>Leonard Milgate</b>	Interested in contemporary history
<b>Andriana Vlahos</b>	Interested in contemporary history
<b>Lorna Froude</b>	Counsellor
<b>Marianne Pietersen</b>	Interested in Dutch migration history
<b>Tracey Firth</b>	Interested in family and local history
<b>Mary Warwick</b>	Interested in aviation and history of transportation
<b>Diana Wood</b>	Interested in local, community and social history
<b>Caroline Pascoe</b>	Interested in media history



## REPORTS

### Ethics and Oral History Seminar – Joyce Cribb

---

*A seminar held on 28 October, 2000 was conducted at the State Library by OHAA (NSW Branch). Graham Wood from the St James Ethics Centre spoke to a large group of Oral Historians about ethical issues*

The Seminar was very well attended by a large group of interested Oral Historians. The group were very interested and considerable discussion was generated over the various problems encountered by participants – so many dilemmas out there and no easy answers! I will not try to cover all the discussion topics covered but confine this report to the essence of Graham's informative talk.

The Centre Graham told us was set up to provide a forum, a place in which business and workplace ethics could find encouragement and some growth. The Centre is an independent non profit and non political organisation and relies heavily on sponsorship and donations for funding. However they also do some paid work. The are four areas to the Centre were described as:–

**Advocacy** – “We say this is what ethics is and this is how it might help in your daily life”.

**Leadership** – “Leadership works with those people of the future who have shown a little bit of sparkle, a little bit of something special and we are trying to encourage in them some ethical thinking

too, so they can bring ethics into their decision making in their future rolls”.

**Constancy** – “Constancy works at the level of an organisation, working with organisations to try and bring some change or awareness within that organisation to do with ethics”

**Counselling** – “An area that deals with individuals and tries to bring some change and assistance to individuals”.

Graham went on to say that people often misuse the word ethics because they do not really understand what it means. “Ethics”, he told us, “is about relationships, about relating to other people as well as to yourself. One might relate just to those people who are in very close proximity, or, in your decision making, you might relate to the wider community in ever increasing circles depending what one takes into consideration. It is also about struggling to develop a well informed conscious and being true to who we are and what we stand for. It requires courage to explore difficult questions and accept the cost of decisions made but it also allows one the freedom to choose the next action”.

Rudyard Kipling has suggested in relation to the meaning of ethics that 'If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, then make allowance for the doubting too' This Graham told us suggested "we should fully explore ourselves, but in fully exploring ourselves consideration has also to be given to other peoples point of view too." Graham went on to say Socrates suggested that 'an unexamined life is not worth living'. "Therefore in ethics there is a continual dialogue between what is good and what is right, between values and principles. Ethics is not the same as morality. Morals are sets of values that you have learned as you have grown up and these values give you guidance as to what is the right thing to do. A difficulty arises when you have competing values, when two things are both the right thing to do. What do you do then? – that's ethics! Ethics is the dialogue that occurs in working out what to actually do. Values can get transformed into principles, principles are rules or guidelines on which to apply your values. For example, the golden rule of 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you' is a principle based on the notion of liberty".

The Ethics Centre Graham told us works with people facing ethical dilemmas at various levels and in the counselling area they work with

individuals who are facing an ethical dilemma.

Like ethics and morality Graham explained people often confuse ethics and the law. The law provides some very broad principles on which our legal framework is founded and these translate into specific policies to make those principles come alive in some way. The policies further divide again into specific rules to follow in upholding the policies. There are also different kinds of codes. At the very broadest level there are 'codes of ethics' These often contain words like integrity, diligence, honesty, which provide principles or values to which to aspire. 'Codes of ethics' are translated into 'codes of practice', and then 'codes of conduct' and finally 'codes of behaviour', which provide a legalistic way of looking at the world. Quite often 'codes of practice', 'codes of conduct' and 'codes of behaviour' are not aspirational but disciplinary. These codes prescribe what shall be done and disciplinary action for failure to follow the codes. However, codes or ethics committee can be quite useful, Graham suggested, as you are searching for the answer. "But rules" he said "can be ambiguous. Rules can give guidance but they cannot answer for every situation – hence the need for dialogue to work out the ethical dilemma".

As there is no universal agreement about what is right and wrong in every case, this lack of agreement is why in business and elsewhere the promotion of vigorous debate about ethical issues is to be encouraged. "Debate", Graham indicated, "was the only way to ensure that our capacity for moral judgement is enlarged" and suggested some questions that should be asked:

- "Is it consistent with your professional code?
- Is it consistent with your conscience?
- Is it consistent with the United Nations 'Declaration of Human Rights'?
- Does it involve the risk of harm?"

Graham had an amusing series of cartoons to illustrate how difficult it often is to sort out the facts from assumptions we make. His advice was to try and be in a position to see all stakeholders points of view. Identify the facts from assumptions and look at the question from different points of view. Ask, "am I being biased? How will people be affected by my decisions? Think about whether we can ever have all the facts! Maybe you can only describe things from your point of view – a point of view that other people can share and recognise!"

In ethical decision making Graham advised us to look at which values and principles are in play. Not only ours those of a professional association, an employer, or in the case of oral history your interviewee too.

As I reported the questions and the discussion were interesting. I think the day reinforced that in oral history as elsewhere there are no easy answers! Each case has to be worked through – thorough examination, meaningful dialogue will assist in solving the dilemmas.

An enjoyable and thought provoking morning. Thank you Graham.



## IOHA Conference – Janis Wilton

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*This is an edited version of Janis Wilton's IOHA Report from Istanbul. Our thanks to the OHAA Queensland Branch for copy of this report.*

High on the western shore of the Bosphorus is the University of the same name. This was the venue for the Xith International Oral History Conference, held under the auspices of the International Oral History Association (IOHA).

The Conference is held biennially – Goteborg in 1996, Rio de Janeiro in 1998, Istanbul in 2000. Durban is the proposed venue for 2002.

The purpose in choosing widely dispersed locations around the world is to encourage strong representation from a particular region while ensuring a programme that invites exchanges and comparisons across countries, continents, cultures, and disciplines.

This aim was met at the Istanbul Conference.

Although the Middle East has been underrepresented in publications and at previous international oral history conferences, this conference revealed the range of research being currently undertaken. Aspects of Turkey and other parts of the Middle East were represented in papers throughout the sessions. There were presentations about oral history research in relation to family history, gender, tourism, ethnic minorities, the media, community

identity, archiving and cataloguing, museums, and heritage studies. There were also sessions devoted to issues of particular local and regional relevance including earthquakes. Significantly, the University and the Conference hosted a session dedicated to the Armenian issue.

The opening plenary session was entitled 'Agents of change: women in the Middle East'. The papers challenged stereotyped views of the role of women in the region. Speakers demonstrated how oral history research has opened windows on the varied political, social and economic activities, and on the different perceptions of their lives and roles, evident in the lived experiences of women from various countries and cultural groups in the Middle East.

Learning about oral history and the region spilled into the 'fringe' conference activities. Performances provided by the University's Folklore Club are a good example. Here oral and folk history and traditions were translated into movement, costume and narrative on stage. We were drawn into the folk traditions and stories of Turkey through abundantly energetic and moving performances telling tales of tragedy, the traumas of war and migration.

The sharing of oral history experiences extended beyond the region. Approximately 50 countries were represented, from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa to the Americas, Europe and the Middle East. A careful reading of the Conference Proceedings would provide a sense of what could best be termed national oral history preoccupations, clearly shaped by events of the twentieth century: political conflict, military coups, immigration, communism, Indigenous rights.

Many issues and topics presented at the Conference crossed national boundaries: ethics, memory and identity, place, teaching oral history, oral narratives, multimedia, collaborative research, remembering trauma, organisms and presenting collections, community empowerment. The challenge at the Conference was to make sense of the mix and match of topics, countries and issues. All sessions had simultaneous or sequential translation (English/Spanish/Turkish). In some sessions the mix and match worked well: in others it was unsatisfactorily fragmented.

The moderators provided a summary of, and commentary on, their sessions, including the papers and discussions. The intention is to present these summaries as a post-conference publication.

### **Present Organisation of IOHA**

The desire to ensure discussion and representation from a variety of countries, regions and continents underpins the organisational structure of the International Oral History Association's organising body. IOHA's constitution requires that the IOHA Council includes representation from at least five different continents. (Australian and New Zealand delegates opted to identify their region as Oceania). Elections are held at the conference.

For the next two years, the elected IOHA Council consists of:

**President:** Marieta de Moraes Ferreira (Brazil)

**Vice-Presidents:** Anne Ritchie (USA), Janis Wilton (Australia)

**Immediate Past President:** Mercedes Vilanova (Spain)

**Council of nine members:** Verena Alberti (Brazil), Rina Benmayor (USA), Joanna Bornat (England), Philippe Denis (South Africa), Pilar Gomez (Spain), Anna Green (New Zealand), Almut Leh (Germany), Tayba Hassan Sherif (Sudan), Nukhet Sirman (Turkey).

It is pleasing and a recognition of the oral history work done in both Australia and New Zealand that the Council has two representatives from the region. The aim of Anna and myself is to promote

the next International Conference to our colleagues throughout the region so that our representation at the conferences increases. We are also promoting the idea that, in the not too distant future, the New Zealand and

Australian oral history associations might jointly host an international conference.

*You may be interested to visit the IOHA website: [www.ben.es/tjussana/ioha/](http://www.ben.es/tjussana/ioha/)*

## The Bouddi Oral History Project Final Report – Jill Baxter

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*Jill Baxter reported on progress in our last Voiceprint and we are delighted to have this report of the final stages leading up to publication. Ed*

The Bouddi Oral History Project gathered speed during the months following my report published in October. With the MS, compiled from transcripts of tapes, nearing completion, I was interested to learn that one of the local groups, the Hardys Bay-Killcare Progress Association, was searching for a worthy object of their financial support. Approaching the association, I received strong support from the President, Annette Wilson, who had been a colleague, in the early 1980's, when we were both special librarians and members of ACCESS.

Luckily, a friend gave me a lead to another resident, a graphic designer, experienced in designing for publishing. After our initial discussion, I gave him a copy of the MS, in a text only format, with some of the photographs chosen for publishing. It was an exciting

moment when he rang to invite me to come and see the pages he had designed. Another local, an experienced printer and publisher, suggested the format. Following this advice, the MS was converted into a 96 page document, A5 in size, with the cover "perfect bound," allowing the title to be printed on the spine. My printer friend suggested I choose a simple black and white text, avoiding the sepia sometimes chosen for its nostalgic appearance. A sand coloured cover, with a photograph and title printed 'in black, complemented the white pages, where the black text and photographs printed with great clarity.

I was now working to a deadline. When funding was granted, I was asked to have the book ready for sale to catch the Christmas holiday period on the

Bouddi Peninsula. This meant a publishing date in late November. Permission had to be sought from each of more than 60 contributors. Some people needed to read the extract, which I proposed to use in the book. Email saved some time on several occasions.

Editing was a crucial part of the preparation and I quickly discovered that one becomes too close to see errors in the MS. Luckily, I had several friends willing to read the MS carefully, for mistakes, omissions and errors. Nevertheless, when the final MS went to our printer, he discovered that the Contents page lacked its numbers! That was a classic example of looking, but not seeing!

Another problem was more political. I discovered that the word Bouddi was, to many older residents, not acceptable as part of the title. The historical development of this area has memories, which still rankle with some people. Luckily, I turned my thoughts to the fact that the peninsula, being surrounded by water, has many reflections. Thus, the title, *Reflections from the Beach and the Bays*, came to mind. The sub title, *Stories told by the Killcare, Hardys Bay, Pretty Beach and Wagstaffe Community*, identified the authors. I found, at the launch, that everyone approved.

We launched *Reflections* on 24 November, 2000, at the little hall, which, for many years, has been the focus of community activities. A 91-year old resident, who had been a Councillor representing this area, accepted our invitation to launch the book, before about 100 people. After the book launch, we discovered that the book format was excellent for posting, producing to show friends and for displaying, in a simple book stand, on the counter at the Wagstaffe General Store, and at other local businesses, where it has been selling extremely well. It has been well received and, to date, we have sold about 700 copies of our print run of 1000 copies. My special satisfaction lies in having the contributors tell me how pleased they are with the result.

*Jill tells us that at present, the book is available locally only. Written orders can be arranged, by writing to Reflections, P.O. Box 4081, Wagstaffe, 2257, NSW. The price is \$12.00, including postage. As the publisher, Hardys, Bay-Killcare Progress Association, is a non-profit organisation, GST is not applicable.*

## Australian Radiographers – Ruth Atkinson FIR

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*A members report of how the radiographers are recording their early history.*

When I was first asked if I would be interested in doing oral histories of radiographers I was given literally sixty seconds to make up my mind, I said, "I do not know anything about the Oral History Association", but that was no deterrent. I was told that there was a seminar two days later and that I had better attend and join the Association.

I did as I was told and have never regretted the day I met Rosemary Block – the whole project has been a wonderful experience.

Being a retired radiographer I had no difficulty in contacting other people in the field.

1996 was a very fitting time to do these interviews as we, as radiographers, were celebrating the centenary of x-rays in Australia. The first diagnostic x-ray in Australia was taken by Father Joseph Slattery, Priest and Scientist of St Stanislaus' College, Bathurst. He had taken an x-ray of a boy's hand and by so doing had prevented the necessity for amputation. This was just five months after the German Scientist, Professor Wilhem Conrad Roentgen, had announced to the world his discovery of x-rays in November 1895.

To date I have completed twelve interviews and have some more under way, doing these part time, doing my own transcripts, and not being a first class typist, they do take time but it is all worthwhile.

Memory is a wonderful thing, the oldest person I have interviewed was ninety three and his memory was such that when I asked him a question he would have the answer without any hesitation. He had some most remarkable stories to relate. Being an x-ray engineer he was called to Darwin after the Japanese bombing to try and get the x-ray equipment working. It had been scattered far and wide, part of the equipment was out in the street but without too much trouble and a little ingenuity he was able to put it all back in working order.

Another gentleman from Sydney, who was serving in the RAAF and was on leave prior to discharge at the end of the war, received an urgent telegram to report back to duty. As navigator he was one of the first aircraft to fly into Japan, stationed at Nagoya which was quite close to Hiroshima where he stayed until he was finally discharged in April 1946. Photos that were taken whilst flying over Hiroshima were found to be fogged

when developed. This was caused by the aftermath of the atomic bomb and goes to show just how extensive radiation can be and what care must be taken. This did not deter him as he did radiography on discharge from the RAAF.

I could go on relating most unusual stories each one having a special place in the memory of the interviewee.

It was very interesting listening to the everyday encounters with what we would now call antiquated equipment, having to mix your own powdered chemicals and developing the x-ray films, each attached separately to a

frame, in a dark room which only had one red pilot light to give you very limited vision, compared with the state of the art automatic equipment of today including daylight processing.

I have come to realise just how important it is to record all this history, three interviewees have now passed on, their stories would have been lost forever. Although I have known these people for several years it was not until I questioned them that I found out so much about their working life that they took for granted and never discussed with their co-workers

## Oral History in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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*A letter and brochure was received from Saudi Arabia telling of the establishment of the King Abdulaziz Foundation and the establishment of its Oral History Centre. For your interest and information here are some excerpt from their beautifully produced brochure. ([www.darah.org](http://www.darah.org)).*

### **Information supplied by Dr Fahd Abdullah al-Semmari**

The Oral History Project and The Documentation of Historical Sources is one of the ambitious programs of the King Abdulaziz Foundation (KAF) which was planned and established to fulfil one of the major objectives of the foundation, that is, preserving history.

When we started setting up this project we had several objectives in

mind and therefore we identified all possible elements that are needed to reach acceptable achievements. The oral history project and the documentation of historical sources meant compiling all relevant historical sources to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia internally and internationally. The historical sources included documents, manuscripts, and recordings of personal stories from those who were contemporary to the building

stages of the Kingdom during the reign of King Abdulaziz and afterwards.

This was the first project of its kind in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was comprehensive in covering all parts of the Kingdom.

Moreover, it has enjoyed the full support of the Saudi Government at all levels, specially the governors of the regions who facilitated the work of the teams of this project. More importantly, HRH Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz, the Governor of Riyadh region and the chairman of the foundation's council, has given this project the major support and guidance.

### **An Overview of the Project**

In the middle of 1996 the Foundation started its national project to record oral accounts and to survey national historical sources in various parts of the country. This included collecting all forms of information, written documents or manuscripts, and non-written oral accounts regarding history of the country and its founder King Abdulaziz. The project included also compiling, documenting and photographing historical sites such as castles, fortresses, battlefield sites and all types of past architecture.

The Foundation formed several teams from its employees that would canvas the regions of the Kingdom, and invited in specialists for cooperation with it.

The objectives of the project were defined as follows:

- To carry out primary surveys of national historical sources inside the Kingdom, locating documents, manuscripts, oral accounts of witnesses and contemporaries of early Saudi history.
- To embark on field trips to regions of the Kingdom and form teams of researchers and experts to conduct the primary survey of historical sources.
- To collect historical documents especially those held by private citizens.
- To photocopy the scattered manuscripts found in private libraries all over the Kingdom.
- To photograph and document historical sites and ruins in the Kingdom.
- To establish a specialised centre for oral history in the Kingdom in the Foundation.

When the Foundation began, its work in this significant project was faced with many difficulties, such as the absence of first hand information on people and locations of interest.

The other difficulties lie in the unawareness among the majority of peoples in the field of oral history and its importance as a source of history.



Despite these difficulties the Foundation was able to use this first stage of the project to identify the problems and test the reaction of people and finally identify the possible locations of historical materials.

The project, which lasted for 18 months, resulted in many things that made it a successful project. Among the results are as follows:

- Conducting about three hundred interviews with the contemporaries and senior people and recording their accounts.
- Acquiring more than 25,000 original documents and photocopies from individual and governmental departments.
- Taking more than a 1,000 photographs of historical ruins and sites
- Providing a source of knowledge on Saudi history throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Making people and institutions aware of the importance of history and oral traditions.
- Establishing a strong base for the work on oral history in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The positive response and cooperation of the citizens was encouraging as shown in their full cooperation with the field work teams of the project. Moreover, the

outcome of this first stage made it necessary to continue the work in a second stage benefiting from the results of the first which served as a testing ground that led to many results and avenues to be considered in the future projects.

### **The Oral History Centre (OHC)**

The Oral History Centre was founded in 1996 with its independent administration in the King Abdulaziz Foundation to be the first centre of its kind in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The OHC was provided with all technological support required to conduct interviews, transcription, and registration and preserve the written records.

The OHC was assigned with a major task in the field of Saudi history and was assigned with several objectives among them:

- To compile the names of the people who were contemporaries and contributed whether directly or indirectly to the events related to the history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the field of administration, politics, education, social work or economics.
- To conduct recorded audio and pictured interviews of the contemporaries and witnesses. The obtained data will be transcribed and typed in order to make it available to

researchers in accordance with scientific rules and standards.

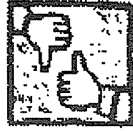
- To benefit from the experience of universities and scientific research centres in Europe and the U.S. which have established specialised centres for oral history like the Oral History Centre at the University of California in Los Angeles created in 1959, and Oral History of America Association (OHA) founded in 1967.
- To cooperate with Saudi and Arabian centres and organisations which have an interest in oral history and compilation of heritage, and encourage joint works.
- To train and qualify work members from the Foundation staff and researchers in order to be able to conduct interviews with most proper [sic] way. Training will include the methods of recording, preserving and transcription.
- To review the interviews and make any necessary comments regarding errors and missing information.

The Oral History Centre is embarking upon a new project dealing with collecting the traditional folk stories in the society of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which will start in September 2000.

The new avenues of the Oral History Centre in the up coming months will be as follows:

- Holding special training sessions for the researchers and staff to improve the quality of their work in the fields of oral history.
- Publishing special series on the oral history interviews that have been conducted by the OHC.
- Starting the second stage of the collection of national historical sources.
- Holding special conferences on oral history in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

*(Hope you enjoyed reading about this interesting project. Ed)*



## Speaking of us. Voices of Twentieth Century Australia

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

*Barry York, Speaking of us. Voices of Twentieth Century Australia. National Library of Australia, 1999, 160pp, illustrated.*

The title is inspired. That is exactly what Barry York's selection of excerpts from recordings held in the National Library of Australia does. He invites the reader to share in common and uncommon experiences in a very warm way indeed. His introduction includes a tribute to oral history and 'its ability to provide insights that are rarely written down'. He has quoted from famous Australians and 'just plain ordinary people'.

It is very satisfying to have an important oral history collection highlighted in this way. Some years after his initial encounter with oral history in New York in the late 1940s, National Librarian, Harold White invited Hazel de Berg to deposit her Recordings in the National Library of Australia. It is a delight to see how many 'of us' are interviewed by this pioneer oral historian who recorded nearly 1300 interviews until her death in 1984.

It is also interesting to note that people who later became very well-known indeed like Brett Whiteley, were interviewed by Hazel de Berg before they

were 'eminent Australians'. She saw potential in people and 'caught' them early in their rise. She would occasionally interview them again when they were famous. She also had her eye on Time and often managed to interview people just before they died.

Dame Mary Gilmore's original interview in 1957 was Hazel de Berg's very first and lasted 1 minute and 21 seconds! It was enough to give the interviewer a taste of what, for Hazel, would become the passion of a lifetime. In the later interview quoted here Dame Mary remembers her father's acquaintances who were former convicts whose backs 'were ridged and ridged from the lash ... I remember one station owner, a big rich man and he could never go swimming – everybody swam where there was water because there was no baths in the houses, of course, ... and he would always sit on the bank, and he wouldn't go in, and one day without thinking the poor man pulled his shirt off and jumped in. My father was in the water, so he caught hold of his arm and said, "Come on, I'll

race you to a different place". And he took him right away from where the men could see him. His back was ridged you see.' Not only does Dame Mary connect us to a distant past – she was 97 when she died in 1962 – but she records her father's humanity and the profound impression it had on her.

Photographers, artists, stars of stage and screen, musicians, writers, rebels and reformers, Aboriginal Australians, scientists, sportsmen and women are among the interviewees. Bruce Gyngell 'the first face of television' gives a delightful account of the dramas that preceded TV's historic first screening on 6 September 1956.

As Barry York promises there are quotations from interviews held with the famous and with the not-so-famous. Lord Florey, Robert Helpmann, Xavier Herbert, Barry Humphries ('I found I did have a gift for amusing my schoolmates, which in a way protected me from bullies – if you could make them laugh they wouldn't hit you'). Among the perhaps less well-known people is Leo Walters who was involved in the early forties with the successful establishment of free public libraries, an institution taken for granted now.

Neta Davis (born 1909) who with her mother established a property near Araluen details her hard life in the bush. In 1986 when she gave the interview she remarks, 'I've been once to town in (the

last) 13 years ... I went once to a dentist, and it was seven years since I'd been out, and I came home and kept a note of it and it was six years before I went out again, to town I mean.' The photograph which accompanies her account tells us a great deal also.

The text is well illustrated with a number of pictures mainly portraits, all from the National Library's Pictorial Collection. Just one oddity was noticed. A photograph of someone (who?) is captioned 'Jessie Street, 1995.' Neither the face nor the date (she died in 1970) is hers. But gremlins exist.

A number of interviewees succeeded Hazel de Berg and many of them are represented in this collection. Collecting oral history is an ongoing and vibrant activity in the National Library of Australia, as it is indeed in state libraries and public libraries throughout the country.

What better way to celebrate a century in Australia than to hear from the people themselves. Whether in cries or whether in whispers, the intimacy of the human voice connects us immediately with the speaker and the life. This necessarily tiny selection from thousands of interviews manages to give an idea of the zest with which people remember their past and it also places before us the leading oral history collection in Australia. *'Speaking of us'* is a great read, but do go and listen to some of them too!

## ARTICLES

### Alfie's Story – Dinah Manson

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*A story from one of our country members Dinah Manson, in response to our pleas for contributions. Ed*

The land where we live on the Far North Coast of New South Wales near Byron Bay has gone through many changes. From the tall rainforest trees of the Big Scrub being cleared for dairy farms, then for beef cattle herds and now acres and acres of Macadamia: someone has seen it all!

His name is Alfie Paulsen and he is a near neighbour of Joanne Scholten and myself. Since Alfie cannot get about much anymore Joanne drives him to do his shopping or see the doctor and while they drive they talk.

One day Joanne rang and said "Put the kettle on, I'm bringing Alfie up to see you and we will take him out to the head of the valley at your place, he has not been up there for many years."

So they drove in the gate and Joanne edged the car as close to the hill top fence as she could and we helped Alfie out and got him a chair, so that he could sit and see all the land below.

He looked in silence for a while and then said, "I remember when it was all covered in trees and the road there was only a dirt track." Joanne looked at me and said "We have to get all this on tape and soon."

We knew we needed a structure and by good fortune we found one. To begin with, one of the veterinary surgeons from the Wollongbar Research Farm heard about our plans and came to see me. He said "My Grandmother lived all her life on a farm near Ballina, she was ninety when she died and I realised I never asked her all the questions about farming in this area in times gone by." He had written a long list of all those questions about the crops, the cattle and problems that used to beset them in early days.

That list of questions became our *Introductory Tape of Ten Sessions*.

Joanne was the most meticulous transcriber. Every single tape has its contents listed, so that, on tape if you wish to check the pastures grown on the hills near Byron Bay in 1925 there they are, 002-055; every tape of the *Ten Sessions* is similarly indexed and hence its great value at The Mitchell Library for rural research in years to come.

I will list the list the titles of the Tapes 1 – 10 and come back later and give some examples of the "Vet Tape" as we called it.

1. Vet Tape
2. Household and Daily routine
3. Meals, shopping and the barter economy
4. Household activities
5. Health care
6. Schooling and play
7. Religion
8. Class and Politics
9. Work
10. Images of Australia and the World

### **The Vet's Tape**

#### **Side 'A'**

- 000-002 Introduction
- 002-055 Pastures grown in 1925
- 055-212 Chooks, Pigs, Ducks and Vegetables
- 212-416 Corn, Cow cane, Oats and Ryegrass
- 416-563 Livestock, The Bull, Cattle

#### **Side 'B'**

- 000-152 Vegetable garden
- 152-438 Dipping Cattle, Tick inspection; Tick Dodgers name was Mr Charlie Dipman! Milking machines and Electricity arrives

Now for some details: – The cattle in those days were Illawarras: big docile cows with huge horns with a mild and

timid disposition. Thus, Alfie explained, they hated visitors in the dairy at milking time. One day his grand uncle came to visit and called across to the dairy. "Gee, said Alfie "those cows were so upset there was more manure in the yard than milk in the bucket."

Another time, the bottom paddock ran along the railway line to Ballina and each week a Hindu neighbour took a short cut down the line to visit a man who needed his weekly mail and translated his letters; so as our Hindu, resplendent in white turban and flowing robes, walked along the line these huge cows fled up the hill and huddled in the dairy yard till milking time.

So for ten happy weeks we spent every Friday afternoon from 2.30pm-3.30pm at Alfie's house. We had a chat and a cup of tea and recorded one session. They were great times, funny, serious and sad at times, it was a privilege to share that man's wonderful past – told in his own inimitable way for the future interest of his listeners.

Thank you Alfie – Joanne and I hope many people hear and appreciate your tapes.

## Digitising the Word – Francis Good

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*Francis Good is Oral Records Archivist with the Northern Territory Archives Service. The following article originated in Records Territory N19 and outlines trends and advantages of newer methods of preserving and researching oral history. Our thanks to Play Back Vol 20 Number 4, Newsletter of WA Branch of OHAA for this copy. Ed*

Most oral history interviews lodged in the Northern Territory Archives' collections in the past were originally recorded on analogue cassette tape. About six years ago, Archives (Northern Territory Archives Services) began to record many on digital audio tape (DAT), which is now the most common medium being used for new recordings here. There are many differences between the analogue and digital methods, but from the archival point of view, an important advantage of digital audio is that it can be copied many times without adding 'noise' to the record.

There is still debate about which is "better" archival sound medium, but certainly digitally recorded audio has become the professional standard, and there are significant advantages where the sound material is used in non-archival settings, such as extracts for broadcast or in web-sites. The Northern Territory Archives Service (NTAS) web-site (see <http://www.nt.gov/nta>) has an oral history exhibition using some short extracts from just a few of the interviews recorded about Cyclone

Tracey in our collections. You can read the transcripts, and if your computer has sound, the sound of the voices can be easily and quickly downloaded for you to hear.

From the archival point of view, whenever a new tape recording is lodged in the oral history collections, it is important that it be copied. Although some work was done in the past to copy old cassettes to archival open-reel tape, for some time now Archives has been making a cassette copy of all new recordings, also for permanent preservation. This has several uses. To save wear on the master recording, this reference copy was used to make working copy cassettes for use in transcription; and it can also be used by researchers who wish to listen to the interview, either to check the text transcript, or as a substitute for it.

Although Archives has developed detailed professional standards in the way transcripts are compiled and checked, and finally cleared with interviewees, there is a growing realisation among researchers, encouraged by Archives, that a text transcript cannot



really convey all the meaning that can be appreciated by the listener who can hear the information and ideas in the particular way that the original speaker was presenting, either intentionally or otherwise.

However, one of the main aspects influencing the way researchers use oral history is that a transcript is a very efficient way to access interview content while a tape can be difficult and far more time-consuming to use. As a way of encouraging more reference to the original sound, one advantage of having the sound in digital format is that it carries a time code, so transcripts of digital recordings can be annotated with numerous accurate pointers to where any section might be on the tape. Most transcripts include a detailed content listing and summary, and these are also now being compiled with time and track markers. Summaries and listings with these details will also make it easier to use sound recordings without requiring the full verbatim transcript.

One problem with this potential up to now has been that DAT players were not seen as practical in the Search Room environment, so Archives has now initiated the next step in Digitising operations: new interview tape recordings, whether recorded digitally (DAT) or on analogue cassettes, are copied to an audio compact disk (CD). Even if the master was an analogue

cassette recording, the copy CD is time-coded, and if the master was recorded on digital audio tape (DAT), all the original time codes and any index (or track) markers are also now made instead of the cassette copies, and will be permanently preserved as the medium for research use.

However, there is another (fairly revolutionary) aspect to the new digital procedures: at the same time as the audio CD is made, another CD is made, of the kind read by a computer. Archives is now able to use software that comes from the court reporting environment: the transcriber plays the sound from the computer CD by using a foot-pedal attached to the computer, while the word-processing software used to type the text is also open. Thus the transcriber can play and back-space the CD sound at will whilst entering text through the keyboard.

CD copies for use in transcription are much clearer, and more easily controlled in the CD reader than in the old cassette systems. In the Search Room, the more easily used audio CD will greatly encourage researchers to listen to all the nuances of meaning and colour of expression in the original recording, hopefully more often than was practical in the past with tapes.

## Some Thoughts on Transcribing – Loreen Brehaut

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*How oral histories are best and most appropriately recorded in print generates cross-disciplinary debate between and among ethnographers, linguists, social historians, oral historians, writers and family archivists. Transcribing is a critical professional issue when credibility of the oral historian and authenticity of the respective text are considered. Loreen Brehaut, a practised oral historian, gives her views.*

*For an ethnolinguistic perspective, see Stephen Muecke's Reading the Country (FACP, 1988) (Our thanks to Play Back Volume 20 number 4, Newsletter of WA Branch OHAA for this article. Ed)*

First of all, I believe it is essential to recognise that there are two different types of transcript, and they have different purposes.

The first, and the most essential, is the verbatim transcript which is the written record of the recorded interview, as detailed and exact as possible. This is made and preserved for archival and research use, not for publication. It should include enough false starts, crutch words and 'stage directions' such as (pauses), (laughs), etc. to give the reader a feel for the atmosphere of the interview. If the informant doesn't speak freely this should be evident. This verbatim transcript should always be checked carefully and then filed, whatever later versions will be made, as any editing will be based on this, the truest written record of what occurred.

Any secondary versions of the interview should be clearly labelled as edited transcripts. These may be full or partial, will usually exclude false starts,

crutch words and stage directions, trailed off sentences and may be completed with appropriate words, and the order of sentences may be changed to give a more logical flow of meaning. At this stage the editor will consider whether or not to correct grammar, as this version is usually intended for some form of publication, and it is our duty as oral historians not to make our interviewees look ignorant or foolish. This does not necessarily mean misrepresenting them as other than they are, but the result should be easy to read.

For this reason, both verbatim and edited transcripts I stick fairly strictly to standard English spelling, even if my informant mispronounces, words. I allow myself a few digressions from this rule, for example 'yeah', 'blackfella' and 'whitefella', but not many others. If I started writing what some of my informants actually said the reader would be as mystified as I first was – my

classic example from the very first Aboriginal tape I recorded was the story about a little bird, the zebra pinch! (I worked that out when the same man talked about a telephone.)

I would be interested to hear what other oral historians feel about these things – and can you convince your informants to leave the verbatim transcript corrected but unedited?! Schoolteachers I find are the worst. If they insist on too many changes I file my original copy and label their version 'edited'.

How do the rest of you cope?

*(Have you some views or rules of best transcribing practice? Let's hear them).*

## Stop Press

The outstanding fourth edition of the Oral History Handbook by Beth M Robertson was published in November 2000. There are a number of revisions and the chapter on equipment has been completely rewritten. It gives recommendations on both digital and analogue recording.

Readers are reminded that the Oral History Handbook is the national standard for oral history. The fourth edition is an excellent addition to your library shelves. An order form is enclosed with this issue of *Voiceprint*.

# Diary of Events



## **Executive meeting Dates for 2001**

Tuesday 12 June; Tuesday 21 August;  
Tuesday 9 October; Tuesday 27  
November, 2001. 5.30pm  
Venue: State Library of NSW  
Members are welcome to attend the  
Management Committee meetings.

## **Seminar Dates for 2001**

Two seminars will be held on  
5 May and 3 November, 2001  
A third seminar will be held together  
with the Royal Australian Historical  
Society – 28 July 2, 2001  
Venue: State Library of NSW  
(Details will be forwarded to members)

**WATTAN**, a national forum  
on 28-29 April 2001.  
Venue: Powerhouse Museum  
Wattan is a community project that  
promotes the heritage of Arabic-  
speaking Australians. It is associated  
with the Powerhouse Museum. Wattan  
explores the concepts of homeland and  
heritage, place and identity, through  
community partnerships, public  
programs, contemporary arts, research  
and documentation.  
Contact: Alissar Chidiac  
Phone: (02) 9217 0409  
Email: alissarc@phm.gov.au

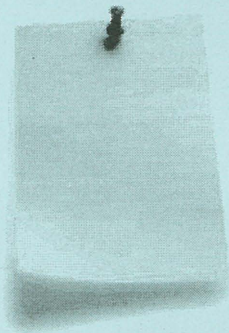
## **13th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research**

16-20 July 2001  
Venue: University of Melbourne,  
Theme: Traditions and Transitions – folk  
narrative in the contemporary world.  
Sessions will be structured thematically,  
and will consider papers which deal with  
traditional/folk narrative in relation to  
broader issues and concepts of race,  
gender, cultural and social diversity,  
language and linguistics; with issues of  
theory and critical discourse,  
methodology and case studies.  
Indigenous voices are welcome in every  
stream.

## **National Biennial Conference of the Oral History Association of Australia**

30 August – 2 September 2001  
Venue: National Library of Australia,  
Canberra.  
Theme: Voices of a 20th Century Nation  
Members should have received a bright  
red brochure about this event.  
The web site for the conference :  
[www.goecities.com/oha\\_australia/](http://www.goecities.com/oha_australia/)

## Noticeboard



*Oral History Transcription Service*  
Professional transcriber. Reasonable rates. Contact Gabrielle Godard on Ph 9310 3940 Fax 9310 3941. Urgent work accommodated

Strathfield Municipal Library is pleased to announce that it has received a grant of \$16,000 from the Library Council of NSW for an oral history project "The Tamil Community and their Neighbours". The aim of the project is to record the experiences of the Tamil community settling in the Strathfield Council area, particularly Homebush. We also hope to consider the interaction of the Tamil community with the wider Strathfield community.

It is anticipated that the project will take up to 12 months to complete with a maximum of 40 oral histories recorded.

The Library is calling for **expressions of interest** from oral historians to conduct the project. For further information and a brief outline of the project please contact Margaret Roberts, Reference & Local Studies Librarian at Strathfield Municipal Library. Ph: 9746 4384 Fax: 9746 9242 email: robermi@hotmail.com