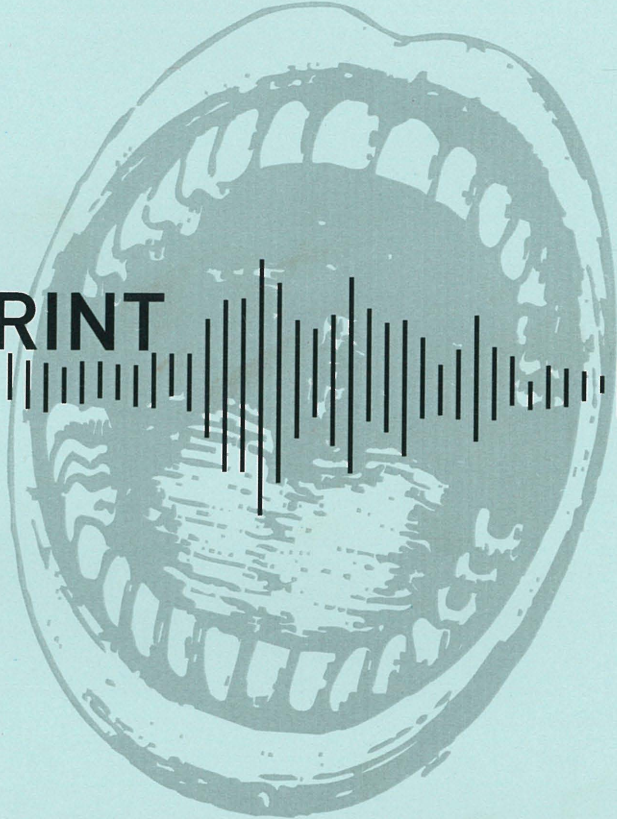


Newsletter of the New South Wales Branch
of the Oral History Association of Australia



VOICEPRINT



35

October 2006

VOICEPRINT

Voiceprint is the newsletter of the NSW Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia and is published twice yearly.

ISSN: 13224360

Issue No. 35 – October 2006

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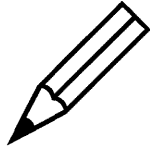
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Editorial



A cautionary tale!

It was January, hot and the leaves and sticks kept falling; and then I had to rake them up, hard work, or even harder work – scoop them out of the pool! Thus we were tempted by the lifestyle promised in the advertisement for new apartments on display in a local retirement village. So one Monday morning we went to look – not tempted by the new apartments – but one of the original apartments – ‘we could live here’.

Now all we had to do was sell our house, pack up and move in! Simple, so it seemed as we signed on the dotted line. First, there was the house and garden to tidy up and after nearly 40 years it was a very full house. What to keep, what to give away, what to throw away and even more puzzling what/who was that? I sorted papers and photos into the archive boxes and as far as possible added names and dates and other details. I found a most beautiful baby photo and I showed the little grand daughters – ‘Pa as a baby!’ No that’s not Pa’ nor could the laughing teenager be Gran! I found some perfume flasks, vases and trinkets handed down from my grandmother and great aunts which I have put aside for the little girls. One day they might even realize that their grandparents were once young. Bits and pieces stashed away to inform the family in the future but how I wish I knew more about some of the things and the family members so they might know more of the family history.

Moving has also meant new equipment, all of which works differently, including the computer. I do caution, it would be an advantage, to read the instructions before the dinner is burnt, the laundry flooded or the words run away, I know not where, off the page! However, slowly, after all these minor disasters I am taking control and looking forward to a long relaxing summer in our new home. Not all relaxing, because some of the time I am determined to spend putting some family history together. One strong message from sorting out the house, the future is informed by actions taken in the present!

Do note the new address, phone number and email so you can contact me. Contributions needed please. Hope you enjoy Anna Jarrett’s article about her Kangaroo Valley project. Has anyone a project to report on or do you have any comments or reflections from the IOHA conference. Look forward to receiving your contributions next January.

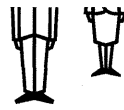
Joyce Cribb

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Membership



New Members

(My apologies to Jill Lennon for spelling her name incorrectly in our April listing. Ed)

A very special welcome to our New Members because I suspect many of you came to us via the International Oral History Conference held in Sydney in July this year. The fact that you have now joined encourages us in our belief that oral history and interest in oral history is growing. If you missed the international conference I am happy to tell you all that the next national conference will be held in Brisbane in September 2007. The next international meeting will be in Mexico in 2008.

I doubt there will be another international conference in Sydney in the foreseeable future, but maybe it will happen elsewhere in Australia sometime! However, we have certainly established our credentials in the oral history world with the success of the 2006 program. In great measure this is thanks to all of those and some of you included who gave such interesting and well-prepared papers. Thank you and welcome again!

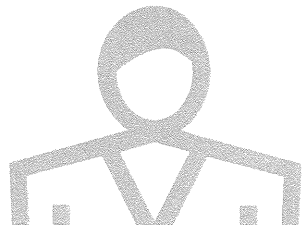
Helen Andreoni	Social anthropologist and university lecturer
Paul Ashton	Public historian and university lecturer
Guy Fordy	Consultant historian
Nathalie Apouchtine	Researcher
John Hockney	Historian and author
Elaine Goggin	Dietician
Lee Taylor-Friend	Historian
Gwen Carruthers	Retired; interested in oral history
Abby Cooper	Student
Ernest Morris	Retired; interested on oral history
Astrid Reinke	Retired; interested in oral history
Sarah Dowse	Historian
Margaret Helman	Consultant
Maria Fallah	Public servant
Robin Stevenson	Retired; interested in oral history
John Gintowt	Research student
Ann Jones	Student
Glenys Withers	Teacher
Karen Schamberger	Museum assistant
Peter Read	Historian and university professor
Annie Shillington	Writer

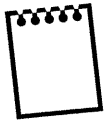


Randall McClelland
Oksana Hull
Brian Sear
Robert Reynolds
Olwyn Green
Margaret Leask
Vishna Collins
Alex Norman
Wanda Kluge
Australian Centre for Oral History

Army officer
Education officer
Industrial designer
Academic
Retired; interested in oral history
Theatre historian
Teacher
Student
Student
Professional oral historians

Rosie Block, President





Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History Awarded to Ms Beth M. Robertson

Ms Beth M. Robertson has made outstanding contributions to oral history in Australia since joining the committee of the Oral History Association of Australia (South Australia) in 1981, in which she has had a long and distinguished career.

As Oral History Officer at the State Library of South Australia she has been an exceptional advocate for the crucial significance of oral history collections to Australia's national heritage. She has been an inspiring mentor and her personality and enthusiasm has encouraged many oral historians to deposit their collections with the library. Her tireless efforts have helped ensure that many cultural institutions throughout South Australia and other States have created and preserved oral history collections.

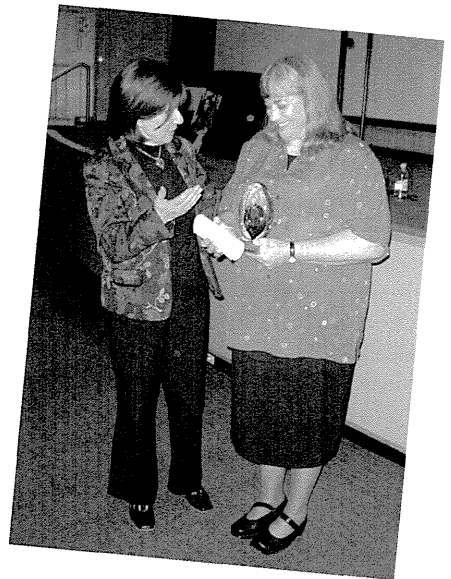
Beth's much acclaimed *Oral History Handbook* was first published in 1983, and is now in its fifth edition. The Handbook, which helped to create a national standard for Australia, is practical and informative, and has done much to establish the importance of good quality sound recordings. It is used extensively overseas and has been published in a Chinese edition.

Beth has also conducted a number of interviews for the J.D. Somerville collection at the State Library of South Australia including an important one on home births.

Beth is a member of the Australian Sound Recordings Association, where her involvement has helped to ensure the preservation of oral history.

She has participated regularly in the biennial national oral history conferences and is a contributor to the Association's annual journal, which she has indexed twice. Her clear, logical and insightful counsel is widely and deservedly sought.

She was awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Oral History Association of Australia in 2001.



Nuts and Bolts (cont...)

Order of Australia Medal awarded to Janis Wilton

I am sure all members were delighted to learn that Janis Wilton was awarded an OAM in the most recent Order of Australia Honours. Congratulations Janis and well deserved! The citation stated that the award was for *'service to the community as an historian, researcher and author, to history organisations, and through the preservation of Chinese heritage in New South Wales.'*

Churchill Fellowship Travels with Lesley Jenkins

Lesley Jenkins returned from her Churchill Fellowship in Oral History in September 2005. The following article is the fourth, and last, instalment in a series she has written chronicling her journey.

The United Kingdom – Getting to grips with sound, transcripts and summaries.

Much of my work as a public historian involves visits to the archives, but I have always found it more interesting to talk to people about their recollections of historical events than to spend time alone there. Both are necessary to arrive at a full understanding, but oral history provides detail, insight and analysis that can surprise, delight and inform both interviewer and interviewee. My view about

this was reinforced when Rob Perks, Curator of Oral History & Director, National Life Story Collection, hosted me for two weeks as part of my Churchill Fellowship.

The library is located on a congested London road and it was heaven to pass into the relative peace of the large courtyard and through the library doors of this new red brick building. Libraries are busy places these days and the British Library is no exception. It has a bookshop, multiple exhibition spaces and cafeterias but it's still primarily a place for quiet research. Rob took me on a tour of the building and we looked for famous faces researching the next best seller but we found none. I was shown the sound proof carrels where researchers sit in small rooms listening to sound recordings, including oral histories. It was reassuring to see that a number of these were in use when we passed them.

I was surprised at the number of projects running concurrently at the National Life Story Collection, which is an independent charity within the British Library's Sound Archive. I was also surprised to meet a number of contracted oral historians working on projects supported by charities linked to or supported financially by the business sector. Rob works very hard at generating these leads and at supporting enquiries that come from all over the UK and from overseas. I first made contact with him some years ago when I couldn't get a response to my query about equipment from the Oral History Section of The National Library of Australia.



The giant supermarket firm Tesco was supporting a project collecting interviews with current and former workers in the industry. Another project began in 1998 and featured the lives of people in the book trade, which had been funded by the Unwin Charitable Trust. Projects were also taking place in Scotland with oil workers on the rigs, and with artists in London. The topics were very diverse but a feature of them was their detail and their length – up to 40 hours per person. The oral historians working on the projects told me that people had asked them if they had been trained not to yawn. “No chance”, they said, “it’s too interesting”

Interviews are summarized and occasionally transcribed and the summaries are added to the British Library National Sound Archive’s Cadensa on-line catalogue, which is available on the Web. I listened to 8 tapes making up one interview and summarized them according to a set of guidelines that ensure consistency and encourage brevity. Each 30-minute section of interview should be a single paragraph not exceeding 250 words.

Compilation CDs are also made of selected oral history excerpts and the material is often used to inform exhibitions or books. The oral historians do their own summaries on the equipment at the library, ensure that it is uploaded onto the database and undertake research, preparation and gather their equipment from the Library. They were using the digital Marantz PMD 660 which uses a flashcard. I took along my

own new machine of the same make and model but it had a sound problem that had been identified during my travels. The sound engineers at the Library confirmed that it was the machine and not operator error – a relief and an irritation at the same time, as I had to return it when I got back to Australia.

I discussed the issue of uncompressed and compressed sound, which was one of the reasons I purchased the Marantz PMD 660 myself, so that I could offer my clients uncompressed sound if they wanted it. I have since come to realize that I will mainly record uncompressed sound because it will cost me more in time and money (downloading and storing) and Flashcard size (cost of cards for recording) to collect compressed sound. I have decided after discussions with staff at the Library, community project officers and with Ken Howarth, an independent oral historian working under the name of Heritage Recording in north Wales (where I also spent a few days), that this will be provided if specified in a contract and may attract an extra fee. However, if I was a curator overseeing the collection and management of an archive, and I had technical backup, I would do as Rob is doing. Rob and his oral historians use 2 Gigabyte Flashcards which record for 3 hours at 24 bit/44.1 – the CD standard. The sound is transferred to MP3 so that they can summarise them more easily and this sound (compressed) is what you hear if go to the web page.

Nuts and Bolts (cont...)



The people and the institutions I visited are moving along the digital road at different speeds. They are making decisions according to their budgets, the technical advice available to them, and the compatibility requirements of their institutions who need to marry the accessibility and storage of their sound recordings with their other collections. For instance the recordings made by the Columbia University Oral History Office for their 9/11 project were recorded using a HHB Professional Mini Disc recorder (compressed sound). They fully transcribe their interviews and they are available via an antiquated card system. The Imperial War Museum has moved from the Marantz CP 430 cassette recorder to the HHB Professional Mini Disc Recorder. They have also moved away from full transcripts, preferring to spend the money on contract interviewers collecting interviews. They now provide summaries. The Museum of London uses the HHB Professional Mini Disc Recorder but they are moving towards the Flash Card. Interestingly, they store the mini-disc as the master plus 2 CDs (Archival Gold). They provide summaries but they also have a few transcripts. The general move is to store the audio on two different makes of archival quality CD or DVD in case one brand is discovered to have a fault. The other move is to store the uncompressed and/or compressed sound recordings on a hard drive which in effect becomes the archival copy. The hard drive in the case of the Imperial War Museum is stored off site for safety and security reasons.

The Oral History curator at the British Sound Library is also a resource person for community organizations setting up recording projects. I visited the Kings Cross Voices Project and the Refugee Communities Project, which were training and collecting, documentation and celebratory projects located in London communities. They had both been well funded and would run for many years thanks to the millions of pounds made available by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It seems that the arguments we are still making about the legitimacy of oral history have passed on to the next stage in the UK and the US where the worth of the project and the richness of the outcomes makes it worthy of funding. In Australia our philanthropic sector is still small whereas this is well developed in America. We have not yet developed links and partnerships with big business, and while there are potential problems associated with impartiality, this it is certainly worth exploring.



International Oral History Conference Sydney, July 2006

Janis Wilton, our conference convener, has submitted the following interesting report and statistics.

Delegates

A total of 417 people registered for the conference.

The breakdown was as follows: IOHA & OHAA Members early bird registration 124; Non-member early bird 52; Student early bird 31; IOHA & OHAA Members standard 53; Non-member standard 39; Student standard 17. Day registration accounted for another 89 attendances and there were 12 sponsorships provided by OHAA and IOHA.

Countries Represented

28 countries were represented:

Argentina 2; Australia 230; Austria 5; Brazil 12; Canada 5; Chile 1; Czech Republic 1; Finland 2; France 1; Germany 5; Hong Kong 1; India 3; Israel 1; Italy 1; Japan 6; Mexico 7; New Zealand 30; Nigeria 1; Portugal 1; Singapore 1; South Africa 14; Spain 6; Sweden 1; Thailand 1; Ukraine 1; United Kingdom 21; USA 40; Venezuela 1; Zimbabwe 1.

Papers Given

A total of 198 presentations (jointly authored papers are counted as one presentation) were on the program. Of these, 13 were 'no shows' – either through withdrawal or simply not turning up. Papers were presented from all countries

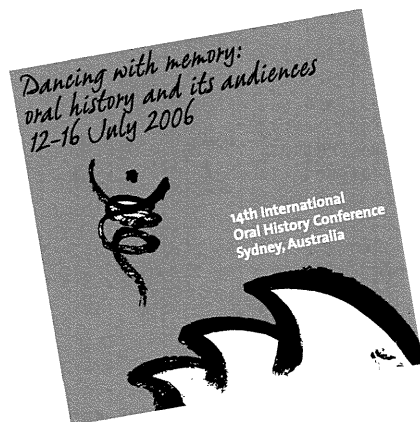
represented at the conference with 78 coming from Australia.

Master Classes

These were booked out very quickly. The initial maximum of 25 for each class was extended a little. (Portelli – 32 participants; Shopes – 29; Thomson – 33; Rehberger & Fegan – 29). It seemed that these could have been filled a second time and the organizers strongly recommend that they become a permanent feature of the conferences.

Special Interest Groups

Another new feature, these generally seemed to be well received and worthwhile. We are currently seeking some responses for those who facilitated the Special



Reports (cont...)

Below: Funso Afolayan
(USA) and Danoye Oguntola
Laguda (Nigeria)



Below from left to right: Rosie Block,
Paula Hamilton, Janis Wilton
(conference conveners),
Rina Benmayor (President, IOHA)

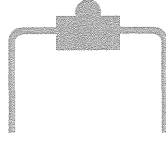


Closing plenary,
New uses and
directions in oral
history, Al Thomson
(UK), incoming
International
President, Rina
Benmayor (USA),
Catherine Moyo
(Zimbabwe),
Daphne Banai (Israel)



Above: Alistair Thomson,
key note speaker and
t-shirt model!

Photographer: Cynthia Nadai



Interest Groups. To date, it has been suggested that they should be continued and that they need more time.

Abstracts

Another new feature was the request for paper abstracts, the translation of these and the publication of a bilingual book of abstracts as well as making the abstracts available through the conference website. Again, this seems to have been well received and useful both for choosing sessions and as a record of the conference, and we recommend they continue as a feature of the conference. However, organizing and administering the collection, translation, editing and compiling of the abstracts is resource intensive.

Bilingualism

Apart from the abstracts, the bilingual nature of IOHA meant large amounts of translation work. We achieved this with the assistance of volunteer translators and through paying for translation and for bilingual speakers to handle enquiries. It was particularly difficult as none of the three of us, myself, Paula and Rosie, has Spanish as a language.

I know you will all be interested in this report from Janis. We certainly broke quite a lot of new ground in Sydney.

It would be great to hear from any of you who attended and have something you'd like to add from a personal perspective. The sessions where I was present were

uniformly interesting and well presented. However, there must have been some where you might have some criticisms and others which you greatly enjoyed. I know editor Joyce would love to hear from you so we can publish a follow-up in the next edition of Voiceprint.

All of us on the conference committee have had many emails and telephone calls of congratulation from all over Australia and the world. It gives us such joy to have these. It seemed to us too that there was a real buzz throughout the meeting and where there were queries they were all satisfactorily resolved. It was great to take part in all of it and to see to fruition the long years (yes, years!) of planning. We were greatly assisted by many of you and there was no one on whom we called who did not render splendid service. Thank you all for coming – and for those who were not able to come there is a CD of the conference papers and if you wish I can send you that for \$15.

At one point during the conference I was heard to say that I felt I would be sorry when it was all over – I think that has to be my final word!

Rosemary Block

President

Ioha Cultural Tour to Canberra 17-18 July 2006 – report and photos by Suzanne Mulligan

(Thank you to Suzanne from Queensland for this illustrated report)

We set out in our mini Murray's Bus from outside the Conference venue for our tour hosted by the National Library. Our host and tour guide for the bus journey was Kevin Bradley (Curator of Oral History and Folklore, Director of Sound Preservation and Technical Services, National Library). Tour guests were Jim and Toni Lane with their granddaughter Miranda, from Gary, Indiana, USA; Funso Afolayan from the USA (originally from Nigeria); Terry from Scotland, Dr Wasu from India; and Soo Choon Lye from Singapore.

Our driver, Rick, took us through Sydney and we headed south, stopping at the historic town of Berrima for a scrumptious morning tea. As we neared Canberra, our overseas visitors were thrilled to spot a kangaroo jumping through a field.

We arrived at the National Library of Australia (www.nla.gov.au) to meet Dianne Dahlitz (Senior Librarian, Oral History and Folklore) and Shelly Grant (Manager, Sound Preservation and Technical Services). Our hosts greeted us with a generous lunch.

Following lunch, we were given a tour of the Oral History and Folklore Branch and the Sound Preservation and Technical Services areas. Kevin Bradley showed us the climate-controlled file storage areas; their sound restoration areas; and the interviewing studios. It was fascinating to see all the old sound equipment being used to digitally copy items that had used that equipment. Some items were in such poor repair that we could only marvel at the patience required to restore them to a standard that allowed them to be heard once again.

From there we walked to Old Parliament House (www.oph.gov.au) where we were given a tour of that historic building. The Press Gallery's office area was most interesting as we saw the cramped conditions in which journalists worked to get their stories out. In the old Press Gallery itself, there are "telephones" set up for you to pick up and listen to the voices of prominent journalists of the time, such as Alan Reid. We also saw the Prime Minister's office before having a lovely afternoon tea in the Old Parliament House restaurant.



We then visited the National Archives (www.naa.gov.au) where there were a number of interesting exhibitions including “Summers Past” featuring iconic photographs of Australian summers; and “Charters of Our Nation” showing the significant documents that contributed to the evolution of Australia’s nationhood. We were shown how to research the wealth of material housed in the Archives, including immigration and military records.

After a very busy day, we were taken to University House (www.anu.edu.au/unihouse), our accommodation for the night. Our National Library hosts took us to dinner at the Sabayon Restaurant in Canberra City where we enjoyed a delicious meal and lively discussion.

Next morning, driver Rick, was ready to take us out for another day. Our first stop was the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (www.aiatsis.gov.au). This was not an institution I was familiar with, so it was interesting to learn about it. The Institute is a centre for researching past and present indigenous lifestyles. It includes a Native Title unit, Family History unit and Audiovisual Archives. The Family History unit has an important role in reuniting members of the Stolen Generations with their families. The Audiovisual Archives is working to digitize its collection to make it more accessible.

We went on to the National Film and Sound Archive (www.nfsa.afc.gov.au) for a wicked morning tea before being shown a “collage”

movie featuring scenes from the Archives collection covering significant Australian historical and cinematic moments of the 20th century.

Graham Shirley gave us a tour of the “behind the scenes” work being done to digitize old movies, television programs, records, tapes and other media.

We were then taken to the National Museum of Australia (www.nma.gov.au) for a whirlwind “taste” of the vast collection the Museum has to offer visitors. It was very well patronised with a number of school children enjoying the exhibits. There was a diverse range of exhibits featuring aboriginal life; colonial Australia; immigration; Australian icons; evolution of computers; Australian “characters”; outback life and much more. After the tour, we had some free time to lunch and continue to explore the Museum.

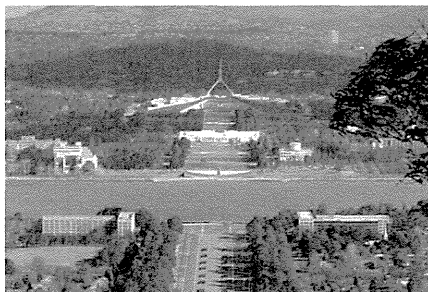
Our bus then drove us to the top of Mount Ainslea for a spectacular view of Canberra and surrounds while our hosts pointed out significant landmarks.

We moved on to the Australian War Memorial (www.awm.gov.au) for a very informative guided tour by former soldier, Terry Ballantyne. This was another building heavily populated by school groups, showing what a great educational centre it is. Terry showed us the Wall of Honour and took us through the World War I section telling us stories and anecdotes

Reports (cont...)

about individual soldiers, which helped us see these exhibits as representing real people.

That is where the tour ended for me as I stayed on Canberra for a couple of days. I was very glad to meet such an interesting group of people and, as an Australian, I was also proud of the institutions that we visited and that the overseas visitors enjoyed them. The team at the National Library did a wonderful job planning the program, liaising with the other institutions and ensuring all of us were made so welcome wherever we went. The tour was memorable, informative and entertaining.



Clockwise from top:
View from Mount Ainslea of Canberra and surrounds; the group at the National Film and Sound Archive; National Museum of Australia





A History of the Oral History Handbook by Beth M. Robertson

Reprinted with permission from *Word of Mouth*, Autumn 2006, the newsletter of the South Australian Branch of the OHAA.

Both *Word of Mouth* and the *Oral History Handbook* were born in 1983, and both publications have achieved milestones in 2006 – the 50th issue of the newsletter and the Fifth Edition of the *Handbook*. It is great credit to the South Australian Branch (SA Branch) that both have remained continuously in print. To mark this auspicious occasion for the *Handbook*, I am pleased to provide this brief history of its development.

The first edition of the *Oral History Handbook*, published in May 1983, was a little A5-size booklet of 32 pages. Its orange card cover featured John Gasper's cartoon of an interviewer shrouded in open reel tape, holding a microphone clear of the tangled tape, saying 'OK. Could you repeat that? We seem to have a slight technical hitch.'

At the time, the Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA) was barely five years old and the seminal works of Britain's Paul Thompson (*The Edwardians* and *The Voice of the Past*) and Australia's Wendy Lowenstein (*The Immigrants* with Morag Loh and *Weevils in the Flour*) were only a year or two older. The SA Branch committee

was in demand for talks and workshops and there was clearly need for some simple guidelines for the growing number of people interested in oral history.

The genesis of the *Handbook* was a set of seminar notes by researcher Ingrid Srubjan who was contracted by Thebarton Council to write a history of the suburb, a project that included a community-based oral history program. Ingrid intended to develop her notes for publication by the SA Branch, but the committee took over when she was unable to complete the task. The committee was architect John Gasper, historians Susan Marsden and Kathleen Patitsas, teacher Margaret Souter and the current author (then a postgraduate history student).

The resulting text was typed, pasted up on board along with John's cartoons and printed very cheaply at Wattle Park Teachers' Centre. Initially priced at only \$1.00 for OHAA members and \$1.50 for non-members, 1000 copies were sold in 18 months.

Articles (cont...)

By then other OHAA branches were buying the *Handbook* and the National Committee, based in Western Australia, was interested in adopting a handbook for publication under its auspices. There were reservations about the scope of the *SA Handbook* (for instance, a single page about recording equipment highlighted the authors' lack of technical expertise) but memory fails me about how a manuscript by a Mr Marshall of Florida in the United States became our chief rival.

The matter was never resolved; the Marshall manuscript dropped from view and the SA Branch retained responsibility for publishing the *Handbook*. I undertook the necessary revisions, adding more information about equipment in conjunction with Michael Williams, the technology-minded National President, and the first 500 copies of the 36-page 'revised and extended second edition' sold out in six weeks.

With John's distinctive cartoon now gracing a blue cover, the modest Second Edition remained in print for 10 years from 1985 to 1994. It survived the 1988 Allen & Unwin publication of the more comprehensive *Oral History: A Handbook* by New South Wales' historians Louise Douglas, Alan Roberts and Ruth Thompson, and continued to sell at least 500 copies each year Australia-wide. I haven't gone back to the financial records, but I estimate that 6000

copies of the Second Edition were sold. The price rose gradually with printing costs to \$2.50 for members, keeping it within anyone's budget.

The Third Edition in 1994 transformed the *Handbook* into the A4-sized, well-designed publication that readers are familiar with today. By then I had been Oral History Officer at the State Library of South Australia for seven years and from that perspective the Second Edition was no longer an adequate introduction to oral history. The Allen & Unwin *Handbook* was out of print and no other comprehensive Australian text had emerged.

Having decided to develop a third edition, my primary aims were to tackle two significant gaps in the literature – how to structure an interview and what brands and models of recording equipment to buy.

Listening to hundreds of hours of recordings over the years I had become convinced that the most successful oral history results from focused interviews conducted by well-prepared interviewers. Yet many handbooks, including the *Handbook's* earlier editions, advise interviewers to 'develop an interview structure appropriate to your topic' without providing practical advice about how this can be done. The Third Edition, and the two subsequent editions, advocated the model of a three-part interview structure, consisting of 'orientation questions', 'common questions' and 'specific questions'



and related this structure to several interview programs.

The Third Edition also answered one of the most frequently asked questions, 'Which tape recorder should I buy?' by recommending specific brand names, model numbers and prices for recording equipment available in Australia. I was not aware then of the cross I was making for my back! As digital technologies have superseded analogue equipment and proliferated beyond imaging, this unique feature of the *Handbook* has become more and more difficult to maintain.

ABC radio producer, author and raconteur Tim Bowden launched the Third Edition of the *Handbook* with great style in April 1994. No other edition has been publicly launched, but it was very useful to differentiate the new edition from its more modest predecessors. The first box of books arrived at the venue from the printer with only minutes to spare, an experience that has tempered my desire for launches of subsequent editions.

The Third Edition's initial price was only \$6.00 to members, thanks primarily to my brother David Robertson providing the cover, layout and supervision of printing through his company Icarus Industrial Design. The price rose to \$10.00 in 1997, with non-members paying \$15.00. It sold 4000 copies.

The timing of the Fourth Edition was problematic. In some ways there was no urgency. The methodology described in the Third Edition remained valid, and the recommended reading list and contact details about OHAA branches, repositories and other organisations could be kept up to date with amendments before each print-run. On the other hand, the increasing impact of the digital revolution on recording, disseminating and preserving oral history had to be addressed.

However, digital developments have much shorter commercial life spans than traditional analogue formats. It became clear that if the Fourth Edition had to wait until digital technology 'settled down', it would never be published! Instead, the advent of the GST, and the elimination of the 21-31% sales tax on recording equipment, became the trigger for a new edition. It was published in October 2000 and sold 2000 copies.

The *Handbook* has always had some international sales, but in 2003 Aven Kuei of the Five Senses Arts Management Association, Taiwan proposed a Chinese edition. Aven had studied for a time in Australia, seen the *Handbook* and believed that it would be a useful addition to the Five Senses' catalogue. When I asked by email at the beginning of the project whether any of the original design would be used, Aven replied that the Chinese edition 'will be different, may I say will be more pretty'! Indeed it is. The first print run was 1000 copies.

Articles (cont...)

When the Fourth Edition of the *Handbook* was published I was sure that it would be my last because I was no longer involved in oral history on a daily basis. However, in my new role as the State Library's Coordinator of Preservation, including sound preservation, I received an increasing number of enquiries for up to date information about recording equipment. In June 2004 I decided to take up the challenge once more, confidently predicting that the Fifth Edition would be finished by Christmas that year. My calculation was only 12-months off the mark!

The Recording Equipment chapter evolved considerably over that year and a half as I tried to develop a structure that would be somewhat more 'future proof' than those of earlier editions. The focus on digital recording standards and the proposal for an OHAA technical committee were endorsed by colleagues at a conference in Sydney, July 2005, and became more confident that I was on the right track. In the meantime John Gasper had readily agreed to work on ideas for new cartoons and to refresh old favourites. The Fifth Edition was finally completed in January this year.

About 15,000 copies of the *Handbook* have been published since 1983, and every print run has sold out. A quick search of the new Libraries Australia website shows that previous editions of the *Handbook* are well represented in libraries throughout

the country. The challenge now is to get the new edition as widely distributed as possible so that the *Handbook* can continue to have a positive influence on oral history and to promote the OHAA.

By the way, the original cover cartoon now graces the back page on the Fifth Edition. It has been relegated to that position because few people recognize its reference to the obsolete open reel tape format. But the *Oral History Handbook* wouldn't be complete without it.

I'm sure members are grateful to Beth for her work, and future members will also come to know and appreciate the Handbook. Congratulations to Beth as the inaugural recipient of the Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History.

Members may order their copy of the 5th Edition from OHAA (NSW) c/ State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, Sydney, 2000 or from OHAA (SA), PO Box 3113, Unley, SA, 5061.

Please include payment of \$20 with the order (cheque or money order).



Sharing Stories: A Storyteller's Approach to Oral History *by Anna Jarrett*

Last year, I was invited to be the oral history facilitator for the History Alive Audio Installation project at the Kangaroo Valley Pioneer Farm Museum (KVPFM). I would work with a small team (a sound engineer/ editor and a coordinator), to record a series of exhibit related pioneer stories. My methodology would be up to me, as long as I was able to record all the interviews within a few days, and script the stories for a series of installations at the Museum. We had seven months to bring this project from initial idea to a final public event for History Week.

With my new digital Marantz recorder in hand, and a handful of men and women pioneers ready to be interviewed, I launched into my first paid project as an oral history facilitator. I've been researching, writing and telling stories for twenty years and have a background in radio journalism and community story work, but I knew that there'd be a learning curve for this project as I developed my own method of gathering oral histories through storytelling, conversation, reminiscence and story crafting.

I picked up lots of wonderful ideas about project planning by reading past Voiceprints and oral history handbooks, especially *Talking Together – A Guide to Community Oral History Projects* by Leslie Jenkins. This is the story of the project

History Alive! Project from start to finish. I hope that it helps other communities and regional museums who are interested in recording and celebrating their stories in a low budget, long term, flexible and very accessible way.

BACKGROUND TO HISTORY ALIVE PROJECT

KVPFM is a charming regional museum which is situated on the edge of town, just over the historic Hampden Bridge. The museum, which is made up of a series of historic buildings and a small administration building, is managed as a non profit community facility with about thirty dedicated volunteers. Each building functions as a look into the past, the pioneer lives of the dairy farmers and cedar cutters who settled Kangaroo Valley. Rendell Cottage, is an original home which is fitted out with an old style kitchen, dining room, bedroom and lounge room, most of the furniture and goods being donations from local pioneer families. Chittick Museum houses twenty four glass cabinets full of photos and objects which suggest the story of pioneer lives from the 1820s on, but are only labelled, not interpreted. There's also a schoolhouse, a work shed, a dairy and a forge.

Articles (cont...)

History Alive was funded by IMB Foundation to bring the Museum to life, to give voice to local history, to build on the cultural significance of the museum and ultimately to make the museum more accessible and attractive to existing and potential visitors including tourists, schools, community groups and seniors. The inspiration for this project was the Nowra Museum of Flight which already had a successful audio installation, engineered by Nigel Anderson of NSMedia. Nigel and I were invited to create a similar experience at KVPMP.

STAGE ONE: Planning and Development

The President of the Kangaroo Valley Historical Trust, Elaine Apperley, was the visionary and coordinator behind the project. Her position and all her work was volunteer, whereas Nigel and I would be paid a fee for our services. The first step in getting this project off the ground was to meet as a team and walk through the museum together, talking about the vision, scope and logistics of this project. At first, I was a bit overwhelmed by the extent of material which the museum housed, and I wondered where I would find the story focus, with no written interpretation having been done yet. But as I walked around, breathing in the waves of old world air, I began to visualize a storyline, and could imagine the voices of the pioneers filling these rooms with their stories.

The next step was to do some basic research from *A History of Kangaroo Valley Australia* by John Griffith, to ask Elaine for a list of the exhibits and any related material

that has been written for the museum, to develop a timeline and themes. I made a list of what I needed before I started the interviews: some historical reference points, some familiarity with the country, a map of the museum and of the region, an understanding of the nature of pioneer life, some familiarity with the main pioneer family names and a structure for the stories. There were no existing recordings of these families to date. My interviewees would be a handful of locals from pioneering families. Their age ranged from sixties to nineties.

With the research ready, I developed a project schedule for my share of the stages in creating an audio installation. This would help Nigel and Elaine work on their part of the project concurrently, and ensure that each stage of the project was running on time. I learned to always double the time you expect your project to take. My tasks were to research interviews, script ideas, conduct interviews, index interviews, copy and submit CD's of raw interviews with script outlines, intros, outros and edit points. The success of this project depended on having a tight team, working with clarity and a strong communication and information management system. Thank goodness for e-mails and mobile phones.



STAGE TWO : Research, interview plans, interviews

The interviewees had already expressed interest to Elaine whose job it was to contact and organize as many interviewees as possible. I was initially given a lively group of three women and five men to interview, with one a local geologist added to the mix, as the project progressed. A few other important interviewees emerged at a later date, so I asked Elaine to interview them with a home video camera which had good sound recording capabilities. I gave Elaine some suggested questions as well as a guide for total length and with this guidance, she was able to record two good interviews.

We decided that the best place to record the interviewees would be on site as this would help trigger place based memories. That was a good idea until we ran into roadworks near the bridge which made a clear recording impossible and we moved to a nearby home. Elaine suggested that it may be best to interview the men and women separately as they were talking about different things. During the interviews, I learned that they also the men and women had quite different styles of remembering, talking and interviewing! I interviewed the men first. Picture this. A “young” blonde woman from the city coming in to the Valley for the day to interview a bunch of bloke farmers. What would be the point of connection that would help the interviews flow? I was fortunate to have the same surname as one of the pioneer Kangaroo Valley

families, Jarrett, with my own story to tell about being related to Thomas Eather, a Hawksbury pioneer. Some of the Jarrett’s came from the Hawksbury to the Valley. There was the connection. Being a distant relative of someone can help bring you into a more intimate circle, and it did.

I introduced the project to the men: how it works, who its for, points of view and multiple truths. I explained that the first part of the day would be recorded for research only then we’d retell some of the stories in individual interviews. Sitting around a table with cups of tea, using cue cards, we talked about work, school, changing technology, social life. The men, who knew each other well, prompted each other’s memories and as the stories came out, the room was filled with laughter and excitement. As a storyteller, I believe that we all have stories to tell, and the best stories are the ones which come straight from our heart, in the moment, full of sensory detail and the emotions of the experience. My privilege was to listen to these men’s stories and ask occasional questions which helped expand the stories, give them focus and at times, relate two stories together. The old yarn spinning magic worked as the men tried to outdo each other with their tales of life in the early days, and their memories of themselves and their fathers, as young men.

With a room full of stories, my job was to bring back some focus to the day. I talked about what makes a good story and

Articles (cont...)

what makes a good story for the audio installations (one to three minutes). I asked each man to choose two themes and choose a story which goes with each of these themes. We also talked about the objects in the Chittick Museum and the Shed which might relate to them (mostly work tools). Interestingly, the men said that the work tools were so old that even they hadn't used them in their time as dairy farmers. Then we talked about telling this story with a strong introduction and ending. It was abit like a crash public speaking course! I interviewed the men one by one, setting up on the back deck where it was comfy. The other men sat around the outside table and enjoyed listening to each of these interviews – a “Live” experience! The more confident men went first and when it was time for the other men, they were encouraged by their friends. This process helped shift the whole dynamic of an interview which can be quite daunting, into an accessible, intimate form. By now, the men were feeling comfortable enough to sit beside me and tell me their stories without me interrupting, just giving nods, smiles, hand and eye cues. When we'd finished all the interviews, I played back a few for the men to hear and checked that they were all happy for their interviews to go into the museum. They were and the storytelling continued as we all left to go home!

This storytelling process helps create powerful recordings for audio installations without having to do much editing. I work with a philosophy that we need to create

spaces for storytelling to really be able to listen to the stories. Drawing from the very old tradition of gathering together to share stories, I consciously try to create this dynamic, and the energy that goes with it, in my interviews. By brainstorming the stories, we work with tales which are told in authentic voices. By crafting the stories, the men did their own editing, told the story in their own rhythm, and created the pictures from their own living memories. These authentic stories have a direct power to them, a power which remains strong right through the editing, mixing and mastering to the final broadcast within the museum. On Open Day in September, when we launched the History Alive Project, some of the comments people made about the recordings were “That sounds just like Bill”, “That’s Doris all right!”. We left the natural speech “flaws” in, like ums and pauses, with Nigel “tightening up” each recording just enough to give it a sound of excellence that the interviewees would be proud of.

After interviewing the men, I took the recordings home and listened back to all of them. They sounded perfect. I thought that I'd try the same approach in my interviews with the women the next week.

However, I soon learned how different it is to interview a group of women versus a group of men! The women were so delighted to meet me and so excited to be gathered together for this important project, that it was hard to stop them talking! Women like to talk all at once and



can follow multiple threads simultaneously. I had the cue cards and a sense of direction as I had done with the men, but the women just wanted to talk! Ah such rich chaos. I kept the recorder running, knowing that these stories would be no good for broadcast but would make great research. For awhile, I decided that laughing together, learning about each of these women's lives and their relationships with their husbands, their families and each other, was more important than following cue cards. Since the memory triggers for the women seemed to be each other, I listened as each of the stories revealed gems of experience. There's a beautiful richness in hearing senior voices talk about our history as living history. I wished that I could spend days with these women, but knew that today at some point, we had to get the specific interviews for the installation.

We all decided that the mostly lively way to remember the stories would be to walk through Rendell Cottage and see what memories each room triggered off. A great idea except that the memories were so full and fast that I couldn't get the mic to each lady speaking and once again, there was lots of overlaid speaking about Sunday baked lunches, pot belly stoves, home baked bread and washing mangles. I kept recording, hoping that I might be able to use some of this for the installation and knowing that the rest would make a great book some day! I felt that I was part of a poignant historic moment where these women were gathering together to pass on

these stories, knowing that their lives were getting on and they wouldn't always be around to tell these tales first hand.

We had a welcome break for lunch and returned to the interview room for one on one interviews. With so many stories stirred up, I hoped that the women could tell their chosen tales with the same focus as the men and with little interruption from me. We didn't have time for the same story crafting session that I'd done with the men and I'm not sure that it would have worked. I trusted that each woman knew the stories which she wanted to tell. And they did! The interviews went longer than the ideal one to three minute timing I was aiming for, but the content was strong, and reflected back all the themes which I'd chosen for the installation including My Wedding Day, Life Skills For Ladies, Chamber Pots and Toilet Stuff and We Made Our Own Fun. Day two of interviews was a success. The women also left for their homes continuing to tell stories.

In listening back to all the interviews, I was pleased to see that my storytelling approach to oral history worked. The best stories are told when there's a point of connection between the listener and the teller and when there is an open space for the stories to be heard and to rest. All stories are about relationships. If there is a strong relationship between the teller and the listener (the interviewer), as well as a deep relationship with the subjects being discussed, then the stories will unfold abundantly and naturally.

STAGE THREE: Logging CD's and developing final script

Once the main interviews were done, it was easier to see/hear where the audio installations were heading. The interviews were indexed with a time log and copies of the CDs were sent to both Elaine and Nigel. Elaine and I talked more about the script for the installations, and added a few more ideas to the initial proposal. My skills as an interpreter came in handy here as I helped translate the vision behind the project and the interviews into the next stage of installation and exhibition.

In selecting the final stories for installation I considered equal representation by each individual, the best told stories, the timing of stories and the links between stories.

As well as writing a script outline, I wrote the text for simple Museum Exhibit signs. The women's stories would be broadcast in Rendell Cottage on a rotating basis so that as the visitor walked through the cottage, they heard the stories. All the other stories would be installed into a listening post in Chittick Museum, with photos of the interviewees as well as a story title and storytelling credit under each story button.

STAGE FOUR: Launch of Audio Installation. Creating a Public Event

There was lots of fine tuning for this project once the interviews had been recorded and edited. This experience relates more to the field of interpretation and producing public events so I won't go into it now. History Alive was launched for History Week in September 2005 with a total running time

of seventy one minutes of stories. The installation and the stories were received with great acclaim and the air was electric with the local pride which was felt by the interviewees and all the visitors that day.

The History Alive project was a dynamic way to create a place and time for recording the stories of Kangaroo Valley pioneer families. As with many story projects, it has uncovered so many more stories. We look forward to the next stage of working with these stories.

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Anna Jarrett is a storyteller, trainer, story consultant and oral history facilitator living on the south coast. Members may contact Anna by email or visit her web sites. (ED)

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Anna Jarrett interviews Kangaroo Valley Pioneer Women



Elsie Dewhurst (left), 96 years young, cut the ribbon to launch History Alive. With her are other pioneer women, Doris Good and Doris Blinman. Anna Jarrett (right) recorded and compiled the stories for the project

Diary of Events



The Oral History Association of Australia (Qld Inc.) is pleased to announce the next National Conference. This will be held in Brisbane in September 2007.

The Conference aims to explore:

- the new ways of interpreting story;
- new ways of working with community;
- new ways of understanding memory;
- new ways for independent practitioners; and
- new ways of dealing with changing technologies.

We will be interested in papers, workshops, creative productions or displays that address these challenges. The call for Papers and Expressions of Interest will go out in September 2006.

For further details contact the Secretary, Suzanne Mulligan: mulligan@gil.com.au or (07) 3376 1865.

Final OHAA NSW Committee Meeting Date for 2006

21 November

Members are encouraged and welcome to attend meetings held at the state Library at 5.30pm. Please meet at the Mitchell Wing vestibule at 5.25. (Staff will direct you if you miss the group)

Seminar Date for 2006

Final Seminar for 2006 will be held 4 November.

Noticeboard

Contributions are invited from Australia and overseas for publication in the

OHAA Journal No. 29, 2007 *Old Stories, New Ways: More Challenge(r)s in Oral History*

Contributions are invited in the following 3 categories:

- A** Papers to be submitted for peer review, and non-refereed articles on the following themes (limit: 5,500 words):
 - Papers addressing themes at the OHAA's Biennial National Conference, September 2007, Brisbane, *Old Stories, New Ways* (See note on next page)
 - Issues arising from the 2006 International Oral History Conference *Dancing With Memory: Oral History and its Audiences*
 - Ethical, methodological, legal and technology challenges being met in the practice, collection and usage of oral history both in Australia and abroad
 - Critiques/analysis of strategies and protocols in projects, the perceived value and meanings attributed by oral historians to their work, or the way in which projects and agencies handle their involvement



Peer Review

If requested by authors, papers in this category may be submitted for assessment by peer review at the discretion of the Publication Committee. However, note two important points:

- Papers for referral must show a high standard of scholarship, and reflect a sound appreciation of current and historical issues on the topics discussed
- Deadline for submission of papers for peer review is 27 February 2007, earlier than the deadline for other material

B Articles describing specific projects, the information gained through them, and may discuss important outcomes or practice issues identified in the process (limit: 4,000 words)

C Reviews of books and other publications in Australia or elsewhere that are of interest to the oral history community (approximately 1,000 words)

Photographs, drawings and other illustrations are particularly welcome, and may be accepted for any of the above categories of contribution.

DEADLINES

Papers for peer review: **27 February 2007**

All other paper, reports and reviews:

30 April 2007

An 'Information for Contributors to OHAA Journal' document will be available on the OHAA web-site in late 2006, which **all contributors must obtain**. For information before this, contact the Editor, OHAA Journal, c/- OHAA President, email: rblock@sl.nsw.gov.au.

- *NOTE: The 2007 OHAA Journal will be issued in time for the OHAA Biennial National Conference in Brisbane, September 2007: 'Old Stories, New Ways'. Papers accepted by the conference organising committee for presentation at the conference may also be offered by authors for publication in the Journal, but only if they are separately submitted by authors to the Journal editor by the due date. Papers will be accepted for publication in the Journal at the discretion of the Publication Committee.*

Call for papers

Noticeboard

Website Oral History Association of Australia <www.ohaa.net.au>.

Do bookmark and visit this site from time to time to keep up to date with what is happening around Australia and especially for details and links to the International Conference. Note conference <www.une.edu.au/iohaz006>

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