

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



44

April 2011

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Oral History Association of Australia
(NSW) Inc – PO Box 66, Camperdown
NSW 1450

email: ohaansw@hotmail.com

www.ohaansw.org.au

Editor: Joyce Cribb

(assisted by committee members)

Please send articles and correspondence to:

Joyce Cribb, 36/2 Ulmarra Place,
East Lindfield, 2070

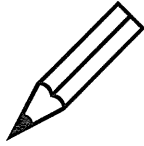
email: jcribb@iinet.net.au or
rburge@ozemail.com.au

Layout and Design: Vanessa Block

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Editorial



This is the last copy of Voiceprint that will come to you in print and in the mail. I, and I am sure many of you, will regret that you no longer have a little book in the mail, but we, like so many other organizations as your President's message informs you, must move with the times and find more economical ways of doing things. Voiceprint will continue in an online format and with online it is hoped that we can report more than twice a year. It will be there to read on screen, on your iPod or computer, and of course some of you will print it out.

This is a new challenge for me, after all I have worked on Voiceprint for the last 15 years, from number 11 and this final print copy number is 44. However, I will not be sitting round wondering what to do as there is a new style of newsletter to get out to you all, and I have some learning challenges ahead. So at this time I say 'we are in the pink' in good condition and health as we embrace the opportunities that the new format will allow. Thank you to all those members over the years who have responded to my many pleas for words, more words to fill the pages. Your contributions have allowed me to compile a readable newsletter booklet, remember the format may be different but words, more words are still needed!!

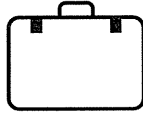
We must all thank Vanessa Block who has designed all the Voiceprint newsletters, Number 1 was published in August 1994, such a sterling effort – thank you Vanessa. Thanks also to Philip Greenwood of Fine Impressions Pty Ltd, printers of Pymble, who has also been most helpful, getting Voiceprint printed and out on time.

Now that we are moving to online, it will be possible to publish and report on events shortly after they occur. We have the 2 day joint Seminar in May, so I hope to see many of you there and publish a report early in June. This will be a new and interesting venture with our seminars, working with others to fill 2 interesting days. Hope you can come. I will still of course be looking for contributions from members, and remember online is ideal for short reports and hopefully we may get some discussion started between members.

Enjoy Voiceprint 44. Contributions for 45, lots of them soon please!

Joyce Cribb
Editor

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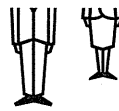


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Web Site

Remember to look up our website: www.ohaansw.org.au for all the latest information and news of what's on. If you have news for circulation through the OHAA NSW web site, please email the OHAA webmaster: Sandra Blamey at: sblamey@ozemail.com.au

Membership



Welcome to all our new members. We hope you enjoy your oral history contact with the Association and benefit from the programs offered.

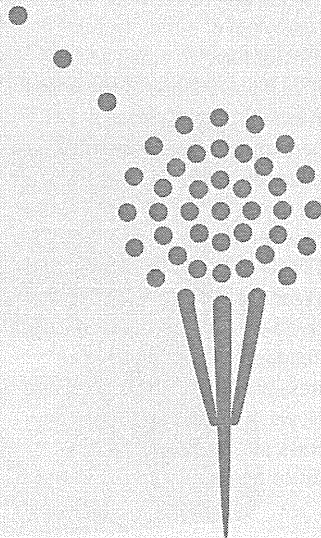
Robyn Hanstock
Toby Hammerschlag
Bronwyn Hanna
Margaret Bligh
Pattie Benjamin
Wendy McCreedy
Ruth Melville
Jenny Joyce
Therese Sweeney
Andrew Host
Ku-ring-gai Historical Society

Writer/Historian
Retired Teacher
Heritage Officer
Bush regenerator
Serial Worker
Writer
Retired
Retired
Managing Director
Audio Editor

Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History

REMINDER TO MEMBERS

The Hazel de Berg award for 2011 will be presented at our OHAA 2011 Biennial Conference. The call for nominations and the criteria will be published in Network News and other history circles and nominations are required by 22 July, 2011.



President's Message

One of the objectives of the Oral History Association is to provide a network for interested persons to communicate with each other and Network News is proving very popular with members. This is part of our strategy to provide an effective and more immediate means of communicating with members, to put you in touch with each other, to inform you of available resources and coming events that might be of interest to you. Ever increasing overhead costs are also forcing us to look for electronic options. In future emails and the website will be our primary tools for *Voiceprint*, membership renewal notices and receipts, and for flyers about events, seminars, meetings etc. We were surprised to discover only ten of our individual members do not have an email address listed with us. If you are one of these and do have an email contact, please get in touch. Others might like to subscribe to a free email account and use it at your local library. Almost all libraries these days provide these services and community centres as well have computers to access. As well as keeping in touch with OHAA you will have a window on the world. If you are reading this and do have an email address but haven't been receiving Network News, or are establishing a new email address, please get in touch: ohaansw@hotmail.com

Awareness of the contribution oral history can make to individual lives, family history and our collective memory is definitely on the rise. Already this year we have had several requests for assistance from diverse community groups and individuals. We are able to publicise these requests as appropriate through our Network News. As a voluntary association it isn't always possible to respond to every request and provide specific training workshops so we encourage organisations to send their volunteers to our regular training workshops – the first this year will be a two day exploration of *New Ways with Oral History* on May 13 and 14 – watch out for registration details in Network News. These workshops are moving from a half day to a full day format in August so that we can help you understand more about the wonderful advantages and possibilities of digital technology for oral historians.

I'm looking forward to a year of exciting new experiences with oral history. I hope to see you there!

Sandra Blamey
President

(Please make sure we have your email address to keep in touch)

Nuts & Bolts



Warm Welcome to Sally Hone

The new Curator of Oral History at the State Library of NSW, Sally Hone comes to this position from being Curator at the South Australian Maritime Museum.

Prior to this she worked with the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney and also undertook private oral history consultancies such as that with Qantas.

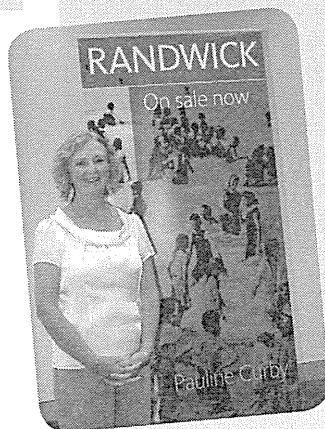
"As an OHAA member I always look forward to getting Voiceprint and the OHAA Journal" she commented. *"Digitising and extending the Library Oral History collection will be a key priority and I hope in about a year I can give OHAA a full report on the treasures in the collection."* We look forward to meeting Sally personally at one of our 2011 seminars.

Another significant change at the Library will occur with the departure of Regina Sutton, State Librarian. We wish her well for the future.

Premier's History Awards To Pauline Curby

At the annual awards ceremony held at the Mint in Macquarie Street on 26 October, Premier Kristina Keneally presented five history awards and three history fellowships. Congratulations to our member Pauline Curby who has won this year's Premier's History Award for community and regional history and was also the recipient of the annual NSW History Fellowship.

Pauline's book *Randwick* was commissioned by Randwick Council to celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2009. The judges commented that *Randwick* sets a new benchmark for the writing and production of local history. The author has embraced all the topics one might expect to find in a municipal history ... and added others that often do not get explored eg crime, and the



Nuxa + Bolta (cont...)

ongoing relationship between Indigenous residents and Europeans. These subjects are treated intelligently – in a manner that demonstrates the author is very familiar with contemporary historiographical debates. The style is crisp and very readable. It is the use of illustration and the quality of the imagery chosen that particularly sets this book apart. The pictures are integral to the text – rather than decoration.

The NSW History Fellowship was given for a project which will research changing attitudes to capital punishment in NSW between 1915 and 1939. Nineteenth century 'abolitionist' movements will be briefly considered as well as the impact of World War I, especially returned servicemen's mental health and the development of psychiatric services. Primary research will focus on case studies of executions and public debates surrounding these with the responses of a variety of individuals and groups examined in detail, especially the medical profession and the labour movement. The study will conclude with an overview of events leading to the abolition of capital punishment in NSW in 1955. Pauline commented that she was very happy to have the opportunity to work on her own research, however, the focus may change as the archival fellowship winner is researching capital punishment also. We look forward to reading the product of this research in the future.

History Week September 2011: Showcase your oral history interviews.

As part of History Week in September 3-11th, the History Council NSW has generously offered to host a potential web page on its website. This will be an opportunity for OHAA members to showcase interviews or oral history projects on which they are working – however, any project or interview must relate to the theme for History Week 2011 – *EAT HISTORY*. www.historycouncilnsw.org.au/events/history-week

There are diverse oral history projects on eating and possibilities include organic farming; permaculture; community gardens; feeding animals; food activism; supermarkets; domestic consumption; hoarding; corner or specialist stores; fishing; bush foods; family traditions and farmers markets.

Requirements: a brief summary of your project (one page maximum); brief audio extracts (maximum of two extracts only of three minutes each) highlighting different aspects of your project or interview; a consent form signed by interviewee and interviewer indicating both parties consent to their recording being made publicly available; full contact details. The final decision about content of the web page will be made by the OHAA NSW Committee.



Submissions are required as soon as possible as the project finalisation deadline is 30 June 2011 – so your submission is needed now. Please take up this opportunity.

Enquiries: Roslyn Burge (0413 733 218) or rburge@ozemail.com.au – please note, not to the History Council.

Congratulations to Members

Congratulations to Michael Clarke on receiving the John Monash Medal 2010 award from Engineering Heritage Australia for his outstanding contribution to engineering heritage through his influential support while in senior positions in NSW Public Works, his active involvement in and leadership of the Sydney Engineering Heritage Committee and Engineering Heritage Australia and his valued input as a member of numerous heritage, history and conservation management bodies. Michael's individual contributions to oral history recording, identification and recognition of engineering heritage sites and guided tours of such sites in Sydney are particularly noteworthy.

Now&Then eNewsletter

Members might like to view this newsletter at State Records and subscribe if it is of interest. <www.records.nsw.gov.au/publication/now-then-enewsletter>. It provides up-to-date information about new research tools and resources, services and seminars, exhibitions and other activities taking place at State Records. Now&Then is distributed every two months.

Film Production

Many Hands Make Mike Work is the title of a film produced by our committee member Louise Darmondy. Louise produced the film to help promote first aid, especially Cardiac Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) for St Johns Ambulance Australia, after her husband had a cardiac arrest while watching their sons at the under tens football. Louise herself was the first to begin CPR and the film covers the story from Mike's (her husband) collapse to full recovery. I was fortunate to attend the premier of the film and meet a number of the people involved. Louise and two others who assisted with the resuscitation were honoured by an award from St Johns. Congratulation to Louise and we look forward to hearing more about the film production at our May seminar.

Nuts & Bolts (cont...)

Maria Hill

Maria Hill, historian and author of "Diggers and Greeks: The Australian Campaigns in Greece and Crete" which utilised many oral history interviews was interviewed on 'Conversations with Richard Fidler' on 11 November 2010. Listen in at: www.abcnet.au/brisbane/conversations



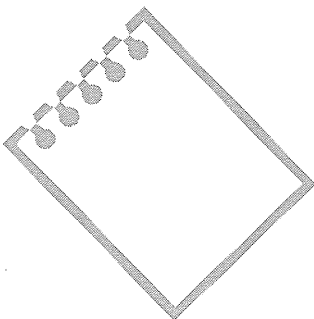
Members' Projects

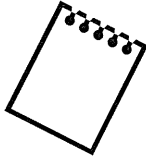
We hope members will tell us about the various projects they are undertaking. I am sure we are all interested to know what is happening in oral history. We hope some discussion and exchange of ideas may be generated. Ed.

St Ives Uniting Church By Bob Knox

In late 2008 an idea developed that there might be a benefit in placing on record reminiscences of people associated with the St Ives Uniting Church and its fore-runners, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. The information would relate to the period prior to 2006. The church council endorsed the project in November 2008. It was suggested that such an endeavour was known as Oral History, a term unknown to me at the time. Subsequently a number of people helped shape the project and contact was made, and training received from the Oral History Association, NSW Branch.

The task involved recording recollections from a number of people from the congregation, former Methodists and Presbyterians and former ministers. So far 27 interviews have been recorded. The recorded interviews have been edited for sound quality and transferred to computer





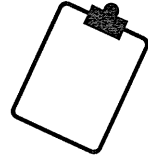
memory. A presentation CD has been prepared of a number of the individual recordings, these have been presented to the interviewees. As we progress there are two library copies of all material gathered to that point being held in digital format. It is envisaged that when complete, a set of the material will be held at the St Ives Uniting Church, the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society and at the Uniting Church Archive at the Centre for Ministry.

We plan to index our material and when material is lodged with the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society it will become part of that organization's intranet. This way the material will be available to future researchers.

A former long time Minister of the church, who was presiding at the time of union, has provided very comprehensive information in a written format. This will be lodged with the recorded material and will provide another information source available for the future. It is planned to have all interviews completed during 2011.

Grand Stories Rotary Club of West Wollongong and Rotary District 9750

The Rotary Club along with the University of Wollongong is instituting a program to collect 'Grand Stories' – Memories. They suggest that mankind has traditionally handed on its memories from one generation to the next through the spoken word. Sadly, one of the penalties of our modern world is the loss of this handing down of family stories. Meanwhile the generation gap widens and part of our inheritance from our grandparents is lost. The program aims to assist and have stories recorded. The Club has sort assistance from and joined OHAA. The project is planned to commence in 2011 and some fascinating stories must come out. We will follow it with interest.



Seminar 6 November Oral History goes to air: from rough diamond to a gem: cutting and polishing oral history for radio broadcast. *presented by Siobhan McHugh.*

At the seminar our congratulations went, to Siobhan on winning the prestigious New York Radio Award 2010. This attracts entries from radio stations, networks and independent producers from over 30 countries and are judged by a panel of international industry experts. Siobhan's program *Marrying Out* was the winner. Audio and transcripts of the two-part documentary *Marrying Out* can be found on ABC Radio National's Hindsight website.

Those at the seminar were fortunate to hear Siobhan speak at length about the process of developing a radio program from the oral history tapes. She focused particularly on the making of the *Marrying Out* programs and illustrated her talk with many examples from the interview tapes. Siobhan told us how she felt radio was the ideal medium for oral history as the sound of the voice conveys so much meaning. The voice tells us things that written words cannot. (This has always been what is unique about oral history – hear the voice!)

Many appreciative comments have come in thanking Siobhan for her excellent presentation. I hope that Siobhan may have time in the future to write about some of the technical details of putting a radio program together. Currently Siobhan has been busy completing her PhD thesis, and we look forward in the future to many more words of wisdom on air or penned from “Dr. Siobhan”

The 16th IOHA Conference in Prague

After Siobhan spoke in November, Denise Phillips our scholarship winner reported on her attendance at the International Conference. Her full report is included in this Voiceprint. Unfortunately our second scholarship recipient, Barbara Karpinski had to withdraw and cancel her trip as she was subpoenaed to appear as a witness in court at the time of the conference. Ed.

Between Past and Future: Oral History, Memory and Meaning Report from OHAA (NSW) Scholarship Recipient *Denise Phillips*, University of New England

Introduction

The OHAA (NSW) branch recently offered two scholarships of \$1,000 each to assist tertiary students who are utilizing oral history as part of their studies to attend the 16th Biennial International Oral History Conference (IOHA) in Prague in the Czech Republic from 7 to 11 July 2010. As a PhD candidate at the University of New England exploring oral histories of Hazara refugees from Afghanistan, I was privileged to receive a scholarship and warmly thank the NSW branch for their generous assistance. Having attended as a scholarship recipient, I reported to the membership at the November seminar and now present this written report for Voiceprint.

With the over-arching theme, *Between Past and Future: Oral History, Memory and Meaning*, the 16th IOHA Conference hosted several master classes and explored a rich diversity of individual themes in parallel sessions at the University of Economics. These included memories of violence, war, totalitarianism and politics, and memories of family, migration and work. The role of gender in making memories and sexual identities was examined, and aspects of health and healthcare, ecology and disasters, and oral traditions and religion discussed. Sessions on teaching and organizing oral history were held, along with explorations of methodological, archival and technological issues. Other themes included oral history and the

Reports (cont...)

media, and oral history's role in subculture, folklore and the arts.

It is exciting to attend these conferences, but it is also vital that we share our learning experiences and make them meaningful to our own projects when returning home. Given the breadth of themes, this report offers an overview of the conference based on the sessions I attended and focuses on working with trauma, memory and the diverse ways oral history is being used around the world. New directions and current debates in oral history are also outlined.

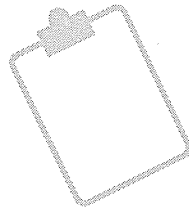
There were 434 papers from over 50 countries presented, some with simultaneous English or Spanish translations. Nineteen papers were delivered by Australians and one by a New Zealander, showing the strength of oral history in our region.¹ The least represented were Asia, Canada and Africa, highlighting a need to support oral history in those regions. This was the first time the international conference had been hosted in Eastern Europe. Steeped in history and newly emerged from Soviet communism, the city of Prague with its magnificent medieval architecture made a vibrant backdrop for the conference. Prague was once the heart of the Holy Roman Empire in the 14th and 15th centuries, and the place where the Thirty Years' War was sparked in 1618 when Calvinists tossed two Catholics out of the Palace window. It is also the home of the

Velvet Revolution, a peaceful mass protest and general strike which brought down its communist government in 1989.

The opening ceremony of the conference was held on Thursday evening, 8 July, in the Karolinum, an historic hall at the 700-year-old Charles University, complete with a wall-sized, red and gold tapestry of Charles IV kneeling before King Wenceslas, the King of Bohemia. In an inspiring keynote speech, leading oral historian Alexander von Plato from Germany noted that, while much scholarship has been done on World War II and Nazism, oral histories of communism and the post-communist era have been slower to gain momentum in Central and Eastern Europe. Von Plato championed oral history's ability to capture people's responses to the great upheavals caused by the collapse of Soviet communism and urged us to remain part of the struggle to ensure that personal memories are not lost to grander histories.

Recording stories of trauma

Trauma can be encountered across many projects and there were numerous papers on this topic. Selma Leydesdorff from the Netherlands gave a Master Class on recording memories of the Holocaust and the Bosnian War (1992-1995), including the Srebrenica massacre. Having lost her own grandparents in the Holocaust, Leydesdorff's approach was heartfelt and frank. She said, 'Nobody will ever know what they experienced or felt as they undressed and were gassed to death', but to remember is to struggle against



forgetting and silence. Highlighting that oral history calls for sensitive engagement, Leydesdorff recalled an interview in which she regretted having tried to avert her narrator from crying. While we as interviewers must keep a certain distance to protect ourselves and to maintain objectivity, she learnt that we nevertheless need to become 'empathetically involved' in the story and stated that she wants her narrators to 'feel my nearness, my solidarity.' Leydesdorff reminded us that, 'It is a very special occasion in which someone tells us their story', and we cannot maintain an academic or formal persona when we enter a home. She added that, in cases of rape for example, 'People don't know how much [of the horror] they have to tell you to get the story out'; it is therefore important to sensitively acknowledge deeply painful topics but to refrain from transgressing emotional boundaries with intrusive questions.

In a parallel session, Viktoria Kudela-Swiatek from Poland expressed similar views and debated the challenges of maintaining a responsibility to history while treating the living narrator ethically. When interviewing traumatised Poles deported from the Soviet Ukraine before World War II, Kudela-Swiatek observed that narrators can re-experience suffering when recalling traumatic events and concluded that, if adaptations are necessary, the interview can be edited afterwards to gain its essential elements.

Roxsana Sussewell from the United States (US) shared her ethical approaches when recording traumatic memories of South Africa's apartheid era (1948-1994). Her narrators were members or supporters of the African National Congress and they had suffered grievous losses in retaliatory assaults by the apartheid government. After her first few interviews, Sussewell was advised that she was too focused on simply getting specific information. By changing to a broader life story approach, she was rewarded with a deeper understanding of her narrators and demonstrated ethical behaviour in responding to their needs. As a clinical psychologist also, Sussewell emphasized the importance of communicating clearly with narrators, keeping checks in place throughout and following-up on their wellbeing after the interview. Ben Morris, who records Vietnam veterans' memories in Australia, commented from the audience during Leydesdorff's session that we are the 'benevolent witness' to somebody's suffering. This, along with the various sessions, sums up the sense of compassion inherent in oral history ethics and the need to be consciously present with the narrator.

Interpreting memories

In another Master Class, Alessandro Portelli from Italy shared his own scholarly experiences and outlined the renowned analytical methodologies which he helped pioneer to better interpret memory. Finding that stories of working class Italy in 1953 were not completely true, Portelli came to discern rich information

Reports (cont...)

within oral history's subjectivity by asking, 'What does this mean?' He posited that because remembering occurs in the present, we gain 'a narrative of the past' and a 'document about the present'. As remembering is often a search for meaning, the narrative will change according to a narrator's present situation. While forgetting can be a survival mechanism, what people do not tell or misremember might indicate an experience which brings shame or means 'too much'. Portelli added that others use the past to criticise the present or become nostalgic, and cited lyrics from Dolly Parton's song, 'In the good old days (when times were bad)', as an example of abject poverty being fondly recalled later.² He also urged us to interview young people – not just the elderly – because they too help create a valuable, future record.

Using the century-old stories of persecution among Hazara refugees who have fled from Afghanistan to Australia, my own paper responded to philosopher Paul Ricoeur's interdisciplinary criticisms of using memory as an historical source. Ricoeur argues that a nation's founding violence creates wounded memory, in which past grievances dominate while other experiences are forgotten. I argued, however, that enduring tensions between remembering and forgetting within Hazaras' narratives reveal both the profound effects of trauma and their assertion of agency, and highlight the complex interplay between the past and the present.

Diverse ways oral history is being used around the world

The conference showcased diverse ways that oral history is being used throughout the world. In an inspiring example, Jamal Alkirkawi from Israel illustrated oral history's use as a peace-making tool in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Through storytelling, his project encourages mostly young members of disadvantaged Arab Bedouin and Jewish communities in the Negev to express their struggles as a way of recognising commonalities with the 'other side'. He showed the power of asking, 'Please tell me your story?' In an outstandingly lucid paper, Vanessa Hearman from Australia discussed stories of reprisal killings by Indonesia's military and paramilitary against supporters of the Indonesian Communist Party from 1965 to 1966 in Bangil, East Java. Hearman showed how officials used fear and propaganda to enlist members of Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation, the Nahdlatul Ulama, and others to kill, and interviewed survivors and perpetrators. Both these projects offer significant models to draw from when navigating competing perspectives of past events.

In collaboration with feminist scholars Sherna Berger Gluck and Rosemary Sayigh, Laila Farah from the US passionately described how Palestinian women in agrarian communities are utilising



alternative forms of oral history. Silenced by the 1948 creation of the Israeli state, storytelling has been transferred to other mediums, namely embroidery, with social and cultural histories being wordlessly stitched into fabric. Sayigh argued that women's voices are often excluded from histories of struggle and denied a role in re-building. Deeply moving stories from Gaza and the West Bank can be viewed in Sayigh's online book, *Voices of Palestinian Women Narrate Displacement*³

Tamara Kennelly showed how oral history is being used to memorialise after horrific tragedies in the US. In the aftermath of the shooting of 32 people by a lone gunman and his suicide at Virginia Tech on 16 April 2007, the University Library has set up a condolence project to archive stories, documents and images of the tragedy and tributes. As an archivist at the library, Kennelly delivered a raw insider's view, underscoring the importance of both honouring those lost by telling and supporting our colleagues in emotionally harrowing projects.⁴ Kennelly's work also forms part of a new direction to record stories in crisis settings, such as Mark Cave's project to interview first responders in the wake of New Orleans' Hurricane Katrina in 2005, 'Through hell and high water'.⁵

Oral history's potential role in healing was raised in several sessions and Marietjie Oelofse, from South Africa, contested this idea. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission invited people to speak about

their experiences under apartheid as a mechanism to heal a traumatised nation. Oelofse cautioned that although the public recognition of pain affirmed the speaker's humanity, storytelling can sometimes re-traumatise in spite of initial relief and can break down defence mechanisms. Additionally, healing can be impaired when compensation and structural changes are delayed. Oelofse shared the saying that, 'The teeth smile, but the heart does not forget'. Sussewell similarly argued that there are 'limits to forgiveness' when a reconciliation process protects the perpetrators. Healing remains an intensely complex process, often far beyond the constraints of oral history.

The location of the conference allowed us close insights into both the ambivalence about recent histories of Eastern Europe and projects to ensure that experiences of Soviet communism are not forgotten. Tomáš Bouska from the Czech Republic chaired a panel 'Political prisoners in communist Czechoslovakia'. It featured oral history projects conducted by fellow members of his online initiative, Politicalprisoners.eu, to uncover memories of former dissidents, some of whom had been held at Pardubice Prison.⁶ Examining differing abilities to adapt to prison life between the sexes in the 1950s, Klará Pinerová argued that while men often retained self-esteem through work, women found their feminine identity attacked.

Reports (cont...)

Women were particularly stressed by the loss of family relationships and privacy, and changes in food, clothing, hygiene standards and accommodation. Identifying a gap in psychological studies on the impact of political imprisonment on women in the 1950s, Kristyna Busková showed how family support, religious faith, patriotism and education served as coping mechanisms. Interestingly, Busková's narrators wanted their names to be published, highlighting that we should not overlook the agency of survivors.

New directions

The conference shed light on new directions in oral history. Paula Hamilton from Australia explored a growing interest in how the presence of the five senses – sight, sound, taste, smell and touch – within memory might enrich our understanding of human experiences. Anna Green from the United Kingdom discussed innovative research into the ways emotions help form memory and how we might uncover and interpret these original emotions when people are recalling the past. Reflecting on whether oral historians are too focused on the spoken word, Sean Field from South Africa shared how audio-visual technologies have enabled stories of complex racial divisions across three major roads in Cape Town to reach a massive television audience. Australia's Janis Wilton explored creative ways of making history and oral history more accessible to the public

through the installation artwork of Fiona Davies, *Intangible Collections*, at the Maitland Regional Art Gallery in New South Wales. Overseeing an extensive archive on 'German Memory' affiliated with the Institute of Biography and History in Germany, Almut Leh demonstrated ways to protect narrators when making oral history available on the Internet. For example, Leh helped establish a registration process for the online project, *Forced Labor, 1939-1949: Memory and History*, in which access is restricted to those with educational or research purposes and granted only after an applicant's details are favourably assessed.⁷

The debate: Has oral history lost its radical edge?

The conference ended by debating the question, 'Has oral history lost its radical edge?', a panel stimulated by Alessandro Portelli having been asked this during a 2008 visit to South Africa. Portelli had later reflected that, although oral history is still 'subversive', it had become 'more respectable'.⁸ As I was presenting at the same time in a parallel session, I am drawing on written debates which informed this panel. Tracing the history of oral history in South Africa, Sean Field notes that early oral historians keenly challenged the way knowledge is controlled by political, archival and academic institutions. While valuing the subsequent wider acceptance of oral history, Field nevertheless worries that complacency may make us 'less critical of past and present forms of discrimination and oppression'⁹ Institutions may now



use oral history to create master narratives that again create singular narratives with a specific message and he cautions against using oral history to simply memorialise aspects of the past. He urges us to uphold the democratic essence of oral history which allows multiple, including competing, versions of the past to be heard and equally valued, and to find creative ways to disseminate these stories.¹⁰

Field argues that oral historians should not only record personal experiences of the marginalised but also be active 'agents of social change ourselves'. Although shunning some of the earlier romanticism of radical oral history, he encourages us to engage in projects, for example, to help overcome poverty or challenge racism.¹¹ This raises questions about whether we can be 'dispassionate' if we also have an agenda for social or historical justice. Alexander Freund helps answer this latter question. He recounts Alistair Thomson's idea that 'oral history can be a form of advocacy'. When Thomson first began interviewing working class women in the mid-1980s, they thought they had nothing of value to share. After participating in numerous projects, they learnt that their stories matter and that they are indeed worthy historical subjects. In this way, oral history has advocated and recognised their worth, thereby bringing about positive change.¹²

Sherner Berger Gluck says that with the dissolution of a unified feminist movement, the past radicalism of feminist oral historians could appear lost. However, assessing the evolution of contemporary feminist scholarship reveals an expansion rather than a diminution in radicalism in the US. While feminist oral historians in the 1970s focused specifically on women's agency and challenging patriarchy, broader challenges are now being made to gender constructs and oppression which results from the intersection of 'race/ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality'.¹³

In closing

In closing, the farewell dinner was held on Saturday evening at the deconsecrated church of St Anna, Prague Crossroads, where guests were entertained with cultural and historical dancing. At the General Meeting, Miroslav Vanek from the Czech Republic was elected as the new IOHA president and Buenos Aires, Argentina, chosen to host the 2012 conference.

I congratulate the Prague organizing committee for such a dynamic conference and their warm hospitality. The trip also gave me the opportunity to visit the Auschwitz-Birkenau camps in Poland, a deeply moving journey which I will forever remember.

In writing this report, I have made sense of and drawn meaning from my experiences and memories of Prague. The conference refreshed and enriched my knowledge. It offered models of excellence in scholarship

Reports (cont...)

and practice to draw inspiration from, and stimulated with new possibilities from across the globe. Leh poignantly reminded us that some of our early pioneers are reaching retirement. This, along with Field's later online discussions, prompts us to learn all we can from our most experienced scholars, and to build networks across generations, disciplines and our international community.¹⁴ Moreover, the diversity of the IOHA conference showed that as oral history keeps evolving, it continues to capture stories from a myriad of perspectives, challenge dominant histories and break silences. This is indeed a testament to oral history's ability to sustain or reinvigorate a radical movement dedicated to vigorous critiques of the status quo and bringing about positive social and historical change.

Endnotes

1 See Alexander Freund, 'Conference report: 16th International Oral History Conference', *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale*, vol. 30, 2010, http://www.coh.usd.cas.cz/download/a.freund-ioha_2010_review.pdf accessed 2 November 2010, p. 5.

2 Dolly Parton, 'In the good old days (when times were bad)', *In the Good Old Days* (digitised record album), YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8RdmlkIoOY> accessed 13 October 2010; Dolly Parton, 'In the good old days (when times were bad)', Song Lyrics, MP3 Lyrics Organised,

<http://www.mp3lyrics.org/d/dolly-parton/in-the-good/>

2010, accessed 13 October 2010.

3 See Rosemary Sayigh, *Voices of Palestinian Women Narrate Displacement*, Al Mashriq, 2005, <http://almashriq.hiof.no/palestine/300/301/voices/westbank.html> accessed 18 October 2010.

4 See 'Collecting and preserving the stories of the Virginia Tech tragedy', April 16 Archive, Center for Digital Discourse and Culture (CDDC) & Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2007-2008, www.april16archive.org accessed 18 October 2010.

5 See Mark Cave, 'Through hell and high water: New Orleans, August 29-September 15, 2005', *Oral History Review*, vol. 35, no. 1, Winter/Spring, 2008, pp. 1-10.

6 See [politicalprisoners.eu](http://www.politicalprisoners.eu), <http://www.politicalprisoners.eu/about-project.html> 2008-2010, accessed 19 October 2010.

7 See *Forced Labor, 1939-1949: Memory and History*, <http://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/en/index.html>

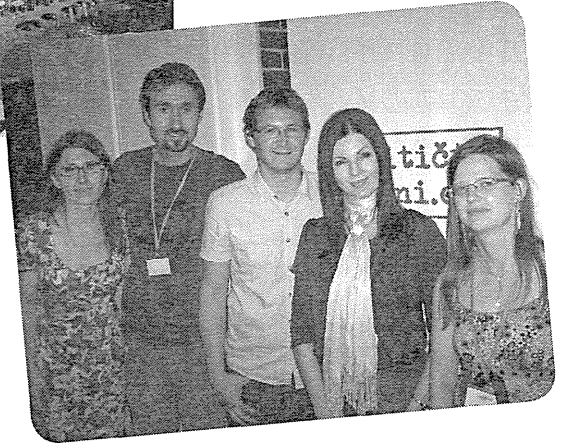
Freie Universität and the German Historical Museum, accessed 3 October 2010.

8 Dean Field, 'From stepchild to elder: Has oral history become 'respectable'?', *IOHA Debate*, International Oral History Association, <http://www.iohanet.org/debate/index.php>, 5 February 2009, accessed 13 October 2010, p. 1.



Prague Old Town

**From left to right:
The Panel on Political Prisoners;
Kristyne Buskova, Tomas Bouska,
Michal Louc, Denise Phillips &
Klara Pinerova**



9 Field, 'From stepchild to elder' IOHA Debate, p. 1-3; Sean Field, From stepchild to elder: Has oral history become 'respectable?' (abstract), XVI International Oral History Association Conference: Between Past and Future: Oral History, Memory and Meaning, Prague, 7-11 July 2010, unpaginated.

10 Field, 'From stepchild to elder', IOHA Debate, pp. 1, 2; Field, From stepchild to elder (abstract), unpaginated.

11 Field, From stepchild to elder (abstract), unpaginated; Field, 'From stepchild to elder', IOHA Debate, pp.2, 3.

12 Alexander Freund, Discussion thread no. 2, 'Responses to "From stepchild to elder: Has oral history become 'respectable'?"', IOHA Debate, International Oral History Association <http://www.iohanet.org/debate/?p=23>, 20 February 2009, accessed 24 October 2010.

13 Sherner Berger Gluck, Has feminist oral history lost its radical/subversive edge? (paper), International Oral History Association Conference: Between Past and Future: Oral History, Memory and Meaning (CD), Prague, 7-11 July 2010, pp. 3, 10, 11; Sherner Berger Gluck, Has feminist oral history lost its radical/subversive edge? (abstract), XVI International Oral History Association Conference: Between Past and Future: Oral History, Memory and Meaning, Prague, 7-11 July 2010, unpaginated.

14 See Sean Field, 'Oral history's "Alienation" – Silo phenomena', H-Oral Hist Discussion, 7 October 2010; Also, Alexander Freund in his 'Conference report', p. 7, noted that the IOHA founders have been interviewed by oral historians from Germany and Italy.

Advanced Oral History Institute: University Of California, Berkeley – August 2010 *Report by Margo Beasley, Oral Historian, History program, City of Sydney*

In August I had the great pleasure of travelling to the University of California, Berkeley, to attend an Advanced Oral History Institute. This week-long summer school was run by the Regional Oral History Office (ROHO), which is part of the Bancroft Library on the Berkeley University campus. The Institute was held in the Berkeley Faculty Club, where I stayed, which was an attractively old-fashioned log cabin kind of place, its heavy 1930s décor (with antlers) called to mind stuffy Ivy League colleges rather than the progressive atmosphere for which Berkeley is known.

ROHO was established in 1954 and is a research centre that functions a bit like a faculty within the university. It's staffed by academic and public historians whose research interests are conducted primarily through the tool of oral history interviewing. There is a broad range of subject areas into which particular projects fit including politics and government, law and jurisprudence, arts and letters, business and labour, social and community history, University of California history, natural resources and the environment, and science and technology.

ROHO's projects are generally reflective of the history of San Francisco and its Bay Area, along with California more generally. For instance, the Office has an ongoing interest in the Californian food and wine industries (it's a tough job but someone's got to do it!), has completed a project on the free speech movement at Berkeley, conducted interviews and produced a book about the nearby former Oakland Army Base, and collaborates with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art on interviews about the history of the museum and the art it collects. Individual staffers also pursue their own academic interests. In ROHO practise, all oral history interviews are videotaped and repeat interviews are also often conducted, depending on the depth and breadth of the research question.

The Institute was attended by about 40 oral history practitioners including public historians such as myself and many scholars from different fields of the humanities who were using oral history as a tool in their research. Participants were mostly North American (including Canadian) but there was one other Australian (Alec



O'Halloran, a PhD candidate from ANU), two Japanese and one Scot.

The unsurprising preponderance of Americans (it was a fee-paying course and the US is an expensive place to get to for most non-Americans) belies the great diversity amongst participants, in terms of their backgrounds and scholarly interests. Research areas included queer Latina diasporas, retailing and the making of a consumer society in Ghana, black women runners in US cultural politics, the Home Front in WWII, artists working in traditional craft media, the civil rights movement for the blind, photography and the Cambodian genocide, Japanese American internment camps, school desegregation in Boston, and Partition and Sindhi Hindu identity.

The schedule was very tightly packed and included topic sessions or discussion groups which would breakout into smaller groups or pairs to work through or trial various aspects of the interviewing process. There were also daily seminars where the seminar leader would talk about issues – ethical, practical, legal – raised by their own research and invite questions, reflection and discussion from seminar participants. A lengthy formal paper was also given each day, either on a research area being pursued at ROHO, or from other researchers using the practise and associated techniques of oral history for their own research. Of particular interest were papers on the use of oral history to elicit the methods by which contemporary Argentineans learned about the suppressed

history of their country's recent past; the use of slave narratives collected by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s to uncover the history of Indian (native American) freedmen identity; and the (relatively) recent electoral history of San Francisco including gay rights and the politics of Harvey Milk.

There was a great mix of oral history skills amongst participants ranging from those who were approaching the task as relative beginners to seasoned professionals. This blend of different levels of experience gave the whole week a tremendous vibrancy as the very bright but not necessarily young newbies challenged conventional wisdoms, practises and theoretical positions, and old hands argued the toss about any and every aspect of their own and others' work. In particular, the Q & A sessions after each formal paper raised interesting and often quite unexpected dimensions to debates, as practitioners compared and contrasted their experiences in the field with those of the paper-giver.

It was extremely stimulating to be in a place where the practise of oral history is taken very seriously, and that's not just in California, but in the US generally. This kind of Institute, rarely possible in Australia because of our small population base, opens one's mind to the endless possibilities for the work that oral historians do and encourages practitioners to think very deeply.

Treasure Trove of Information by Rose Holley, Manager of Trove and Australian Newspapers, National Library of Australia.

We do thank Rose Holley and the National Library for permission to publish this article about Trove. Ed

'Trove' is the latest innovation from the National Library of Australia which brings together the content of eight separate discovery services and much more. Trove (<http://trove.nla.gov.au>) is a powerful search engine. The name Trove makes reference to the expression 'treasure trove', as a collection of rare or valuable things. The name encapsulates the concepts of a collection, of treasured items, and of the process of discovery. The service makes it possible to find and get over 90 million Australian resources. You can also browse 'zones' of information – books, journals, magazines, articles; maps; pictures and photos; Australian newspapers; diaries, letters, archives; archived websites, and biographies of people and organizations.

The service is aimed at the general public and is especially useful for local and family historians. In a recent survey 70% of users labeled themselves as family historians, recreational or professional researchers. There are about 1 million people using the service which was released in November 2009, and this is expected to rise up to about 7 million in the future. The service is free and online and has transformed the

way that researchers living in remote areas can now do their work.

"I have always lived in isolated areas and rarely managed to visit libraries, so to be able to view old newspaper articles from my home is just fantastic."

"Trove enables any society member who may be living far (or near) from a capital city library, to do a bit of research from home and share the results with all members. For us, Trove reverses the tyranny of distance."

The Trove feature which enables you to limit your search to online items only is being very well used, and certainly helps people who are in a hurry and want immediate access to information. However Trove also provides a wealth of information on non-digital resources and this is one of its strengths. Knowing that a unique item exists and where it is held is of huge value to history researchers. Trove provides researchers with access to a wide range of resources from the 'deep web', resources that are not often found by popular search engines, being buried too deep in databases. Trove is a stable repository with permanent page links that can be cited in reports and papers. The search



engine is managed by the National Library of Australia and most of the information is from reliable sources such as libraries, museums, art galleries, repositories and archives. New contributor data is being added all the time. The 20 million full-text searchable historic Australian newspaper articles are proving very popular and a further 20 million will be available by 2011. Historic editions of the Australian Women's Weekly are expected to be available at the end of 2010. A list of titles being digitised is available at: http://www.nla.gov.au/ndp/selected_newspapers

The National Library has funded digitisation of newspapers since 2007 to the tune of \$10 million, but from 2011 onwards State, Territory and Public Libraries, councils, local history societies and other organisations are being encouraged to fund regional and local titles or give donations towards them. The rough cost of digitisation is \$2 per page. Trove is part of the national information infrastructure. It has been developed by working with the public, and it utilises many web 2.0 features. Users are encouraged to engage with each other and the data in various ways. This includes improving existing data by adding comments, tags and also correcting newspaper text; and uploading their own images. These could be scanned old family photographs, letters, objects, or recent photographs for example of historic buildings. Instructions on how to do this are here: <http://www.picturesaustralia.org/contribute/individual.html>

Users have noted that being able to share their own resources with others, and provide comments on resources within Trove is very useful and gives context to resources. Many requests have been received by the Trove team for users to be able to contact other users. This is usually when a user notices that someone else is doing similar research to themselves. This is particularly easy to spot in the historic newspapers where user names are clearly shown on text corrections and comments. To answer this need a user forum has been implemented. This enables discussion to take place within the virtual community, with options for users to let others contact them directly. It can also be used to organise group research where the members are distributed and may never meet each other. Users can set up a 'group' to do this.

To keep a track of your own research the 'list' feature is really helpful. This lets you add anything you find in Trove to your list. You can also add any web resource not in Trove to the list. The list can be ordered, named and every item described as you like. Many users are deciding to make their lists public so that others can see them. A public list becomes a resource in its own right that appears in search results for that topic. An example of a public list 'Songs and Music of NSW places' is here: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/list?id=196>

Trove has something for every researcher exploring Australian information and records, and is an exciting development for all Australia.

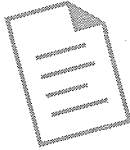
Continuing the Story of 'Print Through' on Old Audio Cassette Tapes *by Trish Levido*

During a recent visit to the National Library, Kevin Bradley, Manager, Sound Preservation and Technical Services (SPATS) gave some advice on dealing with cassette tapes with print through problems. Kevin explained that print-through is the unintentional transfer of magnetic fields from one layer of analogue tape to another layer thus confusing and mixing the sounds. Almost all print through occurs soon after the tape is recorded and wound but further significant increases in print-through occur as a consequence of changes in temperature. Prints through signals are reduced by the act of rewinding the tape prior to playing. Systematic tests have shown, however, that it is wise to rewind a tape at least three times to sufficiently diminish print through.

After using this method on my mother's audio tape recordings made in the 1970's, I found that it did help to make them more audible. Although not comparable to digital recordings in quality, I am satisfied that I have now have 95% of her story. Though print-through can be reduced on the original tape the same level of restoration is not achievable afterwards. Once copied to another format the print through signal becomes a permanent part of the recording.

I have now copied the audio tapes across to my computer and have burnt three copies of the recordings to disc and distributed these around my family. The reason for three copies is that discs are sometimes not perfect and therefore, I have three copies. Also, by giving the copies to family members, if one set is lost or destroyed by fire or flood, then there are other copies in other locations. In addition I have requested my family to copy these discs to their hard drive + external hard drives and memory sticks. In future we will be talking to members about external storage on 'cloud' technology. Kevin also suggested that if you have cassette tapes, store them with the tape 'tail out' and store in their container standing upright. Of course they, and your digital recordings are best kept in a cool, dark and humidity free environment.

It is important to stress the need to continually upgrade the storage of these precious memories, as technology changes, otherwise we could find that in the future the 'players' are no longer around or if around, then may be no longer working. A perfect example of this is audio cassette and VHS players.



Latest OHAA NSW Review of Digital Field Recorders

A good guide for selection of equipment is to buy the best you can afford for quality recordings that have lasting integrity of sound.

The speed of technological change in the digital age means that manufacturers are constantly upgrading their products. OHAA's latest research (February 2011) has concentrated on new models for field recorders which are for those people at an introductory level as oral historians. The testing particularly looked at functions important for the recording of oral histories at appropriate quality levels, ease of use and value for money.

In OHAA's 2008 review the Roland Edirol RO9HR was the best available at that time. This latest review recommends the ZOOM H4n Handy Recorder with its many excellent features as offering better value. The ZOOM H4n has two sockets for external microphones and addresses the widely held view that Edirol RogHR's weak point is that it has only one socket for an external microphone though two mics can still be used by using a split cable adaptor. The Zoom H1 may meet the needs of those on a limited budget. Like the Edirol RogHR it has only one microphone socket, however for simplicity, ease of use it offers value for money.

OHAA has two Edirol RogHR recorders for hire, one with two good quality RODE microphones and a split cable adaptor. See details on our website or ring Trish Levido 9969.5177.

This review was conducted by Trish Levido, a member of the OHAA NSW Committee. Full details are available on the website, together with equipment recommendations for professional oral historians.

SD and SDHC (Secure Digital High-Capacity) cards are flash memory cards. They provide removable memory for compatible digital devices including cameras, camcorders, PDAs, MP3 players, digital recorders and more. SDHC cards are a later development of SD cards, with much bigger storage capacity. Recorders designed for the earlier SD cards may not be able to utilize SDHC cards. It is important to note that you always format the SDHC card (standard or micro) in the actual recorder you are using.

For further information on SD and SDHC cards and for hiring arrangements for Edirols and external microphones see the OHAANSW website.

The Murray Family Of “Kurrumbene” by Margaret Park

The Murray Family oral history project was made possible with a grant from the ACT Government under the ACT Heritage Grants Program. Dr Peter Dowling, as the Heritage Officer of the ACT National Trust, discussed the oral history with the eldest surviving member of the family, Jim Murray and Jim and his family agreed to be participants. Based on advice from Peter and Jim Murray, and working within the constraints of the funding received, I interviewed four members of the Murray family. Two of these were individual recordings and the third was a joint interview. I particularly wanted to interview a male member and female family member to ensure that a wider perspective of life at “Kurrumbene” (the Murray family Canberra home) was captured on the recordings. Therefore, both Jim and one of his sisters, Jean Whatman, were interviewed. As a portion of the leasehold land still resides with the Murray family, I also interviewed Chris Murray and her husband, Alan Swan, as recommended by Jim. It is thanks to the efforts of Chris and Alan that the family maintains a tangible connection with the land.

I conducted the first interview with Jim Murray at his home in Yeppoon, Queensland on 28 October 2009. Jim’s story ranges from his in-depth knowledge of the Murray Family’s history, including

the first Canberra bakery operated by his grandfather, John Murray, his father’s soldier settlement block “Kurrumbene” to that of his own story working and living at “Kurrumbene”. Jim’s sister, Jean Whatman, was interviewed next at her home in Chapman, ACT. Jean’s recording provides additional details about life at “Kurrumbene”, especially growing up as one of two girls surrounded by brothers. The third and final recording was conducted as a joint interview with Chris Murray and Alan Swan. Chris is the daughter of Barry Murray, the youngest of the Murray children. This interview took place on their property “Kurrumbene” at Hindmarsh Drive and Jerrabomberra Avenue, Narrabundah.

We’re on the block on the corner of Hindmarsh Drive and the Monaro Highway down near the old velodrome and the new pitch and put golf course... it’s about a 20 acre block that is left... in relation to the original block – it sits on the south-eastern corner of the old block and it’s the last remaining block of about a 680 or 900 acre property. It’s all been resumed and they built the suburbs of Narrabundah, Griffith, Fyshwick on the block...

When I asked Alan and Chris to describe the size and location of the former “Kurrumbene” property leased to Ernest Murray, Alan replied as above. As a



**Home of John Murray and family,
Murray Bakery site, Molonglo River with
St John's Church in background**

resident of Canberra and familiar with the intersection he depicts, my mental picture of the landscape had to be reinvented. It is hard for us to imagine today the sheer size and proportion of this property as it was in the early period of the Federal Capital Territory in the twentieth century. If not for any other reason (and there are many) this alone justifies why oral histories of this type are important documents for appreciating and understanding Canberra's rural past and social history.

The Murray family's links with the area extend back to George Edward Murray of Collector. It was his son, John Murray, who eventually found his way to securing a lease on land above the Molonglo River on its northern banks as part of the Glebe land belonging to St John's Church in 1907. Having decided on becoming a market gardener for the developing national capital he was waylaid by a plague of locusts and instead turned his hand to baking, one of the many skills he picked



"Kurrumbene" 1928

up during his goldmining days at Cowarra Creek, near Bredbo, NSW. The Murray's Bakery was the first of its type in the new city and it was here that he and his family settled until a fire destroyed it in 1923. The site of Murray's Bakery is in Commonwealth Park and marked as part of the ACT National Trust's self-guided walks "Canberra Central Parklands".

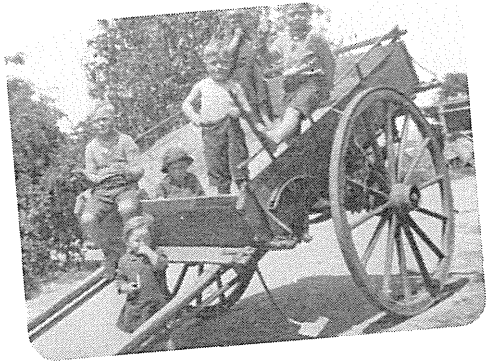
Apart from helping their father and mother at the bakery and around the house the Murray children also played and fooled around just like other kids. And just like other kids they sometimes found themselves in trouble. When I asked Jim about his father and his status within the Canberra community, he recalled a story which involved the Murray children and a boundary fence:

... One of the early stories about what John's roll in Canberra ... was that his wife used to play the organ at St John's. St John's was quite the social centre of the area in the

Articles (cont...)

early days. Over in Acton, Brassey had his property ... also owned the land where it joined the Glebe between Acton and where John's block was. The boys used to go down along the river fishing. One day they went past the Glebe land onto Brassey's land. Brassey fronted them and told them to get off, that they had no right trespassing there. So a few words passed between mainly the older son, John, and Brassey about this, that and the other and so Brassey told him "he would have them up before the Magistrate". John said "oh, that's all right, my father is the Magistrate, so go ahead and do what you do". There were a few more facings up with Brassey and on his way over, he used to walk to St John's Church across the flats actually and to get over the fence of the boundary between him and the Glebe, he had this stile erected. So, what happened? The boys removed the stile (laughs). So that didn't improve it. My grandfather was a magistrate, a freemason and a warden of the church.

Ernest Murray, the son of John Murray, was one of the first Canberrans to enlist at the beginning of World War I. In Jim Murray's interview he retells his father's story of the Gallipoli landing. Ernest survived his time in Gallipoli but was subsequently gassed in the trench warfare in France. This injury scarred him for the remainder of his short life. Jim spoke admiringly and proudly about his father and remarked upon Ernest's diligence in keeping a diary on the battlefield. In his interview Jim recalled that:



John, Jean, Margaret, James, Geoffrey and Graham Murray, "Kurrumbene" 1928

He was on the first landing party. He was a member of the 1st Field Co. Engineers who were attached to a Queensland Unit and they were on the battleship, the Queen. The note in his diary on the 25th [April] [reads] – "Left "Queen" at 1:30am with the destroyer towing them. Landed 4:30am amid a perfect hell of lead fire when we were about 200 yards away and we charged through until we were only 10 yards from the enemy. Infantry charged magnificently and drove the Turks back over one mile before midday. Shrapnel on landing and heavy firing continued all day, but the operations were carried out splendidly".

Jim showed me a copy of this diary and I was greatly moved by the dedication of Mrs Murray. She had carefully copied in a beautiful copper-plate handwriting every word recorded by Ernest Murray. Although Mrs Murray most likely did this as a means of earning some financial assistance for her family during the Depression years, her work is no less admirable, as the Australian



War Memorial was the purchaser of the original. Her action helped to preserve an important historical document for all Australians to research and review.

Under a nation-wide town planning scheme, Ernest received a soldier settlement grant of land. Upon this block he built up his property which he and his wife, Sarah Ruby Elizabeth Murray nee Monaghan, named "Kurrumbene". The family believe it was their mother who named it in memory of her family home at Currumbene Creek, Nowra, NSW.

Beginning with sheep and wool growing, they turned to dairying as Ernest Murray was not a well man and Mrs Murray had experience with dairy cattle. Why did the Murray family turn the original sheep grazing property to a dairy farm? In her interview, Jean explained that it was her mother who pursued this livelihood following the death of their father.

When Dad died Mum had to take over and we did have sheep after that [for a few years] and then she employed a man who was 70 but only seemed about 50. A very nice man, Mr. [Harry] Butler, used to do a lot of the sheep work for Mum, not the business of the sheep... I think the auctioneers, the men, took advantage of her in the business world and she wasn't able to stand up to them. So she'd decided she'd have a dairy because she [had] lived in Nowra and her father used to breed cattle – she knew all about [dairy cattle]. She went down to Nowra and bought cows from there and started up this dairy. It was quite small to begin with and that's

when she sold the milk to the café that Mr. Notaras owned... She said "I get a monthly cheque with the cows but I used to get only a yearly cheque with the wool"... "I couldn't manage it that way. So she found that it was easiest way. Then my brothers, they had to do all the milking [by hand], later we got machines, but they worked so hard.

However, it was not only sheep and dairying which occupied the time of the Murray family on the land. Ernest was a keen experimenter and he introduced a variety of crops and grasses to improve his income and hence the family's living standards. In a letter to the Department of Interior in 1958 Mrs Murray vividly writes of her husband's work with growing lucerne on "light" soil. He even grew a plot of peanuts and cotton in the early 1920s. She also emphasised the significance of his achievements in light of his responsibilities as the recipient of a war service settlement grant:

I feel that I owe it to the memory of my late husband to ask you to place on Department Records – the enterprise, the industry and the initiative shown, by one of your Department's Rural Leases – on his War Service Block of 604 acres, 12A & 110B as the two composite blocks were recorded and before closing also owe it to his memory as what he achieved to the War Settlement Commitment.

Ernest died in 1935 and his wife and children took over the responsibilities of producing milk and milk products for

Articles (cont...)

Canberra. One of their regular outlets was the Notaras café in Kingston. Mrs Murray later became the only woman on the board of the Canberra Dairy Society in the late 1940s. Jim Murray, one of the subject interviewees, and his brothers worked the dairy and created Murray Bros who extended their business beyond dairying to sub-contracting. Dairy farming was a family business, though, and even the children had their chores as Jean describes for us:

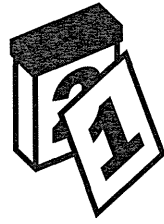
The boys used to run the dairy and from the cow bails they would take the milk some yards down to what we called the 'separating room'. They sterilised things with a big copper and then this 'separator' which had to be put together. It was metal with a big bowl at the top and we'd, meaning probably Margaret or I would pour the milk into it, it had a handle and you'd then turn the handle. It had two spouts on the 'separator' – one spout was [for] the cream and the other spout was [for] the milk. We called it the separated milk. It had no fat in it. So we had to turn that and separate the milk into cream and into [separated] milk. And the cream was made into butter or it could have been sold. ... It had a concrete floor, galvanised iron and those things had to be washed up and all the parts of the separator were pulled down. It was only about 4' high and it was all in pieces ... you had to clean it really well. It was cleaned in boiling water that we had in the copper, it had to be sterilised. So that would take you till the milking was done in the afternoon.

As Canberra grew and the need for residential housing developed, the "Kurrumbene" leases were gradually resumed portion by portion. Whilst the Murray Bros folded and dispersed their assets, the younger brother, Barry, maintained a small block of land and agisted horses. The old homestead fell into disrepair and its final breath was subsumed by fire when it was used as a 'fire exercise' in the mid 1980s. Chris Murray, Barry's daughter, and her husband, Alan Swan with their family continue to live on a small portion of the original block and have successfully, and after a protracted negotiation with the ACT Government, have been granted a 20 year lease. The Murray family have managed to maintain their rural connections within the city limits. This story provides us and future generations with the knowledge that Canberra – grew out of the landscape of plains and hills, developed into a rural setting, was worked over as food source for its population and finally emerged as a fine example of a modern capital city. This was achieved, in part, by the commitment of entrepreneurs such as John Murray, his descendants and their families over a century at "Kurrumbene".

In a few poignant words, Jim Murray summed up his feelings about his Canberra home:

... if I was going home, I'd be going to Canberra. My ties are so very strong to Canberra...

Diary of Events



OHAA Biennial Conference 2011 “Communities of Memory”

State Library of Victoria Conference Centre,
Melbourne, Victoria



**NOTE THIS CHANGE OF DATE –
NOW OCTOBER 7-9, 2011**

Due to a clash with AFL Grand Final date, the OHAA National Oral History Conference, has been moved forward one week. A bumper number of presentation submissions have been received. Don't miss this stimulating event with training workshops on Thursday October 6 and opportunities for tours and visits to exhibitions.

In recent years memory has been an increasingly significant resource for many different types of communities: for survivors of natural catastrophe and human-made disaster; in country towns dealing with demographic and environmental change; for cities and suburbs in constant transformation; in the preservation of special places or the restitution of human rights; for the 'Forgotten Australians' and 'Stolen Generations'; for migrants and refugees creating new lives; among virtual communities sharing life stories online. Memories are used to foster common identity and purpose, to recover hidden histories and silenced stories, to recall change in the past and advocate change in the present, to challenge stereotypes and speak truth to power. The concept of 'community' can be enlisted for change or conservatism; 'communities of memory'

can be inclusive and empowering, or exclusive and silencing. Oral historians, in a variety of guises and combining age-old listening skills with dazzling new technologies, play important roles in this memory work.

The conference will include history walks and tours that introduce participants to Melbourne's rich and diverse communities of memory.

<http://sites.google.com/site/communitiesofmemory/home> or email ohaa2011@gmail.com

Inaugural Australian Council Professional Historians Association Conference

Adelaide, SA, 5th & 6th August –
“Bringing Together” www.historians.org.au

Conference on Poetics and Discourse: 12-14 December, 2011

The Oral, the Written, and Other Verbal Media (OWOVM)

Hosted by Victoria University (Melbourne, Australia) at its City Campus

Testimony, Witness, Authority: The politics and poetics of experience

From ethnic cosmologies and narratives of survival to the lyricism of love and loss – cultures are built on verbal reproductions of experience, on their dissemination through arrays of oral, written, and other verbal media, and on the complex relations between participants in these discourses.

The Programming Committee welcomes your proposals and any preliminary queries.

Please email these to: owovm@vu.edu.au
Contact Emma Dortins:
emma.dortins@gmail.com

**Australian Historical Association, 2011
Regional Conference, History at the Edge**

The 2011 AHA regional conference will be held in Launceston, Australia's third oldest city in the historic Inveresk precinct adjacent to the CBD. Also on the site are the University of Tasmania's Academy Art Gallery and the Annex Theatre.

4-8 July, 2011, University of Tasmania,
Inveresk Campus, Launceston, Tasmania
www.ahahistoryattheedge.org/

**Australian and New Zealand Society of
the History Of Medicine**

An ANZSHM conference is held on a biennial basis. The conference usually spans 3-5 days at venues around Australia and New Zealand. The program includes keynote addresses, a varied program of research papers and other intellectual and social activities. Financial assistance in the form of (competitive) bursaries for postgraduate students is available.

**12th Biennial Conference, Brisbane,
Queensland, 2011**

The University of Queensland, 12-15 July.
www.anzshm2011.org.au

**History Week 3-11th September 2011
Showcase your oral history interviews.**

See note in Nuts and Bolts and please take up this opportunity.

COMMITTEE MEETING DATES FOR 2011

Members are encouraged and welcome to attend meetings held at History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney. Next meeting 6.00pm. Tuesday 29th March

(Watch your email for further dates).

SEMINAR DATES FOR 2011

May 13 and 14th
New Ways with oral History

This 2 day seminar in partnership with the State Library, Museums and Galleries and Institute for Professional Practice in Heritage and Arts.

Day 1: Royal Australian Historical Society;
Day 2: State Library. (See enclosed brochure).

(Watch your email for further details) –
August TBA and November 5th at
State Library

**Digital Recording Equipment Available to
OHAA, NSW, Members Only**

Two Edirol R-09HR Solid State Recorders and microphones are available for short term hire (five days) at a cost of \$20. A refundable deposit of \$200 is required. Borrowers need to provide their own batteries and flash cards. Please note: Edirol R-09HR can take a flash card of up to 4 gigabytes. It is recommended, for quality purposes, to buy these from a reputable source. Please contact Graham Levido: ahhansw@hotmail.com
Tel: 02 9969 5177

Noticeboard



Website Oral History Association of Australia <www.ohaansw.org.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.

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