‘She said: He said:’ Reading, Writing and Recording History

Oral History Australia
(formerly the Oral History Association of Australia)

Journal No. 36, 2014

Oral History Australia (formerly Oral History Association of Australia) Journal
No. 36, 2014

The Journal of Oral History Australia is published annually. Its content reflects the diversity and vitality of oral history practice in Australia, and includes contributions from overseas.

Editor: Dr Sue Anderson
David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research
University of South Australia
GPO Box 2471
Adelaide SA 5001
Sue.Anderson@unisa.edu.au

Cover and content design and typesetting:
LeighSet Design
18 Hill Street, Plympton Park SA 5039
Phone: 08-82974375
igrunert@bigpond.net.au

ISSN: 0158 7366

The Editor of the Journal welcomes offers of material for possible publication in the 2015 issue, No. 37. See Call for Papers at the end of this Journal, or the Oral History Australia website, www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au. Suitable items include papers for peer-review, un-refereed articles (such as project and conference reports) and book reviews.

Enquiries: Dr Sue Anderson, Sue.Anderson@unisa.edu.au

Editor's notes

This edition of the Journal is delivered under the new name of our organisation – Oral History Australia (formerly The Oral History Association of Australia) Inc. This change has come after considerable effort by the National Committee and in particular, Sandra Blamey and Jill Cassidy. I would formally like to acknowledge their considerable contribution to the revision of our constitution and to the day-to-day workings of our organisation.

I am delighted to say that the Journal is now fully functional, having acquired a Reviews Editor in Jayne Persian. This means that we again have a rounded edition with the inclusion of six book reviews this time, all of which have great relevance to our field. I certainly enjoyed reading them and I feel sure you will too. I thank Jayne for her efforts and look forward to working with her in the future.

The Editorial Board has also changed with the resignation of Janis Wilton and the subsequent co-option of Bill Bunbury from Western Australia. Bill really needs no introduction as so many of us know him as a former radio broadcaster and producer for the ABC and an accomplished historian and writer who has worked across a broad range of fields. Bill joins our Chair, Ariella van Luyn, Beth Robertson and myself in assessing papers for peer-review. This year we have three worthy peer-reviewed papers and I congratulate the authors for passing the rigorous process we have in place.

Hannah Loney has generously shared her amazing project on East Timorese women who grew up under Indonesian rule. The oral histories for this project were collected over a 16 month period of field work in East Timor, assisted by an interpreter. Although Hannah is reasonably fluent in the local language, working with an interpreter is no mean feat. The size, scope and practical limitations of such a project demonstrate that the results produced are impressive. Most significant is that this material provides an otherwise neglected history.

Through her interviewees, Valerie Bourke has provided an insightful view of the bombing of Darwin in World War II from the eyes of those who were on the ground at the time. Their testimonies reveal a suppressed story that has never properly been aired. Without giving too much away I can say that Valerie's interviewees reinterpret a hidden and unfairly tainted account of this action. This, and other articles, places our Journal in a ground-breaking position by means of what Paul Thompson identified all those years ago as the re-writing of history through the narratives of the ordinary person and the marginalised.

Ben Morris' paper covers the very sensitive situation of reinterpreting an event in the Vietnam War from the perspective of the commander interviewing his platoon about a particular inflammatory incident. Ben's project challenges the official records and returns validity and dignity to his men and his and their place in the conflict. I commend him on his bravery, not only in the War, but in broaching this difficult issue and the hurdles he has had to manoeuvre in the process.

As ever, we also have a range of fascinating articles included in this volume. It is pleasing to be able to publish a sequel to last year's article by Carol Roberts on the Hawkesbury artist Greg Hansell. Helen Stagg's article this time, while not a sequel to her last on the construction of locks and weirs on the River Murray, offers a literature review of three publications relevant to it.

In addition we have Terry Whitebeach's article on her work with the Sudanese community in Tasmania and the wonderful publication outcomes that bring oral history into meaningful media. Past President Jill Adams provides a revisionist account of women and cooking in the 1950s and 1960s to demonstrate that despite popular sentiment, women did have agency in that era.

Ben Arnfield's article on the Australian Credit Union archives is demonstrative of just what our field of endeavour can add to the often dry archival record, although in this case the archives have also delivered some very rich material. Donna Lee Brien and Jill Adams reflect on the contribution of oral history to the field of creative writing through an analysis of some of the projects in higher degree research and thesis writing that engage in this way. Finally, Elaine Rabbitt offers an up-date on the accreditation program and how OHA member States can engage with it, which is a valuable next stage in the project.

Another important contribution to this edition is the Citation regarding Jan McCahon Marshall's Life Membership. My congratulations go to Jan on a very well-deserved award.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Journal of Oral History Australia.

Sue Anderson

Contents

Articles

Papers (refereed)

Conference/Project Reports

Beyond board minutes and annual reports: the oral history collection of the Australian Credit Union archives

Ben Arnfield

Abstract

Credit unions are retail financial institutions wholly owned by their members, who typically share a common bond of association such as religion, trade, industry or community. The first modern credit unions appeared in Australia in the late 1940s. Since growing to a peak of over 830 organisations by the early 1970s, credit union numbers in Australia have steadily declined to approximately 85 today. This has been due to significant merger activity and a trend towards demutualisation.

The oral history collection of the Australian Credit Union Archives (ACUA) first began in the early 1980s, involving many of the credit union movement's founders and early participants recording interviews amongst themselves in an attempt to preserve the movement's early spirit and development. The project was later expanded with the engagement of a professional oral historian and over the following 20 years the collection grew to a total of over 650 recorded interviews.

This paper will consider ACUA's oral history collection in relation to the growth and evolution of the Australian credit union movement, in addition to examining how the collection serves to illuminate the foundational principles of an industry continuing to undergo significant change. It will also examine the issues from an archivist's perspective, in particular the linking of an oral history collection with wider archival holdings, and challenges regarding collection management and digital preservation.

Advertisement, Universal Credit Union Co-Operative, n.d., from the ACUA image collection

Credit Unions and the Australian Movement

So what exactly are credit unions? By definition they are retail financial institutions wholly owned by their members, who typically share a common bond of association such as religion, trade, industry or community. Credit unions have a mutual organisational structure, much like mutual building societies and mutual banks, meaning that the organisation's member-owners are also its customer base. Membership is non-transferable and has no traded value; members share the benefits of ownership through better services, lower fees and more attractive rates of interest.

Credit unions first developed in Germany in the mid-1800s, arriving in Canada and the United States in the early years of the 20th Century. The first modern credit unions appeared in Australia in the late 1940s, with the post-war economic and social climate a fertile environment for the birth and development of the movement: usury was rife and working people had no effective access to consumer credit and unsecured finance.[1] Out of this need credit unions grew rapidly, their early adherents espousing self-help and mutual

cooperation. Within the first five years 50 credit unions were formed, rising to one new credit union a week in the 1960s. Since growing to a peak of over 830 organisations in the early 1970s, credit union numbers in Australia have steadily declined to approximately 85 today. This has been largely due to significant merger activity and a trend towards demutualisation. However, with this widespread and continual restructuring have also come increases in credit union membership and total assets: the mutual sector in Australia today represents 4.5 million members with combined assets of over $85 billion Australian dollars.[2]

The Archives and Oral History Collection

The Australian Credit Union Archives (ACUA), based in Sydney, Australia, is a business history repository with extensive archival holdings relating to the Australian credit union movement.[3] This includes a large and significant oral history collection.

The oral history collection began in May 1983, evolving out the shared interest of a small dedicated group of volunteers who were all founders or early participants in the movement in Australia. With guidance from the National Library of Australia they began recording interviews amongst themselves in an attempt to preserve the movement's early spirit and development in light of the rapidly changing organisational climate. In 1985 they formed the Australian Credit Union Historical Cooperative which expanded the project with the engagement of a professional oral historian, Richard Raxworthy.[4] Over the following 20 years the collection grew to over 650 recorded interviews documenting the formation and development of individual credit unions, and credit union industry and representational bodies nationwide. Interviews continued largely up until Raxworthy's passing in 2003, with a small number of interviews conducted in the years following.

Opening of the Universal Credit Union Co-Operative shopfront, 141 Devonshire Street, Sydney, 1961, from the ACUA image collection

The Historical Cooperative also began collecting the early material and records for what would subsequently form the holdings of the Australian Credit Union Archives, formed in 1996. The role of the Archives is 'to appraise, collect, document and preserve archival and other heritage material created by or relating to the credit union movement in Australia.' This includes not only official records such as minute papers of board meetings, constitutional documentation and annual reports, but also personal records of archival value which the Archives makes available for research and educational purposes. Currently, the oral history collection encompasses over 60 individual credit unions and 15 administrative or support organisations. The interviews, all recorded on analogue audio tape, range from 10 minutes to over 4 hours with the typical interview being 1 hour in duration. The Archives also holds related series of oral history research material, arranged by agency or organisation, as well as a series of transcripts and tape logs, and access and permission forms. Overall, the collection fits well alongside the organisational records making up the bulk of the Archives' holdings and, combined with substantial holdings of photographic and audio visual material, newspapers and ephemera, serves to provide a rich history of the Australian credit union movement and its development.

The Interviews

Kevin Yates, n.d., from the ACUA image collection

In light of the overall development of the credit union movement and major changes that have occurred in the industry since the 1970s, the following interviews illuminate some of the key foundational principles and values of the early movement and its proponents. This group of credit union pioneers or 'evangelists', who believed in the principles of cooperation and mutuality, worked tirelessly and often voluntarily, with enthusiasm, keenness and 'missionary zeal' to promote and establish the industry in Australia.

Kevin Yates, interviewed in 1984, was exposed to credit unions whilst training with the RAAF in British

Tom Kelly, n.d., from the ACUA image collection

Columbia, Canada during the Second World War. In October 1946 Yates formed the first true credit union in Australia, the Catholic, Thrift and Loan Co-Operative, later renamed the Universal Credit Union Co-Operative in 1948.

On key themes for co-operative developments and the credit union movement Yates states:

> I would say the basic theme was a better social order. The average man getting more from life than he was getting prior to co-operative developments. More for your money you might say, better quality of goods and services.[5]

On the beginnings of the Universal Credit Union Co-Operative, Yates discusses contacting the Antigonish association for assistance with basic supplies and how they got started:

> So we virtually had to start off from scratch and we got in touch with Antigonish and they very kindly sent us some printed matter. We had to get and design our own passbooks, take out some loans to get the feel of things. And those twenty two members and approximately 30 dollar or 60 dollars I should say, 30 pounds, grew into a very worthwhile and profitable operation.[6]

Yates goes on to describe the enthusiastic efforts of the Australian movement's early promoters:

> We rushed around to various parishes, gave talks, sometimes to just a couple of people. I remember one incident at Penshurst I think there was a family of a man, his wife and a couple of children and a dog that is the only audience that I had to speak to... So we just carried on. As I say the enthusiasm was most infectious and you really had to be involved in the movement at that time to realise the amount of energy and keenness. The word got around too, as they use it in America, there were a lot of credit union widows because the boys were out not only actively participating in the credit union activities but charging around the countryside trying to get other groups to start credit unions.[7]

Kevin Yates went on to found the Australian Federation of Credit Union Leagues in 1966 and is widely considered the founder of the Australian credit union movement.

Tom Kelly, another early pioneer was interviewed in 1984, 1986, 1990 and 1996. Known as 'Mr Credit Union,' Tom Kelly joined the Universal Credit Union Co-Operative in 1949; by 1957 he was Chairman.

Describing his beginnings in the Australian movement and his motivating principles Kelly states:

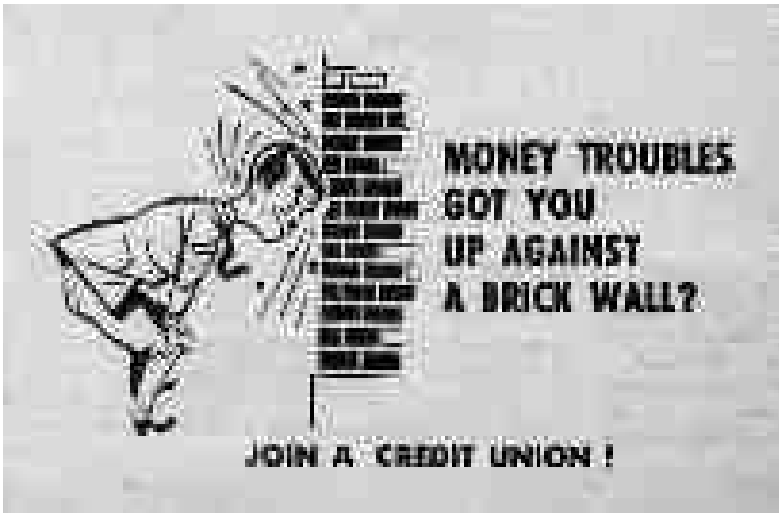
> Well I'd always been interested in the social principles that the Catholic Church put up and I'd read a lot about them and when I was in the army, people I associated with, felt we had to do something better when the war was over.[8]

Kelly goes on to describe Universal Credit Union Co-Operative as the first of the modern Australian movement:

> It is generally regarded in the credit union movement as being the first true credit union. There was a number of thrift and loan societies and small loans societies established in the country, most of them were sort of related or off-springs of building societies or friendly societies and they got advances of money from those organisations rather than raising funds from their members. But Universal asked its members to supply the money themselves, and that was the job we had of convincing people to join up and save with us and borrow from us.[9]

On staffing issues, the spirit of volunteering and his early days at the credit union Kelly states:

> Well, there was no staff, it was all done on a voluntary basis. We used to go in after work and on weekends and do the work, so it was the directors themselves who did all the work in those early days. They eventually did appoint a manager, the first credit union to have a manager, Norm Tracy. Norm threw his job in, he was a foreman in some little firm, and we opened an office at 333 George Street, Sydney,



Advertisement, Money Troubles, n.d., from the ACUA image collection

Don Closs (centre), n.d., from the ACUA image collection

> which also had a cooperative store in it at that time and I was a member of that cooperative store, as was Kevin Yates and Bill Egan, so that I was getting filled with cooperative ideas all these times.[10]

Kelly continued his involvement with the cooperative movement forming the Railways Staff Credit Union in 1966. He was co-founder of the Australian Credit Union Historical Co-operative (the predecessor organisation to ACUA) and was its voluntary secretary-manager for 18 years.

Rose Mary Gallagher, another movement pioneer, was interviewed in 1989 and 1993.

On the 'common bond' and the hard work required to promote and establish fledgling organisations Gallagher states:

> You see you had to have a bond, you have to have a community of interest in those days. It has broadened a lot now. But you had to have a community of interest. It is the only way. I don't think that many of them would know, like the ones that are running them at the present time, they wouldn't be able to set up a credit union, they wouldn't know how. I tell you it is jolly hard work and it is months of work. We used to be out at night at discussions, running discussions for at least three months before it was set up, running rallies at the weekend. The people were all really enthusiastic, they were very keen. Then there would be other occasions you know, like practically every weekend you had to go somewhere because one of them was having a get-together or a rally or something. They were great days and I enjoyed them very much.[11]

Gallagher goes on to describe the basis of the credit union movement and its development in Australia:

> The idea of the credit union is helping people to use their money well and to save it and only borrow for provident things. The main thing when we first set up the credit union was people being in the hands of money lenders and cash order people. They would spend up the limit then they would get another one, never ending. The interest on it was very high. So we used to encourage the people to bring all of their commitments in, like the things that they were paying off and that, and to take a loan to cover the lot and then in future to borrow only from their credit union. We straightened a lot of them out. People were often unaware of the high rate of interest that they were paying and the fact that they would never get out of it because it was big business.[12]

Rose Mary Gallagher was involved in the establishment and operation of many early Australian credit unions including Lidcombe Credit Union, formed in 1952.

Don Closs, interviewed in 1991, was a well-known sports broadcaster with the ABC. He started more than 15 credit unions in the state of Tasmania.

Closs describes his first contact with credit unions and credit union ideas:

> I was in the ABC and in 1958 I was with the ABC Staff Association, I was their secretary. Des Gibson, who was the President of the Staff Association, rang me one day and he said,

Closs in Texas, 1968, from the ACUA image collection

> 'Don, I have got a note from a chap in Sydney and Charles Moses has given his approval. He is going to come down to Hobart and tell us about Credit Unions.' Credit Unions, what are they? Never heard of them.' He said, 'Well he knows all about them'. He said 'He started one in Sydney and he feels that he would like to start one in Tasmania as an experiment to see if it will really work.[13]

Closs later met with Stan Arneil, another of the great early promoters of the movement. Closs goes on to describe the initial meeting and its significance:

> And Stan came into Hobart, I met him at the airport, and he said to me, one of his first words, 'What do you know about credit unions?' 'Nothing Stan.' He said, 'Well you soon will'. That's where it started. Stan gave me the message, he came out home, he had tea out home... So I said, 'All right Stan, well I think what we will do is we will send it to the membership.' And we did. We sent it to the membership and I became very enthused about it. I suppose because of my background in the trade union movement meant that I was looking after other people and their membership worries and problems, with a result that I felt that this credit union was definitely something.[14]

Closs's experiences in the movement also illustrate some of the more unusual stories within ACUA's oral history collection. Describing his experiences at the World Congress in Texas in 1968, Closs states:

> The following year, of course, was the big year. It was the year I took the two Tasmanian Devils to Dallas. Whose idea was that? That was Glenn Addington. He was the PR Man who was in Dallas in Texas when we had the Congress in Dallas the year before. Glenn thought up the idea and said, 'Look, have you got tigers in Tasmania, what about sending us over a couple of Tigers?' I said, 'Well they are extinct.' I said, 'We haven't got any, we don't know if there are any alive. Still don't know.' So he said, 'Well what have you got?' I said, 'Well we have got Tasmanian Devils.' Oh he said, 'Well that's just as good.' So he said, 'Let me know, see if you can get a couple of Devils to bring back next year.'[15]

After negotiating the lengthy bureaucratic hurdles Closs received special dispensation to take two Tasmanian Devils out of the county to donate to the Dallas Zoo. He arrived to a tremendous welcome in Texas in May of 1968, and was given the key to the city, a six gun salute and huge media attention; it was a story that he would dine out on for years.

Collection Management and Preservation Digitisation

ACUA's oral history collection is arranged and described in standard Australian archival terminology. Collection metadata is held in our archival management database, the Dataflair product Archives Manager. Arranging and describing the collection in Archives Manager thus allows for the interviewees and credit unions identified in the collection to be searched and linked to related archival holdings; a record of the interview of Don Closs in 1991 will therefore be linked to all related archival accessions, items, series and agencies in the database, including Annual Reports for the credit unions he was involved in, photographs of those credit unions and of Closs, minute books for the Tasmanian Credit Union League, and ephemera relating to his trip to Dallas. Whilst not 'records' in the traditional archival sense, the oral history collection nevertheless forms part of the overall organisational 'record'; it is therefore seen as a meaningful and important part of our archival collection.

A two-year project to fully digitise the collection is currently near completion. In conjunction with accompanying collection management of the oral history holdings this has become the de facto focus of my role as part-time Archivist. Whilst this is at the expense of wider archival duties (and paper-based records), this focus is justified from a risk management point of view given the importance of the material and the obsolete nature of the analogue tape format.

When investigating and setting up the project significant challenges were encountered: how could

Advertisement, the Little Umbrella Man, symbolising the protection credit union members enjoy when sickness, hard times or financial distress strikes, n.d., from the ACUA image collection

ACUA facilitate high-quality, in-house, preservation digitisation of a collection of its size, on a limited budget? Available technical standards and workflows seemed to exist either for a best of all possible worlds scenario (with a sound studio and unlimited resources), or for very small-scale projects, with nothing addressing ACUA's specific needs. Utilising the assistance of state and national archival organisations and libraries, and the standards of Oral History Australia (OHA) and the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA), a system and workflow tailored to ACUA's needs was researched and assembled.[16] A final critical step was the brief engagement of a professional audio engineer who verified the adequacy of both the technical setup and transfer quality.

The current project involves the use of a high quality analogue playback machine, an audio interface, a PC running the free digital audio editing software Audacity, and appropriate data storage and backup systems. Following the transfer process the analogue tape master is stored under archival conditions, and two digital copies are produced: a digital preservation master WAV file, stored on a dedicated external NAS drive, and a digital access MP3 file, stored on the ACUA server. A procedure for future maintenance of the digital collection is currently being developed.

Conclusion

As an Archivist I see my role as primarily custodial. In digitising ACUA's significant oral history collection to allow for both long-term preservation and access I believe that we are not only assisting current day researchers in charting the development of the credit union movement or in illuminating that movement's foundational values, but also in facilitating research of the collection far into the future. I believe that due to the size and depth of the oral history collection, future researchers will be presented with a valuable record not only of the 'corporate voices' of the credit union movement, but of the attitudes, values and stories of an entire like-minded generation of twentieth-century Australians.

(Endnotes)

1 Gary Lewis, *People before profit: the credit union movement in Australia*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, 1996, p. 12.

2 Customer Owned Banking Association (COBA), Factsheet February 2014, http://www.customerownedbanking.asn.au/images/stories/fact-sheets/2014/COB_Factsheet_Feb_2014.pdf

3 Australian Credit Union Archives (ACUA), http://www.mycuhistory.com.au

4 Richard Raxworthy, *'Australian Credit Union oral history',* Oral History Association of Australia Journal, no. 19, 1997, p. 88.

5 Kevin Yates, interviewed by Gary Lewis, May 1984, recording and transcript held by ACUA.

6 *ibid.*

7 *ibid.*

8 Tom Kelly, interviewed by Richard Raxworthy, July 1986, recording and transcript held by ACUA.

9 *ibid.*

10 *ibid.*

11 Rose Mary Gallagher, interviewed by Richard Raxworthy, January 1993, recording and transcript held by ACUA.

12 *ibid.*

13 Don Closs, interviewed by Richard Raxworthy, November 1991, recording and transcript held by ACUA.

14 *ibid.*

15 *ibid.*

16 International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA), http://www.iasa-web.org/

Cookbooks and oral histories: reassessing the 1950s housewife through the food that she cooked

Jillian Adams

Abstract

Narratives about the lives of women in the post war period in Australia are limited by second wave feminism, nostalgia and collective beliefs. Women who had important civic roles and made 'significant' contributions have made it into the public record but the everyday lives of women were not perceived as important. What this means is women's agency has been overlooked. As a result, the housewife has been styled as a one-dimensional image, with little agency. Johnson and Lloyd question the limited narratives for the post war housewife and argue that she did have choices and she did exercise them[1]. This article supports this argument through an analysis of the cookbooks used by women in the 1950s.

Introduction

Alistair Thomson[2] and Sian Supski[3] have shown how oral histories offer a nuanced version of domestic life in the 1950s. Canadian food historian Elizabeth Driver argues that cookbooks reveal significant information about the nature of women's work. She encourages using cookbooks as primary sources for historical study, through an analysis of their intent, recipes and ingredients, structure and layout, and images and advertising.[4] Barbara Ketchum Wheaton supports her view but argues that cookbooks are fascinating, confounding and confusing documents and that their contents are revealing but unreliable, aspirational and outdated.[5] Driver believes that 'knowing' about the author helps us to understand the recipes and knowing the recipes helps us to understand the author and her time. This paper argues that through an analysis of popular post war cookbooks and food writing in popular newspapers and magazines (material culture) and by interviewing women about their domestic lives and the cookbooks they used, it is possible to re-assess and challenge limited collective memories and to find more nuanced understanding of the role and agency of the 1950s housewife.

Oral History

Oral historian Paul Thompson argues that the most striking use of oral history is in exploring the history of the family. Without this evidence, the historian can discover little about the ordinary family contacts with its neighbours or kin or its internal relationships, 'all these are effectively secret areas' with the only clues to be gleaned from statistics and partial external observations.[6] In the past women shared their stories about domesticity with each other. They are often seen in the women's sections of the daily newspaper or in women's magazines but seldom told to a wider audience. As the study of food emerges as a serious academic pursuit, women's memories about food and cooking become more culturally, socially and politically significant.

Laura Schapiro in her work on American cooking in the 1950s states emphatically that, 'Memory is a resource beyond the reach of any library.'[7] She acknowledges the many thoughtful responses to her questions about food and cooking and the enlightenment they provided in her research towards *Something from the Oven: Reinventing the Dinner in 1950s America.* Collecting oral histories was an intrinsic part of this research. Schapiro found that memories were living histories and interviews were a means of discovering the undocumented stories of women's lives.

Part of the joy of collecting women's stories about the food they cooked is that their narratives are tinged with flavours, tastes and textures. Oral histories add to the value of cookbooks as historical sources, telling us how women actually used their cookbooks and recipes. They reveal the connections between food and culture, food and women's lives, and give insights into Australian domestic life. More importantly, they take women's memories out of the kitchen and include them as a valuable source of information about an era.

This paper uses cookbooks and oral histories to challenge three dominant strands in our popular memory of the post war period:

- that women dressed in pretty waist cinching dresses and made cupcakes;
- that women were unhappy with their domestic lives and that cooking was akin to drudgery; and
- that Australian women cooked from an Anglo-Australian heritage and that our food was dull, bland and boring.

Remembering the housewife

Our collective memory of the 1950s is gathered from a variety of contemporary sources. Feminist writing from the 1970s and 1980s often portrayed women's domestic role as an unhappy one. Betty Friedan, for example, argued that women, groomed to be perfect wives and housewives, were deeply unhappy.[8] However, much of the popular culture we consume today in advertising and marketing and television show her as an embodiment of 'domestic calm and bliss.'[9] American historian Lynn Spigel explores the collective nostalgia for the suburban families that we can see in re-runs of American situation comedy television programs from the 1950s.[10] She argues that television serves as one of our generation's primary sources of historical consciousness, and has caused women to have a skewed sense of their own past. In recent popular culture, the 1950s housewife and housewifery have gained renewed attention, in particular in television drama, cinema and advertising. This attention is being translated into the re-enactment of these representations. Historian Jean Duruz and others argue that we need more complex narratives for the 1950s.[11]

Peter Alexander advertisement, Melbourne Weekly, 7 May 2012, p. 3.

It is interesting to note that we associate the 1950s with the worst of our culinary traditions and the best of our culinary remembering, either deriding the foods cooked or looking back at them nostalgically, remembering cake and biscuit tins groaning with home baked goodies. Duruz traces examples of food memories in 1950s and 1960s Australia as a starting point to address later myth-making about the era. In our food culture, an enduring story describes the bland dull Anglo-Australian foods we consumed in the post-war period. Sydney chef Steve Manfredi remembers:

> [At Bonegilla] I couldn't believe it, we had no idea people ate so badly. It was atrocious … Growing up in Italy I thought everyone ate like we did. I thought everyone had mums and grans who cooked pasta … Little did I know we would be confronted with pale pastel coloured vegetables floating in water, overcooked mutton, grey gravy, strange smelling runny custard and bread which had no textural body to it whatever.[12]

Even our culinary icon Margaret Fulton adds to the negative remembering of food, cooking and women's lives. In a 2011 interview she states that she wrote her 1968 cookbook, 'because women were bored stiff with their cooking.'[13]

In 1960 when the public relations and market research industries were in their infancy in Australia, The United Services report identified that the one thing women of all social and economic classes could not avoid was preparing food:

> When the week is analysed … it becomes apparent that the most time-consuming household duty is associated with meals, where for every day of the week an average of 4½ hours is spent in preparation, consumption and washing up. In other words a quarter of a housewife's waking day is concerned with meals. It is worth noting that virtually no housewife escapes from doing something about meals each and every day.[14]

Nowhere in this report is it mentioned that women's thoughts on cooking meals were sought or analysed and clearly the assumption drawn from it was that cooking was a persistent drudgery and there was a real demand out there by enslaved housewives for quick and convenient and new foods. Other market research identified three clearly defined groups of Australian housewives: those who achieved personal satisfaction from preparing food, those who enjoyed satisfying others and those who wanted to get out of the kitchen as fast as possible.[15] Women's magazines were full of pages for the woman who loved to engage with cooking whereas post war marketing of food focused on convenience foods.

Rather than the one-dimensional image housewife figure, often styled to provoke our nostalgic hankerings and/or our sympathy and with little or no agency, what I found was that they were assigned an all-important task. Their critical role was that 'the happiness and welfare of the whole family rests on her shoulders.'[16] They were 'unacknowledged specialists' and this was a significant role. Certainly the emerging advertising industry recognised their role and their agency. Susie Khamis notes that advertisements for consumer goods targeted to women make up most of the content of women's magazines.[17]

How cookbooks, food writing and culinary ephemera challenge this and how oral history assists

An analysis of cookbooks published in the post war period provides useful information about domestic life, what women cooked, foods they had access to, fashion, family life, entertaining and technology. It also challenges our beliefs about our Anglo-Australian diet; we see ingredients, recipes and cultural influences that surprise us. And we never see the cupcake – a recent American addition to our culinary practice most likely introduced to us by the popular television series *Sex in the City* – but we do see fairy cakes, patty cakes, butterfly cakes and queen cakes. Interviewing women about how they used their books adds further weight to their value as resources.

Texts used in secondary school home economy classes help to foster our belief that cooking was an awful process. The following poem introduces *Cookery the Australian Way*, the primary text for cooking for home economics students in secondary schools:

> I guessed the pepper; the soup was too hot!
> I guessed the water; it dried in the pot!
> I guessed the salt; and — what do you think?
> We did nothing else the whole day but drink!
>
> I guessed the sugar; the sauce was too sweet!
> And so by my guessing I spoiled our treat;
> And now I guess nothing, for cooking by guess
> Is sure to result in a terrible mess.[18]

This text written by a committee of home economists in the early 1960s remains British in its content of stews, crumbed cutlets, pies, steak and kidney puddings, suet puddings, steamed puddings, spotted dick, custards, jellies, passionfruit moulds and flummeries, cream puffs, Banbury Tarts and Bakewell tarts.

Many women's interest in cooking went well beyond these very traditional foods.

Cox, The Hostess Cookbook

As an indication of its popularity, *The Hostess Cookbook* written by Helen Cox and illustrated by Russell Clarke, had four reprints – 1953, 1955 1957 and 1959 – following its initial publication in 1952. Cox notes that she was a cook and that she prepared and arranged the food illustrated in the book.

Helen Cox, The Hostess Cookbook

This is not the sort of cookbook we associate with the 1950s in our collective memory of food and cooking. It was a cookbook designed for housewives and businesswomen who loved cooking and entertaining but needed assistance coping with no 'help' and with restricted time. Women who cooked from this book were reminded how lucky they were to be living in this modern time with time saving technology to assist them with cooking in their modern homes and kitchens. Recipes used labour and time saving devices, such as the pressure cooker and included tinned and pre-prepared foods.

It is the modernity of this book and its emphasis on entertaining that appears to be at odds with our memory of the kitchen as a domestic family space as opposed to a place where the cooking for elaborate parties took place. Everything about this book emphasised its modernity. The layout was modern with the menus for all manner of parties – dinners, luncheons, cocktails, buffets, wedding breakfasts, suppers, morning and afternoon teas, and evening parties. Recipes were set out with the ingredients listed first then the method in a series of steps, as listed below. Cox also included a clever indexing system with Ginger Fluff Sponge for example, being found under 'G' for 'Ginger' and 'C' for 'Cakes.'

Cox maintained a presence by giving chatty advice throughout:

> If you have a warming oven, place the meat in it on its serving dish surrounded by the apricots and bacon rolls, then put the soufflé in the main

> oven just before the guests are due to arrive. … This should be about sufficient time to have a chat and two courses before the soufflé is brought triumphantly in.[19]

From the number of reprints, it is safe to assume that this was a popular book. The fact that I have two copies, both found in opportunity shops, supports this. Its contents show a desire to move away from British foods and towards modern interpretations using modern ingredients and new kitchen gadgets such as the pressure cooker. However, when I first read this book I thought it was pretentious, offered complicated recipes and silly advice. I could not imagine any woman bothering to cook from it.

It was not until I interviewed Naomi Nicholson that I realised how important this book was and what it revealed about the 1950s. It was not really about the food or the entertaining but about its modern message. Naomi loved this book, used it often and still uses it. 'I made a Lemon Delicious out of it only the other day,' she told me.[20]

The reason she liked it was that it was all about dinner parties and that was what they did in those days often for ten to twelve guests. She would cook something for main course and a cold dessert that was already prepared.

She found her own way to use the book by passing Cox's structure of party menus in the first section of the book and recipes in a separate section at the end. Nicholson didn't use the menus at the front – she went straight to the recipes at the back of the book. She especially liked that it showed you how to make simple things into something a bit special. What I had found pretentious she found practical:

> Half a pear (canned) could be filled with jam then using the whites of eggs you could make meringue and put this over the top then bake it. With the yolk you could make custard and really what you had was canned pears and custard but this was very different.[21]

She found this particularly helpful with a family of three children born very close together:

> You always made pudding and it was hard to produce one night after night. This book gave you lots of simple ideas for dressing up simple ingredients that you had on hand for dessert.[22]

Oh, For a French Wife!

Nicholson also had a battered copy of *Oh! For a French Wife*, first published in 1952. The popularity of this book brings the popular memory of boring, bland and British under the spotlight. It combined French cuisine, sophistication, slightly risqué, clever food writing, art and photography into a cookbook described as:

> … a witty combination of culinary advice, amusing anecdotes and mouth-watering recipes enhanced by deliciously appropriate drawings … the perfect guide to the serious business of planning fine meals as well as providing a brilliant digest of the science and philosophy of cooking in general.[23]

Australian popular memory usually ignores the influence of American food culture on Australian gastronomy in favour of a more popular story about the influence of post war migration from Europe on our food culture. *Oh, For a French Wife!* introduced a new style of French food and cooking to Australians via American gastronomy. Authors Ted Moloney and Deke Coleman acknowledged the influence of *The Garrulous Gourmet,* an American book about French regional cooking by William Irwin Wallace. They were the editors for its Australian publication. Australian culinary icon Margaret Fulton describes the influence *The Garrulous Gourmet* had on her emerging culinary career:

> Never has a Christmas gift given more pleasure or been more appreciated. In our tiny house on the Hawkesbury River we were transported to another world as we worked our way through the book. To Paris, to the French countryside,

Moloney, Coleman and Molnar, Oh, for a French Wife!

> and to the regional towns and cities of France with their distinctive cuisine.[24]

As well as this influence, *Oh, for a French wife!* references American sophistication: 'the book would never have been written if he hadn't happened to be drinking a martini a few years ago.[25] It meditates on the philosophy of cooking as did Anthelme Brillat-Savarin and as did Cox's book. It suggests recipes for 'cocktail parties, fork meals, luncheons and dinners,' an indication that women cooked more elaborate foods when entertaining.[26]

Clearly a popular book, there are ten editions and many reprints of *Oh, for a French Wife!* from 1953 to 1967. Again, the way in which this book was used can be confirmed through an interview. Naomi Nicholson loved this book. It was given to her as a wedding present and she made the Beef Stroganoff, Potatoes Anna, Chicken Maryland and Sweet and Sour Fish. She remembers her parents coming to her tiny flat for a meal expecting a roast and so with perhaps a hint of rebellion, mixed with her status as a modern wife and homemaker, she cooked a very different dish for them.

Continental cooking (and American celebrity chefs)

Betty Cumming was not interested in using a most remembered source of cookbooks, *The Country Women's Association* cookbooks. For her, cooking was a creative thing. Married in the early 1960s, it was very important to try to cook something a bit different rather than 'just a meal.'[27] Clearly interested in international cooking she used *The Time Life Cooking of the World* series edited by Elizabeth Campbell, Dione Lucas and Simca, (Simone Beck) with beautiful images of food, people and places, introductions and editing by well-known food personalities and purchased through a subscription. A great deal of planning went into her dinner parties and she was critical of what others served to her. 'In the 60s,' she noted, 'everybody had a variation on cheesecake and everybody used to serve quiche as an entrée then finish up with cheesecake.'[28] Unlike her friends, Betty put a great deal of thought into her dinner parties. She talked about how she used her books:

> This book was an engagement present and I used it a lot. If I decided I wanted a French menu I'd go to that section and do it that way.
>
> I've made Guard's Pudding for the Robbins when they came to dinner. That was his favourite pudding. You can see by the splatters, I did use it.[29]

Even in the 1950s Betty Cumming had a foodie pedigree. Her mother knew home economist and food writer Jean Bowring who wrote the food pages for the *Melbourne Herald Sun* newspaper. Cumming recalls, 'her hand written recipe book was riddled with recipes "Jean's … Jean's. … Jean was on TV too." There were quite a few cooking shows on TV in those days.'[30] Cumming remembers American celebrity chef Dione Lucas' Australian tour and television cooking demonstrations of her American-style Cordon Bleu Cooking. Betty was impressed by Dione Lucas but none of her friends knew who she was, 'Most of her stuff was new; she was proper and exacting and had recipes and a recipe tray.'[31] Betty bought her book, *The Dione Lucas Gourmet Cooking School Cookbook* and at a ceramics class, hand-made twenty Coeur a la Crème (heart shaped moulds) because she was not able to buy them in Australia. She still uses them at Christmas:

> And I still use the same recipe. Actually I have about eight … all the different ones. But I still use Dione—they fiddled around with a perfectly good recipe. But whether it was hers originally I don't know, but if it was in her book it would have to be?[32]

Betty's comment about the originality of this recipe is an indication of when French cooking entered the domestic sphere. Betty says a number of times during the interview that Dione's version of Coeur a la Crème must have been an original dish created by Dione. Even with her sophisticated knowledge of cooking she had not come across this recipe before she came across Dione Lucas.

Jilly Roberts grew up in Adelaide and remembers her mother's handwritten cookbook. We tend to associate hot puddings with a British culinary heritage and Jilly's mother, she recalled, always had a hot baked dessert. But when Jilly first travelled to England she recalls her familiarity with English food, because of what her mother cooked, but she did not connect hot puddings with a British culinary heritage. It was more about the technology of the time and the climate in Adelaide. Ice-cream was a rare treat and it was a rare treat to have frozen things. 'Very few people had fridges,' she said.[33] Cookbooks were full of hot puddings and they were more popular than cold she told me, but not because of Britain. Many homes did not have electric refrigerators and it was impossible to keep a gelatine dessert cold. Consequently what we consider to be British puddings were in reality the only puddings that could be served due to the technology of refrigeration:

> A lot of them were cooked puddings and desserts which, in Australia now we wouldn't think of doing; it's too hot. But at those times they thought nothing of concocting something; bread and butter pudding, marmalade pudding, queen of puddings; all of those things were made by my mum. I remember every Saturday lunch-time, right the way through the year, we

would have some kind of baked dessert. You see ice-cream was a rare treat.[34]

Jilly Rogers reinforced the underplayed American influence on Australian cooking in the post war period. For a special treat her mother made Lemon Snow, a modern American gelatine based dessert. She also showed me her favourite book *Flavour of France*, written by Narcisse Chamberlain:

> This is a beautiful cookery book; I love it – one of my favourite books – those are very simple directions [talking about French Regional cooking]. In the late fifties we started really to be able to travel – my first trips were by ship and it was very exciting to go by BOAC. In I957 I went to France, Europe and France, and I stopped cooking Australian foods and started cooking European.[35]

Narcisse Chamberlain was the daughter of Narcissa and Samuel Chamberlain, American food and travel writers. Samuel Chamberlain wrote for American *Gourmet Magazine* throughout the 1950s and wrote *Clementine in the Kitchen* under the pen name Phineas Beck. Narcisse was an editor for a publisher specialising in cookbooks and she was an independent cookbook writer.

Jilly also entertained a lot, and had a huge collection of cookbooks. A working woman as well as a housewife, she was one of the first to demonstrate cooking on television using rice recipes in a segment sponsored by the Rice Board.

In the 1950s Dorothy Thomson finished secondary school and studied home economics at tertiary level in Brisbane. She recalls seeing American celebrity chef Dione Lucas at a demonstration of French Cordon Bleu cooking at McWhirter's department store in 1956. Lucas' demonstration taught her more than how to prepare Cordon Bleu style dishes:

> We were told don't ever change the recipe or don't ever experiment. You followed the recipe absolutely. Dione Lucas brought in the idea of enjoying cooking and it shouldn't be such a drudgery and so it was quite an experience.[36]

We have a nostalgic belief in a mother/daughter relationship that included mothers teaching their daughters how to cook. However, this belief is at odds with comments interviewees made. In the 1950s, newly married and with a young family, Fay Bowers lived and worked in Charleville. She did not learn to cook from her mother, but had to pick it up herself. It was her bridesmaid – who had studied Domestic Science – who inspired her to learn to cook:[37]

> Well she made this most glorious Victoria Sponge in this old wood stove that I had and it was to die for and we got some cream from somewhere, I don't know where, whipped it up all by hand. The cake was made by hand with the old hand beater and I can't remember what it looked like unless she beat it, she may have beaten it up by hand, but anyway it turned out beautifully and I found I had a knack for cooking and from there on I picked up bits and pieces from other women.[38]

Then she talks about the wonderful foods that she cooked with her limited resources:

> We used to have the most sumptuous afternoon teas in those days. Everyone was a cook in those days. Even though the work was hard to cook, what they produced was really beautiful. It was all made from really good ingredients; there were hardly any processed foods and all your food stuffs were really good quality.[39]

There is also personal pride that she still derives from her publically acknowledged achievements:

> I actually won a couple of prizes at the show and one of the prizes I won was a one egg cake. It was really popular because it was easy to make and it wasn't hard on ingredients; it only took one egg. We used to make tarts, sweet tarts and heavenly tarts and, oh gosh, the staircase tarts – layers upon layers – and we used to make all the sweets and lollies. I was forever making lollies because I was good at it … fudge and marshmallows and toffee and Russian caramels and Turkish delight. I used to make them all. You couldn't afford to give your children lots of parties but they usually had one about five years old and one about ten. You made up a little basket of some sort and you'd put all these homemade lollies in it and you made Iced Vovos with the marshmallow and with a little bit of jam down the middle and they just loved those. I think technology has made us lazy I think and we are not as industrious as we used to be.[40]

Conclusion

Through interviews with women about what they cooked, how they cooked and the cookbooks they used we see many more stories about housewifery than our collective memory has allowed us. Cooking for many was a way that women could express their modernity and for many cooking was a very creative pursuit. Coming out of years of economy and food shortages during and after World War II our diet was not as boring, bland and British as we have remembered. Cooking for many was a way to break with tradition and move forward. Clearly, many women were interested in international cooking; they experimented with new ways of cooking, new foods, new recipes and

ingredients, American and Continental foods. They entertained and enjoyed pleasurable hours planning, cooking and consuming meals with guests. Some turned what they had access to into delicious meals and were publically acknowledged prize winners for their recipes. Women were proud of what they cooked and the pleasure it gave them and others.

(Endnotes)

1 L Johnson and J Lloyd, *Sentenced to Everyday Life: Feminism and the Housewife,* Berg, Oxford and New York, 2004.

2 Alistair Thomson, *Moving Stories: An Intimate History of Four Women Across two Countries,* University of New South Wales Press, Australia and New Zealand, 2011.

3 Sian Supski, '"It Was Another Skin': The kitchen as home for Australian post-war immigrant women,' in *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography,* Australia Research Institute, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia, published online 13 January 2011.

4 Elizabeth Driver, 'Cookbooks as Primary Sources for Writing History,' in *Food, Culture & Society* 12:3, 2009, pp. 257–74.

5 Barbara Wheaton, Barbara, *Savoring the Past: The French Kitchen and Table from 1300 to 1789.* New York, Touchstone/ Simon and Schuster, 1983.

6 Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* 3rd Edition Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, p. 8.

7 Laura Schapiro, *Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America,* Penguin, New York, 2004, p. x.

8 Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique,* Penguin, Hammondsworth, 1965.

9 Power, 'Retro Housewife,' *Sunday Life Magazine* 28 April 2013, p.13.

10 Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media in the Postwar Suburbs,* Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2001 p. 368.

11 Jean Duruz, 'Food as Nostalgia Eating the Fifties and Sixties,' *Australian Historical Studies,* 13, 1999, p. 232.

12 Quoted in Duruz 1999, p. 231.

13 Lisa Power, 'Musical Soothes the Dessert Storm,' *Sydney Morning Herald,* Entertainment, 3 November 2012 http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/theatre/musical-soothes-the-dessert-storm-20121102-28omv.html, accessed 5 June 2014.

14 United Services Publishing, The Housewife's Day, Australian Sales Research Bureau, Melbourne, 1960, p. 5.

15 G Reekie, 'Market Research and the 1950s Housewife,' *Australian Feminist Studies*, 14, Summer 1991, p. 21.

16 A Jukes, *Woman's World,* M. A. White, Melbourne, c1960, Introduction.

17 Susie Khamis, 'Bushells and the Cultural Logic of Branding,' Thesis presented for Doctor of Philosophy in Media and Communication, Macquarie University, 2007.

18 Home Economics Melbourne, *Cooking the Australian Way,* MacMillan of Australia, Melbourne, 1967, Foreword.

19 H Cox, *The Hostess Cookbook,* Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1959, p. 3.

20 Naomi Nicholson Interview with Jill Adams, Sorrento Victoria, 6 March 2013, recording held by author.

21 *ibid*.

22 *ibid*.

23 Ted Moloney and Deke Coleman, Deke (eds), *Oh, for a French Wife!* , Abelard Press, 1964, p. x.

24 Margaret Fulton, *I sang for my Supper: Memoir of a Food Writer,* Lansdowne, Sydney, 1999, p. 65.

25 *ibid.*

26 *ibid.* p. 9

27 Betty Cumming interview with Jill Adams, Mornington Australia, 13 March 2013, recording held by author.

28 *ibid.*

29 *ibid.*

30 *ibid.*

31 *ibid.*

32 *ibid.*

33 Jilly Rogers interview with Jill Adams, Noosa Australia, 19 September 2013, recording held by author.

34 *ibid.*

35 *ibid.*

36 Dorothy Thompson interview with Jill Adams, Noosa Australia, 18 September 2013, recording held by author.

37 Fay Bowers interview with Jill Adams, Noosa Australia, 20 September 2013, recording held by author.

38 *ibid.*

39 *ibid.*

40 *ibid.*

Three madi projects in Tasmania

Terry Whitebeach

Abstract

Four separate publications have emerged from a single oral history project with the Madi (South Sudanese) community of southern Tasmania; a life history, *A Little Peace*, two bilingual picture books, *When I was a Girl in Sudan* and *When I was a Boy in Sudan*, and a novel for young adults, *Obulejo: Trouble Tomorrow*. This report chronicles the four-year project and examines and discusses some of the challenges, triumphs and the methodologies employed in this cross-cultural project.

Introduction

Oral history has a vital role to play in recording the social history of a nation, in making sure the voices of all its citizens are heard and in ensuring that the public record contains a wide diversity of stories and life histories. Madi people from South Sudan are among the newest immigrants entering Australia on humanitarian entrance visas. They arrive traumatised by war, often after years in refugee camps. They struggle to learn another new language and find their place in a foreign culture. Their need to feel (and be) included in wider Australian society, to be heard, to have their experiences validated and respected, is imperative. And to make those histories available in print form creates another opportunity for their stories to be witnessed. For, as Uruguayan writer and historian Eduardo Galeano put it:

> Writing is an act of remembering, a process by which things that have marked one, returning, pass through the heart. Our job is to recover our own face in the broken mirror of the dominant culture, and recover our faith, recover a sense of reality. It's the first stage in a long process of recovery, to discover ourselves in all possible dimensions.[1]

Human beings are a 'storied' species: life stories help us to witness others' experience and extend our own, even if vicariously, to take in information and facilitate meaningful communication, forge relationships and build a sense of community.

> We consciously and unconsciously absorb knowledge of the world and how it works through the exchange of life stories. We constantly test reality against such stories, asserting and modifying our own perceptions in the light of them. These exchanges and the knowledge they impart…become part of our reality. They are as true as our lives.[2]

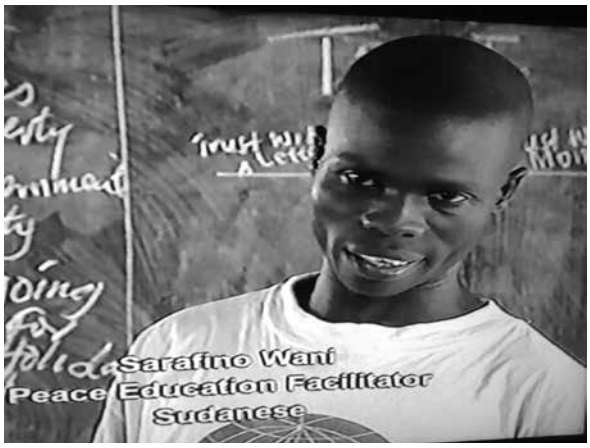
The Context

The history of Sudan is a bloody one. Slavery, colonisation and ongoing conflict have wreaked havoc on the land and its people. During the decades-long Civil Wars (1955–1972 and 1983–2005) many from the Madi and other Sudanese tribes fled to Uganda or Kenya. After a referendum, South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan, in July 2011. At present an uneasy peace exists.

One Man's Story: A Little Peace

Among members of the South Sudanese diaspora who voted for independence in the referendum was a colleague of mine, Sarafino Enadio. (His name reflects the influence of Italian missionary activity among the Madi.)

In 2010, Sarafino began to tell me of something of his life before, during and after the Sudanese Civil War. We quickly made the decision to collaborate more formally: to record, write and publish his life history.



Sarafino Enadio conducting a Peace Education Class, 1994: credit: UNHCR Peace Education Programme (video)

This was a project close to my heart: I have spent many years helping various marginalised groups bring their stories to wider audiences: my PhD thesis "Someone Else's Story" reflects this long-term concern. The title Sarafino chose for his life history was *A Little Peace,* for, as he put it, 'In my life in Sudan I experienced peace for only a very few years…. I was born in 1975, during the period of ceasefire. From 1972 to 1983 there was a little peace in Sudan, then another war broke out. I grew up during that second war'.[3]

Sarafino was a teenager at boarding school in Torit, in Eastern Equatoria, when the town was attacked and 'liberated' by the SPLA (Sudanese People's Liberation Army). He and others fled into the jungle to escape the fighting, and subsequently undertook the perilous journey on foot to the Kenyan border. He was registered by the UNHCR as a refugee and taken to Kakuma refugee camp in Northeast Kenya.

As a teenager displaced by war and living in a refugee camp in a foreign country, Sarafino made the enlightened decision that he would not let the war destroy him, but that he would dedicate his life to finding peaceful solutions to situations of conflict. Initially he volunteered as a teacher in Kakuma refugee camp, and later was trained by the UNHCR as a peace educator and facilitator. He worked in refugee camps with people who had been bitter enemies but who did not want to pass on the legacy of violence and hatred to their children.

Sarafino Wani Enadio 2014. Credit Stephen Enadio

Sarafino spent nearly a decade in refugee camps, never knowing where the rest of his family were, or whether they were still living. Eventually he and his wife and their two young children were resettled in Tasmania. He is a member of the 500 strong Madi community, in which he plays an active role as a leader, despite his relative youth, and is constantly called upon to deal with problems traditionally handled by the elders. War robbed the community of so many of its elders and in their absence younger people have had to assume the elder's traditional roles. Sarafino has memorialised this situation by giving his youngest son the Madi name, 'Amboyo', which means *no elders*; or *the elders are no longer here.*

The Interviewing Process

When we began the interviews Sarafino was very guarded in the way he recounted his experiences. He offered little detail and used a lot of abstractions, generalisations and euphamisms, especially when speaking about difficult issues. He once referred to a situation as 'a little bit of conflict' between two groups. I subsequently discovered that this 'little bit of conflict' included people being beaten and tortured, shot or hacked to death, children captured and taken as boy soldiers and towns and villages destroyed – the the flaring of age old enmities. I did not wish to reawaken his suffering and I was aware that the Sudanese culturally are very reticent in speaking of bereavement or sorrow or trauma. Another factor was the fear of possible consequences to family members and tribespeople in Sudan from the publication of what Sarafino might divulge.

In those early days of interviewing and transcribing, many mistakes in comprehension occurred: at the most basic level, we both had to tune our ear to the other's accent and speech patterns; also, there was so much that I did not understand, except in the most superficial way. Some things Sarafino found difficult to communicate clearly – either because he did not undersand my question, or it had little relevance or meaning to him. I could not always grasp his explanations, from within my own cultural context and world view. This was a situation with which I was familiar and well-used to navigating – one of the challenges of cross-cultural collaboration. I faced similar pitfalls and challenges when working with Kaytetye stockman, Don Ross, to record and publish his life history.[4]

Over a period of almost four years Sarfino Enadio and I recorded an extensive series of interviews, and discussed the resulting text at length. I then edited that text and Sarafino checked it for factual errors. As I began to appreciate more of the context and situations from which Sarafino's accounts arose, and began to get some insight into the Madi world view, we were able to correct many (but not all, I suspect) of the misapprehensions and errors in the text and I also began to realise how much more there was that I did not and could not understand, from outside the culture.

Sarafino was a willing participant and collaborator, but knowing the crucial questions to ask, and ascertaining whether your interviewee understands what you intend by the question is often difficult to get right. Biography and life history writing, which John Ritchie specifies as 'branches of history that focus on an individual's life and career'[5] are, however, as Barwick observes, 'notoriously difficult form[s] of historical writing, the complexities [of which] increase when an author must make the life and times of an individual comprehensible to readers from very different cultural backgrounds.'[6]

I decided to make the interviews largely unstructured, more like free-flowing conversations: this method worked admirably: a lot of illumination of previously obscured aspects of the narrative

inadvertently occurred during seemingly unfocussed or casual conversation. And while I often felt that Sarafino's carefully worded accounts lacked the verve a well told story needs, I initially accepted that it was *his* story and he should tell it the way he felt most comfortable. It was important for him to be heard, but I also worried about finding a publisher and readership.

Transforming the Process

When I had put together a relatively complete draft of the text, I felt that as an historian I had done an adequate job – I had researched, collected and checked the 'facts', arranged the interview material logically so that it gave a picture of the life and times of the man – but as a writer I was far from satisfied. I wanted Sarafino's story to come alive for the reader. And I only had the material he had supplied and the words he had used, to work with, although he offered me the freedom to sequence the narrative. Sarafino is a very serious and intent person, somewhat weighed down by the numerous responsibilities he has assumed or which have been placed on him and is also very conscious of his public image and standing and the effects his words may have on others. And he is committed to avoiding creating or escalating conflict. All these affected the way he told his story.

Life history writing, an extensive record of a life told to and recorded by another who then edits and writes the life as though it were autobiography,[7] lies uneasily on the boundary between biography and autobiography and as such challenges many of our assumptions about telling and writing a life.[8] In life history, two stories together produce one. A speaker and a listener ask, respond, present and edit a life.[9] This definition, Somerville says, focuses our attention on the relationship, the inevitable power relations involved in the processes of the production of knowledge, the interface between talk and text and the need for alternatives to the conventional models of biography and autobiography.[10]

I was navigating a morass of anxieties when a seredipitous breakthrough to the impasse I was experiencing between my responsibilities to the man and to his readers came during a visit with Paskalina Eiyo, a Madi elder and an extraordinary story teller, singer and dancer. She spoke mainly in Ma'di, which Sarafino translated in his usual sober, measured way. But the engaged and animated conversation of the two Ma'di speakers and the excitement and flow of Paskalina's stories broke through the language barrier. How could I infuse Paskalina's vivacity and verve and the animation with which Sarafino had engaged with Paskalina into Sarafino's own narrative? Eventually, I decided I was trying to ride two horses at once, so,

Paskalina Eiyo – photo cedit Jimmy Storrs

apart from making some changes to the syntax, to make the narrative more acessible to readers, I did not try to alter the tone and texture of the narrative in *A Little Peace*. It was what it was. Sarafno's life history must be allowed to relflect his voice and way of telling a story, especially as I had made the decision not to enter the story and make the reader overtly aware of the dialogic nature of the text. The only clue I gave to the dialogic aspects of its creation was in the prologue, where I quoted Elie Wiesel's aphorism: *to listen to a witness is to become a witness.*

Bilingual Picture Books:

The narrative of Sarafino's I loved most, and which had given him obvious pleasure to recount, was an account of how Sudanese children were responsible for guarding their families' crops from birds and animals during the flowering and seeding seasons. Speaking of his childhood, Sarafino's narrative style clarified and vivified: the story came alive.

My enthusiasm for this lively account led directly to the birth of a second project. Instead of trying to make text of the life history operate in a way it patently did not, we could utilise another literary form to transmit some of the interview material to a whole new readership/ audience. Sarafino often had expressed dismay that Madi children born in refugee camps or in Australia knew little of their parents' culture and way of life. Some did not even speak their native tongue, Ma'di. This was also a source of sorrow to Paskalina who regretted that Madi girls in Australia had no concept of 'laru', respect. It was the well-documented story of the gap that develops between new migrants and their Australian-born children. So we decided to create two bilingual picture books, *When I was a Boy in Sudan* (narrated by Sarafino Enadio) and *When I was a Girl in Sudan* (narrated by Paskalina Eiyo) to help fill some of the gaps.

Sudanese children born in refugee camps in other countries, or in Australia, suffer potentially damaging dislocation from their native language and culture. These picture books, we felt, might be of some value in Madi cultural maintenance, and would be a source

Christine Aleri at the Madi illustration workshop, Hobart, 2012. Credit Ninna Millikan

of pride for Tasmanian Madi families. They would also give Australian children a view into the traditional world of Sudanese children and the opportunity to learn some Ma'di words, providing them with a valid opportunity for cultural exchange.

With a seeding grant from the Australia Council for the Arts we set about creating the picture books. We employed Sarafino's narrative about guarding the crops as the print text for *When I was a Boy in Sudan*, and introduced items of Ma'di vocabulary into the text. I worked collaboratively with two other Tasmanian writers to create the print text – and quickly discovered how difficult it was to perfect such a condensed narrative form! Paskalina's memories of her traditional girlhood in South Sudan and the transition to Australian life furnished the text of *When I was a Girl in Sudan*.

Originally we had planned to have the books illustrated by Tasmanian Madi children. Accordingly, we ran a workshop in conjunction with the Madi school and community leaders. What quickly became apparent was that the children were no more familiar with the animals, landscape and life and surroundings in Sudan than we were! Luckily we had brought along photos and illustrations of plants and animals to guide the children. We all enjoyed the workshop and children and adults participated enthusiastically, singing and drawing, playing traditional games and being interviewed for a promotional DVD, but we were forced to rethink how to create the visual text of the two books.

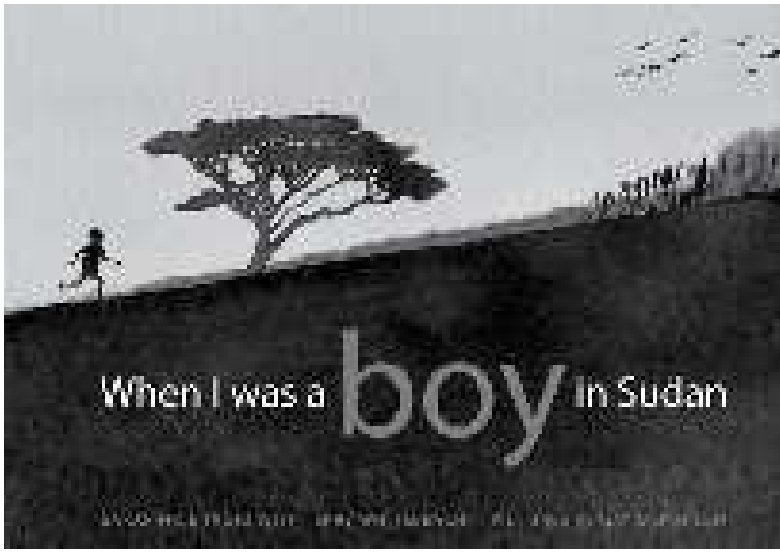
We found an illustrator who was also a scientist and she agreed to illustrate the books. She drew up a long list of questions about the flora and fauna of South Sudan, the appearance of everyday items and a thousand and one other matters, and I put her queries to Sarafino and other Madi people. We realised the illustrations would serve a valuable role in informing and educating both Madi and non-Madi children about South Sudan, as well as providing an appealing visual narrative, so it was important they be factual and accurate, but also appealing to children. Our illustrator, Gay McKinnon, was extremely conscientious and went to great lengths to achieve accuracy.

Getting it Right

It was a difficult process: Sarafino and other Madi people did not know the English equivalent terms for some plants and animals familiar in South Sudan. For example, it took us a long time to ascertain that the Madi 'lulu' tree and its nuts, 'awa', are what we refer to in English as shea nuts. (That information eventually was garnered from a missionary in South Sudan.) And in creating the Ma'di text we had to take into consideration the number of Arabic words that have been imported into Ma'di. Another issue is that Ma'di has many fewer words (especially synonyms and adjectives) than English so one Madi word sometimes does service for a number of ideas, for example, 'limi limi' means both 'clean' and 'sweet'; clean like a fish in clear water (given that the Madi are a Nilotic tribe) and therefore also 'appealing', 'attractive', 'sweet sounding or tasting'. Then there are the culturally embedded sayings that don't translate well: a compliment to a boyfriend: "clean fish". It took some head-scratching and tricky transcreation, for example, before we came up with a praise song, for *When I was a Girl in Sudan*, that remained true to its Madi origins and context (and to Paskalina's song) but to which an Australian audience also would relate.

From Life History to Novel

The fourth project grew out of discussion about the lack of knowledge by Madi children of what their parents had experienced during the Civil War. Most of the adults and a number of their children are suffering the effects of trauma and dislocation, but traditionally Madi do not speak to 'outsiders' (like counsellors) about family or emotional issues. These traditionally are dealt with by elders, most of whom either did not survive the war or have not been resettled in Australia. Once or twice Sarafino had touched on memories and experiences that created such great pain and grief he could not continue the interview: I did not press him



although I knew there was significant material being withheld. And he said he was unsure of how he would broach the subject of the troubles in South Sudan with his own children.

Finally we hit upon a solution that might serve both to reduce and defuse the impact of Sarafino's retelling of some of the more traumatic aspects of his life and satisfy the need to inform both Madi children and other young people of the sufferings their elders had endured. We would create a novel, a literary form whose currency is truth, rather than strict adherence to facts, a composite account which would draw on the experiences of a number of people, transmuted into fiction, and which would not implicate or endanger particular individuals. Thus the inception of the young adult novel, *Obulejo: Trouble Tomorrow*, was effected; a novel about war and suffering and death and destruction, but also about resilience and community, hope and new beginnings, and of finding peaceful solutions to conflict. It would be based in actual happenings, but conflate a number of accounts into a single story, and obscure or fictionalise potentially volatile material. And it would enable us to portray the emotional texture of the experiences Sarafino and others had undergone, when they were forced to leave their homelands.

There is significant difference between history and fiction writing. In fiction, provided there is internal coherence in the material and the writer manages to effect a willing suspension of disbelief in the reader, he or she is then free to invent 'facts' or context at will. But, in history writing one must fashion the narrative from records of occurrences, rather than as lively invention. And any form of historical knowledge, Pickering avers, is necessarily partial, provisional and time bound.[11] Thus, he concludes, 'one of the historian's most abiding senses of frustration in relation to his or her material is its absolute incompleteness, its inevitable existence in the present only as time's traces'.[12] Within the conventions of the novel I could create a complete world, a complete plot sequence and an intimate entrée into the characters' minds and hearts and stay faithful to the truth of lived experience.

Abandoned tank on the road between Juba and Torit, 2012. Credit Sarafino Enadio

Terry and Sarafino's youngest sister Izia, with Izia,s children. Juba 2012. Credit, Sarafino Enadio

Taking a New Tack

After completing a number of unsatisfactory drafts I realised this was a stretch too far for me to make. Although I had published young adult novels written from a young male protagonist's point of view,[13] I was not Sudanese, I had never lived through a war, been captured and tortured, been a refugee or been resettled in a foreign country. I had a good informant and collaborator, but again and again I came to a place in the text where I could not supply those small all-important details that create authenticity. And there was also the illustrator's difficulty with some aspects of creating authentic illustrations for the picture books. The solution was obvious. I told Sarafino I must go to South Sudan and experience the country myself. And while I was there I would take hundreds of photos to assist the illustrator. He was aghast at my announcement and so was his family, who said I should not travel alone; Sarafino must accompany me and look after me. (Something I came to appreciate very much.)

We had no funds, and Sarafino had only two weeks' leave available from the schools in which he worked with students in English as an Alternative Language programs, but nevertheless in 2012 we set off for South Sudan. We were stuck in Nairobi for three days, with complicated visa issues, an unnerving experience exacerbated by our hotel's proximity to the heavily patrolled and guarded Israeli embassy, but we employed the time recording Sarafino's previous grim experiences in Kenya. Breathing the air, seeing familiar sights, unloosed his tongue in the way historian Dick Kimber attests occurred when he travelled through country with Walter Smith during the time Dick was writing the well-known Aboriginal Australian bushman's biography.[14]

Our trip had its joyous aspects for Sarafino, who was reunited with his family after decades of separation, and who saw the Madi lands and his clan's home for the first time in his life. But when we revisited the town in which he had lived as a teenager until it was embroiled in war, he was overwhelmed with frightful memories and soon after we returned to his brother's house in Juba, he became ill. He was unable to speak about what he was experiencing, and it was only later, when we were safely out of the country, that he told me the full story. For me, the journey was confronting: I had never been in a war zone before, where unexploded landmines and abandoned tanks and destroyed roads and buildings were a regular feature of the landscape. Everywhere there were soldiers and weapons: I had never seen so many guns in my life. And although I was hosted very graciously by Sarafino's family, and people were friendly and welcoming, there were times I was seriously unnerved. And, culturally, most of the time I was totally at sea. For the first time, in the safety of his brother's home, Sarafino showed me the marks of torture on his body. He had not spoken to his family about his experiences and was counting on both the novel and the life history to inform them.

Synthesising the Process

Back home, it took weeks to assimilate what I had seen, and to reconcile the man I had known in Australia with the man who was revealed to me in Sudan as a bewildering stranger at times. I was confronted by how things we may take for granted that are so specifically culturally located: manners, body language, gender roles, expectations. But our collaboration benefited

Sarafino with his sisters in law Elvira and Rose, Torit 2012. Credit Terry Whitebeach

from our shared experiences in Sudan. I redrafted the life history in the light of what I had learned on our journey and from our conversations and interviews, both in Sudan and following our return to Tasmania. I handed over bulging albums of photos to the illustrator and the resulting illustrations she produced delighted Sarafino and Paskalina. And I began to add the missing physical details and emotional texture to the novel that both 'fleshed out' the narrative and located it more specifically and therefore allowed it to open out into its universal themes.

Outcomes

In June 2014 we launched the life history, *A Little Peace,* (Burringbah Books) and the picture books, *When I was a Boy in Sudan* and *When I was a Girl in Sudan,* (Anzoa (Joy) Books, Tasmanian Writers' Centre). (The novel *Obulejo: Trouble Tomorrow*, is with a publisher.) Income from sales of the picture books will be used to send urgently needed English books (including 2,000 copies of the picture books) to schools in South Sudan. We welcome any support of this initiative, and/or orders for any of the books. Enquiries: twhitebeach@internode.on.net or admin@tasmanianwriters.org

Conclusion

Oral history is a versatile tool: we achieved three individual outcomes from a single oral history project, and employed three different ways to include the stories of some of our newest citizens in the public record.

(Endnotes)

1 E.Galeano, statement made during lecture, Seattle Public Library, 1991.

2 J.W. Barbre et al. Personal Narratives Group (eds.) *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives*. Indiana University Press. Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989, p. 261.

3 Sarafino Enadio and Terry Whitebeach, *A Little Peace: A South Sudanese Refugee Story*, Garadunga Press, Hobart, 2014, p.1.

4 Don Ross and Terry Whitebeach, *The Versatile Man: the Life and Times of Alexander Donald Pwerle Ros*s, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2007.

5 J. Ritchie, 'Getting a Life', *Meanjin,* 2002, Vol. 61, No. 1, p. 94.

6 P. Kumar. Cited by A. Brewster. 'Aboriginal Life Writing and Globalisation': Doris Pilkington's *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*. *Southerly*, 2002. Vol. 62, No. 2, p. 159.

7 S.N.G.Geiger. 'Women's Life Histories: Method and Content'. *Signs*, 1986. p. 334.

8 M. Somerville.. 'Life (Hi)story Writing: the Relationship Between Talk and Text'. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 1990, No. 12, p. 29.

9 *Ibid.*

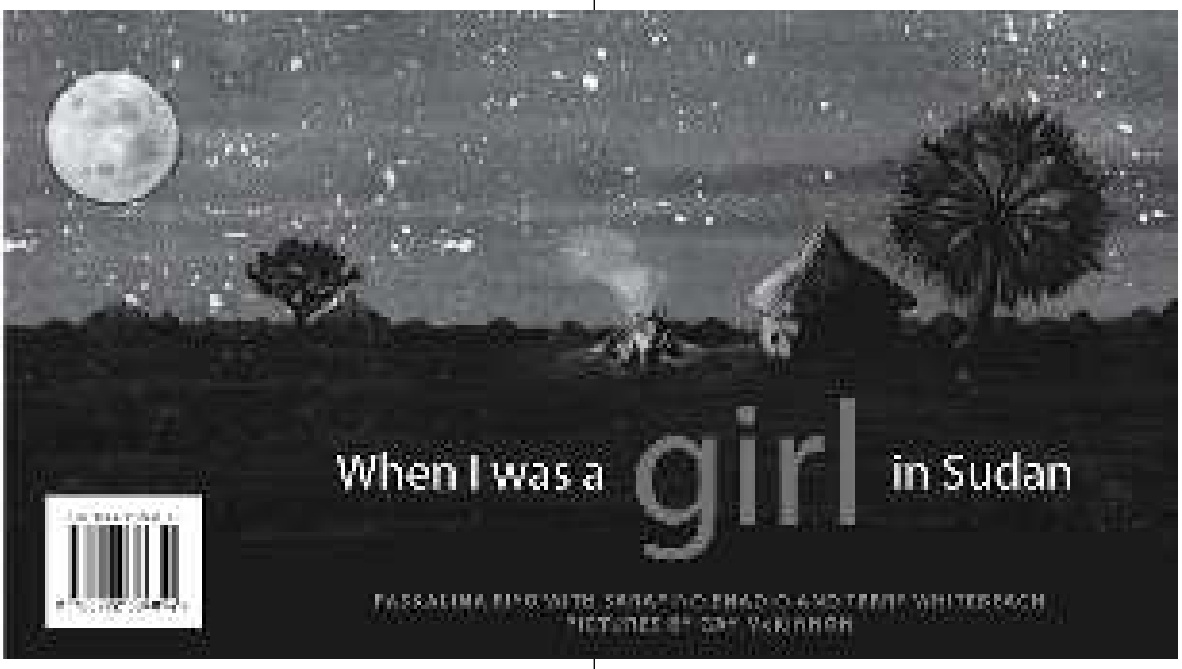
10 *Ibid.*

11 M. Pickering. *History, Experience and Cultural Studies*. Macmillan, London, 1987. p. 7.

12 *Ibid*. p.8.

13 Terry Whitebeach, *Watersky,* FACP, Fremantle, 1997 and Terry Whitebeach and Michael Brown, *Bantam,* FACP, Fremantle, 2002.

14 R.Kimber, *Man From Arltunga*, Hesperian Press, Alice Springs, 1986/1996.



From the ground up: exploring the use of oral history in tourism

Carol Roberts

Background

Almost two years ago, I became involved in a tourism concept based on art and history in the Hawkesbury district of New South Wales and this article explains my use of oral history in the tour commentaries which were a part of that concept. To give some background about the project I will briefly explain how the idea came into being.[1] In 2012, pastel artist Greg Hansell was invited by the Historic Houses Trust Members of New South Wales (now the Historic Houses Association of Australia) to mount an exhibition of paintings of heritage sites in the Hawkesbury district. The first exhibition, called *Life in the Hawkesbury*, was held in Sydney. The second exhibition, *Hawkesbury Sketchbook*, formed the basis of Hansell's annual studio exhibition at his home in Windsor in the same year.[2] The involvement of my tour-guiding business (Hawkesbury Valley Heritage Tours) came about when I was contacted by the Programming Officer Historic Houses Trust Members, enquiring about organising a coach tour to include many of the heritage sites depicted in the paintings for the exhibition.

Fanlight, St Peter's Anglican Church, Richmond Earth pastels, 15 x 20cm. Courtesy of the artist, Greg Hansell.

It was an innovative suggestion and the choice of the artist, Greg Hansell, and the Hawkesbury area for the subject of the paintings and for the tours was an understandable one for the organisers. This was

Macquarie Schoolhouse, Wilberforce. Earth pastels, 15 x 20cm. Courtesy of the artist, Greg Hansell.

verified by Andrew Finlay from Historic Houses Trust Members:

> [The exhibition] acts as a starting point to jump into the history and heritage of the area. It provides a cohesive narrative and theme to run through the day and allows for the introduction of new components as a result of [Hansell's] work. It also captures a wide audience base with heritage, history, art and the intersection of all three as the promotional pull. Greg being a local is also important as he introduces a personal story/perspective to the narrative.[3]

Attraction to place

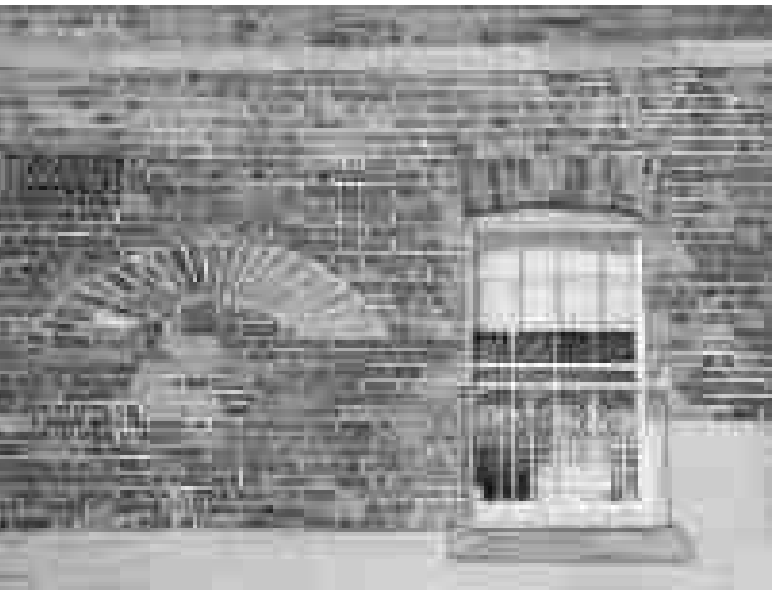
Over recent years, Greg Hansell has developed a close working relationship with the Historic Houses Trust Association people and has held several exhibitions of paintings completed in and around Historic Houses Trust properties:

> I like them and they like my work. Their properties have been really quite good, they're not overly restored. They're well-furnished, they're really nice properties and also, you've got a good range of properties with the Historic Houses Trust...Susannah Place is one of those properties that is unrestored...it is, I think, four

Greg Hansell talking to people on tour, in his studio.

> terrace houses in The Rocks [Sydney] built in the 1840s, but they haven't really been fixed up at all. They've got the grunge and the build-up of flakey paints and the disgusting little kitchen on a back verandah that's been blocked in and I rather like those places...it sort of sums up almost the life of the people, without the people being there.[4]

Added to this relationship is the fact that he has lived in Windsor in the Hawkesbury Valley area since 1979 and has made it his home. He has a profound sense of place with the area and has formed an almost irresistible attachment to the historic environment. As the cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz observes, 'to study place or...other's sense of place, it is necessary to hang around with them'.[5] That is precisely what we did on the tours: we hung around with Greg Hansell and his art.



'Homage to bricklayers various'- painting by Greg Hansell of the Female Orphan School, University of Western Sydney Parramatta Campus, earth pastel 55 x 75cm, 2014. Courtesy of the artist, Greg Hansell.

Living in the Hawkesbury area for so long has allowed the artist to creatively explore the environment and showcase it to the wider community. While the aim of the coach tours was to deliver interesting and informative public history programmes that appealed to a wide variety of audiences, at the same time we were helping participants understand the impact of the historic environment of the Hawkesbury on Greg Hansell's artwork. That impact was one of the main reasons the artist was attracted to the area, so much so that he resigned from full-time work shortly before he moved to Windsor:

> I gave up full-time work and decided to be an artist when I was at art school (I finished in 1980). I bought the little house then, here at Windsor...I was having exhibitions before that...I'd been painting for about five years. So I was having quite a few exhibitions and things were selling remarkably well. I got hung in the Wynne Prize from the first time I entered, when I was still a student and hung beside Fred Williams - that was a buzz - and sales were going terrifically so you had to sort of give up the overtime on weekends for work and paint - it was so easy just to ring up work and say I'm not coming back. And I can't believe that you'd buy a house and resign in the one year, go jobless and then another year or two after do a three-monther overseas to Europe. Quite blissful.[6]

The previous quote was from an oral history I recorded with Greg Hansell in 2008. Since that time I have been recording oral histories with Greg Hansell and regularly researching his artistic techniques because his work formed the basis for my university thesis: 'Sharing history: The artist, the historian and the tour guide'. Hansell's home is situated in one of the most historic parts of Windsor and it is the artist's special connection with the area and its heritage, along with his country upbringing, that informs much of Greg Hansell's artwork and motivates him to record history as he sees it:

> We didn't know much about the house. We used to live in North Street, the next street over, but we were getting flooded out all the time and room was a real problem there. The history of the place - it was part of a grant to Samuel Wilcox, subdivided in 1842 and then after that the house was built by J.J. Fitzpatrick. It's quite a unique house...there would have been a wharf where you put your milk and your grain and all that stuff for the boat. Next door there is a big shed that was part of Hannabus's dairy. It's 1890s and from one end to the other was cow bales. It's been subdivided...but the shed is a couple of hundred feet long...I paint it a lot because it forms a court-yard with our

Photo of Greg Hansell making earth pastels, 2010. Photograph by author.

> place and just looking out at that wall is just fantastic.[7]

From an early stage in his art career it seems that Greg Hansell was aligning himself with the Hawkesbury - forming an association of place - because many of his paintings reveal his fondness for commonplace, internal scenes:

> I tend to like our cosy, cluttered things because I feel comfortable with them. I am aligned to the humble part of our past...it has more meaning – the little man or little lady who really put themselves into their homes and their gardens... they're unpretentious. I like to use as the subject matter the way these people have arranged their houses and gardens to have a private aesthetic, rather than decoration especially for a painting. Gardens have become a very important part of my life. I tend to paint very similar things to the situations I live in...at my last exhibition there were quite a few paintings of the property and sitting on the edge of the river...just a little boat over in the river and the way the trees sort of behave in conjunction with the river and the water and the banks.[8]

Formation of the tours

In my thesis I used the oral history recordings and conversations with Greg Hansell to examine the ways in which the paintings, the exhibitions and tours provided opportunities to link art and history by engaging audiences with the history of the locality. So, working with the artist and the Historic Houses Trust people, I applied the same techniques to put together the commentaries for the guided tours in conjunction with Greg Hansell's exhibitions. During my commentaries I used information from the oral history interviews and conversations with Greg Hansell to provide background information about the artist and his artistic techniques, with reference to specific art works from the two exhibitions.

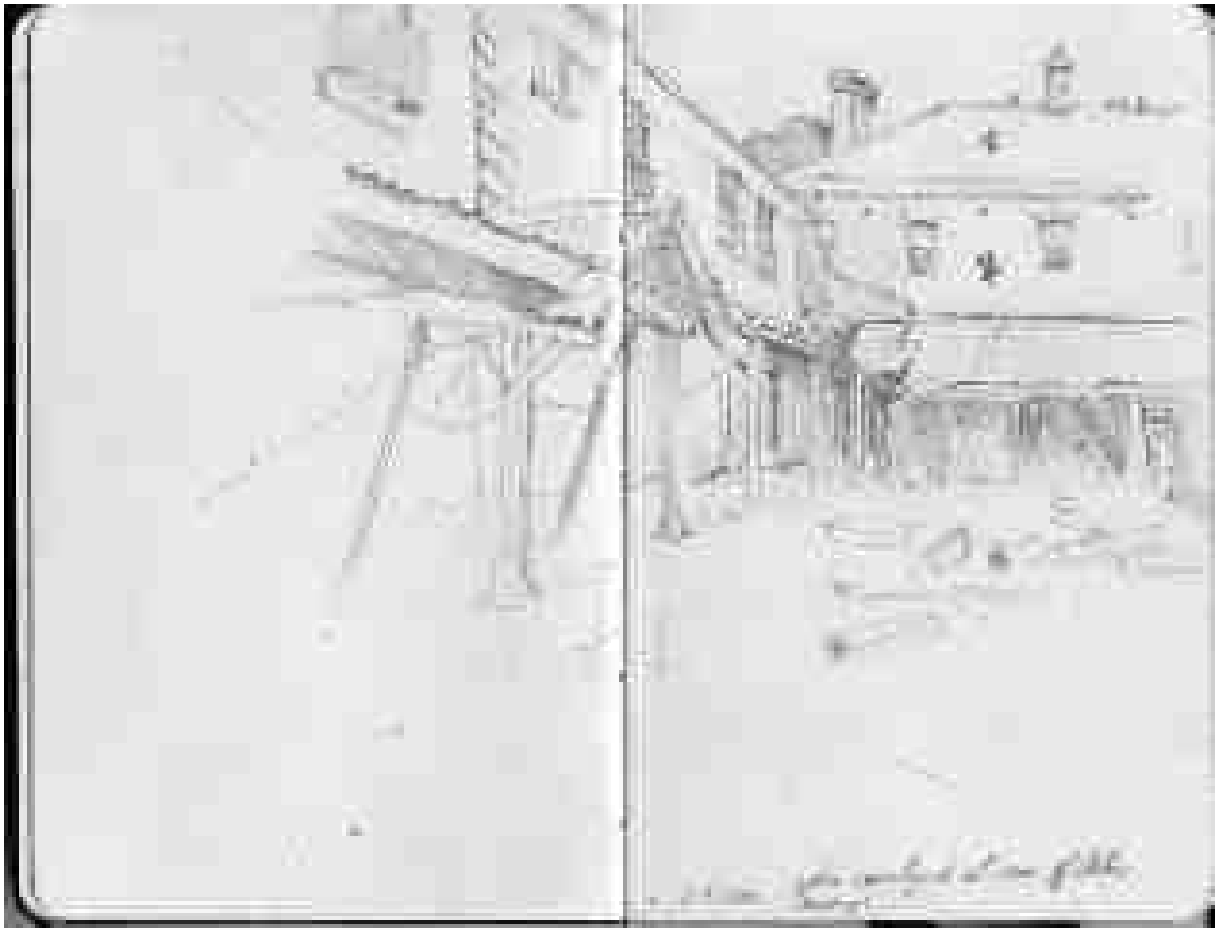
Through analysis of the oral history recordings and conversations with the artist it was possible to demonstrate during my commentary that the artist's techniques of recording history in his artworks go a long way towards establishing him as a public historian. My research covered many aspects of Greg Hansell's painting techniques, for example how he captures light and detail in his paintings. It is significant that in this quote he refers to Sir Arthur Streeton because Streeton came to the Hawkesbury area in 1896 and completed several works, one of which was *Purple Noon's Transparent Might*, overlooking the Hawkesbury River at Freemans Reach:

> It took two trips to Europe to really understand our light - our clear, crisp light. To go to Europe for three months and then come back, it opened your eyes to what our light was like...out here we just take it all for granted. Arthur Streeton nailed it in a nice way, and also Fred Williams. Also, with my work, I can't just dial up a big landscape, I've got to wait for the right one...I've got to find the right one, so you don't do very many of them. A bit like [Streeton's] *Purple Noon's Transparent Might*. That's his only big landscape. Most of his others are nice, little ones. Also, that painting is full of information and that to me is really important - just filling it up with information. There are no quiet bits in it - you look in any corner, it's there.[9]

One of Greg Hansell's favourite subjects to paint is corrugated iron and in this extract he talks about the inspiration he gets from corrugated iron:

> Corrugated iron is one of those wonder products. What you *do* with it - it retains its story too, for me, anyway, it retains its story of where it has been recycled, where it has been bashed and bumped, all those things are retained - they get left in the tin. All that atmosphere, the way it casts shadows, the way it rusts, the way nature has a little bit of say in it too, the life off it.[10]

The two tours I conducted of the Hawkesbury area in conjunction with Greg Hansell's exhibitions could quite feasibly come under the banner of creative tourism. Participants were introduced to heritage



'Open courtyard at rear of later wings' 3 July 2001. Courtesy of Greg Hansell.

sites featured in the paintings while at the same time demonstrating to them the artist's sense of place in the Hawkesbury area through the use of oral history and the paintings themselves.

History and heritage in the Hawkesbury through the eyes of the artist

The history of the Hawkesbury area is strongly connected with the early years of the penal colony of New South Wales and many residents of the area (including the author) can trace their roots back to the first European occupation of the Hawkesbury which began in early 1794, six years after the first European settlement was established in Sydney Cove.[11] The area became prominent as a fertile farming area and most of the original farming sites on both sides of the Hawkesbury River at Pitt Town Bottoms and along Wilberforce Road are still working farms. Hansell's paintings in the exhibitions represented heritage sites, rural scenes and farming activities, plus several of the extant buildings in the area dating from the early nineteenth-century. Most of them were viewed by participants on the tours, either externally or internally.

In his paintings Greg Hansell tries to focus on points of detail on historic buildings, such as the magnificent exterior light on St Matthew's Catholic Church in Windsor, the door and fanlight of the Macquarie Arms Hotel, the fanlight over the door of St Peter's Anglican Church in Richmond and the dome of St Matthew's Anglican Church in Windsor. He captures *Macquarie Schoolhouse* by detailing the sandstone quoins of the building and the 'nine over six pane double hung sashes' with just a hint that there is another room on top. Greg Hansell's painting of the *Schoolmaster's house and Church* at Ebenezer depicts the site from the banks of the Hawkesbury River and the artist comments that he preferred a 'different perspective' in relation to the history of the site and this is the view he provides in the painting:

> Many early parishioners would have arrived by boat from across the river and that's the view they would have got on arrival.[12]

Hansell's *Flood sign* captures the plaque on the wall of the Macquarie Arms Hotel in Thompson Square, Windsor, that indicates the height of the 1867 flood which was the highest recorded flood in the Hawkesbury. In choosing this angle of view, Hansell highlights three aspects of history of the area for the viewer: floods in the Hawkesbury, the Macquarie Arms Hotel (1815) and the wall which was built of rejected bricks from St Matthew's Anglican Church. The aspect of the streetscape in this painting is one of Hansell's favourite points of interest and his motivation for including the flood plaque was explained:[13]

'Second flowering'- painting by Greg Hansell of the Female Orphan School, University of Western Sydney Parramatta Campus, earth pastel 55 x 75cm, 2014. Courtesy of the artist, Greg Hansell.

> I tend to put myself in a position to get a good painting. I tend to record history in another way...It is hard to believe that the area below the sign was once under water and it could happen again, at some time in the future.[14]

These paintings depict small sections of each building and the artist chooses what he considers to be the most attractive feature of the building to portray in his paintings to add to the historic record. By detailing small areas of architecture, Hansell leaves the rest to the viewer's imagination and the artist comments that he 'almost takes the viewer by the hand' and guides them through his paintings to discover objects from the past like upturned milk crates, old bits of cars, pieces of rusting iron or farm tools. In contrast, his views of internal scenes are full of detail of patterns on furniture, ornaments and furnishings so the viewer's eye is 'led around in a circle...they are never let out of the painting'.[15]

The artist explains that his work 'tends to be semi-rural, a lot of it, but not necessarily'.[16] Hansell's painting, *Wilberforce Road,* is a reference to the Hawkesbury as a popular vegetable growing area but he also considers it 'was just a typical road-side scene that could be anywhere in the Hawkesbury'.[17] *The potato farmer* is another typical example. Hansell comments: 'What could be more iconic of the Hawkesbury area than a potato farmer?'[18]. Agriculture also features in Hansell's paintings *Pugh's Lagoon*, *Streeton Lookout*, *Wilberforce Road*, the *Pumphouse*, *The Hawkesbury*, *The potato farmer, Hawkesbury River at Sackville*, *Tebbutt's and the turf farm* and part of the original Stable Square at the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury Campus (formerly the Hawkesbury Agricultural College site). In Greg Hansell's opinion they are all 'characteristic scenes of life in the Hawkesbury'. Also, he chose a specific angle to paint *Pugh's Lagoon* because he had a view 'straight across through a slice of the Hawkesbury...with the lagoon, the polo field and mountains behind'.[19]

Interpretation and communication

Very positive reactions were evident amongst the participants on the tours who visited the heritage sites depicted in the paintings. Arts administrator Jan Dungey observes that 'the training which artists receive is designed to encourage them to look for new ways of experiencing places and of expressing that experience through their particular artistic language'. Hansell agrees that in this way artists can introduce people to other perspectives; to visually understand and interpret particular places and historic sites in relation to their sense of place, in a different way to a tour guide.[20]

It is Greg Hansell's strong interest and sense of place attachment to the Hawkesbury area that fuels his enthusiasm for painting and recording history. However, the artist was faced with a different awareness of historical interpretation several years ago when he was commissioned by the University of Western Sydney (UWS) to record architectural details, through artwork, of the Female Orphan School in Parramatta in 2001, before the building was restored, and again in 2013 after restoration. The Director of the Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, Kathleen Von Witt, comments that Greg Hansell 'captures both the architectural features, and the spirit of the properties he depicts...the artist is concerned with accuracy and form above all else'.[21]

Before restoration began on the Female Orphan School, Hansell realised that the challenge for him was how to capture the layers of history of the buildings while depicting them in the present. Hansell jokes that he is 'a frustrated architect' and explains how his artistic skills were used in his paintings of the Female Orphan School:

> They [UWS] wanted three big paintings of the Female Orphan School, which was the first three-storey building in the colony. It's 1813,

'Jacaranda and fruit bat flyover', 75 x 110cm, earth pastel, 2014. Courtesy of the artist, Greg Hansell.

three-storey, old brick...[it is] a really sad place...so the whole place is very wobbly and very bent-looking...the only instructions from Jan Reid [the Vice-Chancellor] were 'Just don't go pretty on us'. So, it was warts and all. I got a little sketch book and filled it up with just tiny little sketches of the place and the place has got...you're not alone when you paint there, you can feel the presence of 'not happy' people (pause)...It's really sad, you can really feel the pressure there. It was rather lovely actually to go and do it and then at the final handover of the three big paintings all the architects and all the heritage people were there and they were having a real good laugh, that if the buildings fell over they could rebuild them exactly...it was all as it was - just warts and all. There's a courtyard out the back and you could really feel the pressure on you when you walked up to have a close look at the building.[22]

Paintings of The old giant, Sackville; The potato farmer; Thompson Square, Windsor. Earth pastels, 15 x 20cm. Courtesy of Greg Hansell.

Returning to the site in 2013 to complete another three paintings of the Female Orphan School after restoration of the buildings, Hansell comments that now 'there is a completely different feel to the place'.[23]

As an art teacher, Greg Hansell's knowledge and skills of artistic interpretation and communication of that interpretation added extra depth of meaning and dimension to the paintings in the exhibition for participants on the tours.[24] Communication between the artist, myself and the viewers was most important and Greg Hansell and I provided a participative role in talking to and informing participants about the connections between the paintings and the heritage sites. This was well-received by those on the tours, most of whom were acquainted with the artist or knew of and appreciated his work: 'Meeting local artist Greg Hansell was also a highlight of the tour'[25]; 'Particularly enjoyed visiting areas relating to the very talented artist Greg Hansell'.[26]

In planning the content for the commentaries for the tours, I met with Greg Hansell and talked to him about the paintings in each exhibition and reviewed my transcriptions of the oral histories. Because the artist's home-made earth pastels are an important aspect of how he records history in his artworks, the artist has agreed to let me publish his explanation of how he makes the earth pastels:

> I get the rocks and crush them. The rocks I use are shales and mud-stones, ones that have been previously ground up. So it's usually those flat, flaky rocks with a little bit of oil content in them. So I just put the raw rock through a corn crusher. Just a hand-ground corn crusher, then put lots of water into the grit and dissolve the fine particles, so I pour that off and keep the fine particles. Then I let that settle, syphon the clean water off the top and after it settles, let the sun dry it, put enough water back in to make it into a paste or a plasticine-type dough, then roll it up in little sticks and let the sun dry it. I make up fifty to one hundred of each colour at a time. There's about thirty colours I suppose, out of the whole lot.[27]

I was able to read extracts from my own research to participants as part of the commentaries, which was very well-received by passengers and helped them connect the paintings with the heritage sites chosen by the artist to paint.[28] Also, one of the highlights for participants on each tour was a visit to the artist's studio at the end of the day. Greg Hansell explains how he came to hold exhibitions at his home studio:

Monday at Tara (Greg's home) and Rose Cottage, Wilberforce. Earth pastels, 15 x 20cm. Courtesy of the artist, Greg Hansell.

> I started off with the exhibitions in, I think it was about 1994. We have it [the exhibition] in the last weekend of October/first weekend of November each year and that's when the garden is at its prime. The garden is quite fantastic, so by the time people get the seventy-five yards from the gate to the house, they're feeling really good. We just have paintings everywhere...the wine and the biscuits come out and there are no catalogues. It's just very casual and people appreciate it and its sort of become a bit of an institution. There's no official opening and its worked out to be quite a good setup.[29]

The educational aspects of creative tourism - visual and aural

Creative or special interest tourism ventures are becoming increasingly popular with tourists and Greg Hansell and I set out to achieve an educational aspect during our tours. However, the history that the historian wants to tell and the history the public wants to hear are often quite different, so guides have to negotiate the middle ground.[30] From the comments received after the tours, it was apparent that Greg Hansell and I each managed to achieve that middle ground. Participants on the tours received sufficient historical information about the heritage sites we visited from my general commentary and this was supplemented by my reading of excerpts from the oral history recordings

Monday at Tara (Greg's home) and Rose Cottage, Wilberforce. Earth pastels, 15 x 20cm. Courtesy of the artist, Greg Hansell.

and explanations from the artist. Whether they had seen the exhibitions or not, passengers on each tour could see photographs of the paintings on the printed tour schedules and so they absorbed the history of the Hawkesbury area either through visual or aural means. This innovation was appreciated by participants, one of whom commented: 'What a wonderful day it was, so well organised and I would give it ten out of ten...What a good idea to have the paintings on the itinerary.'[31]

The relationship Greg Hansell has developed with his physical surroundings has helped him to anchor his choice of subject matter and the mediums he uses to portray the heritage sites and landscapes depicted in his artworks. Each of the partners participating in the exhibitions and tours shared agency in the creation of an end product from the ground up. Each had a different approach, but ultimately the projects were about how they were delivered. Overall, the focus was on Greg Hansell's art as a record of history that reflects his sense of place and connection with heritage sites in the Hawkesbury district. Most importantly, the use of excerpts from the oral history recordings and conversations with the artist during the tours helped to reveal the extent of the collaborative processes entailed in bringing the projects to the public as history.

(Endnotes)

1 See Carol Roberts, 'And you're still speaking to each other? Drawing the line between friendship and oral history,' in *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 35, 2013, pp. 9-16.

2 Greg Hansell, *Life in the Hawkesbury* exhibition, Historic Houses Trust Members Lounge, The Mint, 10 Macquarie Street, Sydney, 18 May to 28 June 2012; Greg Hansell, *Hawkesbury Sketchbook* studio exhibition, 31 George Street, Windsor, 28/29 October and 3/4 November 2012.

3 Email from Andrew Finlay to Carol Roberts, 10 August 2012.

4 Greg Hansell, interviewed by author, 5 November 2008, tape and transcript held by author.

5 H. Graham (Dr.), R. Mason (Dr.) and A. Newman, *Literature Review: Historic Environment, Sense of Place, and Social Capital*, Commissioned for English Heritage, June 2009, International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS), School of Arts and Cultures, Bruce Building, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU, United Kingdom, http://hc.english-heritage.org.uk/content/pub/sense_of_place _lit_review_web1.pdf, accessed 2 June 2012.

6 Hansell, *op cit*., 5 November 2008.

7 *ibid.*

8 Hansell, *op cit*., 5 November 2008; Greg Hansell in conversation with Carol Roberts, 30 June 2014.

9 Hansell, *op cit*., 5 November 2008.

10 *ibid.*

11 Jan Barkley-Jack, *Hawkesbury Settlement Revealed: A new look at Australia's third mainland settlement 1793-1802*, Dural, New South Wales, 2009. D.G. Bowd, *Macquarie Country: A History of the Hawkesbury*, Sydney, 1994; Bobbie Hardy, *Early Hawkesbury Settlers*, Kenthurst, 1985.

12 Greg Hansell, in conversation with Carol Roberts, 5 September 2012.

13 Bowd, *Macquarie Country*, 1994; Hansell, *op cit*., 5 September 2012.

14 Greg Hansell, interviewed by author, 18 February 2011, tape and transcript held by author; Hansell, *op cit*., 30 June 2014.

15 Hansell, *op cit*., 5 September 2012; Greg Hansell in conversation with Carol Roberts, 15 November 2012.

16 Hansell, *op cit*., 5 November 2008.

17 Hansell, *op cit*., 5 September 2012.

18 *ibid.*

19 Hansell, *op cit*., 5 September 2012.

20 Jan Dungey. 'Where arts, imagination and environment meet', in *Heritage Interpretation, Volume 1: The Natural and Built Environment*, David L. Uzzell (Ed.), London, Belhaven Press, 1989.

21 Kathleen von Witt, *Greg Hansell: Survey* catalogue, 30 October – 6 December 2009, Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, Windsor.

22 Hansell, *op cit*., 5 November 2008.

23 Hansell, *op cit*., 30 June 2014.

24 Greg Hansell is Art School Director at the Royal Art Society in Sydney and has classes there, as well as teaching at the Macquarie Community College Hawkesbury at UWS Hawkesbury Campus at Richmond. He has also taught at workshops in regional art centres in New South Wales; Hansell, *op cit*., 5 November 2008.

25 Email from Marnie Brown to Carol Roberts, 2 November 2012.

26 Email from Mary Burton to Carol Roberts, 1 November 2012.

27 Hansell, *op cit*., 5 November 2008.

28 Extracts from oral histories and conversations used in commentary with full permission of Greg Hansell.

29 Hansell, *op cit*., 5 November 2008.

30 Katharine T. Corbett and Howard S. Miller, ' A shared inquiry into shared inquiry', in *The Public Historian*, Vol. 28, Issue 1, Winter 2006, pp. 22, 24-25, http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/docview/222803491, accessed 15 July 2012.

31 Email from Andrew Finlay to Carol Roberts, 25 June 2012.

Snapshots of rural life: three different approaches, using oral history

Helen Stagg

Abstract

Oral historians show creativity and imagination in how they manage the data they obtain from their interviews. This piece examines three differing publications, all based on an oral historical approach, and discusses the different ways the raw material was utilised. The narrator in each case has fleshed out stories that are sometimes scarcely referred to in official records, either by staying true to the orality of the subjects, or by investigating silences to delve deeper in search of truth and meaning. All these studies however have made a valuable contribution to the oral history literature and to an appreciation of life, memory, and broader issues in rural areas.

Introduction

Whilst undertaking an oral history unit as part of post graduate study, I analysed three different histories and the ways oral history is utilised to illustrate the past. Rural life, with a focus on work, is the common theme in these three works: *Murray Water is Thicker than Blood* by Rob Linn,[1] *Cottoning On* by Siobhan McHugh[2] and *The Rushworth Oral History Project* by Keir Reeves, E. Rebecca Sanders and Gordon Chisholm.[3] These texts enable 'voices' to reverberate across time and capture meaning,[4] allowing posterity to gain an impression of how the subjects made sense of their work and life in a rural setting.[5] This is a discussion of the similarities and the differences in how the three writers utilized the oral history approach.

The Authors and the Studies

Rob Linn

An introduction is appropriate to the authors and the 'lens' through which this rural history is revealed. Rob Linn is a widely published professional historian in South Australia.[6] *Murray Water is Thicker than Blood* grew out of a reunion at Goolwa of the families of lock and barrage builders in 1999 with the desire to preserve something 'little known' and at risk of being lost.[7] Linn's aim was to record the life and times of the men involved in the construction of the locks and barrages as well as of their wives and families. His structure was a type of family journal and photo album, with the oral history interviews providing the narrative.[8] He interviewed twenty one people from 'right across the spread of workers' families and also included some of the very senior professional engineering staff.… the selection was indicative of all families and their opinions very representative.'[9] (It could be argued that to claim representativeness is impossible, particularly with this small sample.) Sponsorship was provided by Captain Peter Teakle, (major sponsor), the Government of South Australia, the NSW Centenary of Federation, the Murray Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) and the Government of South Australia.[10]

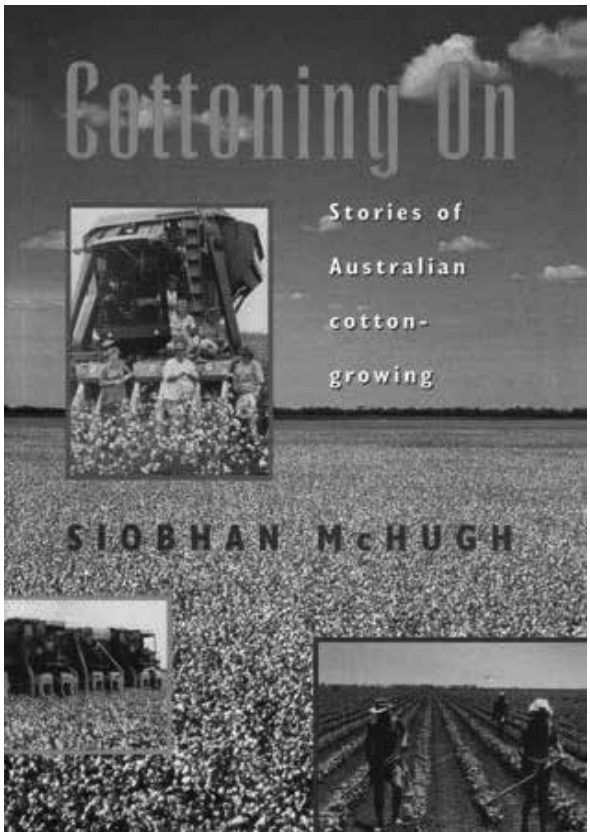
Siobhan McHugh

Siobhan McHugh is an award-winning writer and broadcaster.[11] *Cottoning On* is strongly influenced by her incisive journalistic approach, focusing on controversial issues and exposing inconsistencies in bureaucratic administration. She researched *Cottoning On* from 1993-96, travelling throughout the major NSW river systems where cotton was grown and interviewing a range of growers, graziers, local residents, environmentalists and government representatives. Her aim was to describe the people associated with cotton, 'who they are, what they've done, how cotton has changed their lives,'[12] but the research ended up focusing on water use, pesticide use and the social, physical, environmental and economic transformations to the region brought about by cotton.[13] She undertook this particular research without financial support.

> As soon as I realised how politically fraught it was, because there were all these issues about irrigation, and destroying the Murray-Darling River, and pesticide use, I realised that I would have to not only be independent, but be perceived to be independent in order to write a credible book.[14]

Keir Reeves, E. Rebecca Sanders and Gordon Chisholm

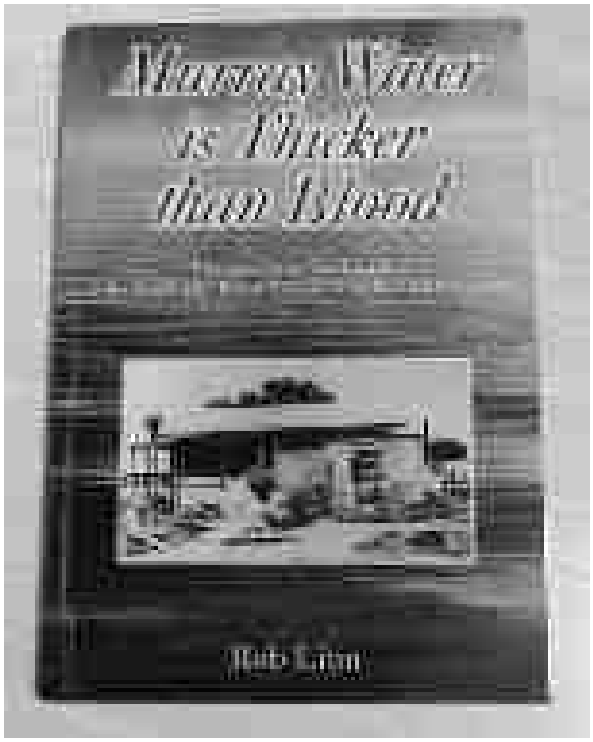
Forgoing sponsorship allows independence for an oral history researcher (or any researcher) who can actually take the project where they think most appropriate without constraints. Keir Reeves states that although sponsored projects are potential sites of conflict of interest, without sponsorship, a project such as the *Rushworth Oral History Project Report* would not have eventuated and this 'record of the past' would be lost.[15] By informing his interviewees about the commissioning role of the Bendigo Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) in 2006, he noted the possibility that some important narratives may have been missed, as former employees may have been concerned about possible consequences if they were critical of their employers. Reeves, Sanders and Chisholm were particularly interested in historical/cultural landscape analysis, and said the Rushworth Project aimed to record stories of the now defunct lifestyle of the former forest workers, to determine how people connected with the forest more generally and how they envisaged their future engagement with it now that logging had ceased.[16] The first few of the fifty respondents was drawn from the former forest worker group. However, as participants made suggestions, new subjects were interviewed. Reeves, Sanders and Chisholm were able to observe the webs of interconnectedness of the townspeople and through the oral history record, preserve the memory of life and times in the past.[17] Reeves et al provide a thorough and vigorous analysis of the oral testimony, mainly through a follow up article titled *Oral Histories of a Layered landscape: The Rushworth oral history project.*[18] The Rushworth Report itself is difficult to access with very few copies in existence. The authors were unable to direct me to a copy but the DSE advised that there is a copy at their Werribee branch and also at the Rushworth Museum. Most of my information in relation to this work is taken from Reeves, Sanders and Chisholm's follow-up article.



Some comparisons

It is interesting to ponder whom the interviewees thought they were talking to and 'who' they thought would be reading or listening to their story: the interviewer, family members, community members, a general public, posterity? All of these factors can influence what is 'retold.' Is the audience they perceived the same as that perceived by the interviewer?[19] Linn's work has a larger potential audience than the other texts comprising firstly the 'field collaborators'[20] and their relatives and members of local libraries in the Murray regions. The MDBC ensured that every school in South Australia received a copy, thus expanding the audience to students as well.[21] This book's 'voices' speak the language of the ordinary person. By contrast, McHugh's book is quite technical/dry in parts, providing good reference material for academics and environmentalists concerned about misuse of water, arguably Australia's most valuable resource. This is not to denigrate the book's value. A prominent environmental educator claimed, 'The book continues to make a significant contribution to all of these areas in water management and water resource development.'[22] In *Cottoning On* McHugh uses her own experience/knowledge and shapes it as a listener while at the same time looking outwards to her audience, a process which may actually have entailed diverging from the original narrators' intentions.[23] One could ask the ethical question of whether the cotton growers realised their commentary was going to be used in an 'environmental statement' and whether McHugh has shirked her responsibility to her living sources by her use of their testimony to expose mismanagement, lack of regulation and exploitation?[24]

While all three works purport to focus on life histories/people/work, each does this in a different way. Reeves et al introduce the concept of layers of history enabling the definition of cultural landscapes. These layers include European exploration, settlement, pastoral life and interactions with Indigenous peoples, gold discovery, indigenous life in the forest, war years and prisoner of war camp, depression years and itinerants, Chinese market gardening, the charcoal and eucalyptus industry and more recently timber production.[25] Similar to an archaeological dig of the historical landscapes for information, the exploration is not just horizontal between different people in town but vertical through



time and these different layers of history.[26] The geography of the forest landscape overlays all of these layers of history and the people's oral narrative forms another part of the 'historical landscape.'[27] Reeves, Sanders and Chisholm asked their subjects about their 'special places' to get to the core of their connectedness with the forest/landscape.[28] The oral record proved that the town's identity remains closely linked to the forests even though logging has finished.[29] Even so, the fractious nature of the community was also shown. There were those who felt 'sold out' by their city counterparts in terms of losing their livelihood, and those who felt that logging had been unsustainable. Significantly, some people were unprepared to be 'on the record,' and the absence of their views could possibly skew the results.[30] The project became the site where differing and occasionally conflicting experiences could be included as part of a multi layered historical landscape.[31]

Linn's work overtly stays with the people and memories. However, geography overlays the oral record here as well. Lock and barrage families in their 'lock camps' were intimately bound in a unique way to their special place. The Murray River, in a metaphorical way, became the 'lifeblood' of the people.[32] Hence the title's implication turning around the old adage that blood is thicker than water. In this case, unrelated individuals were joined together in a fraternity, interdependent and resourceful even when the lock construction was over.[33] Linn's work chronologically maps the time and lives of the people. It elicits the indissoluble complex of lived experience with detailed first person accounts of family life[34] with the overriding theme of hope amidst adversity strongly evident. Despite the economic tough times, people persisted and thrived.[35]

McHugh diverges from the people to themes and issues. Hers is an academic discourse often avoiding 'issues of process,' such as how accounts were made and what effects the making had on the participants. Her work involves detachment and critical reflection.[36] The oral testimony is mostly interspersed through the narrative, often seamlessly fitting into the flow of her argument, supporting the theme of the chapter in the way other primary evidence would be used. Her methodology falls short in that she doesn't correctly reference the quotations, (no times or dates of interviews given in contrast to Linn and Reeves et al) simply naming the interviewee in the body of the text. Also McHugh admits she often varies from the methodological 'norm' in strict 'orality' when she states:

> Every word that is uttered isn't inherently sacred. If you can distil out the essence of what somebody is saying, that does them a favour in that it almost makes them communicate more effectively, providing you are not misrepresenting the nature of their language and of their character.[37]

On another occasion, she states that the oral historian's work is like that of a sculptor crafting the shape hidden in the stone. Great skill in this 'craft' is needed. In what she claims to be the 'best' interview in her career with a cotton grower who was giving incorrect information to protect himself in relation to chemical spraying, McHugh's thorough preparation and wider scientific knowledge led her to be able to force him to tell the truth.[38] She did what Barrkman recommended, bringing her own knowledge, experience and concerns to the interview, resulting in greater understanding and learning.[39] Conversely, Thomson and Perks claim that knowledge and understanding of the past have a profound impact upon contemporary social and political life.[40] There is a two way relationship here between past and present. According to McHugh, 'The book provides important information on historical land and water use in the basin, issues of critical interest to the nation today.'[41] McHugh's work attempts to influence change in agricultural and environmental practice and to empower people to take on the monolithic cotton industry. As a result of her ground-breaking work, changes were made to the content of the 1978 *Pesticides Act*.[42]

A link between Linn's and McHugh's work is in the significance of the Murray Darling system. A newspaper report in 1911 from one of the proponents of 'locking' the Murray stated: 'Utilise to the full the *unlimited* (my emphasis) supply of fresh water that flows through some of the richest land in South Australia.'[43] Reading between the lines of Linn's respondents as children, the river would have been seen as 'always there'. There is an ironic correlation with Siobhan McHugh's work on the abuse of the very limited supply of water in the Murray Darling system.

With the interview data collected in 2001, sixty-two years after the completion of the locks, Linn does not at any stage discuss the significance of the interview 'pool,' mostly first generation descendants of lock builders, whose recollections were of their childhoods. A child's view can be ignorant of the 'beneath the surface' tensions and struggles encountered by the adults in their lives. Their viewpoint/memories may be buffered by a protective shell. The conclusions drawn from these interviews may be different from the reality of the adults of the time: the workmen and the women who toiled to raise their families under harsh and extreme conditions. As Lowenstein says: 'Oral history will almost certainly give a too rosy view of the past.'[44] The respondents in this text saw their lives in the lock camps as positive and happy, with strong community connections. Oral history can involve the psychic struggle to compose a past with which people can live.[45] Maybe Linn's subjects were able with the benefit of time, to create a coherent story that made sense of hardship, a view that may not have been possible in the past.[46] In addition, projects such as this undertaken in a celebratory way after a reunion run the risk of distorting the past by assuming only good things. Failure and conflict can be muted or altogether unexplored.[47] It is also possible that current public debate about the Murray River's value may have heightened the interviewee's esteem of the river itself. After years of drought and interstate squabbling over riparian rights, people's concept of the river's role in their formative years may have become exaggerated. Shifts in public perception over time contribute to changes in individual memory. The past becomes part of the present[48] or perhaps vice versa. An example was Thomson's subject Farrell who 'recomposed' his memory as public rhetoric changed in relation to Anzac Day.[49]

McHugh's work has deeper sub-plots than the other two works. However, there may be elements of the artificiality Reeves, Sanders and Chisholm mentioned where interviewees who feel threatened may use silence, manipulation, adjustment or suppression of the past and alter their 'text.' It is important to recognize that the person 'told the story' and that texts both written and oral are constructions and to note the silences. It is valid to 'read' against other sources to place the comments in context.[50] McHugh was able to show that officials and growers often spoke 'off the record' about issues to do with Aboriginal rights, mal-treatment or sacred sites.[51] The most outstanding revelation in McHugh's work is however the greed that dominates the cotton industry whereby almost anything is permissible. 'You fall in love with the dollars,' remarked one grower.[52] As a result of this, a situation paramount to anarchy reigned at one period in relation to illegal water use in the Bourke region.[53] McHugh's use of oral testimony highlights these abuses and other sensitivities. 'Hearing' the words seems to add strength to the research. She has edited, cut and shaped the interviews[54] to highlight her contention that 'cotton is a disease' risking Australian environment and health.[55] According to Osterud, oral history is a simultaneously personal and political process and the reader is made aware of people's changing interpretations of the past as they come to terms with the present, in this case exploitation of a finite supply of water.[56] McHugh showed that 90% of cotton 'chippers' were Aboriginal peoples working in backbreaking conditions in extreme heat and living in impoverished 'Third World style' accommodation. 'It was the living conditions and the treatment. You were treated like convicts,' said Reg Byrnes.[57] This highlighted the dichotomy between the workers' poverty and the growers' wealth. Perks and Thomson tout the value of recovering silent voices.[58] McHugh gives voice to the cotton chippers and the Boggabri and Gunnedah residents whose children suffer mysterious medical conditions thought to be due to pesticide use.[59] These people may have gained therapeutic benefits and public affirmation from telling of their collective experiences previously ignored or silenced. At the same time, their story becomes a significant resource for political groups and emergent social movements.[60] Oral testimony is also used to show the irony of abuse of Indigenous people when it is their 'mother's land' being exploited for profit by white cotton growers. Pearl Davern said, 'That's our country…the cockie's just about stuffed up our country and our rivers and everything else making millions of dollars.'[61] Reeves et al also notice the minority groups; in this case they noted the lack of evidence about Chinese gold miners and women of the gold rush period in their study. These remain hidden histories, notably absent in the oral record.[62]

Conclusion

There are overlaps and differences between all three of these oral history works. All focus on rural life, but only McHugh and Reeves, Sanders and Chisholm significantly refer to the silences. Linn and Reeves et al, both sponsored works, spring from a community wanting to connect with its history. McHugh's work makes a unique contribution to the literature about water management and water resource development and in so doing, commands considerable standing in this field.[63] Here, a more recent past is recalled and a thorough review is made of what appears to be an unsustainable agricultural pursuit with little regard for the ecological consequences in the face of the enormous political clout of the cotton industry.[64] McHugh utilises the oral record to convincingly make a case for an essential review of water and pesticide usage in an environment under significant threat. Reeves, Sanders and Chisholm are the only ones in this group who provide thorough analysis of the oral history process

and utilise the useful tool of historical layers. Linn is able to re-create a lifestyle based on mutual trust and hope as lock builders' families, 'against the odds,' built and sustained lives in remote and harsh conditions, but provides no analysis of his methodology. Reeves et al and Linn retain loyalty to the orality of the interviews whereas McHugh is prepared to forge the boundaries. The oral history narrator not only recalls the past but also asserts his or her interpretation of that past.[65] In all three texts, the narrators have fleshed out sometimes scarce official records of working/living conditions in rural areas[66] and the participants are actually involved in creating meaning and relationships with the river(s), the land or the forest rather than passively recalling facts.[67] All these studies have made a valuable contribution to the oral history literature and to an appreciation of life, memory, and broader issues in rural areas.

Endnotes

1 Rob Linn, *Murray Water is Thicker than Blood, the stories of the families who made the River Murray's locks and barrages*, Openbook, Adelaide, 2001.

2 Siobhan McHugh, *Cottoning On: Stories of Australian Cotton-growing*, Hale and Ironmonger, Sydney, 1996.

3 Keir Reeves, E. Rebecca Sanders and Gordon Chisholm, 'Oral histories of a layered Landscape: The Rushworth oral history project,' in *Public History Review,* Vol. 14, 2007, p. 114.

4 Janis Wilton, 'The walls speak, don't they? Heritage places and contested memories: a case study,' in *Oral History Association of Australia Journal,* vol. 22, 2000, p. 22.

5 Donald Ritchie, 'Doing Oral History: a Practical Guide,' New York, 2003, p. 45, cited in Reeves et.al., *op.cit.*, p. 117.

6 http://www.sahistorians.org.au/register/list/index.shtml; accessed 28 May 2014.

7 Rob Linn, Personal email correspondence with author, April 6, 2009.

8 *ibid.*

9 Rob Linn, Personal email correspondence with author, March 16, 2009.

10 Linn, *op.cit.*, p. viii.

11 S. A. McHugh, 'The aerobic art of interviewing,' in *Asia Pacific Media Educator,* Issue 18, December 2007, p. 154, http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=apme, accessed 28 May 2014.

12 McHugh, *op.cit.,* p. viii.

13 Siobhan McHugh, Personal email correspondence, 22 March 2009.

14 Siobhan McHugh, 'History in the marketplace: on surviving as a freelance historian,' *Limina: History in Practice,* Vol. 7, 2001, p. 133.

15 Reeves et.al., *op.cit.*, p. 119.

16 Reeves et.al., *op.cit.*, pp. 114-116, 125.

17 *ibid., p. 119.*

18 *ibid*., pp. 114-127.

19 Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, (eds), *The Oral History Reader,* 2nd edn., Routledge, New York, 2006. p. 335.

20 Katherine Borland, 'That's not what I said: interpretive conflict in oral narrative research,' in *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd edn., Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 319.

21 Linn, *op.cit.*, frontispiece.

22 Richard Kingsford, Professor of Environmental Science, UNSW, 12/10/2008, testimonial letter 'Assessment of the rigour and standing of Cottoning On-stories of Australian cotton-growing, by S. McHugh (1996)' in <http://www.mchugh.org/books/cotton.html> accessed May 28, 2014.

23 Borland, *op.cit.*, p. 311.

24 *ibid*.

25 Reeves et.al., *op.cit.*, pp. 114, 116, 121

26 *ibid.,* p. 116.

27 *ibid.,* p. 115.

28 *ibid.,* p. 120.

29 *ibid.,* pp. 116-117.

30 *ibid.,* p. 122

31 *ibid.,* p. 125.

32 Linn, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

33 *ibid.,* p. 75.

34 Joanna Bornat, 'Two oral histories: valuing our differences,' *Oral History Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1993, p. 74.

35 Linn, *op.cit.*, p. 47.

36 Bornat, *op.cit.*, p. 95

37 McHugh, 'History in the marketplace,' *op.cit.*, p. 134.

38 McHugh, 'The aerobic art of interviewing,' *op.cit.*, pp. 153-154.

39 Jennifer Barrkman, 'Seeing more clearly: an investigation into engaging a reluctant family member in an oral history interview,' *Oral History Association of Australia Journal,* no. 27, 2005, p. 20.

40 Perks and Thompson, *op.cit.*, p. 447.

41 Siobhan McHugh, Personal email, March 22, 2009.

42 *ibid.*

43 Linn, *op.cit.*, p. 85.

44 Wendy Lowenstein, *Boots and All: An Oral History of Farming in Victoria,* Catherine Watson (ed), Collingwood, 1984, Foreword.

45 Perks and Thomson, *op.cit.,* p. 212.

46 *ibid.*, p. 212.

47 L. A. Jones, and N. G. Osterud, 'Breaking new ground: oral history and agricultural history,' in *Journal of American History,* vol. 76, no. 2, 1989, p. 553.

48 Perks and Thomson, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

49 Alistair Thompson, 'Anzac memories, Putting popular memory theory into practice in Australia,' in *The Oral History Reader,* 2nd edn., Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 250.

50 Dianne Bell, *Generations: Grandmothers, Mothers and Daughters*, McFee Gribble/Penguin, Fitzroy, 1987, p. 268.

51 McHugh, *Cottoning On, op.cit.*, p. 65.

52 *ibid.,* p. 97.

53 *ibid.,* pp. 95-97.

54 Studs Terkel with Tony Parker, 'Interviewing an Interviewer,' in *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd edn., Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 128.

55 McHugh, *Cottoning On, op.cit.,* p. 195.

56 Jones and Osterud, *op.cit.*, p. 563.

57 McHugh, *op.cit.*, pp. 61-65.

58 Perks and Thompson, *op.cit.,* p. 447.

59 McHugh, *op.cit.,* p. 158.

60 Perks and Thompson, *op.cit.*, pp. 448-449.

61 McHugh, *op.cit.,* p. 70.

62 Reeves et.al., *op.cit.*, p. 116.

63 Kingsford, *op.cit.*

64 David E Symon, 'Review of Cottoning On,' in *ASBS Newsletter,* no. 91, June 1997.

65 Perks and Thomson, *op.cit.,* p. ix.

66 Paul Thompson, *Voice of the Past,* 3rd edn., Opus Books, Oxford, 2000, pp. 83-85.

67 Perks and Thomson, *op.cit.*, p. 211.

Oral history as a key methodology in higher degree research in writing: issues and possibilities

Donna Lee Brien and Jill Adams

Abstract

'Memory is a resource beyond the reach of any library,' writes culinary historian Laura Schapiro in the foreword of her book on women and cooking in 1950s America. In historically based non-fiction projects such as Shapiro's, oral history can locate stories that add a compelling reality and immediacy to the work and provide materials that revise current beliefs about an era. This paper considers oral history as a key methodology in current higher degree research and thesis writing. Drawing on, and profiling, some representative projects in the field of creative writing, it shows that the findings from oral histories are valuable in thesis construction and writing, and are particularly suited to producing material for research and mainstream publication in both print and online forms. It also outlines some of the challenges and issues involved in using oral history as a research method in postgraduate theses in creative writing.

Introduction

'Memory is a resource beyond the reach of any library,' writes culinary historian Laura Schapiro in the foreword of her book on women and cooking in 1950s America. In historically based non-fiction projects such as Shapiro's, oral history can add to other forms of research such as quantitative and archival research and textual analysis. By providing access to a wide range of voices, experiences and opinions that may not be available in published or other sources, oral history can locate stories that add a compelling reality and immediacy to the work being conducted and, even, provide materials that provide contrary evidence to prevailing beliefs.

This paper considers oral history as a key methodology in current higher degree research and thesis writing. Drawing on, and profiling, some representative projects in the field of the authors' experience – creative writing – the following shows that the findings from oral histories are valuable in the research process, as well as the thesis construction and writing. It also provides evidence that oral history assists in producing works that are particularly suited to producing material for research and mainstream publication in both print and online forms. Alongside these positives, this paper also outlines some of the challenges and issues involved in using oral history as a research method in postgraduate theses in creative writing.

Theses in creative writing

Today, creative writing is a significant, and growing, discipline in Australian universities as well as in many countries overseas.[1] This growth and popularity is apparent in postgraduate as well as undergraduate levels of study, with postgraduate degrees available since the 1980s and all universities in Australia currently offering either named research higher degrees in creative writing or the possibility of such study in either named creative arts, or generic, Masters and doctoral-level programs.[2] Many students find such research higher degrees in creative writing attractive as their study involves research in two areas. The first is into the writing process, which is often very useful in terms of skill building and productivity, as well as the other research they need to conduct to provide material for their creative work. The thesis produced in such degrees comprise two linked components: a completed major piece of creative writing – usually a book-length work, script, screenplay or other significant piece of writing – plus a related, theoretically informed dissertation. These major works are, moreover, created with publication in mind, and *publishable standard* is often used in the examination guidelines for such as these.

This means that these creative theses do not follow the more traditional thesis requirements and chapter outline in terms of presentation, but instead, in most cases, aim to produce a publication-ready manuscript that the candidate can submit to a publisher or otherwise disseminate to the reading public. While many students in these programs produce works of fiction – novels, collections of short stories and poetry, and scripts and screenplays – an increasing number of theses in non-fiction have been produced since the late 1990s. These include theses about, and including

works of memoir, biography, essay collections, social and cultural histories and other historically-informed works. Many quality theses have been produced and books published from these programs, and include books that have been short listed for, and won, national awards and prizes.

One of the authors of this presentation, Donna Lee Brien, has been supervising creative writing theses in non-fiction areas since the late 1990s. These have included (or currently include) works of memoir, autobiography, biography, local history, family history, food writing, art writing, music writing and institutional histories. Many of these have a historical basis, and a number have included oral history interviews as a key component of their research methodologies.

These works can be quite personal, as when students write memoirs based on their own experience supported by oral history. I have, for instance, current students writing memoirs based on being the child of Holocaust survivors and being a late-discovery adoptee, and both are using oral histories as part of a series of various research methodologies. In these cases, oral histories are being gathered and used to check, verify and/or contrast with both their own memories as well as those of others available in published texts and the archival record. Another current student is using oral histories as one source of data in her work writing a history of a Sydney suburb, Woolloomooloo, where her family lived for four generations.

Andrew Stafford's *Pig City*, a history of Queensland popular music, written for his Masters degree (completed 2004) was also published by University of Queensland Press in 2004.[3] This was shortlisted in *The Age* Book of the Year Awards in 2004 and was so popular with readers that it was reprinted in 2006 and a new edition published in 2007. Professor Helen Klaebe, an active member of Oral History Australia and Oral History Queensland, has completed a series of research theses using oral history. In 2004, she produced a study of the Outward Bound organization as part of her Masters degree (completed 2004).[4] Her book, *Onward Bound: A 50 Year History of Outward Bound*, was published by the University of Queensland Press in 2005.[5]

Klaebe's doctoral thesis investigated using oral history to provide the material for digital storytelling, and outlined both the potential and problems with oral history as a research methodology in public history work. Her thesis found that the public historian, using oral history in a project which was seeking to gather individuals' stories of the place in which they have lived and worked, formed a number of important roles in such work. Klaebe found that oral history techniques can assist with blending 'a social and an archival history' and were especially useful when the archival history was lacking or insufficient. Her aim was also to shape and produce her material for public consumption, which she was extremely successful in doing. Her work on the Brisbane inner-city location, currently called the Kelvin Grove Urban Village precinct, resulted in a book length history of the area,[6] a series of digital stories that were displayed for a number of years in a public history museum-standard installation on site and online and a collection of oral histories.[7]

Other university-based projects that have used oral history in this way include Peter Mitchell's doctoral thesis on the ethics of memoir writing, which included a memoir of his career in the Australian immigration department. This resulted in the book, *Compasssionate Bastard*, published by Penguin Books in 2004.[8] Janene Carey's doctoral thesis into how to ethically tell the stories of palliative carers resulted in a dissertation on this subject, a set of guidelines for other authors and a book, *A Hospital Bed at Home* (2014).[9] This book detailed Carey's own story alongside those of a number of other care givers. Carey worked with these interviewees through various iterations of their narratives.

For her research towards a Masters in Oral History and Historical Memory Jillian Adams used oral histories of men who worked in Australia's tea and coffee trade in the post war period in Australia to challenge collective beliefs that Australia's coffee culture was the result of migration from Southern Europe after WWII. Her book *A Good Brew,* based on this work, was published in 2013.[10] Adams is using oral history in her current research for her PhD, which involves using cookbooks and material culture to challenge collective, nostalgic remembering of the 1950s in Australia, with the ultimate aim of writing a revisionist history of the post-war Australian housewife. In this study, Adams has collected oral histories of the women who used this domestically-inflected material culture from the 1950s, specifically discussing with her interviewees how they engaged with, and used, these cookbooks and other material at that time.

Excerpt from Creative non-fiction writing using oral history/story

As well as demonstrating how oral histories can be used in non-fiction the following short excerpt from 'Shortbread,' a creative non-fiction work in Jillian Adams' PhD shows the collaboration between interviewer and interviewee beyond the interview.

> Mum always made Shortbread. She was Scottish, or at least her father's father's father was. She wasn't sure where the recipe came from but she thought it must have come from her father's family: they were the Scottish

ones. Her father's mother was from Kinross in Scotland. Her father's family, the McDonalds, were from Talisker, on the Isle of Skye. Her mother, my grandmother, was no cook. She made hats and intelligent conversation, and we knew very little about her genealogy. The recipe was not from her mother's lineage.

The recipe mum used had been cut and pasted into a book of mostly handwritten recipes, and looked remarkably like it had come from *Mrs Drake's Home Cookery: Revised and Enlarged* by Miss Dorothy M. Giles. Her copy had disappeared from her kitchen about the same time she started to make more exotic cakes and biscuits, like Linzertorte, Pecan Squares and Chocolate Brownies from *The Silver Palate Cookbook*. I made a note to check it in the copy of *Mrs Drake's* that I had been given, and sure enough there it was, on the top of page 179 of the 13th Edition, 'Shortbread (large quantity — makes 8 Rounds' along with 'Stuffed Monkeys,' 'Nut Biscuits,' 'Bubble Bread' and Biscuit Mixture Suitable for Using in Biscuit Forcer.'[11]

Shortbread—large quantity—makes 8 rounds

1 lb butter, 8 oz castor sugar, 1 ½ lbs flour, 4 oz rice flour

Asked why her Shortbread was always so good, she answered, without pausing to think, 'The secret is to have the butter soft by letting it get to room temperature.'

'That's why it was always easier to make it in the summer.'

In my memory, it was always hot in the house when Mum did her Christmas Shortbread baking. Mum always filled the tins with Shortbread for Christmas, making it in rounds, batches of it always baked in the wood stove on hot days leading up to Christmas. Over summer, mum only lit the wood stove if she had to and so we ate salads, passionfruit jelly, or roasts cooked in the Sunbeam frypan until a cool change blew in. Shortbread making required the stove and so it was lit early in the morning and allowed to go out when the last batch was baked. The heat in the kitchen tried hard to reduce everything to liquid, but the soft hot butter held its shape and the balls of unbaked dough were covered with just a buttery sheen. Beads of perspiration gathered on Mum's face and arms and she would stop for a moment to wipe them away with the corner of her apron.

She sifted the plain flour and rice flour into a big bowl, added the sugar then rubbed in the soft butter. Then she plonked it on to her marble slab and gathered the mass together in a big lump working it into a smooth ball. Her cooking was tactile. Once worked into a ball, she patted it gently, as you do a baby's bottom. 'You knead it until it comes into a lovely soft smooth lump,' she said. 'The secret is the butter. It has to be good butter and soft. The trick is the kneading.' Then she cut it into sections and shaped each one into a smaller ball — her hands, still skillful, confident and strong.

Training historians to conduct meaningful oral history research

This work of using oral histories in theses and other academic contexts is not, however, without its challenges. In her role as President of Oral History Victoria, Jillian Adams receives many enquiries from people wishing to conduct oral histories for various reasons. Many have both no idea where to start or where to go to gain skills and knowledge in this area. In a recent email, one such enquiry described the oral history interviewing task as: 'you know – I ask a question, or provide a prompt, and the person responds, and so on.'[12] This lack of understanding begs the question, 'What training is being provided for people who wish to conduct oral history interviews who are not members of the various oral history organisations?'

Oral History Australia has no official position on this. Each State in Australia conducts its own training and posts information for would-be oral historians on its website. A survey of state training conducted in 2013 showed vast variations in training provided by each State. A number of Australian Universities offer oral history as a unit in undergraduate history – University of New England, Monash, Deakin and University South Australia – for instance, but students outside the discipline of history or social studies and/or who enter postgraduate programs with other qualifications, do not have ready access to oral history training.

The description of an oral history interview cited above came from a student completing a Graduate Diploma of Traffic Safety and her query was actually not about how to go about conducting the interview but how to transcribe it:

> I am having trouble in tracking down an appropriate or acceptable format, Uni was unhelpful too, hence seeking the expertise of the SLV. The librarian has pointed me to a couple of books in their collection, and while I will follow up on this, I wanted to ask you about an acceptable format ... is there a 'standard,' policy or protocol for a written transcription? Would it be at all possible for you to either point

> me in the right direction, or perhaps to provide a sample of a format I could use as a template?
>
> The assignment relates to workplace health promotion. As the interviewer I am seeking the employee's awareness of their workplace promotion of health programs or activities without asking leading questions. The most difficult part of the assignment is figuring out what it should look like when transcribed.[13]

In this case, the writer's supervisor apparently told her, with no understanding of the complexities of the process that this student was undertaking: 'transcription must be exactly what is said (complete with interviewer questions/prompts, and interviewee responses including pauses, ums, and aahs, etc.' In direct opposition to this advice, oral historian Francis Good writes in relation to transcription:

> Although not universally practiced, transcription of oral history interviews is a key element of the enterprise more often than not. … Opinions vary, not only on how it should be done but also on its worth and significance, and even if it should be attempted at all.[14]

There are many ways of transcribing voice to text. Some authors intervene and selectively edit, change words, order and syntax to remove redundancy and to make the text readable. Punctuation is often challenging, as is capturing the nuances of tone and intonation, rhythm and expression of emotion. Phrasing and the appearance of the text on the page too must all be considered by the sensitive, skilled transcriber. In the end, Good states, 'all readers of transcription, indeed users of any kind of human action, need to comprehend the extent to which we [they] are consuming a constructed artifact.'[15] Projects need to bear in mind the kinds of skills necessary when deciding how to transcribe an oral history interview.[16]

With just a small amount of advice – this student sent a reply, which reveals she understood the complexity of this task:

> Yes, it is far more subjective than I had considered. My interviewee, it turns out, speaks as though one long sentence, and I have had an interesting time in trying to find a pattern or rhythm so I can insert some punctuation to break it down into more manageable chunks for the reader, and still retain the context. Originally I transcribed the lot, but in review have taken out some of his mannerisms ... they don't add anything. Recording someone speaking certainly is revealing. However, the interviewee was delighted with the process, and was happy to be involved. He has even asked to revisit it in ten years' time when hopefully we are all a bit wiser about life![17]

Obtaining ethics approval to conduct such research

Another challenge is regarding the ethics approval system that operates in academic contexts. Oral history research relies on live participants and this creates perhaps the single most difficult hurdle for researchers in the academy – gaining the requisite approval of university ethics committees for oral history projects. As leading academic in this area Alistair Thomson asserts, 'oral historians speak to their sources, and this active human relationship transforms the practice of history in several ways. The narrator not only recalls the past, but asserts his or her interpretation on that past.'[18]

The Nuremberg Code established in 1948 made it clear that the benefits of research must outweigh the risks and that human subjects should give informed consent to any research where they were directly involved.[19] This was the result of an American military tribunal conducted in 1946 that heard criminal proceedings against German physicians and administrators who conducted medical experiments on thousands of concentration camp prisoners – many of whom died or were permanently crippled – without their consent. It appears that tertiary institutions are locked in the belief that any experimentation that requires a human subject is scientific experimentation – as was the case in those Second World War Prisoner of war camps. Even when it is acknowledged that such research with humans may come under the so-called 'low risk' category, which includes most interviews conducted in creative arts research, ethics committees ask that interviewees are included anonymously. Yet those contributing to such research by contributing their oral histories often want, or even require, that their names are attached to their stories.

Jillian Adams' own case is an example of one of the frustrations and lack of support and understanding of the process involved in using oral history as part of the research for a thesis, and is described in here her own words.

> In 2012 I applied for ethics approval from my university for the above work to conduct oral history interviews with women on how they engaged with and used material culture from the 1950s. Basically, I wanted to ask women about cooking, and how they used cookbooks, food articles in magazines and newspapers, other such material. Initially, I filled in a low risk ethics approval application believing my work to be firmly in that category. Even this was

a lengthy process, but I was confident I would be given approval as the previous year I had applied and been successful the first time, but at a different university. I also thought obvious expertise in oral history – my role as National and Victorian State president of Oral History Australia – would assist.

Alas, because I wanted to include the names of the women I spoke to in my thesis, my application was turned down and I was redirected to complete a high-risk application form. The high-risk application was far more complex and much of the information it asked was completely irrelevant to my study. But I duly filled it in and submitted it to the ethics committee. Once again my application was unsuccessful, and this time there were comments regarding substantiating the oral history methodology, at which time it was clear that the committee were unfamiliar with this. This was also despite this methodology being clearly stated in my application and proposal document. Anecdotal evidence suggests that others have had similar difficulties at other universities.

However the question that must be asked here is whether or not the ethics process actually covers the main ethical issues that arise in the process of conducting an oral history interview. In my case I was told many months after conducting a series of interviews with the son of my research interest, that the interview process had brought back painful memories for him of abandonment by his mother. I was aware during the interview process that he had not known his mother and that for most of his childhood she had been absent from his life. My research interest had lived and worked in New York and her son lived in England with his father, visiting his mother on holidays. In her final months and gravely ill, she had returned to England and lived close to her son and his family. He told me that when she had died, his one wish was that he had spent more time with her during her last few weeks. Thinking that she was indomitable, he was unaware of the degree of her illness and the short time she had left.

In the months after the interview, my interviewee became very ill with Shingles and was hospitalized for over a month. To this day I wonder if our interview and his remembering was the cause of his illness. His partner told me of his downward spin, and sadness after I left with my tape recorder and his memories.

Although we are asked when filling out the ethics forms, to demonstrate how we will deal with any fall-out, no form or administrative process can help either interviewer –dealing with the pain they have caused – or interviewee – dealing with the pain of remembering.

Conclusion: ways forward

It is notable and important that oral history is being used in the tertiary education sector to enrich research projects. Used in this way, oral histories and recordings are not only produced for both others to use, they can also inform wonderful publications for general and specialist readers. Although using oral histories in this way is not without its challenges, this also provides a range of opportunities which have been discussed above.

With oral history now increasingly used in research across many disciplines it is time for tertiary institutions to look beyond scientific research as the only model for research that involves human participants. We are not here arguing for an easier ethics approval process, just one that appreciates the many ways in which interviews are conducted, and used, and that understands the real risks to interviewees (and interviewers). Universities should also be aware of the expertise they have in the field of oral history. 'Wendy' for example was studying at the institution where Professor Helen Klaebe works alongside other well-known oral historians. It is, therefore, the duty of each university to appreciate the skills and expertise within their realms, to promote training across disciplines and faculties, and to ensure that students are well prepared when they use oral history interviews as part of their research.

Oral History Australia advocates consent but more importantly advises all interviewers to act to preserve the rights and responsibilities of the different parties involved and to refuse to work in any other way. The main recommendation is that interviews should be conducted 'with objectivity, honesty and integrity' and that 'every interview' is treated 'as a confidential conversation until an interviewee gives the right to share information through an agreement.' It also recommends that 'interviewees are given the opportunity to review, correct and/or withdraw material.'

Alongside the expertise and training available both in, and outside, Oral History Australia provides a solid basis for such projects to enrich research and its foundational contribution to knowledge, produce work of a publishable level that is of interest and value to a reading public and, by following the most ethical and best practice guidelines for such work, contribute to the advancement of oral history practice and knowledge in Australia.[20]

We advocate that, where oral histories are being used, all academic institutions look to their internal resources, as well as that of OHA Inc. to offer appropriate training and further develop their expertise base and interest in oral history as a research methodology and as a basis for creative fiction and non-fiction work.

(Endnotes)

1 Donna Lee Brien, Marcelle Freiman, Jeri Kroll and Jen Webb, 'The Australian Association of Writing programs,' in *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2011, pp. 238-263.

2 Jen Webb, Donna Lee Brien & Sandra Burr, *Doctoral Examination in the Creative Arts*: *Process, Practices and Standards*, Final Report, Office of Learning and Teaching, Canberra, 2013.

3 Andrew Stafford, *Pig City*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 2004.

4 Helen Klaebe, 'Creatively Writing Historical Non Fiction,' Masters Thesis, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, 2004.

5 Helen Klaebe, *Onward Bound: The First Fifty Years of Outward Bound Australia,* Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, 2004.

6 *ibid.*

7 Helen Klaebe, *KGUV Sharing Stories* [website], Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, 2005, http://www.kgurbanvillage.com.au/sharing.

8 Peter Mitchell, *Compassionate Bastard*, Penguin Books, Melbourne, 2011.

9 Janene Carey, *A Hospital Bed at Home*, Tablelands Press, Armidale, 2014.

10 Jillian Adams, *A Good Brew: A History of H.A. Bennett and Sons and Tea and Coffee in Australia,* H.A.Bennett and Sons, Melbourne, 2013.

11 Dorothy M Giles, *Mrs Drake's Home Cookery*, (Revised and Enlarged by Miss Dorothy M. Giles), 13th edn., c1945, p. 179.

12 Email to president of Oral History Australia (Victorian Branch), 'Wendy' 29 April 2014.

13 *ibid.*

14 Frances Good, Frances (2006) 'Voice, Ear and Text: Words, Meaning and Transcription,' in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader,* 2nd edn., Routledge, London and New York, 2006, p. 362.

15 *ibid*, p. 370.

16 *ibid*. p. 371.

17 Email to president of Oral History Australia (Victorian Branch), 'Wendy,' 4 May 2014.

18 Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader,* 2nd edn., Routledge, London and New York, 2006, p. ix.

19 http://ors.umkc.edu/research-compliance-%28iacuc-ibc-irb-rsc%29/institutional-review-board-%28irb%29/history-of-research-ethics accessed 20 May 2014.

20 Oral history Australia 'Guidelines of ethical practice.' http://www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au/page/guidelines_of_ethical_practice.html, accessed 20 May 2014.

Accredited training: enhancing the prominence of oral history in Australia

Elaine Rabbitt

Abstract

How can oral history practitioners enhance the prominence of oral history in Australia?

Why should community oral historians and others undertake nationally accredited oral history training and be qualified in their field?

The purpose of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it aims to present a step-by-step process on how the newly accredited oral history unit 'Record and Document Community History' can be taught around Australia by members of Oral History Australia.

How to get the qualifications required to deliver the training, including a Certificate 1V in training and assessment and the procedure to gain recognition of prior learning will be clarified.

Secondly, the necessity of having to partner with a registered training organisation scoped to issue the nationally recognised certificate will be explained.

This information will then be used to encourage discussion on why gaining accreditation and being qualified can enhance the prominence of oral history in Australia.

Introduction

The development of a nationally recognised oral history training course is a means of ensuring that oral historians have the opportunity to gain a qualification that is recognised around Australia. The idea of developing an accredited training course is not new. Members of Oral History Australia (OHAA) have been discussing the notion for years and an accredited oral history training course was developed and delivered in Western Australia (WA) in 2013.

This paper describes how the inaugural course, now ready to be rolled out nationally, was developed and delivered in Broome, WA. The accredited course is distinctive, as on completion of the course, newly trained oral historians gain a qualification: AHCILM404A Record and Document Community History. This unit of competency is nationally recognised under the Australian Quality Framework.[1]

With the support of Oral History Association of Australia, Western Australia (OHAA-WA), as a remote committee member I have developed the oral history training package, drawn from the wealth of oral history teaching materials available in Australia and overseas.

The pilot course

The inaugural accredited course commenced in Broome with a diverse group of participants, all wanting to learn how to record and document community history. They came with different levels of expertise and skill levels including researchers from Notre Dame University and Environs Kimberley, students studying museum and media studies, community organisations and staff from Broome Public Library.

The oral history course can be tailored to meet the requirements of individual organisations and can be delivered throughout Australia. Course costs depend on the delivery location and are fee for service.

From the Left Front – Kylie Weatherall, Elaine Rabbitt, Jody Neindorf, Anna Dwyer, Larissa Searle
From the Left Rear- Cassie Rahman, Ian Mclean, Bart Pigram, Kevin George, Vanessa Poelina, Arthur Hunter
Written permission has been received from those in this photo.

Background to the course accreditation

The idea of developing such a course was mooted at the National Oral History Association Conference in Launceston, Tasmania in 2009 and expressions of interest were invited. This was the conference where presentations included an overview of oral history in Australian Universities[2] and Carol McKirkdy (New South Wales) delivered a paper on the oral history training for her students at TAFE, an Australian government institution providing education and training.[3]

Carol and I, both qualified with a Certificate 1V in training and assessment, met later in 2009 to discuss the possibilities of developing an accredited oral history course. We conducted a search of existing training packages to investigate the existence of any units that could be transferred to an oral history training package. For example we checked Media Studies interviewing units and the Conservation and Land Management interpreting culture units.

We brain stormed a list of possible units that could form an accredited oral history course. The next step was to explore the level of support for the proposal from each state. In 2011, I contacted each state association to learn what oral history courses are being delivered around the Nation and researched offerings from Australian universities. The responses varied from state to state and across universities. The content and depth of training differs from group to group as does the length and subject matter of training workshops. The aim then was to develop these resources into an accredited training course in oral history for the broader community formally recognising the complexity of skills involved.

This process is referred to as drilling down on the curriculum: 'whether launching a new program or overhauling an existing one, many associations conduct a "feasibility study" to canvass members and gauge their interests and needs. Their feedback should inform the curriculum.'[4]

At the 2011 OHAA National conference in Melbourne I presented a paper called: *Towards a new curriculum.*[5]

In that paper I advocated it was timely to develop a nationally recognised certificate in oral history, teaching people the basics of how to do oral history. I promoted the idea of accreditation through the Vocational and Educational Training (VET) sector, under the regulations of the newly implemented National Vocation Education and Training Regulator.

Examples were provided of the type of oral history materials and resources that have already been developed and the steps involved in working towards a new oral history curriculum were presented. I explained the benefits from developing a nationally recognised oral history training course: a means of ensuring that nationally we maintain a professional level of training and an opportunity for oral historians to gain a qualification recognised around Australia. It was suggested that we develop a course at Certificate III level. I also clarified that a nationally accredited course had to be delivered under the auspice of a public or private registered training organisation (RTO) and that trainers of a nationally recognised qualification require a Certificate IV in training and assessment. The response was mixed. More than 60 people listened to that paper and a rather vigorous question and answer activity ensued. It was decided to form the OHAA Training Working Group.

Not surprisingly, several factors hindered the Working Group's momentum; distance, and volunteers with multiple projects and commitments. However for me, the challenge of developing the training course took precedence, as a component of my job is to set up and manage the delivery of accredited training courses.

After much reflection and a further review of existing training packages and units offered I worked on the course content for Record and Document Community History. This is the only unit of competency in the vast range of training packages within Australia that incorporates oral history training. The Certificate IV unit is part of the Conservation and Land Management Training Package.

In December 2012 I sent OHAA-WA a draft proposal to trial teaching the accredited unit AHCILM404A Record and Document Community History through Djaringo RTO in Broome. Djaringo is a nationally registered training provider no. 5092.[6]

The training proposal included a participant handbook and student assessment workbook with references and acknowledgements. I received a positive response from OHAA-WA and in February 2013 sent an application to the Australian Government's national accreditation authority, the Australian Skills Quality Association (ASQA). To apply, or add a unit to scope, the RTO has to comply with a rigorous process of evaluation by submitting a sequence of supporting evidence and pay an application fee.[7]

In September 2013, I presented another conference paper at the OHAA biennial national conference in Adelaide, *Connecting Community: Oral History Training and Education.* In that presentation I promoted the newly accredited oral history course piloted in Broome, Western Australia. I also proposed course accreditation as a catalyst to connect community, to build professional relationships and advance historical education for all generations.[8]

Record and document community history

As a result of many discussions, over several years, the accredited course came to fruition. The course is based on the unit of competency: AHCILM404A Record and Document Community History. In Australia the performance criteria and standards for each unit of competency are determined by the Industry Skills Councils.[9]

The following is a description of the unit, taken from 'training.gov.au,' which is the official National Register on VET in Australia and is the authoritative source of information on training packages, qualifications, accredited courses, units of competency, skill sets and Registered Training Organisations.[10]

This unit covers recording and documenting community history and defines the standard required to:

- Prepare for interviews and group sessions
- Conduct both individual and group sessions to elicit a wide range of information (if applicable)
- Take notes and details of conversations for future reference and to source supporting information
- Transcribe and edit information
- Access supporting documentation where possible
- Store recorded media and transcripts to maintain recording quality, accuracy, security and privacy requirements.

Application of the unit

This unit applies to those who wish to record community history using the medium of oral history. A high level of cultural awareness and the need to observe cultural protocols are important parts of the process. For Indigenous contexts, the delivery and assessment against this unit must comply with community protocols and guidelines, and be supported by elders and custodians of country.[11] This is an important component of the course.

Competency based training

Within this unit, levels of skills and knowledge are defined and students must gain competency to pass the unit. The training delivery and assessment is known as competency based training. Competency based training recognises that individuals learn new information and skills at different rates and that they can acquire these in diverse ways. Students can achieve the required competencies by studying on campus, by working in a job, or by a combination of study and employment experiences.[12]

The assessment process and instruments will integrate the competencies in a holistic manner that reflects the incorporation of all of the competencies to undertake an oral history interview. Successful participants will be issued with a Statement of Attainment (SoA).

The following is the detailed performance criteria set by the Industry Skills Council:

AHCILM404A Element	**Record and Document Community History Performance Criteria**
1. Prepare for interviews and group sessions	1.1. Topic and events in research are identified according to enterprise guidelines. 1.2. People who may be able to provide information on topic and events (narrators) are identified according to enterprise procedures and cultural protocols. 1.3. Process of individual and/or group sessions with narrators is developed according to enterprise requirements, cultural protocols and topic and events to be covered. 1.4. Basic questions for interviews with narrators are developed and checked according to enterprise procedures, cultural protocols and best practice. 1.5. Equipment, locations and other resources are obtained and checked according to enterprise guidelines. 1.6. Selected narrators are invited according to enterprise procedures and prior arrangements.
2. Conduct interviews	2.1. Oral history process is explained to narrators to obtain their consent to record and use information provided. 2.2. Recording equipment is set up and tested for operation. 2.3. Recording media is uniquely identified for later reference according to enterprise procedures. 2.4. Basic questions are used to initiate the interview.

AHCILM404A Element	Record and Document Community History Performance Criteria
	2.5. Notes are taken to identify supplementary questions and to support recording media. addressed at the end of this box2.6. Interview process is managed to obtain expected and unexpected information, including memories of incidents. 2.7. Narrator is supported to express memories and opinions in an uncritical and positive setting. 2.8. Interviewer provides positive feedback on the narrator's assistance, in line with enterprise procedures and cultural protocols. 2.9. Interviewer manages the environment and distractions to maintain a positive response from the narrator. 2.10. Session lengths are managed to avoid tiring narrators and interviewer.
3. Conduct group sessions	3.1. Oral history process is explained to group of narrators to obtain their consent to record and use information provided. 3.2. Recording equipment is set up and tested for operation to cover all group members. 3.3. Recording media and members' voices are uniquely identified for later reference according to enterprise procedures. 3.4. Basic questions are used to initiate the group session. 3.5. Interaction between narrators and interviewer is managed to maintain flow of information from all narrators. 3.6. Notes are taken to identify supplementary questions and to support recording media. 3.7. Group discussion process is managed to obtain expected and unexpected information, including memories of incidents. 3.8. Narrators are supported to express memories and opinions in an uncritical and positive setting, including identification of different aspects of one incident. 3.9. Interviewer manages the environment, group interactions and distractions to maintain a positive response from the group. 3.10. Interviewer provides positive feedback on the narrators' assistance, in line with enterprise procedures and cultural protocols. 3.11. Session lengths are managed to avoid tiring narrators and interviewer.
4. Transcribe and edit information	4.1. Recorded media and transcripts are handled to maintain recording quality and accuracy, and security and privacy requirements, according to enterprise procedures. 4.2. Interviews and/or group sessions are transcribed to provide a draft transcription according to enterprise procedures and agreement(s) with narrator(s). 4.3. Draft written and/or oral transcripts are provided to narrator(s) for editing according to enterprise procedures and agreement(s) with narrator(s). 4.4. Editing is completed according to narrator(s) wishes. 4.5. Information on narrator(s) doubts/hesitancy on certain facts, and conflicting information between interviews is recorded separately from transcripts and managed according to enterprise procedures and cultural protocols.
5. Store records	5.1. Recorded media and transcripts are stored to maintain recording quality and accuracy, and security and privacy requirements, according to enterprise procedures. 5.2. Access to records is controlled according to the narrator(s) wishes.[13]

The unit elements and performance criteria have been set by the Industry Skills Council. Oral History Australia and I do not recommend interviewing in group sessions, nor taking notes during an interview. The reasons why are explained in the course.

The RTO application to become authorised to teach

As mentioned the RTO application to become authorised to teach a unit of competency such as Record and Document Community History must include comprehensive supporting evidence.
This evidence covers:

- financial viability and ownership of the RTO,
- the history of the RTO,
- current scope and operating context,
- proposed delivery location, mode of delivery and supporting documentation.

The supporting documentation requires:

- training and assessment strategies which define the RTO's target client group/s and describe how it will deliver the training product/s to meet client needs,
- demonstrating how each strategy has been developed through effective
- consultation with industry; demonstrating, using the staff matrix template, how each proposed trainer/assessor possesses all relevant vocational competencies at least to the level of the training or assessment to be delivered
- listing all physical resources and equipment that are accessible at each proposed delivery venue [Ref: SNR 15.3]
- identifying the range and format of all delivery and assessment methodologies and resources/ tools to be used [Ref: SNR 15.2,15.3 & 15.5]
- describing how assessment processes, tools and judgements have been and will continue to be systematically validated [Ref: SNR 15.5].
- providing a complete set of assessment tools, including student instructions and assessor guides, to gather evidence and conduct assessment of all knowledge and skill requirements of one (1) unit of competency (per qualification, course, skill set or unit) [Ref: SNR 15.3 & 15.5].[14]

The course curriculum

In April 2013, Djaringo RTO received notification that ASQA approved the registration of the unit AHCILM404A Record and Document Community History. This course is now available to be taught Australia wide. It comprises three workshops with assessments to be completed:

Workshop 1: Introduction to Oral History and getting started

What is oral history?

Preparing for the interview

Guidelines for ethical practice

Workshop 2: Recording stories and using the recorder

The interview and types of questions to ask

Practise recording

Concluding the interview

Workshop 3: After the interview - reflections

Storing the interview

Using the information

Summaries, transcriptions

Practical tasks to be completed to gain the qualification include:

- Complete assessment workbook containing five activities including answering questions re ethical practice
- Write letter of invitation and informed consent to suit your project
- Complete an interview
- Keep a reflective journal to evaluate the interview context

Course Costs

Course costs will be determined by the organisation hosting the training.

Certification

Trainees or participants who complete the three workshops, an interview and their assessment workbooks will be awarded their certificate issued by Djaringo RTO no: 50292.[15]

'Recognition of prior learning' (RPL)

If you have completed other oral history courses, workshops or interviews you can apply for 'recognition of prior learning' (RPL). RPL is a way of using your existing skills, knowledge and experience to gain your formal qualification. To be awarded RPL and your certificate you have to meet the performance criteria for the unit of competency AHCILM404A Record and Document Community History.

The cost to gain RPL is $180, with no GST applicable. NSW oral historian Carol McKirkby has completed her RPL and has received her certificate. She commented:

> The SoA means a great deal to me because it recognises my capability in the vocational area of oral history. I have lots of qualifications including a Masters degree in a different field of expertise and a three year fulltime diploma in teaching high school history, and I have a lot of experience in working in the field of oral history. But it always troubled me that I did not have a specific nationally recognised qualification in oral history.
>
> I've done many excellent short non-accredited courses, including those offered by Oral History NSW, but as someone who works in the highly regulated vocational education sector (I'm a TAFE NSW teacher as well as an oral historian) I was constantly searching for a means of accredited recognition. This was a stumbling block for someone like me and I think it would be a similar situation for many of my oral history colleagues because I didn't want to spend a large amount of money doing another degree or post graduate qualification.
>
> I know many people working in the field of oral history who practise oral history in addition to a first profession. Also, as a highly qualified professional working in the dynamic education industry it is second nature for me to constantly up -skill my professional capability and currency. I apply exactly the same principles and process of continuous improvement, keeping up to date and expanding my knowledge base in oral history.[16]

Having your knowledge and expertise recognised professionally and gaining the certification is a stepping stone for further learning and possible employment opportunities to teach the accredited course.

Qualifications required to teach

A current Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is the qualification required to deliver accredited oral history training in Australia. A Diploma of Teaching or Bachelor of Education provides you with the skills to teach adults but does not give you the correct credentials to teach, train and assess within Australia's Vocational Education & Training (VET) sector.

The National Skills and Standards Council (NSSC) is responsible for determining the training and assessment competencies to be held by trainers and assessors in accordance with Standard 1.4a of the AQTF Essential Conditions and Standards for Initial and Continuing Registration and SNR 4.4 and 15.4 of the *Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations* as set out below.

The NSSC has determined that from 1 July 2013 a trainer must:

- hold the TAE40110 *Certificate IV in Training and Assessment* from the TAE10 Training and Assessment Training Package as a minimum qualification or be able to demonstrate equivalence of competencies; and
- be able to demonstrate vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered and assessed; and
- be able to demonstrate how they are continuing to develop their VET knowledge and skills as well as maintaining their industry currency and trainer/assessor competence.[17]

Study is involved

To graduate with a Certificate IV, TAE40110, 10 units of competency must be achieved.

There are 7 core units and 3 electives.

Core units

TAEASS401B Plan assessment activities and processes

TAEASS402B Assess competence

TAEASS403B Participate in assessment validation

TAEDEL401A Plan, organise and deliver group-based learning

TAEDEL402A Plan, organise and facilitate learning in the workplace

TAEDES401A Design and develop learning programs

TAEDES402A Use training packages and accredited courses to meet client needs

Elective units

The three elective units may be chosen according to your area of interest or expertise. They maybe units in assessment, delivery and facilitation, language, literacy and numeracy, training advisory services or other imported units. Further information on packaging rules and selecting units is available from the Australian government's website http://training.gov.au/Training/Details/TAE40110.[18]

Course snapshot

Prerequisites: Reasonable language, literacy and numeracy skills, basic computer skills
Delivery: Facilitated workshops, online delivery, distance based delivery
Professional: All trainers and assessors who are delivering and assessing Nationally Recognised Training are required to hold the TAE40110 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment
Accreditation: Nationally Accredited.[19]

Course Costs

Course costs are generally fee for service and vary across Australia. You may decide to study at a private RTO or a government RTO, commonly known as TAFE. In 2014 the full Certificate IV Training & Assessment may cost you around $2,000 or as little as $450, depending on RTO course fees and eligibility for student concession

Course Length

The course is vigorous. Depending on your level of commitment and expertise it is estimated the course will take you three months to complete if you can manage 12 hours study per week. The course is easier to complete if you are actually training people, rather than working in a simulated environment.

'Recognition of prior learning' (RPL)

RPL is available for the units of competency in the Certificate IV TAE. Similar to gaining RPL in the oral history course one has to meet the performance criteria for each unit of competency.

State Oral History Australia associations teaching the accredited oral history course

To teach the accredited oral history course themselves, the member states that form Oral History Australia will need to have members qualified to teach and then partner with an RTO. The RTO must be registered to issue nationally recognised qualifications and must be authorised to teach AHCILM404A Record and Document Community History, ie have it on their scope.

Australia has a highly regulated vocational education and training (VET) system. For someone new to the sector, there is a great deal of information to absorb that is filled with jargon. 'VET speak' is a language of its own. An easy-to-read guide that simplifies the system has been produced by the Australian Government's Department of Industry. *Skills@Work: Back 2 Basics* (5th edition) provides a starting point to help VET practitioners navigate a path through the maze.[20]

Conclusion

In this paper I have presented a step-by-step process on how the nationally accredited oral history unit Record and Document Community History can be taught around Australia by the state associations of Oral History Australia. I have explained how to get the qualifications required to deliver the training, including a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and the procedure to gain recognition of prior learning has been clarified. In addition, details of having to partner with a registered training organisation authorised to issue the nationally recognised certificate have been given.

This paper attempts to promote discussion on why community oral historians and others should consider undertaking nationally accredited oral history training and be qualified in their field. Competency based training allows for the same unit of competency to be taught around Australia and modified to suit the needs of individuals or groups. The Certificate IV qualification is a stand-alone qualification but could be used as a precursor to university studies where oral history theories are studied.

I contend that gaining accreditation and having one's skills formally recognised with a professional qualification can enhance the prominence of oral history in Australia. The key reason for having an accredited qualification is to ensure national recognition and consistency across Australia in our teaching practices. Using the Australian Quality Framework specifications, qualifications are developed that ensure standards are maintained.

If oral history Australia members from any state or territory would like advice on how to proceed please do not hesitate to contact me.

(Endnotes)

1 http://www.aqf.edu.au, viewed 5th June 2014.

2 Janis Wilton, 'Teaching Oral History in Australian Universities,' Panel presentation with Joanne Scott, Al Stein & Alistair Thomson at the *16th National Biennial Conference of the Oral History Association of Australia: Islands of Memory*, Launceston, Tasmania, September 2009.

3 Carol McKirkdy, 'The Sutherland TAFE Oral History Project,' Paper presented at *the 16th National Biennial Conference of the Oral History Association of Australia: Islands of Memory*, Launceston, Tasmania, September 2009.

4 Australian Society of Training and Development Incorporated (ASTDI), *5 steps for a training program Success*, June 2011.

5 Elaine Rabbitt, 'Towards a new curriculum: An accredited oral history course,' Paper presented at *the 17th National Biennial Conference of the Oral History Association of Australia: Communities of Memory*, Melbourne, Victoria, October 2011.

6 http://www.nirrumbuk.org.au/djaringo.htm, viewed 6th June 2014.

7 http://www.asqa.gov.au/verve/_resources/standards_for_continuing_registration.pdf, viewed 5th June 2014.

8 Elaine Rabbitt, 'Connecting Community: Oral History Training and Education,' Paper presented at *the 18th National Biennial Conference of the Oral History Association of Australia: She said, he said: reading, writing and recording history*, Adelaide, South Australia, September 2013.

9 http://www.isc.org.au viewed 29th July 2014

10 http://training.gov.au, viewed 5th June 2014.

11 http://training.gov.au/Training/Details/AHCILM404A, viewed 5th June 2014.

12 http://www.vta.vic.edu.au/?Name=VET_Introduction_to_the_Australian_Training_System, viewed 5th June 2014.

13 http://training.gov.au/Training/Details/AHCILM404A, viewed 5th June 2014.

14 http://www.asqa.gov.au/verve/_resources/standards_for_continuing_registration.pdf, viewed 5th June 2014.

15 Elaine Rabbit, 'Record and Document Community History: A nationally accredited oral history training course,' Djaringo Pty Ltd, Broome, Western Australia, February 2013.

16 Oral History Australia New South Wales, *Voiceprint 50,* Sydney, NSW, June 2014.

17 http://natese.gov.au/?a=62277, viewed 5th June 2014.

18 http://training.gov.au/Training/Details/TAE40110, viewed 5th June 2014.

19 http://www.pivot.edu.au/cert-iv-in-training-and-assessment, viewed 6th June 2014.

20 http://www.innovation.gov.au/skills/ResourcesAndPublications/Pages/Introduction.aspx, viewed 6th June 2104

Re-remembering the Bombing of Darwin

Valerie Bourke

[This paper has been peer-reviewed]

Abstract

How do veterans make sense of their war memories in a cultural milieu which offers a shifting, at times ambivalent, representation of their experience? This paper analyses the testimony of Second World War veteran survivors of the first deadly Japanese bombing raid on Darwin in February 1942. This analysis employs the paradigm of an active constructive memory model articulated through theories of the 'popular memory group.'[1] These veteran survivors make sense of this wartime experience by seeking psychological 'composure' between their personal experiences on the day of the bombing and the changing representation of this event in popular media during the post-war decades.[2] A further aspect of this research has been an examination of the success the veterans have had, via their 'agencies of articulation,' and the fortuitous evolution of a 'new nationalism,' in incorporating their own experiences of the bombing raid into the national Second World War narrative.[3] This analysis reveals the extent to which the present sculpts versions of the past and shows how the past is active in our present lives.

Remembering the Bombing of Darwin

> 'There are a lot of planes in the sky.' A couple of us went out and looked up and said, 'they're certainly not our planes, we haven't got that many!'
>
> And [then] we heard the bombs falling on the Harbour and on Darwin and we suddenly realised that it was a Japanese raid.[4]
>
> I heard a funny sort of noise, a roar, I looked up and saw white crosses in the sky but the first we knew they were Japanese was the firing of Ack Ack guns.[5]
>
> I looked up and there were all these planes, not just one or two but about twenty-seven, up very high, we wondered who they were.[6]

Thus Max Kenyon, Cyril Molyneux and Bill Foster describe the first inkling they had that the Second World War had reached Australian shores. At 9.58 am on Thursday 19 February 1942, just ten weeks after their attack on Pearl Harbor and four days after the fall of Singapore, more than 170 Japanese bombers and fighter planes arrived over Darwin. ' A huge number of planes, in perfect "V" formations flying with the sun behind them' destroyed the government buildings, the hospital, the commercial centre and a number of houses as well as wreaking terrible damage on the wharf area and harbour shipping.[7] ' They went for the ships in the harbour, gave them a pounding.'[8] ' Then the zeros came, they strafed the camp, very low, they were over us, one [pilot] turned around … he lent across and gave us a wave.'[9] In interviews veterans consistently corroborated the fact that there was no warning siren before the planes arrived;' sirens started when the bombs hit the ground.'[10] They also confirm that a second raid began just before midday when more than 50 bombers 'in immaculate formation concentrated an attack on the airport and RAAF base … The bombs came out like rain.'[11] By the time the all clear was sounded twenty minutes later, twenty-two ships were damaged or sinking and burning oil on the harbour created a pall of black smoke. The official casualty rate was at least 243 killed and 350 injured.[12]

Veteran testimony about what happened in the aftermath of the raids is less consistent. Colin Horn, newly recruited to the RAAF, described what he recalls happened next:

> When we saw half of Darwin going by and nobody was telling us what to do, that's when we decided to take what transport we had and get down to Adelaide River.[13]

This unruly retreat south by dazed civilians and some service personnel, infamously dubbed the 'Adelaide River Stakes', later coloured press reports in the Southern capitals.[14] However, Max Kenyon, also stationed at the RAAF base, remembers taking part in no such evacuation south after the raid; instead he had 'picked up the pieces and tried to resume our duties … we had to stay ... We had a job to do … [to] get things

going again.' Though Max does confirm that 'a lot of blokes deserted … it took a week to get everyone back again.'[15]

Throughout the raids the anti-aircraft detachment on the oval fired at the planes whilst servicemen fought back with rifles and machine guns. Ships guns maintained a fierce barrage at sea.[16] Official and non-official records reveal examples of bravery and selflessness among the civilians and service personnel on the day, in particular those who commandeered small craft and fought through the fiery oil cauldron of the harbour to rescue hundreds of sailors from the burning sinking ships. As the *Neptuna,* her hold full of depth charges, burned alongside the wreckage of the wharf, veteran survivor Walter Kys (who had seen the *Peary* going down 'by the stern and sailors jumping off'), gained the permission of his commanding officer to take 'out a skiff and pick up half a dozen or so [injured] … mostly Malays' who had jumped off the-about-to-explode ship.[17] Such courageous responses to the devastation and loss of life in the face of an anticipated invasion should have guaranteed the survivors a share in the legacy of gallantry and stoicism awarded to the heirs of Anzac and Kokoda.[18] Somehow, however, the tincture of cowardice, looting and retreat that tarnished accounts of the day, for decades after the war, made the Darwin survivors' bravery 'conditional.'

Contemporaneous reports

In the days and weeks after the raid official reports released to the public were crafted, on the one hand to give the enemy little cause for celebration, and on the other hand to stir the population to enlist their services to the war effort. The Australian public's first knowledge of the raids was furnished by newspaper reports the day after; these reports and subsequent newspaper articles published over the next month played down both the raid's effects and its extent.[19] Only seventeen of the at least two hundred and fifty deaths were reported.

Headlines in the major state dailies on the day after the raid show the numerous other tragic events competing for the public's attention. 'JAPANESE SUMATRA DRIVE ALONG COAST TO STRIKE JAVA,' 'DRASTIC POWERS TO MOBILISE ALL NATIONAL RESOURCES,' 'RANGOON DANGER NOW IN BURMA THRUST' and 'AUSTRALIANS IN BOMBED CONVOY' jostled with the Darwin raid report for space.[20] Coming as it did in the week that the supposedly unassailable Singapore, bulwark of the empire, was overrun, and the same day that the Bali airport fell to the Japanese, it is not surprising that the Darwin news was quickly swamped by even more alarming events.

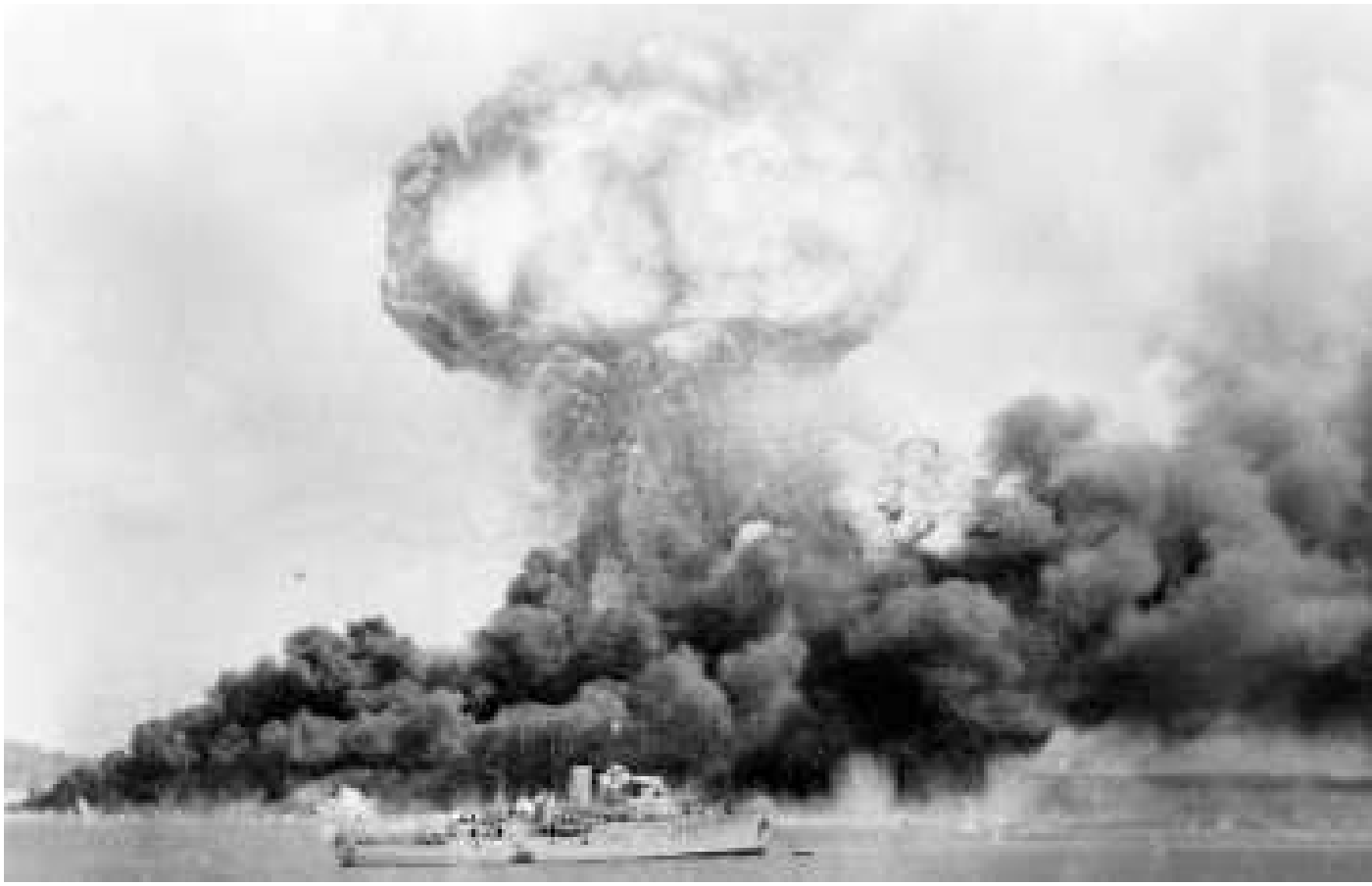
An ambivalent legacy

A Commission of Inquiry led by Justice Lowe was convened in Darwin twelve days after the raid. Its final report was not made public for three and a half years. On 5 October 1945, Prime Minister Chifley tabled the report in Federal Parliament.[21] Although this report commended many for their bravery on the day, it took a 'lessons to be learnt approach,' and mentioned failures of leadership which were blamed for the less than commendable post-raid behaviour among both civilian and service personnel. It was the mention of panic, widespread looting and fifth column activity that the southern newspapers picked up on.[22] Variations of the same theme appeared in the major capital city papers' front pages on 6 October. The Melbourne *Herald* trumpeted 'JUDGE ON DARWIN RAID PANIC-LEADERSHIP AND DELAYED WARNING BLAMED' with the sub-headlines, 'Rush from Town', and, 'Alien Stampede.' The *Sydney Morning Herald* featured, 'DARWIN PANIC AND UNPREPAREDNESS.' Similarly, the *Argus*, led with 'JAP FIFTH COLUMN ACTIVE BEFORE RAIDS ON DARWIN, Leadership Criticised in Commission Report.' The Melbourne paper elaborated with details of poor muster numbers at the RAAF base, even three days after the raid. Reporting tended to concentrate on the 'Adelaide River Stakes' rather than the commended persistence of the gunners and rescuers to whom Lowe had given more prominence. 'The town-that-ran-away' was the label that stuck.[23]

This adverse perception of the event was confirmed in 1955 by the 'day of shame' appellation dispensed by Sir Paul Hasluck, then the Federal Minister for Territories.[24] A 'best forgotten' attitude ensured knowledge of the raid was largely dropped from the prevailing public Second World War narrative for the next two decades.

Shifting national narratives

My review of both popular media representation and school text book inclusion of the Darwin bombing demonstrates this pattern of post-Second World War indifference and neglect followed by a gradual resurgence of interest throughout the eighties and nineties which accelerated to an explosion of publications in the first decade of the twenty-first century.[25] A similar pattern of neglect is found in an examination of general Australian histories and specific military histories.[26] Audio visual representations also show a similar trajectory of neglect of the raid followed by an increase in representations after the fiftieth anniversary in 1992. The National Film and Sound archive lists two productions for the 1990s, with many more frequent productions in the 2000s.[27] So, whilst the Ealing studios 1947 cattle-run epic, *The*



The explosion of an oil storage tank and clouds of smoke from other tanks, hit during the first Japanese air raid on Australia's mainland, at Darwin on February 19, 1942. In the foreground is HMAS Deloraine, which escaped damage.
Source: Australian War MemorialID No. 128108.

Overlanders, about retreat in the face of an imminent Japanese invasion, forsook the opportunity to show the Darwin raid, Baz Luhrmann's 2008 film, *Australia* includes an elaborate depiction of the bombing.[28]

The re-vivifying of Anzac mythology and remembrance

These changing patterns of cultural representation had their parallel in patterns of public sensibility about the history of the Second World War in general as well as the Darwin episode in particular. The years following the war saw first a decline in public interest in matters military. However as veterans aged, there was a renewal of interest in their wartime experiences. Just as individual identities are constructed and can be reconstructed, John Gillis has shown that national identities are constructed and reconstructed over time.[29] A number of researchers have mapped this post-war change in public identification with our military history. Graeme Davison, Ken Inglis and Jenny Macleod have written of the growing appeal of Anzac Day in the decades following the 1970s.[30]

During the 1980s this increasing inclusivity and popularity of Anzac Day was accompanied by an increasing interest in the personal experiences of veterans, especially First World War veterans.[31] The ageing of these First and Second World War veterans generated anxiety that the veterans' personal memories would soon be lost. Paula Hamilton notes the proliferation of these 'egocentric' histories.[32] These individual eye-witness accounts gained authenticity; and were used as the raw materials to build the wider collective memory. The interest in Gallipoli stories morphed into a more general interest in stories of Australians at war. Peter Stanley sees this proliferation of veteran memoirs as contributing to the revival of a 'modern nationalism' enabled by 'a combination of the war generation's retirement and desk-top publishing.'[33]

Jenny Macleod identifies the Australian War Memorial Research Centre's spear-heading of a federally-funded campaign to educate school children and the wider public about Gallipoli, as well as sponsoring the writing of military histories as factors along the path to Anzac re-invigoration.[34] However, it was Peter Weir's 1981 film *Gallipoli* to which Macleod attributes most influence over public perceptions and attitudes towards the Anzac story, via the distilling of those characteristics said to be intrinsically Australian.[35] Weir stated, 'the powerful communication of a national myth is the film's principal achievement.'[36] Marilyn Lake highlights the increasing role being played by another official agency, the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA), in funding this mythologizing and militarization of Australian history. She outlines the growing number and cost of commemorative programmes in the years after the

'Australia Remembers' programme marked the fiftieth anniversary of the ending of the Second World War in 1995.[37]

Responsive to this re-mythologizing and revivifying of the Anzac story, crowds at Anzac Day parades have continued to grow throughout the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century. This development of the Anzac legend into a prism through which all Australians' wartime experiences can be viewed and explained is well illustrated by the propagation of the 'Battle for Australia' story in the 1990s.

Birth of the 'Battle for Australia'

This story had its genesis as part of the plethora of state-sponsored commemorative events, battlefield pilgrimages and anniversaries initiated in the 1990s by the Department of Veteran's Affairs. The elaborate 1990 federally funded pilgrimage to Gallipoli by Prime Minister Bob Hawke, and Prime Minister Paul Keating's 1992 ceremony at the Kokoda Track, signalled the conjoining of these war events and their deployment to serve contemporary national political purposes. Keating recast the Pacific War as the 'Battle to save Australia' from Japanese invasion and tied this Battle for Australia firmly to the Anzac story, an Anzac story now freed of any connotations of fighting for empire.[38] Such annual repetitions of commemorations focus collective attention and enhance the event's status and its saliency for individual remembering.[39]

Private memories were also put at the service of this official Battle for Australia myth-making as veteran pilgrimages on fiftieth and sixtieth anniversaries concentrated interest on personal war stories. Stanley contends that, 'veterans' memoirs and newspaper articles based on them [have been] the most effective vectors for the spread of the invasion myth.'[40] The 1998 formation of the *Battle for Australia Commemoration National Council*, with its aim to honour all those who took part in the myriad actions that collectively comprised the 'Battle for Australia,' gave a new Asian-Pacific-centred and less imperial focus to war remembrance, more suited to the needs of a nation asserting a republican image.

The power of this evolving Battle for Australia nationalism is shown by the way popular media re-badged products to 'fit' this new 'cultural script.'[41] The 1966 penguin version of Douglas Lockwood's popular factual account of the Darwin bombing, reprinted throughout the1970s and 1980s, was titled *Australia's Pearl Harbour*. He cast the raid as Pearl Harbor 'without the treachery.' By 2005 a new edition, despite identical tables of content, is cast in a different tone. This version sports the title *Australia Under Attack* in large letters, and in much smaller print, *The bombing of Darwin-1942*. The newly added introduction stresses that Australia 'was now vulnerable to invasion.'[42] The book title has been remodelled to align with the emerging national narrative about the Battle for Australia. Not surprisingly the 1998 Chris Masters' documentary about Kokoda also aligned itself with this evolving Pacific War narrative with the title: *The Men Who Saved Australia*.[43]

In line with this Battle for Australia trope, the veteran survivors of the Darwin bombing formed the *Darwin Defenders* group in Melbourne in 1995. This group acted as an 'agency of articulation' for the Victorian Darwin veterans enabling them to make sufficient political noise during the late 1990s and early 2000s to secure a place for their stories within this newly evolving Pacific War narrative. The Darwin veterans, in the slip-stream of the Battle for Australia paradigm, now found their experiences foregrounded in the public consciousness. Official commemorative activities combined with interest in individual veteran testimony to create added public recognition which reached its zenith at the seventieth anniversary commemorations in February 2012. These ex-servicemen were no longer veteran survivors but Darwin defenders who had been in the forefront of the battle to save Australia. The Darwin veterans, many of whom had served only on Australian soil, could now frame their experiences so as to be compatible with the Anzac image of soldiering. To emphasize their integration with this new Battle for Australia story line, the Darwin survivors published an anthology of their stories under the title, *Darwin's Battle for Australia*.[44]

Speaking history: veterans remember the bombing

The veterans interviewed for this research all wanted to share their stories of that day. Two factors, working interactively, can explain this readiness to finally give their account. Firstly, they may now sense a more sympathetic and interested audience for their personal wartime recollections. Secondly, their stage of life may well be a factor influencing participation; they may perceive this interview to be their last chance to leave their families and the wider public their version of the event and what had gone wrong, a last chance to set the record straight.

The intersection of this shifting trajectory of popular representation about the bombing with private memory is explored here as these veterans create their own narratives. Among the complex array of factors that affect the nature of these accounts, are matters integral to the interview situation itself. As oral historian Alessandro Portelli reminds us, the nature of responses will depend on the interviewer's questions and the

resulting dialogue.[45] Furthermore, the interview situation sets up a dynamic relationship to which all parties bring their pre-conceptions and biases.[46] I came to the interview with a pre-conception about the influence that the public discourse relating to this event would have on the veteran's remembering. This guided the structure and nature of the interviews. The veterans in turn had their views of what I would want to hear. As the recordings were to be archived in the National War Memorial, the veterans were also aware that there was a wider audience, posterity. The very act of constructing and telling their story about the day of the bombing to a sympathetic audience moulded the outcome. This analysis of the veteran narratives has given consideration to these subjectivities, including the inter-subjective relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee.

This research was undertaken in the consciousness that the making of history involves presumptuously giving meaning to the words, written or spoken, of others. What follows is my interpretation of the accounts shared by these survivors of the bombing. In this analysis variability and inconsistency in versions of the same events are not viewed as reasons for scepticism but as indicators of the complexity of the forces shaping veteran testimony seventy years after the event.

Seeing it differently: 'Nobody was calling the shots'

Whilst I found consistencies in the respondents' accounts of the general sequence of events on the nineteenth, there was greater individual variation in the veterans' testimony about their reported reactions during the surprise attack. Rumours of desertion from the RAAF base and of few men being present at a roll call, even three days after the bombings, were confirmed by a number of the interviewees. The Lowe Commission Report mentioned these unauthorised evacuations from the RAAF base: 'On 23rd February, the muster showed 278 men missing.'[47] Three of the interviewees were RAAF veterans. Their responses relating to the actual events of the 19 February illustrate the teleological nature of the narratives formed in oral history interviews. In such interviews, respondents seek to construct accounts that make their behaviours appear understandable and plausible to the audience. Those details and events unconsciously selected for inclusion in the narrative lead the audience to, and justify, a certain preferred conclusion.[48]

Colin Horn was with the RAAF maintenance crew at the Darwin base on the 19 February. He was interviewed twice for this research. Asked to describe what had happened on the day, his responses list details that inexorably lead to the conclusion that it was best for the men at the base to make an evacuation south after the second heavy bombing raid had destroyed the planes and the surrounding buildings. Describing how difficult it had been to decide what to do, Colin says emphatically, 'the hierarchy got out before the raids' and stresses that they should have stayed: 'we who were left behind, we had no idea what to do.' Further he states, 'I was a sergeant, but I didn't know anything.'[49] This lack of leadership is again referred to in his second interview, 'nobody was calling the shots,' the 'officers had fled south … they left in aircraft before the raid.'[50] And later in that interview, 'nobody seemed in control, we were just lost souls, you felt hopeless, nobody was calling the shots.'[51] Therefore, when he tells the interviewer that he 'got on his bike,' and joined the civilians heading to Adelaide River after the second raid, this appears a sensible thing to do. He reiterates this point later in the interview, 'When we saw half of Darwin going by and nobody was telling us what to do, that's when we decided to take what transport we had and get down to Adelaide River.' It becomes clear that Colin left, on his own, before his comrades: 'I got ahead of them and was going to go down by myself."[52] Later, the others caught up with him in a truck and he "hung onto the truck on my bike.' Colin was a sergeant in a leadership position, so it was important for him to structure his narrative so that his actions are likely to be viewed as sensible and appropriate rather than as those of a quitter running away from the enemy.

Max Kenyon was a guard at the same RAAF base as Colin and had been asleep after night shift when the raid began. His narrative initially focuses on digging out the bodies of the six men in the trench that took a direct hit. He had stayed in a trench during the second raid and after the raid had 'picked up the pieces and tried to resume our duties.' Twenty-five minutes into the interview and after some prompting, Max responded to my speculation about an informal evacuation south. He said 'a few blokes cleared out, it was chaotic, hard to describe.' Later he said 'there were a few blokes missing, we didn't know whether they had been killed or cleared out.' But he is quick to reassert that he did not clear out, 'we had to stay, but a lot of blokes deserted … Some were caught up with and finished in the clink.' Those who went bush 'may have been maintenance crew.' It 'took a week to get everyone back again.' He stayed on and rebuilt the aerodrome at Darwin. Whilst he confirms that they were left to their own devices he does not need to construct a scenario that culminates inevitably in the need for an evacuation south. His account centres on staying at your post and carrying on. This commentary suggests he derived his self-esteem from fulfilment of his duties, 'we had a job to do.' He spoke of improvising to repair pipes, dig trenches and 'get things going again.'[53]

Kingsley Allen, a photographer with No. 13 squadron, was also at the RAAF base on the Nineteenth, working in the darkroom. He heard the air raid siren just as the

bombers were overhead and raced to put on his gas mask and get into a slit trench. Kinsley's narrative appears well rehearsed in that he had a set of ready anecdotes to support and enrich his explanation of the day's events. Although he had only been 18 years old at the time, he stressed that his training in the school army corps meant that he 'knew about tactics.' When the second raid alert sounded he realised it would concentrate on the aerodrome so he 'went into the bush' rather than into the slit trench. After the raid he returned to camp and asked a squadron leader what to do. He told Kingsley he was to 'go down the road a mile or two and gather there.' Kingsley spent the night in the bush and returned the next day. He then spoke of later regrouping in Daly Waters and later again a couple of them were moved to Hughes Air Base. He makes no comment about any unauthorised evacuation. Kingsley's narrative paints the picture of a very thoughtful and confident eighteen year old who handled the two air raids calmly; there is no sense of chaos, panic or lack of leadership in his account. There is no need to account for or even acknowledge a hasty retreat south. Kingsley went on to have a business career and became a member of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce. It is possible that his remembering of his orderly conduct is informed by his later station in life as a successful leader.[54]

Brave soldiers serve in distant lands: 'Darwin didn't sell newspapers'

The interviews reveal that one of the issues these veterans were dealing with was an underlying feeling that their service within Australia was not valued as highly as overseas military service. Not being sent overseas like their peers was perceived as a lesser service, not the true Anzac way. Unsolicited, respondents recounted their disappointment at being posted to Darwin rather than abroad. They mention that service within Australia had diminished their worth in the public's mind. Within the first minute of his narrative about enlistment and training, Ken Davison explained, 'to my disappointment my colleagues were posted to places like Singapore and faraway places, I found myself posted to the RAAF station at Laverton to work in the signals office there.' Later he was sent overland to Darwin. Further into the interview, Ken again mentioned that 'being in Australia was not as important.'[55] He had brothers in New Guinea about whom he believed his parents were more concerned.

George Warr's older brother had enlisted before him and was serving in the Middle East when George was sent to Darwin. He recalls that his parents had thought he was exaggerating when he told them that he had had '500 Japanese just over my head trying to kill me.'[56] The fact that newspaper reports had understated the size of the raid reinforced his view that his family worried about brother Robbie but not him. He was angry that he had not been sent to the Middle East.

> Anyone who had been in the Middle East, the papers blew it up … Darwin didn't sell newspapers. Our army was all overseas. People left at home were only chaff, didn't rate much beside overseas service.

In the third interview, George again spoke of his 'disappointment that he didn't go overseas,' and his admiration for the Anzacs as heroes, he said he 'felt he should go' because of the Anzacs and what these men he admired had done for their country. Fifty minutes into this last interview George reiterated his disappointment that he was not sent overseas.[57] 'Two corporals and three sappers had to go to Darwin."' The rest of the men were sent up to Rabaul.

The testimony of two respondents, Bill Foster and Cyril Molyneux, both members of the coastal artillery stationed at West Point, underscores this self-consciousness about remaining in Australia. Both were quick to mention that they had initially been sent overseas, north to Kavieng (in Papua New Guinea). 'We went further north, but we didn't stay there long; we were put back on the ship and sent to Darwin.'[58] Three times Bill mentioned that he had been initially sent to Kavieng. People 'thought not going overseas was soft.' To emphasise this, Bill mentioned that 'all the "L" battery, dropped off at Rabaul, were captured and all lost.'[59] Cyril also spoke of wanting 'to go to the Middle East but they had too many lieutenants so he was sent up to Kavieng.'[60] He also mentions that the other Special Force 'L', which but for the toss of a coin, he would have been in, were all captured or killed in Rabaul.[61]

Veteran unease about their Darwin service indicates the all-pervasive influence of a powerful shaping factor when veterans assess their wartime experience. This idea of a dominating template that shapes memory features in the work of a number of researchers.[62] Timothy Ashplant's research takes this explanation further when he notes that 'responses to war are formed in relation both to personal experience and to pre-existing narratives'. He speculates that 'pre-memories or templates,' that is, existing cultural narratives or myths, can become 'frames through which later conflicts are understood.'[63] As the interactive model of memory explains, incoming information is 'fitted' into existing neural schemas, even if this requires 'reworking' of the original schema.[64] Ashplant highlights the universal nature of the relationship between these internalised accepted representations of the past, especially past military events, and present preferred male warrior self-images.[65]

For the Darwin veterans such a powerful priming template for framing military remembering was provided by the Anzac stereotype of stoic endurance

and mateship at war.[66] Service overseas and travel to faraway places became part of this Anzac model of soldierly behaviour from its earliest incarnation. As Daley states, 'Gallipoli is just more alluring because of its mournful narrative of sacrifice overseas.'[67] The Anzac ideal privileges overseas service. The exclusion from the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) of returned soldiers who had not seen 'Active Service' overseas, on its formation in 1916, emphasised this aspect of Anzac mythology. So integral was this overseas service component of the Anzac model of a warrior that it remained part of the eligibility criteria for RSSILA (later RSL) membership until 1983.[68] Not serving overseas relegated soldiers who had volunteered to the same status as conscripts who were permitted to serve only on the Australian mainland and her territories.[69] Being posted within Australia severely restricted Darwin veterans' ability to embrace fully this powerful warrior mythology.

The town that ran away

My research aimed to understand how the veterans interviewed have responded to the ambivalent and at times negative portrayal of behaviour of service personnel during the Darwin bombing raid in post war representations. Some respondents did express a wish "to set the record straight" in relation to some aspects of the reporting of the event. For instance some talked about the understatement of the actual number of fatalities in the papers, the lack of effective leadership on the day, the failure of warning systems and the general lack of preparedness for what was an anticipated attack.

A number of those interviewed employed defensive blame-attribution to explain what they perceived as unfavourable coverage of their efforts on the day. They were keen that any blame was sheeted home to those in authority, rather than staining the character of the average young recruit. This lack of atonement by those in authority mattered to them, and had rankled over the years. They had resolved any possible psychic discomfort arising from adverse public perceptions about post-bombing behaviour by transferring any culpability up the command chain. In this way these veterans have buffered themselves against any assault on their soldierly identities imposed by an unflattering public discourse.

Accordingly, Ken Davison explains that 'the lack of leadership was [my] biggest disappointment with the RAAF in these early days.' Ken thinks that this poor quality of officers was a consequence of the rapid expansion of the RAAF and to so many experienced officers being overseas in early 1942.[70] Theo Ferguson, who was stationed at East Point speaks disparagingly of 'pen-pushers' with no experience in charge of the air force.[71] Speaking of his own leadership training in the RAAF, Colin Horn, confesses, 'I didn't know anything … we had no idea what to do.'[72] Israeli researcher Edna Lomsky-Feder found veterans of the 1973 Yom Kippur War had a similar tendency to express disappointment with leadership.[73] The end point in both cases is the construction of a narrative that depicts a past the veterans can live with.

Darwin veterans struggled to deal with accusations of looting in the wake of the raids. The Lowe Commission of Inquiry Report had stated:

> On the night of the 19th looting broke out in some of the business premises and sporadic looting occurred thereafter even to the time when the Commission was sitting in Darwin [three weeks later]. This looting was indulged in both by civilians and members of the Military Forces.[74]

My interviewees gave diverse responses in answer to probing about whether they had witnessed or heard of looting in the period after the civilian exodus. Some acknowledged and defended this behaviour as being necessary to deprive the enemy of useful resources in view of an imminent invasion. Theo Ferguson explained, 'no use leaving it for the Japs, fans and things … It was Rafferty's Rules' in Darwin. RAAF recruit, Ken Davison mentioned there was a, 'lot of criticism about the Army's handling of the takeover of civilian property.' He talked about the need to get food out of fridges as the electricity was off. Prefacing his remarks with 'I never did,' he joked about the RAAF officer who was surprised when crockery from his Darwin home 'turned up' in the officers' mess.[75] The negative emphasis caused by representations of this post-raid commandeering led the veterans to seek to justify and defend their behaviour.[76] What might have been seen as poor form (at best) has been presented as a sensible pre-invasion strategy. The respondents' soldierly identities have been preserved by these ways of framing their recollections.

Making sense of war memories

The testimonies of these veterans, given seventy years after the event, confirm the pervasive influence of public narratives. The growing curiosity about individual veteran's war experiences, within a culture of increasing militarisation of Australian history since the last decade of the twentieth century, has provided a positive environment for veterans to come forward to share their war experiences with the wider public.

George Warr and Ken Davison, in particular, had felt their service in Darwin was not viewed as being as worthy as that of those who were posted overseas.

However during the last two decades a shifting conception of what constitutes an acceptable soldierly image may have inclined these men to tell their Darwin story. George and Ken became foundation members of the Darwin Defenders organisation, working throughout the second half of the 1990s to gain greater recognition for those who served in Darwin and endured the 19 February air raid.

The composure paradigm can be seen at work in the various versions of the Darwin bombing that populate veteran survivor narratives. Seeking composure, Cyril Molyneux and Kingsley Allen crafted narratives that suited their post-war personas as civic leaders. Their recollections contained none of the chaos and post bombing lawlessness described by lower ranked men such as Bill Foster who, as well as mentioning a minor pre-raid mutiny, had memories of the day that were both critical of the poor management and the lack of leadership that ensued in the period after the bombing. Colin Horn's version of events painted a picture of an unruly retreat south: a version that allowed him a degree of psychic comfort as he, along with many RAAF men, had participated in an unauthorised withdrawal to Adelaide River. Nearly all the veterans with 'psychic safety' vouched for the lack of proper warning of the raid.

Additionally, composure theory foregrounds the psychological factors that interweave to produce the fabric of these veteran narratives. It explains the need for individual veterans to subconsciously choose from the range of feasible narratives which will nurture their present self-identities.

Conclusion

Oral History is by its nature intrusive. This research owes a debt to the veteran interviewees who came forward, seventy years after the event, to share their poignant and reflective accounts of that terrible day. To an extent there is (and always will be), a tension between respecting the memories of these individuals 'as told' and the need to use our knowledge of the creative and partial nature of memory to interpret their narratives. Studying the consistencies and inconsistencies revealed in these veteran testimonies enables the historian to gain insights into the influences shaping remembering.

As Mark Roseman explains in his analysis of a Holocaust survivors' testimony, it is not disrespectful to point out discrepancies in versions of the past, rather it "helps illuminate the very processes of memory we are seeking to understand."[77]

Appendix 1

It was not possible to trace civilian survivors or even female veteran survivors for this research. The veterans who came forward to tell their story were all self-selected, they had responded either to advertisements placed in the RSL magazine, *Mufti*, the *Notice Board* section of the Veteran Affairs Newsletter or the *Desperately Seeking* section of the *Herald Sun* Newspaper or to an address I made to the Darwin Defenders Annual General Meeting at Bentleigh RSL (Returned and Services League) in August 2010. Geographically, it was not practicable for me to interview all the veterans who responded to these requests for eye witness accounts of the Japanese raid; all interviewed lived in Metropolitan Melbourne.

To investigate their remembering of the day, I conducted oral history interviews with 16 male veteran survivors. For various reasons I did not use the testimony of four of the survivors interviewed. The 12 men whose testimony was used were all in their late eighties or early nineties and had been deployed for military service in or near Darwin at the time of the raid. These interviewees represented all three services; four were from the RAAF, two from the RAN and four from the Australian Army. These pre-arranged discussions lasted about one hour and were all conducted, at the interviewee's choice, in their own homes, in three cases in the company of a family member or carer. Each session was recorded and a timed synopsis and partial transcript was prepared. These interviews furnished the raw data for the analysis of remembering that forms the body of this research.

(Endnotes)

1 Especially as developed by Alistair Thomson in, Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 8. Also in Richard Johnson et al. (eds), Making Histories, London, Hutchinson in association with the Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, 1982, pp. 206-220.

2 Michael Roper, 'Re-remembering the Soldier Hero: the psychic and social construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War,' History Workshop Journal, 50, autumn, 2000, pp. 183-184. Graham Dawson, Soldier Heroes, Routledge, London, 1994, p. 25.

3 Timothy Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper, The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration, London, Routledge, 2000, p. 17.

4 Max Kenyon, interviewed by Valerie Bourke, Melbourne, 31 January 2011, recording held by author.

5 Cyril Molyneux, interviewed by Valerie Bourke, Melbourne, 29 January 2011, recording held by author.

6 Bill Foster, interviewed by Valerie Bourke, Melbourne, 31 January 2011, recording held by author.

7 George Warr, interviewed by Valerie Bourke, Melbourne, 1 October 2010, recording held by author.

8 Walter Kys, interviewed by Valerie Bourke, Melbourne, 18 October 2010, recording held by author.

9 'Zero' was the term the allies used for the Japanese Mitsubishi AGM Zero long range fighter aircraft in operation from 1940 to 1945.

10 Bill Foster, *op.cit.*.

11 Colin Horn, interviewed by Valerie Bourke, Melbourne, 23 September 2010, recording held by author.

12 Bob Alford, Darwin's Air War: 1942-1945. An Illustrated History. Darwin, The Aviation Historical Society of the Northern Territory and Coleman's Printing, 1991, p. 17. The actual numbers may never be finalized. Whilst service personnel are accurately accounted for, merchant ships' manifests, especially of Asian crew members, were not accurate and/or not recovered.

13 Colin Horn, *op.cit*..

14 The Herald, 6 October, 1945, p.1. (On the release to the public of the Lowe Commission report.)

15 Max Kenyon, *op.cit*.. Ellipsis points are used to indicate omission of words in quotations throughout.

16 Douglas Lockwood, Australia's Pearl harbour, Darwin 1942, Melbourne, Cassell, 1966. pp. 86-87.

17 Walter Kys, *op.cit*.. The USS Peary was a destroyer class warship.

18 Lockwood, Australia's Pearl Harbour, p. 61 and throughout, gives many first-hand accounts of bravery witnessed.

19 Sydney Daily Mail, Friday 20 February 1942, p. 1; Brisbane Courier Mail, 20 February 1942, p. 1; The Argus, 20 February 1942, p. 1.

20 Brisbane Courier Mail, 20 February 1942, p. 1.

21 Bombing of Darwin-Report by Mr Justice Lowe, www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs 195.aspx serial number 431. The full report including the transcripts of the individual testimony only became available to the public in 1992 when it was lodged in National Archives.

22 The Herald, Melbourne, 6 October 1945, p. 1; The Argus, Melbourne, 6 October, 1945,p. 1; The Sydney Morning Herald, 6 October 1945, p.1; Similar headlines populated newspaper front pages across Australia.

23 Report of the Lowe Commission of Inquiry, at www.naa.gov.au/colection/fact-sheets/fs195.aspx serial number A 431

24 The Canberra Times, 26 March 1955, p. 2. Report of Paul Hasluck's speech opening new Legislative Council Chambers in Darwin under headline, 'Darwin's Day of Shame;' The Northern Territory News, 29 March, 1955, P. 1.

25 Valerie Bourke, unpublished Masters thesis, February 2013.

26 *ibid.*

27 National archives sound and video collection at, http//:trove.nla.gov.au/music/result?q=Darwin%20bombing.

28 Australia, dir., Baz Luhrmann, 2008.

29 John Gillis, (ed) Commemoration: the Politics of National Identity, Princeton University Press,1994, p. 18.

30 Graeme Davison, 'The Habit of Commemoration and the revival of Anzac Day,' Australian Cultural History, (Special Issue) Vol. 22, 2003, p. 80. Ken Inglis, 'Remembering Anzac,' In John Lack (ed.), Introduction by Ken Inglis, Jay Winter, ANZAC Remembered: Selected Writings by K. S. Inglis, University of Melbourne, Department of History, 1998, pp. 136-146. University of Melbournehistorymonograph23,p.6-7. :http://search.informit.com.au.ezproxy.lib.monash.edu.au/documentSummary;dn=729914476035107;res=IELHSS>ISBN: 0732515505. [accessed 29 Sep 11]. Jenny Macleod, 'The Fall and Rise of Anzac Day: 1965 to 1990,' in War and Society,Vol.20, Number 1 (May 2002), p. 151.

31 *ibid.*

32 Paula Hamilton, 'Sale of the Century-memory and historical consciousness in Australia,' in Contested Pasts: The politics of memory, Radstone, Susannah and Hodgkin, Katherine, (eds) (2003), New York London, Routledge.p.141.

33 Peter Stanley, Invading Australia: Japan and the Battle for Australia, Camberwell, Viking, 1942, p. 235.

34 Macleod, *op.cit*., pp. 163-5.

35 Gallipoli, dir., Peter Weir.

36 Macleod, *op.cit*..

37 Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, What's Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History, University of NSW Press, Sydney, 2010, pp. 135-156.

38 Liz Reed, Bigger Than Gallipoli: War, History and Memory in Australia, University Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2004, p. 121; Stanley, Invading Australia, p. 246.

39 Geoffrey Cubitt, History and Memory, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 221.

40 Stanley, *op.cit*. p. 246. Stanley persuasively uses post war Japanese documents to show the Japanese command planned no such offensive.

41 Roper, *op.cit*., p. 183.

42 Douglas Lockwood, Australia Under Attack: the Bombing of Darwin-1942, Sydney, New Holland, 2005, p. x.

43 Chris Masters, The Men Who Saved Australia, 1998.television documentaryabc.net.au, Four Corners Archives at : http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/s12899.htm. Accessed June 2012.

44 Ruwoldt, Darwin's Battle for Australia .Darwin Defenders 1942-45 Inc., Clifton Springs, 2005, p.17.

45 Allesandro Portelli, The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History, Albany State University of New York Press, 1991, p. 54.

46 Valerie Yow, 'Do I Like Them Too Much,' in Perks and Thomson, The Oral History Reader, pp.54-67; Frisch, A Shared Authority, among many who examine the inter-subjectivity of the interview situation; Mary Chamberlain, 'Narrative Theory,' in Thomas Charlton, Lois Myers, Rebecca Sharpless, (eds.) Handbook of Oral History, Alta Mira Press, Lanham, 2006, pp. 384-407, gives a detailed analysis of the influences operating in the interview situation.

47 Lowe Commission Report, www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs195.aspx serial number A431, p. 11 (on-line p. 56). This report is reproduced in Grose, An Awkward Truth.p. 230.

48 Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein, Handbook of Interview Research: context and method, London, 2001, p. 719. Also Alice Morgan, What is narrative therapy? An easy-to-read introduction, Adelaide, Dulwich Centre Publishers, 2000, p. 10.

49 Colin Horn *op.cit*..

50 *ibid.*

51 *ibid.*

52 *ibid.*

53 Max Kenyon *op.cit*..

54 Kingsley Allen interviewed by Valerie Bourke, Melbourne, 24 October 2010, recording held by author. The influence of present self-image on remembering is discussed in the section headed Life trajectory and self-identity below.

55 Ken Davison, *op.cit*.

56 George Warr, *op.cit*..

57 *ibid.*

58 Bill Foster, *op.cit*.

59 Bill Foster, ibid.

60 Cyril Molyneux, *op.cit*.

61 *ibid.*

62 Roper, *op.cit*.,' p. 183. See the background to these ideas in Dawson, *op.cit*., pp. 34-44; Thomson, *op.cit*., pp. 8-11; Penny Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self,' in Oral History Interviews: Cultural and Social History, Vol. 1(1), pp. 65-93.

63 Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, *op.cit*., pp. 34-36.

64 Cubitt, op.cit., p. 81; Summerfield, Culture and Composure, p. 68.

65 Ashplant, Dawson and Roper, *op.cit.*, pp. 34-36.

66 Thomson, *op.cit*., p. 128-142.

67 Paul Daley, 'Anzac: Endurance, Truth, Courage and Mythology,' Meanjin, September, 2010, Vol.69:3, p. 45.

68 Keith Rossi, librarian Anzac House, email, 22 March 2011.

69 The Citizens' Military Forces Act of 1943 extended this area to enable conscripts to serve south of the equator in SE Asia.

70 Ken Davison, *op.cit.*

71 Theo Ferguson, interviewed by Valerie Bourke, 16 September 2010, recording held by author.

72 Colin Horn, *op.cit.*

73 Edna Lomsky-Feder, 'Life Stories, War, Veterans,' Ethos, 2004, Vol.32(1), p. 96. This dissatisfaction with their leaders replaced expressing any frustration with the actual war itself enabling them to support the ideology of the nation. The social assumptions justifying the war were 'taken for granted' so any discontent could be safely channelled at the military leadership. 'The hysterical commanders [who] don't command but lose control'.

74 Report of Lowe Commission of Inquiry, www.naa.gov.au, A 431, p. 11 (p. 56 on-line). Report reproduced Grose, An Awkward Truth, n.d., pp. 229-230.

75 Ken Davison, *op.cit*.

76 The Sydney Morning Herald, 6 October 1945, p. 1.

77 Mark Roseman, 'Surviving Memory: Truth and inaccuracy in Holocaust testimony,' in Perks and Thomson (eds), The Oral History Reader, p. 242.

‘And I started to understand:’ moments of illumination within women’s oral narratives from Indonesian-occupied East Timor

Hannah Loney

[This paper has been peer-reviewed]

Abstract

This article explores the memories of East Timorese women who grew up under Indonesian rule (1975-99). It examines the manner in which they articulate their memories of their emerging understandings of East Timor’s history, the political situation of the territory, and the relationship with Indonesia within the context of their broader life narratives. It draws upon oral history interviews as the primary source for analysis, seeking to draw attention to women’s voices and experiences and situating them within a wider feminist research strategy, as a counter to the more prevalent, nationalist masculinist historiography. It also utilises theoretical scholarship on memory, narrative and identity in analysing these individual women’s stories and the key themes within them. I argue that these women identified moments of illumination within their childhood and constructed narratives of realisation around them. These narratives affirm perceptions of the inevitability of East Timor’s independence, and enable the narrators to remember past experiences of violence in meaningful and explanatory ways. Their memories and my analysis of them opens up new ways of understanding personal experiences of broader colonial structures, and also sheds light upon some of the ways in which individuals construct a sense of self and of purpose amidst a particular set of violent historical and political circumstances.

Introduction

East Timor is a small half-island nation just north of Australia that was colonised by the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century. In late 1975, East Timor declared its independence but ten days later was invaded by nearby Indonesia, which occupied the territory for the next twenty-four years. During this time, East Timor was essentially run as a military fiefdom by the Indonesian National Armed Forces (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia* – TNI). However, many East Timorese remained committed to national self-determination and participated in a widespread resistance movement against Indonesian rule. In 1999, following a United Nations-sponsored Popular Consultation, Indonesia relinquished control of the territory and, after a United Nations transitional period, the Democratic Republic of East Timor was declared a sovereign state in 2002.

The Indonesian period was central to the formation of a unique sense of East Timorese national identity that was forged through collective suffering, a unifying resistance narrative, and a distinct sense of identity separate to that of Indonesia. Here, I wish to explore the memories of East Timorese women who grew up under Indonesian rule and their articulation of the personal processes that led to them becoming aware of and understanding East Timor’s history, its status as an ‘occupied territory,’ and the political conflict with Indonesia. I draw primarily upon fifty-five oral history interviews conducted with East Timorese women during several research trips to East Timor from 2012-13.[1]

Firstly, I will discuss the main methodological approach adopted throughout my research project of using oral history as a feminist research strategy to explore East Timorese women’s memories of the Indonesian occupation. Secondly, I will provide an overview of the way in which theoretical scholarship on memory, narrative and identity offers new approaches to understanding the experiences and emotions of East Timorese women who became adults under Indonesian rule. In the final section, I will discuss some individual women’s stories and highlight several key themes articulated within their narratives: the visibility of violence within everyday life; inter-generational story-telling; personal experiences of suffering; and the development of a unique sense of East Timorese identity, distinct from that of Indonesia. Ultimately, I argue that within these oral history interviews, individual East Timorese women selected and appropriated memory fragments in order to construct personalised narratives of illumination.

I use the term *illumination* quite specifically, because I argue that these narratives contain more than simply a location, in the words of Roxana Waterson, of ‘those critical moments in life when the protagonist tells us (explicitly or implicitly) how he or she first became

aware of wider political issues and struggles that may have shaped the course of their life subsequently.'[2] Although the women trace the development of their own historical and political consciousness within a violent and tense political context, the outcome of their processes of understanding was a more spiritual, almost transcendental understanding that East Timor's independence was moral, righteous and inevitable. For this reason, the term illuminating is most pertinent.

Conducting Oral History Interviews with East Timorese Women

Whilst there has been a long relationship between women's history and oral history, a distinct literature on oral history as feminist methodology arose from the late 1970s as part of broader movements for women's liberation and the development of a new field of social history. For feminist scholars, oral history was particularly important in drawing attention to women's lives, so many of which had been overlooked and unrecorded within traditional historical sources and official histories.[3] As Sherna Berger Gluck has outlined, the methodology was originally used to uncritically celebrate the use of women's voices and experiences as a means of challenging the traditional concepts of history, affirming that women's everyday lives are history.[4] From the mid-1980s, however, the field began to shift toward deeper considerations of individual narration, subjectivity, and the interviewer-narrator relationship.[5] These complexities were explored, for example, in Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai's collection of essays, *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*.[6] The field has since progressed to consider more closely, as Joan Sangster has outlined, the ethical issues and different theoretical approaches associated with oral history practice.[7] Today, oral history remains an extremely important tool for uncovering women's experiences and for analysing the meaning of the past in the present. Feminist practitioners of oral history have, in turn, opened up new ways of exploring methodological complexities associated with the practice and process of oral history.[8]

In writing a history of East Timor, oral history provides a means of incorporating women's voices and experiences into scholarship from which they have previously been excluded, stereotyped or under-represented. Previous literature on the Indonesian occupation of East Timor has focused primarily upon decolonization and the emergence of a nationalist movement,[9] human rights violations,[10] international relations,[11] or the East Timorese resistance movement.[12] Within these accounts, women have predominantly been represented as either victims of mass human rights violations, or as martyrs of the revolutionary struggle. There is a growing body of scholarship that explores women's experiences of broader historical events and political processes within East Timor, although this field is still very much in its infancy.[13] Edited collections of oral histories compiled in recent years have drawn attention to some high-profile women's personal experiences of life under Indonesian rule.[14] However, there is yet to emerge a coherent body of scholarship on the Indonesian occupation of East Timor that provides sustained, theoretically informed discussions of the implications and the uses of these women's valuable oral narratives.

From May 2012 to September 2013, I conducted approximately fifty-five oral history interviews with East Timorese women *in situ*. My research focused on three East Timorese towns and their surrounding areas: Dili, the capital; Liquica, in the west; and Baucau, the former Portuguese administrative centre in the east. This research was part of a broader PhD project that explored women's experiences, memories and perceptions of life under Indonesian rule. The interviews occurred on one or two occasions and lasted between 1 ½ to 6 hours each, at a time and place of the interviewee's choosing – usually in their homes or place of work. They were conducted in English, Tetum (East Timor's *lingua franca*) or Indonesian, with the assistance of an interpreter where necessary. My local interpreter was an invaluable research partner and local guide, assisting my navigation of language and cultural barriers. She also provided me with a link to the local community and helped me to source potential interviewees and sites, and to identify a cross-section of women in accordance with local standards. Within the East Timorese context, this meant considering class divisions, language, education, geography, age, diaspora and non-diaspora women. Working with a woman was critical for my research project, considering the context and gender-sensitive discussion points. I found that her youth and personable yet professional attitude were valuable in making participants feel more comfortable to share information and calmed if they became upset when sharing their story. Her very presence was one of my ethical safeguards, both to assist in my response to difficult memories expressed during the interview, but also as someone with whom I could discuss the story and its meaning afterwards. Although I have an intermediate level of Tetum, I was still somewhat reliant on my interpreter and had less control over the direction of the conversations than would have been the case had I conducted the interviews alone. Similar to Nicola North's experiences using an interpreter in her interviews with Cambodian refugees, this meant that there were times when the conversation took unexpected turns that sometimes appeared to me to be 'off the topic.'[15] However, such divergences were ultimately advantageous by building rapport and helping the participant feel more relaxed in the interview setting. I also learnt that this divergent,

fluid conversational style was a central component of East Timorese speaking patterns. The recruitment process used was a snowball technique, although some women were personally invited to participate upon my interpreter's recommendation.

Most interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder (with permission) and were transcribed by an experienced East Timorese transcriber and myself. The interviews were transcribed verbatim with minimal editing, in an attempt to retain the narrator's unique way of speaking and to preserve the texture and cadences of their speech.[16] If the interview was conducted in English and the participant asked me to do so, I made minor corrections to the grammar and syntax of their written expression. A written summary of the interviews was given to the participants and they will also receive a summary of the research findings upon completion of the project.[17] The interviews were of a free-ranging, conversational style, in which I asked my participants to engage in an 'open conversation' about their life. I used some probing questions if necessary to elicit further information, such as 'Can you tell me the story of what happened then?' or 'How did you feel about that?' Although the essential purpose of the interview was to create an historical narrative, I hoped that the interview might give my participants a sense of empowerment and purpose by rendering their experiences, many of which had been neglected and silenced within broader nationalist histories, visible.[18] I also hoped that in listening and bearing witness to their stories, many of which contained memories of extremely brutal events, I could, as Judith Herman has written, 'share the burden of pain' to a potentially cathartic outcome.[19] Particularly outside East Timor, I could be a 'medium of communication' between East Timorese women and the broader Australian public by sharing the experiences of women who were for twenty-four years almost outside the Australian public consciousness.[20] One of my participants, Mena, spoke of the way in which East Timorese women's experiences can be used 'to inspire' women 'in other parts of the world' who are still suffering, suggesting that the acts of telling, listening and recording can be political and valuable for women.[21]

I used the narrative structure initially outlined by the participants themselves as a framework for the conversation. This method of interviewing was intended to help my participants feel less as objects of research, and more as 'narrators of their own experiences:' to speak as they chose and to control the telling of their own stories.[22] At the time of the interviews, I felt that East Timorese women were ready and willing to tell me their stories and what they had experienced during the occupation.[23] Recent oral history scholarship, such as the work of Stephen Sloan and Mark Cave, has suggested the possibilities of doing oral history in times of crisis or immediately after.[24] However, had I attempted this task, problems that Sherna Berger Gluck struck in her interviews with Palestinian women who were resisting Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, such as 'the daily reality of occupation and the immediacy of the political struggle,' would also have restricted the narrative flow and the women's willingness to participate in the research project.[25] For my participants, war and occupation were still in living memory – making this time conducive to telling – although there was enough temporal distance from that past to allow them to speak without fear of retribution. Their memory fragments were often still imbrued with deep personal and collective suffering. There is a significant body of literature that explores the impact of trauma on memory and, although beyond the constraints of this article, it is worth noting that the impact of trauma made 'the process of remembering and forgetting more complex than in other situations.'[26] Most of my participants asserted that they had very clear memories about what happened during their lives in terms of events, feelings and emotions. They were less definite about dates and chronology. One woman, for example, remembered being told by her illiterate parents that she was born when they harvested their paddy, so she just guessed the corresponding year.[27]

Conducting this research as a white Australian woman raised inevitable issues of subject position and difference: these are dilemmas that Diana L. Wolf has discussed in detail in her explanation of contemporary feminist concerns regarding fieldwork.[28] It was important for me to recognise the power relations that existed between my interviewees and myself, and to be continually self-critical throughout the process. To assist, I drew strategies from the work of other scholars such as Debra J. Blake, an American woman who researched oral histories of working-class, Mexican-origin women.[29] For example, the framing of my oral history interview was important in countering some of these issues. I would sometimes hold preliminary conversation with participants, in which I would introduce my project and myself. I would share details about my experiences living in East Timor and my personal interest in East Timorese history as a result of Australia's close geo-political and historical connections with the country, in an attempt to create intimacy and rapport with my participants. As part of my research project, I spent seven months in total living in East Timor and traveling around the territory. For some of the more educated, politically active women, my identity as an Australian – considering Australia's ambivalence to Indonesia's initial invasion, but subsequent role in East Timor's transition to independence – created a sense of urgency for the women to explain to me what had happened, to reveal stories that had been neglected for so long. That I was a woman, who was interested in their stories, often bridged many perceived educational or economic differences between my participants

and myself. At times, being an outsider also created openness for dialogue within a largely polarised, post-conflict society that would not have been achieved by an 'insider.'

Alison Baker has discussed some of the advantages that she experienced being an outsider, a foreigner, in her interviews with women in Morocco because she felt that she 'stood outside of the Moroccan social hierarchy and political landscape'.[30] Similarly in East Timor, without preconceptions about my political affiliations and role during Indonesian times, some women sometimes took it upon themselves to contrast life during the occupation to the post-independence period, drawing out comments and observations that were missing from other critiques. Many women were very proud of their role within the independence struggle, although some were concerned that their contributions had not been recognised in the post-conflict society and that they were still suffering in many ways. Most women were wonderful storytellers and spoke at length and in detail about their lives.

Memory, Narrative and Identity

During the period of Indonesian rule in East Timor, the exceptional conditions of military occupation were very much part of East Timorese women's daily reality. Many women suffered horrifically at the hands of the Indonesian forces, and their bodies often constituted the locus for brutal acts of violence that aimed at targeting the population as a whole, or specifically those who were associated with resistance activities.[31] There was also a broader climate of fear and terror that was cultivated by the Indonesian armed forces as a means of controlling the East Timorese people and suppressing opposition to their rule. It was a time of secrecy, in which individuals could not publically discuss political ideas nor express their opposition to the regime for fear of violent reprisal. The Indonesian government implemented an Indonesian-language education system within the territory that sought to instil in East Timorese children respect and admiration for state-defined Indonesian values, beliefs, and practices.[32]

Despite these oppressive conditions, individual women's articulation of their emerging understanding of the conflict within the territory was often an instinctive and prominent part of their oral narratives. However, it is important that these particular illumination narratives are seen, as Emily Honig has observed, as but one way of telling an individual's life history, 'one of the many possible versions of an individual's past.'[33] Without prompting, many women would tell me about how they came to understand the broader political and historical situation, and this articulation was usually in the context of explaining their moral response to the occupation and decision to participate in resistance activities. Once I became interested in this particular way of framing, I asked some participants more specifically about their experiences of these processes with questions such as, 'When you were growing up, what did you understand about the relationship with Indonesia?' or 'How did you come to understand the political situation as you were growing up?,' in order to elicit those memories. In these contexts, I am conscious that the interview relationship became somewhat more complicated as I asserted more of an active role in asking my participants to locate the emergence of their historical and political consciousness. Their responses were instructive, however, in provoking me to think about how each narrative was shaped and given form as a story, why specific instances were selected for inclusion, and what was accomplished by telling the story in this particular way.[34] In this sense, their responses revealed the ways in which an individual's personal life experiences were linked to broader historical circumstances and political processes.

The women's narratives contained a number of specific moments within the past that were drawn together into a narrative whole. This method of structuring is often considered to enable individuals to make sense of their past. In line with Michael Frisch's assertion, the interview process became a platform for individuals to discover, explore and evaluate how to 'make sense of their past,' how to connect their own experiences to the broader social context, and how to 'interpret their lives and the world around them.'[35] In this regard, the narrative was important to the individual women's development and portrayal of their identity within the interview context. Nicola King writes that narrative construction is a continual process of 'putting together moment by moment, of provisional and partial reconstruction' so as to construct a sense of self, an individual identity.[36] Nathalie Nguyen and Catherine Kohler Riessman have also written about the ways in which people dynamically reshape and reframe their memories through narrative enabling them not only to make sense of their own lives, but also of their past.[37] The women used language and narrative to articulate what happened in their past, to give structure and meaning to their memories, and to communicate them to me, as the listener.

The circumstances of the historical moment of the telling were, of course, significant to the narrative. David Gross reminds us that in 'most acts of remembering, there is as much material from the present that is projected backward as there is material that comes authentically and indisputably from the past itself.'[38] The ultimate success of East Timor's independence struggle was significant in framing the women's narratives as an individual story within a broader narrative of war, suffering and resistance.

As such, the women themselves actively positioned their personal lives within a collective framework, and interwove their personal stories with those of the nation.[39] Maurice Halbwachs has written about the way in which individuals all have distinctive memories, but that they are located in a specific group context that is used by those individuals to remember the past: 'While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember.'[40]

One of the defining frameworks for individual women's memories was the narrative of *funu*, a Tetum word for war that also became a nationalist metaphor for East Timor's independence struggle against consecutive foreign occupiers.[41] It is a particularly masculine narrative in which women are largely absent, because it places emphasis primarily upon the role of the guerrilla fighters and high-profile male leaders in the independence struggle.[42] In my interviews, the women used their memories and experiences to assert a space for themselves within this national history.

The personal narratives were, too, shaped not only by my participants' gender as women, but also by intersecting factors such as class, geography, political affiliations and age. Indeed, the generation to which they belonged was one of the most significant factors that defined an individual's experience of the occupation. Within studies of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, we hear many stories and can observe many public forms of commemoration for the 1975 generation: those who grew up under Portuguese rule and experienced the Indonesian invasion first hand. We hear much less about the younger generation who grew up under Indonesian rule and were educated in the Indonesian system. Some notable exceptions include the resistance fighter, Naldo Rei's, memoir and the recently erected monument in Dili for the victims of the 12 November Santa Cruz massacre.[43] What is interesting and distinct about this younger generation is the combination of events, memories, stories and ideas that have shaped their awareness about the history of the conflict and the political status of the territory.

Childhood Memories from Indonesian-Occupied East Timor

Many of my interviewees observed in their narratives the regularity and visibility of violence during the Indonesian occupation. As young people grew up and heard stories about the death and torture of their family members, this bred a strong hatred of the Indonesian military and a moral opposition to the occupation. One of my participants, Bella, who was born in Dili in 1972, spoke about hearing stories of the violence, suffering, and hardship that people around her were experiencing as she was growing up. She specifically remembered hearing a story from her mother about her auntie being 'raped to death' and her two-year-old cousin who was 'twisted to death.'[44] Bella continued to remember such stories, as she grew older. As Bella entered her teenage years, she began to situate these individual experiences of suffering within a much broader context. I asked Bella specifically about her processes of understanding:

> Hannah: Did she [your mother] talk about, did she talk to you as a child about the political situation in Timor? Or how did you learn about what was happening in your country?
>
> Bella: She told us about the story of my auntie, what happened to my dad when I was very young. And she didn't like the military – never liked them. So all of that influenced us too. So we didn't like them too. In the beginning, of course you can't dislike them simp[ly] because, ohh you killed my auntie! You killed my cousin – that's what I knew. But I had no idea about the whole conflict that they were here, occupying a country. As I grew up, passed my teenage years, and I realised, damn – they're here, taking over my country! They destroy the people, they destroy the culture! So basically it's like, step by step, but it was fast, because of the hardship and the critical situation in East Timor.[45]

Bella described the relationship between hearing stories of violence and suffering from her mother, to her emerging understanding about the broader political situation of the territory. Although Bella heard stories of extreme acts of violence being perpetrated against her family, she described how her anger was exacerbated and focused when she realised the broader political framework that both enabled and sanctioned these actions: Indonesia's illegal occupation of East Timor. Exposure to violence from such a young age was significant in laying the foundations for Bella to situate these experiences within a broader narrative of suffering and a perception of the immorality of Indonesia's occupation. It was both her comprehension of the politics of the situation and her patriotic love of country and culture, rather than her personal encounter with horrific crimes, which mobilised her anger. This unique reflection is counter to more common experiences of personal losses being used by individuals to mobilise intense political feelings, and can perhaps be attributed to Bella's specific education and experiences.

In 1994, Bella was selected by the Indonesian Government to represent East Timorese youth at the Canada World Youth program, but defected after her arrival in Canada and began touring the world advocating for East Timor's freedom.[46] She was, therefore, a very articulate and intelligent woman, but had much experience in sharing her story and using it

as a vehicle for generating international support for her country's cause.

For another of my interviewees, Yolanda, who was born in Maubara in 1971, the endless dead bodies that she saw as child created fixed, vivid images in her mind that stayed with her into adulthood. She said, 'I can forget other things but this one [I] cannot.'[47] Despite being very young and not quite realising the meaning of these images, she understood and remembered the pain of those who had lost family members:

> I was still very small at that time. My dad's sister, usually, during the afternoon, after the Indonesian military had killed people, went and collected the dead bodies. They wore white clothes, made a cross, and buried the dead bodies. Some people collected the skeletons, others collected dead people's heads then they buried them. So, [my dad's sister] was the one who went out to collect those dead bodies. We were still very small, we could not do anything, we just stayed and watched everything that happened. So, when we were still small, we didn't know much, but we understood already that some people had lost their children, lost their family members and we could feel the pain. At our age at that time, we should have not seen those killings because we would be traumatised. We can forget other things, but this one we cannot, because people were killed and died every day in front of us.[48]

That Yolanda refers to forgetting some things but remembering horrific images of killings sheds light on the struggle with memory commonly experienced by child survivors of traumatic events. In reflecting upon interviews with child survivors of the Holocaust, Pauline Rockman observes that to have such memories can mean that 'one is never free of the fear of the dread of those terrible times.'[49] Yolanda is unable to forget the images of dead bodies and the associated feelings of helplessness. Such difficult memories have registered and stayed with Yolanda, whilst she has forgotten many ordinary memories from the time. Indeed, she explicitly raises the potential for her, as a child, to be 'traumatised' by such events.[50] This observation is markedly different from the lack of direct expression of trauma that Lindsey Dodd observed within a study of childhood experiences of bombardment in World War Two, in which one participant recalled, 'I am convinced that it did not traumatise me *at all*.'[51] The language of trauma has been used quite extensively within the social and political context of post-conflict East Timor, being equated with a legal, political and moral category of victimhood. Yolanda demonstrates her familiarity with the terminology and its application, although this does not negate the impact of such memories upon her present condition.

Stories of hardship and loss were also passed down inter-generationally and, like Bella, many women developed an understanding of the political situation through stories told to them by their parents. East Timor is an oral culture, and narrative is the main way that people explain ideas and share experiences. Another of my participants, Rosa, who was born in Bagia in 1976, recalled her mother telling her about their difficult life in the mountains when she was a baby, which shaped her understanding of the situation in the territory. Rosa herself could not remember anything about that time, but her mother had told her about their family's suffering as a result of Indonesia's invasion and sang songs to Rosa to explain the events. Rosa said, 'She told me a lot about the situation at that time.'[52] Rosa is an only child, which is unusual for an East Timorese family, and although many of her memory fragments were not firsthand they were still influential for her political outlook – she found her mother's stories 'inspirational' in forging her political commitment to East Timor's independence.[53]

In addition to obtaining an understanding of her history and life through intergenerational storytelling and songs, Rosa described growing up and having a sense that the situation in East Timor was different to the rest of Indonesia. She said, 'Timor-Leste's status was not the same as others in Indonesia, it was totally different.' In particular, Rosa drew upon East Timor's different experiences of colonialism and subsequent 'different story' as qualities of their identity that were different from the Indonesians.[54] For Rosa, it was from a combination of her mother's stories and a feeling of difference that forged her understanding of the situation.

Maria, who was born in Aileu in 1965, described a similar sense of a unique East Timorese identity that she felt instinctively as a child, living under Indonesian rule. I asked Maria directly about her understanding of the situation within the territory when she was growing up and the relationship with Indonesia. Maria responded: 'We knew that it was something natural to us, without being told by someone; we knew that there was tension between Indonesia and Timor, we could feel it.'[55] Maria, who did not actively participate in resistance activities, was able to go about her daily activities despite this tension. Many East Timorese women, particularly those who were known to be actively involved in clandestine activities, expressed difficulties in physically moving about the territory, and in accessing educational and employment opportunities.[56] Maria worked alongside Indonesian doctors in her role as a midwife in both Maubisse and Ainaro and remarked that relations were 'very good' between herself and the Indonesian doctors.[57] She said, 'We did things together. We were just working partners.'[58] Despite these positive working relationships, Maria, like Rosa, felt that the situation in

East Timor was different to that in the rest of Indonesia and she did not feel that the territory and its people were treated as an equal part of the Republic. Maria also described a feeling of inevitability that one day, East Timor and Indonesia would separate:

> Hannah: Did you feel like you were a part of Indonesia?
>
> Maria: Mmm… no. At the time, it was pretty clear that there was segregation. Although we did things like work together, we ate together, we chatted together, but you always felt inside you like you would never be a part of them. Back at that time, we knew that we would be separated from Indonesia. Because we didn't have anything much in common […] you felt that something was not right. You felt like, the way they talk to you, the way they do things, they will never consider you. They just wanted to take over the country so that they could access the resources. And sooner or later, they were going to occupy all of this and you would be left out and struggling. That's what I think. Honestly, even when I was young, we always felt it – it was just natural, the way that we were brought up in addition to the situation at that time.[59]

Maria draws upon her instinct and experience in determining that 'something was not right' within the territory.[60] Her experience of becoming aware of her East Timorese identity was shaped by her experience of everyday oppression and a lack of commonality with Indonesian people.

Other women commented on unusual differences and fragmentations within society and between people that, to a young child, just didn't seem to make sense. Alita, who was born in Maliana in 1973, remembered noticing differences in people's work habits and daily activities; she also noticed that the state seemed to closely monitor some people's movements and not others. She also identified linguistic, cultural and religious differences between East Timorese and Indonesians that solidified her sense of identity as not Indonesian: 'we had a totally different language, and we had a different culture and religion.'[61] Alita grew up in a strong Catholic household, but she remembered meeting other children at school who were Muslims (the dominant religion in Indonesia) and wondering, 'why are you so different from us?'[62] As she moved through school, Alita saw that there were political divisions between her fellow students that sometimes manifested in physical fighting. Her parents also sternly warned her not to have a boyfriend from Indonesia. From these events, Alita said, she started to understand that Indonesia was their enemy and that the East Timorese were 'looking for freedom.'[63] She began to contextualise these moments of illumination within a broader narrative of East Timor's struggle for national liberation: 'and I started to understand', she said.[64] It was in her final years of high school that Alita became fully aware that there were East Timorese who were fighting for their independence. She felt, therefore, that she had to 'define' herself in support or in opposition of Indonesian rule.[65] Through the presentation of her thoughts, experiences, and an emerging sense of identity within her narrative, Alita projected an increasing understanding and awareness of the broader political situation.

A similar sense of piecing together various events and a process of steady realisation was evident within Bebé's narrative, a woman who was born in Dili in 1981. She described discovering after independence had been achieved that her parents had been involved in clandestine activities. She used this knowledge to reflect upon her childhood and to make sense of strange moments that she specifically recalled:

> And we had, like I used to remember, we had several guests, who were not … back in those days, I didn't suspect that they were, like, connected with the jungle, but then later on, I realised that those people came home with objectives! So it was, I found it interesting to have seen, to have experienced my parents' involvement in those activities. Yeah, it was amazing … They didn't talk to us – they pretended like nothing happened. I mean, it was amazing. Later on, my mum did… I still have this [goosebumps] when I talk about it! And later on when everything [happened], when we had the referendum and got the result, my mum then talked to us. And I came to understand, like those days, those people who visited us on certain days, on particular days, they came and some pretended to be blind, asked us for a cup of water… some came with fruits that they pretended they were from somewhere else. And then it was like a trading between my parents and them, it was like amazing, I mean, I came to realise that those people were connected to those people in the jungle. But then I only came to know later on, after my mum told everyone about that, about those days.[66]

It was very common for East Timorese families to provide food, clothing and medical supplies to the guerrilla fighters in the mountains, usually via an *estafeta* (messenger), although this was an extremely risky activity as there were violent reprisals from the Indonesian state if they were discovered.[67] As she told this story, Bebé showed me the goosebumps on her skin, as she remembered the risks that her parents had taken to support the resistance. After Bebé's mother explained to her that these activities had been part of the clandestine movement, she said that she felt, 'Wow! … it made sense … everything made sense in

the end!'[68] She emphasised a realisation that all of these strange occurrences suddenly made sense and that she finally 'came to understand.'[69] In our interview, Bebé was able to recall and recognise memory fragments and evoke them into a social framework of the broader national struggle for East Timor's independence: the social and political context of the telling facilitated her reconstruction of a coherent narrative.

For Filomena, a moment of realisation occurred whilst the territory was still under Indonesian rule and as such, had an impact upon her political motivations and subsequent actions. Filomena was born in Oecussi in 1982 and, like Rosa, Filomena's mother would tell her stories when she was a young child about the family running away to the mountains in 1975. She said that when they returned to town, they had to be very careful not to mention the word 'FRETILIN' or else they would be captured and put in jail. FRETILIN (*Frente Revolucionária de Timor Leste Independente* – the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) was a political association formed in 1974 that advocated for independence from colonial rule and became a symbol for the resistance movement once Indonesia invaded.

Her mother's warning can be perhaps attributed in part to Filomena's young age, but also sheds light upon broader trajectories of understanding the East Timorese struggle for independence as inevitable, but not imminent. Filomena also mentioned discovering a flag under her bed when she was in grade four of primary school. She noticed that the colours were strange to her – it wasn't the Indonesian flag – and it had the word 'FRETILIN' written on it, which made her curious. She asked her mother about it, but her mother said to keep quiet, that it wasn't the time to know just yet. Filomena also recalled hearing her mother singing a song at night time, '*Foho Ramelau'* (Mount Ramelau) – this was a revolutionary song written by the famous East Timorese poet, Fransciso Borja da Costa, about the highest mountain in East Timor. When she was in the first grade of senior high school Filomena noticed that one of her friends had something written under their collar, 'SAFARI', and she asked what it meant. She was told, '*Saya Anak FRETILIN Anti-Republik Indonesia*' (I am a child of FRETILIN, anti-Republic of Indonesia). Filomena said that at this time, she remembered seeing the flag as a child and realised that it must have represented a stance against Indonesia. At that time, Filomena began to connect these moments and experiences a moment of realisation about East Timor's independence from Indonesian rule.[70] The series of realisations that comprised of Filomena's awareness to the political struggle with Indonesia were revealed to me in narrative form, suggesting that our conversation perhaps had a role in her process of making meaning. However, Filomena's story also sheds light on the fact that oral history is also part of a much longer process, often started many years before, in which a person strives to make sense of and understand her own life experiences.

Conclusion

For many East Timorese women who grew up under Indonesian rule, significant moments that influenced their emerging understanding of East Timor's history, the broader political situation of the territory, and the relationship with Indonesia were central to their life narratives. These moments were gleaned through intergenerational story-telling, songs, witnessing violence, observations, a natural understanding, and living within a culture of fear. They portrayed the pervasiveness of violence, collective suffering, and perceptions of the distinct immorality and illegality of the Indonesian occupation. Many of the women's memories are of brutal events, and their experiences reveal the intensely personal and devastating effects of occupation upon individuals. There was a sense of naturalness ascribed by individual women to their understanding of the situation and their growing impressions that the presence of Indonesia within the territory was not right.

The eventual success of East Timor's liberation struggle perhaps framed the way that the women thought of their past. They located moments of illumination and constructed narratives around them as earlier signs of this path in their life and, therefore, they proscribed a sense of inevitability to independence. These moments of illumination were, perhaps, a way for them to remember, in both a meaningful and explanatory way, their experiences of past violence. This process of realisation evoked by East Timorese women reveals a new way of understanding occupations and sheds light upon the notion that there are different ways in which people locate their awareness of colonialism and of colonial processes.

These narratives were informed by personal experiences and shared memories of violence, suffering and a distinct sense of difference from Indonesia. The individual women's stories vary in accordance with political orientation, age, culture and geography. Yet there are political consequences that emerge from the collectivisation of these memories, in that they portray an inherent, moral and shared sense of opposition to the Indonesian occupation, a commitment to a unique East Timorese identity, and perceptions of the inevitability of East Timor's independence. They functioned, therefore, to lay the foundations for an individual's moral opposition to Indonesian rule and to justify their personal decision to actively engage in dangerous resistance activities that challenged the occupying regime.

The childhood memories of my participants articulated a process of realisation and understanding that was situated within a broader nationalist narrative of East Timor's struggle for independence. Their identity as individuals, their conception of themselves as subjects, was inextricably tied to their identity as East Timorese people. This identity was formed on the basis of exclusion – *not* Indonesian – but was also shaped by historical experiences of colonialism and oppression, a unique culture, religion and language, as well as a sense of the righteousness of their cause. As individual narratives, they reveal some of the intersections between personal experiences and broader historical processes, and the act of telling sheds light upon the way in which individuals construct a sense of self amidst a particular set of historical and political circumstances. Analysing these sets of narratives reveals in the women a prevailing belief in the inevitability of independence. The women's active positioning of their personal experiences within this collective framework enables them to see themselves and their lives as part of a moral, righteous and almost mythic narrative of a country's fundamental right to national independence.

Acknowledgement

The fieldwork upon which this article builds was made possible through the generous support of several travel grants through the University of Melbourne: Faculty of Arts PhD Fieldwork Grant, Graduate Research in Arts Travel Scheme, MA Bartlett Special Travel Grant-in-aid, Riady Scholarship, and the Prue Torney Memorial Prize. I wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their considered and insightful comments that have greatly improved this paper, as well as the *Oral History Australia Journal*'s board members for their helpful comments and support.

(Endnotes)

1 Ethics clearance was obtained for this project through the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC 1136578).

2 Roxana Waterson, 'Introduction: Analysing Personal Narratives,' in Roxana Waterson (ed.), *Southeast Asian Lives: Personal Narratives and Historical Experience*, Ohio University Press, Athens, 2007, p. 10.

3 See Special Issue on Women's Oral History, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies,* vol. 2, no. 2, Summer 1977; and Women's History Issue, *Oral History: the Journal of the Oral History Society*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1977.

4 Sherna Gluck, 'What's So Special About Women? Women's Oral History,' *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1977, pp. 3-17.

5 Susan H. Armitage, 'The Next Step,' Special Issue on Women's Oral History, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1983, pp. 3-8. See also Personal Narratives Group (eds), *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives*, University of Indiana Press, Bloomingdale, 1989, p. 12.

6 Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (eds), *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, Routledge, New York and London, 1991.

7 Joan Sangster, 'Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History,' in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 88.

8 For an overview of the historical relationship between women's history and oral history, see Joana Bornat and Hanna Diamond, 'Women's History and Oral History: Developments and Debates,' *Women's History Review,* vol.16, no. 1, 2007, pp. 19-39.

9 See, for example, Helen Hill, 'Fretilin: The Origins, Ideologies and Strategies of a Nationalist Movement in East Timor,' Masters of Arts, Monash University, 1978; Jill Jolliffe, *East Timor: Nationalism and Colonialism*, Queensland University Press, Queensland, 1978; Carmel Budiardjo and Soei Liong Liem, *The War against East Timor,* Zed Books, London, 1984; John G. Taylor, *Indonesia's Forgotten War: The Hidden History of East Timor*, Pluto Press Australia, Leichhardt, 1991; and James Dunn, *Timor: A People Betrayed,* ABC Books, Sydney, 1996.

10 The final Report of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (*Comissáo de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliaçáo* –CAVR), *Chega!*, is the key text in this regard. The Report documents human rights violations committed between 25 April 1974 and 25 October 1999. Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste (CAVR), *Chega! The Report of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste*, CAVR, Dili, 2005.

11 See, for example, Mark Aarons and Robert Domm, *East Timor: A Western Made Tragedy*, Left Book Club, Sydney, 1992; Wendy Way, Damien Browne, and Vivianne Johnson (eds), *Australia and the Indonesian Incorporation of Portuguese Timor,* Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2000; Richard Tanter, Mark Selden, and Stephen Rosskamm Shalom (eds), *Bitter Flowers, Sweet Flowers: East Timor, Indonesia, and the World Community*, Pluto Press Australia, Sydney, 2001; John Birmingham, *Appeasing Jakarta: Australia's Complicity in the East Timor Tragedy*, Schwarta Publishing, Melbourne, 2001; and Nicholas Tarling, *Britain and Portuguese Timor 1941-1976*, Monash University Press, Clayton, 2013.

12 See, for example, Arnold S. Kohen, *From the Place of the Dead: The Epic Struggles of Bishop Belo of East Timor,* St Martin's Press, New York, 1999; Xanana Gusmão, *To Resist is to Win!: The Autobiography of Xanana Gusmao with Selected Letters & Speeches,* Aurora Books with David Lovell Publishing, Richmond, 2000; José Ramos-Horta, *Funu: The Unfinished Saga of East Timor*, Red Sea Press, Trenton, 1987; and Clinton Fernandes, *The Independence of East Timor: Multi-Dimensional Perspectives: Occupation, Resistance, and International Political Activism*, Sussex Academic Press, Portland, 2011.

13 See, for example, Maria Domingas Fernandes Alves, Laura Soares Abrantes and Filomena B. Reis, *Written with Blood,* Office for the Promotion of Equality, Prime Minister's Office, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Dili, 2001; and Irena Cristalis and Catherine Scott, *Independent Women: The Story*

of Women's Activism in East Timor, Catholic Institute for International Relations, London, 2005.

14 Catholic Institute for International Relations, *I Am Timorese: Testimonies from East Timor*, The European Christian Consultation on East Timor, United Kingdom, 1990; Michele Turner (ed.), *Telling: East Timor, Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, 1992; Jude Conway (ed.), *Step by Step: Women of East Timor, Stories of Resistance and Survival*, Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin, 2010; and Laura Soares Abrantes and Beba Sequeira, *Secrecy: The Key to Independence: It's Better to Have No Title Than to Have No Nation*, Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters, Dili, 2010.

15 Nicola North, 'Narratives of Cambodian Refugees: Issues in the Collection of Refugee Stories,' *Oral History*, vol. 23, no. 2, Working With Memories, Autumn, 1995, pp. 32-39.

16 See Raphael Samuel, 'Perils of the Transcript,' *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, London, 1998, pp. 389-392.

17 The data is currently kept in locked facilities at the researcher's university. In accordance with the Ethics stipulations for this research project, the research data will be maintained for as long as they are of continuing value to the researcher. There are no immediate plans for the audio material and notes to be retained in an archive anywhere subsequently. This is due, in part, to the lack of long-term housing options for archival material in East Timor, as well as the lack of established infrastructure to preserve the materials and provide public access under procedures that are able to safeguard the collection.

18 Sherna Berger Gluck, 'Advocacy Oral History: Palestinian Women in Resistance,' in Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (eds), *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, Routledge, New York and London, 1991, pp. 205-19.

19 Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, Basic Books, New York, 1992, p. 7.

20 Gluck, 'Advocacy Oral History,' p. 208.

21 Filomena 'Mena' Barros dos Reis, interviewed by author, June 2012, tape and transcript held by author.

22 Susan E. Chase and Colleen S. Bell, 'Interpreting the Complexity of Women's Subjectivity,' in Eva M. McMahan and Kim Lacy Rogers (eds), *Interactive Oral History Interviewing*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, 1994, p. 79.

23 Teresa Cunha made a similar observation regarding her much earlier interviews with East Timorese women, which she conducted in the early 2000s. Teresa Cunha, Skype conversation with the author, February 2013, notes held by author.

24 Mark Cave and Stephen M. Sloan (eds), *Listening on the Edge: Oral History in the Aftermath of Crisis*, Oxford Oral History Series, OUP USA, 2014.

25 Gluck, 'Advocacy Oral History,' p. 208. Michele Turner, who did conduct interviews with East Timorese people whilst the territory was still under Indonesian rule, recalled the great responsibility that she assumed in her project in an interview with Wendy Lowenstein: 'I couldn't be naïve, I had to protect, protect, protect. Still wake up at night – what if someone's being tortured to death in East Timor because of me?'. Wendy Lowenstein, 'Don't Cry Michele!,' *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 20, 1998, p. 42.

26 Selma Leydesdorff, Graham Dawson, Natasha Burchardt and T. G. Ashplant, 'Introduction: Trauma and life stories,' in Kim Lacy Rogers and Selma Leydesdorff (eds), with Graham Dawson, *Trauma: Life Stories of Survivors*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 2004, p. 1. See also Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1995.

27 Luisinha Freitas Mok, interviewed by author, August 2013, tape and transcript held by author.

28 Diane L. Wolf (ed.), *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1996.

29 Debora J. Blake, 'Reading Dynamics of Power through Mexican-Origin Women's Oral Histories,' *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3, Problems and Perplexities in Women's Oral History, 1998, pp. 24-41.

30 Alison Baker, *Voices of Resistance: Oral Histories of Moroccan Women,* State University of New York Press, New York, 1998, p. 284.

31 For a discussion of women's experiences of violence during the conflict, see Amnesty International, *Women in East Timor and Indonesia: Standing against Repression*, AI Index ASA 21/51/1995, 13 December 1995; Amnesty International, *Human Rights Are Women's Right*, Amnesty International, New York, 1995; George Junus Aditjondro, 'Violence by the State against Women in East Timor: A Report to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Including Its Causes and Consequences,' East Timor Human Rights Centre, New York, 1997; Miranda E. Sissons, 'From One Day to Another: Violations of Women's Reproductive and Sexual Rights in East Timor,' East Timor Human Rights Centre, Melbourne, 1997; George Junus Aditjondro, 'The Silent Suffering of Our Timorese Sisters,' in Jim Aubrey (ed.), *Free East Timor: Australia's Culpability in East Timor's Genocide*, Random House Australia, Milsons Point, 1998, pp. 243-65; Torben Retbøll, 'The Women of East Timor,' in G. Jonsson (ed.), *East Timor: Nationbuilding in the 21st Century*, Center for Pacific Asia Studies, Stockholm University, Stockholm, 2003, pp. 11-31; and Chapter 7.7: Sexual Violence, Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste (CAVR), *Chega! The Report of the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste*, CAVR, Dili, 2005.

32 See Alberto Arenas, 'Education and Nationalism in East Timor,' *Social Justice*, vol. 25, no. 2(72), Defending Rights and Just Futures in Real World Order, Summer 1998, pp. 131-148.

33 Emily Honig, 'Striking Lives: Oral History and the Politics of Memory,' *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1997, p. 140.

34 See Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, Sage Publications, Los Angeles, 2008, pp. 12-13.

35 Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History,* State University of New York Press, Albany, 1990, p. 188.

36 Nicola A. King, *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, p. 175.

37 Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen, *Memory is Another Country: Women of the Vietnamese Diaspora,* Praeger, Santa Barbara, 2009, p. 7; Riessman, *Narrative Methods*, p. 8.

38 David Gross, *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2000, p. 3.

39 Nathalie Nguyen has commented on this strategy in her study of women of the Vietnamese diaspora. Nguyen, *Memory is Another Country*, p. 8.

40 Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1980 (orig., 1950), p. 48.

41 See Geoffrey C. Gunn, 'The Five-Hundred-Year Timorese *Funu*,' in Richard Tanter, Mark Selden, and Stephen R. Shalom (eds), *Bitter Flowers, Sweet Flowers*, Rowman and Littlefield, Sydney, 2001, pp. 3-14.

42 See also Sara Niner, *Xanana: Leader of the Struggle for Independent East Timor*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2009; Cristalis and Scott, Independent Women; and Teresa Cunha, 'Beyond the Timorese nationalist orthodoxy: The "herstory" of Bi-Murak,' unpublished manuscript, copy held by author.

43 Naldo Rei, *Resistance: A Childhood Fighting for East Timor*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2007. See also Dan Nicholson, 'The Lorikeet Warriors: East Timorese New Generation Nationalist Resistance, 1989-99,' the University of Melbourne, unpublished Honours thesis, 2001. See also comments made by Michael Leach in 'Difficult Memories: The Independence Struggle as Cultural Heritage in East Timor,' in William Logan and Keir Reeves (eds), *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with 'Difficult Heritage'*, Routledge, London and New York, 2009, p. 158.

44 Isabel 'Bella' Antonia da Costa Galhos, interviewed by author, July 2012, tape and transcript held by author.

45 *Ibid*.

46 *Ibid*.

47 Yolanda Maria Conceicão Chalvés, interviewed by author, July 2012, tape and transcript held by author.

48 *Ibid.*

49 Pauline Rockman, 'Issues of Interviewing People with Painful Childhood Memories: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and the Stolen Children,' *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 24, 2002, p. 92.

50 Yolanda Maria Conceicão Chalvés, interviewed by author, July 2012, tape and transcript held by author.

51 Lindsey Dodd, 'It did not traumatise me at all: childhood "trauma" in French oral narratives of wartime bombing,' *Oral History*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2013, pp. 37-48.

52 Rosa Xavier, interviewed by author, July 2012, tape and transcript held by author.

53 *Ibid*. In thinking through traumatic, intergenerational storytelling and the role of the interviewer, Pauline Rockman's comments on child survivors of the Holocaust has been instructive. See Pauline Rockman, 'Issues of Interviewing People with Painful Childhood Memories: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and the Stolen Children,' *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 24, 2002, pp. 91-94.

54 *Ibid*.

55 'Mana Maria,' interviewed by author, December 2012, tape and transcript held by author.

56 Luisa Gonzaga, for example, said that she felt that she couldn't move, couldn't work or go to school because of the stigma attached to her by the military. Luisa Gonzaga, interview with the author, June 2012, tape and transcript held by the author.

57 Maria, interviewed by author, December 2012, tape and transcript held by author.

58 *Ibid*.

59 *Ibid*.

60 *Ibid*.

61 Teresa 'Alita' Verdial de Araujo, interviewed by author, June 2012, tape and transcript held by author.

62 *Ibid*.

63 *Ibid*.

64 *Ibid*.

65 *Ibid*.

66 Benícia Eriana 'Bebé' Xavier dos Reis Magno, interviewed by author, July 2012, tape and transcript held by author.

67 Part 5: Resistance: Structure and Strategy, in the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste (CAVR), *Chega! The Report of the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste*, CAVR, Dili, 2005, p. 41.

68 Benícia Eriana 'Bebé' Xavier dos Reis Magno, interviewed by author, July 2012, tape and transcript held by author.

69 *Ibid*.

70 Filomena Fuca, interviewed by author, November 2012, tape and transcript held by author.

The Diggers' wish: set the record straight

Ben Morris

[This paper has been peer-reviewed]

Abstract

This paper explores the issues of the participant interviewer in a military history context. Participant interviewers may have a stake in the results of their work, as they are part of the story that is under investigation and can influence the result to fit their prejudices. This paper focuses on the strong desire that the interviewees have to correct errors in the official record. As Alessandro Portelli says, 'oral history is not just a collection of stories, but also their interpretation and representation.'[1] A narrative recorded by a participant may produce a realistic interpretation of battlefield events rather than the official, battalion, or a popular military history of those times. This article is based on oral histories of national servicemen, regular soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers, and gives an exposure of the issues involved in a participant interviewer taking oral histories.

Introduction

I served as platoon commander of 2 Platoon, Alpha Company, Second Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR) in Vietnam during 1967, with a group of thirty-three men under my command. My platoon was one of the uncelebrated sub-units of the Australian Army's deployment in the Vietnam War. Unfortunately however, it came to prominence as the result of an incident causing the deaths of Vietnamese civilians. This incident has been discussed a number of times in newspaper articles and military history books.[2] These accounts, often based on scanty information, quickly acquired the status of history.

My desire to offer an alternative account, based on the experiences of eyewitnesses, was the genesis of my recording the oral histories of my platoon and the reason for assembling their views of the facts as the participants believed they occurred. Eighteen of the thirty-three soldiers in the platoon consented to provide oral histories of their experiences during the war. Each oral history interview was conducted using a questionnaire covering their service from their initial contact with the Army until discharge. Of these eighteen veterans, ten discussed the killing of the four civilians in their accounts. This article focuses on the relationship between the interviewees and me as the interviewer. For concise and easy management, this article will explore one particular incident that occurred of which the narrators spoke.

Methodology

The main methodology used was the narrative interview. A questionnaire was designed based on one in an annex to Gary McKay's *Fragments of Vietnam* - four pages of questions divided into specific sections.[3] It was an extensive set of questions divided into sub-sections with specific queries, starting with entry and induction into the Army, and ending with their discharge. Questions were aimed at eliciting information on service life following the veteran's path from their initial training through to their final training as part of a battle-ready battalion, and then their deployment with that battalion into Vietnam. The veterans' opinions on their service and their return to Australia were sought.

These veterans' narratives could then be compared with archival records to situate and verify details. The main archival record was the commander's diary, which is available on the internet in digital form. Some documents, like the description of a soldier's wound, needed an off-line search in the National Archives Collection, mainly at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) Canberra.

The method moved to an ethnographic one where the narratives and the documentary evidence were then tested against the societal, cultural and ritual norms of the veteran world. As trauma was involved, some research also required consultations with psychological papers and experts. Further reading was conducted on the assumption that post-traumatic distress disorder has a spiritual dimension.

My process was to record the veterans' narratives using the questionnaire. One other member spoke to me by telephone, but an oral history was not recorded. Two participants were killed in action during November

1967. Three others have died since their return from Vietnam, one of whom took part in this research. The 'chronological method' as outlined in Alistair Thomson's book *ANZAC Memories* was used as a guide to conduct the interviews.[4] I began with the open-ended question: 'Where did you join the Army?' Some participants needed no further encouragement to start their army narrative. If the narrator stalled, I was able to offer a further question that returned them to their account. On occasions I moved from the chronological method to the popular memory approach to ascertain further details. The popular memory approach is discussed in *ANZAC Memories* and frames questions in accordance with my recollection of events.[5] This process focuses on a particular event and explores that incident. This brought further information forward that may have been missed in following the chronological format. Most of the veterans were initially reluctant to talk about the accidental killing of Vietnamese civilians, which has become known as the 'Bamboo Pickers Incident,' showing that it was a part of their battlefield experience they wished to forget. Most did not speak of this matter until the mode of questioning was changed from chronological to popular.

To Accept or Not To Accept?

All interviews except two were conducted in the interviewees' homes, which gave the veteran a relaxed and familiar location in which to recall their memories. When a narrator invited me to stay at his home I accepted, as this placed the narrator in the role of the host, and I became the guest. This helped to change the power dynamics, as I then had to fit into the narrator's routine, rather than the other way around, with the narrator controlling the environment. This meant that our recording sessions were subjected to the domestic routine of the household, such as meal timings. The breaks to accommodate the domestic events resulted in round table discussions with the wife or partner, which added some interesting details. On one occasion, the wife declared that she had heard more in forty-eight hours about another ambush, than she had in the previous forty years. The different ambush was central to that narrator's war chronicle. She also claimed that the narrator had not fully informed his psychiatrist of certain facts. Some expeditious computer research resulted in the veteran taking additional information to his next consultation, and as a result, gained an increase in his pension. Frequently there was a comment on the next day that the veteran had had his best night's sleep since leaving Vietnam. At one breakfast the partner declared the same information with great clarity.

The interviews took far longer than veterans anticipated, mainly because they took the view at the outset that they had nothing of interest to say. This may reflect the supposition that as an officer, I knew everything, while they knew nothing. As the interviews proceeded, these men tended to become more engaged and forthcoming as though we had returned to the platoon of 1967, and they were having an informal chat with 'the boss.' Their recall was far more extensive than they thought possible. I continued the interview until the narrator claimed that he had nothing more to say. I was often more exhausted than the narrator.[6]

Oral histories can provide a primary source of information about events, conditions and operations by soldiers on the battlefield. As Hagopian comments;

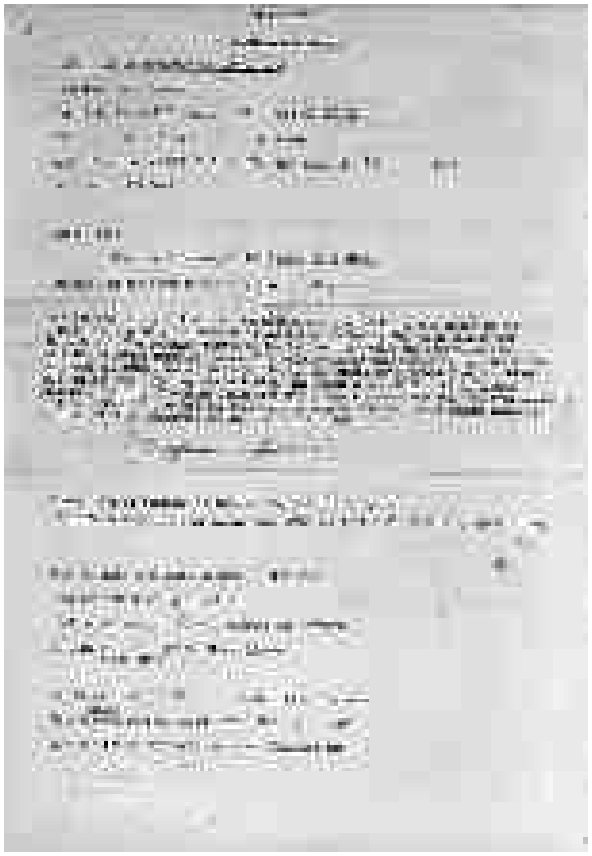
> … the value of the oral histories does not lie in their providing unmediated truths. ... Even when they remain true to events, veterans' stories may adjust to societal expectations - or what veterans believe their audience wishes to hear. The stories may also respond to the other narratives that circulate around the storyteller … [7]

The Incident

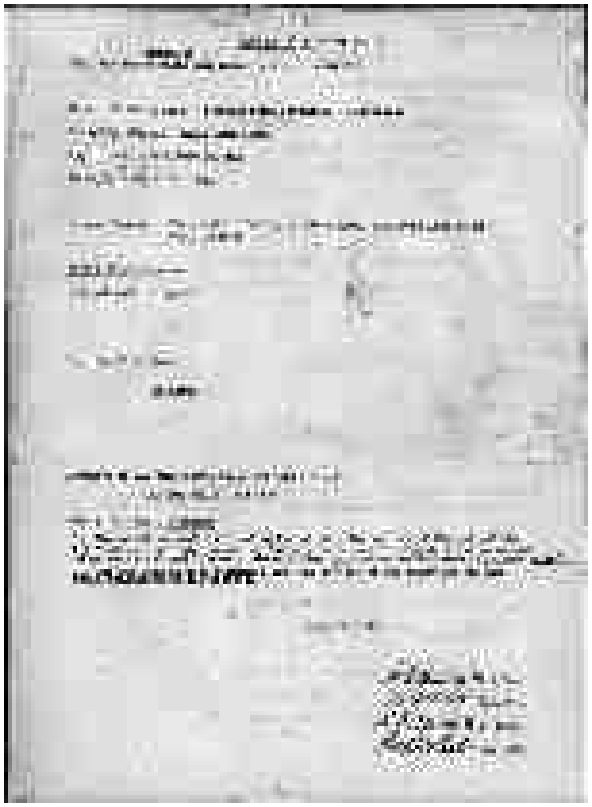
On 20th October 1967, fifteen members of the platoon and I commenced a patrol of the four thousand metre wide exclusion zone surrounding the Australian Task Force base area at Nui Dat, Vietnam.[8] This exclusion area was designed to prevent the enemy coming close enough to the base to launch an attack on the Australian position.[9] The exterior perimeter, called Line Alpha, was situated on the edge of Vietnamese effective mortar range, to prevent the enemy from providing fire support in an attack on the Australian base.[10] Line Alpha did not follow any geographical feature or fence, and was not marked. It was only a line on a map.[11] Between Line Alpha and the base perimeter fence was a 'free fire' zone, which meant that anyone or thing that moved within this area was a target.[12] The local Vietnamese were banned from this area and this was communicated to them by various means.[13] The soldiers had retrieved leaflets that were airdropped in the 'free fire' area warning the locals that they were in a prohibited area. Task Force headquarters advised that the relevant Vietnamese authorities had briefed the locals. Available information suggested that no friendly people would be inside Line Alpha. Constant patrolling prevented enemy penetration.[14]

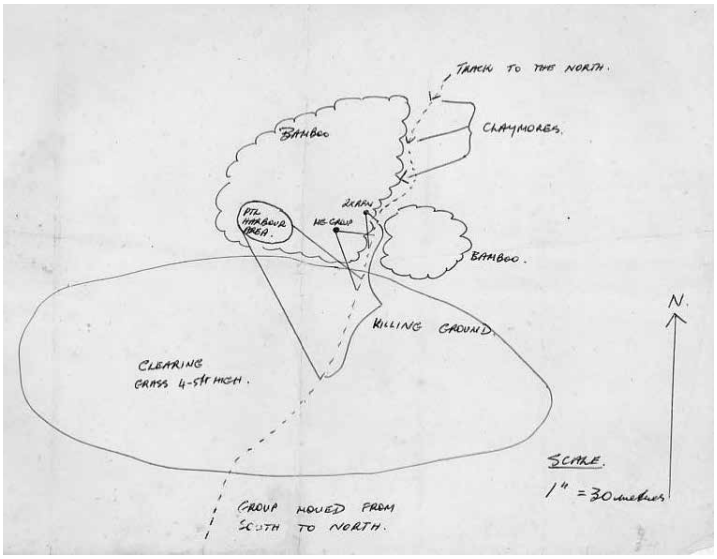
On the evening of 22nd October 1967, this patrol laid an ambush about one thousand metres inside Line Alpha.[15] Early the following morning, a group of civilians entered the ambush area. One person in this group took a long object off his shoulder and waved it at the soldiers.[16] The machine gunner opened fire, as he believed it was a weapon.

The firing lasted less than 30 seconds, and in that time the platoon's machine guns and rifles had killed four civilians and badly wounded a fifth who later



died. There were another six wounded. [17] The order to cease-fire was given when it became clear that the platoon had fired on unarmed persons, including women and children. The platoon returned to base.[18] Later we learned that the villagers had been looking for bamboo thus the incident became known as the 'Bamboo Pickers' ambush.





On the platoon's return to the Nui Dat Base, the Company Commander suggested to me that the platoon should have been carrying captured enemy weapons to place on dead bodies.[19] This would allow the battalion to claim these dead as enemy. The Australians had adopted the American system of rating an operation's success on the body count. It seemed that the Company Commander wanted the company's statistics enhanced.

In my opinion, this was deceitful and undoubtedly illegal. I was prepared to account for this incident and record the details correctly. During our discussion, the Company Commander instructed me as to how I was to write my report. This conversation was conducted out of hearing range of any other person. My report was written with a reference to the conversation about enemy weapons, but I was later ordered to sign a report that had my observations about these directions deleted. As I was uneasy with these instructions, I kept a personal copy of the 'after action report' in case I was ever accused of breaching the Geneva conventions. [20] This patrol report with the company commander's preferred wording is below. The lines of the paste-over are evident in the reproduction.

The narratives I recorded during my research are all influenced by the ANZAC legend. A number of the narrators recall that their instructors during their initial training constantly repeated that they were part of the great ANZAC story.[21] This theme of the ANZAC permeates their narratives.

As Portelli highlights, our interviewees come to an interview with an agenda of their own. [22] My narrators wanted to position themselves within the ANZAC legend. Some related their family members' service in previous wars with their Vietnam experience, while others made connections with the grand ANZAC tradition of volunteering to serve their country in distant lands, motivated by a sense of patriotism.[23] This reflects the fact that the ANZAC legend and the digger tradition remains a popular way for a veteran to recall their service. Lex McAulay, Gary McKay and other authors

have suggested that the Vietnam veteran was a member of the ANZAC story.[24]

What Did He Say?

The transcribers of the veterans' recordings experienced problems understanding the veterans' language. These difficulties usually occurred when interviewees came to an emotionally traumatic event. Two things occurred simultaneously, firstly the narrator lowered his voice, and secondly he lapsed into a vernacular of the mid-1960s, which was a mixture of Australian Army jargon, Army argot, the language of Americans serving in Vietnam, and Armed Forces Radio Saigon speak.[25] The battlefield moments that made the greatest impression had to be spoken in the idiom of their war. I was an insider, therefore I knew what they were saying, but an outsider like the transcribers did not. I believe that it was an effort by the veterans to keep the secrets in the 'family,' but also allowed them to discuss their service so the record could be set straight.[26] This to the outsider may sound confusing but in the veteran world represents a path to achieve conflicting goals. Conflicting purposes were often the norm on the battlefield.

In August 1976, Dr Jim Cairns, a member of the Labor Party and principal organiser of the Vietnam Moratorium movement in Australia, alleged in a Melbourne newspaper that Australian troops in Vietnam had killed twenty-seven civilians and most probably declared them as enemy rather than civilian deaths.[27] This caused a political furore and bought out the conflicting ideological positions of the proponents of a debate between the politicians, media and veterans.

The Minister for Defence at that time, the Hon. James Killen, a member of the Coalition Government which had committed troops to Vietnam, claimed that the allegations were defamatory of the nation and attacked the good name of the Australian Army.[28] He related the Vietnam veteran to the ANZAC Legend. Killen's position was that Australian troops would never commit such an 'atrocity' and promised a full scale inquiry.[29]

The word 'atrocity' had been used by the media and the Minister, but not by Dr. Cairns.[30] His allegation was simply that he had been told that Australian soldiers had massacred civilians. He had no proof to as to whether the dead were civilians or the enemy. These newspaper articles support Gary Kulik's contention that in stories about war, most military history and discussions of events on the battlefield, tend to confirm the speaker's ideology, political and social pre-conceptions.[31]

Following the initial furore, there were claims and counter claims throughout the week until the Minister stated that he had not been given any specific details about civilians being killed so he was not prepared to convene an inquiry into Cairns' allegations.[32] On Sunday 8th August the Sydney papers attacked Cairns for his naiveté and left-wing views, while the *Brisbane Sun* had a front page headline 'The Atrocity is on File.'[33]

On that same morning I was contacted by Army Office and asked to report on the following day, to the Director General of Operational Plans.[34] On the Monday, only a week after Cairns had made his allegations, I was searching the commanders' diaries with the Army Historian, Major Ian McNeil.[35] At the same time, the ABC program, *This Day Tonight,* was arranging for two of my soldiers to appear on their program in which they confirmed that civilians had been killed in the 23rd October 1967 ambush by Australian troops. Their facts did not match Cairns' numbers or dates; however it was an attempt by them to set the record straight.[36] Prior to appearing on the program, one veteran rang the army asking for support but this was denied because he was now a civilian. There was considerable time separating the two different ambush events; one occurred on 23rd October 1967, and the second on the night of 11th/12th August 1970.

At last, Minister Killen's requirement for an investigation had been fulfilled – namely, the identities of two ABC informants and their unit were declared.[37] However, a full enquiry failed to eventuate, and it was never clear whether any of the ABC informants (all four) were talking of the same incident referred to by Cairns, who was being castigated for his opposition to the war and political views. It appeared that the Defence Force's rebuttal of Dr Cairns' allegation was far more important than the facts about civilian deaths, which were not addressed. The simple fact that the protagonists were talking about several different events was lost in the debate.

Over the years, there have been suggestions at Vietnam Veterans' reunions and other gatherings that soldiers' histories have not been recorded correctly. While the veterans I interviewed were among those who made that complaint, it emerged during the interviews that few, if any, had read the official history, much less checked the commander's diary that is accessible through the Australian War Memorial website.[38] The unease that these soldiers have about the accurate recording of history, seems to have been formed from listening to other veterans speak, reading 'populist histories', listening to ANZAC Day orations or being informed by the media.

Setting The Record Straight

Forty years after Vietnam, I decided to attempt to change this situation. I enrolled at the University of Wollongong to study the history of the Vietnam War and veterans' oral histories and set the record straight.[39] While the narrators remembered there was media


Australians 'massacred 27 Viets'

The Age, 2 August 1976.

coverage of the ambush, none were able to give any accurate dates, as though it was all too painful. None of the narrators were able to place the media interest accurately, and one participant said that this furore occurred two years after our time in Vietnam:

> ... two years after there was an article in a Sydney paper, *Sydney Telegraph*, 'Australia's My Lai', and it was about that action. Two people that I know of for sure, Participant S and Non-Participant C, were contacted by the Sydney press about that story and both of them told the reporters to go and get rooted, that there was nothing in it.[40]

The non-participant spoke unprompted about the incident and like the rest could not remember the specific details like the date. He claimed the ABC approached him after Cairns had identified him. This puzzled me as Battalion Headquarters in Vietnam only received consolidated company lists and would not be able to determine an individual's platoon. His identification by the media should be attributed to someone who knew who were members of the platoon but did not know that this veteran was absent on the day in question. The non-participant made the following comment:

> … when I came back to Australia I was pursued [by] a fellow because he found out from a politician who found out that I was in 2 platoon. He pursued me for quite a long time trying to get, he had journalists from current affair programs on television and I can't recall the title of the program on this particular day when they were really pressing me, and they said they'd have a helicopter, a journalist up there on a chopper from Sydney, … and it would be on television that night. Anyway I refused again to say anything. Number one, I wasn't there and I'd already told them I wasn't there. And secondly I didn't want to talk about it. It's not … right to talk about those sorts of things in my opinion because who's going to prove what those people were anyway… Anyway, they eventually got a fellow and I can't recall who it was, up further north, up the coast in Townsville or Ayr or somewhere up there to talk to them on TV, and I actually saw him being interviewed but I can't recall what happened.[41]

While lacking details about the incident, he gives the background to the time and cultural detail, which is one of oral history's features. With another interviewer, it is possible that he may not have raised the issue of the ambush at all, as he said:

> … I thought very strongly about not talking about those sorts of things to anybody.[42]

The relationship between the interviewer and narrator in this research is different from normal oral histories, in that the interviewer had an earlier relationship and they were participants in the events recalled. This relationship was partly defined by military law, and partly was built by working together in hard, harsh and difficult conditions, against a number of common obstacles including an enemy who was intent on killing us. This group welded together as a combat unit which shared a common military language, lore and tradition. We were of comparable age, similar cultural backgrounds, and had a deep knowledge of the events being discussed in the interviews. All were indoctrinated with the same warrior tradition and sense of belonging to the group. There were some differences; for example the platoon was divided into Catholics and Protestants, which was still an important distinction in the 1960s.

The situation was somewhat different to the existing literature on insider oral history collection due to the similarities between narrators and interviewer rather than the differences. This introduces a different focus and some new factors into oral history theory. There are a number of insider-outsider articles in the oral history literature but they tend to be based on gender, tribal taboo or generational parameters. While there were some similarities with these situations, it was different. It was all male, same age and similar background scenario.[43]

There was no formal debriefing of the patrol as depicted in Fred Allison's 'Remembering a Vietnam Firefight.'[44] Allison's methodology was to compare a patrol debriefing with interviews taken many years later. In this case there was no debriefing to consult. There had been no discussion at the time nor did the

platoon openly discuss the event at reunions or other gatherings. Generally snide comments were made by those in the know who wished to obtain a reaction from a platoon member generally by officers at officer functions. This incident was in the corporate memory but not fully documented.

Conduct Becoming an Officer

At the Royal Military College in officer training I had been indoctrinated with the idea that officers do not fraternise with soldiers. Normal convention was that officers socialised and lived in different areas from soldiers. Even in Vietnam, while the officers lived with the troops when on operations, there was delineation between officers and enlisted men in the Nui Dat base.[45] Each company had its own officers' and sergeants' mess, separating ranks for meals, socialising and relaxing; but as a fighting group we were one inseparable unit and interdependent on each other. This interdependence was mentioned by a number of narrators. It highlighted the narrator's role and a link with the interviewer.

These narratives crossed a number of boundaries in sharing events, secrets and feelings. As Paul Thompson comments, 'the interviewer sits at the feet of the narrators and learns from those who know more about the subject'.[46] Here, I was the former officer now collaborating with my former soldiers to produce a history.

In this research, I have moved from that position of command and absolute authority, to a situation of equality. I had to divest my authority and be surprised and on occasions where it occurred, to resist 'correcting' the narrative if my recollection differed from the narrator. I had to hear the interviewee, and not force their testimony to confirm my own recollections. I had to surrender my leadership role and become an equal participant in the interview with the narrator. This was not easy.

Prior to each recording, interviewees would ask what I wanted them to say. It sounded like they were seeking my instructions on how they were to conduct their interview. While such questions may be normal at the start of any oral history interview, in this situation it seemed that I was still the authority figure. Portelli suggests that some oral history interviewees require a mandate from the interviewer and will often try to tell the interviewer what they think they want to hear.[47] I would explain that I wanted to record each individual's experience as he remembered it, nothing else. I made it clear that I was investigating private memory and not the public memory of the war. I clarified that I was conducting research, not a witch-hunt, about past events. This


The Advertiser

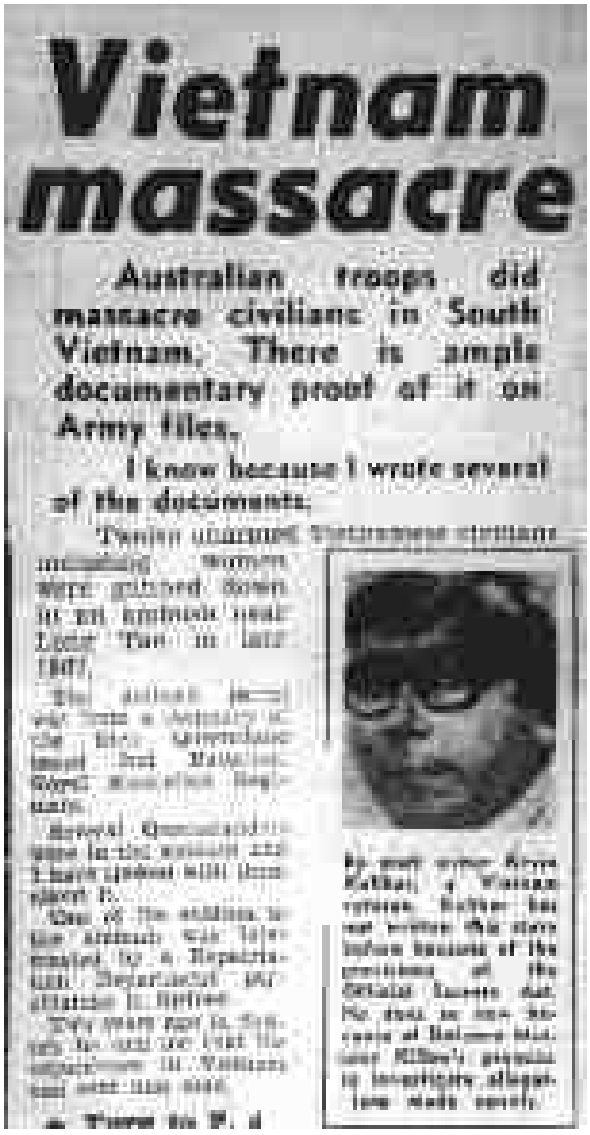
Colonel: Cairns victim of propaganda

Dead Cong had rockets: Digger

The Advertiser, 3 August 1976.

discussion gave them 'permission to speak,' and even though there was some initial awkwardness, all interviewees quickly became comfortable in their role. Some interviewees offered to use their diaries, notebooks and published works to help them remember. I repeated that I was interested in their unaided memory. Specific detail could be checked later but initially it was their private memory that I was pursuing.

The preferred option was to say nothing if they wanted something left off the record. Silence was the solution most took when an issue arose that they preferred not to discuss. There seems to be an unwritten list of subjects that should not be spoken about that illustrates Thomson and Seal's observations about conflicting parts in the ANZAC Legend.[48] Some wished to only talk about that which added to the national legend. This produced an issue for the interviewer as to whether silences represent a lack of knowledge or protection of their preferred view of the war.



Vietnam massacre

Australian troops did massacre civilians in South Vietnam. There is ample documentary proof of it on Army files.

I know because I wrote several of the documents.

Brisbane Sunday Sun, 8 August 1976.

Past-Past

I was very familiar with the platoon's actions since I commanded its operations. My responsibilities meant I moved around the platoon to make sure my plans were being executed, and adjusted them if necessary. My narrators could have assumed that I was a witness to most of their actions on the battlefield and I knew all the painful, unpleasant and 'unsafe" moments. Thus the narrator had an audience of one who knew the 'essentials.' While this was not always a certainty, it was a given to the narrator.

At times, the interview entered what may be called the past-past. We were actually back on the battlefield with some narrators telling me exactly where others and I were standing. We did not need the lens of the present for both the narrator and interviewer had been there and the lens of those days was used. However, facts were essential and necessary and this may explain why some wish to resort to published works.

There was an acceptance of our shared experience as veterans. This was the most important factor in enabling a productive and respectful conversation about our platoon's role in the Vietnam War. Like the veterans, I too had a personal agenda in wanting to 'set the record straight.'[49] The events subsequent to the *Brisbane Sun* exposé concerned me.[50] Firstly, the article written by a former national serviceman portrayed the incident as an atrocity. Secondly the Minister claimed that only 'rogue soldiers' killed civilians and accidents identifying friend from foe in his discussion did not exist.

How did my interviewees recall the ambush? Most remembered their role with a remarkable degree of clarity, confirming the literature that suggests that traumatic events occupy a special place in an individual's memory.[51] Portelli makes the observation that public opinion and the media may prefer fantasies, unreliable sources and myths to the reality of the soldiers' world.[52] It produces a far nicer picture of the war. On the other hand, when soldiers interview soldiers, there is a temptation to reconstruct a shared past that, consciously or unconsciously, may portray events in a light that flatters them and satisfies the expectation of their audience.[53] Truth may not only be a casualty of war, but memories and some retelling of events may also damage it.

My own memories about the incident are vivid. The moment between the machine gun firing on the civilians and hearing the whimpering of children caught in the gunfire was very short but still remains with all.

I knew instantly on hearing the cries for help that something was very wrong. I ordered the platoon to cease fire and ran towards the killing ground to assess the carnage I realised had taken place. I was confronted with a scene that will haunt me forever. As I moved forward I was inwardly hoping that the residual firing would kill me. It is testimony to the training of the men that I was not hit. Was it my learned skill to move among the weapons that prevented me being another death that morning or was it the skill of the soldiers who knew where I was heading? I often wonder.

Do We Really Have To Talk About This?

Only two narrators mentioned the 'Bamboo Pickers' of their own accord and one of them was not on the ambush patrol. It is possible that a non-participant interviewer may not have obtained details of this incident, as most did not discuss the ambush without a direct question. If the participant who volunteered

ATROCITY ON FILE, SAYS EX-DIGGER

Brisbane Sunday Sun, 8 August 1976.

information on the bamboo pickers was not interviewed then a non-participant interviewee would not be aware of the incident. This participant trusted me and therefore spoke about the incident. I doubt that any of the participants would have trusted a non-participant with these memories, and would have remained silent on this story thus leaving it hidden.

In the interviews I was asking my men to recall a matter which had confused me and which, like them, I had buried within me. This incident lasted less than a minute but its legacy lasted for years. One participant describes the ambush this way:

> Very quick; not very long. Shit, how do you tell time in that. I would say it was all over in a minute, two minutes. There was, I mean it would have gone a lot longer if there had have been some armed men there but I think once it was really obvious there wasn't anyone armed there that the shooting stopped pretty quick. Yeah that's all that I can remember of that. I remember waiting for them to be taken away with the chopper, holding them up and ... I remember that guy with a sickle.[54]

The same participant makes the suggestion that the ambush was a set up:

> I don't know what was behind that ambush; I mean obviously we knew they were going to be there, that was the way it struck me. So someone had organised for us to brass them up.[55]

The non-participant mentioned earlier spoke in defence of our actions:

> As far I was concerned we all did the best we could over there and if somebody got in the road then bad luck, particularly if they shouldn't have been there. I don't believe these people should have been where they were.[56]

The participant who gave the longest commentary on the incident spoke for twice as long as any other narrator. He claimed that the platoon was tasked with the patrol because it was a punishment for misbehaviour that had attracted the wrath of a higher authority. These were his comments:

> Our section of the platoon got sprung with beer in our lines and this happened all the time but for some reason or other we got sprung because they used to put them under floorboards. Anyway our platoon had to provide a three-day TAOR (Tactical Area of Responsibility) patrol, which was highly unusual, because that was usually provided by the D & E platoon (Defence & Employment Platoon). For some reason there was no one, I guess the rare circumstances they didn't do it they went to other platoons and would say, 'You've got to supply a TAOR party.' Anyway because someone had found beer in our lines, which was a very regular occurrence, they said, 'Take half a platoon, get out on this TAOR patrol.' It turned out to be a bit different with tragic consequences and I'm not sure whether it was on the third morning or the second morning.
>
> **Interviewer**: Okay do you want to talk about what you remember of the Bamboo Pickers?

Interviewee: Because it was a three-day TAOR patrol and having been on quite a few operations I think we thought this was, ok we are being punished, but it was a safe country. I remember TAOR patrols had been through ever since the taskforce commanded it was a three thousand yard or metre no-go zone I think, free fire zone, so you really wouldn't expect to see anyone there. I know they had to keep the patrols up but it was almost routine and if they hadn't have kept them up it might have had more serious consequences. [57]

Other narrators make a similar comment. It is as though the narrators needed an excuse. They believe that they should not have been involved in this incident. They were suggesting that they had no option about being there.

Examination of the Task Force Patrol Program however, suggests that the patrol allocations were distributed evenly between companies.[58] The participant quoted above was located at the rear of the ambush setting, and so was not an eye-witness to the event, but spent considerable time in recalling the incident and theorising about the locals' knowledge of the exclusion zone. He offered to produce a copy of a pamphlet, which warns the locals of their exclusion. He detailed the medical evacuation process and finished with a fantasised ending in which he incorrectly claimed the RAAF disposed of the bodies at sea.[59] This is in conflict with the commander's diary.[60] The bodies were returned to their village. The participant verbalises and adapts a popular myth in Vietnamese, American and Australian literature that Vietnamese were on occasions thrown out of helicopters.[61] He couldn't recall where he sourced this myth. He confirms Hagopian's observation that narrators often tell stories that circulate around them in their chronicle.[62] He was wounded in the following month and he nearly died. It could be that this near death experience focused his attention on events that occurred just prior to his wounding.

Conflicting Points Of View

The non-participant may have been trying to change my point of view on events. This narrator and I had previously had a number of discussions, which had diverged along paths of opposing philosophies. One ANZAC Day, our discussion had reached a point that another platoon member had to separate us to prevent a physical altercation. I had wondered in my preparation for this research if this history between us would influence the final outcome of the interview. Portelli in his work observes that sometimes persons of opposing points of view may produce a good interview due to the fact that both sides are trying to win the other over, while reaching the satisfaction of having their view recorded.[63]

KILLEN TELLS HOW

Civilians killed by troops

CANBERRA. — Australian troops killed four unarmed Vietnamese civilians in an ambush near the Australian base at Nui Dat in 1967

Free fire

"Accident"

Courier Mail, 10 August 1976.

The other narrator present at this ANZAC Day occurrence initially refused to discuss the ambush at all. However, after a discussion off tape, he gave the following explanation:

> I'd like to backtrack. There was a question that Ben asked me earlier about the civvies ambush, and I said to him at the time 'I'm not going to talk about it.' The reason I didn't want to talk about it was it affected Ben badly, and I didn't want to offend him, so therefore I said to him 'I'm not going to talk about it.' I've thought about it since, spoken to Ben about it, and I'll now speak about it because quite frankly I don't believe that we were in the wrong. We were in the right when we opened that ambush up, because we were 1000 metres away from the nearest village; we had a dark to dawn curfew on all civvies; anything that moved in that period was enemy. When we opened the ambush up, when we had our targets in the killing area, it was just starting to break first light; and in that situation, I have no problems at all. I justified it to myself then, and I'll do it again, now. We were right in opening that ambush up. It was unfortunate that civvies, both old and young were caught up in it, but they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. I'd just like to clear that point, because I know it affected Ben. It didn't worry me at all, and it still doesn't worry me today on that same issue. But we'll move on from there.[64]

This was the total of his words on the incident except for an emphatic 'No' earlier. He spoke about me in the third person as though he was correcting the record. He discloses it was an operational accident rather than intentional killing of civilians. He had set the record straight and he was not going to discuss it any further and the interview moved on as he had requested.

The majority of the platoon was censorious of the machine gunner, who initiated the ambush. As a participant said:

> To this day, from what I've heard from others involved in that action it was totally unnecessary. The bloke on the machine gun was told not to fire by his Number 2, they were civilians, and he just opened up and I think we know who that person was ...

Later the same participant makes the comment:

> Going back to the machine gunner (name given) I do remember now being told later on that he [the man with the stick] aimed and, it may have been the machine gun second in command, that he thought it was a rifle and you shoot first and ask questions later …[65]

The soldier who most likely fired the first shot died before he could be interviewed. On this patrol the usual machine gunner was absent and he volunteered to take this position. His widow gave very specific details of this incident, telling me that she had learnt about the ambush by listening to her husband talking in his sleep. She claimed that he had never discussed the matter with her. Her knowledge was remarkably accurate and detailed.

Yet another participant, the number two on the machine gun, said:

> I can remember the fuckin' stick and I thought it was a rifle.
>
> Well he was about from here to that post away from me. I could see the stick and I just kept quiet and looking around everybody and then someone opened up and that was it. Because they must have seen the same thing but I could see it was a stick. So everyone just opened up ...
>
> **Interviewer**: It looked like a rifle?
>
> **Interviewee**: Yeah it did. Once one bullet fired everyone went. All they needed was one bloke to pull the trigger.[66]

This participant's testimony suggests that he had seen what he believed to be a weapon, but had then identified it as a stick, before the firing started. He did not know what to do and was considering this aspect when the ambush was sprung. Confusion seems to be the one consistent feature of the narratives.

One participant brings the confusion theme out while suggesting that others were controlling the patrol:

> … they were supposed to be in an unauthorised zone or something. No, we were never told anything; it was all covered up wasn't it? I think after that they decided it was time for us to go back to camp; is that correct? They thought that we'd had enough by then and we had.[67]

Another remembers:

> And we had to get up and fuck off and head straight back to Nui Dat. Yeah; straight back.[68]

One participant is certain that he had killed two young girls that day. Their wounds were consistent with the ballistics of his weapon. I was amazed by the detail the veteran was able to remember:

> To this day I believe I was responsible for killing two teenage girls. I was the only one in the unit [sic] with an armalite and one of the girls had a bullet in the head, just a little black spot; if she had been hit with a 7.62 she would have had a hole in the back of her head and there was nothing. The other one was the

> same situation, shot in the chest just above the breast and there again just a little black hole and the size of an adult Vietnamese from that range a 7.62 would have taken half her back out, but there was nothing, just those two little black holes. I was the only one with an armalite, there were no F1s, no 9 Mil weapons there that day; the rest are one M60 or me with the armalite.[69]

After the platoon had returned to base, one participant threw his machine gun down in front of the platoon sergeant and exclaimed, 'I am a murderer.'[70] The sergeant addressed him by his first name and said, 'Pick up that machine gun and come to my tent.'[71] The participant did so and they had a discussion about civilians killing a soldier. The sergeant stated that these civilians were in a prohibited area and could have been VC supporters. He then advised the soldier he would take no action over the mishandling of his machine gun if the soldier went and cleaned the weapon and relaxed while pondering the sergeant´s advice.

After return to Australia, another participant had this experience during a visit to the local markets:

> I remember one day down here at the markets when I was going through a rough time, an Asian woman in a blue shirt like that woman had on came walking through the crowd and you know I really believed it was her. I thought she was going to come over and tell me off. I thought, she's gonna fuckin' give me an earful that woman, that's how my head had gone stupid.[72]

Discussion

While my research presents a less than glowing picture of our battlefield experience, it is not my intention to question the courage or bravery of our soldiers. Some historians may challenge this research because it ventures into the psychological realm. The details embedded in these oral histories are the narrators' realities, and in this case the facts tallied with the commander's diary and other official documents. At the same time it must be accepted that oral histories are not necessarily the absolute truth. Anyone dismissing oral history because the narrators detail some mythical explanations may be discarding some good primary source material.

The keynote speaker at the 2014 Barcelona International Oral History Conference[73] stated that people who have a hidden history which is brought into the public record are living in heaven, for their hidden history had been recognised. This research suggests that a hidden history which continues to be denied puts the participants of that history into a living hell, as their life is not recognised, especially if that denial comes from official sources.

One member of the ambush patrol refused to take part in this research for he did not want the story of the Bamboo Pickers or another incident not explored in this article to be known in his hometown. He lives in fear of his history in the war being exposed, and shown to be different from the sanitised version of the Vietnam ANZAC legend. He lives this legend in various clubs, but lives in fear of exposure.

The longest and the shortest speakers about this incident had made contact with me some time before the Welcome March in 1983.[74] They had formed working relationships with me. One was where cooperation between two government departments was the basis for our friendship renewal, and the other was co-membership on a committee of a branch of the Royal Australian Regiment. This later narrator arranged for my appointment as our battalion representative. Both relationships were on an equal basis, rather than one being in a position of authority as was the case in our time on the battlefield.[75] This equality was demonstrated by one exploring the Bamboo Pickers incident taking as much time as he wished, while the other was prepared to dismiss the incident as it took the gloss off his ANZAC legend.

This later narrator preferred providing a positive image of his Vietnam experience, like the majority of my narrators. I was forced to ask questions to elicit discussion of negative aspects of their war service. The need to keep parts of his history hidden was made evident; he had written a chapter in Bill Parry's book *Just A Nasho*.[76] He wrote about his life as a national serviceman and he cited two incidents, both of which fitted 'the Bean template' for ANZAC military history.[77] His refusal to discuss unpleasant aspects of our life on the battlefield is supported by non-participant D, who stated that this type of incident should not be discussed. However, this person goes on to discuss the incident, thus illustrating Portelli's thesis that opposing parties are trying to win the other party and the readers to their point of view.

Alistair Thomson's hypothesis that veterans tend to craft a history they can live with became clear to me when presented with peer review comments about this article. Most comments touched the points that I was keeping hidden in my own narrative. The reviewers were not pointing to my lack of disclosure, but rather raising points to improve the article. However, when I reflected on the comments there were areas that needed to be discussed that I was hoping to leave undiscovered. These comments have resulted in additions and better explanations in this article. Some material would not have been included if the article had it not been peer-reviewed.

Early childhood taboos clash with Army training to kill, and this causes conflicts in remembering, especially when it involves the killing of women and children. This dilemma is minimised by embracing the national legend; however this is not a lasting solution to alleviating pain.

Amongst the platoon, there was acknowledgment of the effect of the ambush on me, and I was aware that this could introduce a bias into this research. Where the narrators were attuned to my sense of guilt, they did adjust their narratives to fit what they thought I needed to hear, being careful not to offend me. The participant, who initially refused to say anything about the ambush, changed his mind after I stated that I would not be upset by discussion about the incident. He was not alone in acknowledging my psychological state after the incident, and another soldier claimed I had become a changed person after the incident. There seemed to be a concession that most of my soldiers knew I was distressed by the incident, and as a result they were prepared to comment when I questioned them on it. I was an impediment to full discussion, it seemed.

Many of the narrators who took part in the ambush were angry. A number stated that the system failed to support them and their mates during the public disclosures on civilian deaths. In this case, these oral history narratives may correct the speculation and ill-founded assertions of both the politicians and the media reports of August 1976.

It seems as though they had to place their anger, shame and guilt onto a scapegoat. They found two. The machine gunner who sprung the ambush and the system which the soldiers believed had not been honest with them. Anger is clearly present in the narratives, and the guilt and shame are less obvious but suggested by the fact that most did not wish to discuss the matter, and had to be questioned to obtain information. Yet all are sure that the rules of engagement were observed.[78]

Conclusion

My narrators preferred providing a positive image of their Vietnam experience and I was forced to ask questions to elicit discussion on negative aspects of their war service. While my research presents a less than glowing picture of our battlefield, participants' courage or bravery is not questioned. The details embedded in these oral histories are the narrators' realities, and the facts tallied with the commander's diary and other official documents. Oral histories can be accepted as a perceived truth.

When telling their stories, veterans tended to prefer to follow the theme of the national myth, the ANZAC legend. In this research the majority avoided disturbing and unpalatable memories of the incident in question. They demonstrate Thomson's hypothesis that memories are composed so the owner can live with them. A non-participant interviewer may never have been told about the 'ambush' incident.

(Endnotes)

1 Alessandro Portelli, *The Order has been Carried out: History, Memory and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome*, Palgrave MacMillan, Hampshire, 2007.

2 Terry Burstall, *A Soldier Returns,* University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1990, pp. 180-181; Terry Burstall, *Vietnam: The Australian Dilemma,* University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1993, p.102; Kenneth Maddock, 'Going over the Limit?' in Kenneth Maddock (ed),*Memories of Vietnam,* Random House, Milsons Point, 1991, pp. 152-153; Tim Colebatch and Prue Innes, 'Australians Massacred 27 Viets,' *The Age*, Melbourne, 2 August 1970, p. 4; Kevin Keliher, 'Atrocity Is On File,' *Sunday Sun,* Brisbane, 8 August 1976, pp. 1 & 4; AUP 'Four Viets Killed in Australian Ambush,' *The Courier,* Ballarat, 10 August 1976, p. 2; Unidentified, 'Deaths of 4 Vietnamese An Accident,' *The Examiner,* Launceston, 10 August 1976, p. 2; 'Diggers Thought Stick Was Gun,' *The Mercury,* 10 August 1976, p. 2; Unidentified, 'Our Men killed Civilians,' *The Advertiser,* Adelaide, 10 August 1976, p. 3; Unidentified, 'Australians Kill 4 Unarmed,' *Western Australian News,* Perth, 10 August 1976, p. 22.

3 Garry McKay, *Fragments of Vietnam: an oral history of Australians at war*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1992.

4 Alistair Thomson, *ANZAC Memories: Living with the Legend,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994, p. 239.

5 *ibid*, p. 228.

6 *ibid*.

7 Patrick Hagopian, 'Voices from Vietnam: Veterans' Oral Histories in the Classroom,' in *The Journal of American History,* September 2000, p. 595.

8 Richard Bigwood and Andrew Bigwood, *We Were Reos Australian Infantry in Vietnam,* Xlibris Corporation, www.xlibris.com.au, USA, 2011. Paul Ham, *Vietnam: The Australian War*, HarperCollins, Pymble, 2007, pp. 134, 153, 196, 537.

9 Ian McNeill, *To Long Tan,* Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1993, p. 241.

10 *ibid.,* pp. 242, 260-261.

11 *ibid.,* pp. 242.

12 The following references explain a free fire zone: Bigwood and Bigwood, *op.cit.*, p. 107; Ham, *op.cit.*, pp. 134, 153, 196, 537; McNeill, *op.cit.,* p. 241. Locating incident in free fire zone: Unidentified, 'Civilians Killed By Troops', *Courier Mail,* Brisbane, 10 August 1976, p. 1; Our Defence Reporter, 'Killen Rejects New Massacre Claim,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney, 10 August 1976, p. 4; Unidentified, 'Defence Minister Denies Massacre,' *Illawarra Mercury*, Wollongong, 10 August 1976, p. 3; Unidentified, 'Killen Denies Massacre claim,' *The Australian*, Sydney, 10 August 1976, p. 5; Unidentified, 'Massacre Denial by Killen,' *Canberra Times*, Canberra, 10 August 1976, p. 7; AUP, Canberra, 'Four Viets Killed In Australian Ambush,' *Ballarat Courier*, Ballarat, 10 August 1976, p. 2.

13 Burstall, *Vietnam: The Australian Dilemma.*, pp. 144-150. Burstall, *A Soldier Returns*, pp. 173-84; McNeill, *op.cit.*, pp. 241, 243.

14 1 ATF Rear Patrol Programme For The Period dated 200800H Oct to 260800H Oct 67. Located on https://static.awm.gov.au/images/collection/bundled/RCDIG1029937.pdf, accessed 31 December 2013.

15 2 RAR Commander's Diary, AWM 95-7-2-45 part 1, 1 ATF Rear Patrol Programme for the period 200800H to 260800H, dated 19 October 1967, Folio 26.

16 'Four Viets Killed in Australian Ambush,' *Ballarat Courier, op.cit*.; 'Deaths Of 4 Vietnamese An Accident,' *The Examiner, op.cit*.; 'Diggers Thought Stick Was Gun,' *The Mercury, op.cit*.

17 E B Morris, Patrol Commander's Report dated 23 October 1967.

18 This was in accordance with the Task Patrol Plan 200800H October 1967 to 260800H October 1967.

19 Barry Corse interview by Ben Morris, West Perth, 23/01/09, tape and transcript held by author.

20 https:// awm.gov.au/images/collection/bundled/RCDIG1029937.pdf last accessed on 31/12/2013.

21 Brian Donald Gordon, interviewed by Ben Morris, Minden, 18 April 2007, tape and transcript held by author.

22 Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1997, Madison Wisconsin, p. 139.

23 W F Mandle, *Going It Alone*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1978.

24 Gary McKay, *Delta Four, Australian Riflemen in Vietnam*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest NSW, 1996; Terry Burstall, *Vietnam: The Australian Dilemma, op.cit.,* pp. 224-25; Lex McAulay, *The Battle of Long Tan: The Legend of ANZAC Upheld,* Arrow Books, London, 1987; Peter Pierce, Jeffrey Grey, Jeff Doyle, *Vietnam Days: Australia and the Impact of Vietnam,* Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1991, p. 208.

25 Alessandro Portelli, Mesa 17, 'Power and Democracy,' *International Oral History Association Conference*, Barcelona, 10 July 2014.

26 Thomson, *op.cit.*, p. 223.

27 Colebatch and Innes, 'Australians Massacred 27 Viets,' *The Age, op.cit*.

28 Defence Reporter, 'Killen denies Viet Killings,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sydney, 3 August 1976, p. 1.

29 Hugh Crawford and Toni McRae, 'Massacre Inquiry,' *The Sun,* Sydney, 2 August, 1976, p. 1; Unidentified, 'Probe Massacre says Killen,' *Daily Mirror*, Sydney, 2 August 1976, p. 2.

30 Colebatch and Innes, 'Australians Massacred 27 Viets', *The Age, op.cit*. Kenneth Maddock and Barry Wright, *War: Australia and Vietnam*, Harper Row, Sydney, 1987, pp. 293-298.

31 Gary Kulik, *War Stories: False Atrocity Tales, Swift Boaters, and Winter Soldiers - What Really Happened in Vietnam,* Potomac Books, Washington, 2009, pp. 24, 130-131; Robert A Hall, *Combat Battalion, The Eighth Battalion in Vietnam,* Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 2000, pp. 212-215.

32 Unidentified, 'Airman Alleges Viet Atrocity,' *The Australian*, Sydney, 6 August 1976, p. 3.

33 Kehiler, 'Atrocity Is On File,' *Brisbane Sunday Sun*, Brisbane, 1, p. 8; Capital Comment, 'Dr. Jim Shot His Bolt,' *Sunday Telegraph,* Sydney, 8 August 1976, p. 44; Onlooker, Candid Comment, 'Cairns Canard,' *Sun Herald*, Sydney, p.46.

34 This was a phone call by then 57006 Brigadier David Matheson Butler, DSO then DGOP at approximately 1030hrs, 8 August 1976.

35 Later Official Historian.

36 June Heffron, *This Day Tonight*, 9 August 1976, Unidentified, 'Four Viets Killed In Australian Ambush,' p. 2; Unidentified, Civilians Killed by Troops,' *The Courier Mail*, Brisbane, 10 August 1976, p. 3; Unidentified, 'Defence Minister Denies Massacre,' *Illawarra Mercury,* Wollongong, p. 4; Unidentified, 'Killen Rejects New Massacre Claim,' *Sydney Morning Herald,* Sydney, p. 5; Unidentified, 'Our Men Killed Civilians,' *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, 10 August 1976, p. 6; Unidentified, 'Killen Denies Massacre Claim,' *The Australian*, 10 August 1976, p. 5.

37 Unidentified, 'Killen Says No To Vietnam Inquiry,' *Canberra Times* 6 August 1976, p. 6; Unidentified, 'No Viet Probe Yet, Says Killen,' *NT News,* Darwin, August 1976, pp. 1, 6.

38 http://www.awm.gov.au/research/guides/seasia.asp accessed 31 December 2013.

39 Thomson, *op.cit.*, p. 233. Thomson's narrators mention a theme of 'setting the record straight.'

40 Anonymous, participant A, interviewed by Ben Morris, name and date withheld, tape and transcript held by author.

41 Anonymous, non-participant D, interviewed by Ben Morris, name and date withheld, tape and transcript held by author.

42 *ibid*.

43 See for example, Kathryn Anderson and Dana C Jack, 'Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and analyses,' in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (eds), Routledge, London, pp. 11-26; Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd edn., Routledge, Abingdon, 2009, pp. 129-142; Lorina Barker, '"Hangin' out and yarnin':" reflecting on the experience of collecting oral histories,' *History Australia*, vol. 5, no. 1, April 2008, pp. 9.1-9.9; Caroline Humphrey, 'Insider-Outsider: Activating the Hyphen,' *University of Hull, UK Action Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2007, pp. 11-16; Akemi Kikumura, 'Family Life Histories: A Collaborative Approach,' in *Oral History Review*, no. 14, 1986, pp. 1-7; Susan H. Armitage and Sherna Berger Gluck, 'Reflections on Women's Oral History,' in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader,* 2nd edn., Routledge, Abingdon, 2009, pp. 73-82.

44 Fred H Allison, 'Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perspectives over Time,' *The Oral History Review* **,** vol. 31, no. 2, 2004, pp. 69–83.

45 Nui Dat was the site of the Australian Task Force base during the Australian involvement in Vietnam.

46 Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, p. 12.

47 Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia, op.cit.,* p. 9.

4 Alistair Thomson, *op.cit.*, pp. 24-25; Graham Seal, *Inventing ANZAC: The Digger and National Methodology*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 2004, pp. 3-8.

49 Thomson, *op.cit.*, p. 233.

50 Thomson, *ibid.*, also 'on the record' and 'off the record', p. 231.

51 Lynn Nadel and W. Jake Jacobs, 'Traumatic Memory Is Special,' *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, vol. 7, no. 5, October 1998, pp. 154-157.

52 Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out, op.cit.*, p. 120.

53 Gerard Windsor, *All Day Long The Noise of Battle*, Murdoch Books, Millers Point, NSW, 2011, p. 22.

54 Anonymous, participant B, interviewed by Ben Morris, name and date withheld, tape and transcript held by author.

55 *ibid*.

56 Anonymous, non-participant D, *op.cit*.

57 *ibid*.

58 1 ATF Rear Patrol Programme For The Period dated 200800H Oct to 260800H Oct 67. Located on https://static.awm.gov.au/images/collection/bundled/RCDIG1029937.pdf, accessed 31 December 2013.

59 AWM 95-1-4-61 October 1967 1 ATF Commander's Diary serial 3107 dated 23 October 1967.

60 AWM 95-1-4-61 October 1967; Unidentified, interviewed by Ben Morris, name and date withheld, tape and transcript held by author.

61 Lex McAulay 'Myths of the Vietnam War,' in *Wartime: The Official Magazine of the Australian War Memorial,* no. 20, 2002, pp. 13-14; Stuart Rintoul, *Ashes of Vietnam*, William Heinemann, Richmond Vic, 1988, p. 112; Terry Wallace, *Bloods, An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans,* Random House, New York, c1984, pp. 19-31.

62 Patrick Hagopian, 'Voices from Vietnam: Veterans' Oral Histories in the Classroom,' in *The Journal of American History,* September 2000, p. 601.

63 Portelli, *Battle of Valle Guilia, op.cit.*, p. 12.

64 Anonymous, participant E, interviewed by Ben Morris, name and date withheld, tape and transcript held by author.

65 Anonymous, participant A, *op.cit*.

66 Anonymous, participant F, interview by Ben Morris, name and date withheld, tape and transcript held by author.

67 Anonymous, participant G, interview by Ben Morris, name and date withheld, tape and transcript held by author.

68 Anonymous, participant F, *op.cit*.

69 Anonymous, participant A, *op.cit*.

70 Anonymous, participant H, interviewed by Ben Morris, name and date withheld, tape and transcript held by author.

71 James Edward Langham, interview by Ben Morris, Townsville, 31 July 2012, tape and transcript held by author.

72 Anonymous, participant B, *op.cit*.

73 Mercedes Villanova, 'Principlio y final de un sueno, La Barcelona republicans entre 1931 y 1939', Congreso Historia Oral, Barcelona, 9 July 2014.

74 http://www.auspsa.org.au/sites/default/files/welcome_home_nicholas_bromfield.pdf, accessed 01 August 2014.

75 Michael Frisch, 'Sharing authority: Oral history and the Collaborative Process,' *The Oral History Review;* Winter 2003, p. 30; Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia, op.cit.,* pp. 58-60, 268; Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Lugi Trusulli: Form and Meaning in Oral History,* State University of New York Press, Albany, 1991, pp. xii, xvi, 31.

76 Ross Horne, 'A Nasho's Story,' in Bill Parry, *Just A Nasho,* Mr W O Parry, 36 Ruby Street, Mango Hill, Self-Published, 2011, p. 38.

77 D A Kent, 'The ANZAC book and The ANZAC Legend: C E W Bean as editor and image-maker,' in *Historical* Studies, vol. 21, no. 84, 1985, pp. 376-390; Alistair Thomson, *ANZAC* Memories, 2nd edn., 2013, pp. 54-55, 233, 236-237; Frank Bongiorno, Labour and Anzac: Historical Reflections, *Honest History Lecture Series*, Manning Clark House, 15 June 2014. Charles Edward Woodrow Bean was the first official Australian war correspondent. He focussed on the heroic achievements of Australian soldiers at Gallipoli to distract from the unpalatable aspects of warfare, including defeats, death, disasters and the sheer brutality of war. Bean's image is of a brave bronze patriotic bushman who marched off to war, fought courageously and returned home to a hero's welcome.

78 John Polkinghorne, interviewed by Ben Morris, Darwin, 9 June 2008, tape and transcript held by author. His comments appear in 'Deaths of 4 Vietnamese an Accident,' *The Examiner, op.cit.*; 'Our Men Killed Civilians,' *The Advertiser, op.cit*. 'Australians Kill 4 Unarmed,' *Western Australian News, op.cit*.; 'Civilians Killed By Troops,' *Courier Mail, op.cit*.

Reviews and book notes

Review

Dino Hodge, *Don Dunstan. Intimacy and liberty. A political biography,* Wakefield Press, Kent Town, South Australia, 2014. 410 pages, and numerous photographic plates. ISBN 978 1 74305 296 9

Don Dunstan, born in 1926, achieved an iconic status in Australian political and social history, both in his parliamentary career from 1953 to 1979 which included several terms as Premier of South Australia, and subsequently till his death in 1999, so it is remarkable that no biography has appeared previously. Dr Hodge quotes an observation by Neal Blewett in 2011 (pp. 5–6):

> What I would say is that it is an extraordinarily difficult biography to write because you have to face up to the sexual issues. I tend to agree … that Dunstan was very much a bisexual figure. But you have to face up to that because you can't understand many of the aspects of the politics of the period without doing it – and that is an extremely difficult task. So that, I think, may explain why a biography hasn't been written. Because often you can write just a political biography just about the politics; I think with Dunstan you've got to deal with these other issues as well. So it's a very tough thing to do.[1]

Hodge's approach in taking up this tall order of writing a political biography of Dunstan is that:

> … [it] must take into account the pre-existing cultural and political context regarding human sexuality and intimacy in order to understand the scope and importance of his parliamentary work, and the backlash he provoked. This book's focus on Dunstan addresses homosexuality with regard to social policy, police behaviour and accountability, moral panics, and legislative and cultural change. It additionally explores his intimate life, although reference to the considerable amount of sensitive material in the archives for the purpose of titillation or the outing of people is not of relevance here. (p. 8)

Rudolph Nureyev formed a close friendship with Dunstan that endured for more than two decades. When Dunstan settled in Adelaide with Steven Cheng, Nureyev visited them at their Norwood home. *(Courtesy of Steven Cheng.)*

The book begins by addressing key fields of public discourse about homosexuality in the twentieth century – knowledge of these issues and how they were manipulated being fundamental for understanding the problems Dunstan sought to solve, and to interpret the resistance he encountered. Subsequently the book documents his parliamentary work in achieving justice for homosexual citizens against the profound tide of homophobia in social policy, and seeks to establish a correct record of the 1975 decriminalisation of homosexuality in South Australia, the first such achievement in any Australian jurisdiction. The final section examines the nexus between Dunstan's private and public lives.

What emerges is a meticulously researched and detailed work which is richly sourced in a mass of archival and documentary material, which includes nearly 100 cited oral history interviews. Hodge has been a particularly active oral historian since the mid-1990s, and among other work has previously published two books sourced primarily in his own recorded interviews. About a third of those informing this book were his own. They were supplemented by over a dozen from the Don Dunstan Foundation's collections, and – particularly

Australian expatriates in Fiji during the 1920s and 1930s enjoyed a comfortable colonial lifestyle that provided Don and older sister Beth with a relaxed childhood. *(Courtesy of Bronwen Dohnt.)*

for the cultural and political context of homophobia and the discrimination, persecution and prosecution of homosexuals – he draws on over thirty recorded by the late John Lee, held in the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives (Melbourne).

Oral history brings a dimension beyond the formal documentary record, and here it is exemplary in revealing the human experience that is often beyond the bare facts and dates, and deepens our understanding of how and why events played out as they did. The earlier period examined by Hodge brings home starkly the degree of injustice and degradation imposed on the homosexual community, but it also serves to confirm the reality of the systemic, official abuse that many in authority sought blatantly to deny or justify.

For me, there was also a real pleasure to be had in this book because of the seventy or so photographs reproduced. They include wonderfully evocative images of Dunstan's parents in 1916, family life growing up, his early marriage to Greta (née Ellis) and their children, and a host of political and personal friends. Particularly poignant are images of Dunstan with his second wife, Adele Koh (who died of cancer early in their marriage and at a time of extraordinary pressure in his political life and career) and with Steven Cheng, his partner during his final years. In biographies I find myself constantly flipping through pages to find images of people as their part in the narrative is explored – there is a congruence in the two similar urges to see images of people and to read their actual words as recorded.

Dunstan's promotion of civil liberties and reforms to anti-discrimination law sprang from his humanist value system as a social democrat, and beyond social policy primarily affecting the rights of homosexual citizens, he was widely reformist on a broad front in a conservative and hitherto discriminatory society, implementing a range of policies in areas such as women's rights and Indigenous land rights, support for multiculturalism, electoral reform and environmental protection. His promotion of arts and culture is legendary.

The legend also encompasses extraordinary events such as the sacking of a police commissioner, the burning of over forty thousand Police Special Branch files on citizens that had been compiled illegally (in a cemetery incinerator with a spark arrester to ensure everything was destroyed) that took several weeks, and the famous, so-called pink shorts he wore one day in parliament. They were actually pale rose, and the cover of this book is dominated by a photo of Dunstan in rose shorts and white t-shirt, with the head and lower legs cropped from the image. The point of the missing head, for this author, is that:

> the "pink shorts" effect … blinkers perceptions. … The pink shorts may represent Dunstan's performative and, at times, irrationally exuberant characteristics, but they do not provide insight into the forces that shaped his views on morality, social justice and liberty, and nor do they symbolise the scope and impact of the full range of his actions and achievements (p. 7).

In this book, the detail and narrative presented by the author definitely achieves 'a more complex, thorough and accurate analysis' (p. 7) for which he was aiming.

The question for any biography is, of course, how well we understand the subject through reading it. How well can understanding of a complex, highly intelligent and energetic character like Dunstan be adequately conveyed? Further, how congruent are the political history and its explication with the portraiture of a

Dunstan married his research assistant Adele Koh in a private civil ceremony at his Norwood home on 22 December 1976. Adele decided against the tradition of the bride serving tea to guests, describing the ritual 'as a symbol of subservience'. (Courtesy of Bronwen Dohnt.)

complex personality? Hodge has objectively charted a path through the minutiae of the political fray, and while detailing how achievements were won, has not glossed over Dunstan's mis-steps – for example, the appointment of a new police commissioner who turned out to be a duplicitous homophobe; or open association with a flamboyant gay man who offended even his friends and allies. In relating much of his personal life, in the final section of the book in particular, a real balance has been achieved in melding the public and personal character of this extraordinary Australian. By following the sexuality aspects of social policy as a primary lens in this story Hodge has given us a substantial appreciation of Dunstan's character in its political context, so that:

> … we can then begin, in future biographies, the bigger task of interpreting the extent to which all of Dunstan's many and diverse political contributions created tangible and lasting benefits (p. 9).

Francis Good
Nowra NSW

(Endnotes)

1 Neal Blewett, 'The Dunstan Decade', (speech in the Turning Points in South Australian History public lecture series, School of History and Politics, University of Adelaide, 31 August 2011).

Review

Lee Haring, *How to Read a Folktale: The 'Ibonia' Epic from Madagascar*, Open Book Publishers, Cambridge, UK, 2013. 153 pages. ISBN: 978-1-909254-06-0

Way back in 1994 Professor Lee Haring of the City University of New York published How to Read a Folktale: The 'Ibonia' Epic from Madagascar. An expert on Indian Ocean traditions, Haring is now retired but has recently published an updated, revised and expanded version of the book.

The 'Ibonian epic,' as this complex of related stories and variants is known, is a combination of the hero tale and the fairy tale spiced with riddles and poetry. All these elements are expanded into an enormous yarn that defies the sorts of genre descriptions just given. The epic was first collected during the era of European colonization of Madagascar and so has also come to be seen as a narrative of anti-colonialism.

As this inadequate description suggests, this is one hell of a story. And Haring tells it well while also suggesting ways to 'read' this oral epic in what is a model of scholarly publication overcoming, as far as possible, the problems of rendering an oral performance into a printed text. As the author states in his Introduction:

> I introduce to you a longish story containing adventures, self-praise, insults, jokes, heroic challenges, love scenes, and poetry. Here I answer two questions: 'What is it?' and 'How do I read it?' You might decide it is a love story featuring the hero's search and struggle for a wife, or a wonder tale emphasising supernatural belief and prophecy, or a defence of conjugal fidelity, or an agglomeration of psychoanalytic symbols, or a symbolic exposition of the political ideology of a group of people you do not know anything about. You would be right every time.' (Section 1)

The book begins with Haring explaining what it is all about and how we should approach the epic. There is particular attention given to the variety of versions, their texture, structure and the historical and cultural contexts in which the epic originated and through which it has since circulated. Then one version of the epic is given in full, followed by an Appendix of different versions recorded from the seventeenth century into the 1990s. As this book is published in digital as well as print forms, the publishers also maintain a website of related materials, mainly various versions in their original translated languages, as well as a 1980s recording of a performance of Haring's own translation. Readers can also post comments on the book, if they wish.

The basic storyline involves the conception and birth of the hero, Ibonia. This is a shortened version of his full Malagasy name and means 'He of the clear and captivating glance.' Ibonia wants to be married to the alluring Joy-Giving or ('Girl of Grace'), who is abducted by Stone Man. After Ibonia trounces a character called Great Echo in some elaborate verbal dueling, Great Echo gives Ibonia the secrets he will need to succeed in his quest to rescue Joy-Giving. Ibonia's mother then enters the frame, encouraging him to slay monsters, animal and human, in efforts to tempt him away from the quest for his beloved. But, as a proper hero should, Ibonia refuses these blandishments and sets off to find and claim Joy-Giving. The story then follows him overcoming many obstacles and beating many challenges until his true identity is revealed through his exceptional musical and game-playing skills. There is a penultimate battle with Stone Man, in which Ibonia triumphs, retrieves Joy-Giving, they marry, Ibonia prescribes laws for his people, then dies peacefully.

This basic plot varies considerably among different Madagascan cultural groups. Also, various other story elements and full tales have been injected into some versions over time. Like most oral traditions, the Ibonia epic has mingled with print and literary interventions, revisions, elements of which have then been once again adapted into the oral tradition for later generations of collectors to record. We see similar processes occurring in relation to the fairy tale tradition of European cultures and in pretty well every

other genre of oral expression. Rather than leading to the 'degeneration' of some imagined pure oral original, these processes are now recognised as essential and important dimensions of the persistence and meanings of traditional narratives over time and space. Haring deals with notions of 'authenticity,' as well as those of structure, texture and context. The motifs, or narrative elements, within the tale are identified in the intertextual correlations folklorists often use. These illuminate the broader cultural connections between the epic and other folktale traditions of the world, though tell us little about the specific meanings of the story for those who tell and hear it. (Bias note: I'm not a fan of motif indexes.)

Haring's analysis and discussion of the epic goes well beyond assembling motifs, however, and deals with the many complexities involved with a deep understanding of this narrative complex. It is clearly the result of many years of thinking about the Ibonia epic, its history and many meanings.

The depth of discussion and the relatively specialised nature of the issues involved make this a book aimed at those especially interested in the scholarship of traditional narrative. Haring nevertheless conveys his deep attachment to these materials, which are essentially a great story from the vast stock of the world's oral literatures. It is not possible to convey the essence of this many-faceted story, but a small taste will hopefully give an idea of the epic (in translation, of course). This is the concluding section of Haring's central version in which Ibonia lays down laws for his people and bids them farewell:

> Ibonia and Girl of Grace stayed married about ten years. About three years before his death, he declared his will to his father and mother, his wife and children, and all the people in and around Iliolava. He said:
>
> This I declare to you: soon I am to return to the 'place of lying down.' Close at hand is the day when Ibonia will be removed and Inabo [another of his names] will go the way of all those whose doors face west [the dead].
>
> That is a fate that disheartens one's manhood.
>
> For to the earth we return.
>
> Inabo is not of those who are buried to rot, he is of those who are planted to grow,
>
> dead by day, alive by night.
>
> Inabo's return is coming.
>
> These then are the orders I leave you.
> First of things is marriage.
> If you are a prince
> if you are a ruler
> if you are a governor
> if you are a spokesman
> do not untie the bonds of marriage!
> The marriage tie is binding even unto death.
> Do not divide it.'
> (This admonition, it is said, gave marriage the importance it has.)
>
> 'Second, listen. I shall change my name
> for one's name on earth does not go back to heaven.
> Before the lord of heaven all things are new.
> My grandfather is holy.
> These will be my names:
> Lightning-Over-Half-the-Earth
> Gashed-Earth
> Thunderer-Heard-Afar.
>
> Now listen, all of you.
> When there is thunder
> when the skies weep
> when the rain falls
> lament, O Beautiful-Rich,
> for that will be your son,
> Thunderer-Heard-Afar.'
>
> (That, it is said, was the first time it was said, 'It is a bad day for old women,' when it thunders.)
>
> And when the three years had passed — Ibonia had said, "I will die when three years have passed" — then he died.

Overall, How to Read a Folktale is a fine work that makes a substantial contribution to the study of traditional narrative. It will be read with profit by scholars and their students for a very long time.

Professor Graham Seal,
Curtin University, g.seal@curtin.edu.au

Review

Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*, New Edition, Monash University Publishing, Clayton, 2013. 406 pages; illustrations, portraits. ISBN 978-1-921867-58-3

In the original edition of *Anzac Memories*, published in 1994, we are introduced to Thomson's paternal grandfather, Hector, an enthusiastic 1914 volunteer into the Australian Light Horse who saw action in Palestine and Sinai where he was awarded the Military Medal. In Thomson's first telling, Hector is a peripheral figure, who died before his author grandson was born and who is rarely mentioned in family tradition. We are briefly told that Hector struggled in the post-war years, particularly during the Depression, after his wife's death, and that his 'troubled' life meant his two sons (one of whom is Thomson's father, David) had a 'hard and unhappy' childhood as Hector was periodically unable to work

and was regularly treated at the Caulfield Repatriation Hospital.

Twenty years later, in his new and extensively updated edition, Thomson expands on Hector's story and provides us with overwhelming evidence that, in the years and decades after his return from war, Hector experienced regular and debilitating episodes of memory loss, persistent vomiting, nervous exhaustion, social withdrawal and depression, a man described in testimony to the 'Repat' as 'a most serious and pitiful case'. Label it battle fatigue, neurasthenia, shell shock or bad nerves; as result of war, Hector suffered ongoing episodes of mental illness for the remainder of his life. To discover the explanation for these two versions of one returned solider of the Great War, Thomson invites the reader inside his family lore to uncover the controversial, poignant and deeply personal reasons that, until now, have prevented Hector's full story from being told.

In his introduction, Jay Winter notes the traditional triangulation of roles within oral history conversations: the interviewer, the interviewee at the time of inquisition and the interviewee's recall of their life at the specific time in the past under discussion. As Winter suggests, *Anzac Memories* provides a ground-breaking fourth addition to the mix – the interviewer's candid revisiting of his own beliefs, aims, abilities and frailties at the beginning, a generation ago, of a now distinguished career. It is a potent brew.

At its heart, *Anzac Memories* retains its power, so evident in the original, to explore ways in which the main subjects of extended interviews – Percy Bird, Bill Langham and Fred Farrall - composed, remembered, excised, censored and justified both their wartime and post-war experiences, beliefs, behaviours, decisions and ideology. Thomson identifies in his interviewees a compelling combination of both conscious and unconscious memory 'performing' whereby they, sometimes easily, sometimes awkwardly, attempted to enact their own life story within a dominant and conventional national narrative of 'ANZAC' (like Percy and to a certain extent, Bill) or to deliberately cut across the traditional tropes to not only challenge the mythology but to claim a prominent place in the oppositional discourse, like Fred, the soldier turned Communist anti-war activist.

Thomson's chapters examining his process of identifying and interviewing these ageing men, back in the 1980s, as a young and idealistic doctoral candidate, remain as in the original. His analysis evaluating both his interviewees' responses, and his own agency, in facilitating memory making is as astute as it was two decades ago. It is a masterful example of the power, limitations, vagaries and frustrations of oral history.

These original stories are now given renewed, and perhaps greater, relevance by Thomson's use of Repatriation files. Apart from those still restricted under the Thirty Year Rule, these are now available through the National Archives of Australia, and as Bruce Scates has recently noted, represent a largely uncatalogued and unexamined archive. The great value of the Repat files is that they not only contain official communication, but also medical reports, witness statements, uncensored observations and – most tantalisingly – copies of the correspondence explaining, demanding, requesting, pleading and begging from families, friends, workmates and referees, which provide the closest thing we have to a window into the intersection of the public and private lives of that generation.

One of the most consistent stories to come out of the Repat files is how often returned soldiers, back on home soil after more than four years away and keen to get the official rigmarole over and done with, had no realisation that the discharge medical in 1918 or 1919 would likely determine their level of credibility for a pension claim for the rest of their lives. Despite a documented serious eye injury, Bill Langham told a Medical Board in 1919 that he felt 'quite well' and was discharged from the AIF with 'Nil abnormal' and in 'A grade' health. Knowing his mother and young brother were waiting behind the gates, he told the doctors he 'didn't give a continental' what they wrote down so long as he could get going. Persistent eye problems prompted Bill to appeal his 'A' grading in 1927 and 1933. But the 1919 diagnosis stood as gospel. Finally, in 1975, a Returned Services League contact facilitated a review of Bill's case and Bill received a pension on the basis that his incapacity was judged at 10%, but as Bill himself wryly noted, it was '56 years too late.' While, like most government and medical archival files, the Repat resource is an unwieldy and notoriously difficult group of records to employ, Thomson achieves the balance between the extremes of literal translation and imaginative flights of fancy with aplomb.

But back to Hector, and the stigma and shame surrounding notions of mental illness and the prospect of inherited debility, which, for me, is a highlight of this volume. Thomson relates a harrowing tale of David's furious reaction to a suggestion that Hector's mental troubles be alluded to in the original book, claiming that if it had ever been known, his own [David's] acceptance into officer training in 1942 would have been blocked by the Army, that Thomson had 'betrayed' the values of David's comrades, that he was 'appalled' by the reference and 'demanded' it be removed. The oral historian has a number of – often competing – responsibilities: to his findings, his interviewee and those who may be hurt by the subject. Understandably, Thomson chose to omit inferences that would have caused his father further pain, although he admits that their relationship remained 'fractured' for some time. In the new edition, with David now experiencing a serious decline in health, Thomson

has found a way to gain his father's acceptance that Hector's is a story that needs to be told.

The social stigma attached to mental illness, and particularly institutionalisation, was not simply about 'madness' or 'insanity' itself; rather, it was the result of several complex, interlocking and complicated elements: eugenics, shock, ignominy, fear of rejection and, particularly, predisposition. Thomson evaluates both Hector's story and the intergenerational trauma of shame and dread embodied in David's reactions, with empathy and moving candour.

Thomson's gaze is not restricted to an outward viewing of his family, but is one he is able to focus on his own trajectory as an historian. Throughout the new introduction and the final two chapters in Part IV, Thomson does not shy away from what must be uncomfortable admissions and acceptances of his own preconceptions and naïveté as a young academic working to establish his place within the rigid discipline of history, while also pioneering a way of utilising oral testimony that had previously not been achieved. We now know that in the midst of this, he was also struggling with the burden that in acquiescing to David's censorship, he not only felt he had compromised the aim of the original study, but that he had 'ripped off the scab' that had 'unleashed angry, painful memories' for his father. Two decades later, he is able to remind – or perhaps console - us that 'sometimes you can't write the history that needs to be told.'

An historian indulging in reflections on the progression and evolution of his own interactions and thought processes runs the risk of either boring us to tears or irritating us with a self congratulatory stream of consciousness that reeks of conceit. This is neither, and the book is all the more emotive and memorable because of the measured way in which Thomson evokes the journey.

As 2015 approaches, Australia will be deluged with a great glut of sycophantic valorisation of a band of men, now long dead, who were not saints, and never wanted to see themselves as heroes. *Anzac Memories* is a wonderful antidote to the bland diet of one dimensional bushman larrikins storming the heights that will be forced down our throats over the next four years.

It is a riveting, and important, page turner that will appeal to general readers with a passion for the intersection of past and present in Australian culture and also to both professional and amateur historians, journalists and genealogists; a story is shaped by our own participation, and what is omitted is as important as what is included.

Dr Jen Roberts, University of Wollongong

Review

Kah Seng Loh, Stephen Dobbs and Ernest Koh (eds.), *Oral History in Southeast Asia: Memories and Fragments*, New York: Palgrave, 2013. 205 pages. ISBN 978-1-137-31166-5.

This new edited collection of oral history essays about several countries in Southeast Asia is a welcome one. It has been some time since an oral history collection was published that covered Southeast Asia. The last such work was published in 1998, an edited volume by Lim, Morrison and Kwa which discusses the theory and method of oral history and 'doing oral history' in Southeast Asia.[1] Unlike that particular collection, this one edited by Loh, Dobbs and Koh is more concerned with a range of case studies that illuminate the notion of the fragment, in accordance with the postcolonial theorist Gyanendra Pandey. In the introductory essay by Loh, Koh and Alistair Thomson, which sets up the collection, Pandey's deployment of the fragment concept is explained. The fragment can be understood as 'a trace of a lost history and a fracture within the dominant narrative,' which plays a role in 'challenging the dominant account and uncovering new perspectives.'[2] This book and the 1998 Lim, Morrison and Kwa both began as papers delivered at conferences hosted by Singapore's Institute of South East Asian Studies (ISEAS, and the Singapore Heritage Society in the case of the 2010 conference on which this book is based).

This book consists of ten chapters. The first chapter introduces the collection and is then followed by nine case study-based chapters dealing with Singapore, Malaya/Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. At the outset, it is explained as to what constitutes the region of Southeast Asia. Here the arbitrariness of the zone declared as Southeast Asia is shown yet again and the diversity of the region loosely defined as between India and China (an unsatisfactory definition) is acknowledged in this book. The book is clearly weighted in favour of Singapore and Malaysia. This heavy emphasis on Singapore and Malaysia is acknowledged by the editors, but they have tried to compensate through the addition of chapters, one each dealing with Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

In line with this concern to deal with the 'fragment,' part of this book's preoccupation is with recovering stories that do not fit the national narrative. As the introductory essay by Loh, Alistair Thomson and Koh also points out, oral history has become more important in accounting for the past in Southeast Asian societies, such as in discussing topics previously suppressed under authoritarian rule. The book also explores the interconnections between oral history, anthropology and heritage studies. In the first section on oral history and official history, Kevin Blackburn explores the intersection between family memories and state-constructed history in Singapore. Kah Seng Loh examines the withdrawal of the British military

and how this altered the working lives of groups of Singaporeans and the Singapore economy. One of the most interesting and complex essays is by Ernest Koh, who writes about the Malayan Chinese diaspora's contribution to the Second World War. Owing to the transnational nature of their contribution to the war effort, including fighting in Burma, China and Great Britain, their service could not be easily appropriated into official Singapore history and therefore tends to be underplayed.

The second section of the book, on memories of violence, consists of three chapters. As histories of violence and activism in Indonesia are my main research areas, I found this section of particular interest. In Southern Philippines in 1968 young Muslim men recruited by the Philippines government to destabilise neighbouring Sabah, part of Malaysia, rose up and were massacred in response. Curaming and Aljunied's chapter on the Jabidah massacre in the Philippines reflects on testimonies and interviews given by the sole survivor of the massacre, Jibin Arula. By examining Arula's statements over several years (not collected by the authors but featured in the media), the authors show the effects of time on remembering and how the narrator makes new meanings about his experiences in the process of recollection. This chapter is then followed by Damrongviteetham's on the 'Red Barrel' killings, those carried out against members and sympathisers of the Thai Communist Party in 1971-73 and a chapter by Leong Kar Yen on reflections on the 1948 Batang Kali Massacre of Malay villagers by British troops. Leong, and Curaming and Aljunied, as far as I am aware, did not conduct their own oral history work in writing these chapters, but rather reflected on interview material available in the public domain. The inclusion of these chapters confused me somewhat, as I had thought that oral history-based research papers were the basis of the book. In spite of these misgivings, the chapters were insightful in getting us to reconsider past incidents of violence and how these are remembered decades later.

The final section of the book returns to oral history interviews collected by the authors as sources. The first chapter in this section, by Emily Wellfelt, is concerned with how American anthropologist Cora du Bois is remembered in Alor, Eastern Indonesia – in Indonesia's only substantial appearance in this collection. Wellfelt simultaneously straddles two time periods with ease, describing Du Bois' time in Alor as well as how she is talked about by villagers. Her writing is crisp and lively and this chapter is easily the best-written in this collection. Nevertheless, given the centrality of oral history in Indonesia in the last 15 years for victims of the 1965-66 repression of the Indonesian Communist Party, the editors could have thought more carefully about the case studies to include.[3] While the introductory essay tries to allude to some of the key developments in the field in Southeast Asia, such as in the transition from authoritarianism, this needs greater reflection in the choice of case studies included in the collection.

The final two chapters deal with heritage preservation and its relationship with oral history. The history of a leprosy settlement at Sungai Buloh in Malaysia and arguments about its future are the focus of Chou Wen Loong and Ho Sok Fong's chapter. The authors are both involved in supporting the organisation pushing for the preservation of the settlement as a heritage site, the Save Valley of Hope Solidarity Group. It is a sensitive article that features the voices of the Valley of Hope's remaining residents and explores the dilemmas of heritage preservation of the site. Finally, Stephen Dobbs brings the collection to a close by examining the fate of lightermen with the shift of the industry away from the Singapore River. A succinct explanation of the lighterage industry would have been useful in this chapter.

Each of the chapters in this collection generally returns to this 'fragment' concept to show how this concept is deployed in the respective authors' chapters. As a reviewer and oral historian, I am however more interested in each of the case studies themselves, rather than the authors' return to the 'fragment.' The application of theoretical frameworks in the chapters sometimes seems overly repetitive and somewhat forced and could be edited more carefully. The diversity in this collection, though, shows the range of settings in which oral history approaches is utilised in Southeast Asia and most of the case studies themselves are thought provoking.

Dr Vannessa Hearman, University of Sydney, vannessa.hearman@sydney.edu.au

(Endnotes)

1 P. Lim Pui Huen, James H. Morrison, Kwa Chong Guan, *Oral history in Southeast Asia: theory and method*, Singapore: National Archives of Singapore and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998.

2 Kah Seng Loh, Stephen Dobbs and Ernest Koh (eds.), *Oral History in Southeast Asia: Memories and Fragments*, New York: Palgrave, 2013, pp. 3-4.

3 See for example these oral history collections recently translated into English, Baskara T. Wardaya SJ (ed.), *Truth will out: Indonesian accounts of the 1965 mass violence*, translated by Jennifer Lindsay, Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing, 2013 and Putu Oka Sukanta (ed.), *Breaking the Silence: Survivors speak about 1965-66 violence in Indonesia*, translated by Jennifer Lindsay, Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing, in press.

Review

Marian Quartly, Shurlee Swain and Denise Cuthbert, *The Market in Babies: Stories of Australian Adoption*, Monash University Publishing, Clayton, Victoria, 2013. 200 pages. ISBN 978 1 921867 86 6.

History has come to occupy a pronounced, self-conscious place in contemporary debates about adoption policy and practice in Australia. In 2013, former Prime Minister Julia Gillard described forced adoption as a 'shameful mistake of the past.' Her apology to those affected by such practices emphasised that future policymakers would be mindful of this history of 'pain and suffering' and vigilant in ensuring it remained firmly related to the past.[1] More recently, the current government, led by Tony Abbott, has signalled its intent to loosen the regulations that govern intercountry adoption in Australia, paving the way for large numbers of children born overseas, particularly in developing countries, to be adopted by Australians.[2] This push to increase the number of adoptions in Australia is not an aberration on the part of the Liberal government: in 2005, the House of Representatives Family and Human Services Committee, chaired by Bronwyn Bishop, found that unethical past adoption practices had unduly incited an 'anti-adoption culture' which had resulted in low rates of intercountry adoption despite the prevalence of Australians eager to adopt.[3]

Marian Quartly, Shurlee Swain and Denise Cuthbert's recently published account of the history of adoption in Australia, *The Market in Babies: Stories of Australian Adoption*, is a powerful intervention into this divisive political climate. The book is the fruit of the 'History of Adoption Project,' a four year Australian Research Council funded project which concluded in 2012. The project sought to chart the historical factors that have shaped how adoption has been understood and practised, and how adoption has produced, reflected and challenged understandings of familial constitution in Australia.[4] In doing so, it addressed a marked silence in the Australian historical record. The project's chief innovation, however, lay in its analytical emphasis on 'self-reflective experience;' by collecting and analysing the personal accounts of those affected by adoption – particularly adopted persons, their parents and family members, but also social workers and other professionals involved in the practice of adoption - the project aspired to redress the historical marginalisation of these voices.[5] In providing an 'open hearing of the contesting voices' that populate the issue of adoption, both past and present, the 'History of Adoption Project' sought to provide a balanced base of scholarship that would enable policymakers to more responsibly navigate the complexities and contradictions of adoption as they shape child welfare practices.[6]

The research output of the *History of Adoption Project* has been significant - both broad in its purview and impressive in its calibre. *The Market in Babies* draws upon its major findings but also charts new terrain because it weaves together the project's various threads to establish an authoritative, comprehensive historical narrative. The book itself is brief, its prose lucid and readily digestible, and while the content that it presents is challenging, it remains unadorned by involved evaluative forays into theory or historiography. This accessibility is certainly deliberate on the part of the authors and is suggestive of their desire to have their research findings speak to audiences beyond academia.

The Market in Babies charts the rise and fall of modern adoption in Australia's history. Their research follows in the footsteps of American scholars who have led the way in critically examining the evolution of adoption policy and practice and utilising it as a means of exploring histories of social welfare, family life, 'race' and much else besides.[7] The authors' central thesis is that adoption in Australia has long been shaped by 'market forces:' that is, the demand of those seeking to adopt children and the supply of children made available for adoption. Often, this has seen the interests of children subsumed by the desires and expectations of those wishing to adopt and the welfare of the birth parents entirely ignored. As they suggest, the exploitative character of the adoption 'market' has often been masked by a prevailing rhetoric of sentimentality and benevolence. How the forces of supply and demand have interacted in shifting and complex ways over time, and the efforts of those who have sought to impose control, form the substance of Quartly, Swain and Cuthbert's account of adoption in Australia.

The Market in Babies is divided into two sections, the second of which traces the history of modern adoption in Australia from the mid nineteenth century when adoption advertisements first began to appear in colonial newspapers. Entirely unfettered by regulatory measures, unscrupulous practices proliferated. During the 1920s, most Australian states moved to enact adoption legislation which would give adoption legal standing and a greater claim to safety and respectability. It was, however, not until the early 1940s that persons wishing to adopt a child began to exceed the number of children made available for adoption. The popularity of adoption reached a high point during the 1950s and 1960s, spurred on by increasing demand for adoptable children during the post-war era and the growth of the social work profession, which was anxious to carve out its own sphere of expertise. Unmarried mothers became the main source of adoptable children at this time, and were often coerced into parting with their newborn infants. Absolute secrecy prevailed. Demand for adoptable children also saw a 'widening of the net' cast and the adoption of children previously deemed unfit because of disabilities or mixed racial origins became increasingly common. By the early 1970s, more liberal attitudes towards sex, the family and women's roles had

firmly taken root in Australia and the supply of children available for adoption declined markedly. Attitudes to adoption also began to be challenged: organisations such as JIGSAW were successful in campaigning for sealed adoption records to be opened, the suffering of adopted people and mothers separated from their children gained increasing recognition and adoption practices were reformed to emphasise that adoption was a service for children rather than for those wishing to adopt. Nonetheless, the demand for adoptable children remained, and from the mid 1970s, Australia's prospective adopters increasingly looked to overseas markets. Intercountry adoptions have since come to dominate the contemporary adoption market in Australia, but have been in decline over the past decade. The authors conclude their study by examining how offshore commercial surrogacy has emerged in response to the difficulty and unpredictability of intercountry adoption, raising new ethical dilemmas. As they suggest, the market is now in 'wombs and eggs and sperm,' but the power still rests with the 'buyer.'

It is particularly notable that *The Market in Babies* treats domestic and intercountry adoption as constituents of the one history. Both practices, the authors suggest, have been impelled by the same market forces and have produced comparably iniquitous relationships of power between birth and adoptive parents. They argue that where modern domestic adoption has been subjected to reform, ensuring equivalent ethical practices in intercountry adoption has been far more challenging. Given current efforts of adoption advocates to distance unethical past-practices from modern adoption, this argument is particularly striking in its significance.

Powerfully framing this historical narrative is a section on adoption experiences, which focuses on adopted people and on mothers – both separated from their children and adopting. The personal stories upon which this section hinges are drawn from contributions made to the Monash History of Adoption website and from submissions made to the inquiry into the Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices. The authors' employment of extended direct quotations from these stories endows *The Market in Babies* with an authenticity and authority that vividly and emotively captures the complexity of adoption and the harm inflicted by past adoption practices. As the authors acknowledge, their sample of stories probably does not depict a full range of adoption experiences. Nonetheless, their accounts provide a strong sense that the experience of adoption cannot be encapsulated by any one dominant narrative.

The Market in Babies can be situated amongst a growing body of 'corrective' literature on adoption. Such works have begun to shift control of the history of adoption into the hands of those whose lives the practice marked, treating them as authorities on their own lived experience.[8] For its emphasis upon women's experience – as mothers separated from their children, adopting mothers, social workers and as advocates for adoption reform – *The Market in Babies* must also be recognised. Its incisive depiction of how gender and power have oppressively shaped childbearing and childrearing and of women's agency in living with and resisting this oppression is a meaningful addition to Australian feminist historiography.

The Market in Babies is an important and timely work, reminding us of how an incisive understanding of the past can shed light on the challenges we face in the present. Moreover, in seeking to engage the broadest of audiences with history that is rigorously investigated, shrewdly analysed and compellingly presented, Quartly, Swain and Cuthbert confirm the continued relevance of adamic history to public understandings of the past. *The Market in Babies* will, I hope, provide fertile ground upon which new scholarship on adoption in Australia will grow; certainly, history has much to offer as we navigate the divisive politics of adoption.

Carina Donaldson, La Trobe University, c.donaldson@latrobe.edu.au

(Endnotes)

1 Julia Gillard, 'National Apology for Forced Adoption', 21/03/2013, http://www.ag.gov.au/About/ForcedAdoptionsApology/Documents/Nationalapologyforforcedadoptions.PDF, accessed 01/02/2014.

2 See, for example, Latika Bourke, 'Tony Abbott flags changes to make adoption system easier and faster', *ABC News,* 13/12/2013, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-12-13/tony-abbott-flags-changes-to-adoption-system/5156134, accessed 01/02/2014.

3 See, for example, 'Anti-adoption culture alarming: inquiry', *ABC News*, 28/11/2005, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2005-11-28/anti-adoption-culture-alarming-inquiry/750384, accessed 01/02/2014.

4 'Aims and Background', History of Adoption Project, 12/03/2013 http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/historyofadoption/aims-and-background/, accessed 01/02/2014.

5 'Significance and Innovation', History of Adoption Project, 12/03/2013, http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/historyofadoption/significance-and-innovation/, accessed 01/02/2014.

6 'Aims and Background', *History of Adoption Project*, 12/03/2013 http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/historyofadoption/aims-and-background/, accessed 01/02/2014.

7 See, for example, Laura Briggs, *Somebody's Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2012 and Ellen Herman, *Kinship by Design: A History of Adoption in the Modern United States*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2008.

8 See, for example, Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah and Sun Yung Shin (eds.), *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*, South End Press, Cambridge, 2006.

Review

Kevin Cook and Heather Goodall, *Making Change Happen: Black and white activists talk to Kevin Cook about union, Aboriginal and liberation politics*, ANU Press and Aboriginal History Inc, Canberra ACT, 2013. 439 pages and numerous photographic plates. ISBN 9781921666728.

Making Change Happen is the life story of Aboriginal activist, Kevin Cook. It also tells the story of a committed core of activists engaged in local and international politics over two decades from 1970 to the Bicentenary in 1988, sketching the political landscape of the period from their perspective.

The book presents a series of recorded conversations between Aboriginal activist Kevin 'Cookie' Cook and 45 other activists. They describe several decades of Aboriginal resistance and community building in Sydney and Western New South Wales.

It is not hard to imagine the genesis of a book like this. *Making Change Happen* relates conversations that conjure up images of a well-loved kitchen table, an endless pot of tea, and several seasoned activists gathered around, each with decades of experience, and their storytelling caps on. When Paul Thompson made the foundational claim that oral history's strength and *raison d'être* lay in recording voices that would otherwise slip through the cracks of history, I am sure these were the kinds of accounts that he had in mind. They are stories that we hear too little about.

This story has its origins in the Builders Labourers' Federation, or more precisely, in the precarious work of dogmen or 'doggies.' In Sydney's building boom of the 1960s and 1970s, doggies would ride on hooks that dangled from the ends of cranes, up and down the dizzying heights of Sydney's emerging skyscrapers, transporting building materials for their construction. The employment of doggies was as tenuous as their safety. Joining the Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF), however, they became a highly politicised and powerful band of workers, with the capacity to halt construction for days on end.

Kevin Cook worked as a doggie, joining the BLF in 1970, and becoming an organiser within 18 months. He describes the BLF of the 1970s as a space where the politics of labour and race met - where workers were radicalised.

The BLF was instrumental in Sydney's Green Bans, and in 1973 protected the Block in Redfern from imminent development and destruction. The union became involved in campaigns opposing the Springbok Rugby Tour of 1971, and continued to actively oppose the Vietnam War. The friendships, organising skills, and burgeoning political awareness that gained momentum with these campaigns swelled into decades of activism, and is the central narrative thread of *Making Change Happen.*

The casual tone with which Cook and his friends reminisce about their ventures over these decades belies the magnitude of their achievements. In the early 1980s they transformed Tranby Aboriginal Educational Cooperative in Glebe. It began training programs in a range of fields, and started running TAFE accredited courses, both in Sydney, and in regional NSW. *Black Books*, an Aboriginal Cooperative bookstore was established in 1981. Tranby then became a base for further activism, such as the campaign for a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, which was initiated in 1988. Consultative relationships with National Parks and other government bodies were established.

From 1977 and into the early 1980s, the campaign for land rights shifted gear and took on a new momentum. Cook, along with a handful of other activists started the Black Defence Group, agitating for land rights.

> We sounded like a pretty dangerous organization, didn't we! [laughter] The Black Defence Group. I think they thought it was something like the Black Panthers in the US. Little did they know there was half a dozen people meeting in a telephone box. [laughter] It just shows it's amazing what you can do, you know, with a small group of people just focusing on the right sort of issues at the right time.

Land Rights was ultimately an ambivalent win, and the real challenges lay in negotiating the resulting legislation.

The intimacy, humour, and candid reflexivity of these conversations suggests not only of the humility of the book's main characters. It is also testament to Heather Goodall's long-term involvement with this community, which traces back to the 1970s. Goodall adroitly walks the line between insider and outsider, negotiating the professionalism of the historian with the warm presence of a friend.

The words, and the strong personalities of Cookie and his mates drive this book. Goodall's words are used sparingly, as a crucial interpretative link that situates these conversations in their historical context. No doubt a lot of careful work was done in editing these transcripts into an accessible narrative. This volume is a fine example of the fruits of shared authority, that is, the methodological approach outlined by Michael Frisch, aiming to balance, or share authority between the historian and interviewee, both in the interview and in its subsequent interpretation.

There is a parallel between the method of shared authority that informs this work, and the political

philosophy that is elaborated throughout – as its actors remain committed to grassroots, collective organising and community led initiatives, despite an increasing climate of bureaucratic administration in union and Aboriginal politics.

This book will hold a lot of significance for the community in question. As a reader unfamiliar with the characters in question, I occasionally had the feeling I was a voyeuristic fly on the wall, intruding on the party at the kitchen table, and a world that is not my own. That sense of discomfort was balanced by the knowledge that this book deals with an important and relatively unexplored chapter of Australia's history.

Plenty of colour photographs of the narrators at meetings, protests and social events are reproduced in the book, adding to this vivid and personal history. The volume is primarily an e-book release, through Australian National University e-press, which will make it widely accessible online. The print version however is rudimentary in design, and it is a shame that the basic aesthetic of the book does not do more to reflect the value of this work.

As the mainstream media obsessively focus on what doesn't or hasn't worked in Aboriginal communities, and on 'problems' that need to be solved by government, stories such as the ones in these pages surely deserve more attention. They reflect on the significant achievements gained by Aboriginal and white activists working together – developing educational institutions, demanding workers' rights and land rights, fostering links with international struggles, and drawing attention to social injustices. Asserting the space for these voices to speak at length and in their own terms is itself a powerful political statement. I wonder how different the dialogue around Indigenous issues would be if more Australians were aware of conversations like these, and of the work of Cookie and his mates.

Nicole Curby
La Trobe University, niccurby@gmail.com

18th International Oral History Conference, Barcelona, 9 – 12 July 2014

Anne Johnson

It is both comforting and confronting to be a member of the global community. Mentally stimulated by July's International Oral History Association conference in Barcelona, most of those Australians who attended had barely unpacked their bags when MH317 was shot out of the sky over Ukraine.

'Power and Democracy: the many voices of oral history' was the focus of the IOHA's eighteenth get together in Spain. As the conference was in its early planning stages a few years ago, organisers anticipated commentary on projects associated with the so-called 'Arab Spring.' Well into the 'Arab Winter,' we are now watching refugees flood over the Iraqi border to escape a brutal Islamic regime. A common thread through many of the conference presentations was the capacity of oral historians to respond quickly to political upheaval and the role of practitioners as potential activists.

300-odd delegates from 39 countries attended the conference at the magnificent University of Barcelona, founded in1450. Appropriately, in the first plenary session, IOHA past president PIlar Dominquez talked us through Spain's rich history to the country's relatively recent transition to democracy between 1977 and 1982 – a period that gave birth to oral history as a recognised methodology, if not a valid academic discipline. Marginalised by mainstream historians, many of the original group were foundation members of the IOHA, including the first president, Mercedes Vilanova, now 78, seen as the group's matriarch and the mother of 'Contemporary History' in Spain.

University of Barcelona's Historic Building. Photo by author.

Professor Helen Klaebe (QUT, outgoing IOHA Vice President and retired editor of IOHA Journal *Words and Silences)* with new IOHA Oceania representative Professor Paula Hamilton. Photo by author.

An expert on the human catastrophe of Nazism, Austrian historian and social scientist Gerhard Botz spoke powerfully about oral history as a social movement, a legitimate tool to bring about political change. Oral historians, he stated, had a duty 'to give back memory to the oppressed,' allowing individuals to 'retain identity as a form of resistance.'

Professor Paula Hamilton of the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) was amongst those who argued for oral historians to take up the mantle of activism, even if their role involved advocating for those 'who persist in bringing their memories into the public arena to bring about change.' In a plenary session entitled *Challenging government: the voice of the people*, Professor Hamilton insisted that oral history had a direct capacity to challenge,' prompting discussion about the afterlife of the interview. (Professor Hamilton has replaced New Zealand's Deputy Chief Judge of the Maori Land Court, Caren Fox, as the Oceania Representative for the next two years.)

The ongoing argument of whether media coverage of unfolding current affairs constitutes a legitimate recording of history – edited interviews from selected sources commissioned by politically-biased media outlets – was fiercely agued both in the positive and negative. The benefit of reportage in a digital age is the rapid dissemination of information. There was widespread discussion about projects which

From left: Professor Helen Klaebe (QUT), OHA Secretary Anne Johnson, OHA President Sue Anderson (Uni SA) and outgoing IOHA Oceania Representative Caren Fox (Deputy Chief Judge of New Zealand's Maori Land Court).

started out as relevant, yet by the time funding was obtained, equipment procured, interviews completed, transcribed and packaged for presentation, they became, depressingly, less worthy. Of even greater concern were those narratives archived and never to be seen again.

The *Australian Generations Oral History Project,* represented by Project Leader Alistair Thomson and ABC producer Michelle Rayner, attracted a degree of interest amongst those discussing the relevance of long-running projects. As well as archiving narratives for reference and research, the ABC's broadcasting of edited extracts on the ABC's *Hindsight* program were seen as a most effective way of reaching the general public. What to *do* with their interviews seemed to be a worrying problem for many oral historians.

Delegates came from North and South America, Europe, Israel, South Africa and India, Australia (18 representatives) and New Zealand. While mostly from academia, there were also independent film-makers, community workers, artists and performers and there was wide representation across age groups. Aviva Sheb'a repeated her performance of the 2013 Australian national Oral History Australia conference.

Presenter Sue Andersen (NSW public historian). Photo by author.

Australian and New Zealand delegates continued a tradition of meeting outside scheduled presentations to share experiences and it is hoped we will continue an exchange of ideas closer to home. OHA President Sue Anderson (University of South Australia) shared a platform on Indigenous Oral History with Kiwis Nepia Mahuika and Rangimarie Mahuika from the University of Waikato and with further discussion found a fair degree of common ground.

Other notable sessions included Reflections on Oral History, chaired by Queensland University of Technology's Professor Helen Klaebe, which heard from Sweden's new and enthusiastic – and government-funded – Board of Oral History.

The *other* Sue Andersen (NSW public historian) revealed her yet to be published and much-anticipated NSW Teachers Federation oral history project.

If there were any criticisms to be made, it was the sheer number of presentations (96) to be slotted into a limited number of hours and days, and the problems encountered by holding mixed-language sessions without translation. We were provided with a USB stick holding almost 2000 pages of conference papers many describing projects probably not suited to an international audience.

Talking to other delegates, it seems the breadth of content was overwhelming. Some had been hoping for greater discussion about the evolution of oral history in parallel with advancing technology. It seems the most pressing universal problems for oral historians are still what to *do* with gathered materials – and, as always, how to fund worthy projects.

The IOHA's AGM was dominated by discussion on the future of the journal *Words and Silences* which is published digitally both in English and Spanish. Editor of the newly- established *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, Christina Landman, volunteered to take over from Helen Klaebe as English editor of the international journal. Universidad del Pais Vasco's David Beorlegui will take on the Spanish editorship.

David was also voted Vice President alongside Mark Cave (Senior Curator, The Historic New Orleans Collection). India's Oral History Association President Indira Chowdhury will hold the international presidency until the next conference in her home region of Bangalore, in 2016.

With beautiful weather, fine eateries and excellent walking tours around a city steeped in history and magical architecture, Barcelona offered delegates a stunning venue for an enjoyable conference. I am sure the next one will provide its own delights.

Professor Alistair Thomson (Monash University) and Michelle Rayner (ABC Hindsight), both engaged in the Australian Generations Project, with (centre) Ben Morris (University of Wollongong). Photo by author.

2013 – 2014 President's Report

I feel privileged to have been elected the inaugural President of the newly named Oral History Australia Inc., now operating under an updated Constitution. Many thanks must go to Sandra Blamey, Jill Cassidy, outgoing President Jill Adams and the previous Committee for their dedication to achieving this goal. I feel all I have had to do was to take over the reins after the hard work was done.

The new Committee comprises some very experienced members, like Jill Cassidy, who has been a wonderful support and fount of knowledge, and I thank her and all other members, including Jill Adams, Sandra Blamey, Catherine Cottle, Len Cargeeg, Matthew Stephens, Suzanne Mulligan and Virginia Macleod for their assistance and advice in helping to ease me into this role. I have continued to work closely with Ariella van Luyn, Chair of the Journal's Editorial Board. The other Editorial Board members, Beth Robertson and Bill Bunbury, have been most invaluable sources of knowledge and advice. Elaine Rabbitt has been progressive in her role as Chair of our Sub-committee on the Development of a TAFE Training Module, and we continue to support her initiatives in oral history accreditation.

Not the least of the support I have had has come from our new National Secretary, Anne Johnson, who has brought fresh energy, ideas and skills to the role. I also had the pleasure of travelling with Anne to the International Oral History Conference in Barcelona in July 2014. We had a wonderful experience engaging with many interesting people and papers and I warmly welcome her to the Committee. I thank Anne also for her Conference Report, written for this Journal, and for her photographic expertise. The photos she took give me a lasting memory of our time in Barcelona and at the Conference. The next international Conference will be held in Bangalore, India in 2016.

The new national Committee was appointed at the 2013 Conference held in Adelaide, which was a huge success thanks to the enormous efforts of South Australian President and 2014 South Australian Historian of the Year, June Edwards, and Mandy Paul and Suzanne Redmond of History SA. Compliments about the Conference are still coming in. A date has now been set for the 2015 Conference, kindly hosted by Western Australia, of early September and preparation for it is well under way by WA Vice President Doug Ayre, President Len Cargeeg and the WA team.

During the year Oral History Australia has found the need to make a voice with regard to many of the budgetary cuts being proposed by both Federal and State Governments. We have written to the relevant Ministers and the management of the National Film and Sound Archive regarding our strong objections to the slashing of oral history positions and resources at the National Film and Sound Archive and have personally attended consultative meetings that have been held around the country to voice our position.

I am also aware of vigorous responses at a State level to cuts and mergers that will impact seriously on public resources for oral history research. For example, the South Australian plan to merge State Records with the State Library is seen as a regressive move given that this is where they came from so many years ago. Please continue to voice your concerns to your local and Federal members of Parliament. The more they fear electoral revolt, the better!

The new role of President of Oral History Australia this year has been a steep learning curve for me. However with the support I have received I feel well equipped for an exciting year ahead with an active, collaborative and productive Committee, robust membership and lots of stories to be heard.

Sue Anderson

OHAA 2012/2013 Fianancial Report

OHA Treasurer's Report 2013/2014

Receipts

Journal Orders	1,405.00
Capitation	8,505.00
Interest	38.75
Copyright Council	1,956.11
Journal	50.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS	**$11,954.86**

Payments

Copyright royalty payments	842.17
Journal and postage	5,988.25
Website	879.00
Meeting expenses	720.74
Sundries and Legal	11,247.90
TOTAL PAYMENTS	**$19,678.06**

BANK RECONCILIATION as at 30 June 2014

Balance as at 1/7/13	$22,991.10
Add receipts	11,954.86
	$34,945.96
Less payments	19,678.06
	$15,267.90

PLUS
Term Deposit 30/6/14 $15,418.81

As at 30 June 2014 Total Amount

Term Deposit	$15,418.81
Bank Account	$15,267.90
TOTAL	**$30,687.71**

I have examined the financial records of the Oral History Association of Australia for the year ending 30 June 2014 and confirm that the above Statement is a true and correct account of the financial position.

Joan Simpson 6 White Street, Glen Iris, Vic 3146, phone: 9509 6451, 0412 271 731, joan.simpson451@gmail.com

Notes on Contributors

Jill Adams

Jill Adams is studying towards her PhD in the School of Education and the Arts at Central Queensland University. Her PhD uses creative non-fiction, based on oral histories along with research into food writing in post-war Australia, to challenge the static collective memory of the housewife in the 1950s. She has co-edited a special edition of media and culture journal *MC*, published papers in numerous academic journals and presented papers at local and international conferences. The Food area chair of the Popular Culture Assocation of Australia and New Zealand, Jill is the President of Oral History Victoria as well as the current Treasurer and immediate Past President of Oral History Australia. Her most recent book, *A Good Brew: H.A. Bennett and Sons. 100 Years of Trading Tea and Coffee in Australia*, was published in 2013.

Ben Arnfield

Ben Arnfield is a Sydney based Archivist with experience in business, local and state government archives. He has held the position of Archivist with the Australian Credit Union Archives since February 2012.

Professor Donna Lee Brien

Donna Lee Brien is Professor of Creative Industries; Assistant Dean (Postgraduate & Research), Creative and Performing Arts; and Chair of the Creative and Performing Arts Research Group for the Learning and Teaching Education Research Centre at Central Queensland University. Co-founding convenor of the Australasian Food Studies Network, Donna is the Special Issues Editor of *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*, on the Editorial Advisory Board of the *Australasian Journal of Popular Culture*, a Foundation Editorial Board member of *Locale: the Australasian-Pacific Journal of Regional Food Studies*, and Past President of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs. Donna has supervised more than 80 postgraduate and Honours theses and projects in the creative arts and creative industries, many in the field of creative writing.

Valerie Bourke

Valerie Bourke worked in secondary education for all her adult life after completing a degree in history and psychology. After retirement she returned to study completing a Master in Arts in 2013. The article in this edition grew from her thesis which combined her interests in psychology and history in an analysis of the influence of a grand narrative (in this instance ANZAC mythology) on the remembering of wartime experiences.

Anne Johnson

Anne Johnson has worked for more than 30 years primarily in print and broadcast news in Australia and overseas as a journalist and producer. She has authored and contributed to books on subjects from children's nutrition to sports philosophy and continues to work in the area of biography, producing multi-media digital memoirs for print and web publication. She is a member of the Institute of Professional Editors and National Secretary of Oral History Australia.

Hannah Loney

Hannah Loney is a third-year PhD candidate in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. She has conducted several funded research trips to East Timor and collected approximately fifty-five East Timorese women's oral narratives. Her research project looks at these women's experiences, memories and perceptions of life during the Indonesian occupation of East Timor (1975-99).

Ben Morris

Ben Morris graduated from the Royal Military College in 1965 and was posted to the First Battalion Pacific Island Regiment in Port Moresby. In 1967 he served as a platoon commander with the Second Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment and the Fifth Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. He returned to Australia in 1968 and completed 42 years' service in both the Regular Army and the Army Reserve. He was granted

a Bachelor of Economics from the Australian National University in 1986 and received a Master of Taxation from the University of New South Wales in 1993. Ten years ago, he commenced collecting oral histories of the Vietnam War and started research at the University of Wollongong. He has presented at a number of conferences including the Australian Historical Association, Oral History Association of Australia and the International Oral History Association Conferences. His paper 'Permission to speak, Sir!' given at the 16th Conference in Prague was published in the 2010 OHAA Journal.

Dr Elaine Rabbitt

Elaine Rabbitt is a social historian with a PhD in Oral History, the training manager of Djaringo Pty Ltd, the registered training operation of Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation and the president of the Broome Museum and Historical Society. Over the years Elaine has recorded many interviews with people from all walks of life. Interviews have been conducted for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Islander Studies, the National Library, Australian National Film & Sound Archive, Australian Generations Project, Australian Women in Leadership E-encyclopedia, Broome Historical Society and Shire of Broome. Elaine is the training convenor for Oral History Australia and a remote committee member for OHA - WA. In 2013 she was instrumental in gaining national accreditation to teach AHCILM404A Record and Document Community History. Elaine has written and presented papers on oral history and methodology in relation to key themes in Australian social history, at state, national and international conferences. These papers are based on information from interviews and reflection on generational identity and memory and research.

Carol Roberts

Carol Roberts has a Master of History (UNE Armidale), a BA majoring in Australian History and an Advanced Diploma in Local, Family and Applied History. She also has diploma qualifications in music, tour-guiding and community cultural development. Carol's research for her Master of History thesis focused on the art making practices of Hawkesbury artist Greg Hansell and she intends furthering her studies by researching the links between art and history concentrating on sense of place. After leaving full-time employment, Carol taught piano and theory for several years and continued her interest in community historical and arts groups in the Hawkesbury area. Together with her husband, Geoff, she now provides a heritage tour guide service for visitors to the Hawkesbury area. She has been a contributing author to several publications, her main interests being oral history, local and social history, heritage conservation, music and art. Currently a community member of Hawkesbury City Council's Heritage Advisory Committee, Carol is also involved in ongoing research with the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society Family History Group. She has been a guest speaker at several Rotary club and historical society meetings and is a reviewer for the online history journal, *History in the Making*. Carol is currently writing a book on the history of St Matthew's Anglican Church in Windsor for the Bicentenary celebrations in 2017, as well as researching for the joint publication of a book with Greg Hansell of the artist's paintings of the Hawkesbury area.

Helen Stagg

Helen Stagg completed her Masters of History at the University of New England in 2010. Her interests are predominantly in the areas of Australian History with a special focus on histories of minority groups who are under-represented in the record. Her present passion is investigating the history of the men and women and their families who lived and worked on the lock construction camps along the Murray River between 1915 and 1934. Currently she is writing a book on this history which combines extensive archival research with oral history, adding detail and depth to a highly significant era in Australia's past. June 5 2015 will mark the centenary of the laying of the foundation stone at Lock 1 Blanchetown when the project began and Helen aims to have her book published to mark the occasion.

Dr Terry Whitebeach

Terry Whitebeach is a writer, oral historian and teacher of creative writing. She has an MA in English Literature and a PhD in history/biography. Her published work includes two biographies, two poetry collections, three novels for young adults, two picture books and three documentary radio plays. She has a particular interest in collaborative and cross-cultural projects. She is currently working on a 'factional' memoir, *The True Love Story of David Collins and Terra Nullius,* and is engaged with fellow writer Dr Gina Mercer in collating and editing a non-fiction collection, *Anthology of Loss.*

Jan McCahon Marshall – a quiet achiever

Citation for an Honorary Life Membership of the Western Australian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia, 2013

From the time Jan McCahon Marshall joined the Western Australian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia in 1999 she has been an active and dedicated member, serving on the WA Committee in various positions and as President of the National Committee. She has also made a significant contribution as an oral historian, local studies librarian and on the committee of various community and professional organisations.

Her working life began in Local Government for the Town of Kalgoorlie, City of Boulder and on arrival in Perth in 1977 started work for the City of Canning. She obtained a Bachelor of Applied Science (Information and Library Studies) from Curtin University in 1992 and a Graduate Diploma of Arts in Local History from Edith Cowan University in 1994.

For 11 years she was Local Studies Librarian at the Town of Victoria Park Library and is currently History Librarian at the City of Perth, a position she has held for three years.

The Victoria Park Tramstop Trail and Oral Histories

Jan co-authored a paper published in the OHAA Journal in 2004 entitled The Victoria Park Tramstop Trail and the Application of Oral Histories. It outlines the locality and the creation of a local studies collection. This is followed by a description of the project to develop a tram trail and the role of oral histories in the research. It concludes with a treatment of it current position, future directions and lessons that have been learned. It drew on a number of senior citizens who have attained considerable pleasure in recounting their memories as well as satisfaction that their recollections are contributing towards a useful and enduring project. It also involved children who became more aware of the heritage of their district.

Anthea Harris, Local Studies Librarian at Nedlands Library gives credit to Jan:

> Jan has been conducting oral histories for many years and her friendly, quiet demeanor and excellent preparation and organisational skills makes the experience very easy for the interviewee. In the libraries she has worked at (my personal experience is the Town of Victoria Park and the City of Perth) she has included full transcriptions and indexing so that the interviews can be used to provide answers to many local history reference questions. She attracts good volunteers to help her do these time- consuming processes

Jan at work at the History Centre of the City of Perth Library

After two years as a committee member, Jan was elected President of the Branch in 2002 and served five years. During Jan's presidency a sponsorship scheme was introduced allowing members to apply for funds to attend workshops and conferences that promote oral history. The Branch offered seeding grants to assist with the introduction of an oral history project. Applicants included local community organisations, local government and schools. The program was put aside for 2003 and the money offered as grants to WA members who had need of financial assistance to attend the national conference.

She ran workshops for the introductory and advanced oral history, digital techniques and transcription. The Branch updated its equipment to digital audio recorders and hands-on workshops to assist members to make the change from analogue to digital. Jan has been in charge of the hire service since 2001. On relinquishing the chair Jan was Membership Secretary for two years then Editor of the newsletter Play Back for two years.

Community and Professional Contribution

In support of Jan's nomination Susan Hall, Local Studies Librarian at the Birtwistle Local Studies Library, Armadale, wrote:

> Jan McCahon-Marshall has given generously of her time and professional expertise to support and mentor new-comers to the skill of oral history interviewing and has called upon her extensive knowledge of the OHAA to educating new WA committee members of their roles and responsibilities and the Association's long history.
>
> Similarly, Jan's wide-ranging knowledge of the protocols and resources available in the history/heritage sector has been of great benefit to local history librarians and other interested professionals. This commitment to the profession culminated six years ago with the formation of the Local History Practitioners' Group that meets and networks on a quarterly basis in and around the Perth metropolitan area.

Jan continued her professional outreach by joining the editorial committee of the new edition of Australian Reader. She represented the WA Branch on The State Library of Western Australia Working Group comprising state library staff, oral history committee members and local studies groups. Jan represented the Oral History Association of Australia WA Branch on the RSL Living History Project Committee. She was also on a number of sub-committees including Accreditation, Marketing and WA Constitution.

The Oral History Records Rescue Group (OHRRG)

Jan played a significant role as secretary on the Historical Records Rescue Consortium [HRRC]. This group was formed when a successful application was made to Lotterywest for $3 million funding to rescue and digitise 'at risk records' held in the Battye Library of Western Australian History, State Library of Western Australia. As a result of this group and the funding received a program was set in place to digitize the most at risk photographs and newspapers held in the Battye Library. Both the photographs and newspapers held in the Battye Library are available on the State Library of Western Australia online catalogue and from the Trove website. Copies of the newspapers were saved to disc and made available to regional libraries throughout Western Australia. Each region received discs with the newspapers relevant to their area.

However Lotterywest rejected funding for the digitisation of the oral history collection on the grounds that it did not consider that this collection was at risk. It was a great disappointment to the Branch. Jan played a key role in communicating with Premier Geoff Gallop and as a result HRRC reconvened to become the Oral History Records Rescue Group (OHRRG). Branch members were part of the executive committee with Jan as secretary. An application to Lotterywest resulted in a grant of $800,000. In December 2009 the Minister for Culture and the Arts launched the oral history digitisation project at the State Library of WA. The funding provided a recording studio, equipment, technicians and support staff. Over 7,500 hours of oral history interviews were digitised.

The project has been a tremendous success and has seen the preservation through digitisation of over 6,000 interviews (11,550 hours). 190 interviews are available on-line through the State Library of Western Australia catalogue. Digital copies of a number of the interviews have been made available to historical groups and public libraries for their collection.

National President

Jan was National President of the Oral History Association of Australia from 2007-2009. Executive Committee with support from members of the National Committee decided to incorporate the Association for a number of important reasons. This required a new constitution and its adoption at the National Conference. Consultation in drafting the constitution and administering incorporation was a lengthy process. It was a testing experience in which Jan showed diplomacy and fortitude.

In support of Jan's nomination Margaret Hamilton wrote:

> For a great proportion of the time during which I was International and State President of OHAA I doubt I could have undertaken the task without the back up of Jan McCahon Marshall. She has always been a stalwart and reliable person and a joy with whom to work. I certainly endorse the Association's suggestion for Honorary Life Membership.

The Western Australian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia nominates Jan McCahon Marshall as an Honorary Life Member.

Marolyn Hamilton, Honorary Life Member

Membership information

Oral History Australia

(formerly the Oral History Association of Australia)

The Oral History Association of Australia was established in 1978. In 2013 the name was changed to Oral History Australia. Each State is a member association of the national body. The objectives of the Association are to:

- Promote the practice and methods of oral history
- Educate in the use of oral history methods
- Encourage discussion of all problems in oral history
- Foster the preservation of oral history records in Australia
- Share information about oral history projects.

State seminars and workshops are held regularly throughout the year, while a national conference is held every two years. Many of the papers from conferences appear in the Oral History Australia Journal. Members receive a copy of the annual Oral History Australia Journal and newsletters and publications from their individual State associations. Among other publications, Oral History Australia, South Australia/ Northern Territory has published the *Oral History Handbook* by Beth M Robertson, which is available for purchase by members at a discounted rate.

The Oral History Australia website can be found at www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au. National enquiries can be made to the Secretary at secretary@oralhistoryaustralia.org.au.

Enquiries to State member associations should be directed to the following addresses:

ACT
Incorporated into the New South Wales association.

New South Wales
President: Virginia Macleod
Oral History New South Wales
PO Box 261
Pennant Hills NSW 1715
Email: secretary@oralhistorynsw.org.au
Phone: 02 8094 1239
Website: www.oralhistorynsw.org.au

Northern Territory
Incorporated into the South Australian association.

Queensland
President: Catherine Cottle
PO Box 12213 George Street
Brisbane Qld 4003
Email: president@ohq.org.au
Website: www.ohq.org.au

South Australia
President: June Edwards
PO Box 3113,
Unley SA 5061
Email: ejune32@yahoo.com
Website: www.oralhistoryaustraliasant.org.au

Tasmania
President: Jill Cassidy
c/- Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery
PO Box 403
Launceston Tas 7250
0418 178 098
Email: mandjcassidy@gmail.com

Victoria
President: Jill Adams
248 Yarra Street
South Geelong Vic 3220
Email: president@oralhistoryvictoria.org.au
Website: www.oralhistoryvictoria.org.au

Western Australia
President: Len Cargeeg
PO Box 1065
Nedlands WA 6909
Email: ohaawa@gmail.com
Website: www.ohaa-wa.com.au

CALL FOR PAPERS

Contributions are invited from Australia and overseas for publication in the OHA Journal No. 37, 2015

Fast Forward: Oral History in a Time of Change

Contributions are invited in the following three categories:

A Papers on the themes of the OHA's Biennial National Conference, 9-12 September 2015, at the State Library of Western Australia in Perth. (*limit 5,500 words*). Precise themes are yet to be decided, but will focus on the broad theme of rapid change as we are currently experiencing in the field.

Peer Review

If requested by authors, papers in Category A may be submitted to the OHA Editorial Board for peer review.

However, note these important points:

- Papers for peer review must show a high standard of scholarship, and reflect a sound appreciation of current and historical issues on the topics discussed.
- Papers for peer review may be submitted at any time; however, if not received by the Editorial Board by the deadline for submissions of 28 February 2015, they may not be processed in time for publication in the 2015 issue of the *Journal*. Furthermore, regardless of when offers are forwarded to the Committee, the review process may not necessarily be completed in time for publication in the next available *Journal due to time constraints of reviewers*.
- Before being submitted for peer review, papers will first be assessed for suitability by the OHA Editorial Board (which comprises the Chair, the Journal Editor and two other panellists). Authors will be advised by the Chair of the outcome.

Deadline for submissions for peer review: 28 February 2015. Forward to:

Dr Ariella Van Luyn, Chair, OHA Editorial Board, Email: ariella.vanluyn@jcu.edu.au, mobile: 0401925228.

B Articles/Project reports: articles describing specific projects or conference reports, the information gained through them, and principal outcomes or practice issues identified in the process (*limit: 4,000 words*).

Deadline for submissions: 1 April 2015. Forward to: Dr Sue Anderson, General Editor, OHA *Journal*, Email: Sue.Anderson@unisa.edu.au.

C Reviews of books and other publications in Australia or elsewhere that are of interest to the

oral history community (*limit: 1,500 words*). This may include reviews of static or internet available exhibitions, or any projects presented for a public audience.

Deadline for submissions: 1 April 2015. Forward to: Dr Jayne Persian, Reviews Editor, OHA *Journal*, Email: jpersian@uow.edu.au.

Accompanying Materials

Photographs, drawings and other illustrations are particularly welcome, and may be offered

for any of the above categories of contribution.