

# Real to Reel

Newsletter of Oral History Tasmania Inc.  
(formerly the Tasmanian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia)  
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## NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE – Jill Cassidy

### Seminar and AGM

A very enjoyable and successful seminar was held in September in conjunction with the Launceston Historical Society; the attendance was close to a record. At the Annual General Meeting the previous committee members were returned unopposed to their past positions, with Alison Johnston agreeing to continue on as secretary after filling in for Terry Fritsche for several months. As well, we were delighted that Jen Thompson has joined the committee so that we once again have a full complement. The President's Report is on page 3 and the Statement of receipts and payments on page 5.

### New committee member Dr Jen Thompson

Jen Thompson's interest in Oral History began with a series of interviews she recorded for CBC Radio during a stay in Thunder Bay, Canada, and was introduced to Oral History Australia through Rosie Block's instructive seminars at the Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga. She now teaches online in Education and Health for the University of Tasmania and Charles Sturt University.

### Workshop

The 2017 workshop will be held in Hobart on Saturday 27 May. Please alert anyone you know who may be interested. Details will be available shortly.

### Oral History Australia National Conference

The biennial national conference, *Moving Memories: Oral History in a Global World*, will be held in Sydney 13–16 September 2017. No doubt there will be the usual packed program with many occasions to discuss all aspects of oral history, so do think of attending. For details see <http://www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au/oha-biennial-conference.html> There is a Call for Papers on page 12 if you are interested in making a presentation. Note that the closing date is 31 January.

### Scholarship for National Conference

Oral History Tasmania is offering a scholarship of \$1000 for someone to attend the national conference. This is a wonderful opportunity so please spread the word to anyone you feel would benefit. For full details see page 4.

### 2016 Journal

It was expected that this year's national *Journal* would be in electronic format but circumstances led to a decision to print a hard copy instead. It will be posted to members within the next few weeks.

### **Interviewer required**

Are you interested in doing an interview of a Launceston man who grew up and spent a considerable part of his life on Flinders Island? He has a fund of interesting and entertaining anecdotes and is prepared to be interviewed. Please contact me if you would like to volunteer: [president@oralhistorytas.org.au](mailto:president@oralhistorytas.org.au)

### **Do you have a project to tell us about?**

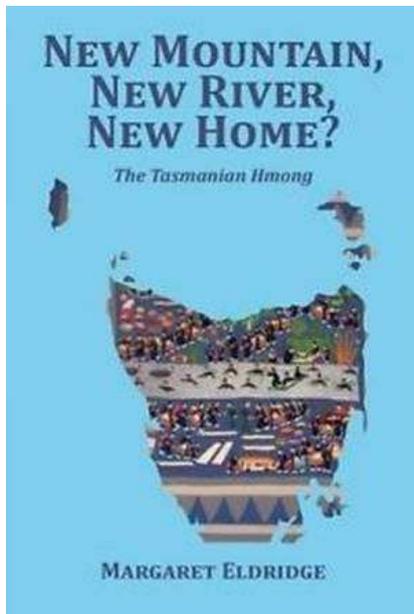
We are always looking for items for the newsletter, anything from a few sentences to a lengthy article. All members are interested in knowing what is going on in the state, and you may make some good contacts through responses to the article.

### **Special deal on books**

Oral History Tasmania members have been offered a special deal for the purchase of two recently-published Australian books based on oral history. Details are on page 13.

### **New Tasmanian book**

Long-time Oral History Tasmania member Margaret Eldridge has just published a book based on her many years of research into the story of the Tasmanian Hmong.



When the Hmong ‘gifted’ the author with the task of placing their story on record, she set about interviewing this small refugee community in Tasmania. The book describes, to a large extent in their own words, the exodus of the Hmong from their hill-tribe homes in northern Laos as a result of the secret war and the conflict in Vietnam. She follows them to refugee camps in Thailand and, eventually, to Australia, where they settle and make a new life. The impact of the Hmong on the local community and the phenomenon of secondary migration are also examined.

Many of you will have bought vegetables from the Hmong at the Salamanca market and will be fascinated by their story.

*New Mountain, New River, New Home? The Tasmanian Hmong* is available from Hobart Bookshop for \$25, from Fullers and the State bookshop for \$26.99, or from Amazon for \$32 plus postage. Alternatively, you can buy the book direct from Margaret for \$25 plus \$5 postage. She can be contacted on [margell@bigpond.com](mailto:margell@bigpond.com) or telephone 03 6225 1801.

### ***From Glory Boxes to Grindr: Dating in Australia, 1945-2015***

A web exhibition has been set up by Anisa Puri and Al Thomson based on the Australian Generations interviews and linked to the forthcoming book *Australian Lives: An Intimate History*, due out March 2017.

It is a fascinating look at dating from a multitude of points of view and at different times. There are 15 portraits on the page and by clicking on each one you can hear a minute or so of each person’s experience. Easy to listen to while you’re working on something else and highly recommended.

<https://gloryboxtogrindr.com/>

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2015–2016

Jill Cassidy

It gives me great pleasure to present the President's report for 2015–2016.

In September 2015 we held a very interesting seminar in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting. Dr Thomas Gunn spoke on the topic: *Reel or real? Writing the history of the Launceston Film Society*. His talk looked at the challenges of using oral histories when written records are missing, and then what happens when the written records are found which contradict the oral material: in particular, the need to decide between memory and record. Dr Terry Whitebeach talked about her DVD and books based on oral histories of South Sudanese refugees. Her paper, *From Loa to Launceston & from Kenya to Kingston: An Oral History Project with South Sudanese Refugees (Tasmania 2011–2014)*, looked at the refugee experience, and especially why she used different literary forms to disseminate the accounts for different audiences. Finally, Dr Jai Paterson spoke about *Launceston's Gasworks site, or oral history without recordings*, where a quick project, requiring oral history, focuses less on the importance of the individual interviewee and more on the humanity they bring to what would otherwise be a purely industrial story.

The Launceston Historical Society has joined with us to organise this year's September seminar, with speakers Brad Williams, Jill Cassidy and Margaretta Pos.

Our other major event for the year was the May workshop, held this year in Launceston. As always there was a wide range of participants and projects for discussion and the day was a success. As usual, several participants became members.

The new website has proven its worth. As our organisation comes up first when 'oral history' and 'Tasmania' are googled we are naturally seen as the main oral history group for the state, which of course we are. People can look up our upcoming activities and we have had increased workshop attendance as a result. Moreover, as we now have an email contact address online we received a quite unexpected query from the United Kingdom asking for a contribution to that country's *Oral History Journal*, which runs a section entitled International Work. Elaine Crisp provided a short article about her nursing project.

We are pleased to have made the decision to pay for our host to make website changes. The committee members did not have the time to take this on and our host makes the changes promptly. You may have seen that we are in the process of putting all the past issues of *Real to Reel* on the website, although we wait a year before uploading each issue in order to keep faith with our members. So far all issues from April 2009 to April 2015 have been uploaded and they are searchable using a search engine. Earlier issues need to be re-formatted and the very earliest need to be scanned, so this will be an ongoing project.

There is a general move in all organisations towards electronic communications, and the number of members requiring a hard copy of *Real to Reel* has been steadily declining. Moreover, earlier this year three members of the committee did the training for STORS, the Stable Tasmania Open Repository Service run by the State Library, so there is no longer the need to send a hard copy of *Real to Reel* to the Library. As a result, and encouraged by the increasing cost of postage, we decided to no longer produce a hard copy for our members. We anticipate that this will not be a problem, as for several years the newsletter has been formatted for easy printing. It should be noted that the Library's electronic copy will also have no public access for twelve months. The same decision has been made by Oral History Australia so you will see that this year's *Journal* will also be electronic.

Our digital recorder, the Fostex, has given us ten years of sterling service without missing a beat until earlier this year when it required a minor repair along with some new headphones. The opportunity was

taken to update the accompanying User Guidelines and it should continue to give good service to our members.

You may remember that after the 2013 Annual General Meeting the secretary's computer died and as a result the minutes for that meeting have been lost. Consequently, at last year's meeting it was decided that the committee members would prepare substitute minutes to the best of their ability; these minutes will need to be confirmed this year.

After many years of great service Terry Fritsche stood down as Minutes Secretary in May. I wish to thank her for her contribution, and to Alison Johnston who took over the role until this AGM. I would also like to thank Lana Wall who as treasurer keeps a firm watch on our finances, and the rest of the committee Elaine Crisp, Andrew Parsons, Leonie Prevost and Pauline Schindler for their hard work and assistance. Finally, I thank the whole committee for their role in backing the award to me of the Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History at last year's Oral History Australia conference in Perth. And as always I would like to thank the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery for its continued support.

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### SCHOLARSHIP FOR ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

Oral History Tasmania is offering a scholarship of \$1000 for a person to attend Oral History Australia's biennial national conference, *Moving Memories: Oral History in a Global World*, to be held in Sydney 13–16 September 2017.

For conference details, see <http://www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au/oha-biennial-conference.html>

#### Requirements

1. You must be enrolled in tertiary studies or working on an oral history project.
2. Non-members will be required to join Oral History Tasmania.
3. Priority will be given to those not receiving funding from any other institution, grant etc.
4. You will be expected to attend the whole conference.
5. You must provide a comprehensive report on the conference, reviewing the sessions you attend, by the middle of November 2017.

Please apply by providing: your name;  
contact details including email address and phone number;  
details of university course (if applicable); and  
a statement of approximately up to 250 words explaining what you hope to gain by attending the conference, addressing all the issues detailed above.

Email your application to [president@oralhistorytas.org.au](mailto:president@oralhistorytas.org.au) by **31 March 2017**. The successful applicant will be advised by the end of May.

## STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS 2015–16

Oral History Tasmania Inc <i>For the year ended 30 June 2016</i>	<i>Notes</i>	2016 \$	2015 \$
<b>Receipts</b>			
Equipment hire		300	30
Interest received		25	30
Membership		1,265	1,305
• Sale of handbooks		264	248
Seminar/AGM		450	1,035
Sundry receipts		-	1
Term deposit interest		287	320
Workshop		230	895
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>2,821</b>	<b>3,864</b>
<b>Payments</b>			
Audit fee		100	100
Equipment		143	-
Executive expenses		140	645
Filing fees		59	59
Handbooks		-	200
Insurance - equipment		448	620
OHAA capitation fees		465	390
Seminar/AGM costs		252	995
Website		455	1,800
Workshop		118	360
<b>Total Payments</b>		<b>2,180</b>	<b>5,169</b>
<b>Net surplus/(deficit) for the year</b>		<b>641</b>	<b>(1,305)</b>
<b>Accumulated funds at the beginning of the financial year</b>		<b>13,775</b>	<b>15,080</b>
<b>Accumulated funds at the end of the financial year</b>		<b>14,416</b>	<b>13,775</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>			
Commonwealth Bank - cheque account		5,174	4,820
Mystate Financial - term deposit		9,242	8,955
		<b>14,416</b>	<b>13,775</b>

## ORAL HISTORY: WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT?

Jill Cassidy

*A talk given at the joint Oral History Tasmania – Launceston Historical Society seminar on 18 September 2016*

There are two 'fusses' which I wish to discuss.

The first is the debate as to whether oral history is 'real history' and worth pursuing by serious historians. Many years ago this debate raged in academic circles around the world. It has largely been resolved, but not completely for some people, and it is worth revisiting here, at least briefly.

The second fuss is the extraordinary mushrooming of oral history over recent decades. Why has this occurred? What is there in oral history which has caused so many people to make such a fuss of its benefits and has led to an explosion of books, radio and television programs, museum exhibitions and more recently CDs and DVDs using oral history?

To begin: is oral history worthwhile for historians? In many respects this could only be a modern question, as can be seen as soon as we start to look at earlier histories.

Herodotus is generally regarded as the 'father of history' because of his history of the wars between Greece and Persia in the fifth century BCE. Yet it is entirely made up of interviews he conducted with participants - in other words, oral history.

He accepted stories uncritically, the modern criticism of oral history. However, we would know very little about the wars but for this work. The documentation of eye-witness accounts became a standard way of finding out about the past.

It continued to be the basis of history until as recently as the nineteenth century when, as the British Paul Thompson has shown, academic historians in pursuit of rigour elevated documents to the position of prime importance, and oral history was marginalised.<sup>1</sup>

This continued to be the case until mid-way through last century. Unusually we can give a year to the beginning of the change: 1948. In that year Professor Alan Nevins at Columbia University in the United States stressed the importance of interviewing great people in order to get the inside stories. He founded the first oral history program to operate in a United States institution; it continues to this day as Columbia University's Center for Oral History. (And I might add, to go there to study remains at the top of serious oral historians' wish list.) Nevins' focus was on the biography of presidents, leading medical researchers, trade union leaders and the like.<sup>2</sup>

The program had only just started when the wire recorder was invented, the forerunner of the tape recorder.<sup>3</sup> This made the interview process much easier, in one way at least: the whole interview could be captured verbatim, and be available for future researchers without having to depend on the note-taking capabilities of another person.

In Australia, Hazel de Berg used a tape recorder to begin her own personal project in 1957, going on to interview 1290 artists, writers and many others over the next 27 years. Her interviews are held by the National Library of Australia and excerpts are often heard in television documentaries.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, Oxford, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> <http://library.columbia.edu/locations/ccoh.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.recording-history.org/HTML/wire1.php>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nla.gov.au/selected-library-collections/de-berg-collection>

We can consider Nevins' work and those who followed as the first stage in the elevation of oral history back into the mainstream.

The second stage occurred in Britain where during the 1950s and 60s the feeling grew that Nevins was concentrating on white male elites, and that oral history was even more useful to document the lives of ordinary working people who hadn't had histories written about them.

Paul Thompson from the University of Essex was a leading exponent. As well as founding the UK's Oral History Society and its journal *Oral History* in the 1970s, he ran the first national oral history interview study, on family life and work before 1918. One of the results was his very popular 1975 book, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society*.<sup>5</sup>

The obvious benefits of this sort of study led to an explosion of oral history activity around the world, moving as well into interviewing the non-literate or those with limited literary skills, to give them a voice. Hazel de Berg too branched out into more ordinary lives, especially relating to local histories.

I said earlier that the question: 'Is oral history worthwhile for historians?' is a modern question. It is also a Western question.

Oral history is the normal method of keeping history in indigenous communities. Although it was eventually revealed as more a historical novel than history, Alex Haley's immensely popular 1976 book, *Roots*, described for the world the role of traditional story-tellers in African villages. The growing recognition of their importance in all indigenous communities followed by an increasing number of interviews world-wide has led to much re-writing of history books, both in Australia and overseas, rightly elevating the importance of the oral tradition to compare favourably with the previously-written official history. One could argue that Keith Windschuttle's scholarship failed precisely because of his refusal to accept the oral testimony.

Finally there was a third stage: a realisation that anyone, not just historians, can record interviews. This has led to the democratisation of *doing* oral history.

It is probably this use of oral history which has attracted the most criticism. The problem lies partly with the term 'Oral History'. Oral Testimony or Oral Evidence are better terms for explaining what such documentation is. It is not really history; it is a technique for finding out facts about the past. History is then written based on these facts.

Some people reject all oral history on the basis of this use of the technique. It is perhaps best summed up in an old Andy Capp cartoon. He's glaring at his wife on the phone, and she says, 'It's not gossip, it's oral history'. Once any story can be given the name oral history, all oral histories become suspect.

In 1979 Professor Patrick O'Farrell reviewed Wendy Lowenstein's pioneering *Weevils in the Flour*, a documentation of Australians' experiences of the 1930s depression, and asked, 'Is it history?' The debate raged for years, and led people to question whether oral history could ever be used by serious historians.<sup>6</sup>

The Australian arguments and similar examinations around the world had great benefits. It brought the practice of oral history under the microscope and caused people to critically examine its uses.

The main issues were:-

doubts about the reliability of memory;  
the role of myth in people's memory; and  
problems about the subjectivity inherent in oral history.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_Thompson\\_\(oral\\_historian\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Thompson_(oral_historian))

<sup>6</sup> For many of the articles, see the Oral History Association of Australia *Journal*, 1982.

Since then, there has been considerable theoretical work on these topics which I don't intend to go into here. But the chief issue at their heart is the believability or otherwise of oral history, especially when compared with documentary evidence.

Can we believe oral history? Of course – in just the same way as we can believe every word of documents: in other words, not at all until they can be verified. Historians rely on autobiographies and diaries, but these are carefully crafted, and in the case of autobiographies rely just as much on memory.

Indeed, oral history has the advantage over written autobiography; at least in an interview the historian can probe more deeply, and ask the question which the autobiographer may not have thought to bother with, or which she had hoped would be ignored. Historians also use newspaper reports as if they are inherently correct, notwithstanding the fact that we all know of times when the papers get it wrong.

Oral history may be used sloppily by some, but then there are some written texts written sloppily too. We don't stop writing history because some people do it badly. We must simply be aware of the pitfalls.

But the debates, fierce though they often were, and the well-documented problems, have in no way managed to kill off the use of oral history. Why is that? What is all the fuss about?

I have already mentioned some of the great advantages of using oral history:

- It can tap into a vast reservoir of oral traditions. In Australia this is particularly so with Aboriginal oral histories.
- It is the only source where the historian and the source work together to create history.
- It brings recognition to many groups who were hitherto ignored, such as the working class or women.
- It allows for 'history from below'; a challenge to the established accounts.
- It can document the multiplicity of viewpoints in a society

Oral history is essential for some sorts of history, such as community history, migration history, environmental history, Holocaust history, and history of the work place.

Europeans once under Communist regimes are reclaiming their past through oral history, as are Iranians and countries in South America. But we don't have to leave Australian shores to find examples; witness the projects interviewing lesbians and gays, or Vietnam veterans. Two years ago in this room Anne Green and Tom Gunn presented the results of interviews of people involved with St Giles Society which helps people with disabilities, while Peter Henning focused on the Tasmanian nurses who had accompanied the Australian Army during the Second World War. All of these would have been very difficult or impossible without the use of oral history.

There are many examples I could have chosen, but hopefully these give a flavour of what can be done.

Oral history supplements documentary sources in many different ways. In 1985 it was decided to write the history of the Western Australian Parliament. It was to include a 3-month oral history project: a short period, but after all, parliament was well documented. But the revelations in the interviews were so good that the project continued for at least the next 25 years.<sup>7</sup>

One of the historians for the project, Harry Phillips, said: 'Transcripts can provide the historian with real facts and real motives, honest admissions, insights into the operations of government and into the main influences on a person's thoughts.'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/geoffrey\\_bolton\\_lecture\\_dblack\\_2010\\_000.pdf](http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/geoffrey_bolton_lecture_dblack_2010_000.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by Ronda Jamieson, State Library of Western Australia, 1985

Oral history is unsurpassed in finding out about attitudes, feelings and emotions behind the facts, and the reasons for actions. Above all, oral history fleshes out history and makes it live.

To illustrate, I'm going to play excerpts from some oral histories I was involved in collecting. My introduction to oral history came in 1988 when, as a staff member of the Queen Victoria Museum, I was asked to do a series of interviews for the Bicentennial commemorations; they provided the basis for a number of short exhibitions and were published under the title *Launceston Talks*. The Friends of the Museum, delighted by the stories uncovered, provided funds for me to continue to do more interviewing, not for exhibition purposes but for documenting the past for future researchers. Within a short time, they went further and began a monthly Morning Coffee series, which is still going, where people would talk about their lives to an audience. These too were recorded.

Of course these early stories were captured on tape recorders. Digital recording now provides much better quality recordings without the noticeable hiss.

As Paul Thompson found in his study of Edwardian Britain, there is nothing quite like oral history for throwing light on social history. I'll begin with Loris Russell, a long-serving English teacher from Launceston High School, who gave a morning coffee talk in 1992.

[My life] spans a long, long time; from the time of buttonhooks for your Sunday shoes which had two little buttons on the side, through to the zip fastener and [Velcro] that's even better. We went from long socks to woollen stockings and garters, with the stockings falling down whenever you ran and getting their knees out. We then went to lisle stockings to the so-called silk stockings. You rarely had a pair but you had something you called silk stockings that were so precious to you and so dear that if they had a run in them you sewed that up on the machine. And if there was an incipient run you could – well, I couldn't; I was never clever enough with my hands – but there were some people who could use a crochet hook and pick it up and stop it in its tracks. There were other people who used nail polish. Well, we went right through those to the modern nylons and at last the unmentionable PHs. So my life spans a long, long period. (Loris Russell QVM 1992 OH 5 A & B ([MC])

It took me a moment or two to remember that 'ph's' were pantyhose.

Charles Rose, whose family owned Rose's Corner in Launceston for many years, provided a different take in 1996.

I was the fifth child and was the baby of the family which was a great disadvantage. My mother became over-protective; I was 'delicate' and had to be looked after and molly-coddled. I suffered whooping cough, mumps, measles and Mother's tender loving care. I survived cod liver oil emulsion, warm olive oil, ipecac [used for coughs and to induce vomiting], camphorated oil, Vicks and poultices. Poultices were something my mother had a penchant for. If I fell down and grazed my knee, boracic lint; and if that didn't infect it enough we got out the antiphlogistine. It looked like clay. That was usually introduced on a piece of unsterile cloth and the upshot was that what was a graze became a whopping great ulcer.

George Street: we had Robinson's grocery store opposite and that's where I used to go to spend a penny, usually spend it a halfpenny at a time. And the rubbish cart that used to come down the lane was always a fascination; a huge thing with six, I think, sliding lids: slid the lid back and tip the rubbish in. When the horse was there sometimes it was really generous and left a little heap of manure. By the time you went inside to get the shovel somebody else from one of the other houses had been out before you. There were always arguments. (Charles Rose QVM 1992 OH 5 A & B ([MC])

My first interview for the Friends was with Lew Robinson in 1991. I had been told he would be a worthwhile interviewee because he had worked as a carpenter at the Metropolitan Transport Trust for many years. I began the interview by asking him where he had grown up, after which I didn't get to his Metro experiences for some time.

Those days, you lived in your own area. You were either a sewer rat, you lived down near the Margaret Street sewer, or a sandpiper – you lived up the Sandhill – or you were a swampy, you lived out at

Invermay. And that was your territory. You see, you didn't go up the Sandhill, it was a walk. You didn't have motorcars. We stopped in our own locality. And my old grandmother, she was the local midwife, and all the children who came to life in that area, they were always known as Granny's babies. My mother died in childbirth. Poor old grandmother, she'd just finished rearing her own. She took six of us, and – In those days, if a woman died and left a lot of family and her husband couldn't look after them somebody would take those children, and my mother took Alice; I always term her as my sister. Grandmother had one daughter still at home then she took six of us and Alice. She'd go out bringing babies into the world and she'd come home with a cabbage under her arm or a bunch of carrots. That was the payment. And those days, if anybody died they'd put them on a board for the undertaker to keep them nice and straight, put pennies on their eyes to keep their eyes shut. And grandmother would say, 'Now, where's the board?' I'd say, 'Oh Gran, Mr So-and-so was the last.' 'Well, go round and get the board. They must have it round there.' It would be my job to bring the board home for somebody else, lay the board on the bed so they wouldn't sag and get them nice for the undertaker. (Lew Robinson QVM 1991 OH 25 A)

The joys of finding an articulate person with an excellent memory.

Another very early interview, in 1988, was with Winifred Green, a trainee nurse during the First World War, who tells of practices that would not be accepted today.

Up at the far corner of the Women's Ward there'd be this little boxed-in corner with a few beds, for what we called the 'naughty little bad girls'. They were the ones who provided sex which they were paid for. And you weren't allowed to go in there to treat them. I suppose they had to treat themselves. The sister might supervise them but I don't think you were allowed to do anything for them because they had syphilis and gonorrhoea and all those sorts of things. They had the dressings given to them and they were locked in their section. If they heard the doctor coming around they would probably throw their pants over the wall. They had their food doped to quieten them down. (Winifred Green QVM 1988 BOHP 7)

It's been a great privilege to interview so many people with fascinating stories. One was Deny King. His 1990 description of mining for tin at Melaleuca in the south-west reminds us of how much physically hard work was involved.

It was deep ground and very hard work. We had to put some explosives in under the face, a big gravel face which was about eight feet high. You'd set the explosive off and turn the water over the top of it. Then you'd stand there for the next day or two forking stones out because all the gravel was so thick and tight you could only drive a pick in between the stones. Eight feet of that and there was a lot of it. And we'd have to save the big stones up to make a wall, and fork the other stuff up behind it. And you had to make sure your walls were well built or they'd collapse on you. That was really hard work, forking those stones up above your head all day. But there was fairly good tin there, good quality stuff. We used to work all weathers and walk half a mile back to camp at night.

But that wasn't the end of the story. Somehow the tin had to be taken to Hobart from this very remote part of the state.

We had to carry the ore about a mile up the beach to where the boat came in to Point Eric. The boat would come in every month or so to pick up tin from the other miners as well as ours, and bring tucker in. It was a great day the boat came and brought mail and new supplies. Sometimes it would be two months before it got there, waiting for the weather. To get into Point Eric was a bit of a hazard; it had to be fairly calm to get in with the dinghy. They seemed to be able to time it to get in between the breakers. We took the ore out in a dinghy, about seven bags at a time. It would take half a day to load the ore. And the fishermen didn't like losing half a day of their good weather because good weather was precious to them. (Deny King QVM 1990 OH 16 A-D)

One thing to note from these excerpts is how much we can learn from the voice. It is why keeping the recording is imperative, not just transcribing the information and throwing out the original interview.

One fascinating aspect of my two interviews with Deny: all told they lasted around four hours. Karen Gee in Hobart also conducted a long interview with him. And there is nothing the same in our two

interviews. It's a clear example of the importance of the interviewer's role; each brings certain ideas and aims which make each encounter a unique experience.

Finally I'm going to play two excerpts from the parliamentarian Dr 'Spot' Turnbull. The first refers to his arrival in Launceston to start practising as a doctor; it shows the importance of the telephone exchange before this was automated, and of course decades before mobile phones.

I got on all right, solely because of the old-fashioned telephones. Some of you remember you used to turn a handle and talk to someone at the exchange. Well, in those days I used to get people asking me to do a house visit and I'd say yes and you could hear the sigh of relief: 'Oh, thank God you'll come.' Because the doctors didn't go. That was the early change in medicine that most doctors didn't go out at night, would refuse. And the telephone girls used to interrupt these people because they knew the phone numbers and knew they were ringing a doctor, and they'd say, 'Forget it. Ring Dr Turnbull; he'll go.' So because of the telephone girls I built up a huge practice.

The final excerpt is of considerable interest in showing how the scourge of tuberculosis affected the community, and how it was eventually eradicated. It is also very candid about politicians.

I entered state politics only because I had a belief we ought to do something about... By the way, most politicians may have an ideal when they start off but that doesn't last long. Once they become a politician there's only one thing you think of and that's how to get re-elected, because it's the best club in the world especially if you're in the Senate. And whilst I'm at it I'll thank you all very much for electing me to the Senate because I'm living on it now.

But we had the highest incidence of tuberculosis in the Commonwealth and I really believed we should do something about it. But no-one wanted to be tubercular because in those days tuberculosis meant you were in bed for two to three years. Today of course it's a different matter. You don't go to bed and you're cured in three months; you just take tablets. But in those days that's all we had so we had TB sanatoria everywhere. And I felt it was time we did something about it. I suggested we have compulsory treatment and compulsory X-Rays. My only achievement in this world is that I got that through the state parliament. Luckily, Labor became the federal government and McKenna, a Tasmanian, was the Minister for Health. And I said to him, 'We'll never do any good with this,' because no-one was coming forward to say they had tuberculosis because how could their family live? It was a real problem because they are going to be off work for a couple of years. And I said, 'Why not have a special tuberculosis pension?' which was to be the equivalent of the basic wage and he agreed. And as a result of that it took off in the rest of Australia. You had to have it compulsory to get them to come to be found as tubercular and then you had to have compulsory treatment to make sure they had the treatment instead of spreading it around.

('Spot' Turnbull QVM 1994 OH 16 [MC])

Let's hope it does not return.

I've mentioned that now anyone is able to do oral history. But it is important to think about the pitfalls and find out how to do it *well*. Quite aside from the technical aspects of obtaining high quality recordings, the most important thing to realise is that we are dealing with real people, not books. We have to make sure that people's interests are looked after, that we behave ethically, that we think about defamation, that we don't use an interview in any way without having a signed consent form from the interviewee which allows it.

We will probably never work on an *Australian Story* or one of the many other television documentaries, but a well-planned interview can add to the sum of our historical knowledge if it is placed with a suitable repository. No wonder there is so much fuss about oral history and long may it continue.

\* \* \*

## **ONE HELL OF AN INFERNO: THE 1967 TASMANIAN BUSHFIRES**

### **An exhibition at TMAG**

Open until 19 March 2017.

This summer, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery presents a moving exhibition commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of one of the state's most catastrophic natural disasters.

*One Hell of an Inferno: The 1967 Tasmanian Bushfires* tells the story of the fires that engulfed south-eastern Tasmania on 7 February 1967, how they occurred, their impact on people, communities and the environment, and why they could happen again. It tells how Tasmanian Aborigines successfully lived with and used fire for thousands of years, and how the Tasmanian environment developed in conjunction with fire. It finishes by showing the beauty of Tasmania's bush, an environment which is threatened every summer.

Black Tuesday, as the day came to be known, saw 110 fires join together into an inferno that killed 64 people and injured 900 others, destroyed 1400 homes and other buildings, leaving thousands homeless. Tasmanians who lived through that devastating day have vivid memories of their experiences from fleeing their homes to keeping themselves and their families safe and trying to do their jobs under enormous pressure, and many of their stories are shared as part of the exhibition.

Through photographs, film and objects collected at the time, visitors to the exhibition can hear from a wide range of people, from schoolchildren and families to a firefighter and a TV cameraman, about how they survived the fires and the impact they had on our lives.

The Museum is also hosting the Tasmanian Fire Service's 1967 Bushfires Storymap which will allow visitors to record their own stories about Black Tuesday.

Further information regarding the TMAG exhibition can be found by visiting [www.tmag.tas.gov.au/fire](http://www.tmag.tas.gov.au/fire)

This project has been generously assisted by the Tasmanian Community Fund and the Clarence City Council who also have an exhibition What Would You Take? at the Schoolhouse Gallery, Rosny, in January 2017.

## **ORAL HISTORY AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE 2017**

### ***Moving Memories: Oral History in a Global World***

Sydney Masonic Conference and Function Centre  
Goulburn Street Sydney 13–16 September 2017

Oral History NSW invites proposals for the next biennial Oral History Australia national conference.

*Moving memories*, our title and main theme, refers to memories generated across space and time, both local and national, as well as cross-cultural and international. It also refers to memories which have an emotional impact on listeners: remembering which move us to laughter or tears. The theme draws on some of the new directions in oral history that address: the impact of migration and asylum-seeking around the world; as well as the exchange between narrator and listener that is 'memory work', or the emotional labour that is involved in memory practices such as oral history.

All submissions will be welcome, but proposals on some of the following topics will assist in creating a coherent conference:

- Migration
- Contested memories across cultures in local communities
- Movement across and within borders
- Oral history as witnessing
- Place and belonging
- Journeys and pilgrimage
- Sensory memories
- Oral history and emotions
- Mobile apps and podcasts for oral histories
- Digital technology in a global world

## PAPERS

We invite proposals for 20-minute papers that critically engage with the conference topics.

## ROUNDTABLES

We invite proposals for roundtables featuring two to five speakers that explore and engage with conference topics. Roundtables are organised discussions around a particular topic, chaired by a moderator. This approach is designed to stimulate dialogue: it will not be an appropriate forum to share short papers or read extensive prepared written material.

## LIGHTNING SESSIONS

We invite proposals for 5-minute lightning talks. We encourage you to critically engage with one idea that relates to a conference topic, and use this opportunity to share ideas about opportunities, challenges, methodology and more in a dynamic and engaging way. Please note these talks must go beyond a 'show and tell' approach.

To submit your proposal go to: <https://dcconferences.eventsair.com/ohac17/cs>

## IMPORTANT DATES

Deadline for Submission **31st January 2017**

Notification of acceptance of proposals **late February 2017**

Registrations open **March 2017**

Earlybird deadline **30th June 2017**

For further information please contact: OHAC 2017 Secretariat, DC Conferences

Tel: 02 99544400 | Email: [ohac2017@dcconferences.com.au](mailto:ohac2017@dcconferences.com.au)

Website: <https://dcconferences.eventsair.com/ohac17/cs>

## NEW BOOKS

### *Behind Glass Doors - The World of Australian Advertising Agencies*

The hours were demanding but the pay was good. And the boozy lunches were even better. Australia's advertising agencies enjoyed their reputation as a glamorous and fun place to work. Based on interviews with over 100 former admen and women, *Behind Glass Doors* lifts the lid on the advertising world – telling the story of Australian advertising's 'golden age' in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s through the experiences of those men and women who were responsible for it.

### *Gularabulu - Stories from the West Kimberley*

In the 1970s, storyteller, author and elder Paddy Roe shared his Gularabulu stories with anthropologist Stephen Muecke. The resulting *Gularabulu* is a unique example of how Indigenous storytelling actually sounds. This revised edition brings the original into print again, offering new commentary from editor Stephen Muecke.

We are lucky to have an exclusive discount code for online purchase of these books from the publisher University of Western Australia Publishing (UWAP). For 20% off the cover price, follow the links and enter the discount code at the checkout. Offers valid until March 1.

*Behind Glass Doors* [<http://uwap.uwa.edu.au/products/behind-glass-doors-the-world-of-australian-advertising-agencies-1959-1989>]: BGDHIST

*Gularabulu* [<http://uwap.uwa.edu.au/products/gularabulu-stories-from-the-west-kimberley>]: GULARABULUHIST



Oral History Center  
The Bancroft Library  
University of California  
Berkeley, CA 94720-6000

## ADVANCED SUMMER INSTITUTE

We are pleased to announce that [applications](#) for our 2017 Advanced Oral History Summer Institute are now open.

### **About the Institute**

The Oral History Center is offering a one-week advanced institute on the methodology, theory, and practice of oral history. This will take place on the UC Berkeley campus in the newly-opened MLK Jr Student Center from August 7–11, 2017.

The institute is designed for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, university faculty, independent scholars, and museum and community-based historians who are engaged in oral history work. The goal of the institute is to strengthen the ability of its participants to conduct research-focused interviews and to consider special characteristics of interviews as historical evidence in a rigorous academic environment.

We will devote particular attention to how oral history interviews can broaden and deepen historical interpretation situated within contemporary discussions of history, subjectivity, memory, and memoir.

### **Overview of the Week**

The institute is structured around the life cycle of an interview. Each day will focus on a component of the interview, including foundational aspects of oral history, project conceptualization, the interview itself, analytic and interpretive strategies, and research presentation and dissemination.

Sessions will include oral history theory, legal and ethical issues, project planning, oral history and the audience, anatomy of an interview, digital humanities, editing, fundraising, and analysis and presentation. Participants will also work throughout the week in small groups led by faculty in which they will have the opportunity to workshop their projects.

Prior to the week, participants will be provided with a reader, the schedule, contact information for fellow participants, and word templates used by OHC at different stages throughout the interview process. These resources will be made available electronically prior to the week and in hard copy upon check-in on the first day.

### **Applications and Cost**

The institute is limited to 40 participants and applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. Acceptances will be made on a rolling basis. In previous years, we have reached capacity as early as the end of March, so urge you to apply as soon as possible.

The cost of the institute is \$950. For the 2017 Institute, we are happy to offer an EARLY BIRD registration discount of \$150. For those who register by December 15, 2016, and pay in full by January 15, 2017, the full price will be \$800. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide financial assistance to participants. OHC is a soft money research office of the university, and as such receives precious little state funding. Therefore, it is necessary that this educational initiative be a self-funding program. We encourage you to check in with your home institutions about financial assistance; in the past we have found that many programs have budgets to help underwrite some of the costs associated with attendance. We will provide receipts and certificates of completion as required for reimbursement.

For further details and to apply go to:

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/libraries/bancroft-library/oral-history-center/summer-institute>

### **Questions?**

We are confident that the program we have put together will help enrich your education and experience with oral history. We're very proud of the group of scholars and practitioners we have assembled to make the 2017 Advanced Oral History Summer Institute a memorable one!

Please contact Cristina Kim at [ckim@library.berkeley.edu](mailto:ckim@library.berkeley.edu) with any questions.

## Call for Papers for *Working with Memories: Australasian Oral History Strand*

at the Australian Historical Association 36th Annual Conference, Newcastle, Australia  
Monday 3 July to Friday 7 July 2017

This strand will bring together presenters from Australia and New Zealand to explore the opportunities and challenges of working with memories as sources for historical research and production. This is an exciting time for oral history. New technologies are opening up novel ways to create, research and produce oral history while posing challenging methodological and ethical dilemmas. Research funding is generating major national projects, while community oral history is as vibrant as ever, often with a political edge for human rights. We are looking for presenters who will highlight innovative approaches to the creation and use of oral history, and / or who will show how they are using oral history to make distinctive contributions to historical research or contemporary politics. Presenters in this Australasian strand will be invited after the conference to submit their papers for a joint Australasian oral history publication. For inquiries, contact the Strand convenors: Dr Nepia Mahuika ([nmahuika@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:nmahuika@waikato.ac.nz)) representing the National *Oral History Association* of New Zealand (NOHANZ), or Professor Alistair Thomson ([alistair.thomson@monash.edu](mailto:alistair.thomson@monash.edu)) representing Oral History Australia.

**Paper Proposals for this strand must be submitted direct to the AHA conference organisers at [aha2017@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:aha2017@newcastle.edu.au)** (noting that you would like your paper to be considered for the *Working with Memories: Australasian Oral History Strand*) **and must abide by the following instructions.**

### Submission and Presentation Guidelines

Each presenter will have 20 minutes presentation and 10 minutes discussion time. Delegates can present only one paper across the AHA and affiliate conference streams. Conference registration is open to everyone, but all presenters must be members of the AHA or its affiliate organizations.

**Each author may only submit ONE presentation proposal.**

**Presentation proposals must be submitted to [aha2017@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:aha2017@newcastle.edu.au) by 1st March 2017.**

You may submit one of two presentation types:

#### 1. Single paper proposals must follow the guidelines below:

**Title:** Maximum of 10 words

**Affiliated conference strand:** *Working with Memories: Australasian Oral History Strand*

**Biography:** No more than 50 words

**Summary of Abstract:** Maximum of 30 words. This will be the only description of your paper in the conference program, so please choose your words carefully.

**Abstract:** No more than 250 words. This abstract will be posted on the conference website in a PDF file with all other abstracts, but will not be published in the conference program.

#### 2. Panel or Roundtable paper proposals must follow the guidelines below:

The panel chair or one of the panellists must submit each paper individually in the name of the author of each paper.

Within the submission process please indicate the following:

- The name of the panel chair
- The email of the panel chair
- The title of the panel session
- Affiliated conferences strand (if relevant)

*Please note the above details must be the same for each paper on the panel.*

The following must be included for each panel paper:

**Title:** Maximum of 10 words

**Affiliated conference strand:** *Working with Memories: Australasian Oral History Strand*

**Biography:** No more than 50 words

**Summary of Abstract:** Maximum of 30 words. This will be the only description of your paper in the conference program, so please choose your words carefully.

**Abstract:** No more than 250 words. This abstract will be posted on the conference website in a PDF file with all other abstracts, but will not be published in the conference program.

**Further details about the AHA 2017 conference at**

[http://www.conferenceonline.com.au/conference\\_invitation.cfm?id=21415&key=729E2A81-BFCC-4297-A6A9-05F1F6EA7FA3](http://www.conferenceonline.com.au/conference_invitation.cfm?id=21415&key=729E2A81-BFCC-4297-A6A9-05F1F6EA7FA3)

\* \* \*

**WEBSITES**

**Oral History Tasmania:** [www.oralhistorytas.org.au](http://www.oralhistorytas.org.au)

**Oral History Australia:** [www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au](http://www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au)

**IOHA (International Oral History Association):** [www.ioha.fgv.br](http://www.ioha.fgv.br)

**EQUIPMENT HIRE**

A **Fostex digital recorder** is available for hire to members. It comes with its own lapel microphones and *User Guidelines*.

Cost of hire: \$30 a week, plus transport costs if necessary. You will also be required to sign a form agreeing to pay to replace any part that is damaged or lost while you have the recorder, up to a maximum of \$250 for individuals or \$500 for groups or institutions.

To make a booking, contact Jill Cassidy on 0418 178 098 or email [president@oralhistorytas.org.au](mailto:president@oralhistorytas.org.au)

THE OBJECTIVES OF ORAL HISTORY TASMANIA

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  
pursue common objectives and maintain links with other Australian oral history  
associations through membership of Oral History Australia Inc.

**MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Individuals	\$40.00	Households	\$55.00
Student/unemployed/pensioner	\$30.00	Institution	\$65.00

**ORAL HISTORY TASMANIA EXECUTIVE**

President, and delegate to Oral History Australia:

Jill Cassidy 0418 178 098 Email: [president@oralhistorytas.org.au](mailto:president@oralhistorytas.org.au)

Secretary: Alison Johnston

Treasurer: Lana Wall

Committee members: Terry Fritsche, Andrew Parsons, Leonie Prevost, Pauline Schindler, Jen Thompson

All correspondence should be directed to Jill Cassidy, Oral History Tasmania, Queen Victoria Museum, PO Box 403, Launceston Tas 7250, or emailed to [president@oralhistorytas.org.au](mailto:president@oralhistorytas.org.au)

*Real to Reel* is edited by Jill Cassidy. The next edition is due in April 2017 and contributions should reach the editor no later than 31 March. They can be emailed to [president@oralhistorytas.org.au](mailto:president@oralhistorytas.org.au)