

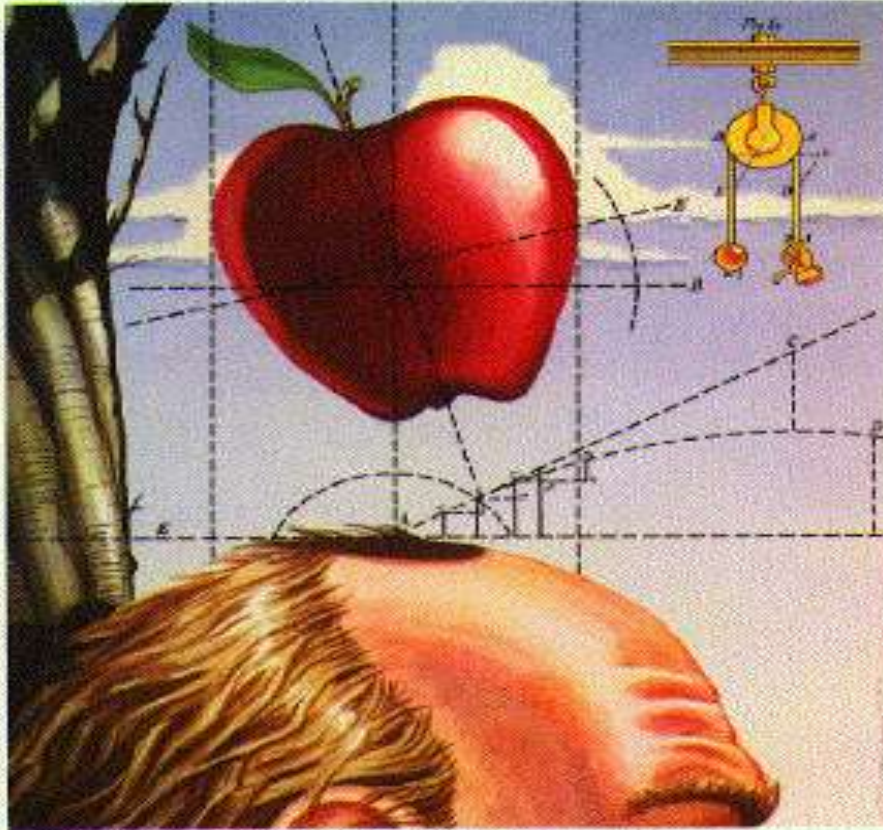
Capturing Memories and Reflections:

Issues and Challenges of
ORAL HISTORY Methodology from an archival perspective

Pitt Kuan Wah

15 June 2012

The Law of Gravity and Oral History Methodology



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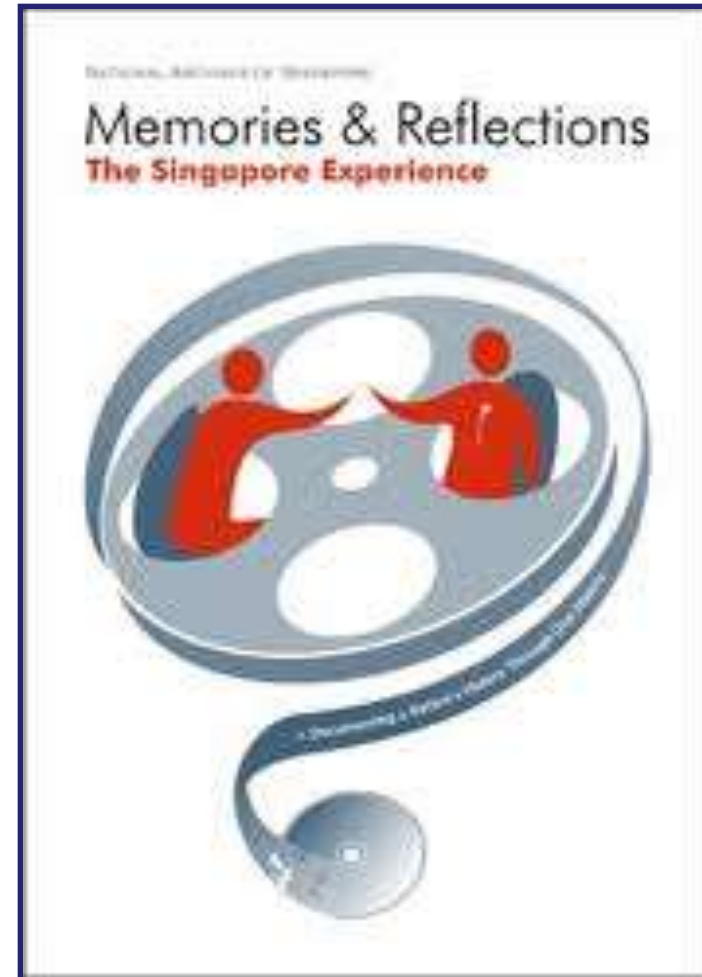
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WHAT NEWTON DIDN'T SEE

Scope (some subjects will be covered very briefly)

- On building memory
- Why oral history?
- Planning oral history projects
- **Conducting oral history interviews**
- Processing the recording
- Preserving the recording
- Disseminating/deploying oral history interview
- {More} Challenges facing oral history



Part 1: “记忆犹新”

**ORAL HISTORY AND WHY IT
MATTERS**

“旧的不去，新的不来，
所有旧的人事物还没消失，
都留在随时随地的想念里...”

[李欣频](#) <喜新·念旧·移馆别恋>



Old times and old things have not yet gone.
They live on each time when we recall them.

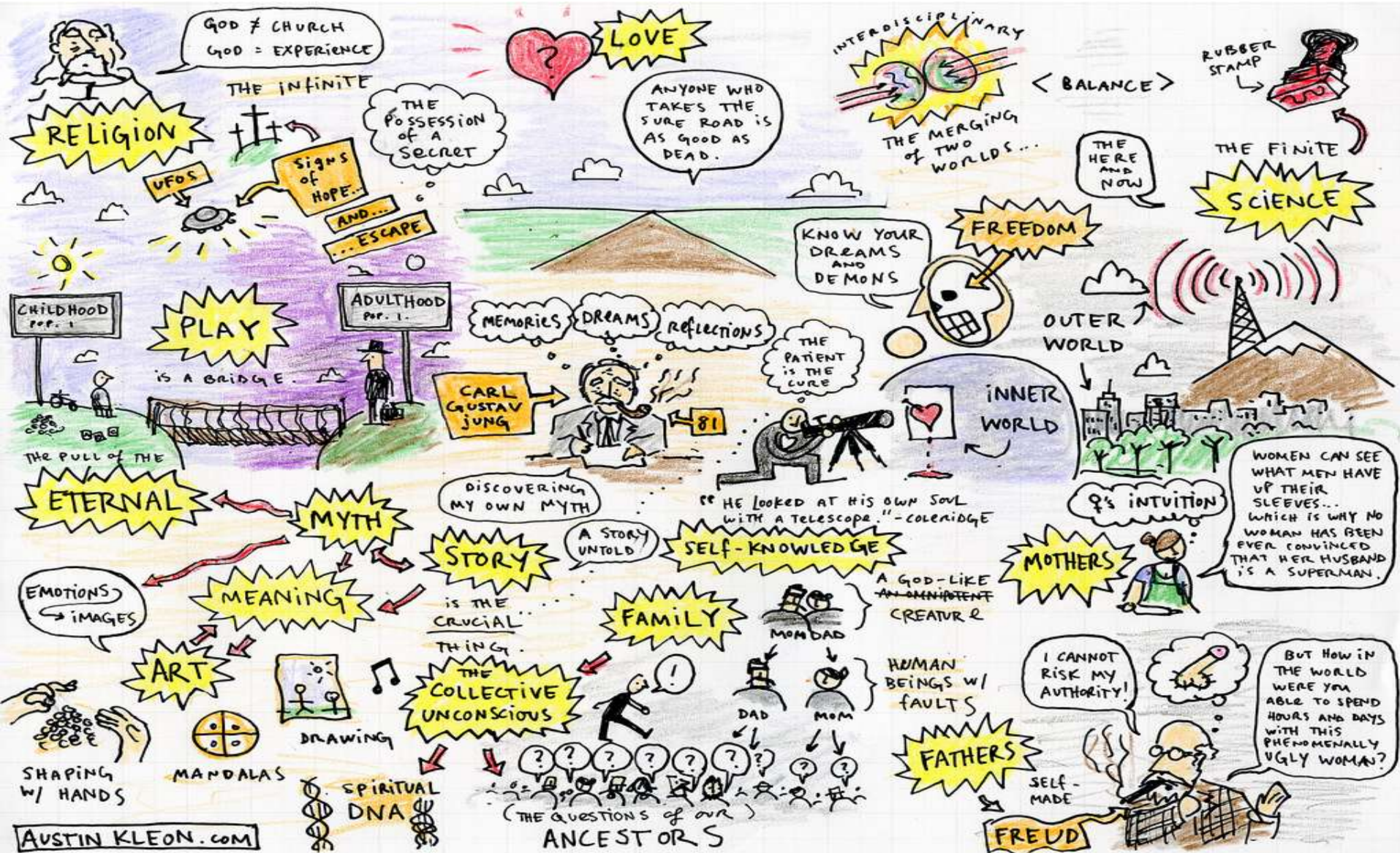
**But for how long? And how accurate it
(the outcome) can be?**

The Wish...

何志武：“在 1994年的 5月 1號，有一個女人跟我講一聲生日快樂，因為這句話，我會一直記住這個女人。如果記憶也是一個罐頭的話，我希望這個罐頭不會過期，如果一定要加一個日子的話，我希望它是一萬年。”



When we "recall" ...

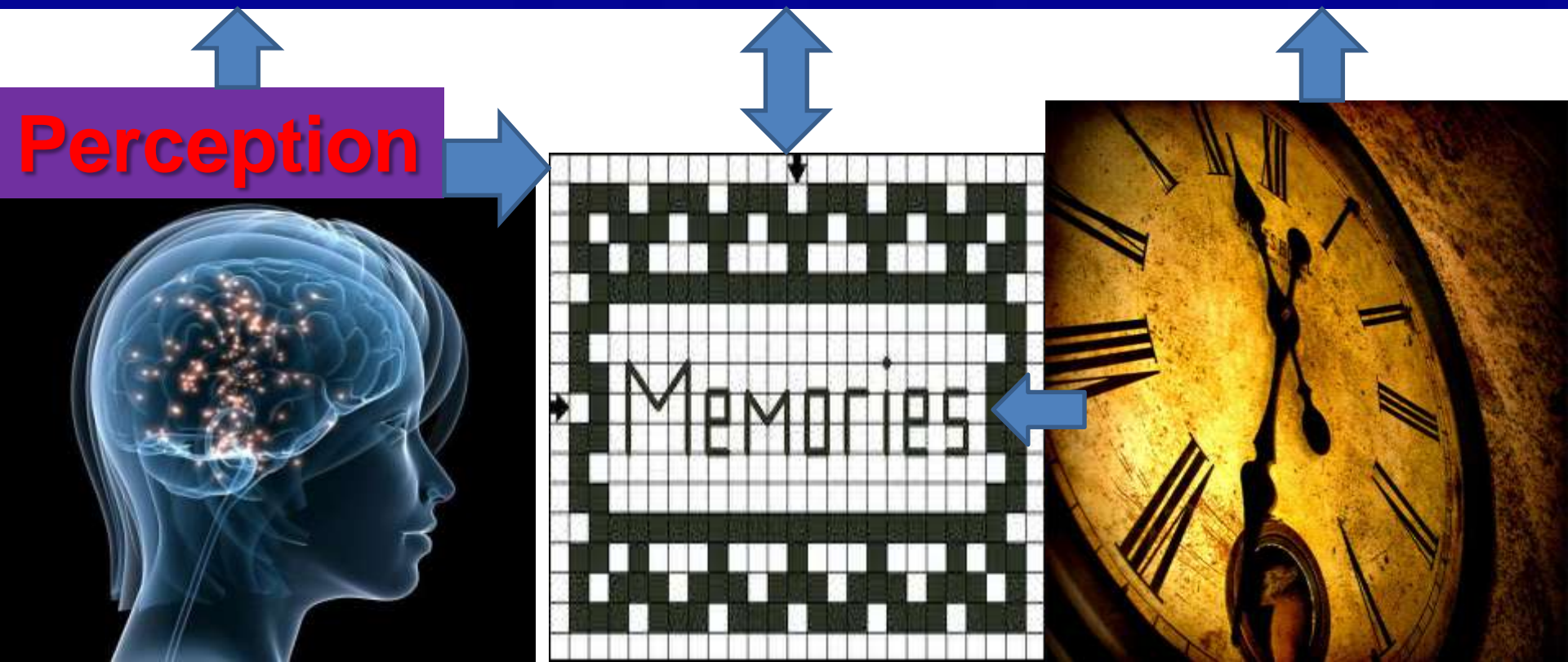


Light Side of Memory

- Two elderly couples were enjoying friendly conversation when one of the men asked the other:
- “Fred, how was the memory clinic you went to last month?”
- “Outstanding,” Fred replied. “They taught us all the latest psychological techniques: visualization, association, etc. It was great.”
- “That's great! And what was the name of the clinic?”
- Fred went blank. He thought and thought, but couldn't remember. Then a smile broke across his face and he asked, “What do you call that flower with the long stem and thorns?”
- “You mean a rose?”
- “Yes, that's it!” He turned to his wife, “Rose, what was the name of that memory clinic?”



REFLECTIONS



on Building Memory...

- Concepts of expanding memory and extending memory form the basis of Oral History Methodology
 - **Expand (remembering)** memory via poetry & rhymes; story-telling and Roman Loci method
 - **Extend (documenting)** memory via writing and information storage media, physical keeping
 - Creation and use of knowledge (from memory) not synchronized, less is remembered.
 - Building of memory requires tools
 - The process is never ending

Remembering Singapore's past

By MEIRA CHAND

I HAVE a very early and shadowy memory about flags. Although I was born in Britain, I grew up there at a time when it was not the multicultural place of today, but a more monocultural type of society that looked askance at my ethnic complexity.

I was born during World War II and when it was over I remember being taken by my parents to see the Victory Parade. I was very small and remember nothing of the tanks and guns and marching soldiers that must surely have passed by. All I remember were the number of small girls in the crowd who triumphantly wore dresses sewn from the Union Jack.

I did not wear such a dress and I remember still my disappointment at this, of not flying the flag like the others. Small as I was, the importance of a flag and its meaning in relation to an individual came home to me. Even then, I think I understood the power of identity a flag could bestow.

Much of my adult life has been spent in Japan, most patriotic of nations, where in the past the flag required such stern allegiance that life itself was held cheaply before it. History has us shown us that waving the flag too high and too hard can encourage dislike of and hostility towards other countries and peoples, and can turn a nation towards aggression, oppression and warfare, as was the case with Japan and Germany in the past, and with North Korea today.

Although patriotism has complex ties to citizenship, race and nationalism, it also shapes the ways in which we remember our past. The flag Japan flies today remembers the best of its past, its unique cultural heritage. Through many years of residence in the country I have come to deeply respect the manner in which that nation values and honours its cultural heritage, sensitively preserves it and draws strength from it still in everyday life.

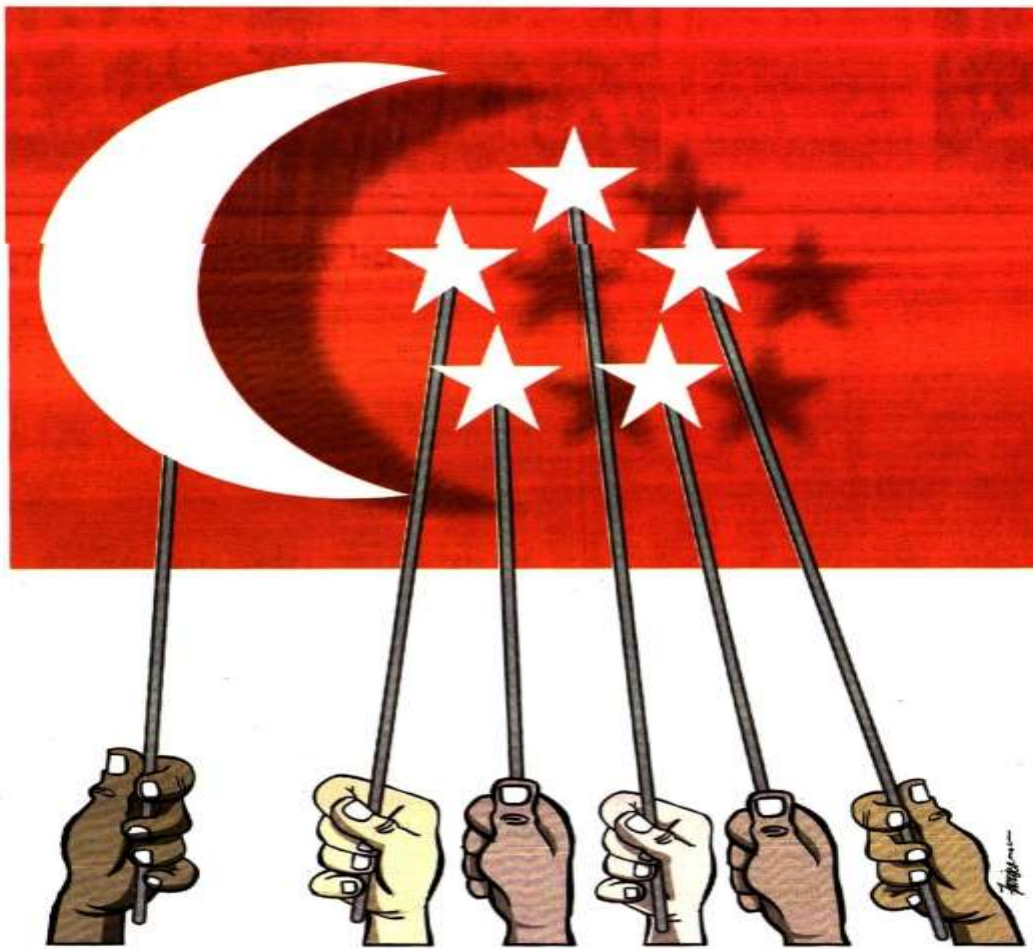
Go to any city in Japan and you will find large, sprawling modern towns, but you will also find the past lovingly preserved in the smooth line of a ceramic or lacquer bowl, a wooden gate, a moss-covered stone, the sound of the *koto*, the tea ceremony, the enjoyment of the Japanese bath and so on. Japan may have rushed pell-mell into the modern age, but it has not forgotten its past and flies its flag proudly upon its unique heritage of artistic achievements.

There is much to be learnt from the way Japan reveres the past, even as it makes room for the future. A fine balance has been achieved and respect for the past is instilled in each new generation.

Today's Singapore is still a relatively new country, and it is essential to wave the flag high, to bind the country's disparate races and cultures into a nation. It is essential to hold onto a vision for the future. Yet I feel in the race towards affluence, the Singaporean has lost a little of the cultural richness and diversity, is sometimes too easily discarded. Once something is gone, once a skill has died or a building has been torn down it cannot be put back, and knowledge about our roots becomes weaker.

In this way I truly appreciate the efforts of the National Heritage Board to both conserve and preserve Singapore's past. I wish more of old Chinatown still remained; there is so little beneath the great blocks of flats and the bright paint of its few narrow streets to give a sense of what might have been.

I take all my foreign visitors not only to the Asian Civilisations and Peranakan museums, but also to the wonderful Singapore History exhibit at the National Museum, and to the Chinese Heritage Centre



in Pagoda Street. There, the glimpse into early immigrant life never fails to touch everyone who sees it.

When I was there some time ago, the museum was facing a change of hands and an inspection crew was looking into all its dim corners. I happened to speak to the director who explained that the new managers found the place very dreary and were afraid visitors also found the place depressing. They wanted to put in new lighting and large signs, and to generally brighten things up.

I begged her to tell the new people that the spirit of the museum lay in its dim sad corners, its reconstructed rows of grimy cubicles with their communal kitchen and primitive latrine. How could we know how harsh life was for those early immigrants if bright lights lit up their misery?

Last week I had to return to the muse-

um with fresh visitors. I dreaded going inside, fearing the worst, but was pleasantly surprised to find little had changed. A large group of Singapore schoolchildren was going around, and I was quite happy to see they all seemed shocked at the conditions their ancestors had lived in, the struggle they had had to survive.

Both in this precious little exhibit and the bigger exhibits of the National Museum and the Peranakan Museum, the Asian Civilisations Museum and all the National Heritage Board's other concerns, I feel the Singapore flag flies proudly in a special way for the young Singaporeans who visit. And it is so important that they do visit and that schools actively promote an interest in the past, to balance the materialism of today.

I am personally deeply grateful for the efforts of the National Heritage Board to preserve Singapore's past, for otherwise I

would not have been able to write my Singapore novel, *A Different Sky*. A great part of my research for that book was done at the Oral History Department of the National Archives.

New to Singapore and in need of research material to write my book, I found that the Oral History Department's dedicated efforts to preserve the oral histories of Singapore's many ethnic communities became an important lifeline to a vanished era. Once a generation dies without proper documentation of its stories, those stories are irretrievably lost to history.

The Oral History Department has preserved that vital history and the stories I listened to were a continuous inspiration while I was writing my book. I had only to put on headphones and press a button and truly, I was able to enter a time machine, and entered also the dreams and

sorrows of each individual I listened to. In this way stories of the past and the different ethnic communities flowed through me, wove themselves together within me, forming a memory and the inspiration from which to write.

In the National Archives I occasionally found groups of schoolchildren working on projects and was glad to see this. I mentor quite a few young people in creative writing programmes. The first assignment I always give them is to go to their grandparents and ask them about their lives, learn their stories and write something based on that. Mostly they do not like the idea and do it grudgingly. But not a few have returned to me and said: "I'm so glad you made me do that; I didn't know anything of my grandparents' life."

I tell them, you may be one of Singapore's future writers, and if you do not know where you are coming from, you cannot know who you are or where you are going.

Through the writing of my novel *A Different Sky*, I have followed and relived the very birthing of the Singapore dream. When I started the book I knew little of Singapore or its history and it has been a lesson to me of no small wonder and admiration, that so much can have come from holding fast to the essence of a dream.

While writing the novel, I too was living a dream, as every writer must do when writing a book. Dreams, as we all know, are intangible things with less substance than a mirage. Much effort is needed to keep a dream on track and see it materialise into something tangible.

Both the Singapore dream I was reliving, and my own creative dream in the parallel world of my books, swayed strangely in tandem within myself over many years of writing - I felt it to be a sort of double act of dreaming. That both these dreams tangibly materialised at their different points in time only proves the power of a dream to realise itself and to change the future for the dreamer.

At the end of my own dream, with a book in my hand, it was incredible to emerge from my time warp and look around me at modern Singapore and realise what the vision of those early pioneers had achieved. Many struggled not only to survive but also to reinvent themselves, to prosper and to grow. It was the power of their dream that allows modern Singapore today to continually shift its vision towards new horizons.

Once, as a young writer, I asked a famous and elderly novelist what advice he would give me. He had only one word of reply. "Perseverance," he said. "Perseverance." I have never forgotten and his advice has served me well. I repeat it now to any young writer who comes to me for similar advice. Perseverance is what those pioneer men and women of Singapore showed in their dream, and instilled in the very fabric of their new country.

The different sky referred to in the title of my novel was a long dream of sky in the era I was writing about, a sky in which there no longer flew the colonial flag. The book ends with a symbolic image of the future, with a bunch of balloons drifting up into the sky, carrying a banner on which is written one word, *merdeka* - freedom.

That image is the seed of the flag we see flying everywhere in Singapore today, and in that one potent word, *merdeka*, was carried the kernel of a dream that was never relinquished but pursued against all odds. That is the power of a dream; a power Singapore has already learned how to seize and hold onto.

Meira Chand, an Indian-Swiss writer resident in Singapore, is the author of the novel *A Different Sky*. This essay is based on a speech she delivered at the National Heritage Board's National Day Observance Ceremony last Friday.

Back to Oral History Methodology

**LET ME BEGIN WITH THE
OBVIOUS – THE KNOWN**

Why Oral History? (1)

- Fill gaps in written history (usually from macro perspective)
- Gives insights into our past – changing lifestyle, values etc.



Interview Extract from
Mr Hay Soo Kheng, son of
a chicken farmer



历史是细节构成的!

Example from Thailand: “Recording Thai Film History” (2000)

- Using oral history methodology to preserve memories of the key players – allowing researchers to understand their background and motivation, technique used in producing their films, supplementing the brief metadata collected by the film archives.
- Collection size as at 2005: 43 audio tapes and 28 videotapes:
 - Directors (2)
 - Producers (3)
 - Actors (2)
 - Voice makers (3)
 - Theatre owners (2)
 - Distributors (8)

Why Oral History? (2)

Only the Victors tell their stories?

A means of learning about ordinary people who normally would not keep records of what they do and see - their stories and life experiences.

That of course does not mean we shall forget about the rich and famous...



MH My first delivery, near Tampines. The patient is very poor, I think their room the ground no cement [cemented floor]. It is an attap house, it is a zinc house but no cement on it. It is terrible, that one [is] very poor. You put the bathtub on the chair, you pour in, the water disappears. Just an oil lamp, [it was] so dark, you can't even see anything clearly. Just go by feeling that sort of thing. I delivered the patient in the night. Then in the morning, because I am not sure of the thing, even got the centipede on the nappies there. I found centipedes on the nappies there. I told that lady, I said, 'Please keep your things clean, otherwise your baby will be bitten to death.' That one also gave birth a lot.

PL How do you deliver a baby in pitch darkness and only with an oil lamp?

MH It cannot be helped, we have to use the lamp, put nearer to the bed there. Then we just delivered.

PL Any comical incident that took place?

MH No, that one don't have, only the water disappeared every now and then. Then I have to call the...

PL You can't pour it... you can't aim is it?

MH No, it is not. It is the bathtub got a hole. They were so poor until the bathtub got a hole. Next day, I have to get a bathtub and give it to her. Present her a bathtub, a new bathtub.

Mary Hee, recalled her experience as midwife in the 60s.

Giving births at home in 21st century Singapore is almost unheard of.

The story behind the Merlion...



毕 不过你刚才说大只的有经过修改啦，那怎样修改呢？你说那些鳞片也有一定的数目？

林 因为那些鳞片，这个放大了那些鳞片一片一片好像一只碟这样，很呆板，我觉得很呆板，我将它做成好像齿轮这样的形，即是表示我们人的红血球这样，一个一个，我将它简化成为图案，这样表现它整只有一种生机，一块一块。那些东西…那个时候是看了才做，关于那双眼，本来我们依照那个图做那两粒眼睛是凸的，是哑的〔密封，实心的〕，他又多一样东西，又要开了有灯光的，我真是满肚子气，我开始做是实心的，没有那盏灯的，那个全部拆了，拆成两个洞，那么玻璃平平装上去是不行的，那双眼一定要凸的，我想了很多个方法，买那些…结果还是我滑头，给我想通了，买那些这么大的灯罩，圆的，突出来的那种，买了我就装了两个进去，两个大灯罩，好像大鱼缸这样的，给我装了进去，行了，你要去那里可以买到这么大的玻璃…

Why Oral History? (3)

Preserves the voices of people – adds a sound dimension to written records, capture feelings and emotions in dynamic form – facial expression, body language (esp via video recording)



Translation

Papaya, mango, banana and guava
Brought from the Sunday Mart
In the village lots of sellers
In the city lots of buyers

Papaya mango rambutan
Duku durian and others
All my friends, let's gather
Buy fruits together

Nursery Rhymes



Why Oral History? (4)

For some minority groups, who depended on oral tradition to pass down collective memories and shared heritage, oral history helps to comprehensively preserved their cultures. [It is about expanding memory]

Driving into historic moment

Tunku's driver recalls trip to stadium



Precious memories: Kalimathoo looking at an old photograph of him and Tunku in Langgar, Alor Star, in the late 60s.

Story and picture by
TUNKU SHAHARIAH
tshah@thestar.com

KULIM: It was just a five-minute drive 50 years ago but K. Kalimathoo will cherish the moment forever.

Kalimathoo, 83, was the man behind the steering wheel of the Cadillac that carried Tunku Abdul Rahman from his residence in Bukit Tunku to Merdeka Stadium on Aug 31, 1957.

Shortly after arriving at the stadium, the country's first Prime Minister's voice rang out loud and clear as he proclaimed "Merdeka" seven times.

"I drove Tunku to the stadium where thousands of people were waiting for him," Kalimathoo said with pride as he recalled the momentous event during an interview at his home at Taman KTC here yesterday.

"There were four of us in the open-air Cadillac - Tunku, his wife (Sharifah Rodziah), his aide-de-camp and myself. We were surrounded by police escorts throughout the drive."

Kalimathoo, who served Tunku as his driver from 1957 to 1982, said that he felt honoured to share that historical moment.

"The Tunku was a true Malaysian leader who treated the Malays, Chinese and Indians equally. I felt sad and devastated when he



passed away in 1990, it is hard to come by such a leader again," he added.

After Tunku's retirement as Prime Minister on Sept 22, 1970, Kalimathoo continued to serve him at his Air Rajah Road residence in Petaling.

Kalimathoo said that Tunku had an uncanny gift of "saying something which would eventually turn out to be true". The Malays call this special gift *having mulut manis*.

Kalimathoo has 16 children and 27 grandchildren and spends his time planting vegetables and ladies' fingers on the tiny plot in his garden nowadays.

He does not believe in selling the vegetables but would share them with his neighbours and children when they visited him.

"Among the things that Tunku taught me was to lead a simple life and to be generous and kind, even when you only have a little."



浪遊 塗鴉世界的 九龍皇帝

九龍皇帝其字的鋪任何方面，他從沒派他的幫派囉。



五十年前，在觀塘、秀茂坪一帶出現了一個自命皇族後人的男人。他以燈柱、配電箱、樹鐵等城市畫布，用毛筆在上面一筆一劃，書寫家族光輝史。這個人走路要撐拐杖，卻無意宣示土地主權的毅力，過了幾年，他的足跡更遠伸至尖沙咀、中環，讓每個毛筆字填滿一大片牆、一整根柱。有些人說他是「傻佬」，叫小朋友不要靠近。有些人會為他拍照，記錄這座城市現象。也有些人為他的塗鴉辦展覽，帶入拍賣會。而他依然故我，在街頭看風大揮筆墨，留下痕跡。

這個男人，名叫曾灶財，號號九龍皇帝。



“不要觉得奇怪,为什么我会有兴趣听一位露宿者对雨声的看法,可能只因为没人愿意跟一位露宿街头的人聊天而已. 要栖身街头的滋味,我不懂得想象,但是我愿意聆听他们的故事. 因为我觉得每一个人,都有他们想跟别人分享的话语.”

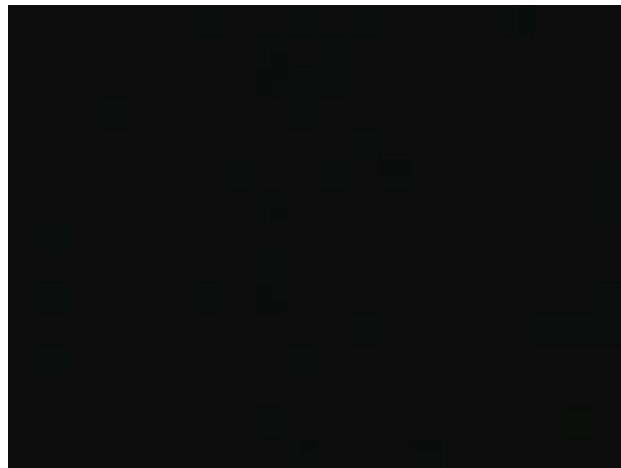


A missed opportunity for a unique community comprising of some 33,000 families and businesses living in more than 300 interconnected high-rise buildings that had “vanished” in 1992?



Why Oral History? (5)

Allows one to reflect on the past and helps put a closure to a sad chapter in a person's life...



Mr Khaw Kok Teen, mechanic, on why he is able to forgive the Japanese despite being interned in a POW camp outside Nagasaki during the Japanese Occupation.



“One of the keys to happiness
is a bad memory.”

[Rita Mae Brown](#) (US novelist, poet, screenwriter, and social activist)

Dr.Dylan: 将一些不开心的事忘掉,我完全不觉得可惜. 再说,人也不应该老是回头望.

Hazel:人没有过去就没有将来,这句话是你说的.

Dr.Dylan:但是一个人对将来没有希望,而不停地老是提起往事怎么行呢? 就算到今天,香港没有真正的音乐值得我再说下去,所以我才要提起以前的事.每次当我说完我就想哭,这样做人会开心吗?那天当医生说我患了老人痴呆,我就对我自己说,不用可惜的.就算慢慢连这个世界都不记得,曾几何时U2,Queen,Beatles都好,总之明天有真真正正的摇滚,真真正正的音乐,那就行了.总之你要记住,过去的事是要用来回味,不是用来逃避的.



Why Oral History? (6)

Connecting generations



Example 1

Interviewers can gain invaluable lessons from the wisdom of the elderly in an interview. Interviewers may identify with the experiences of the interviewees and thereby improve understanding and strengthen inter-generational bonds.

Example 2



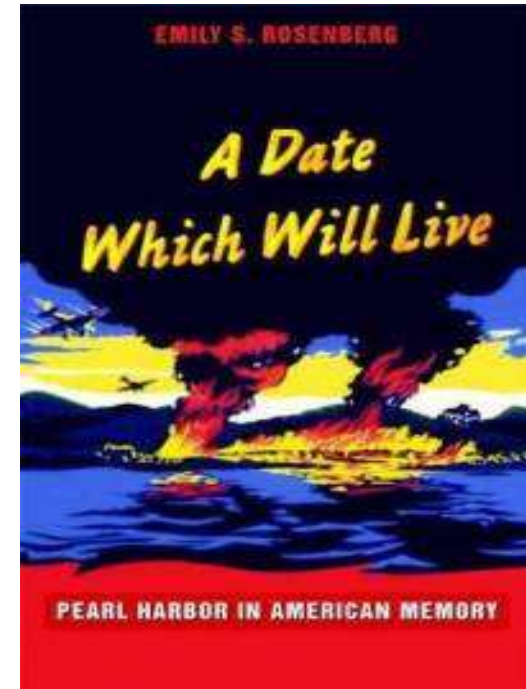
09WoC&pg=PA86&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false

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collection about life during the Great Depression. "The Good War," Trekel wrote, was "a memory book, rather than one of hard fact," designed to counter the "disturbingly profound dis-rememberance of World War Two." It presented highly readable stories, carefully selected by a master at listening and editing. The theme of the book subtly invoked a comparison with the Vietnam War, opening with a verse of Tom Patten's bitterly antiwar song "What Did You Learn in School Today?" ("I learned that war is not so bad; I learned about the great ones we have had. We fought in Germany and in France; And I am someday to get my chance.") By invoking Patten and the "bad war" that had divided Americans and savaged Indochina, Trekel reminded readers of the earlier "good" and unifying war, but he also put "the good war" in quotation marks, both advancing and also subverting the term.¹

Trekel's book dovetailed with a rising interest in "oral history." Collecting oral testimony grew out of a new emphasis on social history—the history not just of great (largely male) leaders, but also of common people who left few written records of their own. The call to do "history from the bottom up" was closely linked to the ideological insurgency that marked the antiwar protests of the 1960s and early 1970s. The new social historians frequently concentrated on collecting the "voices" of women, African Americans, and others whose views had previously been underrepresented in historical texts. Sherna Berger Gluck's *Rose the Riveter* (1988), for example, presented interviews with working women during World War II within a discourse of feminism. A film by the same name, featuring interviews with five women whose lives were shaped by the gain—and subsequent loss—of homefront job opportunities during the war, became widely used in college American history courses. Wallace Terry's *Bloods* (1984), a collection of oral histories from African American soldiers serving in Vietnam, focused attention on this particular group. The emphasis on such "authentic" voices implicitly advanced the idea that individual memory, especially if taken from "below," might provide a more direct path to understanding the past than the more traditional accounts of professional historians, who had

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Is the time factor at play again?

In public memories of Pearl Harbor, the complexities in historical scholarship remained nearly invisible. But why do certain narratives about the past become memorable and stay alive while others never catch hold or fall away? Memory researchers point out that prior familiarity shapes both social and personal memory. People generally fit new events into already familiar frames, distorting or forgetting whatever does not fit. “Memory activists” who seek to use history to buttress particular goals, of course, can contribute to molding events so that they will be understood in terms of already familiar, iconic forms.

**Emily S. Rosenberg, ‘Remember 9/11,
Forget Pearl Harbor?’**

Why Oral History? (7)

<http://www.sina.com.cn> 2012年04月04日 16:19 新华网

新华网南京4月4日电 (记者 蔡玉高)侵华日军南京大屠杀史研究会(幸存者)口述史分会4日在中国南京成立,这标志着中国启动新一轮抢救南京大屠杀幸存者证言的活动。

在当日的成立仪式上,“南京大屠杀(幸存者)口述史调查首批项目课题小组”与首批受访人员代表夏淑琴、常志强、张秀红等签署了《采访协议书》。84岁的南京大屠杀幸存者夏淑琴表示,她一定全力配合采访人员,做好证言,“我要将我的亲眼所见、亲身经历永远留在世上。”老人说。

南京大屠杀幸存者是一个特殊的群体,他们的口述史是当年历史最好的证言,也是对那些企图否定历史的日本右翼的最有力反驳。

侵华日军南京大屠杀遇难同胞纪念馆(微博)馆长朱成山表示,随着时间的流逝,南京大屠杀幸存者的人数越来越少,按照国际标准抢救证言格外重要。

南京大屠杀已经过去近75年,当年的幸存者中最小的也有75周岁了,很多幸存者已经离开了人世。据朱成山介绍,根据纪念馆掌握的信息,目前存活于世的幸存者仅剩200人左右,平均年龄超过80岁。

朱成山表示,多年来,虽然对南京大屠杀幸存者的调查和采访取得了一定的成果,但对照国际口述史的相关学术规范和标准,差距仍很大,需要进一步的完善与提高。为此,在与南京大屠杀史研究相关专家多次商议后,决定成立侵华日军南京大屠杀史研究会(幸存者)口述史分会。

在当天的成立仪式上,中华口述历史研究会常务副会长、扬州大学教授周新国受聘为分会的名誉会长。他说:“分会的成立,标志着我们将按照国际标准,深度抢救幸存者证言。”

记者获悉,成立口述史分会后,对南京大屠杀幸存者的采访调查工作将实现三大转变:一是从过去只注重南京大屠杀暴行的短线调查,向长线调查转变,展现大历史变革中的个人生活史,展现重大历史事件对个人生活的影响。

May be politically motivated from the beginning?

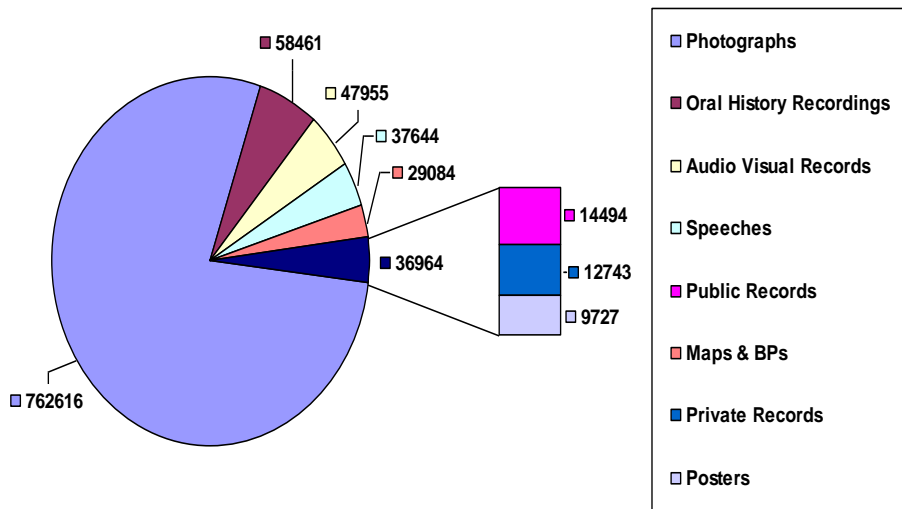
From individual memories to collective memory...

- Collective memory of community
- Collective memory of society
- Collective memory of civilisations
- Collective memory of mankind

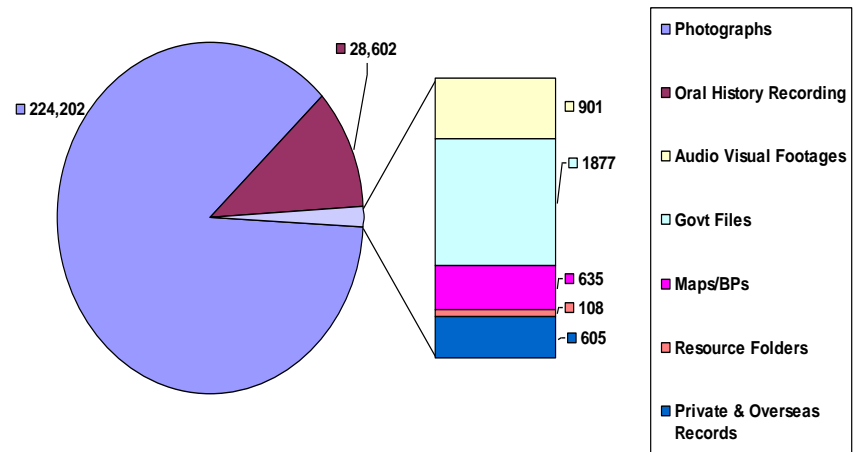


Usage by Record Type

Virtual Access to Archival Records by Record Type
(2006)



Physical Access to Archival Records by Record Type (Yr 2006)



Use by Broadcast Media - Radio

Two-way relationship – usage & promotion



'Reflections'
on FM93.8

(13 part series on life in Singapore)

- Singapore HeritageFest 2007 radio advertisement

Use by Printed Media - Newspaper

SATURDAY

THE STRAITS TIMES - SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2007



PIIONEERS

... pilot. An opera king. A cinema towkay. Pioneers all, they lived making up achievements in different ways, each one a pioneer.

The cinema man

For a man who made his first cap by prefer watching the

ENG WAH

Member of Singapore's first govt

More than 100 years after his death, Singapore's first cabinet still reveres its chief as J.M. Lemay.

By David Ho

THE STRAITS TIMES, NOVEMBER 3, 2007

MEMBER OF THE first cabinet of Singapore, J.M. Lemay, died on November 2, 2007, at the age of 94. He was a pioneer in many ways, not least as a member of the first cabinet of the newly independent nation.

Lemay was born in 1913 in Singapore. He studied at the Raffles College and then at the University of Cambridge. He worked for the British colonial government before joining the Singapore Civil Service in 1945.

He was appointed to the first cabinet in 1959, serving as Minister of Education. He held various other portfolios, including Health, Labour, and Housing. He was a member of the cabinet until 1970.

Lemay was a dedicated public servant and a close friend of the late Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. He was a member of the Singapore Council of Ministers and the Singapore Parliament.

He is survived by his wife and several children. His funeral will be held on November 10, 2007, at the Singapore General Cemetery.



Member of Singapore's first cabinet, J.M. Lemay, died on November 2, 2007.

Veteran writer and teacher

An authority on Malay, Chay ACFY is still giving advice on language & retiring from teaching

By James Ho

THE STRAITS TIMES, NOVEMBER 3, 2007

CHAY ACFY, a veteran writer and teacher, is retiring from his post as a senior lecturer at the National Institute of Education (NIE). He has spent over 30 years at the institution, where he has taught Malay and Chinese literature.

Chay is a well-known authority on the Malay language and culture. He has written several books and articles on the subject. He is also a frequent speaker at conferences and seminars.

He was born in Singapore in 1924. He studied at the Raffles College and the University of Cambridge. He worked for the British colonial government before joining the Singapore Civil Service in 1945.

He is survived by his wife and several children. He will continue to be active in the literary and educational fields.



Chay ACFY, a veteran writer and teacher, is retiring from his post as a senior lecturer at the National Institute of Education (NIE).

Grassroots historian

Wong Chin-Seng's passion for Raobis in a weekly newspaper column is local lore

By James Ho

THE STRAITS TIMES, NOVEMBER 3, 2007

WONG CHIN-SENG, a grassroots historian, has a weekly newspaper column on local lore. He has spent over 30 years researching and writing about the history of Singapore.

Chin-Seng was born in Singapore in 1924. He studied at the Raffles College and the University of Cambridge. He worked for the British colonial government before joining the Singapore Civil Service in 1945.

He is a well-known authority on the history of Singapore. He has written several books and articles on the subject. He is also a frequent speaker at conferences and seminars.

He is survived by his wife and several children. He will continue to be active in the historical and literary fields.

riot and adventurer

He got his chance a few years later, when he was in Hong Kong. He had been in a boat and was looking for a job. He was in a boat and was looking for a job. He was in a boat and was looking for a job.

By James Ho

THE STRAITS TIMES, NOVEMBER 3, 2007

HE GOT HIS chance a few years later, when he was in Hong Kong. He had been in a boat and was looking for a job. He was in a boat and was looking for a job. He was in a boat and was looking for a job.

He was a pioneer in many ways, not least as a member of the first cabinet of the newly independent nation. He was a member of the first cabinet of the newly independent nation.



He got his chance a few years later, when he was in Hong Kong. He had been in a boat and was looking for a job.

Doctor and life-saver

Skin specialist Tay Chong Hai wants to set up Spore-style Nobel prize for medicine

By James Ho

THE STRAITS TIMES, NOVEMBER 3, 2007

SKIN SPECIALIST Tay Chong Hai wants to set up a Spore-style Nobel prize for medicine. He is a well-known authority on the field of dermatology and has made significant contributions to the profession.

Chong Hai was born in Singapore in 1924. He studied at the Raffles College and the University of Cambridge. He worked for the British colonial government before joining the Singapore Civil Service in 1945.

He is a well-known authority on the field of dermatology and has made significant contributions to the profession. He has written several books and articles on the subject. He is also a frequent speaker at conferences and seminars.

He is survived by his wife and several children. He will continue to be active in the medical and literary fields.



Skin specialist Tay Chong Hai wants to set up a Spore-style Nobel prize for medicine.

Hokkien opera king

He is a dying art now, but he is a pioneer in many ways, not least as a member of the first cabinet of the newly independent nation.

By James Ho

THE STRAITS TIMES, NOVEMBER 3, 2007

HE IS A dying art now, but he is a pioneer in many ways, not least as a member of the first cabinet of the newly independent nation. He was a member of the first cabinet of the newly independent nation.



He is a dying art now, but he is a pioneer in many ways, not least as a member of the first cabinet of the newly independent nation.

Then it now

WONG CHIN-SENG, a grassroots historian, has a weekly newspaper column on local lore. He has spent over 30 years researching and writing about the history of Singapore.



ST article 3 Nov 07 on Pioneers – featuring OHC’s interviewees

200 oral history interviews consulted for SPH publication “Men In White”

Outreach Programmes & Education

Dissemination through:

- Oral history workshops, training sessions, seminars

- Sharing and reviewing of interview and research techniques

- Creating awareness and generating interests in oral history interviews

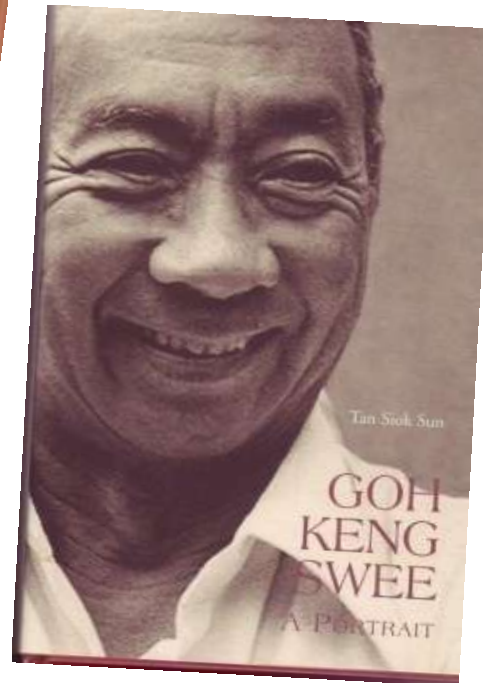
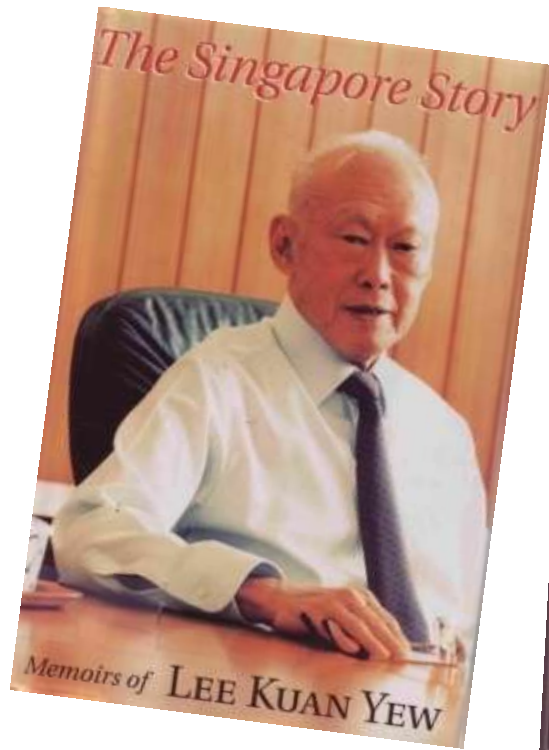
- Connecting people and creating interview opportunities

Packaging Oral History Interviews

- Multimedia packages
 - Organise oral history into thematic packages



Publications Drawing on Oral History Interviews (1)



Oral history can be a powerful tool when deployed in publications

- Good quotations used with sufficient context can create greater connection with visuals and story
- Greater emotional impact

Publications Drawing on Oral History Interviews (2)



Memories at Old Ford Factory

- English and Chinese
Exhibition Catalogue



Singapore Art Museum

- Convergences: Chen Wen Hsi
Centennial Exhibition Catalogue



Members of the Azad Hind Fauj, Indian National Army, marching in the streets of Singapore, during the Japanese occupation of the island, 1942-45.

Spirit, Moral Strength Of Azad Hind Fauj Soldiers Mightier Than Arms, Bose Says

...THE MIGHTY strength lies not in the arms but in the spirit to put and make in the hands of the youth and the old of the Azad Hind Fauj in a military campaign from 1942 to 1945. The Azad Hind Fauj is a military campaign from 1942 to 1945. The Azad Hind Fauj is a military campaign from 1942 to 1945. The Azad Hind Fauj is a military campaign from 1942 to 1945.

...THE MIGHTY strength lies not in the arms but in the spirit to put and make in the hands of the youth and the old of the Azad Hind Fauj in a military campaign from 1942 to 1945. The Azad Hind Fauj is a military campaign from 1942 to 1945. The Azad Hind Fauj is a military campaign from 1942 to 1945.

Bose Visualizes Military Campaign In Near Future

THE HIND FOR ARMED STRUGGLE
BY JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

...THE MIGHTY strength lies not in the arms but in the spirit to put and make in the hands of the youth and the old of the Azad Hind Fauj in a military campaign from 1942 to 1945. The Azad Hind Fauj is a military campaign from 1942 to 1945. The Azad Hind Fauj is a military campaign from 1942 to 1945.



Just as was the case with the INA, the Japanese did not actually provide funds for the Provisional Government. Instead, wealthy Indians in Malaya, Thailand and Burma contributed large sums of money. The British, however, saw it as a form of "extortionate pressure": "Very large sums of money were extorted by Indian Independence League committees in the large towns throughout the occupied territories, the method being to assess the estimated wealth of the rich and to call upon them to pay stated sums. Generally they paid but when they did not they were threatened with Japanese 'treatment' and, in several instances in Singapore, were arrested and detained by the Kempetai until they or their relatives paid up the sums demanded. The funds so collected were handed over to the Provisional Government and, by it, used to finance the Indian National Army in its war, in alliance with Japan, against the Allies."¹²

Quotations from oral history interviews used directly in text

In fact, according to British Intelligence: "For some months after the fall of Singapore, the cinemas continued to show American and British films until they were suppressed as being an obnoxious Western influence. They have been superseded by Japanese news reels, educational, cultural and war films."⁴ Masuri bin Sallikun, a teacher-trainee during the Occupation, recalled that most of the Japanese films screened at cinemas would, ironically, show scenes of the Japanese characters having sumptuous meals, and he felt that this was rather disheartening for the audience who did not have enough to eat.⁴ Besides Japanese films, Indonesian propaganda films encouraging people to work hard were also screened.

On To Singapore' Battle Film To Be Screened Thursday



- Citing oral history
 - Verify information from reports
 - Or supplementing the story

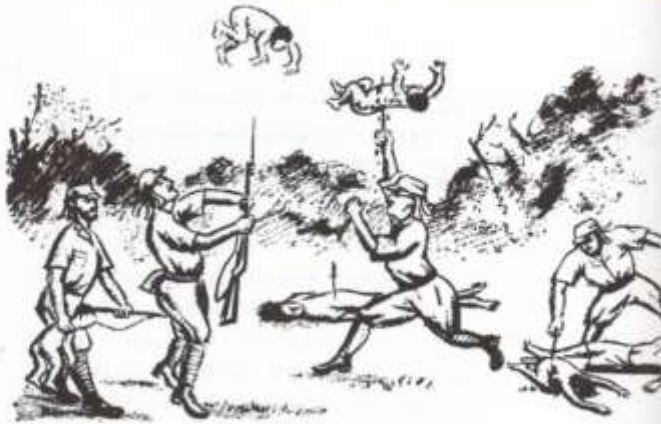
However, Fong Chiok Kai, a resident in Kreta Ayer, recalled differently.

“在日本统治的时期，那些戏院也没几间的。我们对面那里炸了就没有了，那么只是在丹戎巴葛区就有一间叫做华英...那个时期叫做南京戏院，在这个二马路那里，东方戏院叫做中华戏院，是放映电影的，放映电影也是做那些做那些日本电影而已——我们华人电影，好像也是受他们日本统制，不是随便给你们放映华人电影的，看日本影片的。”

“During the Japanese Occupation, there were not many cinemas left. The one across my house was bombed. The one at Tanjong Pagar called Hua Ying...which was then called Nanking Cinema, and another along New Bridge Road, the Oriental Cinema called Zhong Hua Cinema which screened movies. The movies shown were only Japanese movies - I think our Chinese movies were also controlled by the Japanese, they did not easily let you screen Chinese movies, had to watch Japanese movies.”



- Using quotations of different languages
- Presenting both the original quotation and the translated quotation



日军虐杀无辜的小孩都不放过，但是人民却无法阻止他们的暴行。这是巴芭拉·沙恩霍斯特在战后的作品。

芭芭拉·沙恩霍斯特 (Mdm Barbara Scharnhorst) 也看到日军穷凶极恶地对付无辜的平民：

“我记得听到路边骚动的声音，当时，我们住在三楼。我偷望外头，想知道是什么声音，然后我就跟我妈妈大叫：‘有个婴孩挂在刺刀上！’我妈妈走过来，我记得这婴孩顶多这麽大，大概两三个月大吧。当日本兵走近，我看到刺刀穿过了婴儿的直肠，婴儿手脚拼命挣扎，在嚎啕大哭。血淋淋地滴落，日本人则若无其事，还在笑。大约过了两分钟，一名锡克族男士，我们俗称孟加里的，他可能鞠躬时腰弯得不够低，他们就把他的头给砍下来，而那个人还在走着。我清楚记得他的头的滚动，头上的头套松脱了，就如头套的布料在这儿，人头滚在那儿。而那人还继续行走！那便是我可怕的经验，看到一个被杀，婴儿被折磨，那婴儿肯定死的。那婴儿的哭啼声，一辈子也忘不了。那名锡克人被砍时则没有发出声音，发生得太快了，只是‘砍’的人头就滚下去了。那是我生平第一次看见死人。”*

有些居民预感到局势会有变数，便开始缝制日本国旗。住在翡翠山路 (Emerald Hill Road) 的王昌基还记得当时的情形：“可笑的是，在日军进来的那一天，家家户户都挂着日本国旗，就是那面太阳旗。那些国旗是何时制成的，没有人知道。就算是我家，也做了一面来欢迎他们。”**

* 新加坡国家档案馆口述历史中心采访编号3037，第1片光碟，2006年，英语。
** 新加坡国家档案馆口述历史中心采访编号152，第1卷，1982年，英语。

“ I remember hearing a commotion on the roadside because we were on the third floor of the flats. I peeked out wondering what was this noise and then I started shouting out to my mum and I said, 'There's a baby on a bayonet!' She came and she looked out with me. I remember this baby could not have been bigger than this. So I would say the baby was about maybe two or three months old. When they (the Japanese) came closer by and I was looking out, they had the bayonet pierced through the baby's rectum and the baby was, the hands and legs were just flinging and screaming. And this blood was all going down, dripping down and then the Japanese were just laughing away....”

- Barbara Scharnhorst , April 2006

Citation of Oral History Interviews

Pointers to note when deploying oral history in publications:

- Provision of context
 - Overcoming language barrier
 - Balancing of views
- Not all useful interviews need to be quoted. Interviews that are informative but disjointed can be extracted and used to support the story as text or as citation.

Deployment in Exhibitions



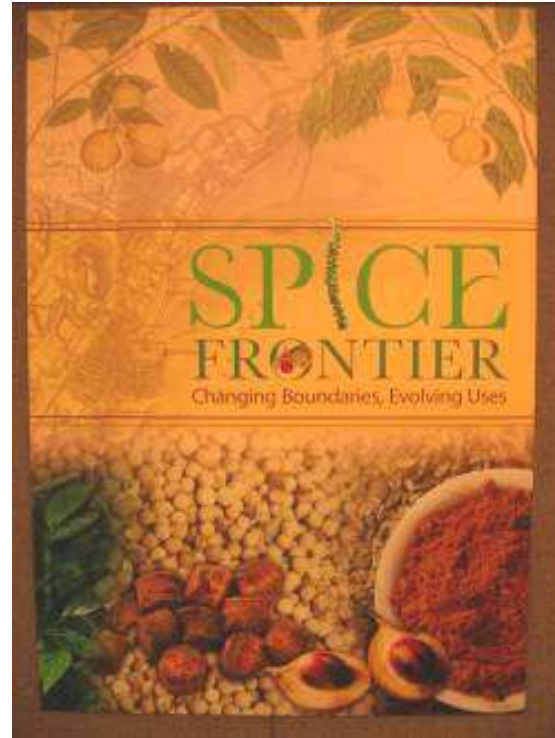
Memories Unfolded:
A Guide To Memories At Old Ford Factory



- Anchoring the exhibition on oral history interviews
 - First-hand account lends **authenticity**
 - Fill “**gaps**” in areas of the exhibition story that are not covered by archives
 - **Heighten** level of **emotional engagement** by visitors and adding a “**human touch**” to the exhibition story
 - **Key quotations** can also be selected and used as displays or as part of exhibition design

10 Years that Shaped a Nation

新加坡建国十年 10 Tahun yang Membentuk Singapura yang Amazing
Seluruh Negara



- Oral history can be integrated, with technology, to create interactive displays that are more engaging...

- “Well of Reflection” at RBC

- “Time Tunnel” at MOFF

- “Talking Map” at MOFF



“Well of Reflection” at RBC:

- Using oral history to provide greater emotional links to the exhibits and to emphasize the theme of reflection





“Time Tunnel” at MOFF

- Making use of oral history to **create an atmosphere** of uncertainty
- To **condition visitors** to the mood of the exhibition as they enter





“Talking Map” at MOFF

- A 3D-Map display that features a collection of oral history clips with details of interviewees and the location of interviewees at the reported events

“Talking Map” at MOFF:
Here’s how it works ...



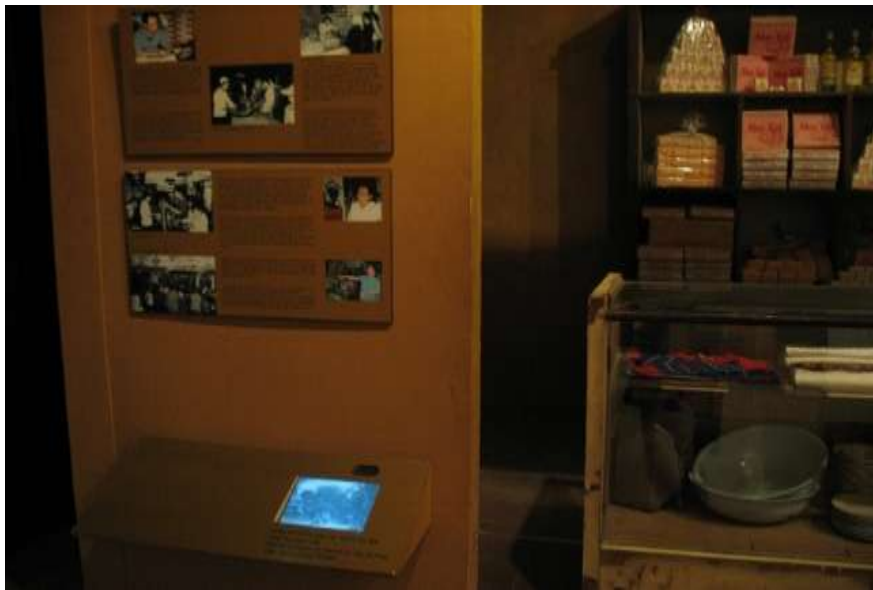
LED lights up to
show location

Deployment in a museum in Vietnam





“Is it possible that today's youth
is disadvantaged
being learned yet living timidly
humbled for the sake of keeping
“the peace”...
Does anyone notice?
Does anyone change?”
Excerpt from poem “Remembering Uncle Ho”
Phạm Thị Xuân Mai, Tân Phong magazine
March 27th 1998

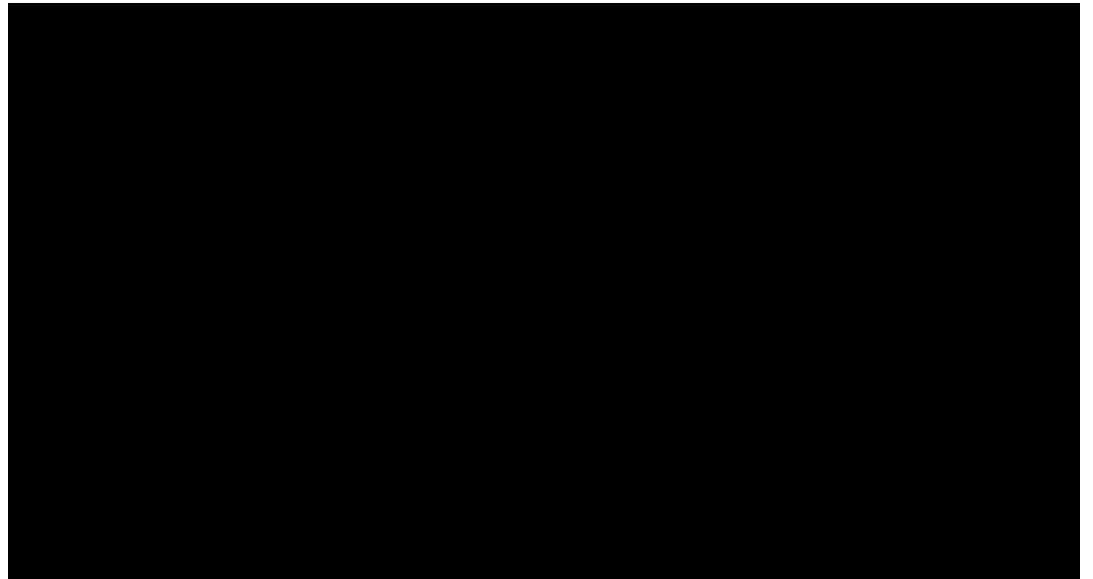
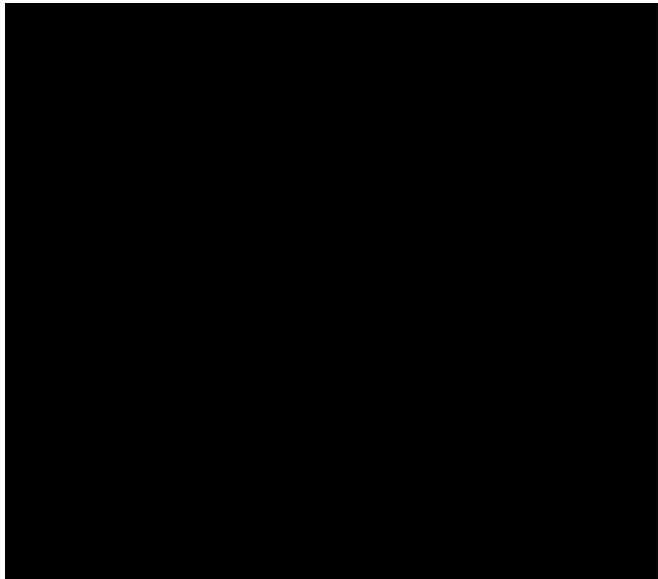


Documentaries Drawing on Oral History Interviews

- **Oral history** and exhibition information can also be packaged into short documentaries



Animation partly drawing on Oral History Interviews



A possible conflict of interest?

OF THE MANY EXAMPLES & ILLUSTRATIONS HIGHLIGHTED ABOVE, ONE WOULD REALISE THAT WE (THE CREATOR OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDS) ARE HEAVY USERS....

Through the use of the interviews ourselves, we can bring about...

- Identification of and filling in **gaps in collection**
- Improvement of **finding aid**
- **Revenue** generation & Justification for high preservation cost
- **Archives Branding to improve the value of oral history as** an authentic, reliable, trustworthy information source

Part 2: “人言可畏”

**WHY DO WE NEED TO ADOPT A
METHODOLOGY?**

ORAL HISTORY METHODOLOGY

Why, What, When, Where Who & How (common sense really!)

Why Call It “Oral History”? Searching for Early Usage of a Generic Term

Charles T. Morrissey

I have discovered that the term “oral history” was coined as early as 1863, and the concept implied in that early usage is remarkably similar to the meaning of “oral history” in today’s parlance. Like almost everyone else I thought Professor Allan Nevins of Columbia University devised “oral history” in 1948, possibly adapting the term from a Greenwich Village bohemian named Joe Gould (1889–1957) who claimed to be recording overheard conversations for a *magnus opus* he was writing (but alas, never finished) entitled *An Oral History of Our Time*.

My discovery was a classic case of serendipity. Let me recount the moment of realization by setting the scene for you:

It was late and I was tired. My eyes were smarting and my empty stomach rumbled. I had worked doggedly from mid-afternoon right through the dinner-hour, ignoring hunger pangs and a slack throat which cried for the soothing balm of an evening libation. I didn’t want to look at my wristwatch because it was probably after nine o’clock—much too late to keep the big library lighted, much too late to be tunneling through what seemed like an impenetrable mountain of bibliography. But guilt pangs were stronger than hunger pangs: I had to keep reading, even if the historical literature was turgid and uninformative, because I had promised myself I would master all the published *Proceedings* of the Vermont Historical Society before I called it quits for the night. This was reading I should have done years before, but in one way or another I had managed to postpone it. Now I felt obligated to master all those blackbound volumes because I was doing the background reading for writing my book, *Vermont: A Bicentennial History*.¹ I didn’t want to overlook anything I was expected to know before I started to write—any obscure minutiae I might find useful to illustrate a point or buttress an argument, any minor item of knowledge which would mislead reviewers into thinking I knew the history of the state whose heritage I was trying to inter-

What’s in a name?

¹ To be published in 1980 by W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., as a volume in its “The States and the Nation” series.

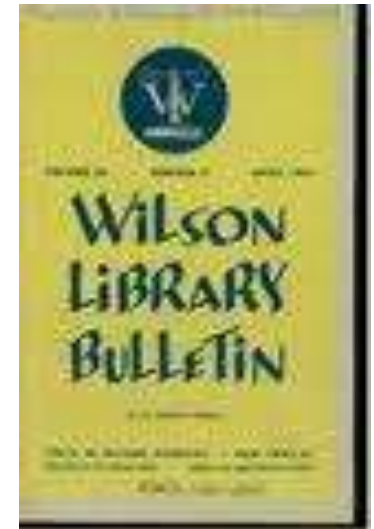
Defining Oral History

“Oral history is the interviewing of **eye-witness participants** in the events of the past for the purposes of historical reconstruction.”



The Oral History Reader
(edited by Robert
Perks and Alistair Thomson)

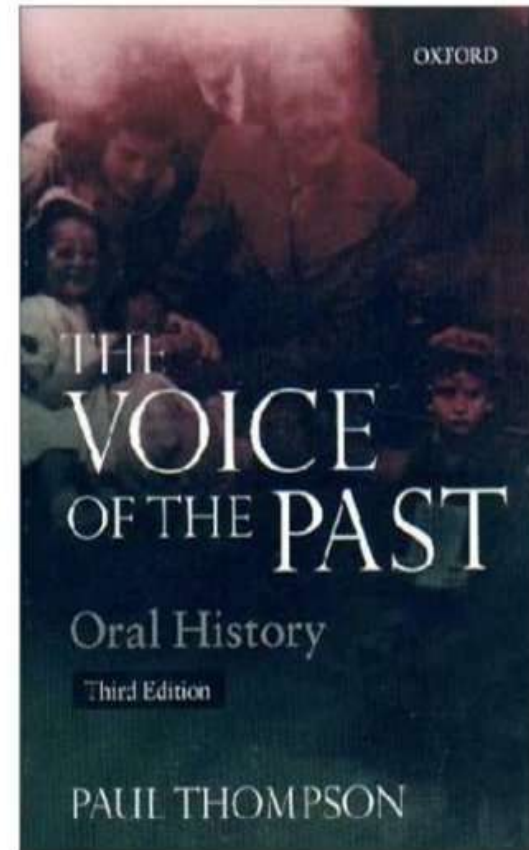
“An organised series of interviews with selected individuals or groups in order to **create new source materials from the reminiscences** of their own life and acts or from their association with a particular person, period, or events.”



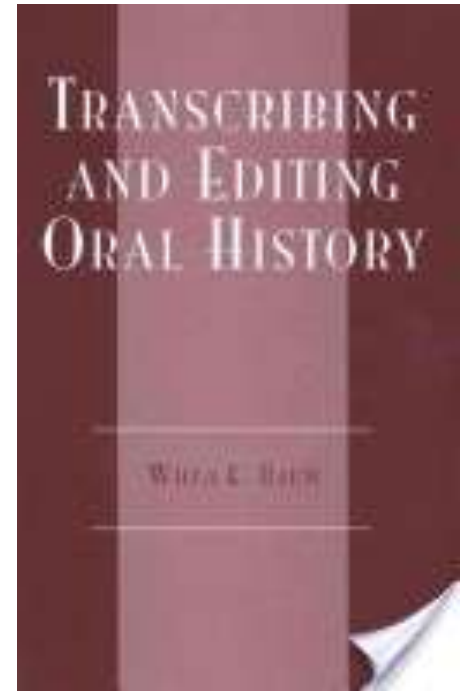
Elizabeth Rumics, 'Oral History, Defining the Terms',
Wilson Library Bulletin, March 1966

“Oral history is a *history built around people*. It thrusts life into history itself and it widens its scope. It allows heroes not just the leaders, but from the *unknown majority* of the people... It brings history into, and out of, the community... It makes for contact - and thence understanding - between social classes, and between generations...In short, it makes for fuller human beings.”

Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*



“A modern research technique for preserving knowledge of historical events as recounted by participants. **It involves the tape recording of an interview** with a knowledgeable person, someone who knows when of he or she speaks from personal participation or observation, about a subject of historical interest...The resulting tapes must then be preserved and processed in such a way as to make them usable and accessible.”



Willa K. Baum, **Transcribing and Editing Oral History**, 1977

What does Oral History Methodology really entail?

Systematic collection and preservation of data related to past (historical) events:

- Interviews conducted by well-prepared interviewers
- Based on fully researched interview outline
- Suitable interviewees
- Audio (and selective video) recordings aptly preserved

Not forgetting sharing of the recorded information as it is through usage and deployment that the value of oral history becomes obvious and thus the programme could in turn become sustainable.

What can you tell from the logo?

- Encompasses the oral history workflow and philosophy
- Technology changes
- The human factor – interviewer vs interviewee
- Interview approach – interview a percentage of population
- Interview technique – asking of questions
- Preservation is for posterity



Just bear this in mind....

**AUTHENTICITY RELATES TO
PROVENANCE. WHO IS REALLY
THE “EYE-WITNESS”?**

Validity of Oral History Interviews

- Memory and Perception (is it not unique from the perspective of archives?)
- Oral vs Written Records (why many **archivists** distrust oral history)
- Evaluating Interviews (but from what perspective – I will come back to this during Part 2 of my presentation)

Back to Memory and Perception (Reflection)

- How much is remembered? At time of event or long after it had happened
 - From the archives perspective, these are issues relating to validity and accuracy
- How is it remembered?
 - Daily/routine vs emergency
- How is it re-presented/re-told (present time)?
 - Issue of reflections vs recalling of facts
 - Also how much/deeply is the person willing to share...



“A group of students were asked for their memories of the 1986 space shuttle disaster a day after it happened and again three years later. Fewer than seven per cent of the second reports matched the first; 25 per cent were wrong in every major detail. Similar surveys after 9/11 and other events show similar results.

If we can't even depend on our own memories of events supposedly emblazoned on our minds, what can we be sure of? Perhaps too much self-awareness of our unknowingness would simply leave us paralysed by indecision and lack of confidence. A bit of spousal certitude may not be so bad after all to keep a chap on the straight and narrow.“

Being Wrong

Book Review by Hugh Carnegie

4 Sep 2010



Another light side of memory ...

- **With all the new technology in fertility recently, a 65-year-old woman was able to give birth. When she was discharged from the hospital and went home, a friend visited her.**
- **"May I see the new baby?" The friend asked. "Not yet," she said. "I'll make coffee and we can visit for a while first."**
- **Thirty minutes had passed, and the friend asked, "May I see the new baby now?" "No, not yet," she said.**
- **After another few minutes had elapsed, the friend asked again, "May I see the baby now?" "No, not yet," was her replied. Growing very impatient, the friend asked, "Well, when can I see the baby?"**
- **"When he cries," she said. "When he CRIES? Why do I have to wait until he CRIES?"**
- **"Because I forgot where I put him, OK?!"**

Written/recorded information based on memory therefore could be unreliable as well.....

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The Straits Times
www.straitstimes.com Published on Mar 17, 2011

Mahathir admits he got some details wrong

But he refuses to be drawn in on criticism of his memoirs

By Elizabeth Looi

CYBERJAYA - FORMER Malaysian premier Mahathir Mohamad yesterday admitted that he may have forgotten some details about the past, after his recently launched memoirs drew criticism for containing discrepancies.

Some readers had raised an issue over Tun Dr Mahathir's description of his first visit as Malaysia's premier to Singapore in 1981. In his book, Dr Mahathir described feeling 'sorely used' when he was not properly greeted at the Prime Minister's Office.

He also said that there was no state dinner for him, and that when he visited former president Benjamin Sheares - his professor in medical college - they spoke for 20 minutes before an aide said the president had another appointment.

But Dr Sheares died in May 1981, seven months before Dr Mahathir's visit in December.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir clarified that he had met Dr Sheares in another meeting, before his official visit to Singapore. But he did not comment on the other details. ½

'People do forget things, you know,' he said at a press conference on the launch of a 'green' building.

Read the full story in Thursday's edition of The Straits Times.
elizlooi@sph.com.sg

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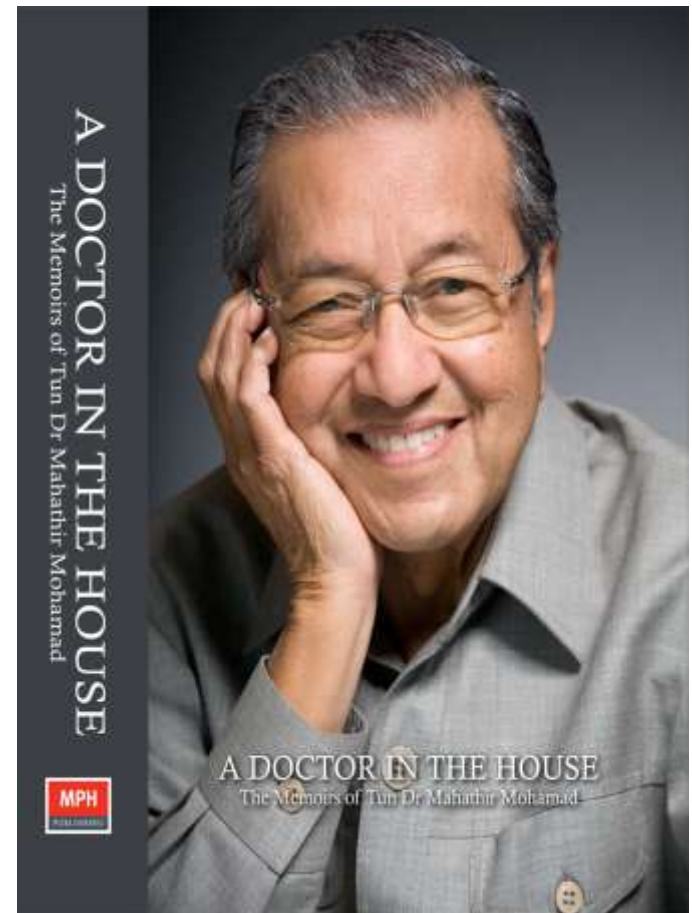
Done

EN ? [System icons] 9:03 AM

“People do forget things, you know.”

Former Malaysian premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad, on the discrepancies in his newly released memoirs.

Straits Times, 17 Mar 2010





They were all false memories

May 1, 2011 - 11:02pm

By: [Chai Hung Yin](#)



SHE claims that she clearly remembers getting pregnant, considering an abortion and having a miscarriage last June.

But when her then boyfriend hired a private investigator to check this out, the outcome shocked them both.

Jane (not her real name), 22, says her boyfriend told her there were no records of her at the hospital.

Now she thinks she's suffering from a condition known as "false memory syndrome".

1

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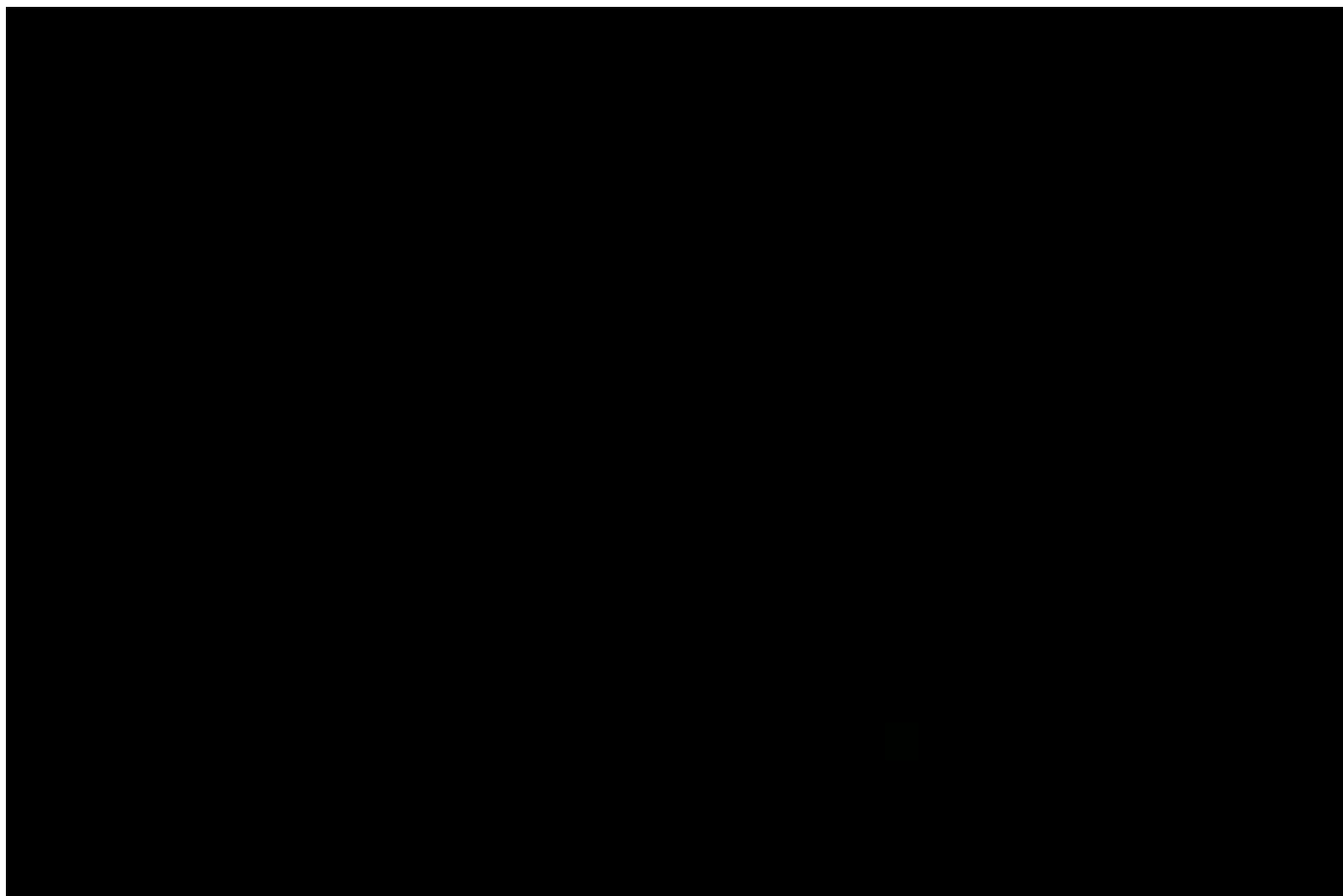
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Win a trip to watch EPL

Play Pick-The-Score
on Football Kicker



Ah Kong, do you remember? ~ 阿公，你还记得吗？





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False memory syndrome

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

False memory syndrome (FMS) describes a condition in which a person's identity and relationships are affected by memories which are factually incorrect but are strongly believed.^[1] Peter J. Freyd originated the term,^[2] which the [False Memory Syndrome Foundation \(FMSF\)](#) subsequently popularized.

False memories may be the result of [recovered memory therapy](#), a term also defined by the FMSF in the early 1990s,^[3] which describes a range of therapy methods that are prone to creating [confabulations](#). Some of the influential figures in the genesis of the theory are forensic psychologist [Ralph Underwager](#), psychologist [Elizabeth Loftus](#) and sociologist [Richard Ofshe](#). False memory syndrome is not recognized as an official mental health diagnosis^{[4][5][6][7]} but the principle that memories can be altered by outside influences is overwhelmingly accepted by scientists.^{[8][9][10][11]}

Contents [\[hide\]](#)

- Definition
- Recovered memory therapy
- Evidence for
- Court cases
 - Sexual abuse cases
 - Malpractice cases

Due to imperfection of human memory, we must presume that our interviewees will sometimes give us conflicting accounts of the same event or accounts differ from the written sources.

Oral history interviewers are not the Seekers of the truths nor are they the Mother Confessors.



Oral vs Written Records

- Words and body language vs static written text
- Factual accuracy vs meaningful interpretation
- The need to establish standards and methods to ensure reliability and accuracy – can we not draw reference from archival science?



Accuracy

- The degree of precision to which something is correct, truthful, and free of error or distortion, whether by omission or commission.
- It is usually refers to the truthfulness of the **content** of the record and can only be established through content analysis. Records produced within a short period after the event or activity occurs tend to be more readily acceptable as accurate than records produced long after the event or activity.
- **How can an oral history programme improve on accuracy of interviews conducted?**

But striking a balance is equally important...





Reliability

- **The quality of being dependable and worthy of trust; the quality of being consistent and undeviating.**
- **From RM perspective, a recordkeeping system is reliable if it produces consistent results. A calculator that always reports that $2 \times 2 = 4$ is reliable; one that occasionally reports 5 is not. In diplomatics, a record is reliable only if it was created by someone with appropriate authority, if it was made following proper procedures, and if all information and steps were finished. In this sense, reliability does not ensure the accuracy of the record's content.**
- **How would this apply to oral history interview?**

Having a methodology that governs the conduct and process of oral history interview is one critical step towards this.

Needless to say, training of interviewers based on this methodology is equally critical.

Part 3: “知易行难”

PUTTING AN IDEA TO WORK

“不闻不若闻之，闻之不若见之，
见之不若知之，知之不若行之；
学至于行之而止矣。” [荀子·儒效篇]

I hear and I forget ,
I see and I remember ,
I do and I understand ◦

Project Paper/ Research



Preliminary Interview



Recording



Documentation

Case File

Writing Synopsis

Transcript

Updating Database



Preservation

Save into Wav
format

Accession & Catalogue

Storage & Repository



Dissemination

CORD Database

Workshops

Reference Room

Publications

Planning Oral history Projects

- Establish project objective(s) and scope
- Prepare project paper
- Key components include:
 01. Background [review of existing information gap, outline objective(s), etc.]
 02. Budget and resources
 03. Time frame (some projects may be long-term or require periodic re-visit)
 04. Scope/coverage
 05. Selection of interviewees
 06. Interview outline
 - 07. The interview**
 08. Processing the recording
 09. Preserving the recording
 10. Access and usage of recorded interview

01. Background

- Need for thorough research to decide on theme(s) to cover
- Identify critical information gaps

PROJECT PAPER FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHINESE CLAN ASSOCIATIONS IN SINGAPORE

I. Background

JUNE 2003

As an immigrant society with a short history, each racial and ethnic group needs to make extra efforts to keep in touch with their cultural heritage, to know where their ancestors come from and what their culture. The need for social identification and mutual assistance amongst the Chinese is reflected in the number of associations set-up far before Singapore gains her national identity.

The traditional role of clan association is to provide support to new immigrants including initiation, induction, mutual protection, social services, entertainment, etc. which were basic necessities to an immigrant in a strange land. In a way, clan associations helped make Singapore what it is today. Presently, Singapore is our home and defines our place in the world. We have built upon our diversity, expand our common ground and develop our own shared Singaporean

PROJECT PAPER FOR THE CHINESE LITERARY SCENE IN SINGAPORE

Jan 2002

actions of intellectuals. Other than as a platform or tool in writers also use literature to "paint" pictures of the society in Malaya/Singapore in the 20th century revealed the life of the Chinese community through their works, as well of the community, such as the concern for China. (Yeo, instances, intellectuals used literary works to raise awareness certain issues, for example the Japanese invasion of China in 1937) and anti-yellow culture movement in Singapore/Malaya. y documenting the historical development of the Chinese pore, we can obtain insights into both the development of agapore (literary history) and the social history of the Chinese

text includes the genres of novels, poems, prose, short stories, id articles of literary criticism and other forms of literary work, ished in a variety of forms: as monographs or books, in wspapers, and so on.

of Singapore from Malaysia, Singapore Chinese Literature and

PROJECT PAPER Performing Arts in Singapore (Music)

present has remained an obscure facet of our nation's relatively short history. History Centre started the "Performing Arts in Singapore (Music)" project in ve's musical roots. It traces the beginnings of organised music making from Japanese Occupation through the British rule and post-independence.

ounded modern Singapore in 1819, it was not long before western classical new colony by mostly British expatriates who were drawn to the new (eral) reasons, as attested by early issues of The Straits Times. There performances in the Botanic Gardens by the Singapore Police Force ed of Sikh bandmen from British India in the 1920s.

ommissioner E.A. Brown established the first children's orchestra in gapore. Children's Orchestra, this kid-ensemble performed occasionally and consisted mainly of violins with lower strings added later. The music ght from England and Europe mostly encompasses simplified string ics by Handel and Bizet. On big occasions, brass and wind players ish military bands were deployed to enhance sonic grandeur. Some of his orchestra included Lim Chong Kiat, who later became a renowned ngapore Conference Hall and Penang's Sri Dewan.

E.A. Brown's orchestra had become adolescents and he decided to g People's Orchestra. In later years, more young people played wind J the standard of string playing also improved. Glenn Williams, who

Project Monitoring (1)

Monthly progress report

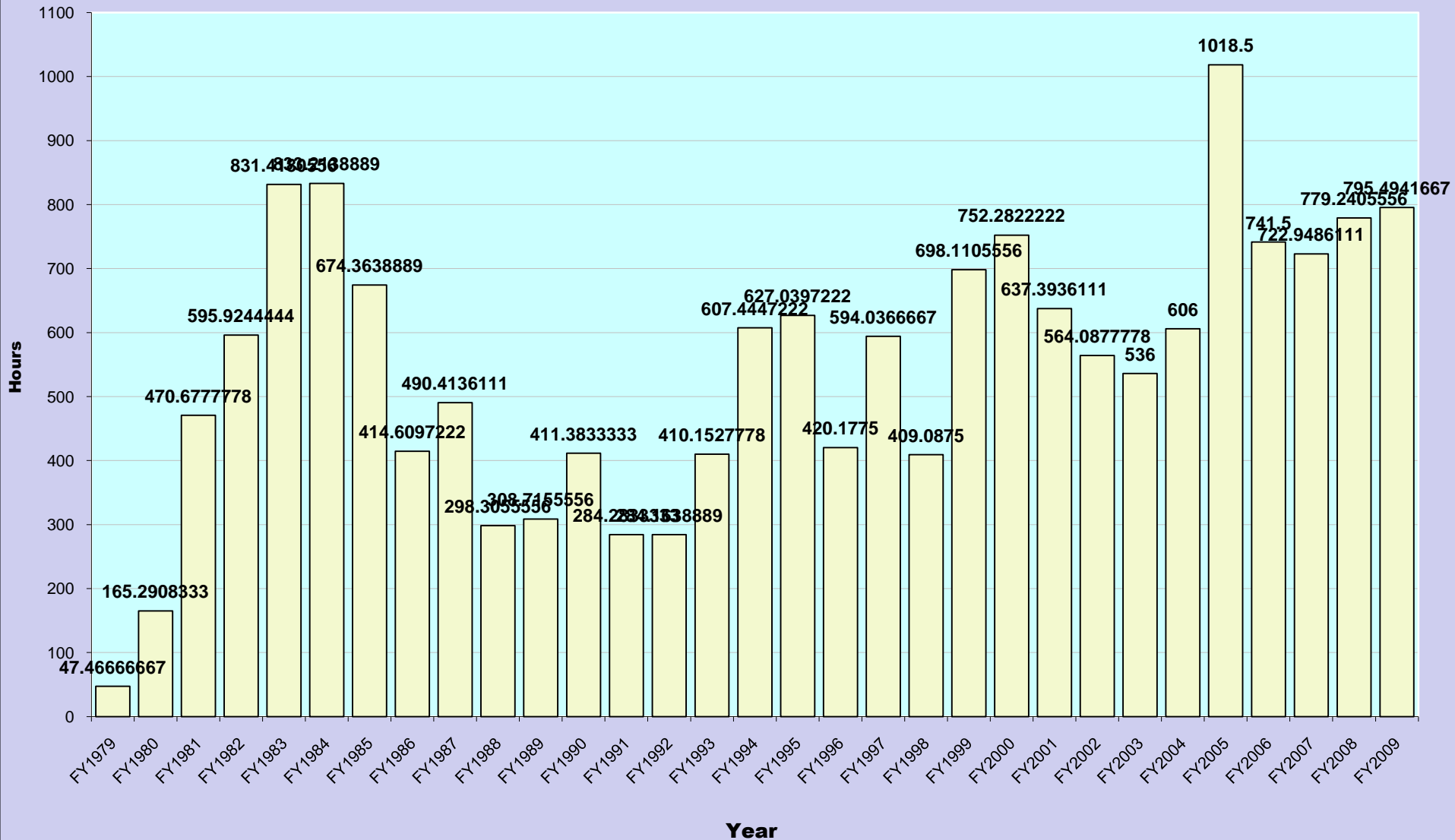
	Interviewee/ Accession No.	Access Conditions*	Dialect/ Language	Interview Session No. (Eg. 1-2)	Total Recorded Hrs	Synopsis written (hrs)	Transcript Status (Y/N)	In Progress/ Completed	Vocations/ Disciplines
1	Mr A/ 2955	U	English	CD10 CD10	1	1	N	In progress	Nursing School/ Nursing
2	Mr B/ 2944	U	English	CD08-09 CD08	1.5	1	Y	In progress	Administrators/ Surgery
3	Mr C/ 2947	A	English	CD24-26 CD18-26	2.5	9.5	Y	Completed	Social Worker/ Rehabilitation
4	Ms D/ 2977	A	Malay	CD03-06	0	3.5	N	Completed	Laboratory Technician
5	Ms E/ 2531	B	Mandarin	CD11-12 CD10-11	2	2	N	Completed	Academia/ Dentistry
6	Mr F/ 2979	U	Teochew	CD05-07 CD02-03	3	1.5	N	In progress	Hospital Attendant
7	Mr G/ 2985	U	Hokkien	CD01-04 CD02	4	1	N	In progress	Canteen Operator
	7				14	19.5			Total

* U = Unsigned, A = Open Access, B = Restricted Access

Project Monitoring (2)

Interview contents	Interviewees			
	A	B	C	D
Personal background (brief)	X	X		X
Family background (brief)	X	X		X
Schooling years (brief)	X			X
Life during Japanese Occupation and its impact (if applicable)	X	X		X
Medical education	X	X	X	X
Medical school	X		X	X
Postgraduate study				X
Medical practice (Government)	X	X	X	X
Private practice	X			
Academia				X
Salary structure	X	X	X	
Medical facilities, equipment and instruments			X	X
Evolution of medical treatment	X	X	X	X
Profile of patients	X	X		
Government policies relating to medicine			X	
Medical associations			X	
Significant milestones		X		X

Yearly Recording Output 1979-2009 (17,029.7 hours)



**17,970 hours recordings collected
(3,456 interviews as at Feb 2011)**



03. Time Frame

- Dependent on:
 - scale of project
 - funds and resources available
 - interviewees' availability and schedule

04. Scope/Coverage

- Need to prioritise
- Time period to cover determined by events

Structuring Oral History Projects by Themes

- Memories and communities
 - Evolving/living or/and disappeared communities
- Memories and trauma (and healing)
 - Testimonies of human rights, war crime and an act of terrorism
- Memories and space (places and buildings)
 - Lost spaces, heritage issues
 - Example: “History of Kampung” (Brunei History Centre, Ministry of Culture, Youth & Sports)
- Memories of beliefs (oral traditions)

Too Broad: Risk of overlapping (ownership?), no focus, too general (no longer unique), the story of three monks carrying water...

**TOO NARROW:
RISK OF
BECOMING SILO,
SEEING ONLY
THE TREES,
MISSING THE
ENTIRE FOREST**



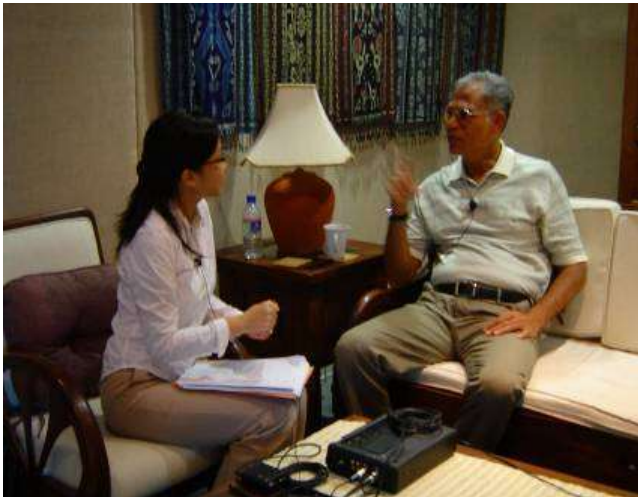
Taking stock....1979-2010

	Project category	List of OHC's project titles	% of total recordings
1	Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chinese Dialect Groups• Communities of Singapore (Part 1, 2 and 3)• Chinese Clan Associations in Singapore• Pioneers of Singapore• New Citizens	20%
2	Social, culture, heritage and sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chinese Literary Scene in Singapore• History of Broadcasting• Print Media• Oral Traditions• Performing Arts in Singapore (Dance, Music, Opera, Theatre/Drama)	23%

	Project category	List of project titles	% of total recordings
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Project (Literature) • Special Project (Visual Arts) • Sports Personalities of Singapore • The Singapore Film Industry • Social and Community Services • Women Through The Years: Economic & Family Lives 	
3	Political and Civil Service History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political History in Singapore, 1945-1965, 1965-1985, 1985-2005 • Senior ASEAN Statesmen • The Civil Service - A Retrospection • RSIS Project - Interview on GKS 	17%
4	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education in Singapore (Part 1, 2 & 3) 	11%
5	Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Services in Singapore • Traditional Chinese Medicine in Singapore 	6%

	Project category	List of project titles	% of total recordings
6	Urban Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Planning • Changing Landscape and Community 	3%
7	Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation in Singapore 	1%
8	Economic, Trades, Industries, Labour Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development of Singapore • History of the Labour Movement • Regional Entrepreneurs • Vanishing Trades 	9%
9	World War II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japanese Occupation of Singapore • Prisoners-of-War (POWs) 	7%

	Project category	List of project titles	% of total recordings
10	Specific themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All others under special project e.g photographer, SPCA, Ford Factory, Research on Pedra Branca	3%



The Golden Rule in structuring project:

“ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS, AS DIFFERENTIATED FROM SPECIFIC HISTORICAL RESEARCH, ARE INTENDED FOR THE WIDEST POSSIBLE USE, BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE. THEREFORE THE SCOPE OF THE SUBJECTS DISCUSSED IS USUALLY WIDER THAN SPECIFIC RESEARCH.”

05. Selecting Interviewees (1)

- ⌘ In search of potential interviewees:
 - Press releases and other forms of info mined
 - Letters and telephone calls to individuals and organisations
 - Published sources
 - Friends and contacts
 - Current interviewees

峇株林金錠逝世 喪府擇明日舉殯

(峇株巴轄14日訊)峇株巴轄林金錠老先生于3月12日吉時逝世，享壽80歲，遺下妻鮑紅(顏素丛)及8男4女，子孫滿堂。

林金錠老先生生平為人忠誠隨和，亦乐于助人，深獲各界敬重。

長男林亞阳是泳順發(峇株)有限公司

董事經理，業餘熱心團體，為峇株巴轄機器廠商公會總務、同仁醫社贊助人等；次男亞赤創設永順發洗車、三男志遠為三大企業有限公司董事和新江企業東主、四男志成在新加坡任技術人員、五男自源是泳順發(峇株)有限公司助理、六男慶吉在新加坡從事廚師、七男慶祝在此間信託公司任市場執行員、幼男慶滿為泳順發(峇株)有限公司零件部經理。孝媳吳素瑱、陳鳳蘭、黃柏燕、陳慧玲、鄭米芝、蔡昫桃、梁真真、何秀麗各助理公司業務。長女林秀英、適婿陳明才為Vital Rider (Property) S/B產業顧問；次女林翠、適婿陳德裕為峇株熱帶水果批發商和船海鮮國餐廳東主；三女雅清、適婿李帝來為峇株巴轄廣場執行主任；幼女雅欣、適婿許達偉在吉隆坡從商。其餘男女內外孫等眾多，有者從商、任職商行、文員或在求學中。

林老先生治喪處位於59, Jln Putera Indah 7/15, Bandar Putera Indah, Tongkang Pechah, 83010 Batu Pahat, Johor. 電話：012 - 735 5303, 012 - 712 0925。林府已擇定本月16日上午11時出殯，安葬於三春椿壽山之原。



林金錠老先生遺照。

Even dead man provides leads...

Internet provides a wide variety of sources...same person may appear in different website, but of varied information details, accuracy and reliability (trustworthiness).

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05. Selecting Interviewees (2)

- Common criteria include:
 - Sampling size
 - Background and experiences of interviewees in relation to subject field
 - Age of interviewees

05. Selecting Interviewees (3)

- Need to revisit interviewees at different stages of life

2
enr.com | August 20, 2008
3

JOBS FOR ALL, AFTER AGE 62

By Robert L. Simmons, CEO of the National Council on the Aging

As the U.S. economy continues to struggle, many workers are being laid off or have their hours cut. For many of these workers, the loss of a job can be devastating. But for those who are 62 and older, the loss of a job can be even more devastating. Many of these workers have spent their lives working hard to provide for themselves and their families. Now, they are being laid off or have their hours cut. This is a particularly difficult time for them, as they are often on the edge of retirement and need the income from their jobs to support themselves and their families.

The National Council on the Aging (NCA) has developed a number of resources to help these workers. One of the most important is the "Senior Job Watch" website, which provides information on job openings for seniors. Another resource is the "Senior Job Training" program, which provides training and support for seniors who are looking for work.

If you are a senior who has been laid off or has had your hours cut, don't lose hope. There are still many opportunities available to you. Reach out to your local community center or senior center for more information and support.

XPRA 150 Z80

SHE'S OLD AND

AT 81, SHE SAYS SHE'S NOT BEING LOST DURING THE RECESSION

By [Author Name]

For many people, retirement is a time of freedom and relaxation. But for some, it can be a time of isolation and loneliness. This is especially true for women, who often live longer than men and may have fewer family members to rely on for support.

One woman, however, has found a way to stay active and engaged during her retirement. She has started a business that allows her to use her skills and experience to help other women. This has not only provided her with a source of income, but it has also given her a sense of purpose and community.

Her story is a testament to the resilience and strength of women. It shows that it is never too late to start a new chapter in your life. If you are looking for ways to stay active and engaged during your retirement, consider reaching out to other women in your community for support and inspiration.

SHE'S GOT ATTITUDE

By [Author Name]

There is a common stereotype that women over the age of 60 are passive and unassertive. But this is not always the case. Many women in this age group have a strong sense of self and a willingness to stand up for their beliefs.

One such woman is [Name], who has spent her life advocating for social justice and equality. She is a vocal and passionate leader in her community, and her influence is felt by many. Her attitude is a source of inspiration for others, showing that it is never too late to make a difference in the world.

Her story reminds us that we should not judge people based on their age. Women over 60 have a wealth of experience and wisdom that can be a great asset to any organization or community. We should all strive to have the same attitude as [Name]—one of confidence, resilience, and a commitment to making the world a better place.

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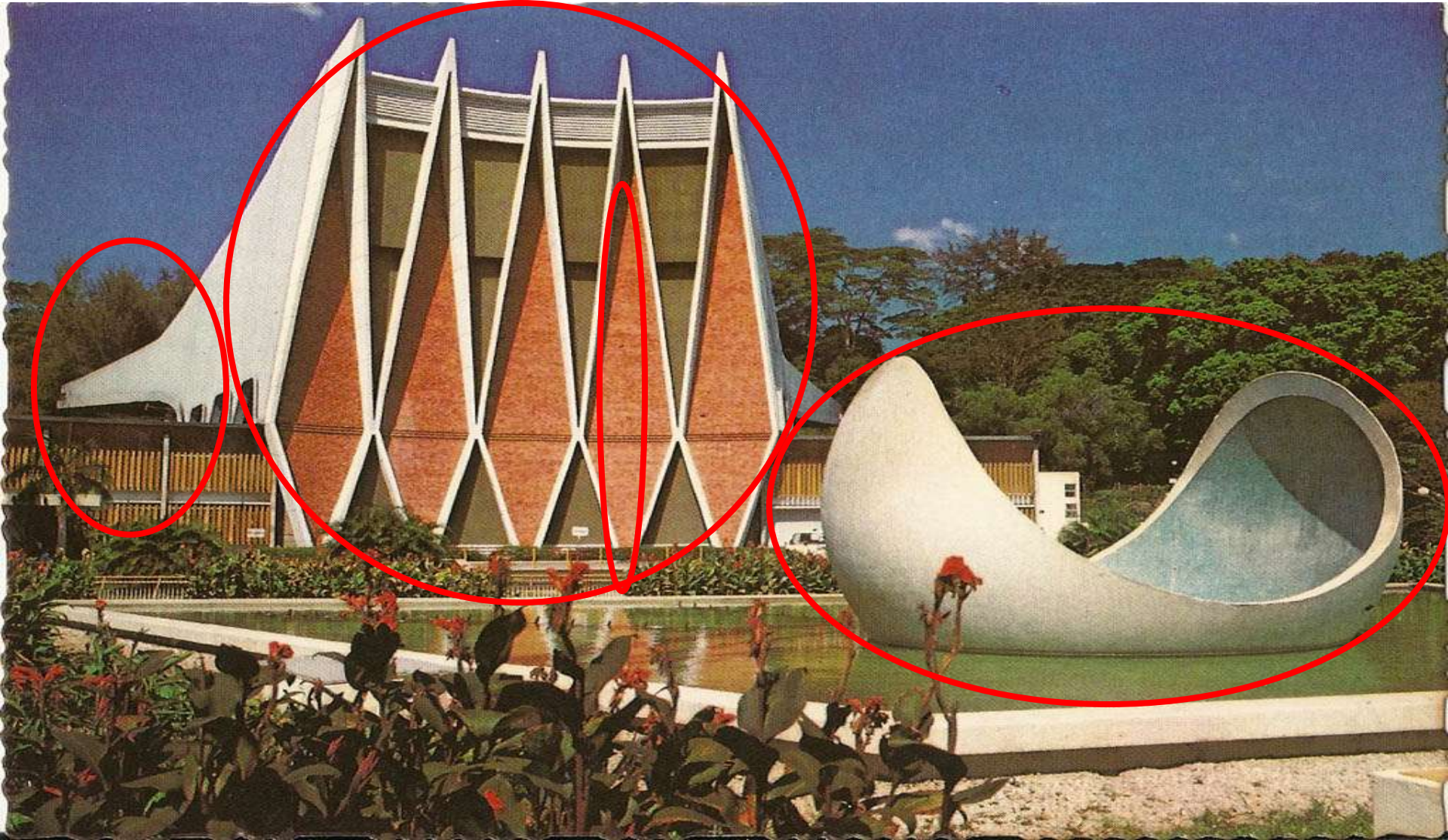
06. Interview Outline

- Guides the interview process
- Interview approach – biographical, topical, or a combination of both
- Should be modified when dealing with different interviewees even though on the same subject
- Pros and Cons of a structured interview
- Use of memory tools

Illustration: Building on & Reconstructing Memories



The Principle of Loci (memory palace)



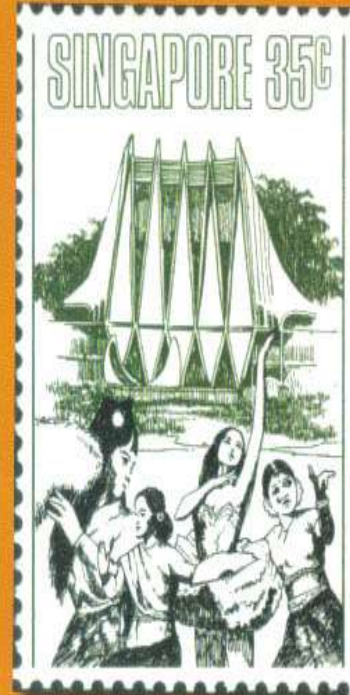
Method of loci

- an imaginal technique known to the ancient Greeks and Romans
- memorizing the layout of building, or the arrangement of shops on a street, or any geographical entity and associate them with a set of items to be remembered.
- When 'walking' through the building or street and identify the items, the memory of them is then formed.

Now can you look at the next six slides, each contain a set of related images and develop corresponding questions?

REMEMBER: COMMON SENSE HELPS

The story of National Theatre (1963-1986)



The National Theatre

This important landmark no longer exists. Its memory is retained through this stamp. The former National Theatre was built on the slope of Fort Canning Park facing Clemenceau Avenue, was officially opened on 8 August 1963.

The Theatre was designed by pioneer local architect Alfred Wong in 1963 after the firm won a design competition. It had 3,420 seats and was built with funds collected by public subscription.

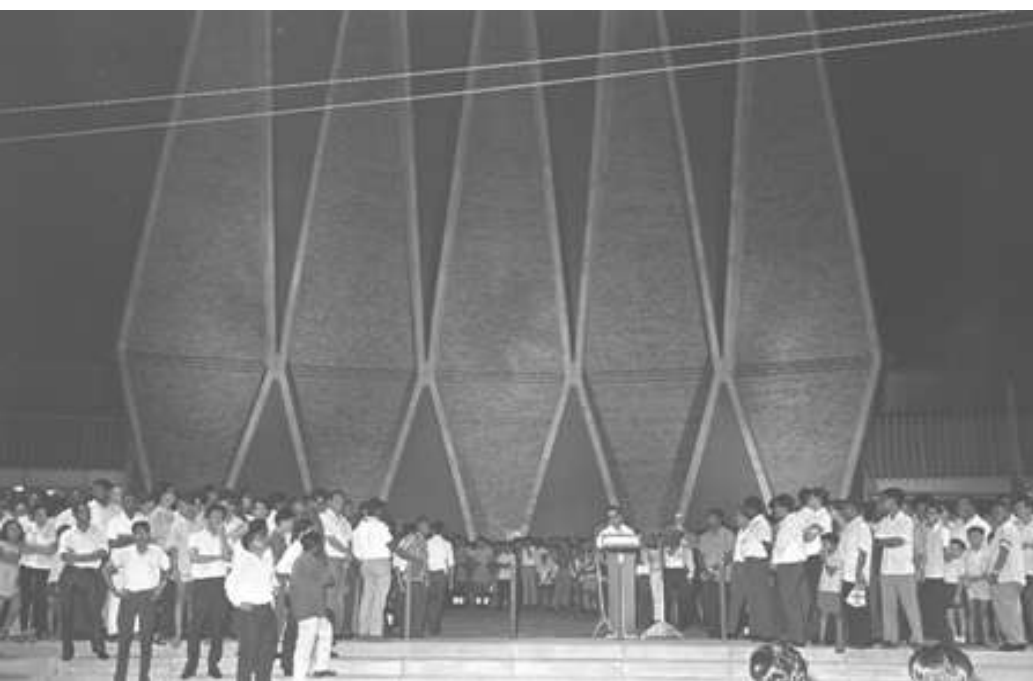
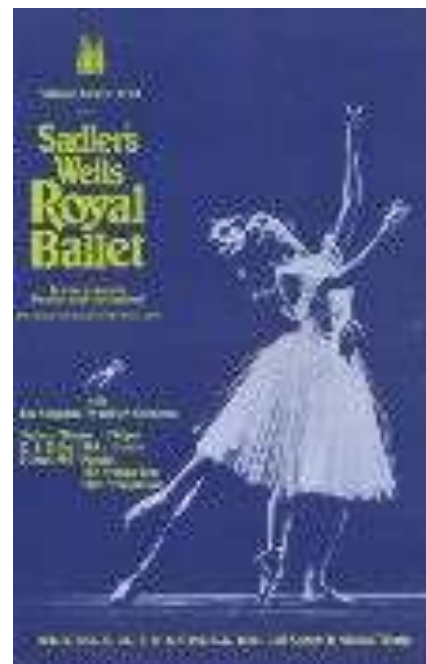
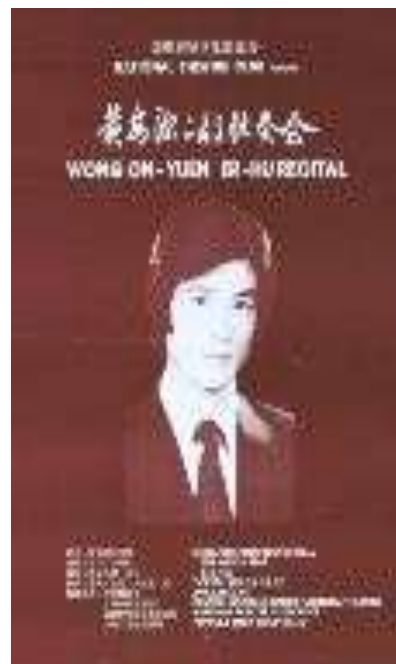
The most significant feature of the National Theatre was its huge cantilevered roof which stretched to the slopes of Fort Canning. It had no side or rear walls and only the huge roof shielded the audience from the elements.

Many important performances were staged at the National Theatre and from 1966 to 1982, the National Day Rally was held at the Theatre.

The proximity of the proposed CTE underground tunnel to the Theatre combined with declining use due to the lack of air-conditioning, led a decision to demolish the National Theatre in 1986. It was demolished between June and August 1986.







National Theatre TO-NITE at 8 p.m.

Writer Koh proudly presents
The Brightest Christmas Show Ever Produced!

"X'MAS SHOWRAMA"

Take proceeds to Yuen Ann, for Extended Relief.
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National Theatre.

Concept: Mike Glenn—SPONSORS: NEW PERANWAY.
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be a special T-act of Bhangkah and will be appearing
in the SHOW.

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"JETS" WITH
VIGORIST JIMMY KOH



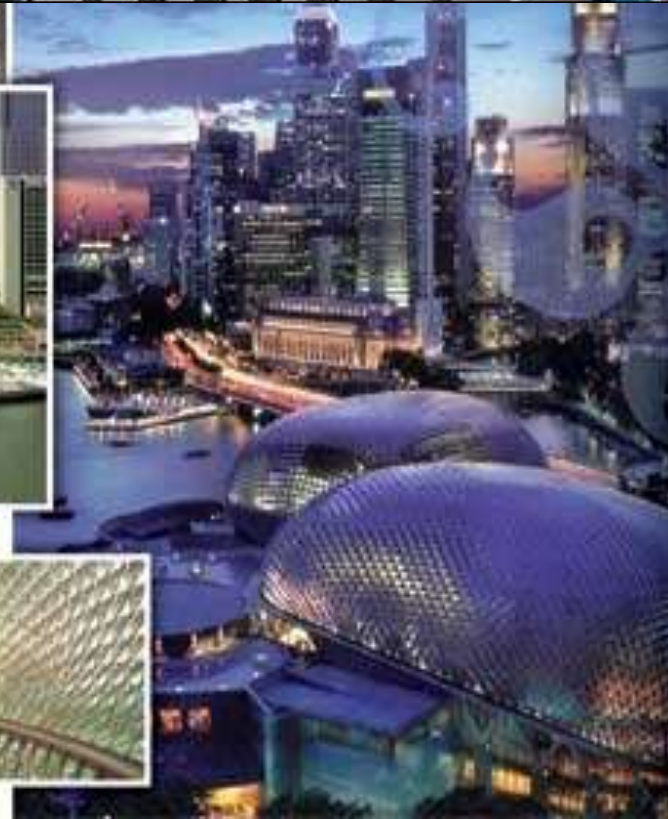
In the 1960s and early 1970s, many world famous and legendary personalities that have performed at the theatre:

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- [The Yardbirds](#)
- [Herman's Hermits](#)



[Louis Armstrong](#)





What do you see?

Can you immediately think of 10 logical questions?



How about this?



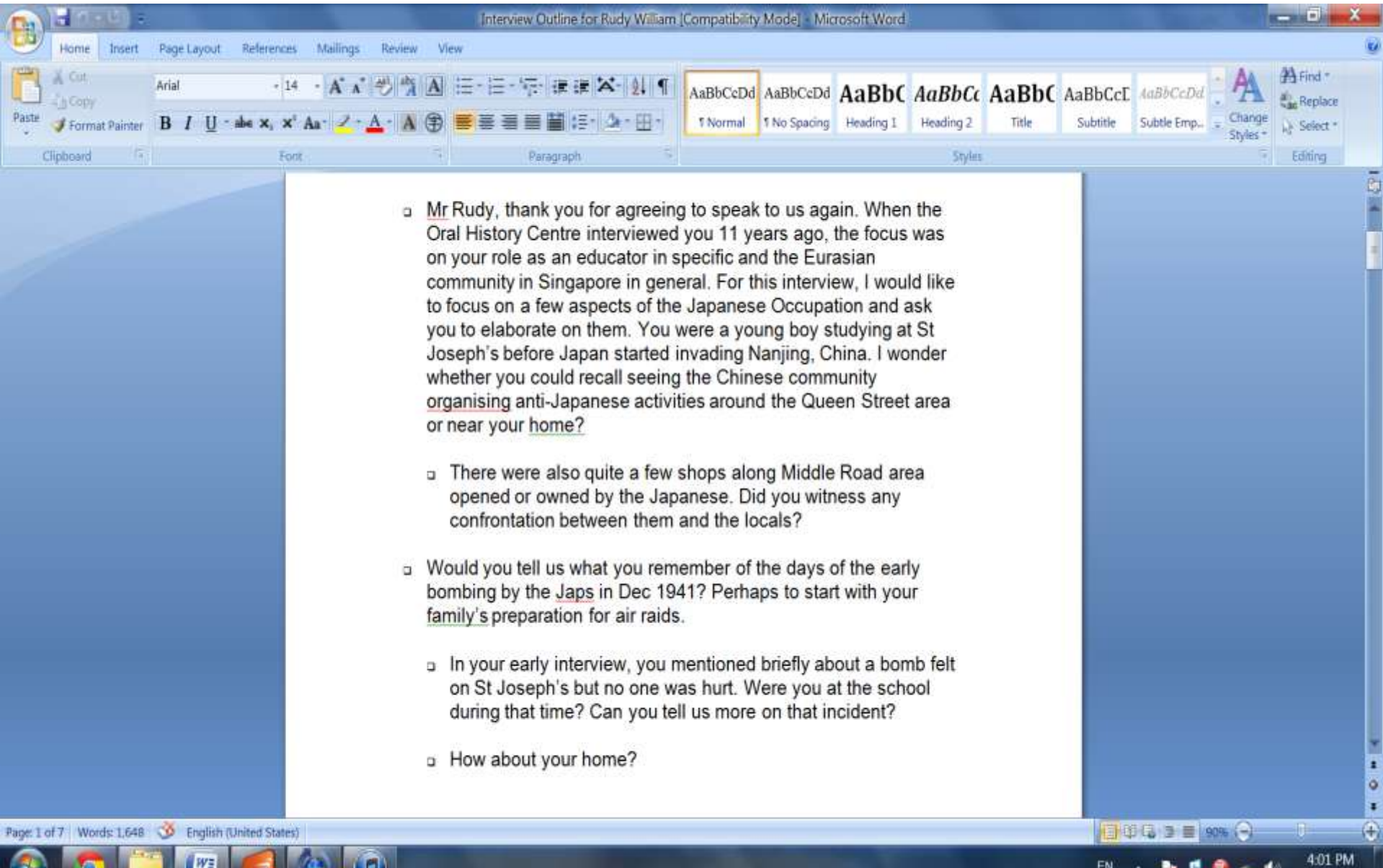
07. The Interview

- Types of Interview
- The Interviewer
- Conducting Prelim Interview
- Conducting Interview
- Interviewing Techniques
- Post-Interview

Types of Interview

- "Life history vs Thematic
- Supplementary interview

Interview outline of a supplementary interview



The screenshot shows the Microsoft Word 2010 interface. The title bar reads "Interview Outline for Rudy William [Compatibility Mode] - Microsoft Word". The ribbon is set to "Home" with the "Paragraph" group selected. The font is Arial, size 14. The style list on the right includes "Normal", "No Spacing", "Heading 1", "Heading 2", "Title", "Subtitle", and "Subtle Emp...". The main document area contains a list of interview questions.

Interview Outline for Rudy William [Compatibility Mode] - Microsoft Word

Home Insert Page Layout References Mailings Review View

Cut Copy Paste Format Painter Clipboard

Arial - 14

Font Paragraph

AaBbCcDd AaBbCcDd AaBbC AaBbCc AaBbC AaBbCc AaBbCcDd

1 Normal 1 No Spacing Heading 1 Heading 2 Title Subtitle Subtle Emp...

Change Styles Editing

- Mr Rudy, thank you for agreeing to speak to us again. When the Oral History Centre interviewed you 11 years ago, the focus was on your role as an educator in specific and the Eurasian community in Singapore in general. For this interview, I would like to focus on a few aspects of the Japanese Occupation and ask you to elaborate on them. You were a young boy studying at St Joseph's before Japan started invading Nanjing, China. I wonder whether you could recall seeing the Chinese community organising anti-Japanese activities around the Queen Street area or near your home?
- There were also quite a few shops along Middle Road area opened or owned by the Japanese. Did you witness any confrontation between them and the locals?
- Would you tell us what you remember of the days of the early bombing by the Japs in Dec 1941? Perhaps to start with your family's preparation for air raids.
- In your early interview, you mentioned briefly about a bomb felt on St Joseph's but no one was hurt. Were you at the school during that time? Can you tell us more on that incident?
- How about your home?

Page: 1 of 7 | Words: 1,648 | English (United States)

90%

4:01 PM

Group Interview: One to two or more...

- Cons: Inevitably people will talk over each other and important information may be missed. More critically, there could be more biases or diversion introduced.
- Pro: refreshment of memory (or reflection?)

潘月红女士

钱杰初先生

第四卷

陈 请问战前新加坡京戏的一般演出情况。或者请潘女士先说说。

钱 对，因为她经过10年，你过来的情形一直你所知道的跟陈小姐谈一谈。

潘 我在上海来的时候就在彩凤社，就是他们请我来。

钱 那个时候她来的这个组织是清唱，没有彩排的。

潘 我们来的时候就在南天楼上清唱，好几间啦，还有吉祥楼啦--也是茶楼啦，醉群林啦，从前还有醉群林啦，还有什么地方我忘了，有几间茶楼都有唱过。我就一半，新加坡还有一班戏叫庆升平。

钱 这是同济医院的。

Present of family members?

- How do you deal with the interviewees when their family members sat in during the process?
- They may be helpful in prompting--along the lines of "Dad/Mom, what about that story about the xxx?"
- There is a need to make them aware at the outset that the stories ought to have come from the interviewees themselves and not the family members.

The Ideal...

**FROM EXPERIENCE,
BIOGRAPHICAL INTERVIEWS
WHERE RECORDING IS SPREAD
OVER SEVERAL SESSIONS AND
WHEN THE INTERVIEWEE IS A
RELAX MOOD, IT WOULD YIELD
THE MOST VALUABLE
INFORMATION.**

The Interviewer

- Does experience (knowledge + skills) matter?
- Qty (number) vs Quality
 - “Since you have difficulties recruiting interviewers, can you not just set up a recorder and invite those who wish to share their stories speak into the mic, perhaps with the help of a technician standing next to it?”
 - “You can increase your output by 300% by engaging the community to conduct interviews, better still for free!”



Qualities of a Good Interviewer

- In-depth subject knowledge
- Genuinely interested in people
- Good listener (“listening” is not the same as “hearing”)
- Empathy
- Sensitive to interviewee’s needs

Interviewer-Interviewee Matching

- Language competency
- Rapport, social status and background (e.g. working experience)
- Subject knowledge
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Age
- Religious background (may be relevant and need to match)

Conducting Preliminary Interview

- Meeting up face-to-face
 - ideal for interviewer to introduce one self and build up rapport directly (able to observe body language).
- Over the phone
 - when potential interviewee is available only for a short period of time and recording will be done at the first meet up.



Guidelines for Preliminary Meeting

- Confirm date and time and be on time
- Be appropriately dressed
- Explain interview purpose and process
 - Carry identification and brochure
- Environmental scan
- Decide to proceed/end interview
- Explain importance of interview release form
- Fix interview schedule
- Keep meeting short
 - Risks of long meeting

More is less or “curiosity kills the cat”?

- Pros and cons in allowing the interviewees see question sheet ahead of time...
 - The risk? They will "prepare" answers. However, trained interviewers can overcome most of that by asking follow-up questions.
 - No need to include all the questions you are going to ask, just give them an idea of the questions you might ask - a chance to start thinking about those types of things again and to start bringing up old memories!



Evaluating Interviewees

- Background of interviewee
- Original purpose of recording
- Interview conducted professionally?
- Intervening events affecting recollection?
- Information given consistent?
- Verification from other sources / interviews?

Backing Out...

- Common reasons:
 - Personal reasons
 - Total failure in memory or inability to recall
 - Does not have first hand information
(accounts constructed mainly from hearsay or from reading secondary sources)
 - Expects payment

Record of Declined Interviews

- To keep track of interviewees approached but declined to be interviewed
- Reasons for declining to be interviewed
- Forms can be filed for documentation purpose

Month: Oct 07								
Form to capture declined / KIV interviews								
Name	Date of contact	Business / Occupation	Approached by	Reply (Y/N)	Reasons	Date for follow-up	File reference number	Remarks
Mr A	22/10/07	Retired	Claire	N	Feels that he has nothing much to contribute	To contact again in Nov 07	1234	To interview on his experiences in the Singapore Workers' Brigade

Environmental Factors: What do you see in each of these images?



Recording Environment: Recording Studio



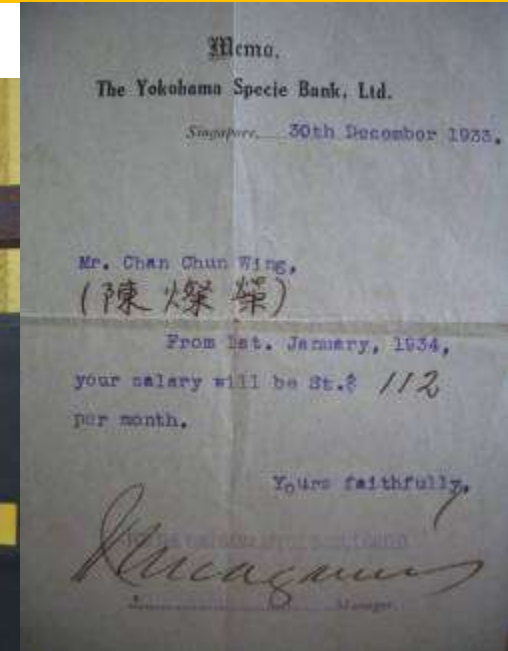
What you see may not be what
you would hear (later)....



Now **listen** to the same
clip again...

What did
you hear
this time?

Looking out for old photographs/documents.. Why?



Recording the Preliminary Meeting

- Time constraint
- Health condition
- Other people present who can provide information
- More than one interviewee, especially group interview

Before Interview

- ✓ Re-confirm interview appointment a day before
- ✓ Check equipment is in good working condition (bring extra batteries and flashcards)
- ✓ Bring interview outline
- ✓ Factor in travelling time if its outdoor interview
- ✓ Check free time available (in case interview session is extended)
- ✓ Re-survey surroundings before setting up equipment (new elements may have been introduced)
- ✓ Water/drinks

Interview Techniques: The DO's (1)

- ✓ Listen actively and attentively - be engaged (look interested) and alert)
- ✓ Seeing is as important as asking:
 - ✓ Periodically monitor recorder (recording volume and recording medium's storage capacity)
 - ✓ Be sensitive to interviewee's body language (non-verbal cues), assess interviewee's condition to determine breaks.
 - ✓ Be sensitive to the (changing) surroundings

Interview Techniques: The DO's (2)

- ✓ Taking notes will make processing work easier:
 - ✓ Describe hand gestures
 - ✓ Identify references
 - ✓ Spelling of difficult/unfamiliar words
- ✓ But do not allow this to break the flow of interview

Interview Techniques: The DO's (3)

- ✓ Asking:
 - ✓ Use a language and style most comfortable for interviewee
 - ✓ One question at a time
 - ✓ Focused and short questions
 - ✓ Give Elderly time to Think
- ✓ Remain polite but firmly in control:
 - ✓ Ask to filter/probe deeper
 - ✓ Ask to check validity and confirm
 - ✓ Ask to divert/move on to new subjects

What does localise mean?

祥林嫂

梁天來



Give elderly more time to recall...

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Age makes it harder to ignore distractions and concentrate: study

Posted: 26 November 2008 11:43 hrs

WASHINGTON - The older we get, the less able we are to filter out distractions while performing mental tasks, a study published on Tuesday in the Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience showed.

"Older adults are vulnerable to distraction due to an inability to suppress processing of irrelevant environmental stimuli," the authors of the study conducted at the Toronto-based Rotman Research Institute at the Baycrest Center for Geriatric Care wrote.



Photos 1 of 1

The study asked 12 adults whose average age was 26, and 12 older adults, average age 70, to "encode" several faces while having their brains scanned with a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scanner - an instrument which makes a noise like a jack hammer.

Both younger and older adults who experienced difficulty "encoding" a memory, or laying down a new face in the brain, showed lower activity in cerebral regions used for such tasks.

But the brains of older people showed greater activity in other regions, which was not seen in the

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Interview Techniques: The DO's (4)

Use Memory Aids



Importance of using tools during interview:

*Would the recall be more effective (and exciting) if the interviewer had a copy of the Street Directory on hand?

*Would it not be possible to equip the recording studio with such reference books?

“But when I got almost to the junction, there was a very frenzied force there of Malays across the whole road. And the Police blockaded the whole of the Whitley Road and the Police Training School, they completely blocked off the road leading to Marymount Convent where this Maria Hertogh was. So there was where they were most frenzied and they began to pound on the car and shout and all that...I put it in low gear, No 2 gear and I forced myself through this pushing people out of the way over the bonnet and so forth. And they ran after the car...Where I was living, again was only about 400 yards in Balestier Road in a road called Irrawaddy Road. And I thought with them chasing this car, I won't turn into Irrawaddy Road, I went right around, down Balestier Road into Moulmein Road, up into Tan Tock Seng Hospital and I got to my house by the back which it was possible through the hospital ground to get into Irrawaddy Road as well.”



MAP
OF
SINGAPORE TOWN

APPROX. SCALE: 1/4 MILE TO AN INCH

Picture Power: A picture is worth a thousand words and more...

- Likewise, photographs could serve to refresh/invoke memory, stimulate interest, allow more in-depth questions to be asked on the subject(s) being spot-lighted and even new vistas open up:
 - **I did not know that!**
 - **It is not interesting?!**
- It is also a great ice-breaker.

Asking Questions is
as much an art as
well as a science.

Illustrations and Pointers in the
next set of slides

(NOT IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE)

“On personal perspective and how people need to look at what’s going on in the future and trend accordingly, the other half is the institutions, whether they be non-profit organisations, companies or even government, what are the kind of principles and perspectives that institutions need to take as we face the inexorable change of demographics, ageing as well as the complexities of living in Singapore in the future?”

Illustration of a complex and abstract question that is unlikely to yield meaningful response...

Interview Techniques – The DON'T's

- × Ask complex questions (3-in-1 or more)
- × Ask academic or abstract questions (showing off?)
- × Ask too many close-ended questions
- × Ask leading/misleading questions
- × Show sign of disapproval (personal biases)
- × Lose control of interview (free flow)
- × Repeat questions that interviewee does not understand or unwilling to talk (should rephrase)
- × Interrupt unnecessarily (be patience)
- × Talk about self

Don't Talk about Self

- Interviewer: Now you can go out?
- Interviewee: Yes, now my husband says that our children have already grown up, we can go wherever we like.
- Interviewer: You must do that when you are still young.
- Interviewee: Yes, he said if not when I grow even older, I wouldn't be able to walk.
- Interviewer: But you are still young. You are still forty ...
- Interviewee: 47.
- Interviewer: Auntie, you are still very young. I am already 40 years old. That is because I married rather late. I married at the age of 30.**
- Interviewee: You gave birth at 30?
- Interviewer: No, I married at 30. I only gave birth at 38.**
- Interviewee: Oh! Now your child is only two years old?
- Interviewer: Only two-and-a-half years old.**
- Interviewee: Then when you are old in the future, your child will just be going to school.
- Interviewer: I wouldn't be able to see my grandchildren.**
- Interviewee: It's like this if you marry late.
- Interviewer: You cannot just marry at any time you fancy, right?**
- Interviewee: Yes, this is fated whether you marry early or late.
- Interviewer: I had the opportunity to study, so I just furthered my studies. I didn't think of getting married and having babies.**
- Interviewee: Yes, nowadays women are better educated so they marry later.

One important role of the interviewer is that of

A Reminder

Also to separate memory from reflection..

- Memory is recall of past **happenings**.
- Reflection is a manifestation of the recall.
- Intentionally or unintentionally there could be biases introduced that could distort the accuracy and reliability of the memory, which in turn affect the trustworthiness of the interview.
- Interviewer's role is to ask validity check questions to guide the interviewee.

One most common mistake to avoid:

The interviewer feels that he or she has to keep talking while the interviewee is preparing a reply or searching for a word to describe an issue...sometimes it may be good to have pauses...

Remember:

Let the interviewee talk. It is his or her show! Make a note to come back asking filtering or additional questions.

Illustration: Questions on New Citizens

What is wrong with these? (1)

- **A Background**

- What is your place and date of birth? (is this how normal conversation starts?)
- What is your family background, such as parent's occupation, position in the family? (two unrelated questions)
- What is your highest education, university attended? (why only focus on highest education? Also it is also a "closed question")
- What are your racial compositions? (academic terminology, big word. How would ordinary people understand what it means?)
- Do you have other family members / relatives who have migrated to Singapore?
- Do you have any dependants in country of birth? (who are considered "dependants"?)

What do you think is the most appropriate opening question to kick start an oral history interview?

“LET’S TALK ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD FIRST...” (OR LET’S START WITH WHERE YOU LIVED WHEN YOU WERE VERY YOUNG)

Why do I think so?

- What about these other questions?
 - “Tell me about your parents”
 - “Tell me about your family”
 - “Tell me your name”
 - “When were you born?”
- Flexibility – open-ended yet could allow narrowing further or be very general if the interviewee does not wish to go into details (privacy etc)
- Most neutral (answer could be good memory or bad memory but a good warming up for interviewee and interviewer)

What is wrong with these? (2)

- **B Motivation to work/emigrate to Singapore**
- What initially got you connected to Singapore: Professional work experience / business / graduate studies in Singapore university / family / others?
- What were the key motivations for taking up Singapore citizenship? (Big word – “key motivations”. Alternate way to ask: “Tell us why you decided to become a Singaporean?” + “How did Singapore attracted you to become its citizen?”)
- What was your age/situation/circumstance when you took up Singapore citizenship? (Two unrelated questions. Alternate way of asking second question: How old were you when...)
- How do you identify with local culture / local people? (what does “identify” exactly mean?)
- What is your experience with government policies, immigration rules, etc? (A leading question. A better way of asking is: Can you recall/describe the process when you were applying to become a citizen?)
- What are the tax benefits after acquiring Singapore citizenship? (Why focus only on tax – it may insult the interviewee that he took up citizenship because of \$\$\$)
- Do you have any children? If so, what are their ages and sex of the children? (Is that how one normally ask about “sex” of interviewee’s son and daughter? Would it not be better that the question is rephrased “Can you tell me how many boys and girls you have? The question could be sensitive and offensive if the interviewee does not or could not have children)
- What are your opinions about National Service in Singapore? (Why single out this question here? Unless it is meant to link to the previous question)

What is wrong with these? (3)

- **C Experience staying in Singapore so far**
- **How many years have you lived in Singapore?**
- **What are the changes in **standard of living** here as compared to your country of birth? (on what basis is “standard of living” determined?)**
- **What was your first experience when you arrived in Singapore? (first impression?)**
- **What are your impressions on the local Singaporeans? (how do you find...)**
- **What are your pastime and hobbies in your **native country** and in Singapore?**
- **What have you done to **integrate yourself** into the Singapore society?**
- **What social activities do you **participate**?**
- **How do you overcome any **language barriers**?**
- **Compare the following with your **native country**, and describe how you cope with the difference. What do you like and dislike most? (need to narrow down and part II is biased – why not asking also about liking?)**
 - **Political system**
 - **Policies, rules and regulation**
 - **Culture**
 - **Social environment**
 - **Working environment**

More Time for the Elderly...

- Studies show that “age makes it harder to ignore distractions and concentrate”
- Therefore, the interviewer must not ask compound questions (combining several issues/subjects in one question, or asking two or more questions in one go), or ask abstract or overly general questions, as it may be difficult for the elderly interviewee to answer
- Rather, questions should be short and focused (but not to the extent of drawing a "yes" or "no" answer without details)
- Do allow the elderly interviewee time to think about questions asked

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Age makes it harder to ignore distractions and concentrate: study
Posted: 26 November 2008 1143 hrs

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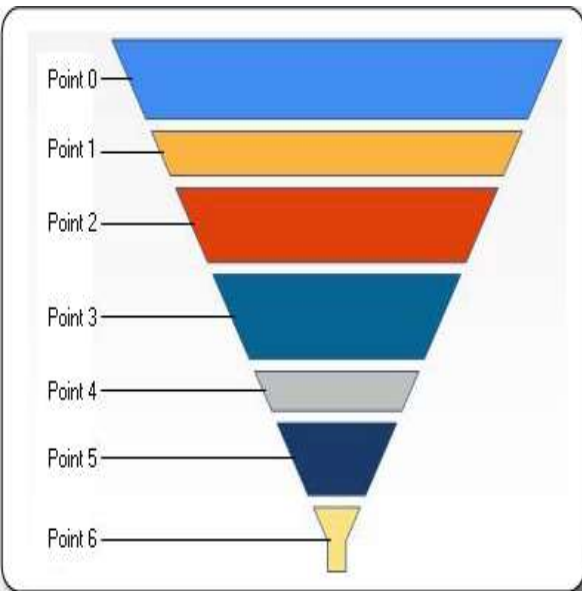


Photos 1 of 1 < || >

The study asked 12 adults whose average age was 26, and 12 older adults, average age 70, to "encode" several faces while having their brains scanned with a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scanner - an instrument which makes a noise like a jack hammer.

Both younger and older adults who experienced difficulty "encoding" a memory, or laying down a new face in the brain, showed lower activity in cerebral regions used for such tasks.

But the brains of older people showed greater activity in other regions, which was not seen in the



One way of avoiding being biased and subjective in asking questions...

**FROM GENERAL TO SPECIFIC
RATHER THAN START WITH A
NARROWED QUESTION THAT AIMED
TO YIELD AN EXPECTED ANSWER**

毕 这些都是没有传授的？

潘 还要你自己去研究，我也没有人传授我。

毕 这样你是怎样学来的呢？

潘 听啦。听完了自己再捉摸，戏里头他是这么做的，但是我做的还要比他来得逼真。你不是抄书不要紧的，他这个哭，哭得伤心干什么，实在是他没有这么伤心，那么的，我们做得伤心一点，更增加人家的感动。

毕 经过自己的改造，加工？

潘 诶。



Do not take no as
the only answer!

Relating with Different Types of Interviewees

- Interviewees who over-prepare written answers
- Interviewees who have written autobiographies
- Interrogative interviewees
- Prominent interviewees

7

Was it a document being narrated over or it was based on "memory"?

What should the interviewer do to establish this fact?
-Add in his/her comment
-Add the document in the case file

TBN Yes. And after the war they tried to trace the little girl. They couldn't find her. And I don't know how long and she came to Singapore I think, that they got hold of her. You know the people who were tracing her and tried to persuade Aminah to give up the girl. Of course she would not, after 10 years. She wanted the child.

Well, Maria replied to the father in Malay. She was educated in Malay. But it was translated. And she said,

"I,

- 1) I may be present at the hearing.
- 2) That I remain with Cik Aminah.
- 3) That I remain a Muslim and do not wish to follow another father.
- 4) That I do not wish to return to Holland.
- 5) That I do not wish to leave Cik Aminah, I am alright here.
- 6) That all Cik Aminah says is true. I wish to speak to the judges."

Signed Nadra binte Marath, dated on the 25th of June 1950.

LT Oh, that was the time when she was at the Home?

TBN Yes, she was in the Home.

LT Was Cik Aminah ever married?

To record or not to record..

- What do you do when the interviewee tell you that he or she is telling this part of the story privately and not for others to hear?
- How do you react when the interviewee is emotionally charged - do you let the recorder runs or stop it and comfort him/her?

RBC's interview on poem written by the daughter

But telling interviewees what
not to talk?

Problems in Oral History Interviews: many could be overcome by skillful interviewers

Reluctance to be interviewed

Long delays

Lack of spontaneity

Deliberate falsification

Digression

Exaggeration

Distortion

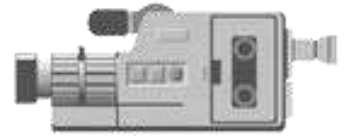
“Say the things I want to say”

What would the ideal length of an interview session be?

- It depends (ie no fixed formula as well)
- Human factors (physical and mental strengths of both parties)
- Too short: not cost effective (how much efforts and time spent in organising a session vs yield of content) and quality of content (warming up time etc)
- Too long: emotionally draining, tendency to have shorter and shorter answers, less elaborate; likewise for the interviewer
- 2-3 (max) hours would be ideal to me. But allow exceptions.

FORMS OF DATA COLLECTION DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Still Photography
- Video-photography
- Oral history interviews
- Documents





Project Monitoring through gap analysis

SAMPLE CHART TO AID MONITORING OF ORAL HISTORY PROJECT ON “SCHOOL HISTORY AND IDENTITY”

Student Group	Enrollment		Relationship Between Student And Staff			Relationship Between Students			School Spirit	
	Choice of School	First day of school	Form Teacher and Student	Other Teacher and Student	Principal and student	Between Classmates	Between seniors and juniors	Between Prefects and non prefects	As student	As alumnus
A	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	
B	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
C	✓	✓				✓			✓	
D	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	
E	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	
Freq	5	5	4	1	0	5	1	1	5	0

*To reduce interviewing to a set of techniques is ...
like reducing courtship to a formula.*

Recording Oral History

Recording Interview

- Position microphone for interviewee
- Ensure recording medium is working
- Test and adjust recording volume
- Check recorder regularly





百疏一漏 or 百密一疏

Switching to silent or vibration mode may not be good enough.



Keeping it at some distance from digital recorder matters.

Same reason as to why cell phones have to be switched off in airplanes or hospitals...

Types of Audio Recording Equipment

- Analogue (fast disappearing)
 - Open reel or cassette tape
- Digital (may have very short machine lifespan too)
 - Solid-state memory card/flash card recorder
 - DAT and MD recorders (unlikely to survive for too long)

From Reels to Bytes



Uher 4200 Report Monitor -
Open reel recorder
1979 - 1986



Sony TC-D5 Pro II
cassette tape
recorder
1986 - 2004



Digital solid-state recorder
Since 2004

Moved from open reel to digital recording of interviews, and moving towards selective video-recording to capture interviewee's facial expressions which enriches the recording

Factors Affecting Choice of Recorders

- Project budget
- Technical expertise of staff
- Office infrastructure
- Usage of the recordings, e.g. online access

Advantage of Going Digital

- Direct transfer for processing and storage via USB card
- Conversion among digital formats fairly easily – eg from wav to mp3, thus facilitate speedy reference services



Why analogue recording can no longer be a viable option?

- Future concern to archive in analogue form, in spite of the good track record of most analogue tape, because the manufacturers of the replay/record
 - Format obsolescence is the enemy here. It is no use to have a very good analogue reel copy, and no machine to play it on.
- equipment are beginning to cease manufacture of reel machines (as compared to a decade ago it was possible to choose from over 80 reel models, not there probably only 5 or so machines, made by Studer, Lyrec and Otari).
 - The National Library of Australia archives its audio collection onto its Digital Mass Storage System. It is possible to develop small scale storage system, or even CD data format as an interim solution.

New recording medium

- Need to be careful to ensure that the recording is uncompressed as compressed audio is inappropriate for preservation. Generally this means no more than 50 minutes per flash card.
- Recommended digital audio format: BWF format at 48kHz sampling rate, 24 bit in accordance with the standards recommended by the IASA technical Committee and the European Broadcasting Union.

Video recording..

- Video of a subject is occasionally important to add meaning or emotion to an interview, the cost can be high.

“Human beings are never moved by written words – it is the spoken word that arouses them to action. Arthur Koestler rightly pointed out that if Hitler’s speeches had been written not spoken, the Germans would never have gone to war; similarly Sukarno in print did not make great sense. According to language specialists, in face-to-face communication 40% of meaning is conveyed by words, 60% is conveyed through intonation, gestures, and facial expressions.”

Lee Kuan Yew, ‘The importance of simple, clear written English’

Address to the Ministers, Ministers of State and Senior Civil Officers at the Regional Language Centre, 27 Feb 1979

Videotaping Oral History Interviews (1)



- Advantages

- Captures body language and facial expressions in addition to voice alone
- Gives deeper dimension to content especially process-oriented (eg. craftsman at work)
- Allows for more dynamic dissemination



On-location Videotaping



Chye Kooi Loong's recollection of Japanese soldiers' liking for sugar. This was recorded during a field trip to Kampar in Malaysia to collect materials for MOFF.

Videotaping Oral History Interviews (2)

- Drawbacks
 - Distraction: not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of a camera
 - Intimidation: e.g. improper use of lighting
 - Budget constraints: likely to incur extra manpower cost
 - Quality of video recording affected by equipment as well as mixed audio and video as single track

After the Interview

- Label recordings
- Clarify concerns
- Check spellings of unfamiliar words, names and places
- Discuss how best to handle sensitive portions of the interview
 - Example of ACM retired director spoke about his view of the Chairman
- Brief interviewee on topics for next session, if any



After the Interview

- Write synopsis
- Get interview release form signed (and send along with thank you card!)
- Decide if the interview recording should be transcribed (will come back to this issue)

Synopsis Writing

- Definition
 - Describes and summarizes key information of an interview
- Purpose
 - Enables users to access interviews quickly and efficiently
 - Should avoid low/no value entries
 - “primary education” vs “studied in xx school”
 - “why he did not complete his studies in university” vs “father retrenched and he has to start working to support family”

Essential Information in Synopsis

- Names of key people, events or objects
 - Location and dates
 - Description of places, events and activities
 - Opinions, attitudes, impressions, feelings expressed
- ★ Expressions are to be recorded accurately and objectively

A few words on writing synopsis...

- What is the objective of a synopsis?
 - To facilitate (filter) search
- Choice of word could impact level of information
- general statement provides “overview” (especially useful for browsing)
- Specific statement allow specific key words search more successfully (speedily).

Need of “vision” ...

- What is the ideal length?
- Do not let technology (limitation or opportunity) drive the outcome
 - RAM & ROM of 1980s vs 2000s
 - Software constraints
 - Processing power (speed) of PCs of yesterday and today (future)



Source: Oral History Centre

Project Title: Education in Singapore (Part 1: English)

Interviewee: MOSBERGEN, Rudy William

Reel/Disc No.: 2

Total Reel/Disc No.: 53

Format: MP3

Recording Language/Dialect: English

Copyright: OHC

Running Time (hh:mm:ss): 00:31:00

Transcript Available: Yes

Synopsis:

Eurasian Association was respected by colonial government. Why the association was influential. Identity of Eurasians changed after independence. Why Eurasians were very close to Peranakans at one stage. Eurasian culture and cuisine. Eurasians' love for enjoyment and songs. How they dress to church. Why christening of a child is an important occasion. Interviewee's godparents were his grandparents.

Accession No: 000510

Digital File(s): 

[Click to read transcript](#)



[Click to read transcript](#)



Source: Oral History Centre

Project Title: Japanese Occupation of Singapore 日治时期的新加坡

Interviewee: MOSBERGEN, Rudy William

Reel/Disc No.: 7

Total Reel/Disc No.: 7

Format: Audio CD

Recording Language/Dialect: English

Copyright: OHC

Running Time (hh:mm:ss): 00:08:45

Transcript Available: Yes

Synopsis:

Emotions experienced when observing surrender ceremony. Father's attitude towards British colonial masters did not change much after Japanese Occupation. Father not politically inclined. Father became President of Eurasian Association (EA) in 1954. Recounted experience during Maria Hertogh riot.

Accession No: 002983

Digital File(s):



[Click to read transcript](#)



[Click to read transcript](#)

Transcript Available:Yes**Synopsis:**

*Reason why father did not go Bahau. Father's opinion on Bahau scheme. Restricted movement in Bahau. Family's reaction to scheme when first heard it. Dr Paglar gave Syonan Eurasian Welfare Association (SEWA)'s blessings to Bahau scheme. Dr J. B. van Cuylenburg's view of Bahau scheme. Thought the Chinese adjusted better in Bahau because they could farm. Recounted several big meetings held in Bahau where settlers complained to Japanese officials about difficult circumstances and failure of Japanese to fulfil promises made. Recounted tour led by Dr Paglar and some members of SEWA to Bahau who returned to Singapore with glowing accounts of conditions there.

Shinozaki stopped registration for Bahau after third batch. Reasons why people went to Bahau. No interaction between Chinese and Eurasian sections. Dr van Cuylenburg brought piano to Bahau. Father's role in registration office. Registration for Bahau conducted in phases. A police inspector used to come by registration office to get updates on Eurasian settlers. Leisure activities in Syonan-to. Family received help from two Chinese brothers during the Occupation. Recalled going with mother to Bugis to eat soup with dog meat. Condition at Sime Road camp. Aunt stayed in camp until British returned. Things noticed before Japanese surrender. How came to know of Japanese surrender. Thoughts on Japanese surrender.

Recounted how the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) tried to put three Eurasians in Bahau on trial for their alleged collaboration with Japanese. Hutchinson took over Bishop's office in Bahau after Bishop Devals died. Father's opinion of Dr Paglar. Dr Paglar was prosecuted by the British after the war. Description of surrender ceremony at City Hall. Grandfather persuaded father to allow him to witness surrender ceremony. Reflections on war. Thoughts on Japanese habit of slapping. Lessons learnt from Japanese Occupation. Foreseen the end of British colonial rule in Singapore. Japanese returned to Singapore only in 1960s. Observations on how Japanese people changed from 1940s to 1960s. Perception of life changed by war experiences.

08. Processing Recorded Interview

- Transfer recorded interviews from memory cards to more durable media (DVD-R, DLT etc)
- A working copy for synopsis writing or transcribing



Transcribing machine

**Start-Stop Universal Transcribing
System complete with foot pedal**

Transcribing

- Definition – “process of listening to an audio recording to produce a verbatim account of the interview”
- Purpose – Allow easy access to a wider audience
 - Reading is usually faster than listening
 - Language barrier could be overcome
- 2-Step Process – Typing and editing
- Cost effectiveness of using voice recognition software



Transcribing

- Time consuming: 1 hour of recording may take 3-5 hours to transcribe and edit
 - OHC transcribes up to 25% of all interviews
 - Since 2004, partial transcribing is also practiced
- Require input and cooperation from both interviewer (and sometimes interviewee) and the transcriber
- Who to do it? Transcriber or interviewer – pros and cons

Criteria for Transcribing Interviews (1)

- Does the interview cover relatively new ground, interesting (likely to be useful information)?
- Does the interview contain interesting descriptions of people, places and events?
- Does the interview contain technical jargon and/or unusual words?
- Does the interviewee speak in more than one language?

Criteria for Transcribing Interviews (2)

- Is the interview conducted in foreign language and translated with the help of an interpreter?
- Is it a group interview where voices of different interviewees are indistinct?
- Does the interviewee have a regional accent or speech difficulty?
- Is the interviewee a well known personality and/or an authority in certain fields?

Broad (not exhaustive) Transcribing Rules

Do transcribe

- ✓ Verbatim
- ✓ Correct information
- ✓ Correct spelling
- ✓ Actions and emotions

Do not transcribe

- × Uninformative interjections
- × Slips of the tongue
- × References made by the interviewee on the interviewer

Ethical Considerations

- How verbatim can it be? Truthful to the interviewee or the potential users?
 - Interview in a Chinese dialect being “transcribed” in Chinese
- Transcribe vulgarities?
- Allow interviewees to edit their own transcripts?

Editing oral history interview?
Why (ethical) and why not

Archival Principle of Arrangement?

After Transcribing

- ✓ Verify spelling of names and places
- ✓ Send transcript to interviewer for editing
- ✓ After amendments, send final transcript for binding or uploading
- ✓ Include noteworthy extracts in resource folders to facilitate future research



Typical Statements

- "Readers are advised that the tape recording is the official document, while the transcript represents solely an interpretation of that document"
- "Readers are urged to consult the recordings themselves for a full appreciation of those aspects of the conversations that cannot be captured in a transcript, such as the speakers' inflections and emphases that may convey nuances of meaning, as well as the larger context of the discussion."

9.0 Documenting Oral History

- Definition
 - To organise and describe the collection
- Purpose
 - To provide systematic access to holdings in the collection by maintaining a proper record of detailed information on each interview

Arranging and Describing

- Accession number
- Maintaining case files
- Synopsis
- Catalogue and online database
- Interview agreement

Maintaining Case Files

A case file contains:

- Interview information sheet
- Accession/CD number(s) of interview
- Bio-data of interviewee
- Interview outline
- Synopses
- Case notes
- Interview release form
- Record of communication
- Research materials
- Additional materials provided by interviewees



Case File Checklist

ORAL HISTORY CENTRE
Housekeeping of case file

Accession No:

Interviewee:

Alias:

SrNo.	Content	Remarks (Please tick "✓" where appropriate)
1.	Interview Information Sheet	
2.	Career Record	
3.	Interview Outline	
4.	Interviewer's Notes	
5.	Interview Release Form	
6.	Synopsis	
7.	Complimentary copy to interviewee	Date sent:
8.	Record of Communications/Visits To/From Interviewee	
Others	eg. Photos, newspaper clippings, donation of other materials, research materials, if any	
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		

Please indicate the number on the actual document accordingly.

Interview Information Sheet

Accession No.		
Surname (Block Letters)		Name in Chinese
Forename (s)		
Alias		
Decorations/Awards		
Date of Birth		Place of Birth
Race		Gender
Nationality		Dialect / Sub-group
Current Occupation		
Address		
Home Tel. No.		Office No.
HP No.		Fax No.
E-mail		
Other interviewee/s		
Education History		
Career Record (please use the career record form if there is insufficient space)		
Project Title		
Recording Location/s		
Interviewer/s		
Total no. of reels	(for audio cassettes only)	
Total no. of CDs		
Total Running Time		
Language/Dialect		
Copyright (Organisation)		
Access conditions	<u>*Open / restricted (*verbal / written)</u>	
Associated materials		

Career Record

Date	Office/Agency	Address	Positions Held	Nature and Scope of Work/Business

NB: This is an extremely important section. Please complete it as fully and accurately as possible. It should provide summary of the contributor's relevant background. Important additional details relating to 'Nature and Scope of Work/Business' are welcome but should be written under 'Notes' overleaf.

Interview Release Agreement

- Written agreement
 - Open access
 - Restricted (with access or reproduction conditions imposed)
- Verbal agreement
- Unsigned agreement
 - Access after 75 years
 - Access given by trustee of interviewee's estate

Written agreement needed for public access



Date: 16 Aug 2006

Accession No: 3023

INTERVIEW RELEASE FORM

I agree that upon completion of my oral history interview with the Oral History Centre, the recording(s) and all copyright for the content of the interviews are to be transferred to the Oral History Centre/National Heritage Board, and that the information in the recording (tick one of the choices):

- can be released immediately upon completion of interview
- can be released 5 / 10 / 15* years upon completion of interview
- can be released, except CD 2 to be embargoed for 5- / 10 / 15* years upon completion of interview on 8 Feb 2006.



Name : S Dhanabalan

NRIC (if applicable) : S004467-2

Address : Temasek Holdings (Pte) Ltd
60B Orchard Road #06-18 Tower 2
The Atrium@Orchard Singapore 238891

Signature :

Name and Signature of Interviewer/witness
for and on behalf of the Oral History Centre/
National Heritage Board

Claire Yeo

* delete where necessary



Accession No: 002960/01

INTERVIEW RELEASE FORM

I agree that upon completion of my oral history interview with the Oral History Centre, the recording(s) and all copyright in the content of the interviews to be transferred to the Oral History Centre/National Heritage Board and that the information in the recording (tick one of the choices):

- can be released immediately upon completion of interview
- can be released 5 / 10 / 15* years upon completion of interview
- can be released, except reel/s _____ to be embargoed for 5 / 10 / 15* years upon completion of interview.

Not to be broadcast / published by the media. Synopsis can be made available online.

Name : Eileen Lee Joo Har

NRIC (if applicable) : S0413995 Z

Address : 8 Ascot Rise, Singapore 289820

Signature :

Name and Signature of Interviewer/witness
for and on behalf of the Oral History Centre/
National Heritage Board

Chad Hui

* delete where necessary



Key statements of an INTERVIEW RELEASE FORM

- I acknowledge that upon completion of my oral history interview made by the (name of institution), the recording(s) will be documented and preserved at (name of the same or different institution, if production and repository are two separate places).
- I agree that the recording(s) (tick one of the choices):
- can be released immediately
- can be released 5 / 10 / 15 * years from the date stated below
- can be released immediately, except that disc(s) _____ can only be released 5 / 10 / 15 * years from the date stated below .
- (** delete as necessary*)

Why do we need to seek agreement from the interviewee?

- Respect for privacy – the interviewee is providing us an inner view which reveal himself/herself along with information on the subjects asked.
- When others listen to the interview, it could constitute an invasion of privacy. It is therefore both ethical and legal that he or she formally (by oral/written means) consented to the subsequent release (with or without conditions added).

Interviews with unsigned agreements

Options

- De-accession (avoid access problem, but waste investment of resources)
- Approach family (assuming interviewee has passed on)
- Taking a calculated risk to make available information in appropriate time or appropriate ways

What is “appropriate”?

- Best intent
 - There are at least two rounds of opportunities for interviewee to say no if the intention is not to share: reject interview request from start, reject release when interview was completed.
- It is always a compromised way:
 - Background reading only
 - Follow standard/minimum Copyright (75 years)
 - Release after attempts to trace interviewees failed. The risk could be high – eroding trust.

10. Access and Usage

- Access to recordings based on agreement signed by interviewee
- List concrete end-products / usage to justify funding for project



The next set of 30 or so slides will very briefly covered...

Access Media

- Duplicating the original for reference / access and as complimentary gift to interviewee
 - Use normal quality CD-Rs converted to MP3 format



MP3 as viable dissemination format

- MP3 is supported by worldwide market players – Windows Media Player, Real Audio Player and WinAmp (which collectively capture almost more than 90% of the world market in software sound player.)
- More importantly, MP3 compression technology ensures quick delivery to the users via the internet. It can retain most of the sound from the original source and compress the sound into a manageable size for download or streaming. At the same time, its quality is not good enough for duplication.

Disseminating Oral History

Objectives of dissemination:

- Encourage usage of interviews
- Promote oral history and generate awareness
- Create interview opportunities to grow and enhance collection

How?

- Make use of **strengths** of oral history interviews
 - Eyewitness accounts, reflections and memories
 - Capturing of emotions
 - Human connector
- Use in **meaningful and connected** manner

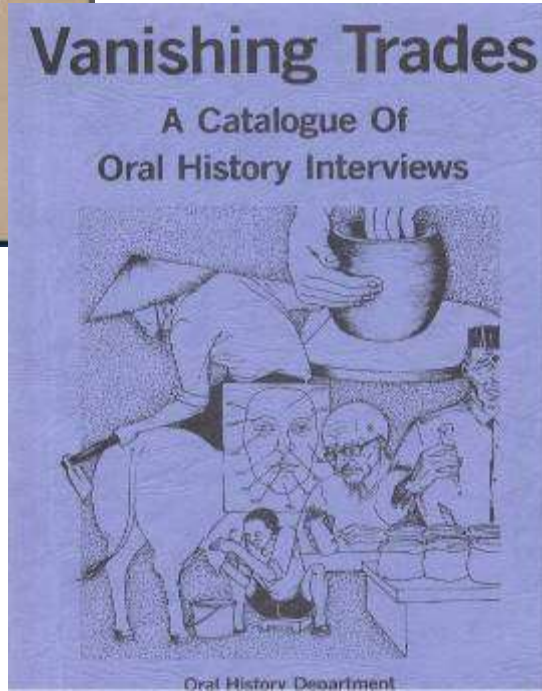
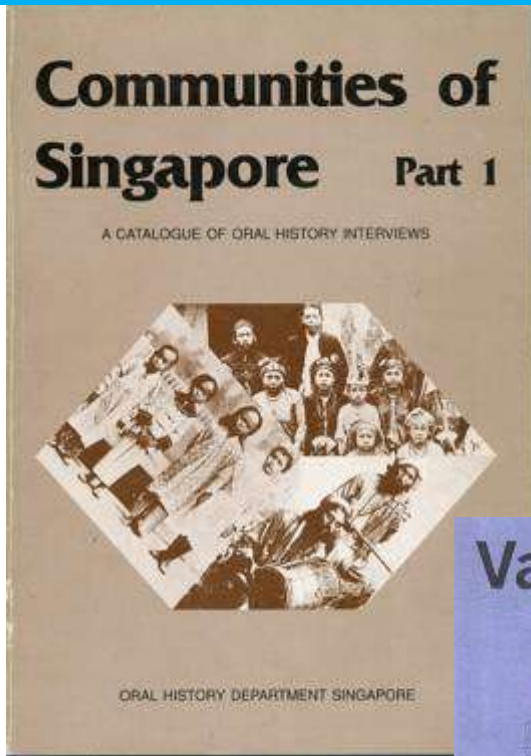
Quality of interview directly affects/limits deployment

- Quality of Content
 - Information value (filling in of gaps, supporting)
 - Background research and citation
- [Broadcast] Quality of Recording (audio/audio-visual)
 - Voice of interviewee (clarity, tight/concise of language, emotionally engaged)
 - Documentary

Deployment of Oral History Interviews

- Research Resource
- Publications
- Exhibitions (Permanent, Online, Travelling)
- Documentaries
- Media
- Outreach Programmes and Education

Oral History Database & Catalogues



Online Finding Aid

The screenshot shows the Oral History Centre website interface. At the top left is the National Archives of Singapore logo. A navigation bar contains icons for 'About Us' (scales), 'Tips' (lightbulb), 'FAQ' (question mark), and 'Links' (double-headed arrow). Below this is a 'Corporate Links' dropdown menu. The main header reads 'ORAL HISTORY CENTRE' in blue capital letters. To the right is a search section with the word 'SEARCH' in a stylized font, a search input field, and a 'Search' button. Below the search field is a link for 'Specific Search'. The central graphic features a collage of people and the text 'CORD Collection of Oral History Recording Database' in large blue letters. To the right of the text is an image of a pair of headphones.

This site has been accessed 27887 times

Access to Archives Online (A2O)



www.a2o.com.sg

Winner of e-culture category award (2004) under Stockholm Challenge Award



Research Resource

- Online Finding Aid - www.a2o.com.sg



The logo for A2O Singapore is a green cylindrical can with a yellow base, tilted to the left. From the top of the can, several archival items are spilling out, including a CD-ROM, a photograph of a person, a film strip, and a document. To the right of the can, the letters 'A2O' are rendered in large, orange, 3D-style font. Below 'A2O', the word 'SINGAPORE' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. Underneath 'SINGAPORE', the text 'access to archives online' is written in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below that, the tagline '100% Pure Heritage. The New Element in You' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a background of a green field with a blue sky above.

GETTING STARTED | A2O SEARCH | ONLINE EXHIBITIONS | NEWSLETTERS | FIND OUT MORE
DATABASES | RELATED LINKS | CONTACT US | SITEMAP



100% Pure Heritage. The New Element in You

- [GETTING STARTED](#)
- [ONLINE EXHIBITIONS](#)
- [NEWSLETTER](#)
- [FIND OUT MORE](#)
- [DATABASES](#)
- [RELATED LINKS](#)
- [CONTACT US](#)
- [SITEMAP](#)
- [SEARCH MAIN](#)
- [SEARCH RESULTS](#)

1. Enter Search Term

- Exact Phrase All Words Any Word
 Thesaurus search [Search Tips](#)

2. Enter Date Filter

From: To: **DATE** (dd/mm/yyyy, mm/yyyy or yyyy)

3. Enter Media Types

- Photographs (Ordering of Prints Available Online)
- [Collection of Oral History Recording Database](#)
- Audiovisuals and Sound Recordings
- Speeches
- Maps & Building Plans
- Posters (Ordering of Prints Available Online)
- Private Records
- Government Records
- All of the above.

Results

33

[Find out how to purchase photographs online](#)

[Find out how to use this search](#)

[Find out more about a2o](#)

[Access to Unclassified Public Archives](#)

1 2 3 4 1 - 10 of 33 items

S/No.	Select	Access No.	Interviewee	Reel/Disc No.	Access
1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	000233	VALIBHOY, Mohamed Yunus	3	Open Access
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	000382	SIM Kwang Teck	15	Open Access
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	000444	NG Chee Seng	27	Open Access
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	000459	YUHANIS bte Haji Yusof (Hajah)	3	Open Access
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	001366	SULAIMAN bin Haji Suhaimi (Haji)	6	Open Access
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	001663	MOHAMED Siraj (Mrs)	14	Open Access
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	001816	CHOO Keng Kwang	10	Open Access
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	001885	ABDUL Ghani Hamid Bin Hj Abdul Hamid	7	Open Access
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	001885	ABDUL Ghani Hamid Bin Hj Abdul Hamid	9	Open Access
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	001943	SARKASI bin Said Tzee	1	Open Access

1 2 3 4 1 - 10 of 33 items

Show Selected Records

Accession No:000233

Project Title:Pioneers of Singapore

Interviewee:VALIBHOY, Mohamed Yunus

Chinese Name:NA

Reel/Disc No.:3

Total Reel/Disc No.:4

Format:Audio cassette

Recording Language/Dialect:English

Source:OHC

Copyright:OHC

Access:Open Access

Running Time (hh:mm:ss):00:30:00

Transcript Availability:Yes

Synopsis:Diversification of business to import/export and property development. Characteristics of each textile centre in Singapore. Relationship with one another. Difficulties in re-developing old houses. Reasons for success in re-building father's business. Father's connection in Pakistan. Export commodities to Pakistan. Reasons for not importing commodities directly. Proportion between textile and commodities in his business. For textiles, import only. Dealing mainly with white materials used for **batik** printing. His view on future of textile trade.

Digital File(s):



[Click to listen](#)



[Click to read transcript](#)

- Making synopsis, audio extracts and transcripts available encourages usage



Total Collection Accessible Online (2011)

Media and Record Type	Records Preserved	No. and % that are open for access	Metadata (brief description) available online
Oral history recordings	3,456 interviews totalling 17,970 hours	2,699 interviews totalling 13,488 hours (75% of total hours)	3,020 interviews totalling 14,903 hours

Part 4: “欲说还休”

A few on-going CHALLENGES. . .
(ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROFESSIONAL ISSUES)

Professional-Ethical

- Ownership and rights: It is about **TRUST!**
- Payment for recording: **TRUST** as well...
 - Official or private?
 - Transport cost?
- Recording of sensitive issues: It is still about **TRUST**
- Priority and Biases: politically motivated projects: **TRUST** at both ends!!

Benefit-risk assessment not just from the perspective of the interviewer but also the interviewee...

- Interviewee is the primary person and he or she has the right to be told of any risks that may arise from what he or she has said.
 - Will untimely release of the interview endanger the interest of the interviewee?
 - How about his associates or relatives?
 - Can anonymity be guaranteed?
- And the decision must also be his/hers.

Professional-Administrative

- Output matters but it is not just about digit (quantity)!
- Collection development (**how much more to interview?**) vs deployment (**can we not spend more in this area?**)
- Oral presentation vs Transcription (**why can't we just keep the transcript and reduce preservation cost?**)
- User-friendliness vs protection of privacy (**does it not matter more to release interviews for immediate usage?**)
- Online access: free downloads vs charging and who owns the IP?
- Placement of OHC – government vs academic – Singapore experience

Risk of oral history becoming a willing tool to justify political agenda...

The case of B_{ukit} B_{rown} C_{emetery}



- 327 **Name:** Tan Hwee Har on Jun 27, 2011
Comments: There'll never be enough land. That's a given. And by exchanging an important part of history for more houses might just be too high a price to pay. I do hope the government evaluates the alternatives and consults various authorities before making the final decision. Sincerely, A concerned Singaporean [Flag](#)
- 328 **Name:** SB Yeo on Jun 28, 2011
Comments: 一再的将历史连根拔起，就如一位朋友说过：历史将仅存干固的文字，空洞而不真实。 [Flag](#)
- 329 **Name:** Tan Seng Heng on Jun 28, 2011
Comments: I support [Flag](#)
- 330 **Name:** Ong Kian Peng on Jun 28, 2011
Comments: [Flag](#)
- 331 **Name:** Maurice Lee on Jun 28, 2011
Comments: Bukit brown is too near the catchment area. Not every is base on dollar & cents. Must protect & preserve that last piece of cemetery. [Flag](#)
- 332 **Name:** Justin Chong on Jun 28, 2011
Comments: SAVE BUKIT BROWN of its historical importance!! [Flag](#)
- 333 **Name:** *Anonymous* on Jun 29, 2011
Comments: Hi, growing and throwing away vast plots of our past is not sustainable. At the end of the day, people are emotional beings who need the nostalgia of the past more than new, shiny buildings of the future to anchor themselves to Singapore as home. Please reconsider conserving Bukit Brown! At the end of the day, what's the use of new housing when we don't even feel we recognise Singapore as Home anymore? [Flag](#)
- 334 **Name:** CHIA Y H on Jun 29, 2011

News Releases

24 October 2011

Partnering stakeholders to document graves affected by the new road at Bukit Brown Cemetery

To meaningfully capture the history and heritage of the graves affected by the new road at the Bukit Brown Cemetery, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and Land Transport Authority (LTA) have partnered key stakeholders in the community to establish a framework to guide the documentation of these graves.

In a meeting with stakeholders from the Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan, The Peranakan Association of Singapore, Singapore Heritage Society, academics and grave experts, Minister of State for National Development Tan Chuan-Jin affirmed the government's interest in the documentation process. He said, "We are aware of the rich heritage of Bukit Brown and its links to the history of our country. We have sought to explore various possibilities for the road but there were no easy choices. Once the decision was taken on the road, we began discussing with key stakeholders. We aim to properly capture the history and memories of the affected graves and to do this before the planned road development begins."

Work and discussions had been ongoing for a few months now. An Advisory Committee, comprising representatives from the key stakeholders groups as well as representatives from key government agencies such as URA, LTA and the National Heritage Board will guide and provide advice to the documentation process. This will ensure that crucial information that can be found at the graves will be meaningfully documented. It is estimated that the new road will affect about 5% of the more than 100,000 graves currently sited in the Bukit Brown Cemetery.

A Working Committee led by Dr Hui Yew-Foong, Fellow and Coordinator of the Regional Social and Cultural Studies Programme at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, will carry out the actual documentation work. A Cornell University-trained anthropologist, Dr Hui is also a member of the Inter-Agency Committee on Chinese Overseas

While it looks like the Government is making major concessions this time to make sure it meets the expectations of the various interest groups, some political observers and heritage leaders put all the effort down to a matter of public relations.

Law professor Eugene Tan said because the decision to develop Bukit Brown seemed to be 'firmly made' when it was announced, consultations have struck many as a case of 'damage control'.

And while its public relations may have improved, the fact is that the Government continues to 'arrogate to itself decisions on key policies', said Mr Derek da Cunha, a political commentator.

Striking a more sympathetic tone, Dr Shawn Lum, president of the Nature Society (Singapore), said he found the Government to be sincere in balancing development and heritage pressures.

'To be fair to the planners, they have really agonised over this.'

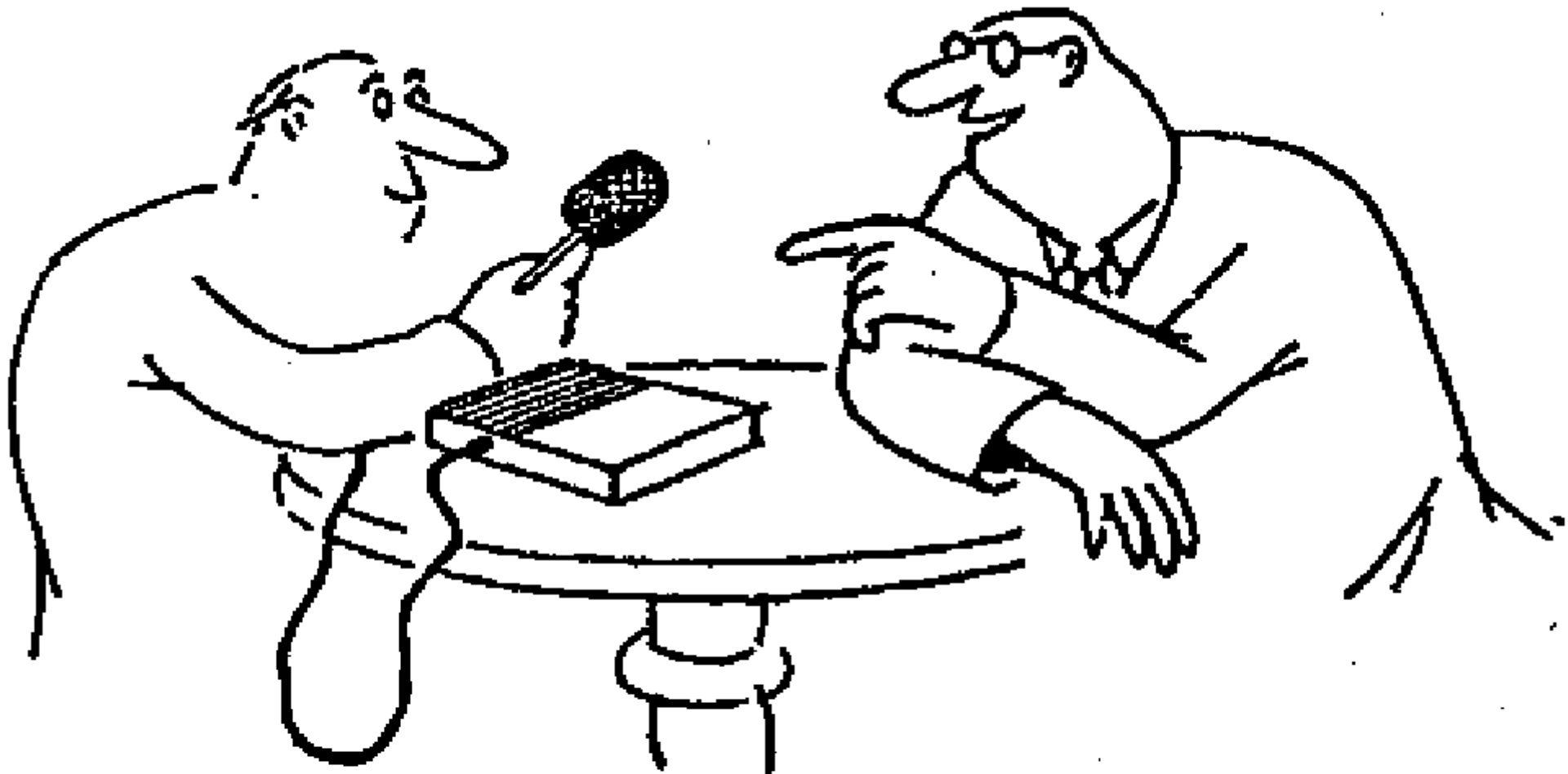
Bukit Brown will be a 'test case of sorts' for state and civil society relations, said sociologist Tan Ern Ser.

In the end, he said, the issue has to be decided 'by the people, in partnership with the Government, and for the people'.



Concluding Remarks

FACTS OR OPINIONS?



„Wollen Sie Fakten oder die Wahrheit?“

Do you want the facts or the truth?

"The strength of oral history as I see it, lies not in capturing facts and figures as such statistical data are likely to found in a more reliable source of written file records. Through oral history, we hope to capture the emotional aspect of interviewees who were once party to and have eye-witnessed certain events that form a larger part of our history and heritage. Oral history provides a platform for them to reflected upon as well as explained things from their own perspective, thus giving future generations a deeper dimension in documenting collective social memories of a community or a nation, never mind the fact that the expression of feelings and rationalization of actions may not be consistent with what actually happened then."

PITT KUAN WAH, 11 July 2011

“For all their shortcomings in terms of hard information I believe they will one day be valued for the way ideas are expressed, for the way events were believed to have occurred and all kinds of myths were created. They will reveal areas of startling ignorance; they will at times be long on wisdom if short on chronological accuracy. If this is true then archivists should learn to defend these and other recordings in their collection, to argue for them and to convince researchers of their value by indicating both their strengths and weakness....

Interviews are often conducted with people who are either unused to, or dislike, the linear mode of reading and writing in which case their communication patterns will be diffused and conveyed at several levels at once. Their presentation may at first sight be muddled and confused but may nevertheless be remarkably perceptive. A public servant or politician on the other hand may be adept at glib, linear presentations which for all their clarity reveal almost nothing.”

Hugh A Taylor, Oral History and Archives: keynote speech to the 1976 Canadian Oral History Conference

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Hugh A Taylor, Oral History and Archives: keynote speech to the 1976 Canadian Oral History Conference

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Likewise you can look at oral history methodology the same way...



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