

'Sydney' OWN: Taking the first steps

At our Quarterly Members' Meeting in August, members took the opportunity to talk about what a new 'Sydney OWN' might look like when our state body is formalised. When this happens, Sydney will become just one of the fourteen affiliated OWN groups in NSW. In the meantime, however, it's business as usual while the Steering Committee (appointed at the Conference) works on the new constitution for OWN NSW. June Lord, who is on the Steering Committee, spoke of the progress made at its first meeting. The Committee plans to have a draft constitution available in November for discussion by all members.

Leading the discussion on Sydney OWN, Sam Smart spoke of the recent State Conference and commended Dorothy Cora for her excellent report. It had not been hard, Sam said, for us to explore the idea of a state body; it's just hard to put the final detail on who does what and when!

There are big questions in front of us, but a lot of good women to sort it out. This quarterly members' meeting was a timely opportunity for OWN Inc. members to start thinking of what the separation means and what processes need to be clarified and what decisions need to be made.

Key questions involve the structure, coordination, representation and activities of Sydney OWN. Challenges also include finding an effective and simple way to support the new peak body with its new management structure and project teams. With increased expectations, we need to facilitate each other to work through the separation, keeping communication lines open and making good use of the newsletter; continually questioning; and being aware of the steps involved in planning the separation. We must also retain the philosophy of OWN, and be more inclusive and valuing of our volunteers.

Practical issues discussed included whether Sydney will remain incorporated or not, the cost of membership/affiliation fees, membership records, insurance, inserts of Sydney activities in the newsletter, and what resources/funds Sydney will have in terms of a management committee and work space. It was suggested that a Sydney questionnaire would be an advantage to encourage participation of more people.

Obviously there is still much to be discussed about the formation of Sydney OWN. A special invitation will be extended to our members in the projects and activities groups to attend the next quarterly meeting, which will be held in November.

Joy Ross

SURVIVING THE OLYMPICS

From 15th September to 1st October, the Olympic Games will take place. Here are some survival strategies provided by the Department of Veteran Affairs.

FOOD: Make sure you have plenty of food in your house to reduce shopping trips.

MEDICAL: Arrange non-essential appointments outside the Olympic Games time and plan your transport, allowing extra time to get to and from appointments

COMMUNITY SERVICES: Check if your normal services will be affected, and organise family or friends to help during this time if necessary.

SAFETY: There will be more strangers around your area at this time, so make sure that you have emergency contact numbers near to the phone.

RELAXATION: Make sure your TV and radio are in good working order so that you can enjoy the games.

When you are out and about remember ...

It will be difficult to move around due to pressures on the public transport system.

Be prepared for crowds..

Take water and sunscreen and medication with you, and maintain a sense of humour!

Coordinators' Report

It has been a busy month as we continue our steady progress towards the formation of OWN NSW. The Steering Committee is working on the constitution and the members of OWN (Inc) have started to discuss how their group will be affected by these changes.

The Annual General Meeting will be on 11th October, later than usual because of the impact of the Olympics, which is also the reason for this bumper double issue of the Newsletter. Nomination papers and the notice for the AGM are included with this Newsletter. We appeal to all of you to support us in our work, to share the load and lighten it.

We really need more nominations for the Working Committee. If you would like to know what's involved in being a member of the Working Committee, please contact any one of us on 9247 7046 and we will be more than happy to talk with you.

The Working Committee has regretfully accepted the resignation of Margaret Bridger, whose multiple skills have been greatly appreciated for the past three years. However, we are pleased to report that Margaret will continue to volunteer her considerable expertise to special projects in the future.

It is not all hard work at OWN – having FUN is also high on our agenda! We are planning a Birthday Bash on 18th October to honour all our members who are 80 and over, and on Melbourne Cup Day we will be having one of our special get-together-just-to-have-fun luncheons. Details will be in the November Newsletter, but mark the 7th November in your diaries now.

Finally, OWN(Australia) is holding its Annual Conference in Perth on 6th September this year. No doubt we will have a report of it in due course.

From Wednesday, 13th September, the office at Lower Fort Street will only be open from 10am to 2pm each day. Normal hours will resume Wednesday 4th October. Let's hope that we all survive the Olympic hype!

Joy Ross, Louise Anike, Renate Watkinson

The Housing Group

Six members attended our second meeting on 26th July and discussed the following:

HOUSING OPTIONS FOR THE AGED: The Seniors Information Service had forwarded informative fact sheets on retirement villages and a book called "Guide to Aged Care Facilities". The book, "Retirement", is obtainable from COTA.

PUBLIC HOUSING COUNCIL: One member reported on a meeting of South Sydney Public Housing Council, where friction had occurred because of the termination of the contract of a liaison officer. The member had also attended a meeting organised by the Universities of NSW and Western Sydney, as a result of research in the Sydney area. Attendees were asked if they had any participation in the decisions made five years earlier by Department of Public Housing re local housing and facilities and most said they had had no input into the decision making.

COMMUNAL HOUSING: Many attempts have been made to establish communal housing in some form or another. Older women appeared unable to commit themselves to living in communal housing with others in their own age groups. Perhaps we should try to interest women now in the 50s age group in planning for such housing.

HOUSING PROBLEMS DURING THE 2000 OLYMPICS: One member had a copy of a special report prepared by the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism titled "Housing Crisis in Olympic City" during the 2000 Olympics. Statistics indicated that 30,000 NSW residents are homeless. After brief discussion, it was decided that for the next meeting we would research women's homelessness and bring our results along. Telephone 9247 7046 in October for information about the next meeting.

Helen McMaugh

Food Sets The Mood

Food sets the mood
For social space,
Varied textures, hues,
Sweet, sour, curried tastes.

Food and drink
Tease the tongue
Memories link,
Conversations spun.

Frayda Myers. Cooper

TRANSPORT

The OWN transport group is travelling some significant highways, with a few detours into slightly kinky byways (such as Russ Aroney's suggestion that we need a "wee in" to draw attention to the serious lack of toilet facilities for NSW railway users.)

At its second meeting in July, Jacqui Graham presented a useful summary of the transport section of the recently published Platform for Action 2000-2002 on Issues of Concern to Older People in NSW (now available from the NSW Ageing and Disability Department.) The six identified issues of concern each have a stated strategic objective and the required actions are allocated to their appropriate owners for implementation. Boiled down, this provides community organisations such as OWN with a workable list of priorities for action. We are already pursuing some of these. This practical list includes:

- * On availability of public transport - establishing local transport advisory groups, linked to the Public Transport Advisory Council to work with other community groups and business. (Members of our OWN group are researching this. We have received a letter from Wayne Smith, NSW MP for South Coast, supporting the Transport Development Worker proposal for Shoalhaven. He has taken this up with the Minister.)
- * On concession fares - ensuring that there are no financial barriers to the use of public transport by older people; that concessions become available on privately run services; and that the system is as equitable as possible. Community and older people's organisations should work with government and transport operators on introducing a fairer system. (OWN's group has a response from the NSW Government's Public Transport Concession Review that its findings - due December 1999 - are "currently being modelled" and will be communicated to the public in due course. We are developing a position paper on this issue.)
- * On safety-reducing fears of using public transport, especially after dark, by liaising with a range of interested community groups and government to develop more services with pick up closer to destinations - and increasing security measures.

- * On older drivers - developing, delivering and promoting older driver education programs; working with local chambers of commerce on free home delivery.
- * On community transport - enhancing independence of older non-drivers who are unable to use public transport by liaison with interested community groups.

At its meeting the OWN transport group also discussed ways to improve the cross-fertilisation of ideas in related areas with other OWN advocacy groups. The value of input through common memberships was noted, and the possibility of other informal interaction was raised.

The next meeting is on Monday, September 4 at 11 a.m., upstairs at Windmill Street. The agenda will cover our draft paper on concession fares, the results of our work contacting people on local transport advisory groups, and the issue of the availability of toilets for public transport users. All interested are very welcome.

Ros Gordon

Nursing Homes: what to look for.

Nursing homes have 36,000 guests per year with a turnover of about 18000 per year. The following are some questions to ask when trying to find a suitable nursing home. Do not be shy. In a good nursing home, your questions should be very welcome. Also, have a good look around. If you are not up to doing this, take a friend, a relative or volunteer along.

1. Ask for an admission form - take it home and study it for details.
2. Ask to have a look at their filing system. All names and details of patients must be clearly marked and separate from each other.
3. Ask to have a look at their medicine cabinet. All medicine for each patient must be in separate compartments and the name clearly marked.
4. Ask who administers or injects drugs. Is it a trained person? In hospitals in NSW it is law that this is done by a registered nurse.
5. How soon after a doctor prescribes is the medicine administered?
6. Is there a trained person who fully understands the relationship between food and insulin and takes care of guests with diabetes?

I BEG YOUR PARDON?

Please speak up!

Putting up with the irritation of a hitherto efficient machine gradually wearing down (my septuagenarian body!) puts me in mind of Bette Davis' acerbic comment, "Ageing is not for sissies!"

My particular gripe at the moment is the deterioration in my hearing. Not when I'm in a normal situation with a few people in conversation, but when I'm in a crowd, or when there is a level of background noise, and so frustrating do I find even this small hearing difficulty, that I can imagine the misery of people with real hearing difficulties. Just think what it would be like if you couldn't pick up the phone and talk easily, or if you couldn't hear clearly or not at all.

Well, last week we had a visit from Rosslyn Werner who is a consultant from a very interesting non-profit making organisation called Australian Communication Exchange. Through their relay service it means that any body with a hearing difficulty or who is deaf, and even anyone with a speech defect can talk to any one on the phone. The person on the other end receives the message clearly, by means of a relay officer from the National Relay Service (NRS).

When you want to place a call through NRS you first type your message or speak it (even if you are speech impaired) onto your teletyper, (TTY), the machine that transmits your messages, or you can use a computer and a modem if you've got one. The Relay Officer at the command post becomes your voice and reads out loud your conversation to the other person through the normal telephone. Then the relay officer listens to the response and types it back for you to read. Once you're connected to the NRS you can make as many calls as you like, and the service is open twenty four hours a day, every day of the year.

There is another service for people with a speech impairment. Speech to Speech Relay uses officers who are specially trained to understand a variety of voice patterns, as well as voice outputs from

electronic speech devices. The caller who has a speech defect and the other party can speak directly to each other, with the Relay Officer "re-speaking" the conversation. All three people are involved in the call and can all hear each other at the same time. Community consultants are available to work with people who have a speech impairment to work out the most effective and comfortable way of communicating via the telephone.

This service is a national not-for-profit organisation that is funded by a levy paid by all telecommunication carriers. Local and tollfree calls can be made without an account, while long distance calls require one.

Rosslyn left us a wonderfully useful publication called "The Deafness Resource Guide 2000-2001". In addition to product names and descriptions of aids for every type of hearing and speech impairment (and there are so many, you can't believe!) it also includes pictures, prices, ordering information and an A-Z index of books and videos. This book is really, really helpful.

We have a copy at 87 Lower Fort Street for your convenience or you can find out more details from Larissa Burns, 1800 555 660 or fax.1800 555 690

Muriel Hortin for the Resources Committee

A Sonnet

Behold, the bursting buds of spring
When soft she steps on leafy stage
What songs from feathered throats will ring
Now past is winter's rage.
Golden wattle, crimson berry
Clustered on the bough
While Zephyr tunes his silent flute
And grasses bend and bow.
Where fairy wren and bell bird meet
On gum and bush to dream
Of warm September's promise,
Running creek and rushing stream.
Where light and shadow blend as one
Beneath a fiery sun.

Marie Williams

Elaine Russell – Author and Artist

Our guest speaker at the Aboriginal Support Circle's August meeting was Elaine Russell, a Kamillaroi woman who is a talented artist, illustrator and author of an imaginative book "A is for Aunty" which is an ABC of her childhood.

Elaine was born in 1941 at Tingha. There were seven children in the family, four girls and three boys, and Elaine was the third youngest. When she was a young child, the family moved to a shack at La Perouse where the children swam and played on the beaches, dived for coins at the wharf and had plenty of fresh fish to eat. Sometimes their father used to put a turban on his head and pretend to be an Indian, to get served in some shops.

Her father got a handyman's job at Murrin Bridge Mission, which was in an isolated area twenty seven miles from Lake Cargellico in south western NSW. They lived under the protection of the mission manager and no one was allowed to leave the mission without permission.

Elaine said she couldn't remember ever going into town, and anyway, the shop owners in the area wouldn't serve Aboriginal people. Blanket and food rations were distributed, but there were no fresh fruit and vegetables in the rations. Part of their jobs was to look after the administrator's veggie garden and to milk the cows each morning, but the veges and milk did not flow on to the Aboriginal people. As a result, all of the children became malnourished and had weeping sores. The men supplemented their family's meagre rations with bush tucker, emu, possum and kangaroo, which Elaine's mother always seasoned with plenty of curry powder. The rations did not include clothes or shoes either, so what they had was handed down through the family. Elaine said she remembers wearing her brother's cast off pants, sometimes two pairs at a time during the cold winter.

The one school teacher had fifty children to teach ranging from grades one to five. There was no secondary education for Aboriginal children in the area. When Elaine was twelve, she won a children's art award, the first prize a trip to the Phillipines. However, her mother refused to let her to go. She thought it was a trick to steal her away as it was Government policy to remove some Aboriginal children from their families.

When Elaine's mother became ill and returned to Tamworth to live, Elaine went with her and worked as a domestic for a large family in the district. She did not receive any payment for her work, only food and lodgings.

Elaine came to Sydney at eighteen and was married at twenty. Her husband came from Purfleet Mission near Taree and they were married at the Aboriginal Inland Mission church there. She has six children and six grandchildren.

With the urge to paint still strong at forty-eight, and fed up with working for a pittance, Elaine decided became a full time student at EORA College and gained her HSC.

Elaine is a self-taught artist. In 1993 she became a full-time painter and at her first exhibition sold two paintings to the Art Gallery of NSW. Her work, depicting images from her childhood, has been displayed at the Heritage Exhibition in Darwin. Her work appeals to both children and adults, as it tells her story and the way she feels, and children understand this. She does not do dot paintings as these belong to the Old People's story from a different area. Elaine has conducted very successful workshops in England with two other Aboriginal artists, one from Broome and one from Queensland. In England she was warmly welcomed and treated with respect.

The ABC encouraged her to write "A is for Aunty" which she sees as a healing book.

Elaine works in schools, has done book illustrations for St. Scholastica, and at the moment has an exhibition of her work at the North Sydney Fine Art Gallery. Her son has inherited her artistic talent. He works for the ABC Dreamtime Stories series as an animator and has won an award in France as an outstanding illustrator.

In acknowledging Elaine's latent blooming and tremendous success one must ponder how many years of her artistic talent have been lost because of the appalling discrimination she received from our governments and institutions.

Congratulations, Elaine, for overcoming such great odds with your tenacity, courage and amazing talent.

Lucy Porter

A VISIT TO THE TENT EMBASSY

On Monday, 14th August, six of us from the Aboriginal Support Circle visited the Aboriginal Tent Embassy at Victoria Park in Chippendale. This camp was established on 14th July, when the Fire of Justice was ignited. Some of the ashes had been brought from Canberra, where the Tent Embassy has been going since 1972. They state that the embassy is a constructive, peaceful protest about issues vital to the Aboriginal Community. Anybody is free to enter, and is warmly welcomed and invited to stand in the smoke of eucalyptus leaves and pray for peace. Alcohol and drugs are not permitted.

We were able to talk with Isabel Coe, the leader of the camp, and Tony Spamos, a remarkable man who, for the last ten years, has personally funded youth projects, programmes, and small entrepreneurial businesses. He has also established a Graffiti Hall of Fame in the car park, next to his business premises. When one of our members admired his T-shirt, he promptly peeled it off and handed it to her!

Sadly, the South Sydney Development Corporation wants to re-zone the car park for residential units.

This camp is now to be known as 'Aboriginal Peace Embassy'. We fully support their objectives of social justice, land rights and peaceful negotiations with government.

However, the South Sydney Council is at present attempting to enforce conditions on the camp, such as enclosing the fire in a metal drum, and allowing only one tent and four people to occupy the site, as well as the camp, paying high insurance fees, which is impossible, as they have no official funding. It is hoped that the camp will be allowed to continue until after the Olympics.

We brought basic foodstuffs, such as bread, milk, margarine, Weetbix, baked beans, packaged soups, tea, coffee, biscuits and oranges, plus blankets and warm clothing. If anyone wishes to visit, a gift of food or a blanket would be most appreciated.

Pat Zinn

Launch of 'Platform for Action'

The second edition of Australian Coalition '99 Platform For Action, skilfully rewritten by Sarah Fogg, Committee on Ageing, was launched on July 20 by Tom Uren, AO. Copies of the Platform for Action are available from OWN.

We have written before in these pages about how the Platform For Action was produced by a number of older people's non-government organisations (including OWN) as an outcome of 1999 International Year of Older Persons. It is a joint statement outlining a range of concerns and a plan of action for those who are interested in developing them further. Sarah pointed to the very easy to read document, the issues identified and actions that government, service providers and older people and their organisations might take to bring about the kind of future we want.

An interested audience of older and professional people heard Tom Uren call for the government to provide a more secure infrastructure and a collective responsibility for the care of older people. Peter Woods, President, NSW Local Government Association (LGA), also spoke of inclusiveness, infrastructure and appropriate resourcing and the advantages of working in alliances to bring about positive change. Peter Woods offered us the opportunity to take our concerns to the LGA. Speakers from organisations such as the Camden Seniors' Committee, Wyanga Aboriginal Community Aged Packages Scheme and a neighbourhood centre in Bankstown provided examples of where older people play a successful role in local decision making.

Lastly, notice was given of a seminar 'Creating Supportive Neighbourhoods For and By Older People' to be held on November 22 to further implement the document.

Joy Ross

VASEY HOUSING

Vasey Housing provides independent living for widows and single women over 55, offering privacy and security in a supportive environment. They have housing in Hunters Hill, Lane Cove, Maroubra, Waitara, Epping and Concord. Some vacancies currently exist. Please phone Rosemary Vine on 9299 3951 for more information.

'bye Cara

Cara MacDougall, part-time worker with the Northside Older Women's Wellness Centre, will be leaving us in September. Over the past three years Cara has endeared herself to all the participants at Northside, not only for her ability to organise the activities in several locations and support the management team, but especially for her understanding of the older women's point of view. All this and more from a thirty-something year old!

Since the beginning, Northside has struggled for funding, and Cara has been incredibly inventive in preparing submissions for councils, the casino, local businesses and the Area Health Service. She has tirelessly promoted Northside, and all the good things that the wellness model means for older women. In spite of all this, and the ongoing efforts of the women at Northside, there is no longer sufficient funding to retain a part-time worker. The Centre will continue, however, managed by a determined group of participants, equipped with a 'survival kit' that Cara has developed. The kit contains guidelines and procedures which show what needs to be done to organise and manage activities at the Centre.

As well as managing the development and expansion of Northside, for the past year Cara has also been the staff support for the Wellness Resource Project. This project has collected information and written a 'how to' guide for older women everywhere who want to organise wellness activities in their local communities. The Wellness Guide will be published in the next few weeks – more about that later.

We are hopeful that Cara's skills and energy will not be completely lost to OWN. Cara has worked closely with Women's Health and Health Promotion at Northern Sydney, and they are now keen to employ her later in the year to support older women's wellness from within the health service, throughout the region. If all goes well, we expect to see Cara continuing to support older women's health and wellbeing on an even broader scale.

In the meantime, we say a big thankyou to Cara for all the knowledge and skills she has shared with OWN over the past three years, and wish her success and satisfaction in the future.

Sam Smart

Theatre Group Report

Over the past six weeks, Theatre Group engagements have slowed down and this has given new members of the group the opportunity to spend more time at rehearsals going over the songs and skits from the new show "Wow 2000", and learning songs from other shows. We have also been trying out different members in the various skits as replacements in case of illness or absence. This is an important learning development and builds confidence within the group.

During the first two weeks in August, Peg and Janet were in hospital. We are pleased that their operations were successful, and we expect them back treading the boards before too long! Brigid and her husband left Australia on 5th August to take up a teaching engagement in China for the next eighteen months. We wish them well in their venture.

Our guitarist, Bernice Lynch, turned 80 on Tuesday 8th August so we lunched at the Hero of Waterloo Pub. It was a very happy occasion, with all the cast there to honour Bernice amidst the beautiful floral gifts and cards. We all see Bernice as a role model and her dedication, talent and loyalty are an inspiration.

In responding to the goodwill messages from the group, Bernice said she had never felt such warm feelings, and that the last twelve years had been the most memorable in her life. She felt it a privilege to be a member of the Theatre Group.

We sang songs accompanied by Anne on the keyboard, much to the enjoyment of the two lone male diners sharing the dining room with us. (Well, that's the story as I heard it and I'm sticking to it. Nothing like having a captive audience!)

The luncheon ended up with one of our group crawling around under the table looking for her teeth! I haven't yet fathomed out what sparked that activity – it certainly wasn't a liquid lunch. Overall, it was a most enjoyable afternoon and we all had a WOW of a time.

Merle Hightet

Reports from OWN

**We've told you about our new Neighbourhood Groups project in theory –
now you can read about them in practice!**

South Sydney

Our South Sydney Neighbourhood Group meets every six weeks in a public housing community centre. About eight women come along, with more on our records.

We drew on OWN's membership list of those who live in our local government area, and sent out an invitation to join in a discussion on 'Older Women and Wellbeing'.

Since then we have explored social isolation, because even though we lead busy lives there are times we can get really 'down'.

A member of the Women and Mental Health Group spoke at our last meeting about her experiences of working with older women who, cut off from family with only their photos, grieve, might gradually let themselves go and may ultimately lose the confidence to participate in groups. We are also making contact with other community services in the area.

We showed OWN's 'Off The Beaten Track' video, and are planning a cheapie lunch out to lighten up!

Joy Ross

OWN 'Coves'

Once upon a time, a group of four OWN members, all complete strangers, met to explore the question: "what do we want of a neighbourhood group - be it this lot of people - or whoever?"

We began to identify our individual WANTS or WISH LIST on a balmy Saturday morning in June over coffee in the Lane Cove Mall.

For Cate, 72, being a voluntary worker in many organisations it started with wanting "work taken off my shoulders". For Pamela, 67, it came down to wanting to establish a contact group of a few reliable friendly people who would be there for her at any time she felt confined to home, and in need of that sort of non-family company. For Nina, 74, it started with dreading not being able to drive herself around and moved on to realising her need to be in touch with people to help her "keep her spirits up". For Rowena, 57, there was a strongly felt need to commit to a network that gets her OUT of her home environment, either physically or through the Internet.

We also shared some concerns, for instance, whether or not to get a mobile phone, the presence or absence of family support/stresses, stereotyping of women, how to hold onto a sense of autonomy in the group while acknowledging the wider implications of "belonging" to the umbrella organisation that brought them together, keeping the group small enough to continue as it began (e.g. less than nine) so that everyone goes home feeling that they had a good chance to be heard, and what's a good time to ring for a chat. We parted with a sense of having achieved something worthwhile in our OWN lives.

When we met again a week later a temporary, informal "agenda" was agreed on for the next few meetings (see below).

During the third OWN COVES meeting more wisdom and pleasure emerged as three of us shared snippets from our lives, e.g. the recent loss of a friend, houses lived in, lumps, falls, knees, hearing loss, ideas for outings together and the value of a mobile phone.

Pamela Tolmie

An Informal Agenda – tried and tested by the Lane Cove Group

The following is an outline of an informal agenda for a Neighbourhood Group meeting which arose out of our expressed desire to be kind to ourselves and to respect one another as equally wise and needy.

Introduce yourselves briefly and describe your connection with OWN. Decide whether or not to keep a record of the meeting - if yes, suggest taking turns. Check in with "a few things I feel pleased about right now". As each person speaks they could also start to spell out a WISH LIST – scribe to record the details. From this a future direction for the group may emerge.

Discuss some group agreements, such as whether everyone is responsible for allowing uninterrupted equal time for members to speak, and whether the meeting will start and finish on the time.

The meeting could finish with time for everyone to respond to some or all of the following:

"One thing I liked about today's meeting"

"One thing I learned from today's meeting"

"Something I am looking forward to now".

Finally, swap names and phone numbers and let everyone know what is a good time to "ring for a chat"

May any good vibes produced in your meeting be warmly felt by all.

Pamela Tolmie.

Neighbourhood Groups

Sutherland

From our starting point of six OWN members, we have now organised a group lunch at the Miranda Community Restaurant on four occasions. This restaurant is a project funded by ADD for the purpose of providing a pleasant low cost venue available for easy access by older people, including those who have a disability or may be socially isolated.

We extended an invitation to join us to women who expressed an interest when we spoke to them at the Seniors Week Expo at Sutherland.

Our gatherings have provided a base for discussions on what we would like to do, and how to bring in other women in the community, particularly those who may be feeling socially isolated. Initially, the aim was to provide an opportunity to enjoy the company of our peers, and to create an environment of a support network.

Through our members who have joined community groups such as the HACC Forum and the Carers and Consumers Forum, we have met and made good connections with the many service providers in our area. One such meeting led to a partnership with the TAFE Outreach program to provide a free computer course for older women. Our luncheon discussions had revealed a desire to become computer literate. By advertising in the OWN Newsletter and placing our lovely OWN poster and notices in four Community Centres within our area, we very quickly filled the fifteen places. We even had to keep a reserve list. Already, following the first of the eight weekly lessons, we are hearing favourable remarks reflecting how older women are appreciating the course in which they feel comfortable among their peers without feeling intimidated by a gender and age mixture. We are working towards a continuing collaboration with TAFE on further projects, and are presently looking at the possibility of an open day which will present to the wider community the opportunities that exist to help older people live fulfilling lives.

When the "Off the Beaten Track" video was launched, we quickly decided we wanted to see it. We booked a room in the same centre and hired a VCR for one hour prior to our lunch. We extended invitations to a number of service providers. Three members of the Theatre Group (two of whom live in our Shire) most generously came and added to the interest with a sample of their wares (live) and some background to their formation and history. The enthusiastic reception added to the success of the day, and together with some of the computer course women, we are increasing and consolidating our neighbourhood group.

We are currently exploring other opportunities which we hope may lead to a "wellness program" based on the wellness models of Bankstown and Northside. Opportunities are everywhere!

Barbara Burnham

Bondi

At first I wondered if I was the best person to make contact with the five interested women in my area as I had a hospital date for an operation and being in the Theatre Group takes up an awful lot of my time. Anyway, I undertook to call them together to get things moving. I was very lucky that one of the contacts was Margaret Kelly and that she worked at ECHO (Bondi Junction) so I arranged with her to set a date and time to have a coffee at 'Emma's Hole in the Wall', and to invite the others to join us.

The day dawned – raining! There sat Margaret at her work desk, and me. Pat had badly damaged her ankle and sent an apology, Frayda was on holiday, Brigid was chairing the local Probus – and so on. The 'Hole in the Wall' turned out to be just that! However, Margaret, knowing her way around, quietly got us moved from a wet and open courtyard and got us a dry corner in the Pensioners' Hall.

In an old ECHO Newsletter, I noticed they had a quarterly luncheon. Wow! What if I could get a few of the Theatre Group to perform at the luncheon? All the Theatre Group said 'yes' and away we went. Margaret booked the new Library Theatre room. We produced a flyer which I sent to twenty two OWN members with a personal message on the bottom to the effect that "I would love to see you here but if you can't make it would you be interested in any further action?" The charge was \$2 and everyone brought a plate.

I was very impressed by the attendance on the day – approximately seventy turned up, and six phoned to say they couldn't make it for various reasons. OWN women approached me and introduced themselves. One woman said that she had been trying to get to something at OWN for ages, and, finally, here she was! The Theatre Group went over with its usual flair. The lunch was yummy and the audience of OWN and ECHO was most warm. Margaret spoke about OWN and the Neighbourhood Groups concept, and a good time was had by all.

Then, as it was hospital for me, holidays for Margaret, and Brigid going off to teach English in a Chinese University, things have been put on hold for the time being. We aim to have a showing of the video of "Off the Beaten Track", the Southern highlands tour, at our next get-together, whenever that is ...

Peggy Hewett

More on Neighbourhood Groups

Ashfield Appetites

We've now met three times. Our first meeting was in one of our members' homes and so we have carried on with this tradition whilst checking out possible venues convenient to all of us. As members of our group live from Marrickville to Strathfield, this has not proved as easy as we thought, and we are still looking.

At our first meeting, three of us arrived bearing enough thoroughly delicious food to feed a multitude only to find that the 'hostess' for the day had also provided a feast!

The same thing happened at our second meeting. Four of us arrived like cuisine couriers to add to the groaning board. Again, we laughed at our extravagance. Here we were, five women ostensibly concerned about maintaining our health and wellbeing, offering each other a calorie-laden morning tea as a gesture of our goodwill! Of course our 'hostess' for the morning had also provided morning tea.

After our third meeting when four of us had again arrived bearing sweet delights, we agreed that in future the hostess alone would provide the 'milk and honey'.

All our meetings so far have been spent getting to know each other, our interests, our histories and our reasons for wanting to connect with like-minded OWN members in our neighbourhoods. The general feeling has been positive, and our next meeting is planned for early September.

Judith Mustard

Pymble

Unfortunately our tiny "Pymble" group has gone into abeyance after one very pleasant lunch. We did plan another lunch, but the geographic difficulties really beat us as we came from suburbs as far apart as Asquith, Willoughby and Dundas.

Nevertheless, we all took some OWN posters, which we have distributed in our far-flung neighbourhoods, and hope this will stimulate some more local enthusiasm. And some of us are keeping in touch by phone - so watch this space!

Ros Gordon

Inner West

Our Neighbourhood Group has now met five times, the first three at different coffee shops, which all proved to be far too noisy. We now meet at Leichhardt Council's new community centre at Glebe.

Six members attended our last meeting. We talked about our particular interests, what services are available for older women in the community (which some of us have needed at various times) and social isolation.

We recently sent out letters to thirty-plus OWN members living in the Inner West to let them know we are up and running. Who knows how many will turn up for our next meeting? We meet on the last Friday of each month at St. Helen's Community Centre, 184 Glebe Point Road, Glebe (three buildings from Wigram Road).

Jan Monson

The 'Umbrella Group'

Members of Neighbourhood Groups attend meetings of the 'umbrella group' for various reasons - the concept interests them or they want to share experiences of developing our metropolitan groups.

At our last meeting we mainly discussed social isolation. While many older women are perceived as being isolated, we agreed that we cannot invade their personal lives. Some older women can't get out due to disability or poverty, so how can they have the opportunity to live a more enriched life? Some are voluntary hermits.

In order to overcome a "them and us" mentality we need to look at the larger issue of living in a male dominated society which renders many women powerless - something which is often exacerbated by caring and by age.

Today, with an ageing population, where women are living longer and more often alone, and with user-pays policies, we need more creative responses to the social needs of older women.

OWN is currently preparing a submission for Casino funding to research social isolation and explore models of neighbourhood groups.

Joy Ross

Neighbourhood Contacts

Ashfield: Pam Ledden 9797 9803

Bondi: Peggy Hewett 9398 2428

Lane Cove: Nina Walton 9438 5540

Leichhardt: Jan Monson 9692 9400

Manly: Christina Beaumont 9949 8516

Mosman: Evie Dunlop 9969 4929

Pymble: Ros Gordon 9449 3115

South Sydney: Ernes Solari 9698 3384

Sutherland: Barbara Burnham 9525 6198

Parramatta: Carmen Strudwicke 9635 3555

PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL ISOLATION

Who defines 'social isolation'?

In the April Newsletter, there was an ad asking older people in the inner-west who would like instruction in the use of the Internet to contact a certain phone number. I did, and spoke to a woman from the centre.

When I told her that I live in retirement units, she said that the grant was intended for 'socially isolated' people and I might not qualify, as residents in retirement villages are not perceived as socially isolated. The perception seems to be that we all have jolly times together! As the woman was visiting everyone who responded to the ad, we made a time for her to visit my retirement units and consider my suitability for the program.

When she arrived I handed the following jottings I made over the holiday period to show her what it's like to be ill over a long weekend. It is as close as I can describe the situation without indulging in any drama.

If you're going to be ill ...

Mum used to tell us, "If you feel you are going to be ill, do any washing and see that you have food in the house; then you can relax and be as ill as you can." In those days, I had two small children to look after; now there is only myself, but a self requiring more energy for its care. How to do these chores when sick but not sick enough for hospital is a problem increasing with age.

By the time you are nearing your 80th year, there are few family and friends popping in, especially if you live in self-care retirement units. Frail old people are understandably reluctant to expose themselves to any infection. So you isolate yourself.

Maundy Thursday, the day before Good Friday, I knew my sore throat was going to get worse. I get bread and a few packets of soup, so I do not starve. I have not made my bed nor washed any dishes. It's

important to keep the few dishes covered with water, otherwise they're an invitation to cockroaches. I shower and dress because it's one way of feeling better, even though "dress" is pants and a top. Someone calls and asks have I sent for a doctor. I haven't, it's not necessary. I feel terrible, but have no fever or cough.

I have sent emails to the family saying, "Grandma has a sore throat." My daughter, 100 kms away, sends one offering to come and get me in the car. I thank her, but don't encourage the children to drive at holiday time.

Good Friday A religious sister brings me a bag of buns. Well, that's sustenance for today and most of tomorrow. They are very good buns. Sister says, "God bless", and wishes me a happy Easter. An email tells me that a grandson aged twenty has had a mishap with fire-eating. His 48-year old mother is off to a gym to try a "workout". I hope they survive these bizarre activities. I wonder how our Meals on Wheels customers are faring over this five-day break.

Easter Sunday It's a wonderful day outside. I can see the sunlight on the trees, which keep my flat rather dark. It would be nice to go and sit on the glass verandah on the other side of the building. But that's the route taken by churchgoers. They will pass and say, "How are you?" not expecting any answer. Everyone knows I don't go to church, but there's no need to remind them of it on Easter Day. Anyhow, I'd better remain in the flat; someone might telephone.

Easter Monday The supermarket is open. I feel well enough to go and at least get some fresh bread.

Helen Monaghan

My Early Years

I was born in England 1934, second in a family of five. My parents kept themselves and their family away from the world. All people were strangers and not to be trusted. This isolation set the pattern for most of my life.

At school, I couldn't make friends however hard I tried. Everyone else seemed to be playing together, but not with me. I kept on trying for years. I was very much affected by my aloneness.

I found one friend at High School, Jennifer. By then I was very introverted and felt that I lived in a separate and secret world. I was also known as the naughtiest girl in the school. The nuns in those days were strict, and shaming was one of their chief methods of control.

I was good at drawing and painting and left school at seventeen to go to Art School, where everyone was pretty oddball. I was very hampered by my unhappiness.

I met my husband there and for thirty years I lived in a marriage where I had no voice in any public sense. With our four children, we were regarded as a normal English family. I was still rebellious and introverted, though this was mostly kept under control.

In 1982, I entered a personal development course and learned very painfully how early isolation had shaped my personality and how it had me living most of my life in despair.

At this point I left my husband. I had never earned money before nor faced the world that I still feared. Currently, I am overcoming my isolation and finding a world of people, some of them friendly after all!

Christina Beaumont

Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre News

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHOICES

Would you like to rediscover some skills? Would you like to learn new skills? Would you like to join a small group of other older women one day a week for 8 weeks to do this together?

Opportunities and Choices is a free training program, conducted in Bankstown by the Centre for Women's Health (Benevolent Society of NSW) and planned for February to March 2001. The program was last presented in Bankstown in 1999.

Some of the topics are, self esteem, group skills, anger management, conflict resolution and assertiveness.

To find out more, come to an information session on Monday, 30 October at the Police and Community Youth Centre on the Cnr of French and Meredith Streets Bankstown from 10.30am to 11.30am.

GREEK OWN

The Wellness Centre has established a partnership agreement with the Greek Older Women's Network aimed at providing support for Greek OWN to continue to expand their wellness program within their unique cultural group and for Greek OWN to become a part of the of the Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre.

Greek OWN women are enjoying exercising with Lorraine, our lovely Tai Chi teacher, at the Multi-Cultural Centre, as well as joining in other Wellness Centre activities.

The spokeswoman for Greek OWN, Chrissie Gotis Graham, has agreed to join the Project Management Team of the Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre. The Wellness Centre program is now available in Greek.

BOWWC PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT

This beautiful series of ten black and white photographs by Ella Dreyfus is aimed at promoting positive images of older women and promoting the BOWWC and the OWN Wellness philosophy. This project builds on the excellent series of photographs in "A Picture of Wellness".

There are two sets of ten large photographs - natural action shots. One set is framed and suitable for display in public buildings in Bankstown and beyond. The other set of ten photographs is laminated and suitable for a travelling exhibition or for display at conferences, meetings etc.

For more information on Bankstown Wellness activities, please contact Judy Laws, Project Worker, phone 9708 2245.

HOW IMPORTANT IS 'TRUTH'?

Our Group once again enjoyed a lively discussion on a very challenging topic: How important is Truth? The dictionary defines 'truth' as 'reality', 'accurate' and 'exact'. We discussed words for not quite telling the truth such as fudging, telling a furry and white lies.

While some participants expressed a feeling that it is important to be truthful at all times, others queried whether there are degrees of truth. For instance, if we were asked direct questions, truthfulness might depend on the questions asked. We all agreed that many people are careless with the truth e.g. politicians.

Often we are punished for being truthful, especially by the media. For instance, the recent debacle around the honesty of Tracy Holmes and Stan Grant in telling the truth about their relationship. We also thought that legal profession is given to stretching the truth if it suits their purposes.

Participants were in general agreement that it is easier to live in a relationship if one tells the truth; the medical profession to-day is more truthful than it once was; we do not welcome truthful comments about our personal choices e.g. our clothes or hair cut; and it is important to be truthful when we say "I love you".

**Our next meeting will be on Monday
16th October, 2000 at 10.30 am.**

The topic will be:

**"INDEPENDENCE OR DEPENDENCE - WHAT
DO WE WANT IN OUR LATER YEARS?"**

Joan Hook

Seeking Your Support

The Aboriginal Support Circle (ASC) has received a generous contribution of \$1300 from the SEARCH Foundation to publish the diverse personal stories of thirty Aboriginal women who have been guest speakers at ASC meetings over the past seven years. These stories are an important part of Australia's history and have, in the main, never been recorded.

Unfortunately, the full cost of funding this oral history project and publishing a book, In My OWN Voice: Untold Stories of Aboriginal Women, will be closer to \$3000.

**We are seeking your donations from supporters
of reconciliation to make up the shortfall.**

Please send your cheque or money order, made out to
Older Women's Network to:
Aboriginal Support Circle C/- OWN, 87 Lower Fort
Street, Millers Point 2000.

NINDIGULLY

The bar was filling up as we walked up from our Campervan site on the Moonie River in Outback Queensland to the Nindigully pub, the oldest licensed pub in Australia. It's a lovely old building circled by wooden verandahs with wooden hitching rails outside, telling of Cobb & Co times when 7,000 horses were on the road pulling the famous coaches. More recently, the film, "Paperback Hero" put Nindigully on the map.

Earlier on in the day, we had watched the pub owners' granddaughter exercising her horse. One foot on the rails, hats tilted over our eyes, warm sun on our backs, Doug and I talked horses with her father. She was thirteen years old, and born to ride. Horse and rider moved as one, rhythmic, graceful and strong.

Her grandmother was brushing her wet hair when we came into the pub at sundown; and grandfather was serving drinks behind the bar, his broad-brimmed hat firmly on his head. Isolated as they are in this town of seven people, they are still always busy, often working fourteen hours a day. Neighbours can be 40k away, but the pub is a meeting place, and a stopover for truckies. When a rodeo or special event is on, up to 1,000 people camp on the river, needing meals and drinks. "I get people- burn- out and sometimes go out and talk to the horses." She smiled. "I believe it is your birthday?" There was a chorus of "Happy Birthday" around the bar, and two young lads, broad-brimmed hats stuck to their heads (do they sleep in them?), check shirted, with their elastic-sided boots resting on the bar rail, turned and greeted me. "First drinks on me," said one. "Second's on me," said the other. "What will you have?" "Brandy and soda, thanks." The landlord looked shocked. "You can't have brandy, you're in Queensland!" "Oh, what do you suggest?" "Rum, of course." So rum it was.

The young ringers talked cattle - their love. Sheep? They looked scornful. Never! I was getting rather tired of this cattle talk, when a crowd of people came through the door. Mothers wheeling babies in prams, followed by all the kids, neighbours, relatives. It was Friday. Time for a night out after a busy day at the cotton gin or on the farm. They had come 40ks or more for a feed and a drink, and a yarn. I asked one woman about her life. "Well, it's hard work, and there's no money in cotton." The ringers chimed in - "There's no money in cattle," and the grumpy old truckie at the end of the bar grumbled, "No money in trucking. It's the f.....g Government!" We all nodded.

"Crack, crack!" The sound came from outside, sharp, clear, and there in the moonlight the young ringer gave a whip-cracking display that deserved Olympic billing. His slim back bent into the whip - side, front, back, overhead, the whip lashed into the air, echoing in the

cold, brilliant night. A small boy, steel rimmed spectacles shining in the moonlight, looked up at him pleadingly. "Can I have a go?" "Sure." Our young up and coming cattleman rent the air with "Crack, crack!" and "Crack, crack!" in quick succession. What a show!

As I walked to the camper through the bimplebox, coolabah and supplejack (pronounced "sooplejack") trees, I thought how lucky I was, at my age, to be able to enjoy marvellous nights like this in the Aussie Outback.

Joan Johns

Introducing the City of Sydney Historical Association

An association is being set up for local residents and the general public to explore the unique history of the city area. This is an exciting new project that aims to create a more accessible and inclusive community history.

Inaugural meeting

This meeting will feature City Historian, Shirley Fitzgerald, telling the story of "The Garden Palace: Fragments and Memories."

WHEN: Saturday, 14th October, 2000, at 2 pm.

WHERE: Abraham Mott Hall, Argyle St. Millers Point

Second Meeting:

"Places in our Hearts: War Memorials, Pilgrimage and Journeys of Remembrance" presented by historian, Bruce Scates.

WHEN: Saturday 11th November, 2000 at 2 pm.

WHERE: Abraham Mott Hall and then to the Garrison Church Military Museum in Lower Fort St.

Third Meeting:

Wayne Johnson, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, will be discussing "Christmas Past Revisited: What the Archaeological Evidence Reveals."

WHEN: Saturday, 9th December, 2000 at 2pm

WHERE: The Rocks Visitors Centre, 106 George St

If you would like to be on the mailing list, please phone Lynda Kelly on 9265 9782

HOME OF THE GNOMES

I have a vivid memory of a room in a Gloucestershire cottage, built in the 16th century and set amongst farmland, just off the main road from Gloucester to London, where the Roman legions used to march past.

The owner of the cottage was the mother-in-law of my niece, and she invited me to afternoon tea. She was a woman of tremendous energy and ambition who, at twenty-three, successfully operated her own boarding house in a nearby town, and was one of the first women in the district to gain her driver's licence. At eighty, when I met her, she was still working in her florist shop.

On the day I visited her, she greeted me warmly at the front gate, asking if I would like to see the garden. It was beautifully laid out, with a wishing well in the centre, and to the side, a wooden structure which sheltered delicate plants. I asked the names of these, but soon forgot when I noticed gnomes peeping from every part of the garden. The owner told me there were ninety-nine altogether, and at the beginning of each winter, each gnome was brought inside and repainted.

This information should have warned me as to what lay ahead. Nevertheless, I walked into the house with a sense of anticipation. Looking around the kitchen, I felt I was in a museum; it was filled with ancient farm implements, a scythe hung on the wall with sets of rusty keys close by. I walked up two steps into the main room, and I was in Aladdin's cave. Hundreds of objects filled all spaces, even hanging from the wide black beams which dominated the room.

In her broad Gloucestershire accent, the lady told me where each item had been bought - miniature dolls, teddy bears, kitsch souvenirs, bric-a-brac, decorated plates and mugs, all from her travels in Spain, France Morocco, and different counties of the UK.

There was a cord to pull to make a clown laugh, a wind up screeching parrot, and a cheeky monk who responded in a lewd way when a button was pressed.

Bawdiness mixed with a childlike love of collecting gave this room a character I'll never forget.

Joan Hook

What's important?

At the recent State conference, I felt that we needed to remind ourselves of our vision of where OWN is going. In this era of enormous changes, most status comes from being in the paid workforce. Older women are generally not in paid employment and are, in the main, volunteers (in the family, as carers and also in the community.) We are almost always seen as statistics or a drain on the State whether we are pensioners or superannuates. We are not usually big taxpayers, we are consumers of little account, but we are also relatively important to politicians because of our numbers.

What rights do older women have when it comes to a personal crisis in health care? When I had a fall recently (resulting in a fracture) and had to seek medical attention, the ambulance man advised me against going to hospital, saying that I would just have to sit there all day in misery. I assumed he meant that resources were so poor in the emergency section of the hospital that I would be better off seeing my GP. This reminded me of the depression era when hospital care was extremely primitive for the poor.

A medical doctor recently wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that "it may be necessary to step out of the expectations of our culture. We may need to seek other values and beliefs." He suggested that by focussing on consumerism and entertainment culture, we fail to see what is happening to our health system. He said that politicians function largely as PR for the dominant culture which puts a high value on how much a person is worth in dollar terms.

We have a right to free health services. It comforts me that OWN belongs to the body of opinion that opts for a humane society for womankind, and works in a forward way for the kind of values inherent in a caring society.

The move to construct a peak body representing members of NSW OWN is a step in the right direction in our work for a more populous body of membership with hopefully greater influence. Importantly, older women are a significant number of voters, deserving the attention of our elected representatives.

Implicit in OWN's stated aim - to promote the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women - is that older women are not expendable just because they are old!

Enid Harrison

Better than Sex?

It's last summer and I'm on McMasters Beach on the Central Coast. The beautiful people are lazing in near nakedness by the beautiful sea. Dazzling blue sky above, golden sands beneath, dotted by multi-coloured umbrellas in kaleidoscopic disarray.

Beyond that, the breakers. Those farthest out are gathering strength for the breathless journey ahead. They roll slowly at first, then faster ... and faster still ... until at exactly the right moment they are leapt upon by the strongest swimmers, who ride them to the welcoming shore. Heads down, feet thrashing, they shoot past lesser mortals. Note how skilfully they avoid crashing into the mass of leaping bodies ... until the wave loses its impetus, and the swimmers return to find another big one.

The diminishing waves distribute themselves among the crowd, finally to join the laughing children at the water's edge in a merry soap-sudsy finale.

We finish our lazy, ritual oiling, my friends and I. We jam in the ear plugs, pull on the caps, and into the surf we go to join the middle throng; there to grab wave after wave, throwing ourselves in glorious abandon in the thrashing foaming water. Can there be anything in the whole world as exhilarating as this? Better than wine ... better than sex ... better than anything!

But there's an end to all things; it's time for me to get out. I head for the shore; I catch a friendly wave. Or so I thought. But now I'm being dumped, rolled and tossed, and dumped again. And again. Over and over, I'm tumbled into the sand. I try and try to get up ... I can't. I can't get up! I crawl on hands and knees ... but still the blasted waves keep knocking me over!

At last I remember the signal. Feebly I raise my feeble arm, and feebly I call ... Help! Help! But the wind grabs my feeble words and tosses them away. Help!

And then ... divine deliverance! A hand is grabbing me. I'm being hauled ashore by a lifesaver! Right at the water's edge! He hardly got his feet wet. I babble my thanks. I can't stop talking. Gratitude is swamping me! I'm high on Rescue! I long to throw my arms around him ... but I can't, I'm too wet ... and he's too dry! Wish I'd kissed him. He was so young ... and oh so beautiful.

I wonder if he told his grandmother that he rescued this poor old dodderer who couldn't get out of the water at the water's edge?

Dorothy Cox

Thank You

I would like to thank all those wonderful people who visited, phoned, sent cards, flowers and messages of support when I was in hospital and rehabilitation care after my knee replacement. It meant so much to me and, I'm sure, helped in the healing process.

I am now at home and raring to go, but of course still tied by the leg. Still I'm getting there. Next time we meet I hope to receive you all at the stage door. Again, many thanks. Break a leg.

Peg Hewett

Awareness Festival Against Poverty & Violence

A diverse Committee of Women is organising an **Awareness Festival Against Poverty and Violence** in support of the World March of Women, a global movement demanding an end to women's poverty and violence against women.

The Festival will be held at the
MANLY CORSO
Saturday, 7th October, 2000
from 11 am to 4 pm

The Festival will be opened by the Deputy Mayor of Manly, Julie Hegarty.

Quentin Bryce, Dean of Women's College, Sydney University, and Mina Singh Batra, accredited delegate at the UN General

Assembly, will be guest speakers.

Folkdancing – Choirs
Instrumentalists – Bands
and much more ...

MY BRASS BAND ADVENTURE

I have always been a very impressionable person. For instance, when I saw a movie I would come home with the unshakeable conviction that I could - in my adult years- achieve star status as a movie star, ballerina, skater, you name it I was going to be just that.

Then along came a movie titled "Genevieve" starring Kenneth Moore and Kay Kendall. Kay in this movie played a sensational trumpet solo with the band and I was hooked. My lifetime ambition then was to play a brass instrument.

Marriage, children etc. came along and all these childhood ambitions were buried till that fateful day when some misguided individual left a flyer in my letterbox. 'PLAYERS WANTED FOR LOCAL BRASS BAND'. I thought this is it - fame is just around the corner.

Full of confidence I rolled up to the first band practice. Yes! I was an excellent sight reader - No Problem! I was duly selected to play the trombone. I was provided with a Trombone, plus case, and manuscripts for quite a few stirring march classics. The bandmaster suggested that we should spend the intervening week perfecting the chromatic scale.

He might well have said "Here is your mountain climbing kit. Next Monday we will be climbing Mount Everest."

In a very short space of time I discovered that I didn't have the right "lips", I had neighbours who were not appreciative of my "melodic" efforts and, most importantly, my ears hurt.

Obviously I was doing something wrong, as a lad of ten years of age came back to the next meeting with his cornet and played a beautiful chromatic scale. No matter how hard I tried I could not produce more than two lines of Barcarolle. Those who know me well will believe that I really tried hard to master this instrument but finally decided to quit while I still had my hearing.

Unfortunately, once again fate had stepped in and I discovered that the band, including you-know-who, was to play in the Bicentennial Parade in our area. I had the uniform, the trombone and my protests were to no avail.

The great day finally dawned and my grand-children were thrilled to see Nanna marching with the band, little realising what a great piece of mime was being performed. Loud shouts of "Good on you Nanna" followed the band till we reached our destination. I must say that by this time I almost believed that I was actually playing.

Needless to say, at the end of the day, trombone, uniform, music, etc. were returned and I said farewell to my dreams of becoming a brass instrument virtuoso.

I do hope there isn't a circus out there looking for a lion tamer!

Ann Cunnyghame

Mind's Eye

The fugitive who lurks around the corner of thought,
Comes in dreams,
Admonishes and explains the unexplainable.
Moves in a dark cave.
Elusive as motes in a sunbeam
The child strives to catch.
How clear yet troubling
Is the dialogue with the dead.
The dead, who shaped our past.,
Come in the early hours to claim attention.
Remote, irreconcilable,
Twitching at the edge of conscience.
Arcane explorers
Bringing knowledge, like a gift
Too heavy for acceptance.
That cannot be placed in a corner
But takes up the whole house.
The house is not yet ready.
Windows need cleaning
The dust of ages must be laid.
The dead retreat.
Questions, unanswered
Hang in the air.
The stranded soul turns in sleep
Curled by the edges of a new mourning.

Judith Mustard

SOUP KITCHEN

A few weeks ago the PM announced his probable retirement after he had won the next election. He had the nerve to add that he may engage in charitable work! Well - he could have plenty of clients among his favourites; the battlers, middle Australia, the share owning (Telstra) mums and dads. He could start a soup kitchen north of the harbour - we already have them in the inner west.

He could advertise thus:

All battlers of North Sydney,
Come along, grow old with me,
My soup is free of GST.

Helen Monaghan

THE HOUSE IN JUBILEE LANE

My family lived on a dairy farm outside Willowdale, a town as boring to restless youth as any other north coast town.

The first time I stayed away from home by myself, I was nearly eight. It was at my Auntie Leethie's house in Jubilee Lane, West Willowdale, during Christmas school holidays. She was my father's sister, renowned for being skittish in her youth. Her name was actually Alethea, prettier than Leethie.

Jubilee Lane was a skinny, dusty thing, meandering to the showground. Aunt Leethie's small weatherboard cottage had a tiny front verandah, hunched over the lane like a nosy parker peering at the passing parade. The parade wasn't much - the odd horse and sulky, a housewife laden with groceries, or kids whooping along on bikes.

There was a small bedroom which I shared with Auntie, a tiny parlour, and dark little kitchen. Part of the back verandah was screened as a sleepout for her teenaged son, then absent. There was an outside laundry with tubs, a copper heated by wood, and a tin bath filled with buckets of hot water from the copper.

The backyard seemed large in proportion to the house. There was a huge unused well, covered with a wooden frame, a rusty old pump and an outdoors dunny, covered with passion-fruit vines.

We often visited her two married daughters, one in Central Willowdale, the other in West Willowdale, not far from Jubilee Lane. I liked the West Willowdale daughter, Marge, the best.

Marge had a cut glass bowl of wax fruit on a lace doily on her dining table. I'd never seen wax fruit, and thought it the very height of sophisticated living, as was the big, plump, shiny, satin bedspread on the double bed.

It was a long walk to the other daughter, Winifred. Her front verandah was completely covered with lattice. It was a dark, gloomy house and Winifred, who had beautiful golden hair, did not like kids much. She had one spoilt son, who was away, and she'd scoot me out the back to play in the dreary backyard. I was bored stiff. The only interesting item in her house was a painting of a golden haired woman kissing a soldier in uniform goodbye, or hallo, I thought the woman was Winifred, but as her husband looked old and ugly, unlike the handsome soldier, the picture was confusing.

Aunt Leethie had a favourite dish, tripe and onions, which I loathed. For some reason, she cooked it on the primus

stove instead of the fuel stove. Whenever I heard the primus pumped, I'd sneak in with dread in my tummy. I was in for the loathed tripe. I had to eat all my food at Auntie's. On tripe days, I longed to be home. My mother never made us eat anything we didn't like. We could even eat weet-bix for tea if we wished.

Auntie bandaged my scraped knees so tightly I walked like a peg-legged pirate. No Band-aids then. The bandage stayed on till my wound started to itch, a sign of healing to Auntie, and she'd yank it off. Ouch! My mother just bathed our wounds in Condy's Crystals, and let us do our own artistic bandaging,

I used to peep from under the covers at Auntie getting ready for Holy Communion on Sundays. She'd powder her face from a cut-glass bowl and dot her apple-like cheeks with rouge. She'd sling on a long string of crystal beads, or shiny black ones, and a fox fur around her shoulders. The tiny head with its sharp little glass eyes stared menacingly at me. She never went out without a straw hat decorated with flowers and veiling, gloves and handbag.

She seemed to be at church for ages. She'd kiss me on her return, and I wondered at her winey breath, not knowing it was communion wine. On Sundays she'd sing hymns all morning. Her favourite was, "Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?" To me, a farm child, this song was macabre, and very unhygienic. We did not have any lambs, but I'd seen pictures of the dear fluffy little things gambolling in paddocks. Why would anyone want to wash in their blood?

Auntie had rimless spectacles which I found fascinating. I'd only seen specs with frames. I examined them too closely and broke them. Auntie called me "Meddlesome Mattie", but she wasn't as cross as my mother would have been.

Sometimes she sent me over the road with a message for Mrs Brest. I thought it an embarrassing name, even at that young age. Mrs Brest had a horrid pet magpie, a huge overfed thing, which waited for the front gate to click. It swooped from a tree and pecked my skinny ankles all the way to the front door. Why I didn't arm myself with a small branch I don't know. Perhaps I thought Mrs Brest would scold me for hurting her pet...

Much as I loved Aunt Leethie, I was glad when my father came in the sulky to take me home. I was escaping the tripe and onions at last. As usual he'd filled the sulky with pumpkins, other veges and fruit for Leethie, his favourite sister. Of all his sisters she was the kindest to his large, growing family.

Helen McMaugh

MEMORIES OF WORLD WAR I

As we left the small wood, my younger sister and I were horrified to see a Zeppelin hovering over us. Were bombs to be dropped? Hurriedly we pulled each other down under bush and waited in terror - but the menacing silver cigar moved on to drop its deadly weapon on a factory. Zeppelins were not of the same intensity as the Luftwaffe of the second World War, but nevertheless left a trail of danger. Mother was constantly moving house to get away from the War's effects - but even in the country it found one out, and when my third sister was born at home, bombs were dropped in a field nearby!

Disasters came thick and fast even in those days, and I was three years old when I heard the word "Titanic".

Occasionally when we were in London, Dad would have a box at the Drury Lane Theatre, and we saw "Peter Pan" three times with the leading female actresses as Peter Pan.

The swirling fog seemed to eclipse the sound of traffic, with only the clop-clop of horses' hoofs. Mother and I found the entrance to the rooms which Auntie Beth occupied under Westminster Precinct. Descending the narrow stairs, we could hear the voices of young women below. The room we came into was spacious, with a high ceiling. Seated around the central table were twelve young women sewing, embroidering, knitting, and occasionally tapping on an early model typewriter. At the head was Auntie Beth, very upright, reading aloud from the Bible. Whether the girls listened raptly, I am not certain. These were her Fallen Women, whom she collected from the streets. It hasn't changed much today; we would call them prostitutes, or pros. Their significance in Society hasn't altered.

To escape the war and the 'flu epidemic, Mother moved house frequently, and in one house in Finchley, rats stood on their hind legs in the back garden - no wonder there was a 'flu epidemic.

My most abiding memory of this time was when bands of German prisoners-of-war passed through our back lane. One day I went out to see them pass. One of the prisoners stepped out of line, and came over and patted me on the head. Almost immediately, our nurse, Nurse Oberon, came pelting out, and screamed, "Don't touch her, you dirty German." I will not forget the hurt that the man felt, his eyes brimming with tears.

What has changed today?

Barbara Storey

SOMETHING IN THE AIR

Theme Song: "There's a spirit I can't explain
The line's closed
But I still hear the train."

'The spirit' is on ABC TV at 6.30pm, Monday to Thursday. What attracts me to this series is the very good characterisation, and, more importantly, it deals with aspects of reality affecting many rural Australians.

The scriptwriters and actors have developed characters based on typical structures of townships - the general store, the radio station, the pub, and farms. The scenic shots are lovely. The plot allows that the sheep station is no longer, and the farmer is now a canola producer. It is fairly easy to guess what will happen when the local farmers shift to canola production and when they invest their savings in an overseas-based corporation to take their produce. The elements of social reality introduced into the context illustrate aware and competent scriptwriters.

The character development is good too, with 'Tom Dooley', an escapee from city commercial radio as a catalyst. The other male characters, the local politician, the priest, the pub owner, are a little too folksy to be true. But the lovable storekeeper Mon, in her crisp 'pinnies', her wise cynicism and her generosity (how could she ever make a profit?) is a star for us older women. Spunky little Meagan of the radio station, courageously facing problems of younger women, is also a winner.

Now back to reality. Can townies write about the fallout from globalisation? Can we depict what is happening about what we term 'the sticks', 'the boondocks', 'beyond the black stump'? Members of OWN in our rural groups could tell us how they are faring - the primary producers, the support systems (the ones which still operate, that is), the youth, the indigenous people, and especially older women.

In the meantime, tune in to "Something in the Air". At least it is Australian!

Enid Harrison

EVERY WOMAN SHOULD HAVE...

One old love she can imagine going back to ... and one who reminds her how far she has come..
Enough money within her control to move out and rent a place of her own even if she never wants to and needs to...
Something perfect to wear if the employer or date of her dreams wants to see her in an hour
A youth she's content to leave behind...
A past juicy enough that she's looking forward to retelling it in her old age...
The realization that she is actually going to have an old age and some money set aside to fund it..
A set of screwdrivers, a cordless drill, and a black lace bra...
One friend who always makes her laugh ... and one who lets her cry...
A good piece of furniture not previously owned by anyone else in her family...
Eight matching plates, wineglasses with stems, and a recipe for a meal that will make her guests feel honoured...
A resume that is not even slightest bit padded...
A feeling of control over her destiny...

EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW...

How to fall in love without losing herself...
How to quit a job, break up with a lover, and confront a friend without ruining the friendship...
When to try harder ... and when to walk away...
How to have a good time at a party she'd never choose to attend...
How to ask for what she wants in a way that makes it most likely she'll get it...
That she can't change the length of her calves, the width of her hips, or the nature of her parents...
That her childhood may not have been perfect ... but its over...
What she would and wouldn't do for love or more...
How to live alone ... even if she doesn't like it...
Whom she can trust, whom she can't, and why she shouldn't take it personally...
Where to go ...be it to her best friend's kitchen table or a charming inn in the woods...when her soul needs soothing...
What she can and can't accomplish in a day... a month ... and a year...
But if nothing else ... may you always travel with hope and kindness in your life.

Off the Internet

notice

Jessie Street Library

'Tapestry'

A Social Document of Women's Stories

Stories of Australian Women in the Twentieth Century. Acknowledge your mother, your grandmother, your sister, your daughter, your women friends – or tell your own story – and have the stories archived for future generations in the Jessie Street National Women's Library.

The collection of stories will continue until 2001, the centenary of Federation. Contributions should be original and not previously published and be approximately 1000 words.

Please phone 9265 9486 for more details and a Registration Form.

OLDER WOMEN SPEAK UP –

VIOLENCE IN THE HOME

You are invited to a seminar on violence against older women in the home, under the auspices of the YWCA.

Older women are empowered by telling their own stories. Come and have you say.

Morning tea and lunch provided

**10 - 12.30, Wednesday, 25 October, 2000
YWCA, c/r Wentworth Avenue &
Liverpool Street, Sydney.
second floor**

Please RSVP by October 19 on 9523 9558

WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

After considerable conceptualising, researching, categorising, compiling, designing (ie finding, sorting and keying in etc), the National Women's Media Centre's web page now has a workable RESOURCE section at

<http://216.92.140.78/Action/Resources/resourceslist.htm>

Try it out, Helen Leonard

Pain Research

Would you like to help increase our knowledge of pain and analgesia?

Postmenopausal women are needed for a clinical trial testing analgesic drugs. This study requires you to have a blood sample, a medical examination, take the study medication and receive brief pain stimuli at intervals over 5 hours. Remuneration for time and travel expenses is available.

If you are a healthy postmenopausal women, have no aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug allergies, and are interested in my research, please phone me on 9385-3810 (bh) or email b.giles@notes.med.unsw.edu.au

If you have any questions regarding this research please feel free to contact me: Belinda Giles, School of Physiology and Pharmacology, University of New South Wales.

board

OLDER PEOPLE & TECHNOLOGY

The focus of the 2000 Premier's Forum on Ageing, which will be held on November 8 this year, is Seniors and Technology.

A questionnaire has been developed to find out how older people feel about/relate to information technology.

The questionnaires have to be completed and returned by mid September.

If you would like to fill out a questionnaire, please call in to the OWN office between 10am and 2 pm from September 3

OR

Phone Kim Chard at Ageing and Disability Department on 9273 6611 and ask to have one sent out to you.

OSTEOPOROSIS STUDY

Could you be at risk of osteoporosis?

We are looking for women aged 65 to 80 years not previously diagnosed with osteoporosis to participate in a one-year study.

Women agreeing to take part will have a bone density measurement to determine their risk of osteoporosis. Those with low bone density will then be invited to participate in the study.

Participants will receive a medication that may help reduce bone loss. There will be no cost involved.

For more information, please contact
Study coordinator Elizabeth Ball
Telephone 9295 8255
Garvan Institute of Medical Research
384 Victoria Street, Darlinghurst 2010

Depression Information Night for Women

Learn how to start living life more fully. Learn about the best of alternative therapies from naturopathy to counselling to Chinese herbs and creative outlets; western medication and when it's used. Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre, 55 Thornley Street, Leichhardt on September 5 from 7 to 9pm.
Bookings: 9560 3011

Understanding Abuse of Older People

Susan Koch at the School of Nursing at La Trobe University has been involved in a research project linking abuse of older people and dementia. She is interested in talking to people about this issue, and can be contacted on 9479 2898 or email s.koch@latrobe.edu.au.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE OLDER WOMEN'S NETWORK IS OPEN TO ALL OLDER WOMEN.

Annual fees:

Membership, including Newsletter.....\$20.00

Newsletter only (for Gov't Depts. institutions and organisations)\$25.00

Send your cheque, name, address and phone number to:
Older Women's Network, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000

Tel: (02) 9247 7046 Fax: (02) 9247 4202 email: ownnsw@zip.com.au
Web site: <http://www.zip.com.au/~ownnsw>