

Big changes and enticing opportunities...

The invitation to explore what a Sydney OWN might look like was met with a lively response from twenty-two members who met at Lower Fort Street on Wednesday, 18 April.

Pam Ledden, on behalf of the OWN NSW Interim Management Team, provided us with a catch-up on how far they have come in their planning for the new peak organisation – see Pam's latest report below.

We drew up a flow chart of what present responsibilities would transfer to OWN NSW and began discussing the process of establishing a Sydney OWN, including who might take part in setting it up and who might be willing to keep it going.

Plenty of questions and concerns were aired and, from the ensuing energetic discussion, it became clear that members want Sydney OWN to play a significant role in our social, intellectual and political wellbeing.

We explored the possibility of a wellness centre becoming a project of the new Sydney OWN. This would mean building on existing wellness activities which, it was felt, could only add to Sydney OWN's prestige locally. The critical question though, is how do we manage more wellness activities as well as being involved in guiding our new group into the future and also being an active member of OWN NSW?

In a context of discussing whether there is sufficient 'woman power' to ensure the future of Sydney OWN, a wellness project and our obligations to OWN NSW, we identified the needs and responsibilities of Sydney OWN. These will include de-incorporation or re-incorporation and a revamped constitution, insurance, affiliation fees, funding, responsibilities to and liaison with OWN NSW, activity program planning and review, premises, staff and use of equipment.

Eleven women agreed to form a Sydney OWN Interim Working Committee: Jan Monson, Merle Highet, Yetty Windt, Joyce Chapman, Peggy Hewett, Louise Anike, Beryl Winter, Joan Hook, Judith Mustard, Pamela Sharpe and Joy Ross.

The Committee's first meeting will be on Monday, 7 May and our main discussion will centre on Sydney's responsibilities in terms of management and being a member of OWN NSW. Committee members will report to the next members' quarterly meeting on Wednesday May 16.

Joy Ross

OWN NSW Interim Management Team Report

Eight members attended the Interim Management Team meeting on 12 April: Pat Simpson (Illawarra), Hedi Roggeveen (Penrith), Enid Harrison (Woy Woy), Anne Warren (Nowra), Gwenda Fulford and Kath Oliver (Newcastle), Pam Ledden and Betty Murphy (Sydney).

Our agenda included two items of a practical nature and two items for general discussion.

The practicalities were insurance and funding. We are currently investigating the public liability requirements of OWN NSW and getting quotes from a couple of companies. No decision has yet been made as to which company we will go with, but it is a requirement of the Department of Fair Trading that we have it before we can become incorporated.

Funding is, of course, a very important practicality. It was decided that a delegation will meet as soon as possible with our funding body, the Ageing and Disabilities Department, (recently changed to the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care) to discuss the issue of redirecting the grant money from OWN Inc. to OWN NSW.

The first of the general discussions was about membership and the need for publicity and action to encourage more women to join OWN groups. We agreed that increasing membership will need to be a high priority for the new organisation once it is up and running later this year.

Secondly, in a context of the Review and Planning Sessions (RAPS) that OWN Inc. has just completed, we talked about the structure, coordination and management of an organisation like OWN. We decided to set aside a specific time to discuss these issues as they will have significant implications for the future management of OWN NSW and Sydney OWN. Members of NSW groups are invited to attend. The meeting will be held at 87 Lower Fort Street on Wednesday, 23 May at 10.30am. A sandwich lunch will be provided, so please phone the office and let us know if you are coming.

Pam Ledden

NB If you are unclear or don't have enough information about the separation of OWN Inc. into OWN NSW and Sydney OWN, please contact me on 9247 7046 or 9797 9803 and I'll be happy to answer your questions

Coordinators' Report

After the hurly-burly of March, April has been relatively quiet although our calendar tells us that the activities groups are bubbling away; the newsletter team meets often and intensely; the Theatre Group rehearses and performs at a great rate and we've all had an Easter break!

At the special lunch on March 28 (too late to get in the last Newsletter) volunteer workers were asked what they got out of volunteering and what keeps them coming back week after week (sometimes day after day!). Many replied that they were attracted to volunteering at OWN because of our focus on social justice and because we are managed and run by volunteers and they are "not treated as charity cases!" The conversation was so fruitful that we have decided on a regular coffee and cake morning tea to talk about our volunteer work and to involve new members. There is also a plan afoot (see page 5 'Getting Involved') to offer training to those who would like to volunteer and learn specific tasks.

As a continuation of our Planning and Review Session (RAPS), the Working Committee has recognised the need to discuss further the issues of coordination and management of OWN and OWN NSW. We need to write a planning document which will be the focus of our activities in the coming months (and years?). The meeting is on Wednesday, 23 May at 10.30am, 87 Lower Fort Street, for all those who have attended RAPS meetings so far.

Like most community-based organisations, OWN has accumulated an enormous amount of material that will be incredibly useful to the woman (or women) who eventually offers to write our history! Much of our archival material is now at the Jessie Street library where it was received with much gratitude and an assurance that it will be well looked after.

Pam Ledden, Joy Ross, Renate Watkinson and Louise Anike.

Advocacy

The Transport Group met on April 11 and is reported on by Ros Gordon. The Housing Group did not meet in April as a lot of energy has been going into writing a funding submission to the Casino Community Benefit Fund for a research project to investigate the causes of homelessness among older women and their needs for safety and support. Ros Gordon has played a major part in getting the submission prepared on time and Sam Smart has provided pertinent suggestions and useful criticism. Thank you both very much.

I must apologise to all those who answered the questionnaire about advocacy and who have not yet been contacted. I imagined the establishment of the advocacy groups would proceed at a faster rate than it has, and it hasn't. I realise there is much more work to be done than I thought and it has meant that some areas have not yet been tackled, and it is mainly the training area. Please be assured that you a very much on my mind and I hope in the next half of the year to be able to focus on this issue.

Pam Ledden

Ros Gordon

Transport Group

At our April meeting, Jacqui Graham reported on St George region transport planning group's achievements. She is investigating how OWN might contribute, possibly in support of a transport development officer for the region.

The Transport Group resolved to follow up, in this newsletter, its April correspondence to the NSW Minister for Transport, Mr Scully, expressing our concern that the Public Transport Advisory Council – the official body whose "primary aim is to represent the interests of public transport users" – does not appear to have met for some time.

Most older women are dependent on public transport and we need a system responsive to users' needs. (The NSW Platform for Action from the International Year of Older

Persons says "having access to appropriate and affordable transport is absolutely fundamental to the independence and quality of life of older people." In Queensland, this aim is officially summed up as "affordable transport for all, for life.")

Without an effective official user body, there is no appropriate channel for essential feedback to government on the performance of our public transport. To date we have only received an acknowledgement of our letter from the Minister.

Hedi reported on key issues from the recent WESROC transport meeting, including the value transport development officers can add, improving integration of transport modes and the importance of considering roads and transport budgets together.

We continue to receive letters from OWN members expressing a range of views on our suggestion that the Pensioner Excursion Ticket should be made more equitable by extending it throughout NSW to private bus services and increasing the fare to counter this cost. We will report more fully on this shortly.

Spring Cleaning in July!

In July, when the weather is a little cooler and everybody is feeling energetic, I am planning a working bee to clean up both 87 and 75. So, those of you who are not hoarders and who love throwing things out start exercising and toning up now! I would like at least one member of all the groups who use the two buildings to be there to identify what is precious and what is not.

The painting group has got a head-start and has already spent half a day making a huge difference to the top room at 75. Thank you Merle and Marcia. The Health Groups are also making inroads on their vast accumulation of material and we have reserved space at 87 for the documents they decide they must keep. See you in July!

Pam Ledden

The Nunnery' won me 2nd prize in the non-fiction section of the "Words on Woollahra" Writing Competition 2001, held in Woollahra during Seniors Week. The prize was \$100 worth of books at Lesley McKay's Bookshops. I'm sure that the encouragement I have received at OWN's Creative Writing Group, and the publication of my work in the Newsletter, gave me the confidence to enter the competition. Helen McMaugh

THE NUNNERY

In the 1960's, Gladys Gill was one of a dying breed, the landlady. My friend Betty and I rented rooms in her residential in Wellington Street, Woollahra. We called it 'The Nunnery' because Gladys only accepted women residents.

Gladys, a widow in her eighties, had snowy hair piled high, Edwardian style. She wore long Granny print dresses, with frosty white lace at the throat fastened by a glittering brooch. Her heart was as frosty as the lace, and as hard as the jewels in her brooch.

The residential was a handsome, white two-storey building, with a flower garden in front and a large back-yard. Gladys occupied a downstairs flat on the front right hand side of the building where she watched her residents' comings and goings. Betty had the opposite front room and I was at the back of the building downstairs.

The main entrance hall, lit dimly by 40-watt bulbs, always had the deathly hush of a dentist's waiting room. The silence was sometimes broken by the tinkle of tea cups or sherry glasses behind closed doors as neighbours reminisced together about past lives, past loves and arthritis.

Gladys Gill's brooding, unseen presence discouraged noise, or any exuberance. The older residents said that she had a gentleman caller for many years but he died.

Every few years she took a sea trip, first class, to England. 'Going home', she said, even though Australian born.

The building was fair-rented, and Gladys let every available

space, mainly to pensioners. One elderly woman lived right beside the coke-fired water heater. Another pensioner lived in a leaky old garden tool shed converted to a small flat. Even the drafty conservatory served as a tiny bed-sitter. A thin wooden partition separated Betty's room from nousey Miss Casey, who also had a thin partition between her and the conservatory. Miss Casey spent a lot of time slyly listening to her two neighbours' activities.

Each bed-sitting room had a small electric stove on a pot-cupboard and a sink. We shared a communal fridge, a wall telephone, a bathroom and toilet. Gladys provided the toilet paper – newspaper squares tied with string.

Upstairs were some larger rooms, and a self-contained flat which a couple once rented, but the man quarrelled with Gladys, who then banned male residents.

There was a roster for the back-yard laundry, with a coin-fed gas copper, two tubs and some indoor clothes lines. It was wonderful to dry your clothes on the back-yard clothes lines but we could not use them on Sundays. Flapping laundry lowered the tone of the place.

The back garden was the 'parish pump' where residents chatted, away from the constraining atmosphere of the gloomy hall. Sometimes Betty and I lazed on the lawn on summer Sundays and listened to the ABC's radio play.

Gladys had cupboards in every nook and cranny stuffed with treasures. There were ornate vases, curtains, whistling kettles, old silver trays, saucepans, and

even the odd floral chamber pot. On the top of one cupboard were some old kerosene heaters, skinny black ones with a top vent.

My bed-sitter, probably a former kitchen, had a window too high to reach. I froze in winter as the wind moaned down the chimney of an old fuel stove in the corner. Radiators were banned and I had to buy a kerosene heater, the squat type with a flame guard and loathsome smell. A thin wall separated me from a grouchy woman for whom I had to keep my radio at a whisper.

Strangely, Gladys did not object to boyfriends visiting but she was known to give notice to women whose boyfriends stayed overnight. I think it gave her a vicarious thrill to observe their comings and goings through her thick lace curtains. During the day, visitors could exit via the back gate, but it was locked at sunset. I often used it to avoid Mrs. Gill's gimlet eyes.

I stayed at 'The Nunnery' for about five years because the rent was low and I was trying to recover financially after a London working holiday. At least Betty and I escaped each day to busy jobs and we felt sorry for the less mobile pensioners. Although Gladys provided much needed cheap rents, she resented the stay-at-home pensioners using water and electricity. In spite of Gladys' bad attitude, most of the pensioners stayed, because of the low rents, and because they perceived a move to a nursing home as a move to a more restrictive atmosphere than 'The Nunnery'.

Helen McMaugh



Letters



Bank fees

Dear Nancy Brown,

I do not think you are over-reacting to the charges at the Commonwealth Bank.

When I retired, I visited the major banks, as well as Colonial and St George. The best account I found was with Colonial. As long as I do not run a cheque account and keep a minimum balance of \$500, I do not pay any bank charges except FID.

Now that Colonial has been taken over by the CBA, I don't know what will happen to that account in the future.

However, I am lucky. In my suburb we are exploring the possibility of a Community bank in conjunction with Bendigo Bank. In fact, we are currently surveying our neighbourhood, and should know within 3-4 weeks if we will be able to go ahead – on current returns, it looks like a “YES”! But I also have an account with a Credit Union that has minimum charges, too.

My advice to anyone is to ask questions, and find out what options are open to you where you live. And then dump the CBA.

Cordially, Carole O'Brien

Postscript to “If only ...”

I really enjoyed Muriel Hortin's IF ONLY... I was particularly impressed by the concise way she explained the way John Howard hoodwinked the nation with the clever wording of the referendum.

He frightened (some of) us with the prospect of having a Head of State elected by Parliament, without drawing attention to the fact that at present we have a Governor General appointed by one man – the PRIME MINISTER!

If anything is indemocratic, that is!

Sheila Mason

Mischievous media coverage

Dear Professor O'Donoghue,

First of all, we want to say how sorry we are at what you must have been through in the days and weeks following publication of Andrew Bolt's interview with you. How frustrating and awful to see your words taken out of context and used against you; used to create further misunderstandings about the policies by which thousands of Aboriginal children were taken from their families.

We have been offended by this sensational and mischievous media coverage and its political reverberations, and disturbed by this evidence of another attempt to discredit the important work which has developed around the Bringing Them Home Report and the movement for reconciliation.

We appreciated, and learned from, the reasoned clarity of your press release dated 23rd February 2001. It is depressing that in the present climate there seems to be no room for public discussion of subtle variations in the experience of Aboriginal people taken from their families. However, this alerts us to the necessity to continue to press for an apology from the government and for full recognition of the legitimate claims of the stolen generations.

We send you our strong support and warm wishes for your well-being.

Meg Coulson
for the Aboriginal Support Circle

Thank you

To Josie and the Theatre Group – thank you so much for the nice things you said about me in your poem, Josie and thanks to all my friends in the Theatre Group for your friendship and caring, carrying my heavy gear, bringing me food and endless cups of tea and pushing me around in a wheelchair. I love you all.

Bernice Lynch

More from China

Brigid Sen has been in Changsha with her husband, teaching at Changsha University since last May.

Hello there Judith and others,

The semester and the year move rapidly on and it won't be long before we are thinking of packing our bags and booking flights, although there are noises about our staying on for one more term, i.e. till Christmas or just after. Still pie in the sky at present. I will keep you posted. I'm not even sure if we would want to take on another semester.

Spring has sprung, though not a lot warmer except for the occasional lovely sunny day, 25c last Wednesday for instance. The campus is looking very green; we've had magnolia blossom, now the yellow winter jasmine and the plum are flowering. Life is a round of buying vegies from farmers' stalls, noodles from a 'barrow lady', getting our shoes, umbrellas, backpack straps and sundry other things fixed on the spot by a very jolly man who is obviously dying to talk to us. Alas, my rudimentary 'Putonghua' is not up to it. He has everything he needs to mend with in a wooden box which also serves as his table. He has a quaint old-fashioned machine for sewing shoes or straps and the like. He is quite unflappable and very skilful. Life here is full of such small pleasures,

Hope all is well in the office, the latest newsletter has been a great read. Love to you workers for the cause!

Love, Brigid

What a giggle ...

Phone rings. 'Hello,' I say.
A muffled voice says 'Fisher and Paykel here'.

'Yes?'

is your fridge running?'

'Yes.'

'Well, you'd better go and catch it!'

Joan Johns

Getting Involved

The Older Women's Network is a self-help organisation managed and run by volunteers.

There are many different ways that members can be involved, from answering the office phone to being a member of the Working Committee. Every job, no matter how big or small, helps to keep older women and ageing on the agenda!

If you have some skills (even rusty ones!) and can offer some hours to help keep OWN's wheels turning, please get in touch. We are currently offering training in using the membership database with Ermes Solari, data entry of general information with Muriel Hortin or Val Brown, newsletter photocopying with Wilhelmina van Dorp, computer layout and design of the newsletter with The Team and computer word-processing with a number of different people.

Why not ring one of these regular volunteers on 9247 7046 and have a chat about what's involved and what *they* get out of it?

Dorothy Cora

Newsletter Team – Please Take a Bow

In my capacity as membership volunteer, I am privileged to read comments made when receiving renewals; attributed mainly to our Newsletter. "Keep up the good work", "I enjoy reading the Newsletter", "I look forward to it each month" and so on. Too many to be acknowledged personally but very much appreciated so keep them coming.

I too would like to add my congratulations to all those involved in the production and there are many. It takes good organisation and dedication to meet the monthly deadline from the first step until it reaches your mailbox.

The April issue had an extra four pages to cope with the many activities during March. Another great issue. Newsletter team – please take a bow.

Renewal payments: We no longer issue receipts for renewals. Payments are entered on the database and your financial position is always shown on the label of your Newsletter.

Ermes Solari

Not to be missed!

A free consumer-focussed conference 'Improving Health Services Through Consumer Participation' will be held on Wednesday, 16 May 2001 at the Swiss Grand Hotel, Bondi Beach.

The aim of the conference is to:

promote national awareness and uptake of consumer participation resources, tools and information, and

promote discussion and debate regarding the challenges and future national directions for involving consumers in improving the safety and quality of health services.

A conference dinner, which begins at 6.30 pm costs \$20. It will be followed by a dynamic discussion facilitated by Julie McCrossin.

Non-salaried consumers can apply for a \$50 payment to cover out-of-pocket expenses.

The conference itself is free but you must register by 4 May using the form available from the OWN office.

The federal Department of Health and Aged Care is conducting the conference in collaboration with a number of other organisations.

Pigpen

Column

In hospital recently for smashed ribs (no not a fist fight), I was forced into the role of observer. What amused me during this time was studying the hierarchies and the traditional stereotypical gender roles.

Along the corridor, arriving with pomp and ceremony, were the specialists in charge of the entrapped 'cases'. They proceeded as a phalanx with the Godhead leading, followed on one side by a head nurse, on the other by a young hospital doctor and sundry others, all leaning attentively for any pearls of wisdom. The patient was expected to remain silent. Anyone addressing God was greeted by a baleful glare from the Head nurse. But, I found if one persisted God gave a reply. The Head Nurse went over the file for Him, directing an even more savage glare at the younger ward nurse if directions were not followed.

Not to be outdone I addressed my questions directly to God, who was very genial, even when he told me I would be let out on the morrow. By the way, a night nurse told me that I was regarded as a very good patient, not at all recalcitrant!

Enid Harrison

Ridding the world of discrimination against the elderly!

Who would have thought that a mornings entertainment by a troop of Scottish pipers and dancers would trigger an energetic debate between a group of older women and his 'worshipful' the Lord Mayor?

The issue began around the moving of tables and chairs in and out of the storeroom in the Council's Community Centre. After struggling to bring them into the main hall, it soon became obvious that the furniture was far too heavy for older women to lug about, even with the use of transporting equipment so that after the event we left it all where it was. For this 'misdemeanour', we incurred the wrath of the centre staff and a fine of \$15.

We wrote to the Lord Mayor asking for leniency and were grateful to learn that, this time, the fine would be waived. However, in his letter the Lord Mayor suggested we get assistance to move the furniture next time. As our husbands and lovers are all as old or older than we are, we sought a clearer explanation of his suggestion. What if no assistance is available? Are we to be denied the use of the hall and other Council-owned halls carrying the same terms and conditions?

At this stage, we were all fired up to rid the world of discrimination against the elderly! We could see worldwide banner headlines praising these ageing dames from 'Down Under' for standing up for the rights of their sisters everywhere.

The Lord Mayor then suggested that we ask for a demonstration on how to move the tables and chairs without risk to life and limb. Ever a bunch of skeptics, we watched with smug, "We told you so" looks on our faces as two librarians showed us how, with minimum effort and almost at the touch of a fingertip, the tables could be placed on and off the trolleys. The movement of chairs required a little more dexterity, but was far from a backbreaking exercise.

Damn!! Our dream of becoming as famous as the nude calendar 'girls' from the English Women's Institute was crushed like biscuits in a food processor. Notoriety would pass us by this time. The Lord Mayor had won.

However, we did have a victory of sorts. To avoid this problem in future, and to prevent back or other injuries, not to mention litigation, staff at the Community Centre will give instructions to all new hirers of the big hall on moving the furniture with ease and safety. Hooray for us!

Margaret X

RELATIONSHIP DEBT

How to avoid it!

Relationship debt is where someone becomes involved in another person's loan or debt because of emotional attachment. In many cases, women are asked to sign a loan document as a co-borrower or guarantor. Some think that their signature is just a formality and sign because they feel pressure to support their partner or adult child. Always seek independent legal advice if you are not sure about the document that you are signing and talk it over with someone from outside the family. Ask yourself the following questions

What financial responsibilities am I taking on? What is the maximum amount that I might have to pay? If I do sign, what are the benefits to me? What could go wrong to stop the borrower making repayments? Can I afford to pay off the loan? Can I afford to take these risks?

Remember, if your relationship cannot cope with an open and honest discussion about money, then going into a loan can be fraught with danger. Phone 13 12 44 for a free booklet *Love and Loans*.

Living Outside Ourselves

Our two hours together in April were, as always, a stimulating exchange; good for our minds and enriching for the friendships that have developed around our monthly conversations.

We found the subject, "What did Dame Mary Gilmore mean by Learn to Live Outside Yourself", extremely interesting. We agreed that most older women now have more opportunities to live outside themselves than when Dame Mary wrote those words during her lifetime 1870-1962.

It is vital to keep active physically and mentally, to socialise and be interested in people. Yet it is also important to maintain a balance between our private lives and our external activities.

The subject for our next discussion group on Monday 21 May will be the "Impact of Multiculturalism on Australian Culture".

Joan Hook

A New OWN Editorial Policy?

A reader-author, who recently submitted a story to the editor of a Chinese publication, received this reply:

"We have read your manuscript with boundless delight. If we were to publish your paper it would be impossible to publish any other work of a lower standard. And as it is unthinkable that in the next thousand years we shall see its equal, we are, to our regret, compelled to return your divine composition and beg you a thousand times to overlook our short sight and timidity."

There were five girls and one boy in my family of origin – now there are four girls.
Until March this year when we spent a weekend together celebrating one of our
60th birthdays, we had not been under the same roof for thirty-nine years!
My sister Ruth, artist and writer, recorded our weekend.

Dorothy Cora

A Confluence of Colless Girls

Picture this.
A quintessential Colless girl conjunction.
Four country girls grown old and citified
Full of years and laughter pickled in tears.
A conclave of sisters shooting breakers
With sensible temerity.
Posing against the sun for a celluloid record of Colless legs
Impregnable – strong, long, bold.
Four brazen grins disregarding size and shape.
O grandma bodies.

A balcony, shared joy in the sunset
Food, wine, an avalanche of laughter.
'You did.'
'I didn't!'
'Was I there?'
And all the while
The silent silken web woven around the wounded one.
The gifts – a bundle of seeds pregnant with perfume
To be planted now and tended in the winter.
Belgian chocolates, spiced figs.
A Tuscan pathway with a cross on the crest of a hill.
Silent tears mingling and distilling in laughter
Like fine wine, birthed in darkness.

All these bind the broken hearted one,
Soften the raw wound,
Ease the monumental pain of rejection.

In the evening a foot massage,
The morning, breakfast loaded with grain and summer fruit
Scarlet peach faced parrots bossy for scraps.

Hovering – the fifth – the eldest. Absent.
A gentle presence fidgeting on the end of their awareness.

Serious discussion of the anomalies of the fourth age looming
A quadrille of heads nodding in consensus,
Infirmity and death,
Like distant and unwelcome guests acknowledged and prepared for
While strong Colless feet tap their bare soles happily beneath the table.

Time to go. Perhaps again? This time next year? No one is sure.
A plethora of kisses and goodbyes.
One become four again.
A confluence made possible by time, space and desire.
Unique.

The river of life resumes its passage to the sea
Enriched, encouraged, carrying within it
Something new.
Picture this.

ODE TO RENEE

Renee in her hospital bed
Laid low by her broken leg
Stopped a passing medico
"This leg" she said "has brought
me low
I need some quick get up and go
I'll lie down quietly to suit
If my handy lap-top will
compute
I'll spend my days without fret
Surfing on the internet.
I'll rid myself of great frustration
If I can stop technic starvation
If you write a paper or two
I'll proof-read the jolly thing for
you".
So there she lies in technic bliss
A small computer odalisque.

Judith Mustard

Moushka

Moushka plays in the heavenly
bamboo,
In blithe kittenhood
Lightly frisking,
Frolicking in abandon.
Chasing butterflies,
Pouncing on pebbles.
Her pretty face
Framed in feathery leaves.
In sudden change
She stretches out
Low to the ground.
The hunter has come
The memory of her kind
Looking for the kill.
The sinuous grace of her
stalking
Stirs the memory of wild things.
Soundlessly she treads the
ground
The rustling leaves her only
prey.
O little cat with two faces
How savage your beauty

Judith Mustard

SUPPORT KURADGI SANDON PARK

The banner with these words catches your eye as you reach the foot of the Bulli Pass coming south from Sydney down to the coast. Along the beach between Thirroul and Bulli, north of Sandon Point, you'll see the tents and Aboriginal flags of Kuradgi. The fire burns continuously and probably Guboo, Uncle Ted Thomas, is beside the fire and other younger people are around, keeping watch over this place. To one side a sacred area is marked out by stakes. Aboriginal remains have been found here, indicating a burial ground, and other artifacts have been found, much of this revealed after exceptionally high tides in 1998. Part of the purpose of Kuradgi is to achieve recognition of the Aboriginal significance of this site and the establishment of the area as a beautiful heritage park.

Only a temporary order is preventing the immediate development of the land according to a plan which comprises a main road linking Thirroul and Bulli east of the Prince's Highway/ Lawrence Hargreave Drive and a series of housing developments. This plan would plough through any possibility of further archeological exploration of the area, cut through a wetland area, encroach upon the coastal footpath and cycleway and ultimately threaten the future of the Kuradgi site itself. It is very important that the development is stopped and that the area should be designated for its Aboriginal significance and as a heritage park.

At least four or five members of OWN have visited Kuradgi to express our support, and we're keeping in contact with the campaign.

Meg Coulson

PS If you want to support the campaign to stop this development, write to Andrew Refshauge, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning G.P.O Box 3451, Sydney 1043 making the following points:

- There is a lack of adherence to due process (i.e. the proper way to do things).
- N.S.W coastal policy should be applied.
- Findings of commission of enquiry into the Illawarra Escarpment should be adhered to with no exceptions.



Identity

I am a non-Aboriginal enrolled in an Advanced Diploma of Applied Aboriginal Studies at Tranby Aboriginal College. The course provides a teaching/learning environment that respects and nurtures culturally appropriate ways of sharing and gaining knowledge – holistically, intuitively, creatively, spiritually and always respectfully. Courses are offered for the indigenous and non-indigenous communities.

My experience as a first year student has been both challenging and stimulating. The main project for our first year was "identity". The purpose of this exercise is to discover who we are – our family connections. Discovering our own roots allows us to understand Indigenous people and their connection to country.

"Identity" was produced in an experiential way i.e. through painting, dance, poetry, music and so on. I chose to do mine as a fabric wallhanging – tracing my maternal line from 1838–2000, when they first arrived in Australia. We kept a Journal noting the steps we took during this process, which was something new for me. It took time and tremendous energy as well as imagination to achieve the end result. My wallhanging now hangs in my house in pride of place as a symbol of who I am and how my family came to be connected to this country.

Contact Tranby Aboriginal College, 13 Mansfield Street Glebe 2037. Phone 9660 3444 or email tranby@comcen.com.au

Josie Clements.

Picton Calling

During Seniors Week, Wollondilly district played host to a group of women, many of them Aboriginal, from various suburbs of Sydney, who were attending a weekend retreat at the Aboriginal Healing House, a place of peace, quiet and tranquillity on Razorback Mountain.

Our Senior's group invited the women to come to our Rock and Roll Competition at the local Bowling club after their weekend retreat.

Soon after joining us, their serenity seemed to evaporate, their calmness was taken over by the need to get down and boogie and maybe party a little. Not only did they take out most of the prizes, including our one guinea for the best original rocker, one of their members wrote this love poem to the D.J.

*Your Rocker night was deadly,
We nearly pissed our pants.
You gave us the opportunity,
To dance and dance and dance.*

Yep. Our OWN Shirley Murphy, Aboriginal supporter from way back, won the prize for best original rocker and I am sure you will all be pleased to know that even in serene settings, her poetry still flows. Good one Shirley, can't wait for your next visit.

Barbara Malcolm

BOOK REVIEW

TULIP FEVER by Deborah Moggach.

Seventeenth century Amsterdam is in the grip of tulip fever. An ageing wealthy merchant and his beautiful wife, Sophie, have their portrait painted by a passionate artist, with devastating results.

This is an exciting novel, vividly taking you back in time and involving you in a plot that is sumptuous and enthralling. *Vintage Press, Paperback.*

Joan Johns

There's a Lot in a Name!

My name is Joyce Helen. Joyce was my mother's choice and Helen my father's.

My mother's choice prevailed so Joyce came first. I wish Dad had had his choice. He did, however, have a small victory, Mum wanted to call me Joy, but Dad said no, that was too fancy, so Joyce I became. I prefer the sound of Helen to Joyce and Joyce dates you. In England, around the time I was born, Joyce was a very popular name. Wherever I went I would always meet other Joyces. The name went out of fashion and now if you meet an Englishwoman called Joyce, you can be pretty sure she is 60 plus. Helen on the other hand has never been a fashionable name, but has never stopped being used. Helens can be any age. In Australia it is different, neither name has been used as much as in England.

The meaning of Joyce seems to be obscure. In medieval England it was a common name for both men and women. It fell out of use and became very rare. In the early years of the 20th century, it came back into fashion reaching its height about 1925. It can also be a family name in Ireland. James Joyce being the most famous holder of the name. I was quite chuffed when in Ireland to be told I was travelling through Joyce country. Helen comes from the Greek and means the bright one, the shining one. St Helena was the mother of Constantine the Great. Helen of Troy was the most beautiful woman in the world in her time. Helen would be a name to live up to. To me Joyce is a nothing name.

But as I have got older I have got more defensive about my name. It's been my name for a long time now. It's part of me and even if I don't like it very much, it is MY name. Here in Australia a lot of people call me Joy. This, I suppose, is the Australian passion for shortening any word they can. But I don't like it, I suppose I am still influenced by my father's judgement – too fancy. I am Joyce, not Joy. Joy would be a different sort of person.

This thought leads me to wonder, do our names help shape our personalities and lives? Would I have been a different sort of person if Dad had won and I had been Helen?

Joyce Chapman

IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU...

One morning recently, a few days after we put the clocks back for the end of Daylight Saving, I awoke drowsily from a pleasant sleep to find it was already light outside. I turned over onto my left side to reach for my little clock to see what time it was, and, hey presto, I was surprised to land with a gentle thud on the floor in a sitting position at the side of the bed with my mattress supporting my back... Inexplicably, it had slid completely off the bed, taking me, the pillows, and all the bedclothes with it. It was like a little slippery dip. I sat there, dazed, trying to size up the situation. When I came to, I reached for the clock, which should have been on the chair at the side of the bed. It wasn't there. Nor was the chair... It was a few yards away, still upright... I found the clock on the floor. It was ten past six.

It occurred to me that if it had happened the previous week, I would have been sitting on the floor in complete darkness, a long way from the light switch, scared stiff, maybe thinking I had Passed On, if you know what I mean... I still can't work out how it happened.

Renee Simons

GLUTEN FREE FRUIT CAKE

Ingredients:

1 kg mixed fruit
1 tablespoon Amaretto liqueur
1 tablespoon Cointreau **OR** use almond and orange essence
125g (4oz) butter
1 tablespoon nutmeg
1 tablespoon mixed spice
4 eggs, beaten
1 dessertspoon Parisian essence (brown colouring, optional)
440g (14oz) unsweetened crushed pineapple
1 teaspoon bicarb of soda
1 cup gluten-free flour **OR** soya, rice and potato flour
1 teaspoon xanthan gum **OR** guar gum

Method:

Cook the fruit and liqueurs for five minutes on **HIGH** in the microwave.

Add the butter and spices.

Tip this mixture into a large bowl and stir in the rest of the ingredients.

Line a glass dish with baking paper. (I use a glass casserole dish about 8" x 4" deep (20cm x 10cm).

Cook on **HIGH** in microwave for about fifteen minutes, elevating the cake by sitting it on a small upturned china dish.

Test with a skewer. (When the skewer comes out clean, the cake is cooked.)

Allow the cake to cool before removing from the container.

You can simply remove the baking paper and put the cake back in the dish it was cooked in, put the lid on, and store in the fridge. The taste improves after a few days.

Renate Watkinson

In a man's world, people make a Ms-ing link

Fiona Stewart *

To modern feminists, the dilemma of title – Miss, Mrs or Ms – whether or not it matters that institutions such as banks or the government, know your marital status, is a serious one. To most younger women, with marriage rates falling, divorce rates rising and women choosing to keep their own names after they marry, there is no longer any alternative to the term 'Ms'.

This is why, when the Howard Government – with its ageing front bench – chose to dispense with such 'modernisms' upon its election in 1996, there was widespread outrage among women on all sides of politics. And rightly so. After all, why should women have their marital status stamped so obviously on their foreheads?

Writer, Margot Miffin, says that Ms was first used as an abbreviation for mistress, a 14th Century translation from the French term *maitresse*, which was used as "a term of respect for women of prestige".

From its earliest documentation on a Massachusetts tombstone in 1767 to the title of the feminist magazine of the second-wave feminist movement, *Ms Magazine*, women everywhere have attempted to make Ms the default term for all women. Like the anonymous and asexual Mr for men, Ms has been promoted as the neutral counterpart for women. It is a title from which no conclusions can be drawn and no fault found.

If only life, and sex, were that simple!

In a 1998 study by the La Trobe University linguist, Barbara Kelly, the supposed neutrality of the term was investigated. In her exploration of "folk-linguistic attitudes", Kelly concluded that Ms, unlike Mr continues to be surrounded by misunderstanding. For example, she found that, rather than safeguarding a woman's privacy, the use of Ms meant that a woman had "something to hide". Worse still, a married woman who used Ms was seen as uncommitted to her husband.

This slur on reputation is, perhaps, among the most ironic the term is supposed to engender. A practice aimed at giving women confidentiality seems to have backfired, and it is this backlash that has prompted some Australian feminists to be inventive in thinking of other ways forward.

Take, for example, feminist Felicity from deakin.edu.au. She suggests that women "choose Mr and tell them that that is the closest of all the options you have been offered". Alternatively, she advises that the term Sr might be more useful because this would leave the inquirer wondering if it was "religious, nursing or neither".

Kaz from bigpond.com has other ideas, finding that she is now nearly always asked whether she is a Miss or a Missus. When she insists on Ms, Kaz says she usually gets "one of those kind of reactions". She claims that while 'Mrs' always leaves her feeling like she is opening her mother's mail, what intrigues her most is the number of times, as coordinator of a *women's* legal service, that mail is addressed to 'Mr' and that letters start 'Dear Sir'. "I am the manager, so I must be a bloke."

For modern women, the idea of having your place in the world questioned because you are not willing to declare your marital status is nothing short of preposterous. The Prime Minister, among others, should realise that it is high time that women's worth is judged and rewarded in more sophisticated ways.

* This is an extract from an article first published in the *Melbourne Sunday Age*. It is reprinted with kind permission of the author.

Surviving Solo Travel

Glossy brochures advertising escorted coach tours don't fool me. They feature beaming tourists clutching complimentary packs, alongside luxury coaches. Singles and couples seem evenly mixed.

If you're planning going solo, your fellow passengers will be married couples or women pals. A solo female is a social pariah.

When you're on your own, you're on your own. On Day 1, the wives smile graciously till they realise you're alone. Then they'll remain aloof and guard their spouses. Female pairs don't want an interloper. Young passengers ignore "wrinklies". The single men? They don't take escorted tours and probably go to Bali, chasing bikini-clad bimbos.

You, solo traveller, are suspect if you couldn't find a travelling buddy.

The brochure for a European tour might promise "See 10 countries in 21 days!" This amazing itinerary is achieved with stops coinciding with the driver's meal breaks. Take Day 3; "Visit historic Cologne". You arrive at noon for two hours' visit, trot briskly through the cathedral, grab a coffee and croissant, join a post office queue, a toilet queue, then it's "all aboard". That was historic Cologne.

For the driver's dinner break, you arrive at a hotel on the city outskirts. Local sightseeing is minimal and the couples take expensive taxis into the main drag. You're not invited, but early morning departures discourage gallivanting.

Solo persons must adhere to timetables. Fellow passengers won't warn you of the imminent departure of the coach as you tarry over purchasing a Black Forest cuckoo clock, or Venetian jewellery. Chastisement for late-comers is status related. Couples often squabble genteelly as they puff aboard, she blaming him for waiting at the wrong spot, he labelling her a shop-aholic. The tour escort, anticipating a final double tip, smiles indulgently. The young don't give a damn if late.

But your lateness gets a chilly reception. Accusing eyes label you a ditherer and a selfish cow for keeping them waiting. No wonder you're solo. The tour escort will frown at his watch and condescendingly ask if you're o.k. His tone implies you're a menopausal menace.

Nobody invites you to join them for meals. The Americans dash to McDonalds for free, clean toilets. So should you, for tipping toilet attendants is a headache. Dine "al fresco" on bread rolls and fruit, more fun than McDonalds.

There are advantages to travelling solo. You don't room with a snorer, an inane chatterer, or one who hogs the bathroom. You can develop an air of mystery and hint at a fabulous life-style back home. Half way through the trip, when boredom with partners sets in, you might become Ms Popular.

Helen McMaugh

The Nosey Neighbour.

We were thrilled when our parents rented the old grey house on the corner of Jubilee Lane. We'd left a boring up-river hamlet, with only two neighbours, surrounded by bush and lonely blue hills. Now we were "townies", in West Willowdale, with a small general store nearby.

The house had a huge veranda, front and side - great to jump off and sprain one's ankle.

Mum shooed us excited kids out to the front veranda while she grappled with a strange fuel stove to make a damper. Our oldest sister unwrapped crockery. Dad was en route with a final cart-load and our horses, Dinkum and Twinkle.

Opposite our house a woman sat on her veranda. She looked a real

Nosey Parker, gladly diverted from housework. Our second oldest sister, Diana, scowled at her.

'She could get off her fat old bottom and make us some nice hot scones.'

Diana loved treats and fondly recalled a neighbour bringing us delicious hot pumpkin scones on a previous move.

'This is town,' I said, in townified tones. 'Bushies are more friendly'.

The nosey woman gazed, Sphinx-like. Diana had an idea.

'Let's shock her. We'll pretend we have more kids than O'Mara's.'

The unfortunate O'Mara's, family friends, had sixteen children and another expected. Our big brother was away at the war, and we remaining seven seemed few compared to O'Maras.

It was winter and Mum had dumped in a back bedroom a big suitcase of woollens, including recent hand-me-downs from rich city cousins. Diana whisked youngest sisters Rosie and Sally inside and dressed one in a bright pink jumper, the other in blue.

'Go and pose on the front steps for Nosey to have a good sticky, then hurry around the back and come back here,' she ordered.

The kids loved new games and pranced off.

Diana gave me a misshapen Fair Isle jumper, sister Althea a Willowdale High School blazer and brother Andy a white tennis jumper which had seen better days. We paraded and posed, then donned many striking fashion disasters from the city kin, including a cyclamen coloured evening top with matching fringed scarf, and spangled ice-skating outfits. Rosie and Sally wore endless kiddie colours.

Mrs. Nosey observed at least twenty differently robed children. Diana gave up when Andy balked at girls' jumpers. Mum had a cuppa ready and scolded us for our silly game.

'I hope that lady doesn't think I have an enormous tribe,' she sighed.

'Well, she could have brought over some morning tea, lazy thing. I hate

damper,' grumbled Diana. Nevertheless, she slathered a hefty slice with golden syrup.

Mrs. Nosey had to get used to a busy social scene on our veranda, for our five girl cousins had moved into Jubilee Lane. Most days at least three of them visited us, with assorted girlfriends from the Lane. Andy escaped the petticoat brigade to climb trees with his mates.

Mrs. Nosey was always rather aloof. She probably made awful scones, anyway.

Helen McMaugh

Theatre Group

The Theatre Group ended March with a very successful performance at Eastwood Masonic Temple where OWN wellness practices were being showcased for local older women.

The last performance before our April recess (oh, how we need it!) was at Woy Woy Leagues Club, organised by Woy Woy OWN. Our new 2001 show 'Doing our OWN Thing!' was received enthusiastically by our audience. We had planned to travel by train carrying all our gear, but a student who has been studying us as part of her project on "What women do when they grow up", offered to take our gear by car. What a difference it made!

Josie Jackson has resigned as coordinator and, for health reasons, is also leaving the Group. Thank you, Josie, for all you have done. You will be sorely missed in all ways, but especially for all the laughs we have had with you. We nurture a sneaking hope that you that your health will bloom and you'll miss us so much, you'll be back.

Jo Allon has also taken a six-month leave of absence for health reasons. We'll also miss you, Jo, and look forward to your healthy return.

Judith Mustard

notice

Jessie Street National Women's' Library

Lunch-hour Talk

12-1.30 pm Thursday, 17 May 2001

Guest speaker: Jane Pollard, author of
Facing the Wrong Way:
A Journey Round the Edge of Australia.

Venue: Lady Mayoress' Rooms, Town Hall (enter via George St). Entry \$10, sandwich lunch included.
Bookings: Shirley (02) 9876 3927, or (02) 9265 9486 or email: shirleyjones@ozemail.com.au

PRIVATISATION

SELL OFF or SELL OUT

Forum in State parliament
Theaterette May 21st,
6.30- 9.00 pm, \$10 entry fee
Prof Bob Walker, Betty Con Walker
and Dr Patricia Randal
The Forum will feed into the
"Now We thePeople" Conference,
Sydney on 14/15 July 2001
For information please contact
France or Bruce Milne,
ph: 9810 7812
Milne@itlite.com.au

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Bequests to the Older Women's Network

If you would like to include a bequest to OWN in your will, the following options will guide you in its wording. Please specify which Older Women's Network you wish to be the recipient of your gift: the Older Women's Network NSW or the Older Women's Network Sydney

Option No. 1

I devise the sum of \$to the Older Women Network for the general purpose of the Older Women's Network OR for the specific purpose of

such purpose being consistent with the aims and objectives of the Older Women's Network, to be administered by the Older Women's Network.

Option No 2 (for a proportional bequest)

I give to the Older Women's Network for its general purposes or the specific purpose of % of my estate (or% of the rest of my estate).

The gift you make to the Older Women's Network will be an enduring record of your generosity.

board

Challenging Racism Game

An Introductory Racism Workshop

5.30 for 6.00 pm Thursday 3rd May.

The workshop will look at:

- personal and institutional racism
- our personal power as part of the dominant culture
- how racism impacts on the indigenous people of Australia
 - how we learn racism

For further information contact
Lilyana Theodossiou
9212 5275

Women's Reconciliation Network
celebrating

National Reconciliation Week

6th Annual Spirit Event

9.30 - 3 pm

Friday 25 May 2001

at YWCA

Cr Wentworth and Liverpool

.....

Trust, Truth, Treaty?

*dancing, story-telling, panel speakers
including Aden Ridgeway*

6.30 pm

Tuesday 29 May 2001

Marrickville Town Hall

Contact

Elizabeth 9453 1067 Janice 9181 3055

Influenza Vaccination

**A reminder that
winter is
approaching and
that influenza
vaccinations are
available free from
your GP.**

Staffing and Quality Care in Aged Care Seminar

A one-day interactive seminar for consumers, workers and industry representatives to identify issues and explore different perspectives in managing and working in residential aged care services.

9.30 - 4.00 Monday, 14 May 2001

COTA NSW office, Level 1, 280 Pitt Street Sydney

Bookings are limited. Please RSVP on the registration form, available from Aged Services Association, 9799 0900 or email mail@agedservices.asn.au

If you are waiting for hospital admission ...

and are concerned about your waiting time, for information and advice ring Patient Access at the NSW Health Department on 9391 9324

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

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Older Women's Network, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000