

History at a Conference

The NSW State Conference at Sancta Sophia on the 3 and 4 July went with the exuberance and liveliness that we have come to expect when OWN women gather together. In an atmosphere of warmth and cooperation, lots of creative thinking was brought to bear on issues facing the newly formed OWN NSW Management Team.

Aboriginal activist and member of OWN, Betty Little, welcomed us to the land and gave recognition to the Aboriginal owners in a short, moving speech that reminded us of our good fortune in sharing such a rich cultural heritage.

The keynote speaker, Pearlie McNeill, gave a sparkling and witty address which, among other things, contained a reference to the shape of teapots and older women's bodies, a reference that was taken up with great humour by other speakers over the two days.

Pearlie also reminded us of all the things that women make by way of arts and crafts, which triggered a response from 'a gang of three' – Gwenda Fulford, June Lord and Vonnie Russell who are now plotting to take over the Lower Sydney Town Hall in three years time for a mammoth display of older women's work! Creative thinking at its wildest and best!

Thirteen women were nominated for the new OWN NSW Management Team and were declared elected. They are Hedi Roggeveen, Sam Smart, Betty Murphy, Vonnie Russell, Anne Warren, Cate Turner, Enid Harrison, Ruth Kearney, Pat Simpson, Pam Ledden, Mollie Smith, Dorothy Buckland Fuller and Gwenda Fulford. Una Nicholl will take her place as Treasurer. The first meeting of the new team will be on 20th July when we will discuss the way the new team will function, the frequency of meetings and many other tricky things.

Tuesday afternoon was taken up with workshops on four issues: finances, resources, public relations and the newsletter with each group making a number of recommendations for the Management Team to consider. It is very clear that it will take some time to put in place all the wishes expressed by women attending the conference.

Also very clear is that money will be tight. Apart from small CPI adjustments, OWN has not received an increase in funding for about five years and managing the finances by a new team with new responsibilities is going to take careful housekeeping.

The early evening on Tuesday passed in something of a happy blur as we threw ourselves into the 'Attitude Adjustment Hour', with wine and a variety of tasty and abundant finger-food supplied by the college catering staff. Later in the evening, women who were staying overnight, passed the hours happily with songs, TV, games and quiet chatting round the fire where stories and experiences were shared, considered and laughed about.

Wednesday morning was set aside for sharing and bragging! Members from different OWN groups talked about their current and planned projects and activities. We heard from women whose presence and energy have not been prominent among the 'usual faces' and it was enriching to know that they're out there doing it! It also provided an opportunity to women from different groups to make connections, think of their own communities and what might be possible in the future.

The Theatre Group came next with one of their top performances – which they claim only comes with a great audience. They certainly had an appreciative and demonstrative one of those!

For an hour after lunch we had a period of free time to talk about unfinished business, new ideas, bouquets and brickbats. Many issues were aired, some discussed, and others left for more thought and time and a more appropriate venue.

Louise Anike closed the conference with a speech recognising the distances travelled by OWN in its various manifestations over the years and the future we are still in the process of inventing. The Theatre Group left us with a song that had hands clapping, hearts happy and hopes high. How could it have been better!

Many thanks are due to all those women who worked to get the show on the road and attend to the enormous amount of potentially worrisome details that such an event always has lurking in the shadows. Thanks also to the people we deal with at Sancta Sophia who are always helpful and polite and make a considerable effort to see that everyone has their accommodation needs and dietary requirements met. The conference organisers are always very grateful to them for their reliability.

Special thanks to the facilitators Cate Turner and Nancy Brown for firmness, tact and coolness under pressure which the task sometimes required.

Pam Ledden

COORDINATORS' REPORT

Light has appeared at the end of the tunnel now that the NSW state conference has been held and OWN NSW, our peak body, is on its way. The next few months are going to be interesting as OWN NSW takes over the responsibilities of OWN Inc. and the (new) Sydney OWN starts to define itself.

Sydney OWN will be officially established at a special general meeting of members in November. In the meantime, you can read about its development in 'Slowly Shaping Sydney' on p3.

OWN Inc's Annual General Meeting will be on Monday, 20 August. The agenda will include a resolution to establish Sydney OWN and a brainstorming session to raise issues and discuss the direction of Sydney OWN. We hope members will consider standing for election to the OWN Inc. Working Committee which will become the Working Committee of Sydney OWN in November. Please see the enclosed nomination form.

We are preparing for the OWN (Australia) Annual General Meeting and Conference which will be in Melbourne in September. As we always do, we will have an opportunity to make amendments to the OWN (A) 'Policies and Statements' and its Constitution. If you would like to join in the pre-conference discussions, please call Joy Ross on 9247 7046 .

The OWN discussion group, Global Spinners, which explores the adverse effects of globalisation continues to attract lively interest from many of our members. At a meeting just before the "Now...we the people" conference on 14 and 15 July at Newtown we identified five issues to be raised at the conference. Keeping the focus on women, and older women in particular , is extremely difficult in the context of so large a problem. More discussion and direction will undoubtedly flow from the conference.

OWN members from non-English speaking backgrounds recently met with consultants to the Western Sydney Area Health Service to talk on what older women see as issues for them. Issues raised included isolation, depression, trauma of dislocation, transport and health matters, for example mammography and pap smears. Their contributions will go towards updating the manual for training of health workers.

You will see in the newsletter that a new group has joined us at Windmill Street. It's called 'The Lost Ladies of History' and is lead by art historian,

Annette Butterfield. This is an ongoing group, with 8-week terms and, although it is fully subscribed at present, we're hoping there will be opportunities in the future for others to join the group.

Pam Ledden, Joy Ross, Louise Anike

Lost Ladies – Focus on women's history

The *Lost Ladies* group began about five years ago as a course entitled 'Lost Ladies of Sydney'. Our main area of study was women who changed the society in which they lived but had not been written into mainstream history; for example, Dora Montefiore, who was a foundation member of the Suffragette League, Bessy Cameron the first Aboriginal schoolteacher and Sophie Steffanoni, Sydney impressionist painter.

We have been on many interesting tours from Victoria Barracks to the Anne Frank Exhibition and are currently looking at women writers who have succeeded overseas such as Jill Ker Conway and Germaine Greer. We also incorporate other topics of interest to women such as GM foods, the changing role of grandparents, public education, immigration and alternative medicine.

The *Lost Ladies* will be meeting at 75 Windmill Street from the end of July. As facilitator and guide I like to keep the group under fifteen – the core group is around ten but is often added to by friends and relatives. We are a closed group until we get settled, but places may become available for additional members in the future. Please contact the OWN office for more information.

Annette Butterfield

Slowly Shaping Sydney

Those of us thinking about the future of our latest group-to-be, Sydney OWN, are very excited! More than sixty members have already responded to the questionnaire "It's up to us to decide what we want to do!" which was sent out in June. Anyone who hasn't filled one in can phone for a copy – we need lots of ideas and suggestions about Sydney OWN activities and interest groups. The six most popular suggestions so far, in order of preference, are guest speakers, outings, women's studies, bushwalking and swimming, book discussion and an a capella choir. A number of members have also indicated an interest in Sydney OWN getting involved in local consumer advocacy issues.

In preparing for Sydney OWN, the Interim Working Committee (IWC) administration and activities teams have been meeting monthly. An advocacy team is still to be formed. Because the IWC was self-selected, rather than elected, it can only make recommendations; decisions will have to be made by the elected OWN Inc. Working Committee until November when Sydney OWN has its inaugural meeting.

At OWN Inc's AGM on Monday, 20 August there will be a session on steering Sydney OWN into the future, when you will have the opportunity to have your say and make recommendations about how we can focus on the Sydney Metropolitan Area. The outcome of this session will provide the framework for adapting the OWN Inc. Constitution to our new group. We also need to think about how to manage funding and resources for Sydney OWN. Do come to the AGM and please consider standing for the Working Committee. The more of us who participate in shaping Sydney OWN, the more it will meet our needs.

And now to talk about the lighter side of things! More than thirty members enjoyed a stimulating and literary couple of hours at our first social event for Sydney OWN on Saturday 21 July at Lower Fort Street. Called 'Wine and Cheese and Poetry Readings', it was a great celebration of our creativity and an affirmation of our belief in the future of the new group.

If you haven't seen the delightful film *Bagdad Café* you can catch it by joining us for a morning of refreshments, followed by the film and discussion at 75 Windmill Street on Friday, 24 August at 10 am. If you like, bring a sandwich and stay on for lunch. Watch this space for coming attractions!

Joy Ross on behalf of the IWC

Never Too Old!

'Never too old to have some fun, never too old to be the one, to change over to a new career.'

'Never too old to exercise, never too old to just be wise, pace yourself and wear the proper gear.'

'Never too old to be yourself, don't be left upon the shelf, be a mover and a shaker.'

Older women attending our latest Wellness Centre at Sutherland have taken to heart these lyrics from the OWN Theatre Group song! Women from 59 to 86 have enjoyed international dancing, gentle exercises, and informative discussions since we opened in early May. They describe the 'non-cliquey' atmosphere with its 'good vibes' as 'hugely welcoming to new starters'.

Sutherland Older Women's Network Wellness Centre recently completed our first ten-week term at our excellent venue, the Pensioners' Centre in Sutherland. We start again for another ten weeks on Wednesday, 25 July.

A volunteer committee manages and runs the Centre on a day-to-day basis and is involved with other participants in designing the activities we offer. A consultant assists the committee and qualified leaders conduct activities.

Sutherland Shire Council has funded the Centre for one year and we have recently received enhancement funding from the South East Area Health Service Women's Health Program, which will allow us to expand our activities, for instance, we plan to add Feldenkreis from July.

We asked older women attending the first term to tell us a bit about themselves. We now know that 67% are aged between 70 and 86 years; 70% rely on the aged pension as their main source of income, 50% live alone and a majority rely on public transport or walk to the centre.

With 683 attendances at Centre activities over the first term, I think we can claim to be a success story!

Noreen Hewett

Getting Started – Growing Stronger

Our latest publication, *Getting Started, Growing Stronger: A Resource Guide for OWN Groups in NSW* was distributed in draft form to participants at the recent state conference. We want as much feedback as possible from members before it is printed, so if you would like to read it and comment, please contact the office and we will send you a copy.

Dorothy Cora

A tick for change ...

It was great to be part of the diverse group of 600 people from all over Australia who met recently at the School of Performing Arts. A conference arranged by "Now, we the People" called all Australians to act together to oppose the present government's policy of economic rationalism which has so sharpened divisions in our society, made the rich richer and the poor poorer and has been the cause of great insecurity and distress.

This was a weekend where we listened, assessed, discussed and advanced ideas for a new direction for our country, based on values of cooperation, ecological sustainability and equality. Six key speakers, each with a profound knowledge of their fields, opened the discussion with a graphic account of their field of work and how it has been affected by this Government's policies of cost cutting and other restrictions.

They spoke, in turn, about the increasing privatisation of education; our universities turning away from academia to big business; Howard's push to take away the independence of the ABC and make it yet another commercial enterprise. Sharan Burrows, President of the ACTU summed up the whole sorry mess made by the current policies, with indisputable, cold hard facts and figures.

The audience dispersed into workshops all over the campus and spent the next two days in deep discussion on the burning issues that face Australia and where government policy has led us so disastrously, through the GST, to allowing international corporations to take over our big industries. The audience was shocked at the lack of moral fibre shown by the Howard Government's agreeing to support America at Kyoto when they refused to reduce green house gases, and their cheer squad who approve of Bush's insane plans for a nuclear weapons shield, which would once again threaten the world with an arms race even more dangerous than the last.

So what to do? Globalisation as such is not the problem. What we need is progressive globalisation, a continuous change making use of the newest technology so that living standards are improved for every country; where we have trade agreements that help third world countries to develop and not be exploited as they are now by the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund.

In Australia we must change to a knowledge-based economy. We are good at research, at science and

technology. We are innovative. We could expand our manufacturing industries with our new technology. We could find a better approach to our rural sector to make life viable and agreeable for country people instead of allowing AGRIBUSINESS to continue to make a wasteland of our countryside.

We, the people can finance economic change and the obsession with a budget surplus every four years. The financial pain and suffering Howard has inflicted on Australia was only so he could boast a budget surplus. For what?

The Conference was strong and positive. We can make a change and we will, by continuing our progressive movement for global change and economic and ecological sustainability.

Muriel Hortin

Bangarra Dance Theatre - A New Triple Bill

"Powerful...masterful...Corroboree continues to refine a dance language reflecting indigenous culture and concerns in Australia...Page's artistic work educates audiences through his cultural perspectives." The Australian, 22.06.01

From the brolga plains of Arnhem Land to the cool swirling waters of the Torres Strait, Corroboree journeys through the songlines of three Dreamings that are central to the lives of indigenous people – that of Brolga (Gudurrku), Red Kangaroo (Gartjambal) and Sea Turtle (Waru). Quietly political and evocative, Corroboree strives to bring attention to the origins of life.

"Corroboree explores the transformation of the human spirit, the relationship between Aboriginal people, creatures and the land and what it is that unifies us as one" says Stephen Page, Bangarra's Artistic Director, "Corroboree is about challenging, awakening and cleansing the spirit."

Brolga tells the story of young woman's transformation and the ritualistic cleansing of the spirit during wet season in the brolga plains of Arnhem Land. Roo is the most overtly political story of the three, exploring the relationship between hunter and prey. Turtle features the creative cultural input and additional composition of Bangarra dancer Peggy Misi, and relates to the sand, the sea and the waters of the Torres Strait, recalling the everyday turbulence of birth and death, life and struggle.

September 12th - 15th, 2001 Theatre Royal, King St, Sydney 7 shows only. Tickets on sale now! Bookings through Ticketmaster7. Phone 136 166 or book online at www.ticketmaster7.com. Adult: \$49 Conc: \$35 Group (10 or more): \$40

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More on Gene Technology

As a nutritionist, I have not found any evidence that genetic modification has led to generation of any damaging proteins in our food. I have noted that all the criticisms in this regard are expressed in terms of speculative statement such as “GM may result in the creation of new and damaging proteins”. There is no hard evidence that it does so!

However, environmental concerns associated with production of GM foods are, I feel, of real importance, and have been substantiated by actual facts, i.e. proven production of more resistant bacteria.

It makes sense to boycott GM foods, particularly processed foods with GM components, not because they are inherently bad for us, but because economic pressure is the best way to stop the big corporations from using these procedures. Genetic Engineering of foods will not solve the problem of world hunger, though it may prove useful in reducing the amounts of pesticide and fertiliser used. World hunger will be solved only by a re-distribution of wealth. There is sufficient food in the world to feed all human beings, but achieving a re-distribution of this is a political, not a scientific problem. This doesn't mean that scientists shouldn't be involved in the process – they should be, as social beings. Their science will not solve the problem.

I have recently been reading a book by Michael Leapman a well known garden writer in England, called “The Ingenious Mr. Fairchild”, which is about Thomas Fairchild, an outstanding London nurseryman of the 18th century, who, by cross-pollination between a Sweet William and a Carnation, produced a plant which became known as “Fairchild's Mule”. It was the first man-made hybrid in Europe, and heralded the thousands of new varieties now available to gardeners today.

This early form of genetic engineering, together with the shocking knowledge that plants had sex, aroused as much of a storm as GM plants do nowadays. As the scientific and religious debate raged, satirists wrote lewd verses about sex in the flowerbeds, and railed against meddling with God's design.

The fact is, human beings have always meddled with nature, seeking to change it for our own purposes and to our own advantage. It is vital to the survival of the species to do so.

Kathleen Olive

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

I was surprised on reading the ‘Genes and Joan’ article in July Newsletter. I have had a lifetime interest in healthy foods, organic growing and the build up of multinational corporations, chemical and seed groups to control food production, particularly over the last thirty years.

Many scientists, consumer groups, farmers and residents groups worldwide, are protesting against the Genetic Engineering direction, for many valid reasons, scientific, dietary, economic, religious and lack of choice, etc.

The Australian Conservation Foundation, Choice magazine, Scientific America, Alliance of Bio Integrity, Vandana Shiva and other Physicists are amongst those writing on their research and questioning the direction Gene Ethics is travelling.

Wendy Kerr

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Dear Editor,

Genes and Joan – a response.

Asking CSIRO plant geneticists about “food gene technology” (which, interestingly, includes cotton) is rather like asking the scientists running Lucas Heights nuclear reactor about nuclear reactors.

Forget cane toads and Chernobyl. “Trust me – I'm from the Government”. I'm also dedicated to belief in the Tooth Fairy, the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus.

Joan Poole

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Dear Editor

I couldn't bear to miss an issue of your wonderful newsletter. I shall take my copy to the Hastings Library, with a view to the Library subscribing and spreading the word in Port Macquarie.

Thank you for all your hard work and congratulations on the wonderful results. Wish I were closer so I could be a volunteer.

Noreen McDonald

Wanted: New Name

The Sydney OWN Newsletter will soon become the OWN NSW Newsletter and it needs a new name! Please let us have your suggestions on 9247 7046.

OWN's Transport Policy

We refer to the article in the OWN June newsletter about the disadvantage experienced by pensioners who use private buses because public services do not exist in their areas.

While we share the concern of the OWN Transport Group about this we are concerned that you suggest that other pensioners should pay higher fares to resolve this problem. As a matter of principle we suggest that groups that are already financially disadvantaged should not be called upon to relieve the disadvantage of others. Many pensioners already contribute unpaid service in community and other organisations but such efforts should remain a voluntary contribution.

If governments are permitted to simply share the disadvantage around in the way suggested it would have serious effects on the welfare system, and divert attention from the fact that after many years of contributing to the wealth of our society pensioners should all be ensured of certain standards of living, health, transport etc.

Perhaps the government could plan now to extend public transport into all the settled areas of cities or towns. If this is too costly then they could conduct simple studies of the use of private services by pensioners and provide a subsidy so that concessions can be given by private companies. Such a survey could be carried out when some other letter is being posted by Social Welfare to all pensioners.

These are some of the concerns of members of the group which met recently. Members also expressed appreciation of the newsletter and of the groups who contribute ideas to it.

Members of the OWN South Sydney
Neighbourhood Group

OWN Health Group

Our group is meeting on 28th August 2001 to discuss a range of health issues including the Government Action Plan for HEALTH – in response to the Report of the NSW Health Council – the Better Medication Management System and other issues which affect older women. Your point of view is important, so we hope that you will come to the meeting and work with us as we look at services available or needed. Contact me on 9420 2343 for more information.

Jean Braithwaite

Aboriginal Support Group

For our July meeting twelve members met at the Museum of Contemporary Art for a special tour of the exhibition of Kathleen Petyarre's work, Genius of Place. This was a wonderful experience but difficult to turn into a few words.

We were told that Kathleen Petyarre was born around 1940 in her father's desert land, Atkanger, about 270 km northeast of Alice Springs. She learnt ceremonies, singing, dancing body painting, from her grandmother and other older women. From her 1970's batiks to the most recent linen canvases, her work expresses this heritage following the dreaming stories of Arnkerrth, the old woman Mountain Devil or Thorny Devil Lizard.

A series of paintings represent the whole country, others focus in on aspects of the land, on significant sites on the ground or subterranean and secret spaces beneath the surface. She revisits the same places in different conditions – whitened by hail or with the red of sandstorms, and approaches from different perspectives, from above or as if approaching the land at an angle on the way into landing on it.

All this conveyed to me an immense sense of the artist's intimacy with and responsibility for her country, something quite beyond my own experience. I also imagine the practical intimacy involved in painting a canvas on the ground, creating a picture full of extraordinary depth and movement out of tiny dots applied with satay sticks.

In the MCA pamphlet, Kathleen Petyarre is quoted as saying: 'I'm really happy to be famous artist now, I'm happy now, just happy, to look after my family, care for my family by painting. I'm happy to put my paintings for MCA exhibition, show people my country, my Arnkerrth, Mountain Devil, to teach other Australians and white people that this is my private law, my private dreaming. That's all.'

Many thanks to the MCA, our guide and Pat Zinn for making this visit possible.

Meg Coulson

Pictures of Wellness

The Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre has produced a 2002 calendar with black and white photographs of older women engaged in a range of wellness practices. The photos were taken by well-known photographer, Ella Dreyfus. The calendar is \$10 and can be purchased from the Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre, 9708 2245.

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Theatre

Group

Report

Tuesday 26th of June the Theatre Group hosted a lunch for friends of the Theatre Group followed by a performance of our current show. This was an enjoyable time for us to forge links with those who support us and to get together in a relaxed atmosphere.

On the fourth of July (American Independence Day – nothing to do with us) we performed at the OWN NSW Conference. This was by way of being a first in for us and for NSW OWN. Our audience was enthusiastic and receptive which gave impetus to our performance. The reaction of the audience makes a tremendous difference to the way we perform. Always there is a positive or negative feedback and we can really feel the vibes.

On the 17 July there was a Xmas in July lunch for local people at the Abraham Mott Hall at which we performed with a few songs and Ann Cunnynghame our resident musician entertained those present with a medley of Xmas songs. The atmosphere was one of quiet enjoyment until some of the irrepressible spirits in the group broke into an improvised *Can Can* (very improvised). There were one or two dedicated supporters present who cheered us on with cries of More! More! and Encore! Encore! and some stamping of feet. Perhaps they might come to future performances for a small consideration!

We have two more performances before the end of the month and quite a few in the future. It has been quieter than usual this year which is perhaps a good thing since three of the group have been away, leaving us to regret their absence and hope for their speedy return.

Lee Carriage, a young woman who has, in the past, taken us for voice production, spent a delightful couple of hours with us this month taking us through our paces. How we wish that she was back in Sydney to work with us on a regular basis. Ah well, we can't have everything.

Judith Mustard

Action Plan for Women

The Department for Women has just launched its 2001 Update Report of the NSW Government Action Plan for Women 2000-2002. It covers current and planned government action for women in the areas of family and community life; violence and safety, access to justice and equality before the law; power, decision making and leadership; education and training and health. Initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds and rural women are also covered in the Action Plan, as well as in three separate Action Plans.

The Department for Women welcomes and encourages any feedback anyone may have on the Action Plan. What gaps can you see? What strategies do you know to be effective? What other information would you like? Have a look at the plans at www.women.nsw.gov.au/publications/action_plan_intro.html or contact the Department for Women on 9287 1860 for a printed copy.

Volunteers Wanted for Research

Into the effect of the type of spectacles on contrast sensitivity in relation to falls

This research is to investigate whether, and at which level of contrast sensitivity, our ability to distinguish between different shades of grey, will affect falls. Also whether a near segment in a pair of spectacles has a significant impact on contrast sensitivity. The contrast sensitivity measure will be compared to the standard vision chart result.

So, if you wear glasses, have good general health and are aged between 65 and 80 years, please participate. All tests are completely safe and will only take 15 to 20 minutes of your time.

If you have any questions about the study, you can discuss them with Elaine Cornell, research coordinator of the School of Applied Vision Sciences on 9351 9250 or Chedy Kalach, researcher, on 0416 095 263.

Chedy will be at 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point from 10am on Thursday 13 September for interviews. Please phone 9247 7046 and put your name down for a time to suit you.

Women Welcome Women

Women Welcome Women World Wide (5W) is a non-profit Trust that fosters international friendship by enabling women of different countries to visit one another. Founded in 1984 by Frances Alexander, as Women Welcome Women, this organization now has members in every continent except Antarctica!

Membership is open to all women who have one thing in common – a wish to befriend others from different parts of the world.

Members have opportunities to learn how women in other countries live, extend the vision of other women and their families, gain in confidence by exploring the world and travelling independently and also to share their own places with other women

Word of mouth publicity and media coverage in various parts of the world, where journalists have been inspired by its unique concept, have achieved growth in membership. Members range in age from 16 to 88+. 5W is financed only by member donations, which they suggest should be twenty pounds.

To join Women Welcome Women World Wide or for more information, contact 88 Easton Street, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. HP11 1DJ, UK Phone / Fax (+44) 1494 465441 or check out their website <http://www.womenwelcomewomen.org.uk>

June West

I CAN

DID is a word of achievement,
WON'T is a word of retreat,
MIGHT is a word of bereavement,
CAN'T is a word of defeat,
OUGHT is a word of duty,
TRY is a word each hour,
WILL is a word of beauty,
CAN is a word of power.

'Star' for a day?

"Oh dear," I said, "I forgot the ring – I *assume* we're married?"

"I thought we'd just be friends," he said.

"Of course," I said, and wished I'd thought of it first. Anyway, who am I to differ? He's an important person from NIDA, and I am just another actor, albeit older – well, let's face it, *much* older.

We'd both volunteered to take part in a video for the Anti-Discrimination Board. The director and producer had come to my place a few nights before, heard me read, and said I had the part. No competition really – they'd had trouble finding older actors!

"Have you any floral frocks?" they asked.

"Will these do?" said I, presenting two old numbers I've had for years and can't bear to throw out.

"Perfect," they said. Pearls?

"One row or three?" I asked.

"Both," they said.

Handbag? They fell upon my ancient Oroton with rapture.

In the video, Jim and I (Betty) are having a night out at a restaurant. Jim's wearing slippers because of his arthritis. People at the next table are talking about discrimination. We tell them how Jim was refused entry into his local club because of the slippers... and so on.

Filming takes place in the UTS restaurant off Broadway. It's called the "Dab Caff". Among the filming paraphernalia and the young students, not to mention my distinguished partner, I'm a bit nervous. Will I forget my lines? Well, of course I do... some, but not all. Confidence comes as we slip into our parts.

The day drags. I wish I'd brought a book. Make-up gets touched up – again. Equipment breaks down; scenes have to be repeated. Tempers shorten. The "Dab Caff" closes, but we press on. One young man, who tells me he has a psychology degree but spends his nights stacking shelves, is so tired. Takeaway food appears, thank gawd.

About 9.30, Jim and I and the crew haul ourselves across Broadway to the nearest pub to shoot the try-to-get-into-the-club scene (best frock and pearls). Is it the whisky I downed or the sheer pleasure of playing opposite someone so experienced and so easy? Despite my exhaustion, the scene rolls along without a hitch, and it is finished!

They hail me a taxi, and I'm home by 10.30, totally stuffed, but so glad to have been a small part of it. I'm to get a copy of the video – hope it's a knockout.

Dorothy Cox

Older Women's Network Newsletter

August 2001

Spring in Kempsey Shire!

The Women's Gathering is in Kempsey this year from Friday 21 September to Sunday 23 September, 2001 at Kempsey Showground.

The program includes a BBQ at South West Rocks and a tour of Trial Bay Gaol. There will be guest speakers, panels, reconciliation workshops and others covering topics of interest to women. Local tours are available.

Accommodation is available at Kempsey motels, or stay on the scenic coast at South West Rocks, Crescent Head, Hat Head, Stuarts Point. Cabins, caravan parks, and billeting available, or camp in Kempsey Showground. Limited hotel accommodation Gladstone and Smithtown.

For more information on the Women's Gathering write Kempsey Shire Council, PO Box 78, West Kempsey, 2440. Phone 65 62625146.

A Scary Dog Story

When I was a little girl, we lived in a small town in Czechoslovakia. As an urban family, we had no pets, nor did any of our friends have any. So I was growing up without any experience of animals.

Sometimes, when on our walks in the park we would encounter a person with a dog on a leash, my mother would take a wide berth to avoid getting close to them. I accepted such behaviour as the norm; animals were to be avoided.

One day, however, there was this dog without a person to mind him, approaching us. I could feel my mother's grip tightening on my arm, a sure signal for me to become apprehensive. Suddenly, the dog took a leap towards us. Oh dear, I thought, so this is it; he is going to maul us to death. I got so frightened that I wrenched myself out of my mother's grip and started running as fast as I could in the other direction. In my haste, I tripped over and fell to the ground. Mother screaming, dog catching up with me! He bounced into me and started licking me all over. I was frozen stiff with terror, sure it was the end of me.

Then the dog quietly strutted on. What a miraculous escape!

It took many years before I realised that dogs lick you out of friendliness.

Trudy Davis

Migration

The past's a foreign country
from which the old migrate,
the old who were young when a war was begun
which killed sixty million from hate.

But those who survive could not revive
a world that was never theirs,
said at last, this world's much too fast
so stop it and we'll get off.

So, get off they did, and some of them hid
their heads in the sands of time,
but others looked up at the brimming cup
of wealth to descendants accrued.

Then they claw their way back to acquire the knack,
of surfing the Internet,
but are never quite clear or have no idea
of expenses that have to be met.

But high tech's a curse and cyberspace worse
a computer technology's forge,
by the sweat of the brow they now must find how
to make it it's knowledge disgorge.

So they join in the race painful joints to replace
and anything else that goes wrong,
they take many pills for a number of ills
in the hope that their lives will be long.

But the price of aged care makes bureaucrats stare
and they warn of enormous cost,
so they say to the old, 'now do as you're told
and go back to that country you've lost.'

These verses could equally apply to long term unemployed, inconvenient arrivals and any others not useful to 'the economy'. Pessimistic? Yes!

Helen Monaghan

Serenade Me

During WW11, my hometown radio station tried to lighten the war news with syrupy love songs. We thrilled to "One Day when we were young", "Ah sweet mystery of life" and "Indian love call", with Nelson Eddy's honeyed tenor and Jeanette MacDonald's trilling soprano. One whole program featured Anne Ziegler & Webster Booth, with songs like "Deep in my heart, dear" and "Lover come back to me".

At most local weddings, there was usually a tenor emulating Richard Crooks' song of male possessiveness, "Because". At home, my older sister idolised songbird Deanna Durbin, warbled along with her on the radio singing "My Hero" or "Spring in my heart", and adopted her hairstyle.

Those romantic songs of the 'thirties' and 'forties' invoked visions of handsome, clean shaven, well-groomed men serenading beautiful women, with perfect diction, and with pure intentions. Even if the lovers were parted by cruel fate, one knew all would end happily ever after in married bliss. But this pleasant scenario was marred by a slow but steady divorce rate. The women's movement was gathering strength and soon Richard Tauber's "Girls were made to love and kiss" was greeted with the cynicism it deserved.

Music has its fads and fashions. The Elvis Presley era was one of the strangest. A recent movie uses footage from a 1970's four day concert in Las Vegas. Elvis' form-hugging white body suit was so tight across his crotch it's a wonder he could move. The suit top, open to the waist, displayed his tanned chest. His mop of dark hair was carefully combed into boyish strands across his brow. His constantly vibrating left leg was decorated with strands of beads and baubles to highlight the erotic movement. The audience, mainly women, went wild, especially at his sexy sideways swing to the floor with the mike. His deep melodious voice was sometimes a mumble, but his performance was charismatic. He is probably one of the most imitated performers of the 20th century. One forgets that he was a cynical seducer of teenage girls.

What of today's love ballads? Young people watch videos of incredibly fit young people prancing in close-fitting gym wear, loudly mouthing unintelligible words. Or they attend concerts where young men with unfortunate face hair and very tight jeans strut the stage, holding guitars in erotic positions, screaming their ear-splitting lyrics. The words are impossible to hear.

Kylie Minogue has a huge following. She trips

about the stage, adorned with a few strategically placed spangles, endlessly repeating mindless inanities. One of the Spice Girls shouts that she wants "it" right now, the "it" needing no explanation.

What would today's young lovers make of Jeanette MacDonald's "Dream Lover"? They might think it was about masturbation, and "One night of love" by Grace Moore about a one night stand. Also, "Make believe" by Allan Jones could describe today's bachelors who refuse to commit.

Perhaps today's equivalent of the sentimental songs of my youth is country and western music. Some performers in their fringed outfits, cowboy boots, and broad brimmed hats look as wholesome as Nelson Eddy and Deanna Durbin. Cynics say if you played a country and western song backwards, the wife would come back, the dog would not be killed and the house would not burn down. Even the lyrics about unrequited love have a spunky optimism that all will turn out right. At least you can understand the words.

Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald regained fame briefly in a spoof movie a few years ago. In "Mars Attacks", the incredibly awful Martians who invade earth met their first comeuppance from a feisty old lady in a nursing home. Unaware of their presence, she was playing at full blast her old record of Nelson and Jeanette's "Indian love call". The high notes affected the Martians' sensitive ear-drums with disastrous effect. They were finally sent packing back to Mars, pursued by trucks bearing amplifiers blasting out "When I'm Calling You-oooooooo-oooooooo, will you answer too-oooooooo-oooooooo." It was the only time in the movie one felt any empathy for the Martians.

Helen McMaugh

PIG PEN

Pollie Watching

A young friend and her mates attended one of Mr. Howard's photo opportunity walkabouts in her locality. (He pats the toddlers on their heads, and pats 'the old dears' on their backs – personally, I'd rather have a lick from a friendly dog!)

I asked my friend what they did it for and she said, "We call out to Mr. Howard – Shame, Shame!"

"What does he do?" I asked.

"He just grins," she said.

Enid Harrison

A Prophet

My mother told me that you could always tell a prophet by the eyes. The eyes could never look directly into yours for fear of what they might suggest. Prophets by their very nature were the custodians of such secrets that they needed great strength and insight lest they alarm lesser mortals with unclear intimations of their knowledge. This puzzled me.

In my studies of the bible I had read the prophets and felt that they had thought little of the finer feelings and fears of those they addressed but, indeed rather played on any possible weakness in order to give their more fearful prophecies more impact. Like arch manipulators they enjoyed striking terror into the hearts of the ignorant and the faithful alike. How to bring this home to my mother without rousing her anger exercised my ingenuity. She was not a hard woman and indeed exerted her authority within the family for the greater good of all its members, at the same time, her confidence was such that she rarely questioned herself and was surprised when other people did so.

This confidence arose in some part from the fact that she had been deprived of a mother at an early age and subsequently had assumed that role in her family. Her father reinforced this stand by his reliance on her so that she became an adolescent matriarch who wielded her power so that she expected that it would be accepted by all.

In time she married. My father was an indolent man, fond of his creature comforts and intent on avoiding unnecessary activity so that the running of the household and its inmates devolved on my mother. His income was a generous one so that he did not need to engage in commerce or any form of work to acquire a living; thus his days were spent in the pursuit of pleasure, in reading and presiding over a gourmet's table. His attitude towards his children was that of a benevolent despot who abjured any activity which might lead to a need for disciplining his offspring. This led to bouts of indulgence and hectic play which would be broken off at the first sign of unnecessary agitation on our part which might lead to his own discomfort.

Thus discipline was left to my mother who through it felt her power and, since she had long given up any hope of changing my father, no doubt she revelled in the thought of shaping her children's characters. To this end she supervised our every activity and when the necessary business of daily

life took her elsewhere we had tutors and nurses who reported our every movement and obeyed her strictures unquestioningly.

I began to sense myself as separate from my family. As an individual I could not claim to be unhappy, but I felt a sense of loss, of something missing, which led to periods of active revolt for which I was punished by the deprivation of some outing - a picnic, a visit to the theatre - to which I had looked forward. Any plea for leniency was ignored so that I chafed under the yoke of my punishment. In subtle ways this led to a loss of trust of those in authority, a suspicion of their motives which made me feel both angry and sad. There was no one in whom I could confide so that I was driven further into myself and became dangerously introspective. The bloom of childhood left me and I felt alienated from all those around me. Had my father been less indolent perhaps he could have saved me for I loved and admired him; his insouciance, which I found attractive, being so different in every way from my mother's strength and purpose.

But will this replay of my childhood resolve my inner uncertainty? I am my sole writer and reader; the rhetoric of my thoughts as I write are confused and amorphous as they were in my young years. A question consumed me. Who, what and where were my mother's prophets? In finding them maybe I would resolve the conflict, never far from my mind which was the keynote of my relationship with my mother. In so doing perhaps I could love her as I felt she deserved.

When I was sixteen my mother died. My father wrote, " Her prophets lived in stones and in stars, washed her world with grateful rain and attended in the sweet scents and plants of her garden". Through all my childhood I had looked in vain for my mother's prophets. Her strict supervision, her insistence on obedience had led me astray so that I never recognised her essence. My whole relationship with her was combative, a teeth-clenching effort to escape her control. To establish myself as an individual in my own world. I know that it was her discipline that shaped me, that honed my strong will and at last separated me from her. I lost her.

Sometimes I visit her garden and sit in the summerhouse where she supervised our morning lessons. I try to capture the thoughts and feelings of that time but they escape me. She has gone from her garden just as in life she fled my understanding. One day, perhaps I will meet my prophet but will I recognise her?

Judith Mustard

notice

Networking Personally

Wanted

**A companion for abseiling
adventure – anyone foolhardy enough
or is this just a fantasy?
Phone Jan 9692 9400**

*(The idea for a Networking Personally
column came from the newsletter work-
shop at the OWN NSW conference – so it's
over to you now for contributions!)*

Mental Health and the Community –

Focusing on the future

CONFERENCE

24-25 September 2001

at Liverpool

**For information, please phone the
Mental Health Coordinating
Council on 9555 8388**

Women and Sex

Researchers at the University of Sydney are conducting a study about women and their sexual experiences with men.

The Study is looking for women who are interested in participating in an in-depth interview about their experiences both past and present. It will be a life history interview so we want to know everything about you from the beginning!

We want to talk to anybody who is interested in participating: older women, younger women, married or single, professional or non-professional, students or teachers, mothers, grandmothers.

So, if you would like to share your life with us, then please give us a call.

The University of Sydney

Trouble hearing TV?

You can now watch prime time TV programs from 6 pm to 10 pm with captions. Captions are slightly different from foreign language subtitles because they are coloured and positioned to indicate who is speaking. Music and sound effects, which may be crucial to the understanding of the program, are also captioned.

For a free information pack and magazine, phone free call 1800 777 801

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

Free Tickets to Hot New Musical

Wesley Institute and the Arts (WIMA) proudly present "Hot Mikado" – the wonderfully re-scored version of the Gilbert and Sullivan classic. The musical will be performed at the Footbridge Theatre, 12-16 September 2001.

WIMA is delighted to offer free tickets to seniors card and pension cardholders, thanks to the kind generosity of the Wesley Mission Aged Community Grant.

Take advantage of this fantastic offer! Book through our ticket office on 9181 4424. Patrick Salas, PR Officer, WIMA Theatre Productions.

Exercise Exotically!

Learn polynesian dancing it's graceful,
gentle and gorgeous!

Classes in planning stage at Waverley Seniors
Centre 31-33 Spring Street, Bondi Junction.

Register NOW - Phone: 93694087

Sageing, Not Ageing Contributions of Our Elders

The Australian Association of Gerontology NSW
is holding a half-day seminar from 12.30 on
17 August at Cumberland Campus,
University of Sydney
(opposite Rookwood Cemetery, Lidcombe).

Phone Adelaide Bornmann 9523 1715 for a
program and directions. Cost is \$10.

Jessie Street National Women's Library Lunch-hour Talk

Thursday, 16 August, 12 pm to 2 pm

Southern Function Room, Level 4, Town
Hall House, corner Kent and Druiitt Streets,
Sydney

Speakers: Wilga Pruden, Dahlis Feltham
and Mary Murray - 'Clothing the Colony'

The participants in this tripartite talk
explain how vocational education came to
exist in the infant colony of NSW, how
vocational education evolved into the
institution of TAFE and how women
teachers had to serve large rural areas,
teaching pattern-making and other crafts.

\$15 (non-members) \$13 (members) includes
light lunch.

To book ring (02) 9876 3927 or (02) 9265
9486 or email shirleyjones@ozemail.com.au

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