



OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales Inc.

No. 14 December 2002

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The pyramid and the circle ...

Shapes, like the pyramid, tend to dominate our lives, particularly our social systems. A pyramid system has a president or chairman (usually a male!) at the top, tapering down to a large base of workers at the bottom (often, the lower we get, female). Communication trickles down from the all-seeing, all-knowing, high point to the unknowing mushrooms at the base.

Other shapes, such as the circle have no defined points or edges. OWN NSW works on the circle principle. This is manifest in the name, 'network'. Even though the circle has a geographic centre (OWN NSW has its office at Lower Fort Street, Sydney), the centre is no more important than the groups on the circumference of the circle.

Communication within OWN depends upon the network principle. The word 'network' conveys images of a 'net'; a useful tool made of rope that has many linkages. Each small knot, each small loop, in a net, is a point of communication. Information, decisions and just plain talk can travel all ways on the net without reference to either a top or a bottom.

It is this networking, circular structure of OWN that constitutes its uniqueness and its strength. It is unique in that no group, project or committee is more important in the structure than another, and its strength lies in our willingness and ability to communicate regularly, openly and respectfully with each other.

OWN Matters, the State-wide newsletter of our Network, is one of our key communication tools. Scattered as we are throughout NSW, *OWN Matters* is an effective way to let each member know what we are involved in, what we are planning for the future, what the issues are that we are facing in our communities.

When every member of every OWN group in NSW subscribes to *OWN Matters*, we can truly say that we are connected. To make this happen, we are offering new subscribers a very special rate if they subscribe between 1 December 2002 and 15 January, 2003.

Complimentary copies of this edition are being sent to members of each group in NSW with an invitation to subscribe. Show your commitment to the circle principle and to good communication – make it happen!

Pat Simpson

OWN Matters

is the Newsletter
of the Older Women's Network
New South Wales Inc.

It is published 11 times a year.
Subscriptions are \$20.

Who Are We?

OWN NSW is the peak body for
sixteen OWN groups in NSW.

OWN promotes the rights, dignity
and wellbeing of older women
through a range of activities and
resources, and advocates to
government and non-government
agencies on issues of concern to
older women.

Contributions

All members of OWN groups in
NSW are encouraged to
contribute to **OWN Matters** with
items of interest to older women
and letters to the Editor.

They can be sent by mail or email
marked 'Attention – Editorial
Team'. Please include contact
details.

Contributions must be received by
the second Monday of
each month.

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Point of View

Not good enough!

I attended the Seminar on Abuse of Older People organised by the Committee on Ageing on October 23. The publicised target of the seminar was Older Persons Organisations and older individuals. In reality, service providers dominated the audience, and the agenda, in my opinion, did not fulfil the brief. Older people were talked about, rather than talked with!

Our OWN Louise Anike was on the panel of speakers, and gave a very comprehensive address. I agree with the view expressed by another OWN member who was present that Louise was the most effective speaker on the panel. She was down-to-earth, took a broader perspective and presented a standpoint different from the practitioners on the panel. The standpoint she presented was of those who have experienced various forms of abuse. That is, she did not approach the subject of talking about the 'done to' and what could be 'done for' them, which was the stance of the majority of the contributors during what little discussion was allowed in the few questions for which time was allotted.

The panelists, in the main, spoke about institutional abuse, sometimes in the name of 'care'. There was plenty of evidence revealing that fear of institutions is well-founded in the older population. The few questions that were dealt with by the panel of speakers mostly allowed 'two bites of the cherry' with several panelists answering the same question. This meant that there was no time for discussion from the audience. There was the usual instance of bureaucratic chit-chat between public servants about protocol although these were not revealed, and nor did anyone bother to find out what they were.

What I felt was exposed in this seminar is how older people are still patronised by the 'experts'. This corresponds with a tendency for many older people to be dominated by people in our everyday lives such as friends, neighbours, children and institutional caregivers. Sometimes the domination is so insidious that we don't recognise it when it's happening.

Older people have a wealth of experience and information in our heads and when we are invited to contribute, we will have something to say. Let's insist on being listened to with respect and goodwill.

Enid Harrison

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

The NSW Management Team and its Coordinators have had a number of busy weeks lately. Last week we held a Management Team meeting all day Monday and then some of us attended the NSW groups' Quarterly Meeting on the Tuesday.

A number of different issues have arisen from within NSW groups, but one of the disturbing elements of the quarterly meetings is that group attendance seems to be falling. Our newer groups are keen, enthusiastic and willing to share triumphs and tragedies. The Management Team would like to have the ideal situation occurring where as many groups as possible attend the Quarterly Meetings to share the energy of the new with the experience of the established. Not only does OWN NSW pay travel costs and provide 'Splendid Sandwiches' and fruit for lunch, the Coordinators have made a determined effort that these meetings occur in an atmosphere of conviviality and goodwill where all can state their opinions and be heard with tolerance for different points of view. It would be great to see some more experienced member groups participating at our next Quarterly Meeting on Tuesday, 5 February 2003.

Pat Simpson, one of our four Coordinators, was guest speaker at the Annual Conference of the Association of Civilian Widows on the 15 November. Pat spoke about OWN NSW and distributed our leaflets. There was much interest in and a little knowledge about OWN, especially about our Wellness Centres. Like OWN, their membership caters for women, but it is a more selected group, through marital status. They have 25 groups throughout NSW and, like OWN, some branches have had to close when

office bearers have felt unable to continue because of age, infirmity and illness. In some of these groups others have been unwilling or unable to continue the task of keeping the branches open. While the Association of Civilian Widows has some similar experiences to OWN, its emphasis seems to be support for widow members and their dependants.

Our emphasis points to a more active ageing experience that is tolerant of all lifestyles, and concentrates on giving older women the opportunities to develop more skills and explore common experiences of being an older woman.

Following last month's meeting with Bronwyn Harrison, Director, Office for Ageing in the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, the Coordinators framed a submission for an increase in core funding for OWN NSW from the Department. It may be some time before we know whether we have been successful, but we remain optimistic because OWN's aims and objectives are, without doubt, a perfect 'fit' with the NSW Government's 1998 – 2003 Healthy Ageing Framework.

The Management Team's business plan workshop with Virginia Henderson will be held on 25 November with members of NSW groups and project coordinators also invited to take part.

It is pleasing to see groups establishing informal networks through Nowra's weekend at Jervis Bay; Sydney OWN's travelling fish lunches and the Southern Highlands Christmas Party with Wollondilly drummers and Illawarra Silvert-OWNS in attendance. This is the sharing part of OWN where ideas, friendships and views are

exchanged in an atmosphere of entertaining adventure.

This is our last issue for 2002. The Management Team warmly congratulates the *OWN Matters* Editorial Team for such a splendid effort. We hope that the invitation to non-subscribers to take up the special subscription offer for *OWN Matters* will lead to many new subscriptions in 2003.

A number of notable members of the Theatre Group are retiring at the end of this year. We are sad that they have taken this decision, but acknowledge a job well done.

The OWN office will close on Friday 13 December and re-open on Monday 13 January. We wish you all a happy and safe holiday. May we return rested, and revived for whatever 2003 brings.

Pat Simpson, Mollie Smith, Cate Turner and Anne Warren

Reclaiming Words

I am very interested in the notion of reclaiming words that are meant to deride women eg spinster, matron, hag, crone, biddy, gossip.

We recently invited a very prominent woman to become the 'matron' of an award honouring women in Left politics in our area, and she was delighted to be called a matron!

I believe a women's legal service in NSW used to operate a mentoring program called the 'biddy system'. I also read that the word 'gossip' originated from the medieval word 'godsip' meaning midwife.

When you think about it, midwives must have gathered a lot of news and information as they spent woman-only time with pregnant and birthing women.

Deb Nicholson

(Matronly biddy fond of gossiping whilst wearing a large blouse)

Advocacy – the last word, 2002

The OWN NSW Advocacy Coordination Group (ACG) was set up in the middle of the year and has now been meeting for six months. The establishment of the ACG is an attempt to augment the efforts of individual members of OWN groups who have been and continue to be energetic and effective advocates on issues relating to older women. Their involvement and achievement has given OWN recognition and status with many non-government and government bodies. The ACG will ensure that OWN continues to have a voice on issues of major concern: health, social isolation, mental health, housing, violence against older women, and transport.

In response to a survey sent to *OWN Matters* subscribers last year, the ACG decided to focus on a health issue as our first exercise. The ineffective implementation of discharge plans for those leaving hospital after a period of acute illness was chosen as our first project, as some of our members had very difficult experiences in the hospital to home, convalescent phase of their health care.

The last meeting of the ACG was held on 6 November and was attended by Hedi Roggeveen, Shirley Bevan, Yetti Windt, Roleena Jennings and me. Hedi had some good news to report – Wentworth Area Health Service is looking at effective implementation of discharge plans; there is a consultative committee to carry out this project, and Hedi is on it!

NSW Health is also working on an evaluation project on the effective implementation of discharge plans and Ros Bragg from New South Wales Council of Social Services (NCOSS) – of which OWN NSW is a member – is on the project team. There is a possibility that a member of the OWN ACG may be invited to participate.

So, it appears that positive moves are being made. We will monitor developments closely, but we expect no quick answers. If NSW Health is evaluating discharge planning at this point then policy making will follow. Implementing policy across the state will take more time. Finding the money to make the policy effective may take even longer.

The first meeting of the ACG in 2003 will be devoted to thinking about our process so far and deciding on our direction for the coming year. One suggestion made at our last meeting was that we shift our focus next year – ‘mental health’ being one suggestion. It was also suggested that we might focus on more than one advocacy issue at a time.

All members of OWN groups are invited to attend our first meeting at 10.30 am on Tuesday, 4 February. If you are unable to attend and you have ideas, please write to the ACG at 87 Lower Fort Street, email ownnsw@zip.com.au or phone me on 9797 9803.

The Perfection Virus

While studying educational philosophy, I came across a social phenomenon known as ‘the perfection virus’. If we catch this virus, we choose arbitrary standards of perfection, then strive to attain them. Of course, we never can – once we reach our goal, we raise our expectations.

Goals are great things. The problem with the perfectionist virus is that when we strive so hard to be something that we are not, we can destroy the very things that sane, healthy people value, such as our health, key relationships and sense of self.

Perfectionists see in others the attributes and faults that we are unable to accept in ourselves, and can become over-demanding and judgmental.

Perfectionism demands us all to be measured against some external standard. This denies and negates the intrinsic value of our individuality and discourages us from celebrating the uniqueness and diversity in one another and ourselves. When we are constantly striving to be something or other than ourselves, we fail to notice and value our uniqueness. This can lead to depression, stress, misery and loss of self-esteem.

As an antidote of this, it’s good to take time to listen to someone whom you wouldn’t normally see as a winner. I sometimes do this and notice that people who, when buffeted by life’s trials, find deep within themselves a strength, a resilience and a compassion that they often use to make the world a better place. When talking to such people, I notice within myself the capacity to be more human. I notice how my imperfections are actually great assets, ones that are uniquely my own.

Pam Ledden

Margot Cairnes
www.lwbworld.org

June Magrath

Voyage of discovery - White to black

I first met June Magrath about three years ago at a U3A course in Chatswood, where I was teaching Aboriginal history. She had come all the way from Guildford to hear me speak, and I subsequently spoke at a U3A course in Parramatta, which she had arranged. Our next connection took place at Merrylands last year, when I performed at a National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week celebration. After I performed again at Merrylands this year, she agreed to speak at our Aboriginal Support Circle meeting on 4 November.

June's grandmother was dark-skinned, and told her family that she was a Maori princess. June only discovered her Aboriginal ancestry after her mother's death. She suspects that her mother might have known, but never acknowledged her Aboriginality, because when she was growing up, the three worst things to be

were Catholics, bastards or 'dirty' Aborigines.

June herself is fair-skinned, but after reading Sally Morgan's book *My Place* and seeing a program on the Stolen Generations on television, she decided to do some research on her background. She had never done research before, but after long, hard months in the archives at the Mitchell Library, she discovered her grandmother's birth certificate which had been issued by the Salvation Army. The task was doubly difficult because a young mother could be registered under her mother's surname, her father's surname, or her grandmother's surname. June passed a copy of the birth certificate around so we could see for ourselves the attitudes in those times. For example, questions such as "How long fallen?" "Drinking?" "Diseased?" "Prostitution?" etc. After June's mother was born, her grandmother went into domestic

service, which indicates that she might have been stolen as a child.

Now June has 'come out' and has been accepted as an Aboriginal person. She is not only learning all she can about Aboriginal history and culture, she is actively working to educate non-indigenous people. She attends Holroyd council meetings and is on an advisory committee as a 'token' Koori. She is also involved in the Wentworth Reconciliation Group.

Unfortunately June's sisters don't want to know about their ancestry and her children think she's crazy. However, her granddaughter is doing Aboriginal Studies at school and she and June are learning together, often at their local library. June urged us to encourage our local libraries to obtain books on Aboriginal subjects and by indigenous writers.

We hope that June will eventually be able to find out about her grandmother's family, who came from the Bogan river area.

Betty Little

Miracles still happen!

On Melbourne Cup day, after our Theatre Group rehearsal, I caught the bus down to Circular Quay to catch a train back to Nowra. Shock, horror, I left my backpack on the seat! Of course my money purse and all it contained was inside. All I was left with was my travel ticket and \$1.40 in coins. I went to the Information Kiosk and was told that a man would put a call out to the buses and to ring back in 30 minutes. I returned to OWN, and on phoning the bus company, was told that no bag had been handed in.

Just as I was leaving the office, my husband rang from Nowra saying that he'd had a call from Leichhardt Bus Depot to say that the bag had been handed in safe and sound! At the Depot, after handing me the bag, the very nice bus man said, "Where do

you want to go now?" "Central," I said. A bus driver standing nearby said, "I'm taking a 'Special' to Circular Quay, will that do?" So, I sat up in the bus, the only passenger, feeling like the Queen, and was dropped off right at Town Hall Station. Aren't some folk great?

Norma Bastock

The Price of Brains

In the hospital the relatives gathered in the waiting room, where their family member lay gravely ill. Finally, the doctor came in looking tired and sombre. I'm afraid I'm the bearer of bad news," he said, as he surveyed the worried faces. The only hope left for your loved one at this time is a brain transplant. It's an experimental procedure, very risky, but it is the only hope. You will have to pay for the brain yourselves."

The family members sat silent as they absorbed the news. After a great length of time, someone asked, "Well, how much does a brain cost?" The doctor quickly responded, "\$20,000 for a male brain, and \$2000 for a female brain."

The moment turned awkward. Men in the room tried not to smile, avoiding eye contact with the women, but some couldn't help themselves and did smirk. One man, unable to control his curiosity, blurted out the question everyone wanted to ask, "Why is the male brain so much more?"

The doctor smiled at his childish innocence and explained to the entire group, "It's just standard pricing procedure. We have to mark down the price of the female brains, because they've actually been used."

Desleigh Thomason

Theatre Group Report

Once again it is my turn to write up the goings on of the Theatre Group. I was one of the five, plus Elizabeth, our pianist, who went to the OWN Australia Conference, while the rest went to Bourke. We were all a bit nervous, but we had a great time, and our audience enjoyed our show.

On the 16 October we travelled by train to Mid-Mountains OWN at Lawson to do a half-hour show of specially selected skits and songs chosen by members of Mid-Mountains OWN. Once again our performance was very popular – it's always so great to watch the audience and see happy faces enjoying what we are doing. It was also great to see some women we had met before. A pleasant surprise for me personally was meeting a friend of mine in the audience who I hadn't seen for years.

We went to Redfern on 22 October to take part in the Older Women, Violence and Abuse forum for service providers. We did our Domestic Violence Show as part of the forum and, once again, the audience really responded positively. Speakers included members of the Police Force, who spoke of the domestic violence they had to deal with, and other speakers shared their concerns.

The weekend at Jervis Bay, organised by Nowra OWN, was a great success. As happens on these weekends, Saturday night is Party Performance Night, where lots of talent comes to the fore. Our courageous and dramatic Theatre Group performed a bloodthirsty mini-opera with great panache. Much to the delight of the audience, the hero dispatched (killed off) the main characters with a soup ladle through the performance!

Seven of us gave a sing/talk at Campsie Community Centre on 31 October, which was very well received. The focus of the day was volunteering, so we talked about OWN as a volunteer organisation and how being a member of OWN had so positively influenced our lives. Amongst the songs we sang was a very old one, *On the Rocks*, which gives a bit of history about where we come from and what we do.

Bronwyn Harrison, Director of the Office for Ageing in the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (OWN's funding body) enjoyed our mini performance on Melbourne Cup Day and the scrumptious lunch that followed. The audience was mini as well – four coordinators from OWN NSW!

At our last meeting, Peggy Hewett, Lucy Porter and Marie Williams told us that they would not be part of the Theatre Group next year. We'll really miss their skills and dedication.

We are going to be busy again until Christmas with three more shows and then a slap-up Theatre Group and Friends lunch at Darling Harbour. Just as well we enjoy ourselves.

Norma Bastock

Thanks for the memories

For fifteen years (you don't get that much 'time' for murder these days!) my life has been very focused on the Theatre Group. It's been an amazing time, but now I need to have some time out to refurbish my flat and reflect on other things happening in my life.

During those fifteen years I've received some wonderful support and assistance from women within the Theatre Group, from many OWN members in general and from our two workers in the office, Dorothy Cora and Kris Ferguson, who are patience personified!

Special thanks to the cast and the director, Louise Anike, for their tremendous commitment year after year. What troupers!

Our pianist, Ann Cunnyngame, came to our rescue a couple of years ago and has quietly and competently coped with a myriad of different programs designed for particular audiences. Not only that, she has become a prolific songwriter for us. What a gem!

And to Lucy Porter ... without whom I could never have lasted so long as Coordinator ... my very, very special thanks. Over the years, Lucy and I have created, cajoled and challenged each other on a weekly basis, and have managed to remain the good friends we have been for fifty years! What a woman.

Josie Jackson and Marjorie Moffat have generously agreed to take on coordination of the Theatre Group. A big vote of thanks to you both. I wish you well.

Wishing everyone an enjoyable Christmas and the very best for 2003. Till we meet again ...

Peggy Hewett

A Salute to Two Champions

Although Peggy Hewett did not know it, a significant change was about to happen to her life in 1988 when she helped to make a decision to go to old Parliament House and perform street theatre protesting the invisibility of older women on behalf of the newly-fledged OWN. And so, Peggy's background of using songs for political activism provided the basis for the creation of the OWN Theatre Group. Thus began the rise and rise of the Theatre Group.

Peggy was the driving force and took responsibility for the administrative work, with the multitude of necessary details such as recruiting new members, publicity, finances, going cap-in-hand to funding bodies, watching finances, and now and then tossing off lyrics for a show. Her spirit was irrepressible, even though at times there were personal sadnesses and a knee replacement. Over time the Theatre Group earned and gained the fine reputation it now has. Peggy's natural presence on stage,

along with an engaging and sincere style mixed with a touch of larrikin has won her many verbal bouquets.

When her long-time friend Lucy Porter retired, Peggy was able to persuade her to join the Group. Lucy became indispensable in helping with Theatre Group administration. And although she took an in-your-face cheeky approach to performing, Lucy could always be depended on to know the words and actions.

Together, these women have been a hard-working twosome. They have handled the complexities of managing such a group from arranging tours from Bourke to Bondi, from Nowra to Newcastle and beyond, and into the bush cities around the State, taking care of the engagements and checking to see who was to perform, compiling scripts and calendars of events, making sure the finances were in order, liaising with various government and non-government organisations and OWN Inc., and later OWN

NSW, and, perhaps hardest of all, trying to maintain morale, cooperation and goodwill between all the Theatre Group members. In the ups and downs, standing ovations to missing props, receptive audiences to not getting funding, fluffing lines to having audiences enthusiastically joining in, Peggy, with Lucy, has steered the group over the years. Now they both wish to retire to take care of other areas in their lives.

OWN owes Peggy a debt of gratitude for having the courage and stamina to create our Theatre Group, and to Lucy who came to join her in the arduous and sometimes thankless task of administration. The Theatre Group has long been recognized as the most effecting and compelling strategy we have. There is no adequate way of expressing our appreciation for their long hours of work and commitment – we can only say – thank you, thank you, thank you. You both deserve the biggest ever Gold Medal.

Louise Anike

Wanted Women

Some years back, a new OWN member came to see what the Theatre Group was on about. Hesitantly, she said, "I can't sing and dance, I don't know what I'm doing here." We said, give it a go, and before long she was a highly valued member of the cast and having a ball.

We are looking for women with enthusiasm, commitment and a good sense of humour to join our Theatre Group. If you would like to sing and dance, love approval and applause, come along and give it a go.

We are friendly, accepting, vital and fun-loving older women who have our say in a theatrical, satirical way about issues that affect older women, and we'd love to welcome you.

All you have to do to become a member of the 2003 cast is turn up at the Abraham Mott Hall, Millers Point, on Tuesday 28 January 2003 at 11am. If you'd like to talk to someone before coming along, ring Judith Mustard on 9560 2668.

Letters to the Editor

Who's worried? Well, me, for one!

Evie's letter to 'Point of View' last month, describing how the giant American Maximus company had quietly taken over Australia's biggest employment agency, could be a taste of things to come if our Government agrees to the provisions of the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS). These talks are currently being held and will continue until early next year when a decision is made.

Under this agreement, if the Government signs it, services like water, postal services, education, banking, media services and health can become 'deregulated' and therefore at risk of privatisation.

To me the very worrying target is 'health', because it is inclusive of and depends on aspects of life which affect people most in their daily lives – things like adequate housing, clean water, income levels, a healthy environment, aged care and transport. I believe many would be negatively affected if Centrelink, which controls pensions and employment services, was privatised.

It is argued by some that private companies would run these facilities more efficiently, but it is obvious that profits would come from cost-cutting and reduction of services. Private companies are not into welfare!

An interesting sidelight into private 'efficiency' is that the public trains in the UK, deregulated by Margaret Thatcher, have now reverted to public ownership. All except the Channel Tunnel train. Rolling stock, upkeep and accidents had become so bad that the Government had to take control again, after huge

profits had been made by the private companies.

The GATS talks are continuing throughout November at Homebush, the scene of many angry protests. The GATS Agreement will not be finally settled until early 2003, so there is still time to campaign against these proposals.

The OWN Current Affairs discussion group has lobbied the Minister for Trade, Mark Vaile, on this subject and has received several letters from his office setting out, in some detail, the Government's position. This leads me to think that the Government is sensitive to letters from the public.

OWN members can have their own input into the debate for more openness and accountability from the Government in the only way they can, by writing letters, talking to our MPs, and informing people.

Muriel Hortin

Those brain cell blues – and blews.

At the end of her article last month, Enid Harrison says she hopes that it will provoke discussion. It will. Failing memory is a state which older people never fail to remember, often with an anxiety, which can be the cause of that failing memory. Who, with detergent in one hand and the handle of the fridge door in the other, has not felt panic at the thought of life behind a pool fence?

Many people live with an unacknowledged undercurrent of anxiety, older people being the more affected. They are aware of the dire results of a moment's inattention. So, anxiety

compounds forgetfulness into worry about memory loss.

Thus far I have not had much trouble with memory: dates are fine, times less so. There is a need to write times down, otherwise I find myself devising elaborate circumlocutions in order to hide from myself, as well as others, that I have forgotten an appointed time. Finances also present a challenge with EFTPOS, direct debits and credit transactions requiring endless mental arithmetic. I must remember to keep a record.

Most of all I need to remember twice-told tales. Years ago I asked my children to remind me if I fall into this tedious habit. They do, often. Today I am wondering how many times I have told that kindly therapist of the incident with the bubblers in the playground sixty-five years ago. Twice, or three, unforgivable times? Anxiously cogitating upon this I have a shower, not a long hot one these days, but a quick, cool refreshing, stimulating three minutes – and – oh, dammit, where are those bloody towels?

Helen Monaghan

Congratulations

Congratulations on *OWN Matters*: it is well-balanced, has something for everyone, and always has something to stimulate my thinking and action. Any subscriber who expects that everything will be of interest to her is one-eyed and selfish. Obviously there will be some parts that will not be of interest, but are necessary for those who are interested. Good luck and keep up the good work, like many others I thoroughly enjoy and appreciate your efforts.

Joan Lambert

Letters to the Editor

Christmas observances

I read with interest Helen McMaugh's article, *Gift Horses*. Years ago, when I observed Christmas, like her, I received gifts I neither needed nor wanted. I did recycle them by passing them on as gifts to others. It was necessary to keep good records so that the receiver had no connection with the original donor.

Gradually, the realisation struck me that the way most people observed the season was a farce: money spent on presents that were inappropriate, food and drink that were unnecessary. I have seen gifts put in the garbage within a week. Christmas is not a time of good cheer, let alone peace: debt, suicide, domestic violence, child abuse, psychiatric hospital admissions and family breakdowns all increase during the Christmas period. Jesus, were he alive today, would have nothing to do with such a festival.

My only concession is that I write to friends and relatives who live too far away for a visit or phone call. It serves as a reminder to keep in touch. I also buy unexpected appropriate gifts for family and friends throughout the year.

My other concern is the amount of imported 'junk' that proliferates in the shops at this time, masquerading as 'stocking fillers'. The same people who purchase these products as gifts are the first to complain about the lack of jobs for their children. If you must give Christmas gifts, choose something Australian made and of good quality, that you *know* will be welcome.

Joan Lambert

A form of discrimination?

I am pleased to see that OWN continues to include our address, phone and fax numbers, as well as an email address and web site in our newsletter.

I am concerned and frustrated that some organisations are beginning to promote their email address as the prime point of contact. Have they considered the number of people who do not have access to a computer, or who would really like to speak to someone straight away, and might perhaps have difficulty searching through phone books for the number to ring?

Neglecting to provide a choice of written, verbal or electronic contacts discriminates against so many people, including many older people, people with a disability and people who were born overseas.

Sadly, many people are feeling increasingly isolated in this electronic age. Those of us who use computers often marvel at the wonderful convenience of keeping in touch by email to friends and family around the world. But let's not forget that for many people, a kind word or information by phone, or a letter in the mailbox, is their only means of keeping in touch.

Yetty Windt

Publicly lampooning ...

Unlike Patricia Hampshire, I was amused by the parody on the National Anthem in October's *OWN Matters*.

It was surely a plea for compassion and a fair go for refugees as well as taking a derisive and funny poke at the

solemn chauvinism of national anthems.

I do not have respect for Howard's policy on refugees and deplore the government's cruel treatment of them.

No bearer of high office is automatically entitled to respect and should certainly be publicly lampooned if they do not uphold the ideals of social justice and compassion.

Muriel Hortin

Another lampooning...

I don't believe it! You're surely not serious, Patricia Hampshire? Do you still stand up, no matter where you are, when the British National Anthem, *God Save the Queen*, is played? After all, she is still the Queen of Australia... (No matter what the butler saw...)

Just because someone has used the tune of Advance Australia Fair to get an important point over, it doesn't mean disrespect to our fair country – it's only a tune, after all!

As for John Howard, not a day goes by without him being 'publicly lampooned', as you put it, in the daily press. Hardly anyone takes up the cudgels on his behalf. Is he beyond reproach? I don't think there are many like you, Patricia, who feel he is above criticism.

But like all of us, you are welcome to your beliefs.

Renee Simons

Unbelievable

In an internet conversation with a man in the US yesterday, I mentioned the Bali bombing. He typed back, "What bombing and where is Balie (sic)?"

Renee Simons

At and Beyond the Rocks

Our Happy Heart Weekend

In the true spirit of OWN, Nowra members extended hospitality to members of other groups from NSW to share a weekend at Jervis Bay. This was the fifth organised weekend away for OWN members and the first on the South Coast. Making the long train journey from places as far away as Newcastle, Woy Woy, Sydney and the Illawarra was a challenge, especially since it meant changing trains and carrying heavy bags. Despite this, our twenty-four guests were able to raise a happy smile for their drivers for the last 25 kilometres into our weekend site at the Field Station, adjacent to HMAS Creswell.

Thirty-five women aged from our early 60s to 95, determined to have a 'happy heart' time! We were especially delighted to welcome Lorna Gilmore who, at 95, happily joined in all the activities, including our walks, some of which taxed the stamina of a couple of her younger companions!

The small, creative and effective hospitality team from Nowra – Barbara Robertson, Anne Warren, Jo Krelle, Norma Bastock, Everaldo Garner and Ro Bailey – had created a fabulous setting to ensure the event would be one that everyone would remember.

A cuppa at the accommodation centre and soon we were chatting happily before dispersing to our various rooms. When we were told that the penalty for a lost key was \$100, it became a very prized item! There was one hiccup when number 6 key disappeared but fortunately it was recovered before too much psychological damage had been done!

As the shadows lengthened on that first evening, we strolled through

the grounds of HMAS Creswell (we needed special permission from the Administration to enter the Base) with crowds of curious kangaroos gravely watching our progress. Following a hearty two-course meal, we ended the day with fun and games organised by the hospitality team.

On Saturday most women rose early and, since it is said that Shoalhaven people like to walk, some found themselves on quite a long trek before breakfast. Others were content with Tai Chi, safely out of the wind, while the remainder lingered over cups of tea and idle chatter.

A sense of ease, so conducive to creating friendships, developed as we relaxed into the weekend. As the day promised to be cold and blustery we decided to explore various tourist spots, including the *Lady Denman* complex.

The highlight of the weekend was the concert on Saturday night. The hospitality team had imaginatively decorated the dining room with colourful balloons and glitter. We played games and told jokes and poetry with light-hearted zest. Who could forget the bouncy clown, the saucy net-stockinged floosies with their brilliant scarves and glittering jewellery? The Sydney Theatre Group stole the show with a light opera of pure delight; their polished performance the result of frenzied practice on Saturday afternoon, with Ann Cunnyngame accompanying the weird and wonderfully costumed players on her keyboard. You have to give it to the Theatre Group – they can produce entertainment at the drop of a hat. Circle dancing concluded the night with a candle dance, improvised by Anne Warren, which brought the evening to a gentle conclusion.

We remembered the victims of Bali in a final joining together of hands.

On Sunday the energetic Nowra women drove those brave enough to face the early morning, to Greenpatch, a beach famous for its thriving wild bird population and tranquil atmosphere. Some walked, some did Tai Chi on the beach. Half a dozen braved the cold waters, with Merle Hightet, from Sydney, even joining the dolphins. The last breakfast, another feast, and everyone began their journey home.

Nowra OWN members enjoyed the opportunity to show our hospitality, and sincerely thank all those who joined us for a truly wonderful 'Happy Heart Weekend'.

Isabel MacCallum

Hullo from Penrith

We have a great group of women who belong to Penrith OWN. Nine members attend Aqua Aerobics, ten members come to Tai Chi with our instructor Fay, others come to International Dancing and Yoga. Because our members choose the activities they want to attend not all members are known to each other, so it would be lovely if they could all meet at our Christmas get-together for a social chat.

Having a range of wellness activities is wonderful, but I become very frustrated at having to spend so much time ringing around trying to get on-going funding to pay facilitators. We manage to get limited funding to start a course, run it for one term, everyone gets excited and stimulated by the activity, then the funding runs out and we have to cancel the class! The tremendous increase in insurance means that

At and Beyond the Rocks

there are also increased costs of membership of the Community Centre and to attend classes. Added to that are the transport costs (we mostly have private buses out here) to get to the centre. It is so crucial for socially isolated women to be able to come to the Centre, where they have the chance of meeting people and enjoying a variety of classes. Well, that's off my chest!

Our group meets on the third Saturday of each month. We usually ask someone to speak or otherwise entertain us. A group of Irish singers from the Gaelic/Irish Club provided lovely listening entertainment for us at our last meeting.

On Thursday, 21 November Elizabeth and Irena will run our Craft Stall at the Lennox Shopping Centre in Emu Plains. Thanks for organising our Saturday meeting raffles all this year – the funds they raise pay for our insurance.

Some Penrith OWN members are also volunteers at "Our OWN Place", the drop-in centre we started some years ago in the Penrith Community Centre. It's open five days a week from 10am until 2pm. We plan to close from 13 December and re-open on 6 January. Thank you to all of you for the great job you do there.

Our end-of-year celebration will be a harbour cruise on 27 November.

We are also planning a Christmas afternoon tea break-up on Saturday, 14 December, where everyone will have the opportunity to meet our dance teacher, as well as seeing the dancers perform. More people may be inspired to join them!

Reporter, Caroline Davis, spoke to Thelma Anderson

Illawarra OWN

Since the AGM our membership has risen steadily. We meet fortnightly, and alternate between business and social meetings.

The recent death of Annette Smith, an active member of long standing, has deeply saddened us. Seventeen members of OWN formed a guard of honour at her funeral, which was much appreciated by her family. We will miss her.

Some of the events we have been involved in or have conducted over the past months include:

- A Tupperware party which, due to the number of people attending, attracted large orders. Our group was lucky to win a giant mixing bowl, which will be handy for future celebrations or as a raffle prize for a future fundraiser.
- A talk on investment for retirees saw members pondering the difference between allocated pensions, defined benefits and savings.
- Two different speakers on breast cancer who delivered the same strong message about the importance of early diagnosis.
- A Housing Forum which included living in retirement. Different members spoke of their current living situation, for instance, townhouses, units, retirement villages and caravan parks. A good discussion and ideas were aired in this meeting which led us to invite Barbara Burnham, a Sutherland OWN member who is also Secretary of the Retirement Village Association, to talk to us about the pros and cons of villages in the Illawarra area.
- A visit to Mission Australia's charity warehouse was followed by a lively lunch at a local restaurant, Chilli's.

- A lunch at Illawarra Leagues Club, a popular venue, for twenty of our members, who were fascinated by the flashing red light on their card, which announces when their order is ready! A great way to be heard above the chatter perhaps? Our lunches give us the opportunity to get to know other members on a deeper level, especially our new members.

- Five Illawarra members attended the OWN NSW state conference in Sydney in July. Two members also attended the national conference and AGM of OWN Australia in Canberra. The results: great venue, great food, and they learnt a lot.

- Our singing group, the *Silvert-OWNs*, continue to enhance numerous local functions, extending south to include two anniversaries: OWN Nowra's tenth, and OWN Kiama's first. They have also performed at different Probus groups and at the Town Hall for the Day of the Older Person. Inspirational!

Future events include a talk on Reclaim the Night, an exchange of recipes, and distribution of our local newsletter in early November.

Following its success last year, we are again planning to wrap and pack presents for children under the care of DoCS. Later, the social worker who gave us the children's names will collect the gifts and perform for us with her belly-dancing group, *Ibis*.

Future performances for the *Silvert-OWNs* include pre-Christmas events for carers in a number of different venues. Their creative approach to attracting new members to join OWN and to expounding OWN's philosophy is modelled on the NSW Theatre Group.

Reporter, Caroline Davis, spoke to Ceri Ritchie

At and Beyond the Rocks

Sydney Highlights

Members of OWN Sydney have played a considerable role this month in arranging and speaking at three forums on violence and abuse against older women. At long last it seems that professional workers are starting to pay more attention to the plight of older women who have, or are, experiencing violence and abuse.

The first forum, organised by the South Sydney Regional Liaison Committee, was called Older Women, Violence and Abuse: a forum for service providers. Keynote and support speakers spoke of the hidden nature of violence, the lack of resources for older women and the lack of relevant training for service providers. Robyn Sedger, who is with the Aged Abuse Monitoring Project in Penrith, reported that 13% of almost 2000 incidents of domestic violence in the Mount Druitt area in the first six months of this year concerned women aged between 50 and 84. She believes that the prevalence rates will be higher in years to come, as 21% of the population will be over 65 by 2030.

A second occasion was an Elder Abuse Seminar held by the Committee on Ageing and the Centre for Education and

Research on Ageing for older people. The panelists mostly spoke about institutional violence in nursing homes and hospitals. OWN member, Louise Anike, who is a long-term activist in this area, was well received when she spoke about her reservations about the term 'elder abuse'. Her concern is that elder abuse is not really treated as violence.

Louise also spoke to a gathering of service providers in Parramatta. There are 54 refuges in NSW and only three are for sole women – Blacktown, Liverpool and Bondi – and none in rural areas. It was reported that a refuge for sole women is about to be opened in Blacktown, and although it has not opened yet, the worker is already inundated with calls.

So, it is very timely that OWN Sydney is producing an *Older Women's Right To Safety* quilt, which we plan to launch at our OWN forum in 2003. The quilt is being completed by a group of OWN women drawing on Meg Bishop's experience.

"Wellness on Wednesdays" has become for some of us an oasis amongst our otherwise busy lives. It's about taking care of ourselves, having time to laugh and play a bit, to meet women we don't often catch up with and to learn new

skills! Our three physical facilitators – Alex Franczak, gentle exercise, Liz Ireland, drumming, and Nora Kemp, Tai Chi, are excellent leaders and very encouraging and supportive of older women. Meg facilitates a light-hearted discussion group while we beaver away at our quilt craft. The ages of women attending "Wellness on Wednesdays" range from early 50s to mid-90s! It's a great opportunity for energising and socialising, so do think about including one or more activities as part of your New Year resolution, and bring along a friend.

Our November Fish Lunch was held in Kiama in rather cool and damp conditions, but the warm and friendly networking ensured that those of us who travelled from Sydney, Illawarra and Nowra felt the trip was definitely worthwhile.

Our end-of-year party will be held on Friday 13 December. Everyone's welcome, especially as the sun will be shining and there will be lots of room outside!

Lastly, warmest thanks to our Nowra sisters who arranged a tremendous weekend in Booderee National Park. What a great time we had.

Joy Ross

Wollondilly Women's Holiday: An Invitation

Wollondilly OWN has planned a Women's Holiday at Myuna Bay on the Western foreshore of Lake Macquarie from Monday 24 to Friday 28 February 2003.

The accommodation is excellent – water-edge holiday units that accommodate five persons per unit, each with its own shower, etc.

The cost is \$223.85 per person or \$203.50 with a Seniors Card. A deposit of \$20 is required.

The price covers accommodation, linen, all meals, wine with dinner, transport to and from the railway

station and all activities including visits to Hunter Valley wineries, cheese tasting, visits to old Morpeth, Dancing Waters, picnics, lake cruises and coastal drives.

This is Wollondilly's first annual holiday and we are hoping many members from the other NSW groups will join us.

Contact Wendy Roberts 4683 6006 if you would like to book in or you can contact me on 4229 9504 for more information.

Barbara Malcolm

Dorothy does it for peace!

In early October, Dorothy Buckland-Fuller, a member of the OWN NSW Management Team, joined two coach-loads of people leaving Sydney to participate at a National Peace Demonstration at Pine Gap. Pine Gap is a US military base in the centre of Australia a few kilometres from Alice Springs. It houses the most advanced intelligence installations; it controls a number of satellites and can gather information from any part of the world, including Australia. It was located here in the 1960s and has played a major role in many US military operations, including the Gulf War and the current 'War on Terror'.

The Sydney group travelled for three days to join 350 other protesters from around Australia. The long tiring journey was followed by two days in searing heat protesting outside the American Base and one morning outside its Depot Facility. At 80, Dorothy dismisses these challenging conditions as unimportant because she is a dedicated peace activist who believes that the very existence of Pine Gap on Australian soil makes us a nuclear target and is infringing the sovereignty of our country, and this is unacceptable.

Whilst there, Dorothy, who was representing Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), joined up with a group of older women peace activists from Perth called *Raging Grannies*.

Although not a 'grannie' herself, Dorothy says she loves children and sees herself as a loving grannie to *all* children. This is why she is willing to set aside her own needs as she works to promote mutual respect and cooperation among nations, which she believes will help prevent future wars.

Dorothy would love to see a *Raging Grannies* group established in Sydney. The first group in the world to call themselves *Raging Grannies* met in 1986 in Canada. Several peace activists who had been doing street theatre began dressing up in outrageous hats and singing satirical protest songs against nuclear submarines, uranium mining, nuclear power, militarism, racism and corporate greed. They were sometimes arrested, but never taken to court. Like our OWN Theatre Group, *Raging Grannies* perform at rallies, schools, festivals and community events. Their theme song is: *Oh, we are a gaggle of grannies/Urging you off your fannies/We're raising our voice/We're sick of your toys/NO MORE WAR!* In addition to wanting an end to military spending, they also target other abuses in society such as environmental and social issues. Anyone interested in starting a group of *Raging Grannies* in Sydney?

**Reporter, Dorothy Cora, spoke
to Dorothy Buckland Fuller**

Keeping the 'Peace'?

Since the second world war the United States Government has bombed 21 countries!

China 1945-46, 1950-53; Korea 1950-53; Guatemala 1954, 1960, 1967-69; Indonesia 1958; Cuba 1959-61; Congo 1964; Peru 1965; Laos 1964-73; Vietnam 1961-73; Cambodia 1969-70; Lebanon 1983-84; Grenada 1983; Libya 1986; El Salvador 1980s; Nicaragua 1980s; Panama 1989; Bosnia 1985; Sudan 1998; Former Yugoslavia 1999; Iraq 1991, 2003 and Afghanistan 1998, 2001-02.

We are told there is no option but to wage war on Iraq. But the options are clear. We bomb innocent people and hope that this will result in a change of leader. Or, we allow UN weapons inspectors to do their job,

we work for a change in regime rather than the leader, we allow medicines and food into Iraq and we avoid a humanitarian disaster.

There is no legal justification for any invasion or associated bombing of Iraq. There is no hard evidence that Iraq possesses any weapons of mass destruction and there is no substantiated connection between the Government of Iraq, September 11, and the al Qaeda network. Iraq's neighbours, the ones most at risk from Iraq's weapons, are against this war, as are top military professionals in Britain and the US, many international organisations and countries around the world, and a great majority of people in the US.

From **New Internationalist**
www.newint.org/index4.html

Dust if you must!

Dust if you must, but wouldn't it be better

*To paint a picture or write a letter,
Bake a cake or plant a seed,*

*Ponder the difference between want
and need?*

*Dust if you must but there's not much
time,*

*With rivers to swim and mountains
to climb,*

Music to hear and books to read,

Friends to cherish and life to lead.

*Dust if you must, but the world's out
there.*

*With the sun in your eyes, the wind
in your hair,*

A flutter of snow, a shower of rain.

This day will not come around again.

Dust if you must but bear in mind,

Old age will come and it's not kind.

And when you go, and go you must,

You, yourself, will make more dust.

Anon.

Alcohol: confused with mixed messages?

Almost daily we read about research into the effects of alcohol on older people. This month, Danish researchers, after studying the drinking habits of nearly 2000 volunteers over 15 years, claimed that the benefits of drinking red wine include a reduced risk of developing Alzheimer's and dementia. Good news!

The bad news is that new research by the British charity, Alcohol Concern, claims that older women and men are drinking excessively due to a lack of social support and the gradual disappearance of close-knit communities. Their research suggests that older people use alcohol to kill pain, particularly from arthritis and rheumatism, or to help with insomnia.

Dealing with bereavement, retirement, loss of dignity through unemployment or dependence on others, health problems and financial worries, can also lead to overuse of alcohol.

Apparently the number of older women drinking more than the weekly guidelines of 14 units per week has increased from 4 per cent in 1988 to 7 per cent in 2000 – a rise of 75 per cent.

The huge rise in drinking among older women even exceeds the rate of unsafe drinking in young women, which has more than doubled over the same period. A worrying trend.

References:

Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand www.alcohol.org.nz/

Alcohol Concern (UK)
www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/

Aged Concern (UK)
www.ageconcern.org.uk/

Like computers?

Ever noticed that the older we get, the more we're like computers?

We start out with lots of memory and drive, then we become outdated, crash at odd moments, acquire errors in our systems, and have to have our parts replaced!

Anon.

Diffuse Hair Loss (Alopecia)

Diffuse alopecia is a form of hair loss which tends to affect the whole scalp, rather than specific areas of it. The hair loss is not associated with symptoms of itching or pain and can sometimes be corrected.

On average, about 100 hairs are lost from the scalp daily. Due to the effects of infection, damage, inflammation or pregnancy, hair growth may become altered so that it is all at the same stage of development. Accordingly, large numbers of hairs are lost at the same time, resulting in diffuse alopecia.

Certain drugs, for instance anti-cancer drugs, attack the growing cells of the hair root and can cause hair loss. The major hormone lack or deficiency that causes diffuse hair loss is decreased thyroid function. Hair loss may in fact be the first sign of thyroid disease, and anti-thyroid drugs can cause diffuse hair loss which may become very marked.

Anticoagulant (blood-thinning) drugs can also cause diffuse hair loss. Iron deficiency, even in the absence of anaemia, can cause problems with hair growth and can cause diffuse alopecia.

Treatment depends upon the cause. Tests will be performed by the doctor to make sure that the thyroid gland is working well and that the iron levels are normal. In most cases of diffuse alopecia, no treatment is needed, as the

condition is self-limiting. In some people, the hair loss diminishes and the hair regrows. However, it is unusual for it to return to its original density. In other people, the hair loss continues and the scalp hair remains generally thin. Fortunately, complete baldness is very rare.

Diffuse hair loss can be very distressing, particularly in women and can lead to loss of confidence and even depression. Considerable support and sympathy are needed from family and friends.

www.surgerydoor.co.uk/medcon/detail.asp

The Aged Care Rights Service

The Aged Care Rights Service (TARS) promotes the rights of older residents of supported accommodation in NSW. It is independent of both government and industry.

Retirement villages, serviced apartments, hostels, nursing homes and boarding houses are all supported accommodation. The TARS service is available to people who are over 55 years and who live in, or plan to live in, supported accommodation in NSW. They can advise on the legislation that sets in place the costs and procedures at the time of entry. Family and friends can approach TARS on behalf of a resident.

The service provides telephone advice, advocacy and negotiation. Workers can meet with residents and residents' committees and assist residents in hearings before the Residential Tenancies Tribunal, Guardianship board, etc. TARS also offers workshops and guest speakers for staff and workers in the community. All services are free and strictly confidential.

Phone TARS on 9281 3600 or toll-free 1800 424 079 if you are outside Sydney.

Book Review

You don't have to like cooking to enjoy *How to Cook a Galah* by Laurel Evelyn Dyson. The book is filled with stories and quotes from many sources, including old letters, diaries, recipe books, memoirs and oral records, and contains old photographs and paintings, as well as the recipes, some of them with intriguing titles such as "Station Jack", "Slippery Bob", "Mittagong Dumpling" and "Jerrawangala Honey Cakes".

The author, who originally trained as a botanist, writes about cookery traditions amongst Aboriginal people, continuing through colonial times up to the present and shaped by the many communities who have settled here. She has gathered material over many years, through travel and research, and has tried out every recipe in the book!

The book costs \$29.95. I heartily recommend it as a treat for your self or a gift for a special person.

Pat Zinn

Creative Writers Dine ...

The third dining venture for the former Creative Writers group was to the Brasserie at Silks, that Devil's Playground of poker machines attached to City Tatts. Helen tried to win the \$200 jackpot by swiping her membership card, but no luck, and no champagne for lunch.

The tall, dark, spunky waiter taking meal orders impressed us with his pony tail and gold earrings. We dined on delicious lasagne, pie, grilled fish, and omelette, washed down with reasonably priced vino. There was no knitting of brows or genteel disputation over the bill as we all paid separately at time of ordering.

An enquiry into writing projects elicited the usual excuses. Polly and Joan claim to be on holidays

but thinking about writing. Pam is excused because of her uni course assignments and Jean assiduously attends an Ashfield writing class. Helen is busy on her memoirs about all the rented places she's lived in since her salad days.

We finished with excellent coffee and Polly daintily devoured a chocolate friand. Two gamblers in our midst departed to play the pokies and we fear the worst for their housekeeping money.

Bon Vivant

Film Review

Taking Sides is a superbly acted and presented film with memorable shots of war torn Berlin during the reign of Hitler. It tells the story of Wilhelm Furtwangler, world famous conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, and his interrogation by an uncouth, bullying American Major played to the hilt by Harvey Keitel.

There are horrifying documentary shorts to remind us, if we need reminding, of the appalling death camps and the cruelty, futility and stupidity of racism and war. There are underlying layers that will have you examining your views of morals, loyalty, and choices.

Furtwangler, played by Stellan Skarsgard, hoped that music, which was his life, was above politics and would inspire, enrich, and nourish the people of his homeland, but he became caught in the net of this fearsome Nazi regime. If he left Germany and his beloved orchestra he would have been an enemy alien in many countries and interned, and an end to his music.

The humiliation and agony of this man of music is brilliantly portrayed. A 'must see' before it leaves the few theatres where it is showing – Valhalla, Roseville and Chauvel.

Joan Johns

Get me to the show on time!

You know how it is, being taken out for dinner and a show. To go out at night, into the city, is a treat in itself. And tonight, I'm going with my best boy. (Thirty nine years since he was born, the longest baby in the hospital, and I swear he's getting taller...or am I getting shorter? I can stand up easily under his outstretched arm.)

So off we go, to his favourite Thai restaurant in Brunswick. Lovely leisurely meal, but maybe a bit *too* leisurely? Time is fleeting; we mustn't be late, strictly at 8pm. Quick, into the car! And then find a park. Damn...not a space to be had. Don't these Melbourne people ever go home? Found one, but it's miles away.

Now we're running, and I'm on my back," he sez. And I not?" So up I hop. He's I'm clutching his shoulders, one skinny bone to another streets and I'm sure I'm we make it to the theatre

He bends, I dismount, and we proceed to the foyer with as much unconcern as if we'd arrived in a stretch limo.

I can't remember the name of the play, but I remember how we got there!

Dorothy Cox

Insomnia

As we get older, the likelihood that we will spend a few nights tossing and turning increases dramatically. Contrary to popular assumptions, however, our need for sleep does not lessen with age. Nor are sleeping difficulties an inevitable problem of ageing.

What is true is that, as we age, our sleeping patterns will likely shift because our circadian cycle naturally advances. As we get older, many of us fall asleep earlier in the evening and wake up earlier in the morning. We may wake more often during the night and nap with greater frequency during the day. For many women, this natural shift is exacerbated by the need to use the bathroom, by the pain and discomfort of chronic illness, by emotional problems and by different medications.

Sometimes insomnia is caused by certain habits such as having an irregular sleeping schedule, spending too much time in bed and using bed for activities other than sleep and sex, for example, watching television or working. Caffeine or alcohol consumption and the overuse of sleep medications can also disturb sleep. Too little physical exercise or exercise too soon before bedtime can cause problems, as can uncomfortable or noisy surroundings. Insomnia can also be a side effect of medications such as antidepressants, decongestants, corticosteroids, bronchodilators and anti-hypertensives.

The first task is to try and identify the cause of the insomnia and to do something about it. For instance, if it is due to anxiety or stress, relaxation may be of use. Some aromatherapists recommend lavender for relaxation, while others say herbal remedies also help. A massage may help you relax, even if given during the day.

Your doctor may recommend short-term use of prescription sleep aids called hypnotics during times of increased stress, anxiety or major changes. Also, sleeping medications can be effective if your sleep problems have become intractable and a cycle of sleeplessness and worry has developed.

However, drugs used for insomnia are not ideal; they have side-effects and tend to be addictive. Sometimes, when they are stopped, insomnia tends to recur. Herbal remedies are popular and appear to be relatively safe when used in moderation.

If you lie in bed worrying that you won't be able to fall asleep night after night for months, your doctor may refer you to a sleep clinic. These clinics can help determine the cause of the sleep problem. Sleep clinics use behavioural approaches to help you learn to manage thoughts and anxieties and to change behaviours that interfere with healthful sleep.

Finally, you are the best judge as to whether you are having sleep problems. If you do not wake in the morning feeling rested, it doesn't really matter what time you go to bed or what time you wake up. Talk to your doctor. No matter how old we get, we all need to wake sufficiently refreshed to take on the day.

Extract from Harvard Medical School Consumer Information
www.hms.harvard.edu/

Whose Home?

Outside our local cake shop is a sign, "Home Made Pies". Sounds enticing? Just the words, "Home Made", make it sound better.

But think about it. Whose home are they made in? Susan Renouf's? Bob Hawke's? The Governor General's? Did small children help?

Maybe something 'home made' is not really all that wonderful. The cook may have had dirty hands, unclean finger nails. Lots of other repulsive, appetite destroying ideas come to mind.

I've been in homes where cats walk freely over the kitchen benches while preparation of a meal is in progress. Some indulgent mothers allow their small progeny to roll out the dough, which gets greyer and greyer as the process goes on, and the kids often have runny noses which they clean with the backs of their hands. I've actually had proud mothers offer me biscuits made by their children, and they've told me quite seriously that they removed the biro dents before they baked them (the biscuits, not the children.)

And of course, not everything 'home made' is edible. Not everyone is a Cordon Bleu cook. You wouldn't have wanted to eat anything made by my grandmother. Her home was clean enough, but she was the worst cook ever. She used to stand over me waiting for praise while I attempted to swallow the things she served up. I was a good actress. I had to say everything was lovely, because she would have complained to my father about me.

Who wraps the stuff? How is it transported to wherever it's going? In the back of a hot car? How long does it stay there? Who decides the "use by" date?

Home made? Not for me, thanks.

Renee Simons

In this my winter

*How long it seems since I stood
And felt the texture of grass
Spring underfoot
A month, a moon has passed.
My whole childhood.
My feet forget the feel of mud
Squelching between toes,
Dry dust, falling like ash
To coat and cover skin.*

*How long since I rolled down
A tussocky hill?
Gathered clover flowers
To weave a garland?
Oh! A lifetime has passed.
My spring, my summer spent.
Memories. Autumnal golden leaves
Lie in drifts
Defying winter's chill.*

*But I cry "Welcome"
To my winter.
My last season on this earth.
I have watched my world's life flower,
Grow to full bloom.
Each season a brief hour.
In this my winter,
Buds, fruits and flowers,
Gathered from my store,
Are blazoned on my roof tree.
All who pass my door
May choose a gift.*

*To my dearest dears
I give my love
And all that I could gather
In season and out.
But oh! Their gifts to me
Cannot be measured.
Look how they fill my house!
Spill through windows and doors.
Riot round my garden,
Delight my eyes.*

*My head is a granary,
Close guarded
Lest the harvest be plundered
And escape this storing place.
The child, the girl, the woman of me
Lie in this carapace.
No bee has felt more sweet the honey's comb.
Let it be written in stone.
The harvest is done.
The reapers are gone home.*

Judith Mustard

Help for the Anxious

According to the 1997 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, anxiety disorders are the most common mental disorders in Australia. 1.3 million Australians experience an anxiety disorder.

The Anxiety Disorders Alliance (ADA), a Standing Committee of the Association for Mental Health NSW Inc., offers a range of services for people with anxiety disorders and their families and friends throughout NSW.

Info and Referral Line: 9570 4519

Outside Metropolitan Sydney: 1800 626 055

FESTIVE CHRISTMAS CAKE

(No fat, no sugar, no egg yolks, and absolutely yummy!)

1 kg mixed dried fruit
1 1/2 cups wholemeal SR Flour
1/3 cup unprocessed bran
1 tbspn marmalade
1 tspn nutmeg
1 tspn cinnamon
1/3 cup skim milk
1 tbspn whisky if desired
1 cup fruit juice (orange, apple or grape juice)
3 egg whites (discard yolks)
Egg white to brush top of cake
Pkt blanched almonds (some for cake and keep some for decoration)

Cover dried mixed fruit with water and bring to boil for 1 minute.

Drain and soak overnight, or several hours, with fruit juice and whisky.

Preheat the oven to moderate.

Fold all other ingredients into prepared fruit, slowly add skim milk.

Place in a non-stick cake tin 20cm/8" which has the bottom and sides lined with two thicknesses of Gladbake paper. (This is most important because other papers stick to the cake).

Bake for 1 hour in moderate oven, then reduce the temperature to slow for a further 30-45 minutes.

Place the cooked cake in an airtight tin or some such for 15 minutes for easy removal. Keeps well in the freezer. Decorate with holly.

Joy Ross

NOTICES

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 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.

Aqua Fitness Facilitator Wanted

The Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre is looking for a new Aqua Fitness Facilitator to work two hours per week on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10am to 11 am during school terms at the Bankstown RSL Club pool. The rate of pay is \$35 per hour.

Please contact Jan Malley, Project Worker, phone 9708 2245 or fax 9796 4950 Mobile: 0413 001 261

Friends of the Theatre Group

Please let us know if you are coming to our Christmas Lunch on Tuesday 17 December so that we can book our table/s.

Phone Merle Highet 9569 3836

OWN Publications

I'd like to help ... A capacity building project on Leadership

includes four discussion guides on leadership and capacity building for older women.

Free!

YOU Can Make a Difference: A Guide to Consumer Advocacy.

\$5 includes postage and handling.

Tell Me More ... Voices of Older Women.

\$8 includes postage and handling.

A Picture of Wellness: The Story of the Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre.

\$8 includes postage and handling.

Please send your order with cheque or credit card details to OWN, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000.

Women's Electoral Lobby

End of Year and 30th Birthday Celebration

Please join us for drinks and nibbles to acknowledge people we have worked with on feminist issues, our supporters and those involved in policy debates of importance to women. And also to help us celebrate 30 years of lobbying!

Monday, 2 December 2002

66 Albion Street, Surry Hills

6.30 pm for 7.00 pm until 8.30pm

RSVP by 29 November 9212 4374

or email welnsw@comcen.com.au

Computer Course

If you're interested in attending computer training in the New Year, please phone the office on 9247 7046 and put your name down. If you've already done the course, it's ok to do it again if you feel the need!

RUM Week

1-8 December

RUM (Return Unwanted Medicines) Week is part of a campaign funded by the NSW Government to encourage more people to use the free 'Return Unwanted Medicines' service offered by every pharmacy in NSW. The week is designed to bolster awareness of the health and environmental risks associated with storing and incorrectly disposing of out-of-date, and unwanted medicines. It is a great reminder to go through our medicines chest now and get rid of all those out-of-date pills – just take them to your nearest chemist. Remember, pouring them down the toilet can have really bad effects on our waterways somewhere down the track.

Now, when friends ask, you can answer that all important question:

Where are the other OWN Groups in NSW?

Ashfield Greek	Maria Camelin, 49 Catherine Street, Punchbowl 2196	9790 5961
Bellingen	Jude Roseth, 1/7 Caseys Lane, Bellingen 2454	6655 0874
Bankstown Greek	Evie Dakanal, 43 Saurine Street, Bankstown 2200	9785 8488
Illawarra	Pam Peacock, PO Box 34, Austinmer 2515	4267 5962
Kiama	Jeanette Hindmarsh, C.H.C PO Box 276 Kiama 2533	4233 1033
Macarthur	Macarthur OWN, 283 Queen Street, Campbelltown 2560	4627 2792
Mid-Mountains	Sue Hardwick, 7 Orient Street, Lawson 2783	4759 1611
Newcastle	OWN Newcastle, PO Box 847, Hamilton 2303	4967 2500
Nowra	Barbara Robertson, 9 Cyrus Street, Hyams Beach 2540	4443 9317
Penrith	Thelma Anderson, 102 Coeland Street, Penrith 2750	4731 6212
Shellharbour City	Nan Pitt, 68 Porter Avenue, Mt. Warrigal 2528	4297 2828
Southern Highlands	Margaret Connor, C/- Bowral CHC, Bowral 2576	4861 0369
Sutherland	Noreen Hewett, 12/17 Wilbar Avenue, Cronulla 2230	9523 9158
Wagga Wagga	Muriel Waddell, 56 Grove Street, Wagga Wagga, 2650	6922 6876
Wollondilly	Wendy Roberts, WHC, PO Box 266, Tahmour 2573	4683 6006
Woy Woy	Heather McKenzie, 121 Woy Woy Road, Woy Woy 2256	4342 2197
Wyong	June Goss 36 Albinga Road, Gwandalan 2259	4976 2565
Sydney	Joy Ross, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000	9247 7046

Give a special friend a special gift!

Take out an eighteen month subscription to *OWN Matters* and save \$10!

An annual subscription to *OWN Matters* is normally \$20.

Between 1 December 2002 and 15 January 2003, you can take out an eighteen month gift subscription, worth \$30, for only \$20 – a saving of \$10!

To benefit from this special offer, please send your payment, before 15 January, to:
OWN Matters OWN NSW, 87 Lower Fort Street Millers Point NSW 2000.

Recipient's Name (please print) _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

Payment method:

I enclose a cheque for \$ _____ made payable to OWN NSW

Please debit the following credit card for \$ _____ Visa Mastercard Bankcard

Card number: _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ Exp. date __/__/__

Name on card (please print) _____

Signature _____

**IF UNDELIVERED PLEASE RETURN TO:
87 Lower Fort Street
Millers Point NSW 2000**

***OWN Matters*
Older Women's Network NSW Inc.**

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