



OWN MATTERS

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

No. 18 May 2003

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Please consider...

With so much disaster, destruction and dehumanising occurring in the world, it is tempting to turn inward. Concentrating on ourselves can be comforting, for a short while.

Another way to deal with depressing world circumstances is to give time and energy to our OWN organisation. Working to achieve a better life has many benefits, one of them being to help dispel the despondency we feel during periods of conflict and suffering, another is to strengthen our sense of connectedness with others.

Next month, nomination forms for the OWN NSW Management Team will be sent out in OWN Matters. The present members of the Team, many of whom have served for almost three years, will be standing down. Some will work more closely within their local OWN groups while others will help to form new groups. Some intend putting more energy into working at the national level and others will involve themselves more with the Theatre Group, the Aboriginal Support Circle, and the Wellness and Advocacy Coordination Groups. Their commitment will undoubtedly enrich the OWN issues that they take up.

Our Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting on the 24 and 25 July is fast approaching. To replenish numbers on the Management Team, new women need to come forward. We hope a number of you are thinking seriously about nominating for a position on the Management Team as we steer our state body through to bigger and better things in 2003-2004.

Our constitution states that at least six members of the Team must come from regional groups, so please give some serious thought to using your expertise and energy to keep the momentum going!

Pat Simpson

OWN Matters

is the Newsletter of the
Older Women's Network
NSW 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
your contact details.

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

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Point of View

To see the graphic scenes on TV of the Iraqis rejoicing at the fall of Saddam Hussein and to see the end of that brutal regime filled me with an overwhelming sense of relief and joy. My first reaction was that maybe the war had been justified after all.

When the euphoria had somewhat abated, I began to have second thoughts and a sense of foreboding that perhaps this unilateral decision on the part of USA and Britain to bomb Iraq may not be the guarantee of peace in the future.

Was it morally justified? Bush's reason for letting loose the dogs of war was that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. None, however, were found. I thought of the millions of people world wide who had been so strongly opposed to a savage war unleashed against a small, poorly defended country where half the population is under 15 years of age. This war was opposed by the Security Council and the great European Union powers who had urged an extended weapons inspection and a more moral intervention without bombs and air strikes. It was a war that was obviously going to result in chaos and the destruction of the country's infrastructure, which is happening already with the scenes of wholesale looting and anarchy.

Can freedom and democracy really come out of such a brutal, unnecessary war, with thousands of civilians dead or mutilated, their homes and lives destroyed? The millions of people around the world who have marched against the war have rejected the idea that power can be substituted for morality.

I continue to hope that our peace movement in Australia will gain strength and that we continue to press for the return of all our troops from a place where we had no business to be in the first place.

Muriel Hortin

Depends on your point of view!

Operation Iraqi Freedom? I don't think so. It's more like Operation Let's Run a Race, but First Let Me Break Your Knees.

After dropping not hundreds, but thousands of bombs on Baghdad, when a marketplace was mistakenly blown up and civilians killed, a US army spokesman implied that the Iraqis were blowing themselves up!

"They're using very old stock. Their missiles go up and come down." If so, may we ask how this squares with the accusation that the Iraqi regime is a threat to world peace?

When the Arab TV station al-Jazeera shows civilian casualties it's denounced as "emotive" Arab propaganda aimed at orchestrating hostility towards the "Allies", as though Iraqis are dying only in order to make the "Allies" look bad.

But the awed, breathless footage of aircraft carriers, stealth bombers and cruise missiles arcing across the desert sky on American, British and Australian TV is described as the "terrible beauty" of war.

Arundhati Roy (author of *The God of Small Things*)

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

After a very busy March, it was a relief to take a bit of a breather during April in preparation for our next big thing, planning for the State Conference in July.

An official evaluation of OWN's Seniors Week projects has been undertaken for the Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care (DADHC). The *Listen Up to Older Women* storytelling events were deemed extremely successful by organisers, participants and audiences alike. Individual participants in the Fostering Wellness project were extremely impressed with what they saw and experienced at the various centres they visited. Hopefully, their enthusiasm and energy will be translated into the establishment of wellness programs in their local areas. We look forward to continuing our association with DADHC in future years so that positive ageing programs in their varied forms can be continued.

Mollie Smith has been working hard for some time to establish an OWN group at Parramatta, and with a public meeting set for Monday 23 June, this dream may become a reality. If you have friends in the Parramatta area, please encourage them to attend the public meeting. There will be more details in the June issue of *OWN Matters*.

Most people would agree that organisations that speak with knowledge and credibility at the federal, state and local level are listened to in the ever-increasing clamour of voices in our democracy. To be fully representative of a group's membership is also an important factor. To speak with the authority of full representation with one voice determined by its members is arguably the most important tenet of all. At present OWN Australia is only representing nine out of eighteen groups in NSW. The Management Team would like it to represent all eighteen! With this in mind, we are proposing constitutional changes to make this happen.

In brief, we are recommending that the affiliation fees from NSW groups to OWN Australia be paid by OWN NSW. An article, *About OWN Australia*, discussing the thinking behind the changes is included in this issue. The Management Team has asked groups to discuss the proposal and provide feedback.

Hope you all had a happy and fruitful choc-binge break at Easter and have come back safe and sound to participate in OWN after a well-deserved break

**Pat Simpson, Mollie Smith,
Cate Turner and Anne Warren**

Fostering Wellness

What fun! Fancy being provided with free hotel accommodation, free meals and vibrant company for three days in Sydney!

Muriel Waddell and Judith Constable from Wagga Wagga, Marge Bosley and Annie Pickering from Macarthur, Anne Warren and Gretina Nortin from Nowra, Gwen Knipe and Pat Carlton from Newcastle were the lucky OWN members invited to join Dorothy Cora, OWN NSW, and Joy Ross from Sydney OWN, to explore and experience OWN's Model of Wellness. Newcastle member, Gwenda Fulford, also joined the group as an observer, at her own expense, because she was so interested in learning more about Wellness Centres.

The three days were well planned; Sutherland on Monday, Penrith

and Bankstown on Tuesday, and Sydney and Northside on Wednesday. A busy, but fun-filled schedule focused primarily on information sharing, but also included some great experiential moments – exercise and international dance classes at Sutherland and drumming with Sydney! The opportunity to participate and experience the warmth and camaraderie at all the Centres was priceless. We were able to appreciate what is so different about the OWN Model of Wellness.

We would like to sincerely thank everyone from these groups who so willingly contributed their time, experiences, information, and suggestions for the benefit of those of us wishing to embark on the same adventure.

Needless to say the Fostering

Wellness group also enjoyed themselves 'out of hours' – some, who shall be nameless, behaving somewhat disgracefully in public places! The NSW town of Tibooburra has a special meaning for us all now as it sparked wonderful exchanges between Marge and Muriel who reminisced about early years spent there. The staff at various eating establishments are to be commended for their patience in dealing with the most raucous table in the restaurant.

Thanks must go to Dorothy Cora and Joy Ross for their cheerful shepherding and accompanying of our group. Much was learned, and I am sure we all returned home full of inspiration and enthusiasm to get Wellness Programs of some sort included in our OWN group.

Pat Carlton

About OWN Australia

In 1985, a small group of perceptive older women in the Combined Pensioners' Association (now CPSA) realised that their particular needs were not being addressed by CPSA or other older people's organisations and sought funding for a pilot project called *The Older Women's Network Educational Program*. At the completion of the project, the Older Women's Network was established as a self-help group whose aim was to empower older women through participation in decision making about issues that concern and interest us. In 1991, the newly incorporated group moved into premises at Millers Point, and with a small recurrent government grant and dedicated volunteer workers, OWN expanded into other states.

OWN Australia was formed at a specially convened Think Tank at Elanora Heights in 1993 attended by older women from all states and the ACT. There are currently OWN groups in Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia, NSW and the ACT.

Management: A National Council on which State and Territory groups are represented manages OWN Australia. The Council consists of a Convener, Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer, as well as four other councillors, of whom no more than three can come from any one State or Territory. Members of the National Council are elected at alternate Annual General Meetings and can only be elected to an office for two terms, that is, four years.

Membership: Only a group can be a member of Australia A. Each group pays a capitation fee of \$2.20 per member to become an affiliate of OWN A. Each group is entitled to two votes in all General Meetings and at National Conferences. In NSW, nine

groups out of a total of eighteen groups are paid-up members of OWN A.

Funding: From 1993 to 1997, OWN Australia received annual operational funding through the Office of the Status of Women which enabled it to maintain an office and employ an administration worker. With the election of the Howard government, recurrent funding was lost, and OWN A now survives on project funding through the Office of the Status of Women within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Projects focus on research initiatives which advance the political, social, financial and personal status of older women, and which also correspond to federal government's priorities.

Purpose: OWN Australia represents its affiliated groups at the national level with representatives on a number of federal policy-making bodies. It makes policy submissions to Senate and other enquiries on issues such as income security, health and aged care and is often consulted by government on such issues. OWN A provides opportunities for older women to familiarise themselves with current issues, to speak out on issues of concern and to have these concerns heard at the national level. Membership of OWN A is something to be used and valued.

Why should all NSW Groups belong to OWN A?

All strong organisations have representation at the local, state and federal level. Speaking with 'one voice' is a part of that strength. As only nine NSW groups belong to the federal body out of a possible eighteen, this means that not all members of OWN groups in NSW are

represented at the national level.

The OWN NSW Management Team has moved to correct this situation through a proposed amendment to the OWN NSW constitution. The amendment has been circulated to all NSW groups for comment and will be voted on at the NSW State Conference on the 24 and 25 July 2003.

The proposed amendment will be an addition to point 4 and will read 4.4 "Each member group will have its OWN Australia affiliation and capitation fees paid by OWN NSW."

OWN NSW has the funds to pay these fees. Even though this action will raise only \$1500 per annum for OWN A, it will assist it to keep operating in times of financial hardship.

The Management Team of OWN NSW has deemed that this is a priority issue, and would like all NSW groups to send comments and feedback on this proposal to 87 Lower Fort Street following their discussions.

Pat Simpson

Advocacy Training

Work the System: An Introduction to Systems Advocacy is a one-day training course provided by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre for anyone who uses the system or helps others to understand how the system works. It's on Wednesday 28 May 2003.

The cost of \$145 includes all course materials, lunch and refreshments.

Please call Sarah Mitchell or Carolyn Grenville for more information on 9299 7833 or email smitchell@piac.asn.au.

Listen Up to Older Women

The Older Women's Network Sutherland took an active part in Seniors Week by holding a storytelling event, "Listen Up to Older Women", at The Pensioners Hall, Sutherland, On 19 March 2003. Seniors Week 2003, through the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC), provided a small amount of funding for a pre-event training workshop and refreshments on the day.

Since a lot of our members are inexperienced in public speaking, the workshop, led by Pearlle McNeill who has professional skills in storytelling, engendered an immediate sense of confidence. By the end of the workshop we had eight volunteer speakers who were to tell their own stories the following week.

Sounds like a simple project doesn't it? It is only when things get underway that you realise 'simple' isn't the adjective you need! Every leaflet, flyer, advertisement had to be approved by the Media Unit at DADHC before we could distribute them, and emails flew backwards and forwards at an alarming rate. Bookings for the function had to be organised and DADHC needed to know exactly how we were going to explain to any unfortunate visitor who arrived at the door without having booked that we had a 100 chairs and they were number 101! We knew we could cope, flying in on a wing and a prayer is something OWN women are really good at, but could we convince DADHC?

I'm sure the young woman who sent the large, heavy box of Seniors Week Programs which landed on my doorstep has never suffered from a 75 year-old back. Their contribution to Ageing and Disability immediately took on a new perspective!

Catering was the next dilemma. We decided on lunch for our guests from Nowra and Illawarra OWN and afternoon tea for our audience. A catering team was formed and the debate began. Never has the hot savoury versus assorted sandwiches assumed such significance.

Timing became critical. The morning activities at Sutherland OWN Wellness Centre had to finish in time for lunch which in turn had to finish in time for the 'Listen Up' program to begin. In the meantime, the same hall had to be completely re-arranged for seating purposes.

Evaluation forms arrived from DADHC; we were ready to be put to the test. What would the audience actually say of our efforts?

Inevitably the great day arrived.

No more time for nerves, this was it. So how did it go?

It was a lot of fun. All the hard work by our members paid off. The entertainment generously provided by the Illawarra SilvertOWNS was a great success. Our speakers told their stories, amusing, factual, sad, and always entertaining. They were all warmly appreciated by the audience.

Reading the Evaluation Forms before returning them (uncensored!) to DADHC confirmed our own feeling that the afternoon had been a success. One evaluation asked for Belly Dancing and "something adventurous, like canoeing", but in the main they thanked us for our efforts and requested the same again next year.

What more could we ask?

Barbara Whiteman

Save Medicare!

Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association of NSW (CPSA) recently initiated an alliance of organisations opposed to Federal Government changes to Medicare. OWN NSW has become a member of the Save Medicare Alliance, which is open to any not-for-profit non-party-political organisation which agrees with its aim and objectives.

The broad objectives of the Save Medicare Alliance are to:

- Increase the Medicare levy and abolish tax incentives to high income earners.
- Provide rebates for medical practitioners working in rural communities to be higher than for metropolitan medical practitioners.
- Ensure that doctors who bulk-bill receive an increased and adequate rebate.
- Include dental treatment in Medicare.

Other aims are to have Commonwealth-State Health Care Agreements calculated as a percentage of GNP, to maintain the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and for Centrelink's Pharmaceutical Allowance to be increased to be the equivalent of one script per week for each Centrelink Pharmaceutical Allowance recipient.

The Save Medicare Alliance has planned a rally for 12 noon, 8 May, 2003 at Chifley Square.

Theatre Group Report

Seven of us flew to Armidale on 13 March to participate in the Armidale Women's Comedy Festival over four days. On the day we arrived, we entertained a large audience in the Autumn Lodge Community Centre with some old fashioned sing-a-longs, which I must say were very well received.

We were presenting our Domestic Violence show in the local church hall the next day and, as usual, we had some very mixed emotions from the audience. We really strike a chord with some people because, sadly, domestic violence is happening all over.

Saturday arrived, the big day! Rehearsal in the Armidale University Hall in the morning, back to the motel for rehearsals for our part in the show, back to the hall for a professional hair-do and make-up.

Back of the Backdrop: a personal story

I was told, but didn't really believe, what it would be like being a member of the OWN Theatre Group. Let me tell you, it's not for the fainthearted. So here I am, at rehearsal every Tuesday, it's lively and fun, but a definite commitment of time, energy and memory. The myriad other things involved in our daily lives, such as grandchildren-sitting, Meals on Wheels delivery, *OWN Matters* work, study projects, socialising, dog walking, all go on hold one day a week.

It gets more complicated when we go out to perform around or at some distance from Sydney. I confess I am not a morning person – mornings really should start about 10am with a cup of coffee perfuming the air. But somehow our train, bus or car usually leaves before 8am! On a chilly, wet and

Then the big moment, we were on. I must say that we did the Older Women's Network proud. We sang three of our songs, and got a tremendous audience response. We were very happy that we had had so many motel room rehearsals!

Our next show was at the Ultimo/Pymont Festival. What a contrast. I drove the props into Town and got bogged down with all the 'no right turn' and blocked off streets, plus the fact that my Gregory's was published in 1994 – I have since bought a new one! We went on amid lots of noise, people talking and laughing and children crying. I don't think that many people heard anything we said except a couple of die-hards at the front of the stage. We were asked at the end of our performance to go

to Sussex Inlet to help the women there get a group together but we haven't heard anything else so far.

Then it was off to Kooroola Community Centre at Malabar for their Women's Day. Once again we were outdoors on a windy and fairly chilly day. Ann Cunnyngame, our musician, was on a stage and we were on the ground and ne'er the twain did meet. We couldn't hear Ann and she couldn't hear us so we finished our songs at different times. Not good! We had to compete with lots of people milling around the tea and coffee stand, which was right beside where we were performing.

At our next planning meeting, there was a majority vote that we do not participate in outdoor shows again. We have the kind of material that people need to listen to in order to understand what we are about and this is not possible when both the music and our voices are 'blowing in the wind'. Never mind, there is always the next time.

Josie Jackson

we've probably changed there. Once we get the 'feel of the place' we can warm up and/or do a quick run through, especially if we've had to re-assign dialogue when someone is ill. Palms have never been so handy (sorry).

Then Ann starts to play and we're on. Generally we connect with the audience quite quickly, except on occasions when the stage is outside. Often the audience is at a distance, children and dogs run around or through the stage area or the wind blows Ann's music and our voices away from the audience. But it's true – the show must go on! So we do our thing hoping we'll be heard and understood and enjoyed. That's difficult against a background of rattling teacups, spruiking stallholders, children being chastised and all the rest.

Once our performance is over we
(Continued page 7)

must clear the set by removing and repacking our props, repacking the keyboard, collecting any music, scripts, sound gear, whatever we brought with us, and often organise ourselves to go home again by train or bus. Usually the host group gets us as far as the station or bus stop, but sometimes we have to trundle there with all our gear. Our efforts are generally 'rewarded' with a modest cheque, but there are times when we feel we cannot ask for payment.

It was of more than passing interest for me to catch the ABC's Radio National program *Life Matters* which had a segment on the Gala Concert from the Armidale Women's Comedy Festival. It was great to hear some totally unsolicited compliments from younger women for the OWN Theatre Group's part in the program and the strains of *Older Women, That's Our Name*. Gives me a better buzz than any drugs!

Marjorie Moffat

Grandparents & Grandchildren

Margot Fitzpatrick is working on a Grandparent project funded by the Federal Department of Family and Community Services.

She will be asking grandparents around Australia about issues they face, especially legal and financial issues, and what would help them cope better in caring for their grandchildren.

Many grand-parents have asked that she also include grand-children's voices. The project will finish at the end of June so there is not much time. If you would like to contribute, please contact:

Margot Fitzpatrick, Grandparents Project Officer, COTA National Seniors Policy Secretariat, Level 2, 3 Bowen Crescent, Melbourne 3004 Phone 03 9820 2655 or email mfitzpatrick@cota.org.au

Negligée driving

"You really should wear clothes when you drive the car," my grandson told me. What was he on about? "This negligée driving business." What a laugh. I had received a summons for negligent driving, and had to appear in Gosford Court before a magistrate.

What does a 'good girl' wear when she is up before a beak? How does a good girl defend herself on a criminal charge? I pondered these questions, consulted a legal eagle friend, and prepared myself for the big day. I chose a modest suit with a neatly pressed white collar, and carried a shopping bag – a good touch, I thought.

The Court was packed, grannies helping with babies, solicitors with their clients, mostly men. In fact, there were only two women charged that day, and I was one of them. I chatted with others 'crims' about violent forces in the world and, being a crim myself, was at liberty to ask some quite personal questions of them.

The magistrate dispensed justice like a well-oiled machine. I watched sympathetically as young men were brought in handcuffed. "Such humiliation," I said later to my daughter, who, as a doctor, has many times given evidence in sexual assault cases. "Mum, they really are violent men."

A pathetic fellow in a neat suit and tie interrupted the Magistrate's sentence with, "But please, your Worship...", and the magistrate shouted at him, finger pointing accusingly, "Did I speak to you? No. Be quiet." I shook in my shoes. What will happen to me? I could hear him proclaim, as he placed a black cloth on his head, "Take her down!"

By mid-afternoon I was faint with hunger and not at all the perky, sure-of-herself woman I'd been on

arrival. I had practised my carefully prepared speech, calling on my thespian training, but it was now a muddled mess in my head and my impressive demeanour, Portia-like, had wilted in the heat.

Suddenly, "Joan Johns!" That's me! I scrambled to my feet, dropping my shopping bag, and grasped the microphone. The kindly clerk of the Court put out her arm to support me. What was the magistrate saying? I opened my mouth, and nothing came out. He leant forward, kindly, completely out of character. "What do you plead? Guilty?" "Yes, oh yes, sir, I mean your Worship, guilty of course," I stuttered. Where was Portia now?

Instead of eloquently pleading my case, I stumbled towards him with my speech in my hand. "I've prepared a statement, sir, er, your Worship, if you would care to read it." He raised his arm in alarm and the clerk of the Court grabbed me and pulled me back. "You must not approach his Worship," she whispered. I was practically grovelling by this time.

He carefully read my plea, then looked at me. "You've been driving a long time, fifty five years and no demerit points." He took another piece of paper handed to him by the police. "A very good record. You are dismissed, and no fine is necessary, but..." A dramatic pause. "Do not appear before me again!" "No! No! Your Honour, Worship," I stammered, picking up my shopping bag and meekly leaving the Court on wobbly legs.

My family and friends were amazed. Driving into a parked car, writing off my own (no one hurt except me, slightly), and then getting off with a warning!

"Best bit of acting you've ever done, Mum," said my daughter. I certainly don't intend to repeat my performance – being a crim is hard going.

Joan Johns

Letters to the Editor

A heart-warming celebration

My feelings of frustration, sadness and anger over recent weeks have been tempered by my presence, mid-March, at a party which was organised by the residents of a small beautiful tree-lined street of a Sydney harbourside suburb.

The guest of honour was a gentle lady who has resided in the same house for over seventy years and she was celebrating her 90th birthday. She is the sole survivor of her family and never married. She worked in a city office for many years until her retirement. To nearly all the people who live in the street, and to many who have lived there over the years but have moved on, she is indeed the matriarch and 'granny' of their community.

So they came from close by and far away, between thirty to forty women and men, as well as over a dozen children. They brought delicious goodies to eat, drinks to share, flowers, gifts and heaps of love and joy. I joined them to honour my life-long friend. I now salute all those wonderful people, of diverse ages, who have proved that love, generosity and caring still reign in our world to create memories, happiness and goodwill.

Jo Krelle

In admiration

I've just read my April edition of our well-crafted newsletter and as always I admire the herculean efforts of the newsletter production team. At last year's AGM, Judith Mustard gave an excellent presentation on the wonderful cooperation of the team in getting it published each month. It occurred to me then that words simply couldn't encompass the

energy that goes into the gestation and birth of this small literary gem for older women.

In reading the last issue, my mind was like a butterfly hovering over a garden of alluring plants all so different and every bloom with its own precious cache of sweet nectar. As I read, I wonder why more members don't subscribe to a newsletter which holds so much. It is a rich source of information, fun, pearls of wisdom and flippant and serious observations. In my opinion *OWN Matters* deserves a much wider reading subscription list.

Isabel MacCallum

Don't be FUED!

Quite recently, I was talking to an old friend who worked for many years at an American multinational. We were talking about the type of reporting of world events in the media and the effect of this on the minds of the listener/reader. My friend told me about 'FUD', worked out by psychologists employed by the multinationals and eagerly taken up by the media, spin doctors and the powers that be. FUD stands for Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt, and when one thinks about it, this is exactly what happens to people.

Just think about how the whole scenario of Iraq has been dished up to us. *Fear* of terrorism, *uncertainty* about the future, the price of oil and petrol and increasing prices, *doubt* about how we feel, whether we are for or against war, whether we give enough thought to Iraq and the suffering of the innocent Iraqi people, and so on.

The bombing has been even more savage than that experienced by the Vietnamese people. Who has ever heard of a clean war? So, beat them at their own game and

do not be FUED. Make up your own mind and tell them in as many ways as possible that you know what they are up to, and what they can do with it. After all, we do not need someone to write our speeches, do we?

June Goss

Another reason to use Teletext

I usually watch the ABC, Channel 2, which presents some wonderful British dramas and comedy shows, but many of them are set in areas of the British Isles where they speak in broad dialects. I often used to wish they had subtitles. Struggling to understand some broad Scottish dialogue, I suddenly had an inspiration – turn on the Teletext! It was already installed on my TV, but I hadn't thought of using it before. Try it – it makes a difference!

Renee Simons

Who feels safer?

Loved the Global Politics Quiz in the latest *OWN Matters*.

Our Prime Minister wonders why we protest against war which is really an invasion and according to him we should all feel safer – does anyone agree? Certainly not those of us old enough to have lived through four wars.

Recently on the ABC a young singer from America sang a song he had been harassed and investigated for performing. Radio stations refuse to play it. It goes: *You can bomb the world to pieces/ But you can't bomb the world into peace*. As he said, "Peace is not just the absence of war, it is the presence of justice". Will the Iraqi people feel they get justice?

Nancy Brown

Letters to the Editor

Thanks, all you wonderful women

Recently, I had the misfortune to fracture my right elbow. Many of us know how an accident can be a real cause for concern especially when one lives alone and family members are in distant places. Besides, most of the younger generation are fully occupied in their own sphere and though they might want to come to the rescue, it is mostly impractical to rely on such support.

I was quite prepared to 'go it alone' and was staggered when just one phone call, as I was taken to Casualty at the local hospital, led to a wonderful support mechanism from local OWN members in Nowra, and from OWN NSW Management Team members as well. It made such a difference. This is a public acknowledgement to a number of special people for the support so willingly given.

It didn't stop there. Three days after the elbow repair job, with three of our Nowra members, I went with women from other OWN groups on the five day holiday arranged by Wollondilly OWN at the Youth and Recreation camp on the shores of beautiful Lake Myuna.

I soon forgot the discomfort of my injury in the peace and tranquillity of our surroundings – the walks round the lake with its fascinating water bird population, the forays to different places of interest and most of all the camaraderie of our time together. To share in such simple activities, to admire the various theatre group performances and, most of all, to feel a common bond among older women, is indeed a great way to reinforce the aims and objectives of OWN and to have a good time.

Isabel MacCallum

Loss of Hope

One Sunday in February, 2003, with the temperature in Sydney at 30 degrees plus, one quarter of a million people assembled in Hyde Park and surrounding streets for a Peace Rally. Many, myself and another member of OWN among them, gridlocked for an uncounted number of hours. There was hope that forthcoming war could, by power of our numbers, be avoided.

That day, there was a feeling of hope amongst us. Subsequent rallies have lacked that energising element. Hope had been deferred by the time of International Women's Day on 8 March and by the time of the rally on 23 March, it had gone. There was war, and the crowd was less.

So, why? Discouraged by comments such as 'concerned people' (Coalition Senator, female), 'well meaning' (Gerard Henderson), 'disloyal mob, giving aid and comfort to Saddam Hussein' (Australia's Prime Minister)? Hardly likely, except for those who believe they should support 'our troops', neither gallant volunteers nor unwilling conscripts, but professional service personnel, who know they are at the disposal of the government.

Then student rallies on each side of the country turn ugly. No one mentions agents provocateurs. Our media seems not to know the term.

In Sydney, a police chief declares student rallies will be stopped. This most alarming development is barely mentioned, even by *Everyone's ABC*, and there's little comment in the one daily newspaper in NSW which retains some independence, the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The banned rally scheduled for 2 April did take place, with fewer

students, more police, some violence and little publicity. No one, it seems, was interested. My Afghan student of English commented, "Governments will do as they wish, no matter who or how many protest."

On that day, 2 April, the modest leaflet advertising the Palm Sunday Rally was removed from the notice board in the retirement units where I live.

That attitude of covert hostility along with too much media coverage of the war itself, seems to have exhausted the public's attention span and so less than 10,000 people rallied for peace on Palm Sunday.

Helen Monaghan

Correction

Having recently completed a major in Japanese at Sydney Uni, I am able to correct an error made by my grandmother in her article, "Who would have thought it!" in last month's *OWN Matters*.

Now if she were a Chinese peasant she would have been somewhat misplaced "under the reign of the Samurai", the latter being Feudal Japan's warrior class, and not rulers of China....but I still think it's cool to have a grandmother who can do Tai Chi!

Marley Zelinka.

Did you know?

Henotheism - pronounced HEH-nuh-thee-ih-zum (noun) means the worship of one god without denying the existence of other gods.

At and Beyond the Rocks

OWN Sydney Highlights

Much has been said lately about risk assessment and public liability insurance. Members of OWN Sydney will be pleased to know that the Working Group will be checking all premises used for meetings, workshops and social activities to ensure they are safe. Some of the safety strategies are really commonsense, for example, putting our bags away from where people walk, mopping up wet floors and checking electric cords.

Congratulations to OWN NSW and everyone involved in the Fostering Wellness project. Joy Ross, coordinator of OWN Sydney, and Dorothy Cora, Information and Resource Coordinator, accompanied the eight participants in their exploration of OWN's model of Wellness at Sutherland, Penrith, Bankstown and Sydney. Cara MacDougall generously gave some time to the group to explain the history of the Northside Wellness programs and Joy provided an overview of Sydney's development and funding issues. The project participants found the three days exhausting, but very informative. Maybe we will see

some more Wellness programs develop beyond the metropolitan area.

OWN Sydney sent our congratulations to Quentin Bryce, Dean of Women's College, University of Sydney on her appointment as Governor of Queensland, and received a warm reply. We also congratulated Lucy Turnbull, newly appointed Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney.

The City of Sydney's boundaries, which come into effect on 8 May, means that the City of Sydney will now include Woolloomooloo, Kings Cross and part of Glebe. As quite a few Council staff will be transferred to the City from these areas, we look forward to greater opportunities for liaison at various committees and groups.

Members will have received a copy of the OWN (Australia) Measuring Social Capital survey in the last newsletter. The Project Committee hopes there will be a good response, and that interested members will come to the focus group on 19 May. Please see the enclosed flyer.

If you are looking for a "delicious but vicious" (*Sydney Morning Herald, Metro*) film to see, see *Chaos*, a feminist film on race, class and gender.

The Palm Sunday March for Peace on 13 April gave many of us an opportunity to show our concern about the invasion of Iraq and to mourn the senseless loss of life. Our Wellness on Wednesday group made a special banner beautifully sewn, carefully scripted with "War is Not the Answer" and brightly coloured, to carry at the march.

Joy Ross and Louise Anike

Farewell

OWN Sydney's a cappella group no longer exists. Four of the members, including myself, met on 4 April at Windmill Street and decided that we could not continue due to our much appreciated choir mistress, Jackie Loeb, being in great professional demand and therefore unable to meet with us on a regular basis. May I express how much I, personally, have appreciated the wonderful support so many members have given to me and to the group.

Beryl Winter

Wyong OWN

There was welcome relief from the banging of war drums and the rhetoric of war for the members of Wyong OWN who were able to celebrate International Women's Day at Gosford Regional Gallery and Arts Centre on 8 March.

The Gallery and Arts Centre is in a lovely and calming spot. A display of posters, new and old, from various women's conferences around the world greeted us, and there was an exhibition of women's paintings, mostly local artists, and a huge display of crafts for sale.

Mrs Mina Singh Batra (dressed in an elegant sari) officially opened the event. She spoke of the role of women in the United Nations and Non Government Organisations.

Entertainment by the Red Hot Chilli Mummas was great, especially when they launched into *I am Woman*. Performers from the Women's Health Centre displayed their talent with archetypal masks, and the Gosford City Band and the Celtic Dance Group had our hands a'clappin' and our feet a'tappin'. Shirley O'Toole displayed her moving story-telling talents.

Then it was on to a healthy lunch prepared by members of the organising committee. Despite not expecting the 250 women, and some men, who turned up to celebrate the day, with their usual female ability, the organisers more than coped.

We have sent a letter of appreciation to all involved and asked for early information for IWD celebrations in 2004.

A truly wonderful day to celebrate an important date on the world's calendar.

June Goss

At and Beyond the Rocks

Woy Woy OWN

Everything is going well in Woy Woy OWN for our twelve members. We have a meeting once a month and with the use of a community bus and driver, a pattern has been established for regular outings, rain or shine, organised by Heather McKenzie and Margaret Bramich.

On a lovely sunshiny autumn day in March, we journeyed to Moonee Moonee on the Hawksbury and then on to Brooklyn for lunch. After enjoying a cup of good coffee on the wharf we visited the Old Stationmaster's Cottage, now an historical/craft place, before wandering around comparing prices for fish and chips at different cafés. There was a good variety on offer at reasonable prices – Sydney 'fishos' take note for a future venue – and all services are close to Brooklyn station. With our packets of hot fish and chips we were driven up the hill to McKell Park where we ate in a covered picnic shelter surrounded by lovely river views.

One of our members, Millie Thorsby, who grew up in the area, entertained us with tales of earlier days in the settlement. We stopped at the local cemetery, abundant with delightful flowering plants, so that Millie could pay her ancestral respects. Everyone had a wonderful time.

During Seniors Week, some of our members were involved in a storytelling event and attended a local member's BBQ and luncheon concert at the local RSL club.

Enid Harrison

Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.

Paulo Freire

Mid Mountains OWN

End-of-year festivities up here were minimal because of the fires. When the wind changed, and it often did, there was always an increased risk to homes and lives so we needed to be constantly vigilant. Firefighters and volunteers did a remarkable job against incredible odds.

For the second successive year we hosted a highly successful Christmas party for the 'Parenting Young' group, which includes single parents of both sexes and their small children. Our group provides small gifts for the parents and the children and works hard to create a real party atmosphere.

And then came serious talk about the war in which we should never have been involved and now, sadly, are. For the last several weeks many of our number have been attending protests and peace vigils.

A recent highlight for MOWN was the launch on 2 March by Freda Whitlam of *Aunty Joan Cooper - Through the Front Door, a Darug and Gundungurra Story* by Dianne Johnson. Aunty Joan is a Darug Elder and a much loved and respected member of MOWN, and of the wider community. When Joan was born on 29 February 1928, the world got lucky.

Dianne Johnson has lived in the Blue Mountains for the past fifteen years, is an anthropologist and has written several significant books, articles and reports. Dianne conducted several interviews with Joan, talking with her about Darug history and its links, and about marrying Digger, which brought Darug and Gundungurra together. They also talked about family, life in 'the gully', community life, culture and involvement in the wider community. The resulting book is a triumph, long overdue and one we will always cherish.

The launch was held in the dining room of the majestic old Carrington Hotel, with its beautiful art deco décor and rich leadlights. Aunty Joan began with a Welcome to Country. Our MC, Lyn Bevington, welcomed Freda Whitlam, who launched the book with great style and many amusing anecdotes.

Copies of the book were presented to representatives of local community groups. The Blue Mountains Mayor, Jim Angel, paid tribute to Aunty Joan and her involvement with the community over many years. When Aunty Joan and her family were formally presented with the book, Aunty Joan said she was overwhelmed because she had absolutely no idea that the launch was to be held at the Carrington, the hotel where her mother, forced to enter by the back door, once worked as a laundry woman. Today, Joan entered by the front door as guest of honour for the launch of a book about her life. The love and respect she enjoys is richly deserved and was evident in the many tributes and long applause she received.

Jacinta Tobin accompanied herself on guitar as she sang Yarramundi, a song she had written and composed. Known as Chief of the Richmond Tribes, Yarramundi was an ancestor on whom both Joan's parents placed great significance. They were careful to instill a great pride in the Yarramundi connection in their daughter.

The formalities over, we celebrated with high tea, lots of excited chatter and Aunty Joan herself got down to some serious book signing. It was a truly lovely afternoon.

Helen Craig

BRIDGING THE GAP

"I don't think I have much to say," protested my friend Lilka. "Who is interested in my life anyway?" The whir of the tape recorder sounded in the silent room. She continued, hesitantly. "I came from Poland and had to hide from the Germans and flee from one country to another. I lost all my family. She stopped short, her voice quivering. "I reached Australia after the Second World War and felt safe for the first time. What a joy to walk freely in the streets and only worry about sport and weather."

We completed part of the tape covering Lilka's history. Her life had been studded with loss, horror and sadness. Most of her pain was hidden away and she rarely reflected back to her time in Europe. She kept busy, joking, laughing and quickly changing the subject. In Australia she was actively working to support herself in a family business. She married and had one rebellious daughter and saw no need to bring more children into a world she called "not fit for the next generation".

After fifty years of marriage her husband died. Her life was empty and lacked meaning. There was no more sharing of thoughts, joys and sorrows. She became quiet and withdrawn, shuffling around in slippers in darkened rooms, always wearing black. One of her few pleasures was walking. But she was frail and unsteady and tripped on a loose stone and broke her leg. A carer was summoned.

Heidi, a large forceful lady, arrived. Hallo Wie get es dir? Her elegant French poodle Fifi followed. "Get out," screamed Lilka. "I don't want dogs, and German is the last language I wish to hear." But Fifi had already jumped into her lap and nestled there. The dog looked up with pleading eyes. Lilka stroked the

delicate white fur. "I suppose you can stay."

Heidi was slightly younger than Lilka, and nothing was said about where she had spent the war years or her political ideas. When I visited Lilka, her hair now shone and she wore brightly coloured dresses with earrings to match. There was a friendly banter between the two women and lots of laughter. Lilka felt alive and energetic again, and Fifi was often the focus of attention.

Once the leg had healed I had difficulty making an appointment to continue the tape. Lilka's diary was crammed full. She was out and about, shopping, walking in the park, and visiting the cinemas and galleries with Heidi. A close friendship developed between them. Sometimes the language was Polish, sometimes German, and sometimes English. Jokes, stories and confidences were shared.

As Lilka became mobile again, Heidi announced that the time had come for her to go back to her farm. The moment she left, Lilka took to her bed. She stopped talking and laughing. Her eyes were cloudy and she went back to wearing black. She refused to answer the doorbell or telephone. A call was made to Heidi to come back. She in turn felt needed, and readily agreed. She organised things on the farm and returned with Fifi and two large suitcases. She was preparing herself for a long stay in the city.

Fifi is barking in the background. Lilka's voice is firm. She holds the microphone and completes her story. "I met this wonderful person who has become a very close friend. She is from Germany. I don't think I can do without her.

Sometimes I want to die but she gives me something to live for. Danke Schon, Heidi".

I marvelled at how two women on opposing sides during the war had bridged the gap. They had come from very different backgrounds and religions but had developed a close bond. I felt a flicker of hope for the difficult world in which we live.

Helene Gonski

Creative Writers' Cuisine

We were delighted to return to the delectable spread at the Bowlers' Club in March. (Commiserations to one of our regulars, Pam Sharpe, absent and hospitalised.) We were a bit miffed at the speed with which our empty dishes were whipped from under our noses as we ate the last crumbs. The place was crammed with as many seniors as the battalions of Orks in the latest Lord of the Rings movie. We were told our table was needed urgently, so Polly Gow had to down her coffee like Speedy Gonzales. Notwithstanding the good tucker, the Bowlers' Club is no place to linger for a chat.

The April venue was a Polly 'find' – Boston Markets at 263 George Street. The dishes, especially chicken, were delicious and modestly priced. Even our vegetarian member was well pleased. Unfortunately, the local wage slaves have discovered the place for lunch and the noise level is a trial. As for literary endeavours, Jean Wurlod is ever industrious and Helen McMaugh has had two successes, a shared 3rd prize in the Woollahra Seniors Writing Competition in March, and a story accepted by Lovatt's Memory Lane for its April issue. Thanks to Polly for organizing the Bowlers' Club and for finding us new nosheries.

Bon Vivant

Is this the future?

Listening to the RN program, *All in the Mind*, on a recent Sunday, I heard Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, author of *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, speak to Sue Clark about soldiers and the drugs they use in combat situations. The question Sue posed was – could synthetic drugs be the answer to the horrors of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

Even though we know that the US army has experimented with drugs for many decades, I found the discussion with Dave Grossman and Monash University professor, David Neil, deeply chilling.

Grossman suggests that these days the military is thinking of soldiers less as a human being who carries weapons in fights, but as pieces of equipment. “The soldier is more of an ‘it’, in which their human characteristics need to be suppressed.” He explained that for many decades soldiers have taken drugs like amphetamines (speed) to sustain combat and that WW11 vets still recall the little white pills that kept them going for days. But now, he said, at the turn of the 21st Century, military research is focused on creating a very different beast, a chemically enhanced soldier, who can go without sleep, or even food, for up to a week. It’s called ‘metabolic dominance’.

Apparently US funded research is currently taking place to develop an anti-remorse pill which soldiers can take in combat situations to reduce feelings of regret, remorse and guilt – all core to the experience of Post Traumatic Stress.

Research is also being undertaken to develop a pill which will eliminate memory! David Neil expressed his deep concern: “If you look at historical reactions to great atrocities, and I’m thinking

primarily of the Jewish reaction to the Holocaust, one of its most consistent themes is memory. If we do not remember, we run the risk of repeating history. So drugs that eliminate memory after the fact of things are very dangerous.”

Imagine the scenario. Soldiers will be sent into battle with an increasing capacity for destruction, but with the help of some little pills will not have to feel anything, regret anything or remember anything! This might save governments money in the short term (for welfare and support services, etc), but in the longer term it’s got to be a recipe for immense personal and social destruction.

If you have access to the internet, you can read a transcript of the entire interview at www.abc.net.au/rn/science/mind/s817005.htm.

Margaret Bridger

Hearing Loss Seminar

The Hearing Loss Seminar organised by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care on 19 March was very useful, though I must say that the only really happy note was being told that regular, moderate, alcohol consumption is associated with a significantly reduced likelihood of hearing loss. Hic, hic, hurrah!

Professor Philip Newall from Macquarie University reported on a recent study of older people in the Blue Mountains which found that 1.5 % Australians aged 55 plus have a hearing loss affecting both ears. Hearing aids are worn by 13% of people, but probably 33% need one.

Dr Jenny Rosen, Head of Audiology at Hornsby Hospital, spoke about the practicalities of dealing with hearing loss and compensatory aids. She also talked about what aids are

available and measures which can be taken by others to improve communication. This was very helpful.

Our OWN Betty Johnson described her approach when she discovered that she had difficulty in hearing. Because of her persistence in demanding more time for questions and discussions in seminars, participation by audience members increased quite a bit.

That persistent interjector, your OWN Enid, scored the first question. For some time I have been interested in the development of other senses to guess what the hell is going on, so I raised the question of training for the deaf in the use of our other senses. For instance, training in observation of body language and on awareness, better training in lip reading, encouraging people who are deaf to avoid social isolation by using educational aids and light. Voice projection for various forms of deafness and speech rhythm training for carers tailored to different types of hearing loss would be helpful. Overcoming background noise with the use of an aid is a big problem for people who are deaf. This sort of education could be handled by public hospitals.

However, on talking to Dr Rosen later, she told me that the number of audiologists available in her hospital was limited because of money. From the financial news, I note that cochlear implants are a desirable financial investment ... such are the contradictions in our society!

Enid Harrison

An unusual event

Shortly before my grandmother died in 1976, she had given me a set of rosary beads that had been given to her by a friend in 1914. She was then a young Irish girl, in her very early twenties and when she told her friend she was expecting her first baby, her friend gave her the beads to pray for her unborn babe. This baby was my mother.

My mother died in February 2002. It was my mother's wish that there be no funeral procession at her funeral, that we have a Mass at the church and then farewell her coffin at the church door. While I watched her coffin being put in the hearse, I held the beads in my hand and as I stood looking at the hearse, I looked down at the beads and remembered the day my grandmother had given them to me. I closed my hand over the beads as the hearse pulled away. A few minutes later I went to put the beads away and they were gone. I could not believe it, one minute they were in the palm of my hand and the next they were gone. We searched everywhere I had been but could not find them. The next day I returned and searched again, but there was no sign of them.

In the last week of March 2003, my grandmother's youngest child died and at his funeral his wife told me that he thought it was lovely the way we said goodbye to Mum at the church and that he wanted his funeral to end like that. As the hearse carrying his coffin pulled away I told a distant cousin who happened to be standing next to me about losing my beads at my mother's funeral. To my amazement she reached into her pocket and pulled out the beads. It seems she arrived late at Mum's funeral and so missed the hunt for the beads. She and her husband were also the last to leave and as they stepped off the gutter to cross the road to go to their car, she looked down and saw these very old beads lying in the gutter. They were covered in sticks and leaves and looked like they had been there for ages.

As I said, she is a distant cousin. If it were not for the fact that my uncle wanted his coffin to be farewelled at the church, I would never have mentioned losing the beads to her. I can't help but think that somehow Mum was teaching me a lesson – look after what is given to you in trust. I lost the beads and found the beads in the same way. Lost as my grandmother's eldest child's coffin departed from sight and found as her youngest child's coffin departed from sight. I count myself truly blest.

Barbara Malcolm

Doilies

As a new bride, Edna moved into a small house with her husband, Jack. She put a shoe box on the shelf in her wardrobe and asked her husband never to touch it. For fifty years Jack left the box alone until Edna was old and dying. One day when he was putting their affairs in order, he found the box again and thought it might hold something important. Opening it he found it contained two doilies and \$82,500 in cash. He took the box to Edna and asked her about the contents.

"My mother gave me the box the day we married," she explained. "She told me to make a doily to ease my frustrations every time I got mad at you."

Jack was very touched that in 50 years she'd only been mad at him twice. "What's the \$82,500 for?" he asked.

That's the money I've made selling the doilies."

Anon

Illustration praying hands?

A Prayer for the World

*Let the rain come and wash away
the ancient grudges, the bitter
hatreds
held and nurtured over
generations.
Let the rain wash away the
memory
of the hurt, the neglect.
Then let the sun come out and
fill the sky with rainbows.
Let the warmth of the sun heal us
wherever we are broken.
Let it burn away the fog so that
we can see each other clearly.
So that we can see beyond labels,
beyond accents, gender or skin
colour.
Let the warmth and brightness
of the sun melt our selfishness,
So that we can share the joys and
feel the sorrows of our
neighbours.
And let the light of the sun
be so strong that we will see all
people as our neighbours.
Let the earth, nourished by rain,
bring forth flowers
to surround us with beauty.
And let the mountains teach our
hearts
to reach upward to heaven.
Amen.*

This poem was written by Rabbi S. Kushner, American author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. He was asked to compose a prayer which could be said by anyone of any faith.

When only an advocate will do!

The prevailing rhetoric during the years I worked as a community aged care worker in local government was a whole-of-government, step-by-step commitment to meeting the needs of people who require home and community care services. My recent experience of trying to arrange additional home care services for a close friend provided little indication that this approach is working.

My friend, blind and living alone with no family support, had been receiving four hours Home Care each fortnight for many years to assist with cleaning and shopping. He prepared his own meals.

Then, at the age of 74, his health deteriorated and he began suffering heart problems and slight mental confusion. His GP referred him to the local Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT). Being desperately short-staffed, they could not assess him for four weeks. He was eventually assessed as needing additional hours of Home Care to assist with meal preparation, to supervise his eating and to clear up.

The difficulties in obtaining additional Home Care were discussed with us. The local Home Care coordinator is not permitted to increase hours even when the client has been assessed as 'eligible', but must refer the case to Head Office for assessment.

Of course, there were other subsidised programs available through Aged Care Packages and Community Options (COPs), but each had hurdles. For example, Aged Care Packages have a limit on the number of hours available each week, and the service would have to be provided by an organisation other than Home Care. Effectively, this would have meant a change from the regular, familiar carer, to an unknown carer, which would obviously create further confusion

for my friend. COPs had a waiting list for new referrals.

Meanwhile, my friend's general health deteriorated, his confusion became much worse and the only answer seemed a short stay in hospital to stabilise his health and be re-assessed by ACAT.

In the Private Hospital he was assessed as needing Nursing Home Care or, if he returned home, to have a twice daily Nursing Service to supervise medication and assist with bathing. He also needed daily Meals on Wheels, assistance to ensure he ate meals and to wash up and do his personal laundry. Regular cleaning was to continue, as before.

The provision of nursing and meals services commenced the day after he went home. However, the extra hours he needed from Home Care were a problem.

I spent many, many frustrating hours ringing ACAT and Home Care, leaving messages, missing return calls, ringing again, to find out whether the additional services were possible or whether we should look for a respite care bed in a Nursing Home. The local coordinator was very cooperative and Head Office waived the home assessment, so extra assistance was ultimately provided by Home Care and my friend was able to stay at home a few weeks longer than otherwise.

But how would he have managed without an 'advocate', with the added advantage of one who knows 'the system' and had the determination to keep ringing to explain the situation? The same applies to patients in hospital as the staffing levels mean that there's not a lot of nursing time available for each patient.

I cannot speak highly enough of the exceptionally supportive and

understanding staff at Home Care, ACAT and the Nursing Service, and the volunteers who attended my friend. They work in very stressful situations.

The scenario I've described is taking place everywhere because of the enormous demand on home support services, together with insufficient hospital and nursing home beds. Chopping and changing between different services is not the answer. The government, through the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, must increase funding all round if services are to keep up with increased demand and changing needs in a satisfactory, flexible and client-focused way.

Val Brown

Women for Peace

*Women the world over
Protest loud and clear,
No longer will we tolerate
Wars wanton and wild.
The cost is too great
And can't be reconciled.*

*Whatever the pretext
for "liberation from evil"
International law deems "pre-emptive strike"
Dangerously illegal.
Warmongers never give
humanity a thought,
Lives are destroyed to back up
"big talk".*

*Who makes such decisions
Causing heartache and grief
While the fruits of our womb
Lie mutilated
On death's withered leaf?*

*So let your voices be heard
Throughout the land!
Now is the time to take a stand.
Proclaim ever so loudly enough,
no more.
Peace is our business,
Demand an end to war.*

Merle Highet

The First Time's Always the Worst

The first mammogram is the worst. Especially when the machine catches on fire. That's what happened to me.

The technician, Gail, positioned me exactly as she wanted me – think a really complicated game of Twister – right hand on the blue, left shoulder on the yellow, right breast as far away as humanly possible from the rest of your body. Then she clamped the machine down so tight I think my breast actually turned inside out. I'm pretty sure 'Victoria's Secret' doesn't have a bra for that. Suddenly, there was a loud popping noise. I looked down at my right breast to make sure it hadn't exploded. Nope, it was still flat as a pancake and still attached to my body.

"Oh no!" Gail said loudly. These are, perhaps, the words you least want to hear from any health professional. Suddenly, she came flying past me, her lab coat whipping behind her on her way out the door. She yelled over her shoulder, "The machine's on fire, I'm going to get help!"

Okay, I was wrong, "The machine's on fire," are the worst words you can hear from a health professional. Especially if you're all alone and semi-permanently attached to a machine and don't know if it's the machine in question.

I struggled for a few seconds trying to get free, but even Houdini couldn't have escaped. I decided to go to Plan B, yelling at the top of my lung, the one that was still working.

I hadn't seen anything on fire, so my panic hadn't quite reached epic proportions. But then I started to smell smoke coming from behind the partition. This is ridiculous, I thought. I can't die like this. What would they put in my obituary? Cause of death? Breast Entrapment.

I may have inhaled some fumes because I started to hallucinate. An imaginary fireman rushed in with a fire hose and a hatchet. "Howdy ma'am," he said. "What happened here?" he asked, averting his eyes. "My breasts were too hot for the machine," I quipped, as my imaginary fireman ran out of the room again. "This is gonna take the Jaws of Life!"

In reality, Gail returned with a fire extinguisher and put out the fire. She gave me a big smile and released me from the machine, "Sorry! That's the first time that's ever happened. Why don't you take a few minutes to relax before we finish up?"

I think that's what she said. I was running across the parking lot in my backless paper gown at the time. After I'd relaxed for a few years, I figured I might go back. But I was bringing my own fire extinguisher next time.

Source: Jan Aitkin

Art Exhibition by Brenda Saunders

Brenda Saunders (Palma), a member of our Aboriginal Support Circle, who is of Aboriginal descent, recently exhibited an exciting and challenging fibre-based mixed media installation of wall works entitled *Skin Deep: Native Title Land Rights* at the Tin Sheds gallery in Chippendale. The works are based on traditional skin cloaks worn by Tribal Aborigines, and blankets formerly issued to Aboriginal people on missions and Government Reserves across Australia

Brenda has portrayed important historical figures such as Pemulwuy, Windradyne, Margaret Tucker, Mary-Ann Cain and Truganini, against a background of relevant colonial maps overlaid with photo images from the life stories of the subjects. Variations on the black, red and yellow colours of the Aboriginal flag further unify the series.

The project has been assisted by the Federal Government through the Australia Council and will tour NSW regional galleries in 2004-5. Slides of Brenda's work can be found on her web page, <http://palmasaunders.net>.

Pat Zinn

Advocacy Update

Members of the Advocacy Coordination Group met on 18 April. We agreed to undertake research into women's refuges to see how many older women seek refuge accommodation and what refuges can offer older women. A questionnaire will be produced and face-to-face interviews will be carried out with refuge staff.

If you are interested in advocacy issues please join us at our next meeting on Tuesday 27 May at 10am.

An enlightening conversation ...

An extract from recent correspondence with my email friend in Alabama, USA.

Me: I still find it difficult to understand why your President insisted on having a war if they only want Saddam Hussein. Nor do I understand why our PM and the British PM were so keen to join in.

Kay: Nor do I. If you find out, please let me know. My personal opinions: (1) it really is over oil. (2) for Bush, it is an ego thing because his father backed down twelve years ago. (3) for Bush it is also an ego thing because he enjoys wielding all this power.

I asked how come he was elected if he is such an unsuitable man for the job.

Kay: He wasn't elected. Gore won the popular vote, but we have this strange system called the Electoral College. It was set up long ago to make things 'even' for the States that didn't have many people. An old archaic way of doing things that I wish we'd change. Anyway, in the Electoral College, there was a tie. And you remember that fiasco in Florida where the chads weren't counted and some black people (many black people in Florida are Democrats) were turned away from the polls? And guess who was/is governor of Florida? George Bush's brother, Jeb Bush. And because they could not find a way to solve the problem, they turned to the Supreme Court of the United States to figure out who should 'win the election'. And the Supreme Court is loaded with Republicans. And George is a Republican. Hence, we are stuck with George...who, by the way, is not a very intellectual fellow in the first place – gets his English all mixed up and is an alcoholic. I just hope he is not using alcohol now. Even his mother admits he is an alcoholic, I hear.

Me: An alcoholic! We are quite aware that he is not very bright, but I never dreamt he was an alcoholic.

Kay: As far as I can tell, he's been through treatment and is not drinking at this time. One of my concerns is the 'alcoholic personality' traits that alcoholics tend to have.

Me: Surely he doesn't have the last word on the running of the country?

Kay: Well, our government does have a system of checks and balances: Legislative – the Congress, House of Representatives, the Senate and Judicial – Supreme Court and the Executive Branch. It means the President and his cabinet.

Renee Simons

Vitamin trial hope for osteoarthritis sufferers

Researchers in the UK are launching a major trial to determine whether taking Vitamin D can prevent osteoarthritis. The study, funded by the charity Arthritis Research Campaign, will look at 600 people with osteoarthritis of the knee.

The researchers will assess whether taking vitamin D supplements can stop the deterioration of the knee joint by preventing the destruction of cartilage. They will use X-rays to measure cartilage destruction over a three-year period. Previous studies have suggested that low levels of Vitamin D are associated with increased cartilage damage to the hip and knee. This leads to a more rapid progression of osteoarthritis, and is associated with greater use of painkillers and

an increased need for surgery.

There is no cure for osteoarthritis, and treatments simply try to control the pain and keep sufferers active. The number of osteoarthritis sufferers is expected to rise dramatically over the coming years as increased life expectancy leads to greater numbers of elderly people.

www.surgerydoor.co.uk/news/detail.asp?offset=3003

Midnight Moggy

*You have a fine fat pussy cat
He's cuddly, soft and sweet,
Loves to curl up on our bed
Or curl around our feet.*

*He's fondled, petted, fed fine food,
He's master of the house,
Ignores you when it suits his book,
He's never caught a mouse.*

*But when you let him out at night,
Ah, that's a different story.
It's war and mayhem in the dark
To guard his territory.*

*He's challenged by the neighbour's cat,
The fur begins to fly,
And then he rapes a female puss
Who's lately caught his eye.*

*That nasty, snarling, spitting cat,
That monster of the night,
Limps home, battle scarred at dawn
From just another fight.*

*So if you really love your puss
And want to do what's right,
Please, do us all a favour,
And keep him in at night.*

Marie Williams

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:

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
purpose 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.**

Notices

*There is a wind
Blowing voices to me
Memories of how I arrive
Journeys by air, land and sea...*

From 'A BETTER LIFE'
proudly presented by the
Illawarra Multicultural
Women's Performing Group.

Adults \$8 Concession \$4
Inner West Cultural Services
9519 0815

New Theatre 9519 3403
11 am Tuesday 10 June
11 am Wednesday 11 June
New Theatre
542 King St. Newtown

Humanitarian Crisis

People in Iraq need our
support urgently.
To donate, please call 1800
024 413 or donate online at
www.caritas.org.au.

Freedom from Fear

What does freedom from fear
mean to you as an older women?
Join us for a discussion of issues
that are important to you.

Entertainment by OWN Theatre
Group and lunch provided. Free.

10am – 1 pm, Thursday 8 May

Waverley Library Theatre
Floor, Corner of Ebley and
Denison Street Bondi Junction.

For catering purposes, rsvp to Lara
on 9369 0420.

**Central Sydney AHS
Health Promotion Unit**
Free information kit and free
introductory gentle exercise
classes at Camperdown.
Phone 9533 4422 for info.

Are you postmenopausal and have osteoporosis?

The Northern Metabolic Bone
Centre, Royal North Shore
Hospital, is conducting a study to
evaluate an investigational
medication for osteoporosis.

Women volunteers are needed for
a 3-year research study.

You may be eligible if you:

- Are aged 55 to 85 years of age
- Are at least 2 years
postmenopausal, and
- Have not taken hormone
replacement therapy or
medication for osteoporosis in
the past 6 months.

There is no cost to participate.

If you are interested and would
like additional information about
the study, please call: The Study
Coordinator, Northern Metabolic
Bone Centre on 9926 8503.

Have a cuppa for cancer research

Australia's biggest morning tea
Breakfast from 9am to 1pm

Tuesday 20 May 2003

Millers Point Activity Centre

Confidentiality vs The Rights of Carers

Community education forum for
consumers and carers on finding
the balance in the Mental Health
System. Sponsored by the
Schizophrenia Fellowship and
NSW Attorney General's
Department.

5.30-8.30 pm - Monday 12 May
Metcalfe Theatre, State Library
More info: 9879 2600

Notices

Little Black Bastard

La Mama Melbourne Presentation

A journey from the autobiography by Noel Tovey devised and narrated by the author.

Darlinghurst Theatre
19 Greenknowe Avenue, Potts Pt.

Wed. 23 April to Sat. 10 May

7.30pm Tuesday to Saturday
5.30pm Matinee Sunday

Tickets \$25.00 Concession: \$21.00

Enquiries: Phone 8356 9987

(Members of the OWN Aboriginal Support Circle will be attending the matinee performance on Sunday 4 May.)

Jessie Street National Women's Library Lunch-hour Talk

Thursday, 15 May, 2003.

Lady Mayoress' Rooms, Town Hall, Sydney -12 noon to 1.30 pm
Entry : \$20 (non-members)

\$15 (members).

Sandwich lunch included.

Speaker: Dr Jane Hall, head of 'Clean Up Australia' and seven-time world champion in Paddle Sport talks about different aspects of her life.

To book, contact Shirley on (02) 9876 3927 or the Library on (02) 9265 9486 or email shirleyjones@ozemail.com.au

Assertiveness skills

6.30 – 8.30

Thursday 19 June for 3 weeks
Leichhardt Women's Health
Centre 9560 3011

The NAVIGATOR Trial

The Department of Endocrinology at Royal North Shore Hospital is involved in a large international study called The NAVIGATOR Study. NAVIGATOR will be the world's largest ever diabetes prevention trial, with 7,500 people taking part in 40 countries around the world.

The Endocrinology Department at Royal North Shore Hospital is looking for people who may be eligible to participate in a drug trial. The study will assess whether a new drug therapy prevents or delays the onset of Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

If you are 50 years or older and have any of the following:

impaired glucose tolerance (igt) or 'pre-diabetes'

a relative with diabetes

abnormal blood sugar during pregnancy or other occasion

high blood pressure or cholesterol

heart or blood vessel disease

are overweight or take little exercise

are a smoker

you may be eligible to participate.

People taking part in NAVIGATOR will be given a tablet to take once a day and another type of tablet to take before main meals. Everyone taking part in NAVIGATOR will have regular blood tests, physical checks and expert advice on changes they can make to their lifestyle to help maintain good health. The length of the study is six years and includes eighteen clinic visits. There is no cost.

For more information contact Louise Hay, Clinical Coordinator, on 9926 6820.

Story-telling, story writing

Starting in May, 2003, a series of up to 8-week programs is seeking women of all ages of non-English speaking background who live in the Sydney's Inner West.

These are workshops currently organised by Inner West Cultural Services. It is designed for women to explore their sense of identity and belonging through creative writing and oral history recordings.

For information please contact Rosarela or Anna at Inner West Cultural Services, Phone 9519 0816. info@innerwestcs.org.au

**If you are receiving *OWN Matters* you are currently financial.
Reminder notices will be sent out with the June issue.**

