

COORDINATORS' REPORT

The highlight of August was the Annual General Meeting held at Millers Point on Wednesday 18 August. Around 50 members and 10 guests attended the meeting. Marianne Hammerton, Acting Director General of Ageing and Disability Department (ADD) addressed the gathering, reports were received, a new Working Committee was elected, the constitution was amended and a fine lunch was shared by all.

Renate Watkinson, who chaired the meeting, gave the report from the Working Committee and received reports from group and activity convenors. It was noted that Peg Hewett will be stepping down from her role as Theatre Group Convenor at the end of the year and Renate thanked Peg for her fine leadership and artistic contribution.

In her address, Marianne Hammerton observed that ADD and OWN are increasingly working in parallel with positive results. She acknowledged the Network as a role model and an important source of feedback to Government by being able to articulate problems which affect older women and by being a vital part in the development of creative solutions to these problems. She made a plea for OWN to continue to speak out against stereotyping and negative attitudes towards older women. Marianne went on to discuss the commitment Government has made to Wellness in its Healthy Ageing Framework and to the increasingly positive relationship being forged between State and Federal Governments in the areas of ageing and disability services. In order to address the needs of the 456,000 women who are carers in NSW, ADD and Health are working together to develop a NSW Carer's strategy. The Federal Government is also acknowledging this need by making an additional \$m12.9 available for carer support. Stressing that Government is not about rhetoric but about action Marianne pointed to Regional Advisory Boards now being established and to the Meeting of Generations Forum to be held in November. She encouraged our members to become involved in these and other activities.

In saying goodbye to the outgoing Working Committee, Renate acknowledged those who did

not nominate for the new Committee. Jean Skuse, Hedi Roggeveen and Gwen George were thanked for their considerable contributions over past years, Jean in her role as our very capable Treasurer and Hedi as an activist in a range of areas affecting older women. Life Membership was awarded to Gwen, a foundation member of the Network, as a tribute for her tireless work for social justice for older women.

Thanks also go to Committee Member Caroline Eggerton and to Coordinators Renate Watkinson and Sam Smart for their work during the past year.

The new Working Committee is Pam Ledden and Margaret Bridger - Coordinators; Louise Anike, Peggy Hewett, Betty Johnston, Judith Mustard, Joy Ross, Sam Smart, Renate Watkinson - Committee Members.

The position of Treasurer was not filled. At the first meeting of the Committee in September this issue will be addressed together with allocation of the various responsibilities of the Committee such as the Newsletter, the Theatre Group, Wellness, Advocacy, Membership and Administration. As a means of familiarisation, starting from the September issue of the Newsletter, we will be writing a series of profiles of Working Committee members and their special areas of responsibility.

The proposed amendments to the Constitution which were circulated in the July Newsletter were adopted in full with one dissenting vote. Please call at 87 Lower Fort St if you would like a copy of the amended Constitution or phone us at 9247 7046 if you would like us to send one out to you. You might also like a copy of our Annual Report which provides a thumbnail sketch of Sydney OWN and gives a flavour of the diversity of activities in which our members are involved.

As a final word this month we would like to say thank you to workers, both paid and unpaid, members and co-committee members for all the help and support we have received during the year.

Margaret Bridger, Sam Smart, Renate Watkinson

WELLNESS FORUM. . . AND BEYOND

One-hundred and fifty women joined us at the Women's College, Sydney University, for the two-day Forum on Older Women's Wellness practices held July 6th and 7th. We had organised this event for two main reasons: firstly we knew that older women everywhere were interested in finding ways and sharing ideas about achieving a sense of wellbeing for themselves, and we suspected that our wellness centres at Bankstown and Northside, successful as they are, might be only two examples among many others, where older women themselves are involved in planning, organising and running wellness activities. And secondly, we wanted to seize this opportunity of including health and community workers in our discussions and planning sessions, so that the future spread of wellness activities could happen through *partnership* with service providers who understand and support what we do.

So the two days were filled with examples of wellness activities, old and new, rural and urban, some supported strongly by local health workers, and some, like "Growing Old Disgracefully", told of a group of women who decided what they wanted and have gone about getting it! Sue Dennison, from Nundle, a cancer survivor and dedicated community health worker, described how she organises carloads of women to travel to Tamworth for breast screening, where the most important time of the day is the coffee-stop on the way home. Here women get to talk about common issues and share their thoughts and feelings about what is important. The OWN group in Penrith has built a successful partnership with one of the local community nurses, so that their group is provided with a venue and the where-with-all to have a variety of activities which would not be possible without support. In last month's newsletter Muriel told us about Colleen Carwood's Aboriginal Waves group in South-Eastern Sydney.

Noreen Hewett had set the tone on day one with her opening address describing the fundamentals of OWN's wellness models, and the keys to success that have been learned through participants own experiences. Over the two days we were treated to a succession of impressive women speakers highlighting what it is that makes for wellbeing

for individual women and for the community as a whole. And the women themselves defined what wellness means for them: purpose - control - freedom; involvement and participation, and feeling OK, physically and emotionally.

So where do we go from here? The Forum was a launching pad where the ideas and how-to experiences flowed freely. It was funded by the NSW Health Department, and OWN is receiving another substantial grant from Health to carry this fund of ideas and information forward to help other groups of older women set up wellness activities in other communities. We will collect material and information about what has already worked for successful OWN and other community groups, and make it available to others. The Rural Women's Network has a similar project under way, concentrating on rural and isolated older women across NSW, so we will be working together to make the best use of resources and to carry the experiences of health and well being forward.

A more detailed report of the Older Women's Wellness Forum is available from OWN.

Sam Smart

OWN Australia Annual Conference

**Monday 20 September to Wednesday 22
on September 1999 at Burgmann College,
Australian National University, Canberra.**

Conference registration \$10

Full Board at Burgmann College \$52 per night
(\$40 concession)

Conference dinner \$20 non-college residents,
\$12 residents

Casual meals \$8 non-college residents

To register for the Conference and to book
accommodation, please contact Kate Arnold
6254 0682 or Julia Biles 6281 5637 by
Friday, September 3.

Or phone Sydney OWN on 9247 7046 and we
will send the registration papers to you.

Home Care

Because many older people are unable to get much needed home and community care services, the Older Women's Network and Combined Pensioners and Superannuants' Association (CPSA) have set up a Working Party to examine complaints and trends towards higher fees and privatisation. The collaboration has resulted in valuable exchanges of information about individual cases and agencies' responses to complaints about waiting lists.

The working party met for the third time on July 1st, when other organisations were also present to hear Paul Sadler from the Ageing and Disability Department provide information and answer questions. Major issues were apprehension about referrals to private providers, the impact on NSW services and fees of the Federal Government funding policies and the need for growth funds instead of cost cutting to maintain existing service levels.

Early release from hospitals was raised. Services which allow recovery at home relieve hospitals of high acute care costs but the Health Department makes no ongoing budgetary contribution towards these services which generally come out of HACC funds. If they aren't adequate, evidence shows that some patients return to the hospital system with an aggravated medical condition.

There was support at the meeting for a central information point to prevent consumer confusion on how to get services and an effective complaints system which would collate data on complaints at all levels, using it to monitor and rectify inadequacies in services.

Caroline Eggington, Betty Johnson, Hedi Roggeveen and I have attended Working Party meetings up to date representing OWN. I believe our contributions have been useful and welcomed. Members of the working party are pursuing individually investigations through local agencies and may become involved in consumer representation at regional or local level. We hope to set up a network of members in both CPSA and OWN who will become regional consumer advocates and inform us regularly of what is happening among service providers and recipients. If you want more information, please contact any of the representatives on the Working Party through Sydney OWN.

Noreen Hewett

Vitality at Northside

During 1998-99 a considerable amount of time has been spent seeking funding for the Northside Wellness Centre. This is a constant source of irritation as we would much rather spend the time developing and expanding our centre to other areas within our region.

Our program of activities on Wednesday at Chatswood maintains the same format, with Feldenkrais followed by an information/discussion group in the morning, followed by lunch and then a Qi Gong class. The program continues to attract good attendances including many women who are entering their third year of regular attendance plus a constant stream of new faces.

The Crows Nest program has grown to three activities per week with the help of a grant from North Sydney Council. We have been able to offer many of the things that Chatswood has experienced as well as greater depth on some topics, such as a four-week Music and Sound Workshop.

The Tuesday Feldenkrais class at Lindfield continues to be popular and provides an extra place for those who want to escape the crowd on the floor at Chatswood on Wednesdays.

One exciting development this year has been the emergence of two groups established by women who have been attending the Centre. The first group is a Qi Gong class now running every Friday. The Qi Gong class proved to be so popular on Wednesdays that some of the women decided to set up a class of their own to ensure that they could go regularly. This class has been extremely successful and remains completely independent and self-funded by participants. The second group is an independent Self Awareness group, an offshoot from a six-week Self Awareness Workshop we had offered at Crows Nest. This group meets at 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point. While we assisted the groups to get established the idea to create them and their continuing success lies entirely with the women attending. This is what wellness practices are all about: older women taking action to ensure they have continued opportunities for personal development, companionship and physical activities in an atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance.

Cara MacDougall

BOOKS ... BOOKS ... BOOKS

There are three books that I recommend: 'Why Weren't We Told?' by Henry Reynolds; 'Haunted by the Past' by Ruby Langford Ginibi and 'A Tribute to Andrew Olle' with a preface by Annette Olle and Paul Lyneham.

Professor Henry Reynolds' book is about his personal search for the truth about Australian history. It is concerned with the little known (until very recently) facts of Aboriginal history and the attachment of Aboriginal people to their land and their culture. His aim is to help find ways to further the cause of reconciliation with our Aboriginal brothers and sisters. He describes some very disturbing incidents, which took place in his search for the truth. In North Queensland, where he lived, academic friends and others showed a great deal of racism in their attitudes, jokes, slurs and downright lies. This is distressing to those who are trying to understand our past history and who feel enriched by the contribution of Aboriginal writers, singers and dancers.

Professor Reynolds search began when he and his family were holidaying in England. What better source then to start at the beginning, to learn of the attitude of the conquering white race as it settled this new land, Australia? On returning home he began the very time consuming task of finding out the truth of settlement in Northern Queensland. As the pastoralists and settlers occupied the land, the attitude for the most part, was one of pushing the Aborigines off the land and if the Aborigines resisted, then the pastoralists just got rid of them, either by hunting them off the land, shooting them and large scale massacres which included women and children. The Aborigine had no place in the new Australia. White man felt he had the legal right to shoot on sight any aborigine in his path. One figure quoted was as many as 200,000 deaths or even more in the early part of our history.

The second book by Ruby Langford Ginibi, an Aboriginal mother of nine who brought up her children almost alone, tells the story of her son Nobby. Some of the children's fathers were black, others a mixture and some were white. Nobby was very fair like his father. Nobby, to his great credit,

never once tried to be white. He was an Aborigine and proud of it. Some children did not believe he was an Aborigine, but it didn't take long to change their minds when Bill (very dark) came to fight the school bully tormenting brother Nobby.

This fine story is about Nobby's life. He was gaoled at a very young age, 17 and a half years, for a crime he did not commit and for which he was gaoled for six long years. Nobby's time in gaol is heart rending. The brutality of the gaolers against Nobby and other Aborigines in gaol, was harsh in the extreme. The general public and police believed they got the punishment they deserved. Ruby Ginibi says "Nobby's story has its roots way back. It's part of a bigger historical picture passed down from one generation to another. This story continues to day".

The book also takes up the cause of the gaoling of Aboriginal youngsters for minor misdemeanours e.g., for swearing at a policeman. Such a 'crime' was enough to get them arrested and thrown into gaol. Ruby also deals with Aboriginal deaths in custody. Seven case histories are described. One contains a wonderful poem to Maisie Pat and all mothers who have lost their children whilst in custody.

A recent figure about the number of Aborigines in gaol confirms this. In fact it is worse today than in previous times - once it was 25% of Aborigines occupying the cells, today it is 30%. Horrifying when you realise that the Aboriginal population is only about 2% of the total population.

The third book is a tribute to Andrew Olle, ABC news announcer and TV presenter, whose untimely death at the age of 48 left his listeners and viewers in tears when news came through about his illness and subsequent death. In this tribute, ABC journalists and news presenters have contributed their memories of Andrew. Altogether they give a picture of a very warm, caring, capable, loving, energetic and stubborn man (he had to get the right word for the story or a sentence). The tributes are very moving, people were so touched. The ABC received 6000 separate calls and faxes. One can only hope that they helped to ease the pain of his death for Annette, his wife, and three children. Both his elder son Nick and daughter Nina pay their own tribute to their Dad in this book.

Enid Maher

HINTS ON BECOMING A.S.O.P.

(A SUCCESSFUL OLDER PERSON)

I've noticed lately that no matter how I (the essential I) feel about it, others look upon me as Old. This experience will come to everyone who is lucky enough to live beyond seventy-five in reasonable health.

A wise woman once said, "Old age is not for sissies." Age means greying hair and wrinkles, perhaps loss of sight or hearing; slowing movements. It does not mean the onset of second childhood or loss of brainpower for women. For women, while the loss of sex-appeal may not matter too much, it adds to the 'childishness' view. I am being paid by a grateful government for staying alive with more or less free medical care; I can get cheap home help; also reduced fares, rent assistance, or a rebate on rates and telephone.

We oldies are still an underclass and are vulnerable, with often diminished sight, hearing and physical strength. So we must develop coping strategies and techniques.

Changing your appearance is one way; hair colour, perhaps. Maybe give up the string of pearls and wear silver chains instead. If you really want to be noticed, wear a short tight black skirt.

More lasting though, cultivate old skills and learn new ones. Join groups like U3A or the Older Women's Network. Never admit to a poor memory, except to your best friends.

And face it - saying you're too tired to go out somewhere won't get you far in the Older Persons' stakes. So just say you're writing a book and can't spare the time, and above all, 'Stay Alive'.

The best part of ageing is the store of memories you gather, and the longer you live, the larger the store. It will also annoy those who think we are just cluttering up Planet Earth.

Cecily McIlroy

THIS IS A QUEUE FOR EXERCISE

As we meet twice a week for "Wellness" activities at Penrith OWN, Rae and I felt responsible enough to train as Fitness Leaders.

Having successfully presented our reason for training and being accepted for the Course, we arrived on enrolment day. We were very noticeable, being the only older grey haired people in a line-up of flexing muscles, bouncing young ones in short shorts and all with visions of becoming personal trainers or running their own gyms. Their greetings were to let us know we were in a queue for exercise and gym work. We assured them, with humour, we were aware where we were and what we were about. The instructor kept telling us to sit down, with the result we would miss our place in the queue. Not to be daunted, we decided no more sitting, we would stand with the best of them.

It was intense study, two full Semesters, with more than gym work. We learnt the workings of the heart, lungs, the names of the muscles (what a brain teaser) and how they worked, bones and how exercise affected the body and a lot more. We sat for exams and took part in class discussions.

Some of the younger ones didn't complete the course, but we were so adamant in making a stand for the older person, we didn't miss a class. The whole class of young people, when they realised we had a sense of humour and would listen to their point of view, as well as giving ours, accepted us and even admired us for what we were doing. We hope we were able to give some positive insight on how to work with and respect 'the older person'.

I am happy to advise Rae and I attended our graduation night this year, the International Year of the Older Person, where it was announced we were top of the class.

We feel we achieved a milestone for ourselves as well as for the older woman in undertaking this course, and we hope our influence will be far reaching because of our association with the young people in this class.

Thoughts from my Wheelchair

I'm waiting for my broken leg to heal, sitting in a wheelchair, thinking about things, reading prodigiously, and talking endlessly on the phone.

There's not a lot you can do in a wheelchair (you can't even get to the back of the fridge or the pantry. So you have to eat whatever is in reach). I now know how frustrating it must be to have a disability and have to cope day in, day out with trivial tasks that require thought and ingenuity to do.

My wandering thoughts turned to IYOP and what has been achieved this year, if anything. Has it actually promoted more positive images of ageing and all the other things it was supposed to do? Hard to tell.

The Coalition '99 groups in various States have all been contributing, (NSW receiving a great fillip from OWN). What started my thinking about this was a review of a book called "I'm Still Me" by South Australia's Coalition '99 in collaboration with Flinders University. This is a collection of interviews with twelve prominent South Australian women, like Dame Roma Mitchell, aged between 60 and 90. They are all famous women grown old, not your average older woman.

Will this book do much to alter community attitudes?

And what about the stories of super older women doing hair-raising stunts? The 90 year old who went sky diving or the 100 year old who climbed up the Harbour Bridge?

I find these stories very off-putting. Like most people I've never wanted to perform such feats of derring-do, even when I was young.

And what about the presentations, exhibitions featuring aged people, the photographs, stories and documentaries - that have proliferated this year.

Some of them have been good, assisting the recognition, respect and portrayal of older people like William Yang's portrait gallery of old faces, wise, dignified, humorous., Marvellous stuff.

In the other hand there was the photographic exhibition of older women's naked bodies, which repelled me. Making images like this in accepted photographic poses denies the difference between age and youth. Old bodies are not beautiful, as defined by our culture. So what? It doesn't matter. We are different now and have better ways of showing our worth than by giving voyeurs the chance to compare us with the firm youthful bodies.

So I'm not convinced about the value of all this type of publicity.

But I think IYOP has achieved much in other ways. I think that more older people are now beginning to regard themselves as important people who make a good contribution to society.

In Sydney there have been wonderful responses to our functions, our forums, speak-ins and seminars at least from the ones I know about, which are those which have been organised by OWN. They have all been very worth while and much appreciated.

Older people have been helped to realise that successful ageing is just a matter of relating to age-related changes. And a forum like OWN's recent "Wellness" Conference would have helped greatly.

If facilities that can make these changes acceptable are readily available then ageing will lose its fear and in spite of declining health, bereavement and other concomitants of age, most older people can become more contented with their lot and more accepting of the ageing process.

Most women I know enjoy their lives, the freedom from routine of work and family commitments, the time for themselves. Paradoxically, in spite of aches and pains and deterioration of health (a broken limb slowed up in healing by osteoporosis) many have a high sense of well-being.

My meandering thoughts take me to a consideration of what "well-being" actually

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THE DOMINO EFFECT

(Continued from page 6)

depends on. It's not just feeling well in a physical sense. It doesn't seem to depend so much on material things.

Part of the sense of well-being is high self esteem which comes when one feels in control of one's life.

I know that self esteem does not always have a causal factor. Some has to do with psychological aspects and life experience. Generally though self esteem comes not only with control of one's life, but being part of a community, having one's opinions listened to.

Being useful is another important factor and older women should always remember that relative to the resources they consume, they have made substantial contributions to family and society during their long lives.

Most beneficial and happy-making is to find a group of like-minded and compatible people with whom you share a common interest, say, the environment, animal welfare, politics.....whatever. It must involve effort and usefulness, I think.

For myself I am happy to belong to the Older Women's Network.,

I join in the cut and thrust of discussion, sometimes take responsibility for a job, and I air my opinions and listen to others., Every day I learn something new from the collective wisdom of this bunch of worldly wise, experienced, mostly fun-loving and sometimes stropy women.

Like everyone I grieve about the misery and hardship suffered by others and always join in, however feebly, with protests against injustice. I write letters and talk about those things to people I meet. I am, on the whole, pretty contented to be an older woman and I suspect that most of are.

Muriel Hortin

I bought some much needed new towels, which of course had a lot of excess fluff. I should have washed them before I used them, but I didn't. I shook one, and a piece of fluff flew straight into my right eye. I tried all sorts of strategies to remove it (the fluff, not the eye) but it wouldn't budge.

I went into the kitchen to look for my eye bath, which I keep on a high shelf. As I felt around for it, too lazy to get the step-stool, my hand dislodged an empty jam jar, which of course immediately fell down and exploded on the kitchen floor. Glass everywhere, large pieces, splinters, little sparkles on the carpet in the adjoining room from fragments too small to see. I managed to pick up the larger pieces and put them on the morning paper, which I hadn't had time to read properly. Of course, I cut my hand in the process. I put some tissues over the cut to soak up the unbelievable quantity of blood which was flowing from my finger while I looked for Band-Aids in the cupboard. In the process, I managed to knock over a canister of cereal, which of course fell down on to the kitchen bench and spilt some of its contents onto the floor.

I had to apply several Band-Aids before I could begin to clean up the horrible mess. Then I got the broom to sweep the cereal and the smaller pieces of glass into one place.

The broom handle caught on the jug of filtered water just behind me. It flowed all over the floor, all over the broken glass and cereal. It took a very long time to mop up what seemed like gallons of water, all the while gingerly avoiding the broken glass. I parcelled up the mess in my still unread daily paper. There were still sparkles on the carpet, so I had to use the Dustbuster to get rid of them. Eventually, all was restored to normal.

Days later I was still finding pieces of glass in remote places in my lounge room, and the carpet glittered spectacularly here and there in the sunlight.

I did find the eye bath, and managed to get rid of the fluff in my eye. Thank goodness for that. And I washed the towels.

Renee Simons

THE HEARTLANDS OF AUSTRALIA

From 5th to 17th July, I was delighted to visit the heartland of Australia, Alice Springs to Uluru (Ayers Rock). I was pleased to find that Clare Sefton, a fellow Sydney OWN member was also in our tour group. The tour was an opportunity to explore the National Parks in this area.

Some of the highlights were Standley Chasm, Simpson's Gap, Palm Valley, Kings Canyon, Uluru and Kit-Tjuta (Olgas). These are all sacred areas for the Aboriginal People in this area.

One of my most rewarding mornings was visiting the Aboriginal community of Lilla. It's a community that has been returned to the native owners, the Luritja People. The 55 hectare area is near Kings Canyon. The guide shared the many traditional artefacts with us, including a native dwelling made of spinifex grass and mulga branches, shields, digging sticks, music sticks, spears and boomerangs. They collect glue from the spinifex plant. To straighten the shaft of the spear, it is heated over a camp fire and gently shaped. Then, we had an opportunity to try to throw a spear using spear thrower. I wasn't able to get the spear to stay in the spear thrower long enough to get aim. It really takes skill to properly make it go in the right direction.

The Land of Lilla was breathtakingly beautiful. It is set in the midst of the mountains. As we walked into the hills, our guide pointed out some of the bush tucker and important trees. They also have some rock art. The Dreamtime story of these people is connected to the stories of the Kings Canyon people and the Uluru people. It has to do with three thieves, a python, a possum and a mole, who stole food from the Rainbow serpent of Uluru. A willy wagtail, a spy for the Rainbow serpent, reported the theft. We saw the rock art of the thieves in Lilla and the rock art of the spy in Kings Canyon.

Although the Luritja People enjoy opening their country to tourists, their living area is private. The guide pointed out to us that today they live in brick houses and enjoy modern conveniences, and their children enjoy computer games. However, they are speaking their language as a first language and are trying to pass their culture to them.

Frayda Myers Coopers

GRANDPARENTING

The grandparenting workshop was really stimulating and interesting. Very different experiences as grandmothers emerged, and this threw new light on each of our own situation.

We agreed that the most important factor was to balance the needs of the grandchildren and their parents with the needs and capabilities of the grandparent. The grandparent must be able to say "No". It is important for the grandparent to be able to say "No" and also to know "when to zip our mouths!"

We found many joys in being a grandparent, having fun with the children but not having the responsibility, and watching the children grow and develop. It is a pleasure to pass one's own interests and skills to the children.

We were a small group and gained a lot from this workshop, which was facilitated by Yetty and Helené. If they offer it again, do make an effort to attend as I'm sure you'd get something valuable from it too.

Joyce Chapman

Quinces I Cook on Occasion

Quinces I cook on occasion,
Seeking the cochineal
To colour them red
As my Grandmother did,
Touching the lemon, vanilla and almond,
The green, and the peppermint, rum.
The essences shelf and the recipe tin
Are part of the warp and weft of things
That Grandmother handed on.

Norma Balzer

STAYING SERIOUS ABOUT IYOP

Platform for Action

Whilst some in older people's and community organisations are still planning events right up to the end of December to celebrate IYOP, others of us are preparing to take older people's issues up to governments.

OWN members in Gosford, Mountains and Sydney have sent in a wide range of submissions to the 'Platform for Action' on carefully thought through issues such as attitudes, participation, advocacy, decision-making and social and legal issues.

The submissions will now be woven into a document, which will become the (draft) Platform for Action and will be presented for discussion at a forum in Parliament House on Wednesday 13 October. Workshops will be held on seven topics (see flyer), so it will be important, especially for those who made submissions, to speak to them.

A formal launch of the completed Platform for Action is then planned for November for presentation to the Premier. This will be our first lobbying exercise around these particular issues. Once presented to the Premier it will be important that older people and community organisations ensure that the government takes them seriously by constant monitoring, and an annual review of achievements to determine what needs revision.

Special Events

OWN's last big event for IYOP will be the launch of 'Tell Me More..' in October - most probably on the third Saturday.

Once again, we are planning something a little different so keep your eyes open for a flyer in the next Newsletter to find out all about it! As usual we would appreciate your help on the day so please get in touch with Dorothy or me on 9247 7046 if you are willing to assist in either a minor or major way.

OWN will also be taking part in the NSW Department of Ageing and Disability's Grey Mardi Gras, a street march and festival in Hyde Park North on Saturday, October 2 (see 'Noticeboard' for details). If anyone would like to help with a stall please give me a call.

Joy Ross

THEATRE GROUP REPORT

September, and then its only 'weeks' to Christmas and New Year and 'what a program' we have ahead of us.

We're off to Canberra in September - back to where the idea of the Theatre Group germinated - and what a way to celebrate. Nationally, we now have four Theatre Groups and we are planning to present a combined show during the National Conference of OWN. I hear quite a few people are coming to see the show. If you're interested, I can recommend the Macquarie Hotel, B&B for \$35.

When we get back, it's off to South Australia for a week's tour of the Mallee area which is out from Murray Bridge. We'll be performing over six days with 2 shows a day from 29th September to 7th October. What troupers!

We'll fit in a few local bookings in October and then, following the launch of "Tell Me More", which sounds as if it will be quite exciting, we're off to the Southern Area of NSW for a week's tour with the Wellness movers and shakers in November.

Like I said "What a program"!

We say farewell to Caroline who is our Director on Tuesdays and Administration Assistant on Fridays. As usual, our paid workers are with us for a short period due to financial considerations, and then we have to put into practice what we learn from them till the next one can be afforded.

We performed our "fun show" as requested by Beryl Evans ex M.H.R. for the WAAF afternoon tea. They expressed their appreciation by serving us with afternoon tea and presented us with a pair of Wings badge.

We performed our IYOP plus Violence segment at Richmond on Friday 20 August, and by the time you read this, we will have had our meeting with the 'new' Working Committee to assist in solving problems with less cast next year. We will also have had our Theatre Skills Workshop, so I'll tell you all about that next month. Till then, Cheers!

Peggy Hewett

BOOK REVIEW

The Women's Power Handbook, by Joan Kirner and Moira Raynor, (Viking, 1999)

This book is for all women who have ever tried to change anything, from the domestic to the global. It is a practical, commonsense guide to the tactics of power-holders, and to the ways in which women can work together to get good things done. It is both chatty and tough-minded, with anecdotes, tips and splendid Horacek cartoons, and an admirably eclectic selection of insights from anything that helps – feminism, management theory, law history, politics, sociology, psychology (academic, pop and new age.)

Both of the authors have held positions of formal power, Joan Kirner as Premier of Victoria and Moira Raynor as Chair of WA's Law Reform Commission and Victoria's Commission of Equal Opportunity. This enables them to make sharp comments about the spheres of political and bureaucratic power, but they are equally as interested in the ways in which women might encounter and use power in our neighbourhoods and homes.

I suspect that the women who will find the Handbook most useful are younger, employed in a job with prospects and going home each evening to a family which includes children; I found myself skipping bits. However, there are sections of particular interest to OWN members, particularly those on planning, networking, making alliances, managing meetings, lobbying, public speaking, using the media, and community activism. Particularly pleasing for this reviewer was to find (on page 224) a reference to the work of Josephine Conway, a member of Newcastle OWN.

In sum, this book is grounded in the hard realities of life of the activist and also immensely encouraging and optimistic. I suggest that each OWN group purchase a copy to keep as a reference.

Jane Grevillea

Op Shops

'Op' could mean opportunity or it could mean optimistic – it depends on your outlook.

There are about seven op shops in the small central coast township where I live. They are the best patronised of small shops. Some are stocked with garments from the recently deceased not so well-off, while some seem to be boutiques carrying the disposable items of the better-off. Mother-of-the-bride frocks in the latter are prolific. All the shops have a distinct odour of airless closets and human use.

Op shops are the sociological sign of our time. They are often patronised by people who are not struggling on pensions or who have needy young families. The boutique-type op shops display good bone china and trendy gear. Proceeds are for charities such as disposable pets, wildlife protection or good works. These are Dickensian shops - a sign of the never-ending 'upgrade' and perhaps economic rationalism – useful at the change of season when space is needed for the latest fashion or for clean-outs when relatives die, or when one moves house. Do these people feel a rosy glow associated with donating to 'good works'? A sense that someone is worse off than me - not so fortunate?

It seems op shops are a necessity even though they may well be recycling goods to well-off people but they are a cheap means of clothing people who are disadvantaged.

Enid Harrison

Congratulations to OWN member Margaret Sargent who received a Premier's Senior's Achievement Award on the 30th of July. Margaret's award was for her outstanding Service to the Community, especially on behalf of women.

A GHOST STORY

November the fourth was the festival of the ghosts. Many serious discussions took place at this meeting because ghosts had been feeling dissatisfied with their role in the world of human beings. They didn't feel man needed them anymore and in fact many denied their existence. This denial hurt the ghosts deeply since they tried to become friendly and believed they were a comfort to people.

A long wisp of a ghost spoke up. "I remember a man who was unhappy with his life."

"He's not going to tell that story again," whispered a shorter, plumper one to another, stretched out on the grass. "Afraid so," was the reply and so they listened.

The first ghost said, "This man, I'll call him John, couldn't see any purpose to living. His thoughts were on suicide and his family didn't want to see him anymore because of his depressed state," said the ghost and looked at his audience, now reduced to three as the others had faded away.

This lack of interest did not deter the storyteller and he continued, "John sat in his car which was parked on a cliff overlooking the sea. He was crying, wanting to die but unable to take the final step."

"Are you wondering how I know all this?" He looked at the three for signs of interest. Each one nodded although the plump one stifled a yawn.

"Well, in the course of my duties, I had been visiting an ancient church and after roaming around the building I saw John sitting in a pew. He looked desperate, wringing his hands and pulling at his hair. I realised this man needed help, but from whom? Could God, the Holy Ghost, be listening? Checking to see if He was about, and receiving no answer, I knew I had to act. I followed John to his car, hoping to think of something before he, too, became a ghost."

"Would that be such a bad thing," he mused, not expecting an answer.

"It was too late to call for help from the other ghosts. What could they do anyway?" His tone was scornful, his form grew longer. "I knew I had to act quickly. The sky was lightening. As the sun rose, I would disappear into the mist. A transformation would have to take place. I would assume human form although I hadn't attempted it before. I chanted, twisted, twirled and eventually a body appeared with arms and legs attached. A little hairy to be sure, but I was thankful for anything.

I felt my head, sure enough it was there. So with this knowledge, I jumped onto the bonnet of the car and tapped on the windscreen. John lifted his head from his arms, staring in disbelief at me, and then in a scream he shouted, "Go away, f--- off you old bugger!" whilst putting the car in reverse and accelerating away, any thoughts of suicide quickly dispelled.

"This only goes to show we ghosts are necessary even if, at times, we have to wear two horns and a pointed tail."

Joan P. Hook

Sometimes I feel like I'm diagonally parked in a parallel universe.

Dear Editor –

Congratulations to the editors and all those involved in "Ripe for Repetition". It is a very attractive book – visually appealing, beautifully illustrated, a perfect size to pop into your handbag – and so cheap! The stories speak for themselves. A credit to OWN and the Newsletter.

Joan Johns

NOTICE

FORUMS

The Ageing and Disability Department will present a series of forums in their rooms on Level 13 Conference Room, 83 Clarence Street, Sydney. 10-30am-12noon. Morning tea is available from 10am.

Thursday 16 September: OLDER MEN-ALIVE & KICKING

Wednesday 20 October: EXPERIENCED HANDS - OLDER PEOPLE AS VOLUNTEERS

Thursday 18 November: SENIORS ON THE MOVE-- TRANSPORTING AN OLDER POPULATION

Wednesday 15 December: TAKING CHARGE-DECISION MAKING FOR LATER LIFE

Please RSVP to Geraldine Caswell
Phone 9367 6841

Alzheimers Day

Tue Sept. 21 Public Seminar about Dementia for World Alzheimers Day, phone Alzheimers Association 9805 0100

Train travel

Countrylink has announced an extension of its 50% fare policy to include all Australian holders of Seniors cards and Pensioner Concession cards on all Countrylink services.

EMBROIDERY

Do you enjoy doing ribbon embroidery? Have you any spare time and would like to earn extra money working from home? I am a milliner needing embroidery on my hats. Interested? Please get in touch. Maya Neumann 9361 0905 or 933 17327

Seniors Online

www.onlineaustralia.net.au/seniors.cfm is a Commonwealth initiative to encourage older people to use the internet. The website is dedicated to informing older people about the ways the internet can change and enhance our lives, and includes information about health, travel, finance, sports and entertainment as well as clear instructions and advice about using the internet.

Seniors Online Day will be launched on Tuesday 7 September at the State Library of NSW by Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP, Minister for Aged Care.

For more information about registering, please email oa@noie.gov.au or phone 9240 0911.

BOARD

Nutrition Week 10-16 October

FOOD VARIETY AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY seminar at The Webster Theatre, NSW Veterinary Science Conference Centre, University of Sydney.

Tuesday 12th October, 1999.

Chair Person : Professor Ian Caterson (Boden Professor of Human Nutrition)

Speakers: Gary Egger (Exercise Specialist), Glenn Cardwell (Sports Dietitians Australia) and Jane Moxon (Senior Nutritionist, NSW Health)

Cost: \$25 Members \$35 Non Members
For more details and a registration form, contact the Australian Nutrition Foundation NSW Division on (02) 9552 3081.

Ageing and Active Conference

A conference on Ageing in the 21st Century will now be held on Friday 19 November, 1999 at the University of NSW. More info will be available in a later newsletter or you can phone Dr. Diana Olsberg on 9385 2396.

IYOP EVENT DATES

Fri 1 October United Nations International Day of Older Persons

Sat. 2 October Grey Mardi Gras, a celebration of ageing, street parade and festival 10am-4pm. March from York St to Hyde Park North; phone 1800 804 135 for details.

Wed. 13 Oct. IYOP Forum to discuss the draft Platform for Action, Parliament 9am-2.30pm House, Macquarie St., Sydney; \$15/\$5; see flyer for registration.

'The Meeting of Generations'

In November, 800 people of all ages from around Australia will consider the positive lessons that have been learnt this century and address aspirations of young people for the next century. There are four 'subject tracks': Community Attitudes; Inclusive Communities; Work and Community Participation; and Investing for Future Generations. Contact Ms G. Le Bransky, Manager IYOP, Ageing & Disability Dept., L13 83 Clarence St., Sydney 2000

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

Annual fees:

Membership including Newsletter.....\$15.00

Newsletter only (for Gov't Depts. institutions and organisations\$20.00

Send your cheque, name, address and phone number to:

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Fax: (02) 9247 4202

email: ownnsw@zip.com.au

Web site: <http://www.zip.com.au/~ownnsw>

