

*Enid's copy*

# HORROR AT WEE WAA

It was with a mixture of rage and heartfelt compassion that I read about the brutal rape and bashing of the 93 year old woman at Wee Waa recently.

At first it was only briefly reported in the press last year. This did not surprise me, as many older women have been raped and even murdered in recent years. The crimes, unless they were committed in sensational ways, received scant coverage in the press.

Suddenly, this assault became front page news. This was not due, I believe, through horror of the callous attack, but for the news value that the Council were to test by DNA all the males in the district in order to catch the rapist. It seems it was technology on display that was newsworthy, not the crime.

In my opinion, it was an opportune police-cum-political exercise to promote the idea of using the DNA technology to catch criminals.

A puzzling aspect of this case is the fact that Miss Knight's name was published, as a victim's name is normally not revealed. This raises questions as to why her name was made public.

One effect of the rape is that Rita Knight no longer feels safe to live alone. She now resides in a nursing home, robbed of her independence. However, according to media reports, she has received considerable community support since her ordeal. OWN sent Rita a message of support, and encourage others to do the same.

The question is: will we see the same amount of media attention when and if another older woman is raped, or will the media only show interest when there's mass DNA testing?

**Louise Anike**

Ed. Louise has been invited to be a member of the Advisory Committee, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse at the University of NSW. If any members have an issue or a suggestion that you would like Louise to raise, please leave a message for her at the office on 9247 7046.

## What's Bugging You?

The violence against Rita Knight is one of the symptoms of our increasingly uncaring society today – a society that seems not to care a jot for the weak and vulnerable; that allows children to be incarcerated for minor offences; that sends refugee Kosovars back to a devastated homeland and a Prime Minister who adamantly refuses to say sorry for the frightful crimes committed against our indigenous people. This spreading lack of compassion is surely fuelled by leaders of a government more concerned with political expediency and economic rationalism than care for human beings.

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

It is a fact that politicians carefully note the number of letters sent on any issue, so it is never a waste of time to write a letter.

**KEEP LETTERS GOING TO CANBERRA.**

**PHONE OR WRITE TO YOUR LOCAL MEMBER ABOUT ANY ISSUE THAT CONCERNS YOU.**

**JOIN IN PROTESTS**

**SIGN PETITIONS.**

**TALK TO PEOPLE TO HELP RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND TO COMBAT APATHY.**

**SPEAK OUT.**

**Maintain the rage!**

**Muriel Hortin**

## Coordinator's Report

And then there was one...

Pam Ledden has resigned from her position as joint coordinator. Pam intends to continue managing the Peer Support Advocacy Network (PSAN) and also continue her interests and responsibilities in OWN's advocacy work. Thank you, Pam for your contribution as coordinator, it has been much appreciated, and I'm sure that the advocacy brief will benefit greatly from your enthusiasm and interest.

Out there in the wider world several matters continue to be of great concern. The GST, of course, is getting closer and it now seems clear that there will be no further amendments to the Act. In addition to concerns about what it will mean for us personally, we have particular concerns in the office about what it will mean for OWN. Kris, our Office Manager, has been doing a sterling job finding out all she can about its effects so that we can act responsibly. Unfortunately, not all the information we need is available yet from the Australian Tax Office.

Also of concern has been the position taken by the Federal Government over Mandatory Sentencing and the Stolen Generations. In the first instance letters were sent by OWN to the Prime Minister and appropriate other Ministers voicing our opposition to this iniquitous approach to sentencing. With regard to the second issue we have decided to "walk the Bridge" behind our banner on 28 May to demonstrate our strong commitment to reconciliation. Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will find an article written by Muriel Horton about the Stolen Generations and details of the Bridge walk. Hope to see you there.

Keep your eyes open for our brand new poster, which we plan to distribute far and wide to spread the word about our wonderful organisation. Pam Ledden took responsibility for its production, and what a great job she has done - great colour, great message and great photography of three of our

members: Ermes Solari, Betty Little and Ros Gordon.

Thank you to Wendy Farly of *anthouse* for striking and colourful poster design.

If you would like to put up a poster in your library or community centre, give us a ring and we'll send one or more out to you.

Till next time.

Margaret Bridger

## Getting Together in Our Neighbourhoods

For older women, living in a supportive neighbourhood is an important factor in our wellbeing. At OWN, we think of 'wellbeing' as not just about health, but related to a sense of belonging to, or identification with, a particular community. OWN's strategies to build supportive neighbourhoods include connecting OWN members in their local area and resourcing them to initiate and build supportive neighbourhoods.

So far, sixty members in the Metropolitan area have responded to the question in the Members' Questionnaire about wanting to meet other OWN members in their local area. (There are also members outside Sydney who have said 'yes' to the question but we have yet to develop ideas about how to respond to them.)

All sixty members have been contacted and loosely grouped together in ten areas, with a contact person identified in each area.

Four groups are located on the northside at Pymble, Lane Cove, Manly and Mosman. In the south is Bondi, South Sydney and Sutherland and west is Leichhardt, Ashfield and Parramatta. Each has a contact person.

On Monday, 17th, we had a Supportive Neighbourhoods meeting where eight of us talked at length about all the issues involved in making supportive connections within our local communities.

We expect that neighbourhood groups will start small and remain fairly informal, and that each group will work out how they will go

about promoting the rights, dignity and wellbeing of older women.

According to the 'experts', social isolation of older women is one of the biggest issues for communities. We are planning to seek funding for a project to research this issue.

Our next get together is on **Wednesday, 14 June**. We plan to look at and discuss a video on volunteering (screened on Compass on Sunday 16 April - did anyone tape it? Please let me know.) Bring a sandwich and stay on after the meeting for a chat over lunch.

Joy Ross



## From the idea to the reality ...

### Establishing OWN NSW

Fourteen members attended the special members' meeting on Wednesday, 19 April to share their ideas about forming a peak body - OWN NSW.

The central question for the meeting was: what difference will having a peak body make to OWN, and to its members?

As the formation of 'OWN NSW' is the main item on the agenda for both the NSW OWN Groups meeting on Wednesday, 3 May, and the OWN Inc. Members' Meeting on Wednesday, 10 May, it was critical that we came up with some clear understanding.

To do this, we refined the issues into the seven key questions:

1. Will current members of OWN Inc. belong to an OWN NSW?
2. Who will manage OWN (NSW) Inc.?
3. How will voting/representation of groups and individuals be organised?
4. What about funding and premises?

5. How will OWN NSW be affiliated with OWN (A)?

6. What are the implications for OWN (Sydney) Inc.?

7. What constitutional changes will be necessary and how and when will they happen?

Most of our time was spent discussing questions 1 and 2. All the issues will be explored by a Working Party and will be on the agendas of the May meetings and the State Conference in June.

Suggestions:

1. That OWN Inc.'s name be changed to OWN (Sydney) Inc., and that all current members of OWN Inc. will automatically be members of OWN (Sydney) Inc. (It was acknowledged that this will mean revisiting the issue of membership and newsletter subscriptions so that members are not financially disadvantaged in any way.)

2. A new organisation called OWN (NSW) will be incorporated. Membership of OWN (NSW) Inc. will be for groups only, for example, local OWN groups in NSW including Sydney OWN.

The Theatre Group, Aboriginal Support Circle, Newsletter, Wellness, Advocacy and the Administration/Finance Group are all projects or working parties of OWN (NSW).

3. We explored ideas about a structure for managing OWN NSW.

4. A key issue for members of OWN (Sydney) Inc. will be its renewed focus and coordination.

A convenor will be appointed to undertake overall coordination of the peak body - OWN NSW.

It is expected that local OWN Groups (affiliates) will continue to come together for quarterly meetings, and that tele-conferencing for those too far away to attend the meetings will continue.

These, and other key issues, will be presented at the two meetings in May, so please come along and have your say.

Dorothy Cora

## International Year of the Culture for Peace and Non-violence

On 12, April Sabine Erica, a peace activist for many years, convened a group to discuss the concept of a 'culture for peace'. Although it was a small group, which was somewhat disappointing, the discussion was nevertheless creative and impassioned.

Sabine talked a little about the United Nations publications on the issue, the kind of language used, the scarcity and lack of adequate funding allocated to the Year by the UN itself and the Australian governments, state and federal.

Our talk ranged far and wide from the efforts of the Swiss government to remain 'neutral' in two world wars, to the more recent efforts of the Japanese to dismantle the militaristic aspect of their culture. We spoke a lot about the competitive nature of our own culture and the nationalistic overtones often evident within it.

The media and film production industries received some stringent criticism for the representation of violent behaviour, which serves to validate the same kinds of behaviour in real life.

Many questions arose about how we treat other members of our communities, child-rearing practices, and who it is that gets neglected and marginalised in our immediate environment. We talked about how the language used to describe trivial conflicts, sports contests for example, has escalated to include terms like "it's world war three out there", and how more recently reference to the Holocaust has been used inappropriately.

Sabine brought with her a copy of the United Nations Manifesto 2000 which is being circulated for signature and is available from the United Nations Association of Australia, phone 9262 5111. It includes such statements as respect for all life, rejection of violence, sharing with others, listening to understand, preservation of the planet and rediscovering community.

If you wanted to but couldn't attend the meeting, and believe that peace is an important issue to be addressed within OWN, please give me a ring on 9247 7046 so we can plan a follow-up meeting.

Pam Ledden

### PEACE IS IN OUR HANDS

**Respect the life and dignity of every person without discrimination or prejudice.**

**Practise active non-violence, rejecting violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economical and social, in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable such as children and adolescents.**

**Share time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to put an end to exclusion, injustice and political and economic oppression.**

**Defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity giving preference always to dialogue and listening rather than fanaticism, defamation and the rejection of others.**

**Promote consumer behaviour that is responsible and development practices that respect all forms of life and preserve the balance of nature on the planet.**

**Contribute to the development of communities, with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles, in order to create together new forms of solidarity.**

## We're Not Ladies, We're Women

Last October was the 20th anniversary of the Wagga Wagga Women's Health Centre. Wagga has the proud achievement of being the longest established women's health centre in rural NSW.

As part of the celebrations for this event, Jan Roberts and Bev Stewart, two of the 'Founding Mothers', wrote a history of the Centre. This is not only a book about the Women's Health Centre, but also a commentary on social issues, politics and women's health in general.

In talking about her book, Jan says: "One of the things that continues to sadden and outrage me is the way most of women's history is invisible. The grand movements get some coverage, but the stories of women, particularly in the rural areas, are often unrecorded and ignored."

"We wanted to redress this imbalance and tell the story of a group of feminists in a conservative rural city who challenged the sexist society and the lack of adequate services in health and welfare in the country. We wanted country and city women to be aware that there was also a tradition of radical, feminist political action alongside the more common images of the CWA lady and the embattled wife of the farmer."

When Bev and Jan looked at the social justice objectives of equity, rights, access and participation as outlined in the NSW Government's Social Justice Statement, "Fair Go, Fair share, Fair Say", this book is about all these issues, both in the historic sense and the present time. They have commented often on how many things have not changed in twenty years - funding difficulties, lease difficulties, lack of cooperation from the Health Department, lack of recognition of the work, and value, of such services. These are still issues twenty years later.

So many of the rural services women have fought for are still not available or are inadequately

resourced, eg family planning, preventative health programs, adequate maternal and child health services, abortion services, adequate mental health options, transport and employment.

The book contains archival material, photographs, cartoons and selection of posters from the 1970s and 80s Women's Liberation Movement.

Cost: \$20 (including postage) from the Wagga Wagga Women's Health Centre Po Box 351 Wagga Wagga 2650.

### "Women's Business, 1975"

Twenty five years since our mother enclosed a message in a capsule ... a capsule which was to be reclaimed by Cowra Rotary last week. So back we went, my sister and I, to the land of our birth, to see what our clever mother had recorded for posterity.

A dinner party was arranged, for about 250 people, many of whom knew the Hutchinson girls and welcomed us with open arms. Some we hadn't seen for years ... lovely it was. Then came THE OPENING.

All around us people were opening their little boxes to see what their ancestors ... or they themselves ... had committed to the earth twenty five years ago. What family secrets might we discover? What precious memorabilia might we expose?

We longed for sensation ... but that funny old lady had simply written that Cowra was a wonderful town in which to live! And that our father had opened his jewellery business in 1915 (she told me it was 1913) with three hundred pounds, and that they had three living children ... Harry, Dorothy and Margaret. We were dashed with disappointment.

Then the Cowra Guardian person produced a letter that SHE had seen fit to save in HER container written by me to the paper on December 9th, 1975.

And here it is.

Dear Editor

Whatever happened to Harry M Miller? Remember the man who brought us "Hair", and "Jesus Christ Superstar"? The great entrepreneur of the sixties,

who made us rethink our ideas on theatre ... and the better we were for it, too.

Well, he was booked this week to speak at a luncheon organised by the Country Party for the women of Cowra, so off we went. We didn't expect any keen political comment, seeing he was under the Country Party banner ... but we did hope for a neat turn of phrase, a witty aside.

But all we got were some tired old jokes, the same old sexist attitudes (with a bit of anti-city stuff thrown in), and the dreariest line-up of glib-lib platitudes we've encountered so far in this mock-election campaign ... and that's saying something. Even country women these days are concerning themselves with the real issues ... even country women need the benefit of child care facilities, equal pay, legal aid, the family law bill, contraceptive advice, consumer protection. Probate has ripped of country women too, you know. Country schoolgirls get pregnant, country women get raped.

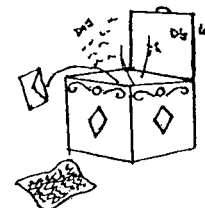
But did we hear anything about what the Country Party has done in the past in these areas, and that they might do in the future? Do you really think we want to go back to the old days of utter dependency on fathers, husbands, employers? When our sons were gaoled for believing Vietnam was wrong, and publishers were scourged for selling books that are now accepted everywhere? Harry Miller, you frighten me! You and your reactionary, paternalistic, repressive politics. Come to think of it, I'm glad you're for the Coalition ... listening to you has reinforced my strongest dislike for them.

So thanks a lot, Harry M. You've done Labour a favour. If only you hadn't bored us to death. The sandwiches were nice.

Signed: Dorothy Cox, 84 Redfern Street, COWRA.

Here we are twenty five years later. So what's new?

Dorothy Cox



# Theatre Group Report

Like General McCarthur, in his infamous words, "I have returned".

Where did my three months long service leave go?

I now appreciate how it feels to come into a show, cold! To make me feel at home, Lucy, who has been acting coordinator, generously gave me the job of writing the Theatre Group's report for this newsletter. I think "payback" may be involved! If you read last months newsletter with the report of our Leichhardt performance, you know what the "WOW! 2000" show is all about.

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> April the group travelled to Kur-ring-gai Campus of the University of Technology to perform to a very attentive, receptive audience who were doing their Masters degrees through the Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Health.

The feedback we received was very encouraging, "Your enthusiastic Theatre Group gave us an interesting and entertaining show. I would like to congratulate every one of them on their performance. This is the first time I had heard of OWN and I was very impressed by what you have all achieved. Your messages came over loud and clear throughout the performance and was very positive. Congratulations."

It was heartening to find that the woman who booked us had seen the group perform years ago at a nursing conference. One of the women in the audience worked in health administration in Dubbo and advised us that she had also seen us during our very successful "Bush Tour" six years ago and we had inspired her to set up a country group for older women which is still flourishing today. An indication that the Theatre Group is a valuable asset in spreading the word of OWN.

We often work under difficult circumstances, for example on the Saturday, Josie was unable to perform because of repercussions from her recent fall and Brigid was struck down with the 'flu. Into the breach. Louise stepped into Josie's role and I into Brigid's. How to learn the dialogue overnight? Impossible! Talk about necessity being the mother of invention, I pasted the two sheets of dialogue into a newsletter cover and, voila! (Though I threw Judith a little with my interpretation of the ending!)

The group continues to perform to many different audiences. On Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April, seventy men and women from the Jewish Care, Survivors of the Holocaust group were very impressed with our sing/talk and "WOW! 2000" show.

Feedback from social worker Zoe Williamson "The audience loved it, found that the performance gave them inspiration. Material was very interesting and humorous. It was obvious that the performers love what they are doing and feel empowered while performing. They give off a positive attitude and a passion to the audience".

During April we will be working with professional jazz singer Sue Cruickshank, who will pass on her expertise with music and stage presentation. We will be having a well earned break from 18<sup>th</sup> April until 2<sup>nd</sup> May and then come back refreshed to perform at a dinner 9<sup>th</sup> May at Parliament House for 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the Public Service Women's Council. On 23<sup>rd</sup> May we will be looking forward to having a reunion with women whom we met last year on our Southern Highlands Tour. This will be held at the Abraham Mott Hall where a video of the tour will be launched.

Nice to be back

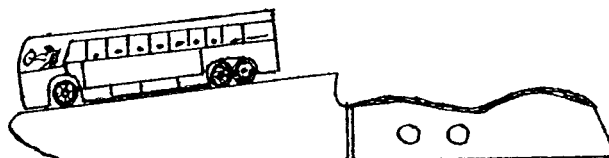
Peg Hewett

## TRANSPORT FACTS Did you know that:

Three different organisations are involved in providing rail transport: one manages the rail lines and stations, another manages the rolling stock and another provides the services.

- ◇ Small buses don't save money as most of the cost of running this service is in paying the driver. The best economy comes by organising the service to meet peak usage.
- ◇ Administering means-testing for seniors cards would cost more than the likely public transport savings.
- ◇ Some parts of the rail track are so unsafe that trains can only travel over them at about 20 kms an hour.
- ◇ In some parts of NSW the only transport to the nearest centre is by school bus. This means each journey has to last a full day.
- ◇ Most private bus services are running on a knife edge and are dependent on school transport and other government subsidies to survive.

Pam Ledden and Ros Gordon



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## other points of view ...

I am perplexed by Cecily McIlroy's article in the last issue of the Newsletter, re Sexual Assault.

I saw that photo in Good Weekend on March 4<sup>th</sup>, and though it was amusing. No more than that. I mean, "Do I look fat in this?" is not exactly calculated to start a stimulating debate, is it? No wonder the man looked "uninterested". A woman companion would have felt that way too, I'm sure. As for his attitude indicating mild contempt, I didn't see it that way - you read what you want to into it. And what would the outcome be? If he said, "Yes", there would be a quarrel and tears on the part of the woman. If he said "No", she wouldn't have believed him. And that would have started a quarrel also.

I honestly can't see any connection between that photograph and the rest of Cecily's article. How does this have anything to do with the sad case of the single woman who had taken out an AVO? Why should we assume that the man in the photograph would become violent? There are a lot of good men (I was married to one of them.) I think it's high time we admitted that, instead of vilifying the male sex as a whole. And, let's not forget, there are lots of horrible women, too.

Getting back to that photograph, I think that anyone living with such a silly woman had every right to be irritated by questions like that. You'd certainly need a lot of patience.

Renee Simons

### Correction

In the article "Because We Did Not Ask" by Helen Monaghan, in last month's newsletter the name "Bonhoeffer" was spelt as "Bonhoesser". We apologise for this error and also for the missing 'g' in Monaghan.

The Editor

*I was very pleased to see interesting and informative articles on breast cancer by Renate Watkinson, and another headed "Bras and Breast Cancer" in the April Newsletter.*

*However I could not believe that anyone would be irresponsible enough to reproduce, in "From the Net", the totally unsubstantiated and scaremongering allegation, for which there is no scientific proof, "that one of the leading causes of breast cancer is the use of anti-perspirant."*

Monica Law

### Sales and Sexism

I have just had a look at your web site and love it. I have recently started a Business Women's Network in Port Macquarie. I am also conducting research, nationally, on how women are 'sold to' - by men.

I have an online questionnaire where women can tell their story of how they were treated during a sales experience. Some of the stories so far seem to be too outrageous to believe, but they are, unfortunately, true. One of the most common complaints is that salesmen assume that a woman cannot make a decision on a major purchase without a 'hubby' present. My web site: [www.sellingtonwomen.com.au](http://www.sellingtonwomen.com.au)

Kellie Mills

### Retirement Research

I am a 55 year old, third year Sociology major at Swinburne University in Melbourne with an interest in issues affecting women as they approach retirement. I hope to do a research project on some of these issues later in the year (still trying to narrow down a topic).

I am delighted to have located your organisation and would hope to use it as a resource in my research.

I would be happy to open dialogue with members who might also be studying at this time.

Lois Booton

[loiseb@dragon.net.au](mailto:loiseb@dragon.net.au)

## Consumer Medicine Information

### IT'S YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

Questions to ask your doctor

- What is the medicine for and how does it work?
- Are there times when the medicine should not be used, for example, during pregnancy, or when taking certain other medicines?
- What are the instructions for taking the medicine, for example, how do I take it, how much do I take, when do I take it?
- What happens if I miss a dose?
- Are there things I must or must not do, or should be aware of, when taking the medicine? For example, is it safe to drive? Do I drink alcohol?
- What are the possible side effects? What do I do if I experience them?
- How do I store the medicine and what do I do with the leftovers?
- What is the medicine and who manufactures it?

### The 'No New Women's Prison' Campaign

**Who Are We?** The "No New Women's Prison Campaign" (NNWPC) sprang to life as community groups responded to the revelation that the NSW government had approved, in its 1999 budget, \$42,000,000 for a new women's prison to be built.

A moratorium on the construction of a prison is now being ignored by the NSW government.

**How Can I Help?** Sign a petition (at OWN) and write to The Hon. R. J. Carr, MP, Premier, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Citizenship, Level 40, Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place SYDNEY NSW 2000 Fax (02) 9228 3935. Send a copy to The Hon John Ryan, Chair, Select Committee Inquiry into the Prison Population, Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000 [cryan@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:cryan@parliament.nsw.gov.au) Fax: (02)9230 2992

For more info about NNWPC :  
Locked Bag 18, Suite 317 Newtown  
NSW 2042 phone 9990 2370,

## Dancing Kings and Queens

Gwennie and I were childhood pals. At sixteen we decided to learn ballroom dancing to improve our chances socially.

Soon we both loved dancing every Saturday afternoon at Donnie Spencer's dancing classes. Donnie looked a middle-aged man even then, but I saw his death notice recently and was surprised to read that he was only seven years older than me. Gwennie and I were not 'good sorts' so we got the fag end of the dancing partners or we danced with each other.

One afternoon Gwennie told me that Donnie had asked her to join his team of dance instructors. Of course, I assumed that I was not included as Gwennie scored more partners than I ever did, but as a loyal pal, she insisted that I be included in the deal, for a pittance each.

After that we were always sure of partners as we got one beginner each for a dance. With a natural aptitude for rhythm and a born bossyboots, I think I was a good instructor. Gwennie heard one partner say so. One afternoon Donnie approached me and asked me to partner a 'star' dancer in a demonstration of a new dance step. I was astounded as the youth was a 'dancing king', who looked down his nose at me in my faded floral skirt and my sister's passed on blouse. This fop was a 'whizzer', top of the crop in style, both in clothes and in dancing technique. I was in awe of him.

What worried me most was that I had been dodging in and out of the loo after each dance to re-pin the elastic in my sagging bloomers. So as an unlikely pair we went downstairs to a storeroom to practise. I was in terror of my pants falling down mid twirl. After three efforts I got the step right and the demonstration went on with the partner's girlfriend studying us intently. I heard a loud voice from the audience commenting 'She didn't do that step'. My pants did not come down, but they might as well have because I returned to my seat red-faced, thinking 'There goes my last chance of stardom'.

This was to be the story of my life. I am sure that experience has fashioned my psyche, always expectant of elastic to bust and bloomers to descend whenever I get up to speak on podiums and in vast halls of wisdom.

Enid Harrison

### JOIN THE CELEBRATION

Last November the Theatre Group, together with Sam and Betty from Wellness, and Kate and Tashe from Queanbeyan, visited five towns in Southern NSW to meet with older women and talk with them about our shared lives and experiences.

'Off the Beaten Track' was a most successful seven day tour. We met over 500 country women; they told us about their lives, and they were captivated by the Theatre Group members putting many of their concerns to music. In some towns the women performed for us too – it was a great time. As a result of the OWN tour, many older women in those rural communities have continued to meet and talk about their communities and the issues that affect their lives.

Well, the country women are paying us a return visit, and EVERYONE IS INVITED! On Tuesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, women from Crookwell, Young, the snowy region, Braidwood and Moruya are coming to Sydney to visit OWN and to meet with OWN members. A celebration and media launch will be held at Mott Hall, 1.30pm.

We will be launching a colourful report of the tour, an excellent video that was made while we were in Dalgety and Braidwood, we will hear from some of the country women, and our own Theatre Group will perform. Come and join us for free refreshments and a great get-together. See the enclosed flyer for details.

Sam Smart

MEET ...

*Judy Hastings*

Our OWN St Jude - saint of the impossible and cleaner extraordinaire

Where is your favourite place to go?

*The movies*

What do you like to do the most?

*Pottering around and doing things for people*

What is the one thing you never want to have to do again?

*Find a dead body*

What gives you your greatest sense of satisfaction?

*Turning chaos into a clean and orderly place*

What is the best thing you get from the Network?

*Boosts to my confidence and self esteem*

What is your greatest contribution to the Network?

*Being able to say 'yes' and get the job done*

What do you think is the single most important issue for older women?

*Having friends, and feeling secure and confident about where they are living*

What are you most passionate about?

*Socialising with friends and being able to help when something is wrong*

What causes you most distress?

*People picking on the 'underdog'*

What do you wish you had done that you haven't done yet?

*Got more education*

# Life in the Parallel Universe

I saw the movie "Being John Malkovich" recently, which is clever but confusing. My friend and I decided we would not want to be someone else, even for fifteen minutes. What if the person we chose suffered from some condition like acute dyspepsia or tinnitus or kleptomania? Fifteen minutes in their persona could be a nightmare.

The movie set me thinking about parallel universes on the bus journey home. If there is, say, one parallel universe then it is possible that there is another "you" over there, or up there, wherever it is. Those who believe in the existence of such a universe also speculate that the other "you" leads a life exactly the opposite of yours in the present universe.

For instance, Helen McMaugh over "there" would be slim, have pots of money, live in a house and not a home unit, be a whizz at maths and science, understand the world of finance, be a good cook, and always be supremely self-confident. Most significantly, she would probably live with her ideal partner, Mr Right.

I mention Mr Right because in the present universe I have always ended with Mr Wrong. In fact, a dreary succession of Mr Wrongs. I did meet Mr Right in the 1960's but he was stolen from me by a fast-working blonde in a bikini on a yachting picnic. The blonde, who called herself Dorice but was really a "Doris", subsequently dumped my fickle Mr Right. However, he remained fascinated by her and never found another permanent Partner. She used him shamelessly to store her furniture when she went overseas for a year, to do odd jobs in a run-down house she rented, and a shoulder to lean on when her many male conquests let her down.

In this present world I still bump into fickle Mr Right from time to time. In the thirty years since that fateful yachting trip he has lost his hair, had several hernia operations, grown a paunch and become pompous, judgemental and boring. His most boring trait is his misplaced devotion to Dorice, now a "bottle blonde".

In the parallel universe, however, Mr Right must still have his hair and kept his flat stomach. Instead of being a bore, he must be urbane, witty and charming. He is faithful to his partner. Could that partner be me? Did Mr Right and I end up together in the parallel universe? If circumstances are the exact opposite to here, it must be so.

However, the me in the present world is naturally pessimistic. I put it down to Celtic genes.. For that reason I would like to peek into the parallel universes for fifteen minutes. Not only do I want to see if I did in fact end up with Mr Right, I want to see what Dorice is up to. Over there she will not be a manipulative, man-stealing gold digger, but kind, generous, and supportive to the sisterhood. Disturbingly, she will be single.

Although Mr Right over there should be loyal and not fickle, perhaps he will find me too competitive as a partner. After all, that other me is slim, rich, clever, can understand algebra, trigonometry, the futures market and make perfect souffles. With my self-confidence I am a star at cocktail parties. Might not Mr Right, over the years, become a little over-awed? How could he resist the charms of a nice, unthreatening, supportive Dorice? Are they having a secret affair?

Perhaps it's just as well I can't take that fifteen minutes trip. I think the grass might not be greener in the Parallel Universe. Life will still have its complications.

Helen McMaugh

## Medical Services and the GST

*A medical service will be GST free if it is:*

- supplied by or on behalf of a medical practitioner or an approved pathology practitioner.
- generally accepted in the medical profession as being necessary for the appropriate treatment of a patient.
- Hospital care and other health services including paramedical services are GST free.
- Only a small range of services not covered by Medicare benefits, eg. Cosmetic surgery, will be subject to GST.
- Private Health Insurance and Ambulance Insurance are GST free.

If you need more information you can ring the general public Tax Reform Infoline on 1364140, or write to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) at GPO Box in your capital city, or visit the ATO website at [www.taxreform.ato.gov.au](http://www.taxreform.ato.gov.au).

*Extracted from 'Age Pension News', December 99.*

## EDUCATION AND SOCIAL ACTION CONFERENCE

How can song, dance, theatre, storytelling, writing and visual arts be used for education, development and social action?

This is a conference to bring people engaged in different fields of social action and education together; where activists, workers, policy makers, artists and scholars alike will be encouraged to participate; and where workshops will be long enough to have decent discussions and engage in hands-on activities.

**When?** 8:30 am Thursday, 30 November, at the Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Sydney. Only seven minutes walk from Central railway Station, 1 Quay St., opposite Paddy's market and the Haymarket Monorail station.

Phone 9514 3843 or email [cpe@uts.edu.au](mailto:cpe@uts.edu.au) for more info.

## THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

Reading in today's "Sunday Life" (2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2000) Jane Freeman's anecdote, "Party Politics", about the horrors of the party for six-year olds she attended, took my mind straight back to my younger son's sixth birthday party in 1958.

We lived in an old, rented, double-fronted semi at that time. The living room was narrow and very long, about thirty feet, I think, and had a door at each end which opened into the hallway, so the room could be exited and entered from either end. (It must have been two rooms at one time, but the dividing wall had been removed.) The table was a long one, loaded with the customary birthday goodies, fairy bread, crisps, cheezels, frog-shaped jellies, sausage rolls, iced cup-cakes, green and red cordial, paper hats, blowers, lollies, whatever. There were about twelve six-year olds, I think, as well as my own two daughters, aged four and nine respectively.

The parents escorted the children into my home and left as quickly as humanly possible. The children all sat down at the table, wolfed the food down rapidly, waited for the birthday cake, sang "Happy Birthday", and then, as one, leapt up from the table and began chasing each other, out of one doorway, along the hallway, back into the room through the other door, out again, along the hallway, back into the room, over and over and over, shouting, shrieking, screaming, knocking one another down, just missing me each time. All except one, a very fat boy, who stayed at the table and ate stolidly throughout, seemingly unaware of everything.

My four year old daughter was hysterical, clinging to me in fear. The older one was frightened, clutching at my dress. It was beyond imagination. It was like a tribe of whooping, war-like Red Indians on the rampage, knocking over anything and anyone in their path.

Not everyone had television in those days. I thought that if I switched it on, they might stop in

their tracks and be enthralled by it. Not so. It got worse and worse. And the fat boy went on eating.

My older son, aged about eleven and a half, arrived from school. He gazed at the scene in horror and amazement. "Leave it to me, Mum," he said bravely, "I'll fix it." He stood astride in front of the whooping mob, arms akimbo. "Stop that, stop it," he screamed, "Stop it right now!" They didn't seem to notice him. They charged on, knocking him flat on his back, leaping over him in a frenzy.

Fortunately, the parents began to arrive to take their children home, and the pandemonium stopped. I don't think I'll ever forget it.

Renee Simons

### STORIES, WRITING

#### & PUBLISHING Forum

8.45 to 5 pm . 1 September

Blackfriars Campus, University of Technology, Building 5

When people create and actively participate in a community writing or storytelling process there is enormous potential to help them see themselves as makers of, rather than passive players in, culture and history.

Annie Bolitho and Mary Hutchison, authors of 'Out of the Ordinary: Inventive ways of bringing communities, their stories and audiences to light', offer imaginative and practical ideas for sharing stories, turning stories into text and reaching a wider audience through simple publishing processes. Storytelling, oral history, autobiography, life stories, reminiscence, and the production of local histories are all forms of a 'community writing' practice. They can be used to draw out a community's experience and to represent it collectively. This process may link up not just to people and their communities but a place and an entire history.

Registration Fee: \$40 To register, contact Centre for Popular Education

E-mail: [cpe@uts.edu.au](mailto:cpe@uts.edu.au)

Tel. 02-9514 3843

MEET ...

*Louise Anike*

Director and scriptwriter –  
Theatre Group

Spokeswoman –  
Violence Against Women

Chairperson –  
Working Committee

Where is your favourite place to go?

*Bed*

What do you like to do the most?

*Reading, dining with good friends and having stimulating conversations*

What is the one thing you never want to have to do again?

*Deal with a violent husband*

What gives you your greatest sense of satisfaction?

*Getting a standing ovation for a Theatre Group performance*

What is the best thing you get from the Network?

*Sense of belonging and the understanding I get from like minded women*

What is your greatest contribution to the Network?

*Commitment to changing negative attitudes about older women*

What do you think is the single most important issue for older women?

*Income security and safety*

What are you most passionate about?

*Feminism*

What causes you most distress?

*Cruelty and violence*

What do you wish you had done that you haven't done yet?

*Written the great Australian novel*

## Use your Imagination, Senator!

Senator Herron's attempts to deny the validity of the term, "stolen generation" has caused even deeper suffering to the indigenous families who lost their children.

Senator Herron is the father of ten children. Is his imagination so limited or impoverished that he cannot imagine the anguish he would feel if a "social worker" forcibly removed one of his children? Taken away, never to be seen again?

The mathematical arguments used by Senator Herron are completely beside the point. We do not know how many children were stolen from their families. We do know that a generation of families was destroyed.

The reconciliation process has been immeasurably harmed by these statements of the Minister's and as a result, the process that had been slowly gaining ground and starting to engage the minds of Australians who may not have given it much thought, was hindered. The many imaginative campaigns such as the "Sea of Hands", good exhibitions of Aboriginal art, original programmes like ICAM on SBS and thoughtful statements by people of the calibre of Sir Gustav Nossal have all helped the process of reconciliation. They have been good steps forward but with the Minister's remarks we have taken a step backward.

For reconciliation to become a reality it must be part of our thinking and our everyday life in every community in Australia. It should be on the agenda of every school's curriculum. It must be backed by local and national leadership.

### People's Walk for Reconciliation

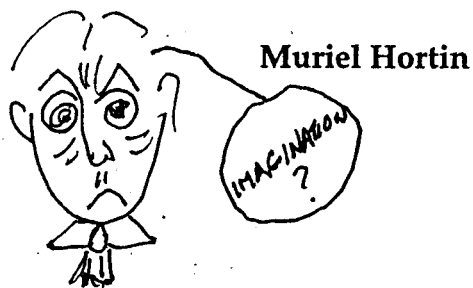
The Older Women's Network desperately wishes to see justice done for indigenous people and we work for reconciliation through our Aboriginal Support Group. We are now asking our members to take part in the People's Walk for Reconciliation, to take place on May 28. Details on the flyer in this newsletter.

The People's Walk is to be part of "Corroboree 2000" which is supported and assisted by the NSW State Government, Sydney City Council, North Sydney Council and the Darling Harbour Authority.

It will be a great day with wonderful entertainment at Darling Harbour, so we hope you will all be there.

P.S. Corroboree, we are informed, is a word in the language of the Darug people from the Sydney region. It refers to a group of ceremonies, including public performances of songs and dances covering the whole of social, economic, legal, political, religious and cultural life of the Darug people.

Muriel Hortin



Muriel Hortin

### HAVE YOU PREPARED FOR YOUR FUTURE?

"Most of us have made a will," says Barbara Lorback of the Seniors' Information Service, "But many of us do not prepare for our well-being before we die. There are two additional areas that we need to consider when we are growing older: enduring power of attorney and guardianship.

In the same way that your will can become outdated, your enduring powers of attorney and guardianship can also become outdated by changes in your circumstances. You can renew or change both documents.

You can obtain copies of the power of attorney and guardianship forms from the Seniors' Information Service - phone 13 12 44 between 9am and 5pm from Monday to Friday.

## A BIT TOO EARLY...

Kitty and I were about fifteen years of age when we first met in London, over sixty years ago, and we loved each other on sight. We were in our thirties when I left England, but we've kept in touch ever since, never forgetting each other's birthdays. We kept up a correspondence of sorts, though Kitty had to be jogged into action when I got tired of waiting for a reply to my letters. Lately, we've had to correspond by telephone, as Kitty finds it difficult to write because of a chronic illness. She is, and always has been, a brilliant artist, and fortunately is still able to paint. I think she'd just die if she couldn't do that. She did have a portrait hung in the Royal Academy some years ago, which is proof of her artistic ability.

We always ring each other on our birthdays, mine in October, hers in March. About 8.30 pm, our time, 7.30 am theirs, I suddenly realised we're into March, and it was time for me to ring. I dialled the appropriate numbers. No reply. Could they be out so early on such a cold morning in London? Was she ill, in hospital? I tried again a bit later. A shrill Telstra voice gave me a rather strange message about overseas lines being under repair and that I should ring such and such a number if I wanted to enquire about this, that or the other. I rang the number. The usual menus, dozens of numbers, none of which applied to what I wanted. I jabbed one of them. A rather haughty voice delved into the matter, and finally suggested that as I was no longer registered with Telstra for overseas calls, I should ring the company (One.Tel) that I was registered with.

I decided to ignore that, as I ring my daughter in Atlanta every week, and never have any difficulties. I dialled Kitty's number again. Her husband answered. "Where were you?" I asked, "I was worried." "Oh, I just drove Kitty to her Art Class in town," he replied. Instant relief. "I'm so sorry I missed her," I said, "I wanted to wish her Happy Birthday." He laughed. "You're a bit early," he said, "Her birthday's not till next Wednesday ..."

Renee Simons

# FROM THE NET

## Who can relate to this?

I have just been through the annual pilgrimage of torture and humiliation known as buying a bathing suit! When I was a child, the bathing suit for a woman with a mature figure was designed for a woman with a mature figure, boned, trussed and reinforced, not so much sewn together as engineered. They were built to hold back and uplift and they did a darn good job.

I wandered around a department store trying to make a sensible choice from what amounts to a designer range of floral rubber bands. The first thing I noticed was the extraordinary tensile strength of the stretch material. The Lycra used in bathing suits was developed, I believe, by NASA to launch small rockets from a slingshot, which gives the added bonus that if you manage to actually lever yourself into one of these bathing suits, you are protected from shark attacks. The reason for this is that any shark taking a swipe at your passing midriff would immediately bounce back and suffer whiplash.

I fought my way into the bathing suit, but as I twanged the shoulder strap into place I gasped in horror — my bosom had disappeared. Eventually, I found one of them cowering under my left armpit. It took awhile to find the other. At last I discovered it flattened beside my seventh rib. The problem is that modern bathing suits have no bra cups. The mature woman is meant to wear her bosom spread across her chest like a speed bump. I realigned my speed bump and lurched toward the mirror to take a full view assessment.

The bathing suit fitted all right, but unfortunately, it only fitted those bits of me willing to stay inside of it. The rest of me was oozing out rebelliously from the top, bottom and sides. I looked like a lump of play dough wearing undersized cling wrap. As I tried to work out where all those extra bits had come from, the prepubescent salesgirl popped her head through the curtain, and said "Oh, that suit, its perfect, It's YOU!" I replied that I wasn't so sure and asked what else she had to show me. I tried on a cream coloured one that made me look like a lump of masking tape, and a floral two-piece which gave the appearance of an oversized napkin in a serviette ring. I struggled in to a pair of leopard skin bathers with a ragged frill and came out looking like Tarzan's Jane on a really bad day. I tried on a black number with a midriff and looked like a jellyfish in mourning. I tried on a bright pink pair with such a high cut leg I thought I would have to wax my eyebrows to wear it. Finally, I found a suit that fitted. A two-piece affair with shorts-style bottoms and a halter top. It was cheap, comfortable and bulge-friendly, so I bought it.

When I got home I read the label which said, "Material may become transparent in water." But I'm determined to wear it anyway. I just have to learn to swim in the sand.

Gabrielle Rose  
g.rose@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

## We can make a difference!

*This is as insightful as it is scary.*

*A Columbine student who experienced one of the many High School Massacres wrote it:*

The paradox of our time in history is  
That we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers;  
Wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints;  
We spend more, but have less;  
We buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families;  
More conveniences, but less time;  
We have more degrees, but less sense;  
More knowledge but less judgment;  
More experts, but more problems;  
More medicine, but less wellness.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values.

We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.  
We've learned how to make a living, but not a life;  
We've added years to life, not life to years.  
We've been all the way to the moon and back,  
But have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbour.

We've conquered outer space, but not inner space;  
We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul;  
We've split the atom, but not our prejudice.  
We have higher incomes, but lower morals;  
We've become long on quantity, but short on quality.

These are the times of tall men, and short character;  
Steep profits, and shallow relationships.

These are the times of world peace, but domestic warfare;

More leisure, but less fun;  
More kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are days of two incomes, but more divorce;  
Of fancier houses, but broken homes.

It is a time when there is much in the show window  
and nothing in the stockroom;

A time when technology can bring this letter to you,  
And a time when you can choose either to make a  
difference

...or just hit delete.

# Notice

## Enduring Guardianship Seminars

Free seminars to explain recent amendments to the Guardianship Act 1987 which makes it possible for you to appoint someone you trust with the authority to make personal and lifestyle decisions on your behalf when you cannot make these decisions for yourself. This can include providing consent to medical and dental treatment. It is called enduring guardianship and it is different yet complimentary to enduring power of attorney.

Seminars will be held in:

Newcastle 4 May	Chatswood 1 June	Dubbo 6 July
Bondi 11 May	Penrith 8 June	Lismore 21 July
Cronulla 25 May	Hornsby 16 June	
	Liverpool 21 June	
	Sydney City 29 June	

**For venues and times, and to register,  
please phone**

Melanie or Karen on (02) 92651443 or 1800 451 510

## East Timor is still threadbare ...

Please help!

Any spare tools are urgently needed to rebuild homes and workplaces. Also sewing machines and accessories: cotton fabrics, needles, scissors, thread, tape measures ..

The people of East Timor are anxious to start work.

For more details, please contact Father Claude Mostowik on 9550 3845 or email [mscjust@mira.net](mailto:mscjust@mira.net).

## Have you experienced breast surgery?

The YWCA is running a program of gentle floor and pool exercises for women who have experienced mastectomy, lumpectomy or breast reconstruction surgery.

Programs will be held in Five Dock, Parramatta, Penrith and Nowra., starting on Wednesday, 10th May.

**Contact Claire on 9285 6225  
for more info.**

*The late Ruth Layard generously bequeathed her extensive library of Aboriginal encyclopaedias, art books, videos and CDs to the Aboriginal Support Circle.*

**Does anyone have a small, preferably lockable, cupboard they would be willing to donate to house this precious collection?**

**Please contact the OWN office  
9247 7046  
if you can help.**

## MAY DAY PICNIC

in the Domain

2:00 pm Monday 1 May

After the 11am-2pm protest outside the Stock Exchange, there will be a traditional May Day Picnic to remember the Chicago Martyrs and the origins of May Day.

Bring food, drinks, flags, banners, music, games, etc.

The Domain (opposite NSW Gallery).

For more info, phone 9519 9194