

Women and Volunteering

The United Nations has declared 2001 as International Year of Volunteering (IYV). The NSW Government's theme for the year is 'Active Citizens Building Communities in NSW' and a budget of \$600,000 has been allocated for demonstration projects and a rural volunteering support strategy across NSW. The Government's goals are to recognise and celebrate volunteers' efforts, to publicise and promote volunteering and to carry on the legacy of the Olympic and Paralympic volunteers.

'Volunteering' as a practice is influenced by a number of factors such as changing community values and the inclination and capacity of people to volunteer. Government policy is also a factor in the changing face of volunteering. Did you know, for instance, that the federal department responsible for International Year of Volunteers is not the Department for Employment and Workplace Relations but the Department of Family and Community Support Services? And that the Federal Government has no policy on volunteering except as it relates to its 'work for the dole' scheme?

In 1997, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) found that there were 2.3 million volunteers in Australia giving more than 433.9 hours annually. The annual contribution to the Australian economy is \$24-31 billion. Who decides who is counted, how many hours to count and how to cost them?

Over the past decade or so, the overall number of people volunteering has fallen, partly because of the changes in women's roles in society – more women are in full time paid employment and still have responsibility for domestic work. Although the majority of volunteers are still women, older women, as a group, are not identified either in the ABS statistics or by governments. Many *older* women are carers, but if the person being cared for is a family member, the carer is not counted in the ABS statistics as a volunteer. Is this fair? And who decides?

The contributions of older women volunteers are also not clearly recognised in the academic literature on volunteering. For instance, in a collection of essays, *Volunteers and Volunteering* edited by Jenni Warburton and Melanie Oppenheimer, and recently published in Australia, older women are not identified as a separate category, only as 'women' and 'older people'.

One of OWN's concerns is the possible impact of using untrained volunteers to provide community services for older people. Volunteers have a right to clear role definition and proper training, but the reality is that to gain, retain and maintain volunteers costs an organisation money. Without adequate funding, it is difficult to find the 'right people' for the 'right jobs' and provide them with the 'right preparation' and the 'right management'.

OWN will be pursuing some of these issues at our Seniors Week forum, *Lending a Hand: Whose Hand?* on Saturday, March 17 (please see flyer for more details). If you would like to know more about International Year of Volunteering (and have access to the Internet) check it out at www.iyv2001.org. The government site is at www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au.

Joy Ross

ARE YOU FREE?

The Older Women's Network is managed and run by its members. Volunteers do everything from managing the organisation to answering the phone – and everything in between.

At the moment we need volunteers who are willing to come in once a week or once a fortnight on a regular day to type (we can help you learn to type on a computer if you don't already have this skill), answer the phone, photocopy, etc. If you have office/clerical/administration experience of any kind, we need you – NOW!

Please phone Dorothy Cora on 9247 7046 to talk about what's involved.

Coordinators' Report

Many thanks to those of you who participated in the Members' Consultation on February 14 – your comments and suggestions will be included on the agenda of the Working Committee's next Review and Planning Session (RAPS) on 28 February.

Some of the issues raised by members include coordination, reporting mechanisms, strengthening of advocacy policies, promoting OWN and increasing membership, social activities, fostering leadership and increasing partnerships and alliances.

We would like to remind members that WC meetings are open for you to attend and contribute to. However, ordinary members may not vote on an issue and the final decision is the responsibility of the WC. If you have a particular issue you wish to put on the agenda, give one of the coordinators advance notice and we will, if possible, give it priority on the agenda. This means you don't have to attend the whole meeting if there is only one item that interests you.

As we move closer to setting up OWN NSW, the new OWN Sydney needs to start thinking about its own needs, for instance, the formation of an interim steering committee, the use of premises, our logo, financial issues, staff support, having a voice and programs and social activities. A special discussion on the development of OWN Sydney is planned for Wednesday, 18 April at 87 Lower Fort Street. Come along if you can – more details in the next newsletter.

The Quarterly Members' meeting elected Pam Ledden and Joy Ross as OWN Inc. (soon to be OWN Sydney) delegates to the NSW quarterly meetings. At the NSW meeting on 21 February we welcomed representatives from our new OWN groups in Shellharbour and Kiama. Another new group is also planning to start up in the mid-Blue Mountains.

As usual, March will be hectic with a number of International Women's Day (IWD) events in the early part of the month and NSW Seniors' Week events dominating the latter half. We've got some

really interesting speakers lined up to talk about topics that are very much on the agenda at the moment – volunteering, social capital and the future of community services. The flyers will fill in the details for you.

Don't forget to join us for the IWD march and rally on Saturday, 10 March – we always have such a good time!

Pam Ledden, Joy Ross, Renate Watkinson and
Louise Anike

Tree of Many Moods

From my roof balcony
Norfolk pine skyward reaches
Spreading upturned branches
Delineating view.

Early sun gives golden glow,
Bits of building, greenery, sky,
Picture puzzle pieces
Between extended branches.

Magpies and parakeets fly in flocks
Perching all the way to top
Agilely repositioning,
Replacing one another.

Cross patched patterns, black and gray
Savage winds, lightning too,
Create stress 'n agitation
In me and noisy birds.

At sunset, oranges, pinks, purples,
First dominate the puzzle grid,
Then colours blend, separate, and fade
Quiet contemplation as stars emerge.

Frayda Myers Cooper

International Women's Day

Why is International Women's Day still important?

Because...

Our work is never done and underpaid or unpaid or boring or repetitious and we're the first to get the sack and what we look like is more important than what we do and if we get raped it's our fault and if we get bashed we must have provoked it and if we raise our voices we're nagging bitches and if we enjoy sex we're nymphomaniacs and if we don't we're frigid and if we love women it's because we can't get a 'real' man and if we ask our doctor too many questions we're neurotic and/or pushy and if we expect community care for children we're selfish and if we stand up for our rights we're aggressive and unfeminine and if we don't we're typical weak females and if we want to get married we're out to trap a man and if we don't we're unnatural and because we still can't get an adequate safe contraceptive but men can walk on the moon and if we can't cope or don't want a pregnancy we're made to feel guilty about abortion and ... and ...and

Reproduced in part with permission from Joyce Stevens, who wrote it in the early 1970s.

I think it's still relevant today!

Thursday, 8 March 2001 is International Women's Day (IWD), an occasion for generations of women to celebrate women's contributions in all areas of social, cultural and political life. It is also an occasion for identifying and taking action on the economic, political and social rights that have yet to be won.

The theme this year is ***Celebrating a Centenary of Women's Achievements***.

IWD originated in 1908 from a public demonstration by women members of the International Garment Workers' Union in New York, who were demanding changes to their intolerable working conditions. In 1910, IWD was officially recognised at the Second International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen, Denmark. Green, white and violet were the colours

used in 1908 by the women who fought for votes for women in England and have been used ever since.

Although much has improved for women since those early days, the need for further reforms is undeniable. For instance:

- * Women remain under-represented in decision making positions at all levels of society. In Australia women occupy only 10 per cent of top managerial positions.
- * Throughout the world 86 million girls—43 million more than boys—never go to school. Of the world's one billion illiterates, two thirds are women.
- * 38% of the Australian female population have experienced one or more incidents of physical or sexual violence since the age of fifteen.

On Saturday 10 March OWN members will be marching behind our colourful banner, so come and join us.

The Rally starts at 10.30 am, Sydney Town Hall. From there we march through the CBD to Hyde Park where we continue our celebrations with an array of wonderful female performers.

Joy Ross

Support for Linda's family

Members were very moved by Noreen Hewett's newsletter tribute to Linda Adamson, a treasured supporter of OWN, who died last November. Linda has left her husband Alan, who has a similar disease, and a seven year old daughter, Ruby. One of our members has made a generous donation towards Alan's care of Ruby and has suggested that others might also like to contribute. If you would make your cheques out to OWN, we will forward them on as we did on the previous occasion when members donated money towards the trust fund for Linda.

Joy Ross

Theatre Group

Rehearsals twice a week, muttering words on buses and trains to the bemusement of other passengers, waking up singing words from the new show – it's all go, go, go to be ready by Monday 26th February for our first performance of the year.

Our driving force and director, Louise Anike, exhibits remarkable restraint keeping us toeing the line as we mumble and bumble our way through rehearsals, but rest assured we are progressing and it'll be all right on the night (day). With fifteen members of the group to cope with, her work is cut out.

Bernice Lynch, our stalwart musician who has been with the group from our beginnings and given us invaluable support and accompaniment over the past twelve years, has retired to the wings due to health and personal problems. Ann Cunynghame has offered to be our musician with assistance from Bernice. Thank you Bernice and Ann.

Josie Jackson is our new co-ordinator. Good luck, Josie, with all the work involved, and thanks to the rest of the Theatre Group who have taken on various tasks which are necessary to keep us treading the boards.

Judith Mustard & Lucy Porter

Our Bernice

Bernice – The backbone of our group
Bernice – Our musician and our friend
Bernice – On her you always could depend.
She came to each rehearsal
Not knowing what she'd find –
Had we changed the words or music?
She never seemed to mind.
She'd raise her eyebrows, give a look,
She was really rather kind.
When we were singing out of key
And the words we sang were wrong,
She'd strum on her old Gibson
To move us all along.

Bernice – the entertainer,
What a talent – hot to trot.
The Theatre Group has always known
We owe you such a lot.
Your friendship, sense of humour,
Your ever-smiling face,
Your dedication to the group,
We know we can't replace.
As you start to take things easy,
We just wanted you to know
What we really think of you,
The things that we can't show,
Our respect, our love, our friendship,
Bernice we'll miss you so.

Josie Jackson

Globalisation and All That!

What does it mean, this buzz word “globalisation”? How does it affect us and should we be worried about it?

This was the first topic in a series of discussions we had at 87 and hope to continue in the near future. They will be part of community discussions initiated by a group called, “Now, We the People” to change the present national agenda and create an alternative path to economic rationalism, racism and ecological restructure. It is hoped that this will all lead to a Conference in July.

Our meeting acknowledged that globalisation can bring substantial benefits, economic, social and environmental but it can also erode and devastate whole countries and communities if it is not controlled. It is a natural force but must not be allowed to override all other things. It can be ruthlessly exploited by narrow and powerful influences who, through organisations like the World Trade Organisation (WTO), can enforce tax privileges and industry protection in all areas like commerce, international finance and agriculture.

Globalisation means free trade, deregulation, privatisation and commodification (turning even the basic necessities and strands of life into objects to be bought and sold – ever the genetic basis of life!)

So when did the idea of global trade emerge? How is it possible that in fifty years we have seen the emergence of international corporations so powerful that they can control the lives and fortunes of people all over the world?

In 1948 the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) was formed to accelerate global economic development and recovery after the war. Trade then meant manufactured goods.

In 1986 at the instigation of transnational corporations, which had been steadily growing in power, a round of talks was held in Uruguay to radically reorganise the international economy. New rules on tariff reductions in goods and services were forged by clever lawyers for their masters.

In 1995, 500 of the world’s most powerful people met for three days in Los Angeles. The result was

a new organisation, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which became the operating body of GATT. The citizens of the 125 countries that signed were largely unaware that their national sovereignty was under threat. It now involved not only tariffs, because what the corporations were really after was a global playing field, without rules, and with access to unregulated labour, consumer markets and natural resources without having to operate under restrictions of national laws.

The economic rationalist/free trade ethic embodied in the WTO also demands major spending reductions by nations such as health, education, wages and support for small business...and aren't we seeing all this happening in Australia today?

This is what we were talking about on Friday, but we have only just started to nibble round the edges.

Our next discussion will take place on March 9 with guest speaker, Pat Ronald. Come and add your voice to what we hope will develop into a strong movement of the people, starting with the Conference in July.

Muriel Hortin

Resource material is available in the OWN office and from www.nowwethepeople.org.au.

HAIKU

Time's Enigma

This year just began...
We have hardly turned around...
Soon Christmas again!

On the Harbour

Boats at marina...
Great beautiful water-birds
Serenely swaying.

Trudy Davis

Concession Fares Feedback

Thanks to all of you who felt that the issue of the Transport Concession Fares was important enough to let us know your point of view. We don't have a clear majority but we do have some alternative ideas about how the issue might be approached.

Some members were quite vehement in voicing their point of view, and opinions are obviously strongly held. There was also concern with the perception of OWN moving away from the point of view of other pensioner bodies.

The four main positions were:

1. Agreement with the price rise out of concern for equity for pensioners living outside the range of government transport services.
2. Agreement with a price rise but not a doubling of the price – perhaps an increase directly proportional to the increase in the amount of the pension in the last eleven years.
3. Another suggestion was that only pensioners should have access to the Pensioners Excursion Tickets (PET) and not those holding Seniors Cards.
4. Opposition to a rise in the PET price on the grounds that their fare should not be used to subsidise those who had to use private buses – finding the money should be the government's responsibility.

The Working Committee heard the various opinions at the last committee meeting and added their own to the list. No decision was made as to the position the Transport Group should adopt on the issue but the suggestion was made that further opinion from members be sought.

So once again, it's over to you. What about the alternative suggestions mentioned above?

Pam Ledden

Fair Concession Fares?

Members of OWN Theatre Group were dismayed at the proposal of the OWN Transport Group that Pensioners Excursion Tickets (PET) be increased by 100% or whatever figure is revenue neutral to the government to subsidise fares for pensioners and seniors over sixty who use privately owned bus services.

We agree that PET should be available to seniors and people on pensions but not at the expense of people who are already receiving this benefit. Robin Hood robbed the rich to help the poor, not robbed the poor to help the poor.

The NSW & Federal Governments found millions of dollars to finance the Olympic Games – maybe some expertise and additional funds could be found to help solve the transport difficulties and extend public transport and community buses to outer Sydney and country areas.

Many people on base pensions are on a tight budget with increased rents and the GST, and are already living a hand to mouth existence. The \$1.10 fare enables them to enjoy life and go to Wellness Centres, medical appointments, hospitals, shopping, excursions, volunteering and looking after family and grandchildren on a daily basis if necessary. The proposed increase would add up to \$30.00 a month less in their spending money. This decrease could lead to people being unable to go out as often and increase their isolation and loneliness.

The Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association also oppose this fare increase as they feel it would not be beneficial to their members. We strongly urge the OWN Transport Group not to proceed with this proposal.

Josie Jackson & Lucy Porter
for the Theatre Group

The Pig Pen

A gynaecologist recently instructed one of our members who asked questions during the examination: "I'll do the talking – you can ask questions later."

Have you been put-down?
Send it in to our regular 'Pig Pen' column.

Retirement Village Residents Are Angry

On the whole, older people have heeded government advice to choose accommodation options for their retirement which will enable them to remain independent. Many decide to remain in their own homes supported by community services, but those who chose to buy into a retirement village are sometimes finding that this renders them ineligible for Home and Community Care (HACC) services.

The providers of HACC services operate under guidelines for eligibility laid down by the Federal and State Governments. The problem is that the guidelines bracket retirement villages and aged care facilities together. This can give the impression that a retirement village is just another form of residential aged care and that residents in retirement villages will receive similar services to those in an aged care facility. This is far from the reality.

Every retirement village sells to residents whatever HACC-like services they choose to offer by way of a contract signed on entry or, sometimes, as flexible 'user pays' services. Residents can find that the retirement village they have purchased entry into does not provide the services they need to remain living independently in a self-care unit, and the cost of private enterprise providing the services is often beyond their means. When they seek HACC services, residents can find that the guidelines are interpreted in such a way as to exclude them from the services they need to continue living independently. Had residents remained in what was probably an unsuitable family home, HACC support services would remain available to them.

As the eligibility criteria in the HACC guidelines can be used to discriminate against some older people in retirement villages, the Retirement Village Residents Association (RVRA) is lobbying for the removal of the guideline. RVRA is calling on the Government to recognise that retirement villages are not aged care facilities, and that older people living independently (whether in their own homes or in retirement villages) have a right to HACC services. Retirement village residents would greatly appreciate support on this issue from other older people's organisations or individuals.

Barbara Burnham.

Support for Victims of Crime

The Victims of Crime Bureau in conjunction with Mission Australia's Victims Support Service offers victims of crime a 24 hour, 7 days per week telephone support service. The telephone service is accessible to people with a hearing impairment by telephoning 02 9374 3175. Telephone interpreting can also be arranged for people who have English as a second language.

Written information is available to people who telephone the support line, and referrals can be made to over 1500 different agencies across NSW offering varying services and supports. Referral to qualified counsellors can be made under the Approved Counselling Scheme, which is free of charge to eligible clients.

To contact the Victims Support Service, telephone 02 9374 3000 for metropolitan callers or 1800 633 063 toll free.

Hints to Increase Personal Safety and Decrease Property Theft

1. Place shoulder bags across the body, do not just hang them from the shoulder.
2. Back-pack type handbags are attractive to pick-pockets and bag-snatchers.
3. Do not place valuables (handbags or briefcases) at your feet when sitting at outdoor cafes or when using street phone booths.
4. Remain alert at all times - watch what people are doing around you.
5. Communicate confidence - offenders target the 'weakest' link. Speak assertively if you are approached. Try not to 'look' vulnerable.
6. When required to travel by bus or train, arrive at the shelter or station with little or no time to spare, say five minutes. Do not sit there waiting for long periods because you are increasing the chance of an unwanted approach from someone.
7. When walking to your car, have your keys in your hand.
8. When driving, lock all doors. It's a myth that you will not be able to be released if involved in an accident.
9. If using automated teller machines and withdrawing substantial amounts of money, separate the cash on your body, i.e., some in your wallet, some in your pocket, etc.

NSW Police Service

More or Less Committed?

Our monthly discussion group's topic was 'Is our commitment and responsibility today less than in our youth?'

The group decided to discuss present day attitudes and not those of earlier years.

We discussed our views on commitment after learning that the dictionary meaning of commitment is a 'pledge' or a 'promise'. We agreed that it's important to put a great deal of personal commitment into partnerships and friendships, and that we can also make a binding promise to ourselves. One member said she believed that making a commitment enriches the soul.

On the issue of responsibility, it was suggested that some people who undertake responsibility might have power needs. We agreed there are different types of responsibility, for example, at work and in the family. Many people see their responsibilities differently, for example, love, duty and obligation can play a big part in the care of an aged parent.

We discussed the closure of bank branches and agreed that this indicates a complete lack of responsibility to the older and less well off citizens of Australia. The group thought it was nothing less than immoral.

Our next meeting will be Monday, 19th March, 2001 10.30a.m. 75 Windmill Street. The subject is 'Remarkable Australian Women'.

Joan Hook.

SENIORS WEEK 2001 - MARCH 18 -25

The NSW Government's slogan for Seniors Week 2001 is "Share the Experience". In a week of celebration and information, the following events are programmed.

Hypothetical, *Should or can we put the genie back in the bottle – has technology gone too far?* Monday, March 19, 10.30-12 City Recital Hall, Angel Place. \$5/\$2. Bookings: 8256 2222

Expo 50+: Tue-Wed, 20-21 March, 9am-3pm, Darling Harbour Exhibition Centre, Hall 5, with exhibitions, entertainment, seminars and workshops. Free Westbus buses will ferry you from Central Station to the venue.

Technoseniors: Thur-Fri., 22-23 March, 10am-2pm, Wesley Conference Centre, 220 Pitt St., Sydney. A 2-day series of seminars and workshops to explore technology and telecommunications. Must book: 13 12 44

Health day: free lectures by the Garvan Institute of Medical Research on a variety of topics at 384 Victoria St., Darlinghurst. Must book – Liz, 9295 8110.

Ballroom dance: Saturday March 24, Sydney Town Hall, 11-2pm; free.

Songfest: Sunday March 25, City Recital Hall, Angel Place, 11am-1pm; free.

Gold coin movies: Greater Union, Dendy, Hoyts and Village 18-21 March

See the special lift-out Seniors Week program in the Daily Telegraph on Monday March 12 or call the Seniors Information Service on 13 12 44.

Aboriginal Support Circle

Nineteen women, including some very welcome new members, attended our first meeting of the year on 5 February. Their enthusiasm is heartening. The main business of the meeting was to elect a new committee. Pat Zinn and Betty Little, two of our coordinators, who have done a splendid job, have retired from these positions – our thanks for their work over the past year. Pat has taken on the job of secretary. Betty is retiring because of her new job with the Post Office, but has offered to assist us in any possible way she can in the future. Monique Reiher will continue as a coordinator and will work with our new coordinators Sandy Chandler and Norma Anet to keep us informed about Aboriginal affairs and to liaise with speakers for our meetings and events. Margaret Walker is our librarian and I have agreed to represent the ASC on the Working Committee.

The coming year will be a busy one. The project, "In My Own Voice", which is a collection of stories of the lives of indigenous women and others who have been associated with our Support Circle is well in train and an enthusiastic group is guiding its course. Two women have agreed to be interviewed and the project steering committee has received advice and some training from Ruth Wilson, the author of the oral history guide book, 'A Big Ask'. The project is close to our hearts and we look forward to its happy completion at the end of this year.

Congratulations to Carol Martin, ALP, who is now the MP for Kimberley in the Western Australian parliament. She is the first Aboriginal woman elected to a parliament in Australia! Isn't it a disgrace that we had to wait until 2001 for this historical event to occur? If you would like to send your congratulations to Carol, her address is: Carol Martin, MP for Kimberley, PO Box 1433, Broome WA 6725.

Wear a 'Sorry Pin' (reproduced above in actual size) and talk to your friends and strangers about what it means to you to say 'Sorry'. Pins are \$10 which includes postage and can be purchased from Proactive Concepts, PO Box 1020, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782. Tel 02 4757 2225

Judith Mustard

Obituary and Book Review

Diana Kidd: Two Hands Together

Through a cruel quirk of fate, Diana Kidd, aged 67, died last September of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) after a Sydney - London flight on the eve of a well-earned holiday. She had just completed writing her children's book *Two Hands Together*.

Last year I reviewed her previous book *A Fat And Juicy Place*, the story of an urban aboriginal boy. In it she touched on the issue of reconciliation through the eyes of children. This latest book is fully devoted to that theme. It is a first person account of a white Australian girl, Lily, about 10 years of age, of the happenings when an aboriginal family move in next door. Lily and her younger brother are spontaneously attracted to their hospitable and fun-loving neighbours, whose children are of a similar age. They become the best of friends. But their father's prejudiced disapproval spoils everything. The author sensitively portrays Lily's thoughts and feelings, wavering between her natural love and admiration for her father and her increasing hatred of him for his reluctance to see a different point of view. Near tragedy has to occur before he has a change of heart.

The book is now available in all major book-stores at \$12.95, as well as at some public libraries.

Diana's previous books, such as *Onion Tears*, the story of a Vietnamese refugee girl, adapting to life in Australia, have always focussed on the plight of the less privileged in society. She expressed her concerns not only in writing, but also through active involvement with causes such as The Sydney City Mission and the Reconciliation movement. Her family and friends appreciated her for her warmth, humour and compassion. Her untimely passing away is a great loss to our society.

Trudy Davis

COPING WITH OLD NICK

I keep a wary eye on Old Nick, and even throw some spilt salt over my left shoulder

Our ancestors were plagued by fewer devils than we are. For rural ancestors in pre-industrial Britain, devils included landowners, gamekeepers, rent and tax collectors, bailiffs and the odd recruiting officer.

Today's devils are legion. Wage earners must be circumspect with supervisors, clients and colleagues. If your employers start flirting with "downsizing", tread warily, stay trim, taut and terrific and computer literate. Ageing workers, hearing Time's Winged chariot close behind, might contemplate Faustus-like pacts with the devil.

Home unit owners must endure the usual ratty neighbours, the owners' committee and dreaded annual meetings. Some devil owners agitate to install a jacuzzi, ban pets, allow pets, or have the main entrance tiled with imported mosaics. The Yuppies or Baby Boomers love proposing special mega levies. The managing agent raises his fees. Again? Other devils are mortgage providers, burglars, door-to-door salespersons and estate agents pestering you to sell.

Perhaps you rent? Your leaking ceiling, broken security bars, or loose connection in the stove need repairs. In dealing with your rental agency, you need a very long spoon. It's futile to spit the dummy at inaction, you'll get no action. If you're polite, they'll ignore you as a "push-over". While waiting, you'll get pneumonia from the leaking roof, be burgled, or electrocuted, or all three. You live with a landlord or landlady? Devils in disguise.

Tradesmen are a special devil class, especially auto repairers. Our rural ancestors walked everywhere, and repaired their cottages, huts, hovels, whatever, themselves. They had no electricity, running water, or tiled roofs. True, they tended to die young, but rarely while waiting for a plumber.

We are bedevilled by Centrelink, large-scale fraudsters, partners you're either trying to discard or win back, and the devilish Tax Dept.

Blood lines aren't always benign. One definitely needs a long spoon in dealing with some relations. A friend dubbed her ma-in-law's place "Gate of Hell" after a Japanese movie.

Is your loved one in a nursing home? The dragon-Matron can be a devil. You need a long spoon to get your dearest a modicum of good care, properly toileted, or even treated like a human with feelings. Crossing staff members' palms with silver might help. Devils are never averse to bribery.

Perhaps today's plethora of devils is a factor in rising mental illness, now affecting about 5% of the Australian population.

Life was nasty, brutish and short for many ancestors. There were horrible executions for treason, stealing food, or religious beliefs. For centuries women were burnt as witches. But many people spent quiet lives with minimal devilish interference. They experienced unemployment, low wages, but not the frenetic race to be 'au fait' with technology, superannuation and spiralling medical insurance. They did not exhaust themselves in gyms or endure cosmetic surgery in pursuit of eternal youth. There were few divorces, mortgages and drug-addicted offspring.

"Who sups with the Devil needs a long spoon." A long spoon might be more useful than a christening mug.

Helen McMaugh

Parramatta Neighbourhood Group

Older women in the Parramatta area are invited to join us on the fourth Friday of each month at the Community Health Centre, 12 New Street, Parramatta from 10am to 12 noon.

On Friday, 12 March we will be discussing 'Something that Interests Me' – a book, article etc. Please contact Carmen Strudwicki 9635 3555 or Barbara Parne 9873 1769 (after 6,30 pm)

OLDER WOMAN GETS THE NEEDLE

Despite the January heat, a gratifying number of members attended an introductory talk about traditional Chinese medicine given by Cathy Davitt, Dip.TCM (Syd) Cert. Acup (China). The talk ended in a battery of questions and a rush for Cathy's card. One member even permitted an acupuncture needle to be inserted in her arm.

Cathy became interested in Chinese medicine in 1978 when, as a general trained nurse, she noted the efficiency of acupuncture in the reduction of severe pain. In particular was a patient who had suffered a gunshot wound, which created agonising nerve pain. Every conventional method was employed to reduce the pain, to no avail, until acupuncture was applied. It was enormously successful. This surprised everyone, including the medical registrar who permitted the trial.

Later, when nursing in Germany she noted that private hospitals gave treatment options to various alternative therapies – specifically acupuncture. On her return to Australia in the mid-80s, she studied and graduated in traditional Chinese medicine, and now works from the Paddington Medical Centre in Sydney. The GPs working there frequently engage with her in mutual consultation.

Cathy explained that the basis of Chinese medicine is about energy. A human is an energetic mass, the same as the universe. They are also affected by the same elements, such as heat, cold, wind (which is erratic internal energy) or damp. Energy moves throughout the body in channels, its source generating from major organs such as the liver, kidney, heart or lungs.

Every major energy channel ends at a sensory organ. For example, the kidney channel ends at the ears, and the liver channel ends at the eyes. Disturbances such as ringing in the ears, or deafness, indicate kidney energy imbalances. Visual disturbances such as migraine flashes, blurred vision or dry, red eyes, indicate liver energy imbalances.

The tongue reveals the constitution of the patient generally. Each part of the tongue reflects the health of major organs, and which element is affecting it. A swollen tongue covered in a thick white coat indicates sluggish fluid metabolism and low digestive energy. If the tongue shows red edges, that means there is too much heat in the body. A purple hue means there is stagnation of energy and blood.

A major diagnostic tool is the three pulses in each wrist. Practitioners, skilled in pulse diagnosis, can tell the state of the inner organs, the flow and strength of energy, where there are imbalances, the presence of pain, and if a patient is pregnant.

Cathy used a case of a woman with Stage 3 vulva cancer to explain Chinese medicine diagnosis and treatment. Vulva cancer is slow growing, and the orthodox treatment for it is radical – excision of the labia and part of the vagina, followed by radiotherapy, all of which has drastic side effects for the bladder and bowel. The woman concerned chose Chinese medicine.

A red festering sore had developed because her liver energy was blocked, reducing energy and blood flow to the genital area. This condition indicated extreme imbalance in the elements of heat and damp. Cathy's treatment released the blocked energy and cleared the heat and damp. But, most importantly, she treated also the underlying constitutional imbalance that had caused the blockage in the first place. The patient has been in remission for three years to date. Cathy uses both acupuncture and herbs to treat her patients.

Samantha McKay

notice

Web sites to check out ...

Anti Discrimination Board website has info about the new Carers act www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb

A great search engine! Google.com

Save the ABC www4.ewebcity.com/arpad/oz/abc.html

Friends of the ABC www.fabc.org.au/nsw

Honouring Women: nominate some more women for the Australian Women's Honor Roll at <http://www.capow.org.au>

State Library of NSW www.sl.nsw.gov.au

Send in your favourite sites for others to enjoy!

ACCOMMODATION

Woman, 59, currently living in Corrimal, would like to rent in South Sydney or Eastern Suburbs.

Thelma Tierney

4285 7258

Join the Australian Bronte Association

The Association promotes the study and enjoyment of the lives and works of the Brontes.

For more information, contact Christopher Cooper on 9850 9539

or email

chris@maths.mq.edu.au

COTA Computer Club for Seniors

If you are interested in learning computer skills in a relaxed environment with other older people, come along to a meeting on Thursday, 10 March at 10.30 am on

Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney.

Phone Neil 9958 7261 or Dawn 9555 1930 for more info.

Wanted

Women's Memorabilia

Liverpool Women's Resource Centre is collecting posters and badges (especially Reclaim the Night and IWD), photographs, newspapers clippings, T-shirts, old issues of magazines, pamphlets and other things of significance to women.

They are planning to establish a permanent collection that can be displayed at museums and special events and, in time, at a Women's House in Sydney's west.

Please phone Nola or Amanda on 9607 7536

What about the Mothers of Federation?

Elizabeth Evatt

Lenore Coltheart

Betty Searle

Shirley Fitzgerald

Bronwyn Bancroft

and others

will tell stories about women who may not have made the history books, but who most certainly are part of this country's history.

Jessie Street Library

12 pm to 4 pm

Sunday 11 March

Marconi Room, Level 4

Town Hall House

RSVP on 9868 1613 or 9265 9486 to reserve a place.

board

What's Your Story on Early Discharge?

The Community Health Collaboration Project invites you to tell your real life story from a consumer-perspective about the impact of early discharge from hospital.

For more info, contact Liz Reedy,
Community Health Collaboration,
Council of Social Services NSW,
66 Albion Street, Surry Hills 2010
phone 9211 2599

Whose Place? Conference

*'Public space for young
and old in Sydney's West'*

*March 6 & 7
Parramatta Riverside Theatre
Free for older people
(60 and over)*

*Performances
Music
Dance
Exhibitions*

*The OWN Theatre Group is
performing its new show
at this conference, so if
you've never had the
pleasure of seeing and
hearing them ...
come along!*

*Phone Esme 9671 4333
for registration details*

Racism Workshop

- Get a better understanding of
- personal and institutional racism
 - our personal power as part of the dominant culture
 - how racism impacts on the Indigenous People of Australia
 - how we learn racism

Action for World Development

5.30 pm Thursday, 22 March 2001
AWD Centre, 8th Floor, 8-24 Kippax Street, Surry Hills
\$20 includes refreshments.

BEQUESTS

When making your will,
you may wish to make a
bequest to the Older
Women's Network to assist
us in continuing to promote
the rights, dignity and
wellbeing of older women.
Please phone 9247 7046
and we will send you
suggestions for wording
your bequest.

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

Annual fees:

Membership, including Newsletter.....\$20.00

Newsletter only (for Gov't Depts.
institutions and organisations)\$25.00

Send your cheque, name, address and phone number to:
Older Women's Network, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000

Tel: (02) 9247 7046 Fax: (02) 9247 4202 email: ownnsw@zip.com.au
Web site: <http://www.zip.com.au/~ownnsw>