

Difficult Decisions - they won't go away!

It has been pointed out to me that recently many items in the lead article for this publication have been focussed on internal business matters. I think that's exactly right and this is going to be another one, but hopefully we are nearing the end of the new and difficult and we can get back to more interesting topics.

This piece is about the Newsletter and membership fees for this and that. The issues were discussed at the Conference in June and we are now moving to implement the recommendations and to make the necessary changes.

Firstly the Newsletter and its new name. As I write, no definite decision has been made about the new name. Some of the suggested names mentioned only "news", but the OWN newsletter has always been a lot more than that, so titles that suggest "news only" were considered inappropriate. Other suggestions were titles that had no mention of OWN at all and could have been a newsletter of any organisation. Discussion at the NSW OWN groups' quarterly meeting, the OWN Inc. working committee and the coordinators of OWN NSW have narrowed the suggestions to three: OWN INK, OWN MATTERS and OWN WRITES. If you feel strongly about any of these please complete the Newsletter Survey flyer or ring the office and record your opinion by 17 September.

Also related to the Newsletter is the question of price. At present it is costing just under \$20.00 per eleven copies, per year, to produce. If the cost of Beyond the Rocks, the publication reporting on regional groups, is included, the cost is even higher. At present those who subscribe to the Newsletter are paying \$20 but that also includes membership of OWN Inc. which was set at \$4. We cannot afford to continue producing the Newsletter and charging only \$16 as this means producing it at a loss.

It has been decided therefore that the Newsletter (by any other name) will in future cost \$20 per year for eleven copies. Membership of an OWN group will be a separate amount to be fixed by each individual group.

For members of OWN Sydney, the membership fee will be set by the Working Committee. The members of OWN Sydney will still be able to pay their subscription to the Newsletter and their membership fee combined because for this purpose Sydney will be using the OWN NSW accounting system. But the message is, expect a price rise to \$25 per year.

For Sydney members there'll be another change! All fees and subscriptions in future will fall due on 1 July each year. For the remainder of this financial year as subscriptions fall due we will be asked to pay a pro rata amount to take us up to 30 June 2002. Thereafter an annual membership and subscription will fall due on 1 July each year.

For those who are members of other OWN groups who choose to subscribe to the Newsletter it will cost \$20 per year and will be paid to OWN NSW as a subscription due 1 July each year. Their local membership fee will go into their own groups' coffers.

We are urging as many as possible to subscribe to the Newsletter because it will be the main channel of communication between all members and the Management Team as well as being a damn good general read!!

While we're on the hard stuff, a word about OWN NSW affiliation fees. Based on the recommendations of the conference and the quarterly meeting of NSW OWN groups it has been decided that for a group to join OWN NSW there will be a one-off joining fee of \$10 and a capitation fee of \$1.10 per head per year. Both of these are to be paid this year by 31 August and thereafter by 1 July each year.

There now! Clear as mud? Please phone and ask for more explanation if there's more you wish to know. A member of the OWN NSW Management Team will be in the office each day and will be able to explain more. Pam Ledden – Monday, Vonnie Russell – Tuesday, Sam Smart – Wednesday, Betty Murphy – Thursday, Cate Turner – Friday morning!

Pam Ledden
OWN NSW Management Team

COORDINATORS' REPORT

There has been surge of interest and activity amongst members since OWN NSW became a reality and Sydney OWN has begun the process of defining what it might become.

Many thanks to Pam Ledden for her capable chairing of the OWN Inc. Annual General Meeting on 20 August. Following presentation of the Annual Report and the Treasurer's Report, members were invited to acknowledge OWN Inc's achievements over the past thirteen years. Three of our founding members, Noreen Hewett, Gwen George and Norah McGuire spoke about their experiences in the very early days. Noreen described the way in which the mythology attached to older women was fractured by the OWN Theatre Group's challenges to polities and the media. Norah spoke about the difficulty of getting men at Combined Pensioners to accept that older women had separate issues to them and Gwen reminded us of OWN's effort to get a Women's Information and Referral Service established in NSW. Others acknowledged with their own stories the amazing development of OWN over the years and thanked those who were inspired to create it and keep it going – against the odds!

A brainstorm about "Sydney OWN's identity" – ably facilitated by Christine Regan – evoked a barrage of words such as democratic, influential, challenging, creative, fun, assertive, supportive, generous, feisty, wise and friendly. (Doesn't it sound great?) All of the ideas put forth will instruct the new Working Committee of Sydney OWN as they explore what OWN Sydney might become. A full report of this session will soon be available.

A big welcome to the following members who were elected to the incoming Working Committee: Louise Anike, Ruth Briese, Peg Hewett, Merle Highet, Betty Johnson, Judith Mustard, Joy Ross, Mollie Smith, Yetty Windt and Beryl Winter. Other members will be co-opted onto the Committee at a later date. We resolved to cancel the incorporation of OWN Inc. and to hold the inaugural meeting of Sydney OWN in November. We also resolved to have a \$5 membership fee for Sydney OWN (see article p. 1).

Other events we have been involved in this month include attendance at the 'Now We The People' conference and planning for the OWN (A) conference in September. Joy Ross has agreed to represent OWN on the South Sydney Domestic Violence Committee and others continue to participate in the Platform for Action committees which is seeking further funding to support this three year project.

Socialising is important too! The poetry reading afternoon was a great social success with women reading either their own work or that of others, and it looks as though the a capella group will get off the ground. In the pipeline is a video-viewing of 'Bagdad Cafe' and, in September, a visit to the S H Ervin Gallery.

Louise Anike, Pam Ledden and Joy Ross
Coordinators

Poetry Readings at 87

The Wine, Cheese & Poetry on July 21 was unkindly dubbed in the Diary Page as "Wind & Cheese". However, the wind blew fair for success.

This was a most enjoyable occasion. Twenty seven older women had the opportunity to read their own poetry and/or poetry of their choice and to listen to and appreciate the poetry of others. The selections were diverse in content and mood and often reflected the passions of the readers. Indigenous poets and women poets were well represented – including some hilarious offerings by OWN poets – and the classics were not forgotten.

Breaks between sessions allowed members to socialise and to enjoy delicious refreshments.

A pleasing total of \$100 was raised from entry donations and a raffle

June West and Helen McMaugh

Aboriginal Support Circle

This month has been a fairly busy time as usual. At our monthly meeting, each member had a chance to share with the others something about their own work or ideas, and we ended the meeting by looking at our library, which is shaping up nicely. A group of us had a working bee to make a selection amongst the material held, and Margaret and Monique started the ongoing task of cataloguing the books. We have met twice already. With Pat we also looked into the collection donated to ASC by Ruth Layard. Brenda prepared an Ex Libris sticker in memory of Ruth and the books are now identified and ready to be included in the lending collection.

The Oral History Project Committee met to report about the progress of the work. Ten people have already been interviewed, the transcription is going well, and other interviews are scheduled.

Among other activities, Monique went to represent OWN at the Petersham TAFE for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Outreach Teaching in Tafe and 2001 NAIDOC celebration week. It was very rewarding to hear of the achievements of so many students from remote areas who otherwise would not have the chance to study. They were present in great number. Thanks to ASC's contact with Bankstown Wellness Centre and subsequent involvement in the Bankstown Aboriginal Women Art Workshop, Monique was able to go to the Blue Mountains for a Reconciliation in Music gathering for the launch of two CD's by Darug women, Jacinta Tobin and her Lawson near neighbour, Deb Dare. It was a very lively and interesting afternoon.

Monique Reiher

Desperately Seeking Volunteer/s

Our October newsletter needs to be photocopied and folded on Monday 24 & Tuesday 25 September.

Wilhelmina van Dorp, our regular newsletter photocopier, will be on holidays that week so we need to find someone else for the job.

Skills required are patience (the photocopier is automatic) plus strong arms and hands for folding!

Please phone Dorothy or Kris on 9247 7046 if you can help.

Theatre

Group

Christmas in July was the theme at the Hannaford Seniors Centre at Rozelle where we performed on 24th July. Ann Cunynghame our talented musician entertained with old time songs and carols as the guests were packed into the hall. Despite a mishap with keys, no room for microphones, limited space for us to perform, we went 'on with the show' and amid much goodwill and laughter the audience greatly enjoyed the show. Later following the bagpipes played by a very distinguished Scottish gentleman we helped 'pipe the pudding' in, as our own Scotswoman, Janet Waters, danced a Scottish reel. A great time was had by all.

The next day we were at Sutherland Entertainment Centre performing at a luncheon for the Combined Caring Centres. What a difference in performance space, with a great stage, sound system, lighting technician and even our own change rooms. Despite all this splendour we adapted to our surroundings quickly and with the Hon. Bruce Baird in the audience we delivered our messages in our usual satirical, feisty, humorous way with very positive responses from the audience. Hopefully our M.P. also took note of what older women want.

Back to Sutherland on 8 August for the Sutherland Older Women's Wellness Centre. A small group was required for a sing/talk but we were enthusiastic and eight of us participated. An appreciative audience brings out the best in us, and as Louise Anike led us through our history we ardently joined in the singing at the allotted time.

Bankstown Wellness Centre on 17 August, four of us to talk about the history of the Theatre Group and our personal experiences as to why we became thespians at our age. It appears our reasons range from the love of music and singing to older women raising issues and having the space to confront and dispel myths of ageing.

We're off to Canberra on the 26 and then in September a five day tour of the Scone region highlighting domestic violence. Oh, well, on with the show.

Lucy Porter

Research on Women and Sex

I opened the last OWN newsletter and turned straight to the Notice Board on the last page. There's always something exciting there. Sure enough I found this touching appeal for help with research:

Researchers are conducting a study about women and their sexual experiences with men... If you would like to share your life with us, please give us a call – University of Sydney.

I'll ring right away, I thought – but there was no phone number. Undaunted I rang the Sydney University switch and explained about the ad.

'So you want me to find the people doing research on sex – that's a tall order,' said the switch. 'But maybe I can help you. I've got a list of research projects here. Look, here's one: *Use of condoms in gay men prior to infection with AIDS.*'

'I don't have much experience in that area,' I said modestly

'I can understand that,' she said sympathetically. What a lovely switch Susie was! 'What about *Mutuality of Love in Whale Piracy?* That's in the Japanese Department.'

'I used to live in Japan,' I replied chattily...

'Oh well, your experience would be useful there,' said Susie, the friendly switch.

'Do you think so?' I answered doubtfully.

'Here's a good one,' said Susie, '*Achieving Sexual Spirituality with the Guru* – that's in the Divinity Department.'

'Mm, sounds interesting...'

'Or *Cultivation of the Gingko Tree*. That's about sexuality, isn't it?'

'Oh, this might be it. *Symbolic Interactionism in the Works of the Psychiatric Profession*. Is that the one?'

'I think I'd better get the right phone number,' I gave up. 'Thanks for all your help, Susie. Bye.'

'Bye.'

PS Dear Ed, please could you tell me the phone number?

Margaret Sargent

Ad-Affected

Recently, when I was reading Naomi Klein's *No Logo* – a great book about how we are market-manipulated – I was inspired to write this vignette on how we are affected by advertising.

Obvious examples of offensive advertising are seen in the magazines in doctors and dentists surgeries. These fashion-fascist glossies, so heavy with advertisements for unwearable clothes costing mega dollars, are almost unreadable. Apart from the fact that these garments are so grotesque, I no longer pick up the magazines because of GERMS! I appear to be so market-trained that when I look at one of these magazines I see crawling nasties from flu-laden hands! My market-training obviously comes from watching TV ads of conditioned-mothers blitzing bugs with the very latest chemical weapon. I don't want that smelly stuff to invade my nostrils!

Back to Naomi's book – it's a wonderful read and can be borrowed from your local library.

Enid Harrison

Corporate Citizenship Again

In the April 2001 Newsletter OWN members read about Ladybird Blinds, who give a percentage of the value of every order to a charity.

Macro Wholefoods, at their shop in Bondi Junction, conduct a monthly draw for \$100 for customers who bring their own baskets and bags for shopping. Half goes to a charity nominated by the customer. Worth remembering if you're keen on organic foods and recycling.

Joan Poole

Key Contact Database

The Rural Women's Network has developed a Key Contact Database, which could be a useful resource for OWN groups looking for guest speakers or someone to facilitate workshops. Also, some members of OWN might like to be included on their database as older women with special expertise or knowledge. Please contact Allison on 6391 3620 for more info or check out their website www.agric.nsw.au/rwn.

THE GROUP

I belong to the Gosford Older Women's Network Book Group. I've been a member for four years. We've had several members in their eighties, including one blind woman who discussed the talking books she got from the Society for the Blind.

We meet on the second Friday of each month. Sometimes the group is as small as eight, sometimes over twenty people turn up. We just want to share the enjoyment that reading has given us and to encourage others to find out what companionship reading can offer. Some of the older ladies like romance and historical fiction, some have more literary tastes, but we treat all books equally.

Quite a few of our members had country childhoods and were forced to read their parents' book collection for want of a nearby library, bookshop, or other children to play with. So, after reading our precious jolly hockey-sticks type girls' books and the children's classics, *Anne of Green Gables* and *Little Women* we were given on birthdays, there was nothing else for it but to tackle the library of classics. In our house, that included Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Sir Walter Scott, Jane Austen, and, if desperation set in, even Shakespeare! Dad came from a family where people read aloud to each other – in fact, he read Charles Dickens to my mother while she was pregnant with me, whereas her family had no books and thought of reading as a lazy pastime.

Most of us are on a pension, so it isn't feasible for us to buy copies of one book to discuss each month. Instead, we decided to choose one well-known title once a year, so we would all have plenty of time to borrow or buy a copy, read it, and think about it before our discussion. This year it's *Are you Somebody?* By Irish writer Nuala O'Faolain. Last year, it was *Oyster* by Janette Turner Hospital, which I loved.

We meet for two hours. The first hour is spent discussing a topic related to literature. Some of these have included favourite books read in childhood, Federation literature, the life and times of a favourite author, Victorian books, coffee table books, humorous writing, Jane Austen. Or sometimes we pretend to have \$150 to spend on books and discuss our choices. One of the liveliest discussions we've had was about books that tackled the subject of aboriginal reconciliation,

including Roberta Sykes' memoirs, and of course, Sally Morgan's *My Place*. We also had a heated discussion about *Angela's Ashes*. A couple of people really hated that book. They found it too sad to keep reading about babies dying.

The second hour begins after a break for morning tea, with a discussion of the books we have read during the previous month. We all keep notebooks and take down the titles of books we like the sound of. Some of our members go to a great deal of trouble to write a synopsis of the book to read to us. Others just discuss their books in a more unstructured way.

Quite a few of us are computer users and do research on the Internet. We can read reviews, first chapters, author interviews, and sometimes we print out these pages to circulate them in the reading group.

(This story is Barb Roach's. It was first printed in a new monthly magazine Good Reading which is available from newsagents.)

A Friend in Need ...

Do you have time to visit a long-time member of OWN in Glebe once a month to read the OWN newsletter to her?
Her eyesight is not what it once was and she misses her monthly 'fix'!
Phone Gwen, 9660 6067

Medicines Information Centre

The NSW Medicines Information Centre (MIC) operates from St. Vincent's Hospital. It can be used by health professionals, including community based pharmacists, doctors and hospitals, also nurses, dentists, government departments, lawyers, journalists and patient support groups. The MIC is able to provide quick responses to telephone enquiries or provide more detailed literature reviews and reports. It can provide information on adverse drug reactions, drug interactions, experimental and trial drugs, identification of foreign drug products, herbal medicines, and travel medicines. Knowing about the existence of this centre could help you to prompt a professional to find out more about a drug query you have. Phone Number: (02) 9361 3011; Fax: (02) 9360 1005.

Renate Watkinson

THANKS!

Have just been reading the latest Newsletter. Congratulations to all – a really good issue. I loved the article by Helen McMaugh – I wish I'd written it myself!

Belated thanks to everyone for the telephone calls, the lovely cards, the visits which I received during my long, dreary stay in St. Luke's. They certainly helped me to cope with it all. I am slowly getting more mobile, but I think it will be quite a while before I am back to even near normal.

There were certainly some incidents worth recording, both in St. Luke's and in St. Vincent's I (I had two operations in Vinnie's) – one day I'll try to write about them.

Love to all,

Renee

Ed. And she has!

Vinnie's ...

Anyone who has had a stay in the Public section of St. Vincent's Hospital will know what I'm talking about. After my disastrous fall in April on Friday the Thirteenth, I was operated on, and woke up in a ward there. Almost Dickensian, in my opinion. No telephone, no newspapers, no radio, an ancient television set which was too blurred to watch – absolutely no contact with the outside world, unless you had a mobile phone. I didn't.

The weather was very hot at that time. There was only one noisy ceiling fan for this very large room, which was on the eighth floor. The one window which opened could only be raised from the bottom about eighteen inches. (Presumably to stop demented patients from jumping out.) The Venetian blind over it was broken, and couldn't be lowered properly. The redeeming feature was the medical attention, which was wonderful. Practically all the nurses were Irish, and I soon began to develop a bit of an accent myself. There were some Chinese nurses who only appeared in the dead of night, but that's another story.

I think this must have been a ward for geriatrics, as the other seven patients in the room were all

very elderly women, none of whom spoke to me or to anyone else. They just lay there motionless with their eyes closed, only opening them at meal times. Hot liquids were often served in wobbly polystyrene tumblers, something which surely was quite dangerous. Meals were indifferent, only edible when you were ravenous or inquisitive. I was neither.

I don't remember very much about this short stay – about five days, I think, after which I transferred to St. Luke's. In the next bed to me at Vinnie's was a very grey looking Italian woman, grey hair, matching grey skin. Every morning her grandson, who looked to be about twenty-something, an extremely chubby young man, would arrive about 9 o'clock. Every day he brought her breakfast. A sumptuous meal. Fresh bread rolls, butter, liver pate, cheese – many gourmet delicacies. They would sit facing each other, the food laid out on an adjustable hospital table. Grandmother would eat with relish. Grandson looked on in adoration, sharing some of the goodies with her.

When the meal was over, they'd stay facing each other, making sporadic conversation now and again in Italian. Every so often, he'd pick up Grandmother's hands and kiss each one of her fingers several times, muttering endearments between caresses. He'd stay till about four o'clock in the afternoon. And this happened every day... She never had any other visitors.

Renee Simons

What Do I Think Of Corporatisation of General Practice?

It's not only bones that shrink in old age; our whole world shrinks too. Old friends die off, energies diminish. What once was easy can now be a huge endeavour. No more jumping on buses! The prospect of retirement villages shines ever brighter. The constant merry-go-round of health seeking gets exponentially harder. We beat a well-worn path to doctors, chemists, Medicare, ear, eye, bone, feet, blood experts and that's only a beginning! All this might add years to our lives, but leaves little time and energy for pleasure. The prospect of a one-stop mind/body shop sounds pretty good to me.

Dorothy Cox

A Great Hospital

Over the last seven months, when I was first troubled by a hernia, I have had interesting experiences at one of Sydney's great hospitals. (Any reader wanting names could give me a ring on 02-9523-9558.)

I visited my GP saying, 'Hey, this is getting worse. It's swollen and painful.' 'Why come to me? You need an operation right away. Go to the Emergency Department.' So I did.

I arrived at 11 pm. The hernia was by now lying quietly in its proper place. All night I waited there, in one of a row of upright chairs until after 6 the morning. No comforts except machines spitting out packets of chips and cups of coffee. Cold and noisy it was, with sick and injured people coming and going through the dilapidated outside door clanging just behind me. 'You will not be admitted. The surgeon won't see you,' said the registrar. 'But my GP said it was urgent,' I objected. He softened just a sliver. 'Your GP was quite right, but this is a political decision, not a medical one. Go home.'

Several weeks later I achieved a consultation with a surgeon (a different one, as might be supposed), who examined me rather casually and fixed a date several weeks later for a 'little' operation. It took five hours to undergo all the tests required to protect the medical profession against insurance claims. The operation was postponed, and then transferred to another, less great hospital. I came round choking and fighting for breath, and found the same pain in the same place as before. 'It'll settle down', said the surgeon. 'The choking was due to a muscle relaxant.' When I saw him again, he said, 'It's because your muscle tissue is weak. It was that ten and a half pound baby you had!' I saw him yet again, and this time exacted the truth: 'It could be a hernia. Go for an Ultrasound test,' he said. 'It's a strangulated hernia,' concluded the Ultrasound consultant. 'The operation was in the wrong place.'

It was some weeks later that I saw a surgeon (yet another one), who advised a more elaborate operation to mend the tissue as well as the hernia. He fixed a date. After fasting all night I waited from 9.30 in the morning to 5.15 pm in the row of chairs in the waiting room, still fasting. I comforted a weeping woman in a wheelchair also waiting, who had come from Mittagong.

Sitting in the waiting room was not unlike being on an aeroplane flight. I wondered whether it might give me 'economy class syndrome' or DVT (deep vein thrombosis).

Eventually I reached the pre-operation room. A different, more satisfying experience began! The surgeon located the hernia precisely, the anaesthetist listened carefully to my fears, the nurse gave me a hot blanket, and we all had a conference. The point was to avoid a repeat of the previous experience of choking, which had followed my collapse in the recovery room after administration of a drug. Then I was given the maximum personal care right through the procedure - oxygen before and oxygen after the operation - and monitored all through the following night. By the third day I already felt well and had no pain. Through Medicare, all this cost me nothing with the exception of the gap in the consultants' fees.

'What a great hospital!' I thought. I could almost forget the waiting, the casual examination, the bureaucracy, the pain. Almost!

Margaret Sargent

Who supports the ABC?

Extract of a letter from the Hon. Kim C Beazley, Leader of the Opposition, dated 12/7/01:

"The ABC needs the philosophical support of the government of the day. This has been lacking over the last five years. A government led by me will give that support, for example, respecting the right of the ABC to be critical of government decisions even when we may feel that criticism to be unjustified."

Extract of letter from office of Senator the Hon. Richard Alston, Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. Letter signed by Peta Credlin, Adviser Broadcasting:

"The ABC is one of Australia's primary cultural institutions with a very significant and valued role to play in Australian life. The Government is fully committed to ensuring that the ABC remains an independent national broadcaster delivering quality programming to audiences as efficiently as possible."

Helen McMaugh

WITH LOVE, AND CHOCOLATE SAUCE

We missed Cahill's most when they were gone, in the 1980's. Their restaurants were part of Sydney's social scene for over forty years. For romantic trysts, family gatherings, and a girls' night out, we went to Cahill's.

The Cahills' empire, at its most popular in the 1970's, comprised five restaurants, and fifteen Brass Rail taverns in the City, Chatswood and North Sydney. The taverns were self-service.

In 1936, a friend attended a teenagers' birthday party at Cahill's Tea Rooms, 51 Castlereagh Street. They had one pound to spend between them, on ice cream cake with chocolate or caramel sauce.

In the 1950's, a friend found romance in Cahill's, Castlereagh Street. She was a nurse at Sydney Hospital and often dined at Cahill's with other nurses, usually on mixed grill. Her admirer followed her there, and seated at another table, gazed adoringly at her. He was a blue-collar worker and her parents did not approve. They wanted a professional man for their nurse daughter. Eventually true love prevailed and they married.

Also in the 1950's, my sister was an art student at East Sydney Technical College. She and fellow students worked as waitresses at Cahill's in Darlinghurst Road, Kings Cross, where sedate women hostesses in black ushered patrons to tables. The students appreciated the tips they received and found country visitors the most generous. They hated the unglamorous white wrap-around uniform but loved the free meals.

Another friend was courted by her husband in the Tudor Room, Martin Place, in the 1960's. He considered it a very proper place to take a girlfriend. Now widowed, she fondly remembers her beloved, and the roast beef.

In the 1960's and 1970's, my notoriously thrifty bushwalking friends favoured Cahill's. Our favourite haunt was Italia Romantica in the Strand Arcade. The ceilings resembled blue Italian skies with clouds and cherubs, supported by lots of white columns. We imbibed at the Dolce Vita Bar and sampled the saltimbocca, cannelloni and pizzas. Sadly, the restaurant burnt down with the original arcade.

My niece remembers the first time she was tipsy. It was in the 1970's, at the Clogmakers Bar at Cahills' Dutch Village, Park Street. Her High School class had been to the movie "Dr. Zhivago". As well as her first venture into inebriation, she remembers the ice cream cake with chocolate sauce.

A school-teacher friend also remembers the Dutch Village. She had a short-lived extra job there as a waitress. On her fourth night, she saw a patron reading a Latin text and stopped to discuss it with him. She lingered too long holding two cups of coffee for another table and was reprimanded by the supervisor. It was hot, her uniform was too tight, her legs were chafed, and the Latin-reading patron was condescending to such a presumptuous waitress. She resigned that night.

Another bushwalkers' hangout was the African Safariland at the top of William Street. I spent several hours there one evening in the late 1970's comforting a broken-hearted friend. She had caught her perfidious lover at the William Tell Wine Bar at the Swiss Village with a shapely rival. The murals of predatory animals in the African Safariland reminded her of her false lover, so we drowned sorrow at the White Elephant Bar. Then we dined on comfort food; waffles with ice cream and caramel sauce.

The Mexican in the former Imperial Arcade, with its Matador Wine bar, was a good place to meet friends for lunch or a meal before the movies. So was the Vienna Woods (Wienerwald) at 161 King Street, with Eidelweiss Wine bar and Vienna Schnitzel.

For classy dining, there was the glamorous Brasserie at 75 Elizabeth Street. It had a Lautrec Winebar, table service and self service. Its speciality was coq au vin. People liked the elegant Castlereagh Street Cahill's for parties. A friend held her parents' fiftieth anniversary dinner there, and decorated the tables with leaves dipped in gold.

Cahills' restaurants were also good places for women dining alone. It was very cosy in a booth with a glass of wine and a book.

I wish my salmon and potato cakes tasted like Cahill's.

Helen McMaugh

Genetically engineered food – are we being served?

Concerned to balance the negative material circulating about genetically engineered food, Joan Johns investigated the CSIRO website and reported in the July issue of OWN. The information Joan presented only tells half the story. The CSIRO's biotechnology division is partly funded by industry, committing the CSIRO to the agrichemical companies who develop and sell GM seed and the pesticides and herbicides to spray on GM crops. Consider these facts:

Genetic engineering is different from traditional plant and animal breeding as it crosses species barriers – animal/plant - and uses viruses and bacteria to force expression of the desired trait. Selective breeding such as eliminating rust in wheat keeps within the plant species and is safe. For an overview of GM and its risks see www.psrast.org.

The use of viral and bacterial marker genes introduces **new risks** to health and the environment, with potential for new toxins, allergens and carcinogenic compounds in food (Institute of Science in Society, www.i-sis.org). This counters CSIRO's claims that GM food is helping to eliminate allergens in conventional food.

Successive studies show the yield of GM soybeans, for example, to be 6-10% *less* than conventional varieties and they use 2 – 5 times *more* pesticides than non-GM soy (Charles Benbrook's survey is on www.biotech-info.net/herbicide-tolerance.html.) GM will not help increase our food supply and feed the world.

GM cottonseed oil is the only food crop approved in Australia so far. Cotton growers are becoming disenchanted with the failure of GM cotton to control insect pests and increase yield.

GM foods imported into Australia are not tested for safety by food regulator ANZFA, who only assesses data provided by the biotech companies. See www.anzfa.gov.au. We eat foods that are unapproved for consumption overseas. See the Public Health Association of Australia's tests at www.pha.org.au/food_regulation_advisory_group.

Supermarkets in the UK, Europe and even the US are removing GM foods from their shelves.

Europe has introduced tough new labelling laws, defying threats from the WTO. Japan, South East Asia, Korea, Brazil, Denmark, Ireland, Saudi Arabia are among countries demanding GM free crops, fruit and vegetables.

Australia's golden opportunity to secure its GM-free markets and protect the health of its citizens will slip from our grasp if our scientists and regulators are not prepared to acknowledge the risks to health and the environment. They must test for safety, label all GM foods and ensure GM and non GM crops are kept separate, so Australians can continue to choose the food they eat.

Vicki Brooke

www.sydney.foe.org.au/gene_ethics

Freedom and Happiness

The subject under discussion at the July meeting was "Have freedoms acquired in recent times led to greater happiness for women?" This was a difficult question to come to grips with and an equally hard one to report upon. We agreed that women nowadays are generally free to control their own lives. For example, the advent of the Pill enabled women, for the first time, to control their reproductive processes. We are free to be single mothers, if such is our choice, without any disapproval by society.

We are more freedom to voice our opinions and to live independently if we so wish. We are free now to aspire to a higher education and, with it, career opportunities of a kind once only dreamt about. It was agreed that happiness, as always, is a fleeting state of euphoria but contentment is the reward for those who can achieve it through personal satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment.

Joan Hook

Book Review

'The Hours' by Michael Cunningham \$17.95

'The Hours' won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1999 and is homage to Virginia Woolf. It is an exquisite, touching commentary on life and creativity. Read Virginia Woolf's *'Mrs Dalloway'* - it is cleverly related. A book to remember.

Joan Johns

World Conference Against Racism

This Conference, the full title of which is the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related intolerance, is being organised by the United Nations Human Rights Commission, headed by Mary Robinson and will take place in Durban, South Africa, from 31st August to 7 September, this year. It is the third such conference, the two previous ones having been devoted in large part to apartheid, in Geneva in 1978 and 1983. It is preceded by a non-government organisation forum, which begins 28 August and will be attended by a number of Australian organisations.

A working group comprising representatives of concerned Australian non-government organisations, has been meeting for some time and has produced an Action Kit. The aim is that the Australian Government has substantial input from the community. The Action Kit is available from Amnesty International, (phone (02) 9217 7600. Website www.amnesty.org.au.) and includes a sample letter to Government.

Trude Kallir

Let the junk mail revolution begin...

Here's a way to get the banks and credit companies etc. to (eventually) stop sending their junk mail to you! Let them know what it's like to get junk mail.

The pre-approved letters you get in the mail for everything from credit cards to 2nd mortgages, come with postage paid return envelopes. Well, why not get rid of your other junk mail by putting it in the return envelopes and sending it back to them! Imagine sending an advertisement for your local chimney cleaner to American Express, or a pizza coupon to Citibank! If you put heavier stuff in – you know, things like can metal lids – it costs them more ... Just make sure your name isn't on anything you send them. You can even send the return envelope back empty if you just want to keep them guessing!

Eventually, the banks and credit card companies will begin getting the message. Best of all, they're paying for it – twice! Let's hope they learn to recycle as much as we do!

Anon

Reconciliation

Their blood has stained this earth,
Their flesh, a sacrifice to alien gods,
Lives on in root and leaf.
This ancient land,
These sparse hills and towering cliffs,
These rock-encrusted shores
Invite the wild seas to play their great crescendos
'gainst sand and stone.

The wild tearing night, when demons howl
And all the spirits of the dead are loosed
To wail their anthems up and down the coast;
To cry vengeance; to cry vindication;
To be carried by bird and beast.
To be passed from mouth to mouth.
From north to south
From east to west.

Will sink at last into a lovely peace.
The brazen sun, sailing through murky clouds,
Will illumine the shore
The sea will sparkle and small fish leap with
pleasure,
The clouds will lift, and drift, and break.
Soon this light will bless the land
And, all creatures, turning in their sleep
Will stand, light and easy in their waking.

A yoke is lifted.
A gracious and lovely people
Pass before our eyes.
How hard it is to forgive
Those we have wronged.
Perhaps we can walk together and their ancient
law
May pass to us as a legacy
To stand at the corners of our future
Theirs and ours
If our god grant us an equal grace.

Judith Mustard

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Danger Lurking in Old Bones!

There's danger lurking in old bones; yours may be crumbling but you might not know it until you have a fracture. Last October I fell down among the flower pots and fractured my wrist. Months later I noticed a chemist's sign saying, "Get your ultrasound bone density test here". So I did. She said (and I jest a bit) "Put your foot in this bucket of water. Oh dear you're high risk. Go see your doctor. That'll be forty bucks."

The doctor said "Get thee to a specialist, woman." So I did. I took my 83 bucks, as instructed (Medicare will reimburse) and had another test. Much more high-tech this one. Back to the doctor for a change of drug, something stronger to stop the rot. I tried two different drugs, neither suited so I went back to the original Rocaltrol.

I am now loaded with information. If I'd known all this, I might have avoided the fracture. Osteoporosis is crumbling bones. After menopause there is a sharp decline in the production of oestrogen which accelerates calcium loss. The risk factors are excessive alcohol, being female (!), having a small thin frame, advanced age, a family history, early menopause, surgical removal of ovaries, abnormal absence of periods, anorexia or bulimia, low intake of calcium, certain medications, a sedentary lifestyle and malabsorption problems.

If in doubt see your doctor. If you have osteoporosis do not despair. Help and plenty of information is at hand and instructions on diet and exercise are available. All simple, sensible and possible.

Dorothy Cox

notice

Accommodation

Overnight or emergency accommodation is available in the ACT.

On a bus route, close to Woden Plaza - 10 minutes from Civic Centre, 2 minutes from Canberra Hospital

BB single with ensuite \$30 Weekly \$130.00

BB couple: \$40 Weekly \$160.00

Phone (02) 6286 2511

Janet Newman,

28 Debenham Street, Mawson ACT

Email: janet@austrametro

More Wellness activities

West Ryde: Feldenkrais, Morning Tea and Discussion Group from 10-12 every Tuesday at St. Columbs, Corner Bellevue and Dixon Avenue, West Ryde. Phone Joan 9858 3222 for more information.

Hunters Hill: Discussion group, gentle exercise and guest speakers from 10-12 every Tuesday at 44 Gladesville Road, Hunters Hill. Limited transport is available – phone Deborah on 9817 0101 for information.

Do you want to make history?

Leichhardt Library is launching its oral history program. What they need are people's memories of living and working in the area.

They also need volunteer interviewers.

If you would like to participate, the launch will be on at Balmain Library, 370 Darling Street, from 6.30 on Wednesday, 12 September. Refreshments provided. Phone Margaret Penson, 9367 9266.

STITCHES – Italian Migrant Women's Textile Artworks exhibition
9.30 to 5 pm at the Maritime Museum until 30 September.

Exercise Exotically

Learn Polynesian dancing it's graceful, gentle and gorgeous!
Classes now at Waverley-Woollahra Arts Centre, 138 Bondi Road, Bondi.
Phone Aruna on 0402 146440

Bequests to the Older Women's Network

If you would like to include a bequest to OWN in your will, the following options will guide you in its wording. Please specify which Older Women's Network you wish to be the recipient of your gift: the Older Women's Network NSW or the Older Women's Network Sydney.

Option No. 1

I devise the sum of \$to the Older Women's Network for the general purpose of the Older Women's Network OR for the specific purpose of such purpose being consistent with the aims and objectives of the Older Women's Network, to be administered by the Older Women's Network.

Option No 2 (for a proportional bequest)

I give to the Older Women's Network for its general purposes or the specific purpose of % of my estate (or% of the rest of my estate).

The gift you make to the Older Women's Network will be an enduring record of your generosity.

board

Commemorating Social Protest Movements and the Labour Movement, 1965 to 1975

22-23 September 2001

Women's College, University of Sydney

Anti-Vietnam war, sexual politics, Aboriginal land-
rights, student movements, and more ...

Registration fee for both days (includes lunches and
tea/coffee) \$80 or \$45 concession.

Enquiries to Beverley Symons 9799 6943

Jessie Street National Women's Library Lunch-hour Talk.

Thursday, 20 September, 12 to 1.30

Venue to be decided.

Speaker: Cecily Briggs

'Wendy Paramor: Lost and Found' Cecily
discusses the life and work of Australian
artist, Wendy Paramor, who exhibited
worldwide, but whose work has virtually
disappeared since her death in 1975.

Entrance \$15 (non-members) \$13
(members). Light lunch included.

To book and for information on venue, ring
(02) 9876 3927 or (02) 9265 9486 or
email

shirleyjones@ozemail.com.au

Consumers' Telecommunications Network

The CTN AGM on Friday, 14 September at 10am
will look at constitutional amendments related to
composition of the Council and role of members.
Phone Helen Campbell 9572 6007 if you would
like to attend or want more info.

Aboriginal Art Workshops

for

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

10 - 2 Monday 10 September for 8 weeks

at the Benevolent Society's Centre for Women's Health

288 Queen Street, Campbelltown

Please phone Alana 4627 2792 or Leanne 4620 1359

Jessie Street National Women's Library

Annual Parliamentary
Luncheon

**Monday 24 September,
12.15 to 2 pm**

**Guest speaker: Maxine
McKew**, journalist and TV
personality, takes as her
theme 'Following Jessie'.

\$60 (members) \$65 (non-
members). Booking essential.

For details, contact

Cathy 9858 1613 or Library
9265 9486.

Research your health ...

www.surgerydoor.co.uk/Frame/research.shtml

A-Z of complementary medicine at

www.surgerydoor.co.uk/level1/complimentary.shtml

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