

OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales Inc.
No. 9 July 2002

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There's Still Time!

You still have time to register for the OWN NSW state conference on Monday 15 and Tuesday 16 July. But you must do so before Friday 5 July!

The program for the conference is looking great.

On the first day, Annette Turner, our special guest speaker who hails from Back o' Bourke, will talk about what it's like for women living and thriving in the outback.

Following Annette's talk we will be treated to a new thirty-minute Theatre Group performance of provocative, clever and moving skits on everything from economic rationalism to peace and laughter.

After lunch – which is always a treat at the Women's College – there'll be a series of small group workshops where we can explore issues, share experiences and contribute towards the development of a stronger, more effective and influential Older Women's Network in NSW. Topics will include communication, oral history of OWN's founding members, membership issues, and OWN's future.

At around 4pm...drum roll...we will gather in a smaller, more intimate room, for a *Mood Adjustment Session* or, in more formal terms, a cocktail party!

The program for the second day will include a special meeting to discuss changes to the NSW Constitution, the AGM, an a cappella group performance and reports from representatives of each NSW group.

If you would like more information about registrations, please ring the office on 9247 7046.

Point of View

OWN Matters

is the Newsletter of the
Older Women's Network
New South Wales Inc.
It is published 11 times a year.
Subscriptions are \$20.

Who Are We?

OWN NSW is the peak body for
sixteen OWN groups in NSW.

OWN promotes the rights,
dignity and wellbeing of older
women through a range of
activities and resources, and
advocates to government and
non-government agencies on
issues of concern
to older women.

Contributions

All members of OWN groups in
NSW are encouraged to
contribute to **OWN Matters**
with items of interest to older
women and letters to the Editor.

They can be sent by mail or
email marked 'Attention –
Editorial Team'. Please include
contact details.

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

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In the days following the death of Nancy Crick, several writers in the media made a determined effort to portray her as a victim. They have been ignoring some important points.

It was her assessment of her own level of suffering that is the important point, not what she was suffering from. Whether she had cancer cells in her body at the time she took her own life is irrelevant. She'd had enough of whatever it was that was hurting her and also enough of the side-effects of whatever it was that she was using to relieve her pain. The fact that she was still in pain, even though free of cancer itself raises some interesting questions about the skill with which her surgery was carried out and the effectiveness of the drug regime she was on. It was also stated in the press that she was putting on weight. This could also have been due to fluid retention perhaps, not a healthy sign at all.

To add insult to injury there was also adverse comment about her smoking and, by crikey, a reference to the lines around her mouth being caused by her habit. How utterly crass. Many people who smoke don't have them, and many who do smoke, do!

Many women have an up close and personal view of what it is to be a carer, they often have the experience of caring for children, ailing and/or disabled relatives and friends and it is possible to decide not to inflict that kind of life-consuming disruption onto others, without having a flicker of low self-esteem. Once it might have been seen as an unselfish act, but that idea seems to be well out of fashion with journalists. The big bloke seen on TV with his arm about her shoulders (probably her son) didn't seem to be anything other than protective of her. Badgering her to take her own life was probably not on his agenda

Last point and by no means least, her formidable courage in carrying out her own desire to end her life. The final confrontation with a lethal dose, the process of picking it up putting it in her mouth and then swallowing isn't the act of a wimp. All of this and at the same time making end-of-life decisions, an issue for all of us.

Nancy Crick was never a victim.

Pam Ledden

If you're interested in attending a group discussion on Voluntary Euthanasia, please leave your name at the OWN office – 9247 7046 – and we will arrange one.

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

The present Management Team had its last meeting this week and a small celebration to mark the end of the first year of operations of OWN NSW. In general it has been a satisfying, difficult and exciting process being part of the emergence of the peak body and each one of us has given generously of time, opinions and skills to progress the work. We thanked each other and toasted our efforts.

We are now considering ourselves in recess and declaring all seats on the team vacant. The coordinators will continue to do the caretaker tasks. There are still only five nominations in for election to the new team, so please think deeply about the talent in your group and get your persuasive powers to work. Not all the present members are standing again. For instance, Sam is moving to the mountains, Betty is concentrating on Wellness matters and Pam is turning her attention to Advocacy Coordination which was put on hold a couple of years ago.

The Theatre Group is being included in the Women on Wheels tour of northern NSW currently being organised by the Department for Women. This means a trip of two weeks with seventeen performances in that time. The Department will be getting a great draw card for their presentations and workshops and OWN will be getting a boost of publicity as well. Serendipity! The TG members probably won't think so by the end of the two weeks; their minds will be on rest and recreation.

The postcard campaign seems to have been a good idea, many groups have responded with big mailouts and more are planning to. Thank you all. Later this year we plan to follow it up with letters

to various directors-general in various departments as they begin the process of allocating funds to groups and projects.

Just in case you thought the insurance issue was nicely settled, our present policy is only until the end of July and once again we will, with the help of Kris Ferguson, begin the irritating and time consuming process of trying to find out how much it's going to cost to cover public liability insurance.

Margaret Allison, the Director General of our funding body, the Department of Ageing, Disabilities and Home Care (DADHC), visited OWN for an hour in mid-June. Margaret and another member of the department, Robert Griew, listened while Sam and Pam talked to them about OWN's structure and activities, and the various issues that we deal with. They then visited the Theatre Group rehearsing in the Mott Hall. The TG put on a small show for them, and both Margaret and Robert were greatly entertained and appreciative. Margaret will join them for a couple of days of the Women on Wheels tour.

In our view, the visit went particularly well. Margaret and Robert were both appreciative of OWN's philosophy, energy and productivity. One of the most significant pieces of information we were given is the fact that a new unit, the Office for Ageing, has been created within DADHC. The work of this unit will be to look at all aspects of ageing, not just Aged Care or Home and Community Care. This is a significant development from OWN's point of view as it signals the department's intention to take a wide view of issues related to ageing, as OWN itself does. We, therefore, sit very much more

comfortably within a department that is shifting the emphasis ever so slightly away from service delivery organisations. The implications of this have yet to unfold but the possibility is that OWN will be consulted more frequently and that more funding may become available to us.

In the last month, or so it seems to us, there has been a slight tweak in the universe that bodes well for the future of the Groups and OWN NSW. A particularly warm welcome to OWN Sutherland. We have a great year to look forward to.

This is the last Coordinators' Report from us three. We look forward to seeing many of you at the Conference for a bit of discussion and some good fun.

***Pam Ledden, Sam Smart,
Betty Murphy***

Important reminders!

Subscriptions to *OWN Matters* were due on 1 July. If you're reading this, and you have not renewed your subscription, you are reading a complimentary copy!

Membership of OWN Sydney was also due on 1 July.

For more information, contact Ermes Solari or Kris Ferguson on 9247 7046.

Please note:

The figure in brackets on your address label is nothing to do with subscription/membership renewals. It is a code used for postal purposes.

Ermes Solari

OWN Sydney Highlights

Coordinators' Report

It's a worrying scene when the Federal Treasurer, in his recent budget speech, infers that older people are a problem! Meg Coulson argued that it is important to challenge this way of thinking... services, health care and welfare must be seen as a collective responsibility.

At the recent quarterly members' meeting, which preceded Pearlie and Meg's discussion, we overheard someone whinge: "There's too much on!" It's true! Our activities during the past few months have rapidly expanded, and it's wonderful to see so many older women enjoying themselves at dancing, drumming, lunching, and so on. With school holidays approaching there are fewer activities planned, so hopefully the 'whinger' can get her breath back!

In preparation for the forthcoming OWN Sydney AGM, the Working Group has completed drafting the OWN Sydney 'Guidelines' and now welcomes members' comments. If you would like a copy, please give Joy Ross a call on 9251 9333, or have a look at the copy held in the office at 87 Lower Fort Street. Closing date for comments is 1 August. The final draft will be tabled for acceptance at the OWN Sydney AGM on 23 August 2002.

Louise Anike and Joy Ross.

Life Before OWN

At our last get together we talked about work and other experiences before retirement. What a wonderful wealth of experiences. We then walked up to the S.H. Ervin Gallery to enjoy the Salon des Refusés, the alternative selection of works submitted for the Archibald and the Wynn prizes. We finished a very companionable morning with a coffee at the Gallery Café.

Yetty Windt & Hedi Roggeveen

The Ins and Outs of Feminism

Our guest speakers for this discussion, the second in our series on feminism, were OWN members and long-time social justice activists, Meg Coulson and Pearlie McNeill.

Meg introduced the topic by saying that the word 'feminism' produces quite complicated responses in people. The reality is that feminism has many voices and it doesn't have answers for all the issues, although its primary struggle is still around creating a fair and just world. She acknowledged the achievements of feminism since the turbulent '70s, and suggested that today's issues have expanded to include reconciliation, war and peace, refugees and global inequalities.

Meg believes that there is a need for a re-look at feminism. Government policy and social attitudes are increasingly dividing people. Aboriginal people are greatly affected by being treated as an alien group in our society and refugees are presented as 'illegals' without human rights. This is what happened in Germany in the 1930s and during the Second World War. We were chilled by Meg's reference to the quote: "First they came for the Jews, but it was not my problem, then the gypsies, the communists, the gays and the disabled, and when they came for me there was no-one left to protect me..."

Our way of looking at things must change. People in power invite us to see older people as a 'problem' – a threat to the prosperity of the young. This economic rationalist approach is well in place – look after yourself, or lose out! It is important to challenge this way of thinking: services, health-care and welfare are a collective responsibility.

Pearlie spoke of the U-turn which the women's movement had created for her as a working class woman. She referred to 'interior thinking' and the value of women's stories, the need to pass on knowledge, set the record straight for our children, expose where possible the secrets in families. Pearlie invited us to consider the difference between solitude and isolation, to find practical small ways of asking for help, for instance, giving good friends permission to phone at 2am if they need to... She believes we don't talk enough about our needs. Pearlie expressed her philosophy (originally from Antonio Gramsci) as, "*I live with pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will*".

During the following discussion a number of participants talked about their own perceptions of the word feminism and how it applied to them. Everyone agreed it was a thought-provoking session and, as usual, the discussion ran out of time. Pearlie and Meg were warmly thanked for their thoughtful and sensitive contribution to the series.

Joy Ross

Get involved!

OWN Sydney, as an affiliate of OWN Australia, is calling for interested members to join a sub-committee to prepare for the next OWN Australia conference which will be held in late September. We plan to draw up some amendments to the OWN Australia constitution, as well as design resolutions for OWN Australia's Policies and Statements. The first meeting will be held on Friday 19 July. Please contact Joy Ross on 9251 9333 for more information.

A Valued Volunteer

Peggy Hewett's commitment to voluntary work at OWN has paid high dividends on at least two different levels. At a personal level, when she performs political songs and scripts with the Theatre Group, Peggy says she feels capable, talented and strong. At another level, her longtime commitment to the Theatre Group has positioned the Older Women's Network firmly in the public domain as an organisation that makes visible, and addresses, the many issues facing older women today.

Peg's voluntary work began when she was a teenager in 1944 singing 'songs with a message' at political fundraising functions and, despite the ups and downs of a demanding domestic life and being in the paid workforce until her late fifties, she has never stopped.

Following her 'conversion' to feminism in the early seventies, Peggy played a key role in establishing the Women's Action Theatre, a voluntary group which performed at International Women's Day events, on university campuses and at a wide variety of women's functions. During that time Peggy also co-wrote and performed a play about contraception, *'To have or not to have children'*, for an ABC radio program called Choice.

In 1984, following her retirement at 57, Peggy decided to 'do something' about the invisibility of older women's lives.

She assisted in writing a number of snappy skits and songs and led a troupe of seven older women to Canberra where, uninvited, they performed a show on the lawns outside Parliament House. They delighted their audience, and the production won an Australian

Bicentennial Authority award and a front page spread in the Canberra Times.

From this success, Peggy went on to establish the Older Women's Network Theatre Group.

Peg's big-heartedness is legendary. She has been – sometimes all at once! – the Theatre Group's coordinator, administrator, lead singer, performer, and co-writer of scripts and songs. In addition to managing local performances, Peggy has arranged rural and regional tours in NSW, and has organised and facilitated interstate and intrastate workshops on movement, voice production and script writing so that older women outside Sydney can create their own scripts and songs.

Peggy loves the challenge of delivering to audiences of all political hues the political messages contained in the songs and scripts of the Theatre Group. Her special brand of energy and talent has long been an inspiration to older women and a provocation to younger women who are encouraged by her wit and zest to regard their own ageing in a different light.

In OWN's early days, despite administration not being her favourite activity – she *is* a diva, you know! – Peggy also agreed to work in the office as joint coordinator. She left that role after a couple of years to concentrate on employing her theatrical skills with the Theatre Group, but remained a member of the OWN Inc. Working Committee from 1991 until 2001, when OWN NSW took over the reins. Peggy is currently a valued volunteer on the OWN Sydney Working Group.

Dorothy Cora

Welcome, OWN Sutherland

At a meeting on 14 June, a group of OWN members in the Sutherland Shire decided to form an OWN group in the area and to seek formal affiliation with OWN NSW. We have already appointed delegates to OWN NSW and are looking forward to attending the state conference in July.

Having an OWN group separate to the Sutherland Older Women's Wellness Centre will provide opportunities for older women in the area to have a voice in local issues and to be involved in activities around, for example, International Women's Day and Seniors' Week. We are looking forward to exploring and planning our future direction and focus over the coming months.

Noreen Hewett

OWN Southern Highlands

In May, members of the Southern Highlands Older Women's Network met at Mittagong Bowling Club to discuss future directions for their newly formed group. Meetings will be on the first Thursday of each month.

At the June meeting, members enjoyed a life writing session, *Valuing Self – Get that life story down*, run by Pat Simpson from Illawarra OWN. One of Pat's 'getting to know you' exercises – identifying one thing that each of us really likes about ourselves and then sharing it with the group – was really interesting. It can sometimes be a challenge to openly value ourselves as older women!

A number of us are planning to attend the OWN NSW conference in July. We are also looking forward to joining Nowra OWN when they celebrate their tenth birthday in late June.

Margaret Connor

Letters to the Editor

Appreciation ...

The following letter was recently received from Sutherland Shire Council which funded our first year of operation and continues to support Sutherland Older Women's Wellness Centre programs.

Dear Ms Hewett and Ms Burnham

At Council's Meeting held on 25 February 2002, it was resolved that you be congratulated for your extraordinary volunteer work in identifying the needs of older women in the Shire, and establishing successful programs for them.

After the successful launch of the Older Women's Wellness Project on 2 May 2001, the interests and the needs of the community have been seen through the increasing participation and the addition of new members. The project has attracted many interested people since its launch, through word of mouth, publicity in the Sutherland and St George Leader, Shire Life, a community newsletter and distribution of programs through libraries and doctors' surgeries.

Council appreciates the contribution this program is bringing to the older women in our community, as well as your dedication and commitment to such a worthy cause.

J Raynor

Spirit Lift

My monthly 'Spirit Lift' for June enticed me to take up a pen, at long last, to particularly thank you for the Wonderful Wise Woman profile of Louis Anike. Previous profiles and 'herstories' of quietly determined, dedicated and compassionate women, talking, analysing and advocating for a more equal and just society, have also been wonderful. How fortunate I feel living in this era and knowing Louise, and so many

others, and having the opportunity to find a focus, and be able to participate in and use skills learnt through workshops, conferences and such.

My fond regards and congratulations to all members of the *OWN Matters* production team.

Wendy Kerr

Messages Matter

Congratulations to those who designed the eye-catching post-cards we were asked to send to politicians. A marvellous idea! I had great fun making up silly, rude and mysterious messages, but of course I resisted! Have you sent yours?

Joan Johns

The way to go

Thanks OWN for the good read in my June Newsletter. Lately I have been too busy to attend any OWN functions, and the newsletter stops people like me from feeling lonely and isolated. The June issue had heaps of information. I particularly liked the idea of Enid's birthday party wake. So often the only time our family gets together is at a funeral. Then we all say that in future we will keep in touch, but we never do, and the next reunion is at the funeral of a friend or relative we have been meaning to see.

Like Enid, I thought the idea of an 'el cheapo cardboard coffin' funeral was the way to go. I had even told my family I would like the cardboard box painted blue and decorated with silver stars but when I made enquiries there was no such thing as an 'an el cheapo cardboard coffin funeral' in NSW.

According to the NSW Health Department and various funeral directors the 'el cheapo cardboard coffin' is illegal in NSW. In fact,

'el- cheapo' funerals of any kind are non-existent. In NSW we have laws to ensure a funeral is a costly affair. If anyone knows of an 'el cheapo' version, I would love to hear about it.

Keep up the good work Newsletter Production Team. You do a great job.

Pamela Sharpe

Coffee Club

The Town Hall Coffee Club met last week in the Queen Victoria Building. Though at times my claim to 'have a mind that works' seemed to be an empty boast, we agreed to meet again on the first Thursday in July at 11am at the Cascade Coffee Shop at the entrance to Town Hall Arcade. All welcome.

Helen Monaghan

Really?

In an email to Renee Simons, one of her many overseas e-friends wrote: "What do you think about the mess in the Middle East? It's so dreadful, but I am very concerned that the US stays OUT of these foreign problems. After all, THEY stayed away from *our* Civil War (1860s)."

Renee's reply ... "I don't know what to make of your comment that the Middle East didn't help the US in the Civil War. Which side should they have been on? I can't imagine them being with the Southerners, drinking mint juleps... I mean, maybe they didn't even know it was happening – no telephone, no radio, no television, in those days. Maybe some individuals might have helped if they'd known and if they'd had the transport, though it would have been all over by the time they got there in their sailing ships..."

Theatre Group Report

"These pretty faces are going places!" is a line from one of our songs. It must be true, because it's the second time this year that a young woman has wanted to make a video about us. Samantha McDonald, her offsider and a young sound person spent the day with us on 21 May. Throughout the day, the camcorder was busy recording us dressed in a variety of costumes, performing and being interviewed.

You probably don't remember, but the day was very cold and wintry, not the best of conditions for getting undressed and dressed many times. This is the price we pay for fame!



While all this was going on, our OWN photographer, Monica Reiher, was taking candid shots – not 'the posed look at the camera and smile' type, resulting in some very funny and no doubt risqué shots. Some are sure to be R-rated and not for general exhibition.

On Saturday, 25 May, a cold and rainy day, we all made our way to surely one of Sydney's ugliest buildings – the Masonic Centre. We had been invited to perform for the Women Teachers Union Conference. For once we had a proper stage, the only trouble was we had to get changed behind rather a flimsy curtain directly at the back of the stage. Whatever happened to modesty? We appreciated the sophisticated sound system, the lighting and a large audience of wonderful women. They enjoyed the show's vitality, satire and sense of fun. Our director and singing teacher were in the audience, and that made us all a little nervous. Not to worry, they both gave us their tick of approval. One fifty-year old said she didn't fear getting old after seeing the show. A much younger woman, after enthusing about the show, said she didn't realise just how old we were! Is this a compliment or what?

On 28 May, we held a morning tea for Cancer Research and – wait for it – raised \$120, ate heaps of forbidden food, and congratulated Marie Williams on her raffle win, a large bottle of whisky. Just the thing for the cold nights to come. Cheers, Marie! Thanks to Jo Allon for organising such a successful event.

On the same day, Margaret Allison and Robert Grieve from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care paid us a brief visit to look us over and see if we were worth funding, and they were quite impressed. Margaret was involved in street theatre in Queensland when she was younger. She plans to join the Group sometime during their Women on Wheels fourteen-day tour, commencing 23 June.

After a quick read through this report, it is clear that we do a lot of stripping. Could this experience lead to a more lucrative career? Probably not at OUR AGE!

Jean Jacobs

Australia's Biggest Morning Tea

A big thank you to the Theatre Group and guests for their cooperation and participation in the morning tea for the Cancer Council. We raised one hundred and twenty dollars, not bad for the sixteen Theatre Group members and their guests from the office. This amount has been donated to the Abraham Mott Community Centre to help boost the twelve hundred dollars raised by their own efforts. Marie Williams won the raffle – a bottle of whisky.

Josephine Allon

WOW!

In 2001, the Department for Women and the Premier's Council for Women designed an innovative program, Women on Wheels (WOW!), to provide regional women with access to information and knowledge about NSW Government and community services.

A second WOW! Tour took off on 23 June, this time targeting the North Coast, New England and Northern Tablelands regions of NSW, with a large team of women planning to hold information sessions, workshops, women's health events, breakfasts and morning teas, leadership seminars and hands-on information technology courses.

The Theatre Group is part of this second tour. Keep your eyes peeled for an account of their successes, adventures and survival strategies in the next *OWN Matters*.

Aboriginal Support Circle

Josie Clements was the speaker at the June meeting of the Aboriginal Support Circle. She enrolled in the first non-Indigenous Aboriginal Study Course at Tranby College in June 1999. The original twenty-seven were committed to two years of evening classes. In addition, it included several camps. To complete the course, there was a main project in which each person was involved in discovering their own identity, and then learning about the land and Aboriginal people, where they were born, or where they were presently living. They had to keep a journal of the process.

We enjoyed browsing through Josie's journal which included many interesting photographs of her family and the Leichhardt Aboriginal people. Josie also brought along the students' Yearbook which included a composite of all their photographs.

Josie chose her maternal family, the McManus clan, as her great-grandfather came to Australia in

1838 from Ireland. As she was born and still lives in Leichhardt, she did extensive research into the history of these Aboriginal people.

She also brought along the beautifully hand painted and hand stitched wall hanging she had completed for her project. It pictures the six generations of McManus women: great-grandmother, grandmother, mother, Josie, daughter, and granddaughters. The pictures of the women were reproduced onto material and were individually hand stitched onto the background, then rows of glass beads or sequins were stitched around each photo. As Josie's grandmother always wore black and liked to wear a string of jet black beads, her photo is circled with jet black beads.

Along the way the students learned crafts. Josie made a dilly bag and tried her hand at basket weaving. Their camps were on the Linga Longa property of Jack Beetsen. An important event was staying awake from sundown to

sunrise. They used clap sticks and sang music as part of the ceremony. Josie said that after a while she was actually 'hypnotised'. It helped her to understand how the men at a Corroboree could remain energized for several days with little sleep.

Last year Josie volunteered at the festival of the Yeperenye People at Alice Springs. All around her she heard only Aboriginal Languages being spoken. This was quite an awakening experience. She realised how difficult and confusing it is for someone without the main language to cope.

Although the course was to have been a two year commitment, it's been three years and they still have the Women's Business to complete. Because there was a fire during one of their camps and they lost all their possessions, the time had to be extended. But even the fire was a learning experience, according to Josie. She enthusiastically recommends the course.

Frayda Myers Cooper

Thank you, Ermes

For the last twelve months, Ermes Solari, our volunteer responsible for membership and subscriptions, has steered us through the process of changing subscriptions to *OWN Matters* and *OWN Sydney* memberships so that they all fall due on 30 June.

Ermes has put in many hours of additional work planning and implementing the changes.

So, a big thank you, Ermes, for all your commitment and hard work – we couldn't have done it without you!

Kris Ferguson
Office Manager

Some dislikes of the visually impaired!

Toilet paper so stuck down that it is difficult to start the roll, so there's a lot of waste paper before starting the roll.

Australian newspapers with type not dark enough and not large enough.

Opening the front door and not being able to see the visitor because of the glare, and the visitor standing there saying, "It's me," instead of using their name.

And what about the great lack of pedestrian crossings in some suburbs? In my main shopping area there are only two in total, more than a kilometre apart.

Joan Young

The Step Down Project

Trude Kallir, Joy Ross, Ermes Solari, Betty Johnson, Margaret Sargent, Jean Braithwaite, Roleena Jennings, Shirley Bevan and I attended the Advocacy Group meeting on Tuesday 4 June.

We looked at the result of the survey, sent out in April *OWN Matters*, which clearly indicates that health is the most important issue of the eight listed for OWN members to consider. Social isolation and mental health were the other two issues of great concern.

Having collected this information, there was much discussion about how to proceed. The group has described itself as the Advocacy Coordination Group and recognises that in this area, it will be responsible for advancing the advocacy role of OWN NSW.

We also discussed the matter of the length and breadth of 'health' as an issue. How long is a piece of string and how complex some of the knots? Several suggestions were made as to what aspects of the many knots we might apply ourselves to, bearing in mind that one of the things we recognised at our last meeting was that we were trying to do too much. So!

In recent times some OWN members have been hospitalised with acute illnesses and have

remained in hospital until the acute phase of the illness has been managed. Discharge from hospital meant the realisation that the services that were supposed to be available to enable them to manage at home were either non-existent or too thinly spread to be accessible at the time they were needed. In some cases the solution has been a prolonged stay in hospital, filling an acute care bed, or relying on friends and relatives to provide the help required. The kind of care and rehabilitation service, once supplied by convalescent hospitals, is now only available in rare instances. There are not many of this kind of facility left anywhere and certainly not enough of anything in rural areas.

The meeting decided that this would be the first issue that we confront and have now set in train a series of steps to explore the problem and seek information on what other organisations are doing to address it. Step Down is a phrase used to describe the stages of recovery after acute illness – hence the name of this project.

The next meeting of the Advocacy Coordination Group is Tuesday 2 July at 10.30am at Lower Fort Street. Those who are interested are invited to come.

Pam Ledden

ATM Scam

The latest scam involves thieves putting a thin, clear, rigid plastic sleeve into the ATM card slot. When you insert your card, the machine can't read the strip, so it keeps asking you to re-enter your PIN number. Meanwhile, someone behind you watches as you enter your PIN number. Eventually you give up, thinking the machine has swallowed your card and you walk away. The thieves then remove the plastic sleeve complete with card, and then empty your account. The way to avoid this is to run your finger along the card slot before you put your card in. The sleeve has a couple of tiny prongs that the thieves need to get the sleeve back out of the slot, and you'll be able to feel them.

Chubb Security Memo

White Wine is good for lungs!

Drinking white wine may help maintain healthy lungs, say US researchers. According to a study of 1,555 people, a lifetime of drinking wine, as well as current consumption of the drink, was linked to improved lung function, researchers from the University at Buffalo, New York, found. In contrast, no link was discovered between lung health and drinking beer or spirits.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the American Thoracic Society in Atlanta, Georgia, researcher Professor Holger Schunemann said, "This finding may indicate that nutrients in wine are responsible for the positive effect of alcoholic beverages on lung function. Red wine in moderation has been shown to be beneficial for the heart, but in this case the relationship was stronger for white wine."

In the study, researchers recorded the participants' body measurements as well as details about their current and lifetime alcohol consumption, and lifestyle habits, including diet. The participants also performed standard lung function tests. After comparing the different drinking habits and lung function, researchers found that both recent and lifetime wine drinkers had the best lung function.

www.surgerydoor.co.uk/news/detail.asp?offset=2234

(According to ABC TV's *Dimensions*, two glasses of wine a day is considered the maximum healthy consumption for women – of any age! Eds.)

Things we're not supposed to say

I hope no one will say, "I'm so sorry you lost your mother". Or use any of those terrible expressions like "passed over", "passed away", and "gone before". They remind me of those death notices that say, "A patient sufferer laid to rest". Not something that would ever be said about Mother or me, thank goodness, but something that would only be said about a woman, never about a man. It sounds incredibly martyred. I'm glad we are more direct, painfully so, some might say, and not likely to use genteel euphemisms.

I will ring people and leave messages that say, "My mother has died. Please don't send flowers or visit – phone or write, if you'd like. The funeral notice will be in the Herald." I want to do it in the way that's best for me. The advantage of having been the only one to visit is that there is no one else whose wishes and feelings I will consider above my own.

I will be rude to anyone who says: "It is a blessed relief, you must be glad, don't upset yourself by talking about it, she's had a good innings, God never gives us more than we can bear, she's gone to a better place, she'll be with your father again." How would they know? How dare they?

For years, I have thought about how I will want to celebrate her life and mourn her death. It's been such a long time since I suspected she was beginning to dement in 1980, and since the accident she wasn't expected to survive in 1991, and since the geriatrician said in 1992 that she could not live more than another seven years. I have dreams and nightmares about my own survival and my ability to see her through to the end. Fortunately I have begun to believe that we are both ready, and that I will enjoy the freedom and the opportunity to be slothful and to travel. I haven't been away for more than two weeks since 1982, and not to Europe for more than forty years. Now I'm planning for the future.

My big fear about the funeral is that my sister will be disruptive – as Mother was at my wedding – and that I'll get hysterical, giving her the opportunity to say, "See, she's mad, just like her mother." I plan to have a religious service at the funeral director's chapel where she can come and bring friends if she wants, and where my Christian friends will feel comfortable. The cremation will be private, and her ashes will come to my courtyard as part of a new water feature.

I will have a gathering of my friends later, by invitation only, with a display of photographs, including an enlargement of her naked and beautiful in 1930. I have begun to write what I want to say about her life, about her great strengths and weaknesses, and I will ask a friend to talk about my life with Mother in the Nursing Home.

Monika Law

Sourced by Frayda Cooper

How's Your Driving?

Despite the decline in physical conditions associated with getting older, research shows that older people are generally driving safely well into their seventies, eighties and even their nineties.

However, while many older people know when to surrender the keys, there are others who continue to drive when they are 'at risk'.

For families, friends and caregivers, the issue of what to do about someone they love who is driving in a risky manner can be both perplexing or even paralyzing. People faced with this dilemma have often taken a year or more to act, and those who have intervened report it as being one of the most difficult things they have ever had to do.

A handbook, *When You Are Concerned*, published by the New York State Office for the Ageing, was developed to help families, friends and care-givers who are facing this problem. Although it was published in American, it is very relevant to Australian readers. A copy is available from the OWN office.

In Australia, the *Older Driver's Handbook* is available from Motor Registry Offices.

Check the safety of your MIX of MEDICINES

Approach your regular pharmacist or even your General Practitioner [local doctor] to come to your home for a medicine review of the actual medicines you are taking. They will claim payment of the Hundred [100] Dollars from the government source to check each person's medicines. It will not cost you anything, but is a form of protection against the possibility of adverse effects that can be a disaster scene.

Jean Braithwaite

Why the ETs have not returned our calls!

Since the advent of television, our programs have been travelling into outer space. If nothing but TV advertising reaches our nearest extra terrestrials, I wonder what they make of us?

If they know about carbon based life forms, they would rarely see a person aged over forty years in our advertisements. They might assume that is our average life span. Rarely would they sight a black, Asian or handicapped person.

It would seem that only handsome young men buy cars, invariably accompanied by slim beauties in scanty strapless dresses and stiletto heels.

Only gorgeous young women ever shampoo their hair, which then falls in shining cascades across their shoulders. Similarly, anti-wrinkle creams are always massaged into the exquisitely smooth faces of seventeen year old females.

A mother concocting a quick meal from a packet is usually rewarded with ecstatic delight from her teenage son as he eats it. I wish my packet meals tasted as good.

As for pizza delivery, orders are mostly placed by shapely girls, who flirt with the winsome delivery boys.

Athletes under thirty owe their gorgeous bodies to muesli bars. Among nine out of ten children preferring a breakfast cereal, there is the mandatory black or Asian child.

Only couples who can scuba dive and look fantastic in skimpy costumes ever holiday at Queensland resorts. Too bad about all the old fatties.

Tropical cruises are favoured by beautiful people in evening wear. They have no trouble finding a partner to embrace as they gaze at a calm moonlit sea. Presumably the plethora of widows and divorcees is below playing the pokies.

Only young couples, usually with an adorable child, buy real estate.

Young women in adventurous jobs can recover immediately from PMT or tension headaches by downing aspirin. Then, smiling, they leap back into piloting an air ambulance or making cliff rescues.

If by chance a person aged over forty appears in advertisements, the image is usually stereotyped. Advertisers love portraying women in hideous lawn bowling outfits.

A senior bowling woman is shouted a modestly priced ice cream by her elderly male friend. What a cheapskate! She'd probably prefer a gin and tonic in a cosy pub.

An aged couple is shown receiving retirement advice from a young male financial adviser. Dad does most of the talking and is reassured by the adviser that he (and his ignored wife) will always be able to afford a serving of sprouts when dining out. Where are all the mature financial advisers with years of experience in the real world? The last time I saw a financial adviser in a bank, she appeared to be fresh from her HSC.

One positive senior image is that of a spritely woman dusting her nicknacks in a sumptuous home while awaiting the postie. She jigs about as she opens good news from an investment company. Next she is reclining beside a pool sipping a cool drink. At least she has spent her dividends on herself and not wasted them on her profligate children or grandchildren.

There is a disturbing new trend for young people to eat chips and similar snacks as loudly as possible. Undoubtedly the irritating crunching emphasises the crispiness of the product. What happened to parental admonitions to eat quietly? What will the ETs make of our eating habits?

TV advertising has as much reality as those old "True Romances" the lovelorn read before Mills & Boon spiced them up.

Maybe the ETs have decided that the people portrayed in our advertisements are an artificial, immature, hedonistic lot, and not worth knowing. Maybe that's why they are avoiding us.

Helen McMaugh

Remembering Ivy

Dorothy's a real party girl. If she hears of a party, she'll be there with bells on – first to arrive and last to leave. Especially if there's dancing. She can't help it. She throws herself into it like a mad thing. BUT she never gives parties herself. And here's why. Long ago, in Dorothy's childhood, some rich people gave a HUGE party for their grandchild. All the children from the town were invited, including Dorothy and her siblings. But not her fourth class best friend, Ivy. Dorothy knew how sad that made Ivy, so she thought she'd give Ivy a party herself. Only she knew her parents couldn't afford it. So what she did was to invite just Ivy to her place; and Ivy came. Expecting a party. Only there wasn't one; just two best friends pretending. And that little Ivy never told. But Dorothy was ashamed. Her pangs of remorse were so bad that she said to herself, "I'll never give another party as long as I live".

Well, the years went by. Ivy left town. Dorothy went on living, and living, and living – until she's nearly 80 – and she thinks, "I'll give a party in memory of Ivy".

So she did. She set the wheels in motion. A chef was engaged. A friend said he'd bring his group band. Another friend said, "Invite a hundred, only fifty will come." Invitations went out. Eighty were coming! "It'll be a squash, but not to worry," said the friend. But of course Dorothy did – worry, that is. She worried when the chef let her down. She worried about the weather, the decorations, the catering, the flowers, the neighbours who offered their kitchens, and where to put the bodies who needed beds.

But there's no stopping now. The big day comes. It's midday. Two

hours to go. But where are the decorations? Balloons unblown, streamers uncut. And people coming to the door expecting LUNCH! The meal planned for that evening disappears down hungry throats...poor Dorothy! The tears threatening for months overflowed like a king tide...she's awash...she's a mess. She's led off to bed, exhausted. But while she sleeps, her long-suffering family comes to the aid of the party! She emerges just in time, to find...transformation! Purple, green and white balloons, streamers and stars hang glittering from above, festooning the whole stairway and right down to the front door. Then the band starts playing...oh what heavenly music! It floats down from the top floor landing, down the three flights, right to the street, where strangers are stopping to listen.

Now the guests are charging up the stairs as if they hear the Pied Piper, decked in green, white and violet, like true feminists, and wearing on their person the number 80, denoting Dorothy's (and Ivy's!) 80 years. All are relations and friends of Dorothy, friends old and new, country and city. (Old lovers? Only Dorothy knows, and she's not telling!) They're bearing such gifts of love and goodwill. No time now for worries! This old red-brick three storey Art-Deco building is coming alive! The party is going wild...everyone's having a ball, from the oldest (Dorothy) to the youngest, her little Lilly granddaughter.

There's a breath to catch for speeches, and the grand entrance of her sister Margaret's state-of-the-art birthday cake. Dorothy's family is kept busy seeing that all are eating/drinking/enjoying.

But where is Dorothy? Out on the landing, dancing again...and the wild ones from OWN are dancing with her! Her other granddaughter, Hannah, is

persuaded to play flute with the band...everyone is clapping and cheering...what a climax! Everyone is happy. Guess who's happiest of them all? Dorothy is! As the ghosts of those two little girls join hands in forgiveness of that long-ago party that wasn't!

Anonymous (tee hee)

Because ...

Our work is never done and underpaid or boring and 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're 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 nymphos 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 our 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 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 ... for lots and lots or reasons... We are part of the Women's Liberation Movement.

Joyce Stevens

International Women's Day, 1975.

Has all that much changed since 1975? We'd love to hear from you.

Editors

Warmed by Memories

Pat Elphinston, social justice activist, wife, mother and grandmother and wonderful friend to so many, died on 26 May 2002. Later that week, during a 'celebration of her life', I spoke about Pat's work in the women's movement.

I met Pat first in 1948. By 1950 we were in a team which formed the Union of Australian Women (UAW). Pat was its first Treasurer, and from 1956 to the early 1960s she was National Secretary.

As a woman, a mother and a teacher, Pat related closely to the problems faced by women and children. She especially supported Aboriginal women like Pearl Gibbs, Faith Bandler and Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal) who fought for social justice for their people.

By 1958 we were on a working committee which organised what newspapers described at the time as 'the largest women's delegation to Federal Parliament ever'. More than 280 women from across Australia presented petitions from a 'Mother and Child' campaign which sought increased child endowment and maternity allowances, among other issues. ASIO investigated this unheard of invasion by women, but had to report, 'No contact between local persons of known security interest'!

At times the UAW was condemned as 'the hat and glove brigade' because some women 'dressed up' for special events. Occasionally, there'd be a flurry before a deputation – 'it's a hat and glove job, girls' – and some of us would borrow hats for the occasion. Hence the occasional very funny photographs!

In the 1960s, with the new wave of feminism, Pat supported refugees for women fleeing domestic violence, women's assertiveness against sex discrimination and a revived International Women's Day. The women's movement in Australia gathered new meaning and strength from younger women – and Pat worked with them.

Pat joined the Older Women's Network in 1994 and when I came to live near her in 1996, Pat's friendship was a great bonus. We swam together at Cronulla beach enjoying glorious sunrises and worked together on local issues. Pat supported the Sutherland Shire Older Women's Wellness Centre, enjoying the exercises and company of other women.

Celebrating her life was like one of those glorious sunrises – only this time we were basking in the glow of Pat's personal sunset, warmed by memories of her selfless nature, her quirky humour, her beautiful smile, her wonderful life. Sweet Pat!

Noreen Hewett

Inequality Starts Early

The study of 702 parents with children under 16 found sons earned more than daughters for eight of the most common household tasks. Boys were paid at least three times the amount offered to girls for cleaning a pet's cage, or loading and unloading the dishwasher. Boys got much more than girls for taking the rubbish out, for vacuuming the floors and washing the car. Boys even got more financial inducement for doing school homework. The only exception was cleaning around the house. Girls were paid more than boys for this.

SMH 25.5.02

Joan Johns

safety pin cartoon?

A Scanty Story

Bless you, dear Renee, for making us laugh. I enjoyed your story about renewing the elastic in our pants by threading it through the waistband with a safety pin. Remember the safety pin coming undone halfway through the process? Curses. I have an underwear story to tell too, but mine is about scanties.

It was wartime. I had been married for some months, and, in spite of elaborate precautions with those rubber disc things, I became pregnant. Doug and I were at Lindfield station, when a trainload of Air Force boys pulled in. Doug was striding along in military fashion when suddenly I felt a "pop".

My trousseau scanties had given up the battle with my bulge. I wriggled and clutched at them to the amusement of the boys in blue, but in spite of my antics, the scanties slithered to the ground around my ankles, followed by the little covered button that did them up. Cheers went up.

The boys leant out of the windows. "Can I help you, darling?" Doug turned when he heard the commotion. He was horrified and embarrassed, and marched on. The boys were shouting, whistling and clapping, so I picked up my pink flowered, lace-trimmed little garment, waved it around my head, and grinned from ear to ear. I did a little jig. The noise was deafening as the train pulled out – the best audience I ever had!

A Full Life

Emily is old. She lives in a small flat with minimal furnishing, yet cluttered. Within each cupboard and drawer is a mixture of idly stacked stuff – put away, neatly arranged, orderly, readily available for use, but then there is an accumulation of oddments, thrown in anyhow, topped by a final deposit that tends to spill out whenever the door or drawer is opened.

She stares in consternation and confusion.

“However will I find anything, or make room for something else? It’s like my brain – massive storage, chaotic retrieval, full of valuable things I can’t reach, and

loads of useless junk I should never have put in or should have discarded when they reach their use-by date. I always think they might come in useful, or I’m too busy going out to play, instead of staying home and tidying up.

“I’ll do that when it rains, or I’ve nothing better to do.”

“Then I scrounge another cupboard from someone else’s throwouts, or an op shop, or Council clearance day. I feel so pleased with myself, ‘the virtuous environmentalist’, and get down to spreading the junk around more loosely so I’ve room for more, only to find that the floor space has shrunk. I’ve acquired more junk!”

A knock at the door interrupts her rambling reverie. It’s Kelly, her

granddaughter, come to give her umpteenth computer lesson.

Emily tenses up as she realises with horror, “I’m adding to my confusion and to my junk by writing poems and stories like this, then trying to find a better storage and retrieval system. I should at my age be throwing away material things, emptying my mind, deep breathing, meditating, practicing Yoga, and reaching to Nirvana!”

“Hello,” she says cheerfully.

“Come in, love, I’ve done some homework and bugged it up yet again. Look, it says, ‘Illegal Operation – Consult the Vendor Immediately’. Am I glad to see you!”

Emily Maltby, aged 80

Imagine

I arrived at Woomera Detention Centre as a nurse in 2000. This hot, dusty, arid, miserable cage in the desert is full of men, women and children, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and grandparents. Desperation and hopelessness permeated the air, and the longest any of those people had been there at that stage was five months. Some are still there.

I’ve seen and heard the guards laughing at the pain and suffering of the people imprisoned in Woomera.

I’ve witnessed a guard making a detainee beg for soap. This woman didn’t speak English, but she had learnt the word soap from someone. To the guard she said, “soap”. The soap was proffered, but withdrawn when she reached for it, again and again, until she said “please”.

I spent much of my two years imagining. Imagine if it was my children. Imagine how bad it must have been to make that journey. Imagine how much pain they must feel. Imagine being intimate with your husband and having a guard burst into your room, and then imagine the further humiliation when he shares his story with anyone who’ll listen. Imagine having rotten teeth and being in agony and told you’ll have to wait at least another two months to see a

dentist. Imagine you no longer have a name, just a number. Imagine all you have to wear is a pair of shorts, a T-shirt and a pair of thongs and it’s about one degree celsius in the morning and your thongs are being held together with the wire and string that you’ve managed to scavenge off the army tents. Imagine you are 17 years old and all you want to do is go to school and instead you can do nothing at all. Imagine that you slowly watch your family disintegrate before your eyes. Imagine seeing someone lose their mind. Imagine why people who fled to save their lives, and saw them as precious, are now trying to lose them. Imagine that you have NO RIGHTS.

If you can imagine that, then you can begin to have a small sense of what Woomera Detention Centre is like, and perhaps can feel just a little of the anguish that fills those cages.

Moira-Jane Canahan

Moira-Jane Canahan is a school nurse and mother-of-three now working in Alice Springs. She came to Australia from England as a £10 assisted migrant and grew up in Woomera, well before the detention centre was built. This is an extract of an article she posted on an email list, ausfem.polnet@postoffice.utas.edu.au.

Letting Go

*How do we let go
As nurturers we give so much
Our family
Grow up and leave
It takes much strength to give them up
To step aside
Letting go.*

*Didn't we all through their youth
Try to help them be able to leave the nest
Seeing that they
Could independent be
Strong enough to cut the cords
That had bound them to us
Letting go*

*Our relationship was so intimate
We want to make claims
They don't want to know
But sadly life tells us to step aside
Releasing, yet holding on
There is a great hold
Letting go*

*In our heads we know what we must do
The same we asked our parents to
But our hearts cry silently
So you go back, try and pick up
The dreams you had
Of being artist, teacher, musician, whatever
We revel in this new independence*

*But all too soon this time passes
Grandchildren set demands
Nurturers we become again
He has retired
Needs your support
And once again we are
Letting go*

*These twilight years
We have much to give
Of sharing knowledge and our skills
Mixed feelings of joy and sadness
We know that we
Must once again
Let go*

*We have not failed
It has not been in vain
Pass on the knowledge
Of women's strength and
Our ability to make way
For the next generation
Learn to let go*

Joan Hilton

Older people and the law

It is often difficult to know where to start looking for legal assistance, but obtaining accessible information about our legal rights is critical to everyone.

If you need a lawyer, you can find one through the Law Society of NSW. If you cannot afford to pay for a lawyer you can contact the Law Access Line, Legal Aid Commission of NSW, or your nearest Community Legal Centre.

There are many legal issues that we should all be aware of in regard to pensions, power of attorney, finances, housing, consumer rights, age discrimination, disputes with neighbours, accidents and family law.

If you would like a free copy of Older People and the Law, phone the Seniors Information Service on 13 12 44.

Volunteers

My husband and I have just returned from a wonderful three-week holiday in Tasmania. At many venues – historic houses, galleries, and so on – we met enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers. However, a worrying trend is emerging.

Several of the Councils are in the process of sacking paid weekend workers and replacing them with lone volunteers (weekends being a difficult time to get volunteers).

To my way of thinking, it is most unfair to expect a volunteer to act as a security guard on paintings worth many thousands of dollars, to service the shop selling cards and books, tea and coffee, to handle enquiries at the counter and on the phone, and to conduct guided tours as required. Goodness knows what the legal ramifications are for the volunteer in the event of an accident to a visitor or a robbery. (Yes, they do happen, even in Tasmania, with a thief recently taking the donation box, complete with pedestal.)

I also feel that a volunteer should be there to assist a paid employee, Director or whatever, not to replace them. I am very appreciative of volunteers, and have in the past done my share for some twelve years, establishing a community kindergarten, etc. No doubt, as I reach retirement, I will be doing volunteer work again, but I will be checking my legal position and not taking another person's job, and I suggest all volunteers do the same.

Annette Butterfield

Remember when ...

Monday began the week and rain, hail or shine, it was washing day. First the fuel copper was filled and the fire lit. When the water was bubbling, a cake of home-made soap was shaved into flakes into the water and dissolved. While the water heated, the beds were stripped. Whites were washed first, and they were agitated around with a wooden copper stick, which was also used to lift them, dripping wet, out of the water into nearby tubs. The hot water would then be used to hand scrub the coloureds on a wooden washboard. If the tank water was not too low, two rinses would be done in the two cement tubs. The final rinse would be a blueing with Reckitt's Blue Bag. It was claimed to make whites "whiter than white".

Certain articles needed starching, such as tablecloths, pillowslips, doilies, collars, anything that had to be crisp or stiff. A packet of "Silver Star" starch would be produced and pellets put in an enamel dish. This would be dissolved with cold water, then a kettleful of boiling water off the fuel stove would be added slowly while stirring with a wooden spoon into a thin glue. The set aside articles would be individually put through this liquid and wrung out to join the washing basket of whites. The wringing by hand of heavy sheets, struggling to get out as much water as possible, gave mother a wet front, alright in summer but not so welcome in winter.

When the clothes basket was full, it was down to the back yard to hang them out with wooden "dolly" pegs, prone to splitting at the wrong moments. Still heavy with water, it was a struggle to lift things onto lines held just high enough off the ground with sapling clothes props, praying

that they didn't slip and let the whole wash end up in the dirt. When the clothes were dry, they would be taken off the line, every article that required ironing would be sprinkled with water and rolled up to make ironing easier.

Tuesday was ironing day. Two flat irons would be placed on the hot fuel stove, an old blanket and sheet would cover the wooden kitchen table, and the first iron, after being wiped with newspaper to clean off soot, would be used until it lost its heat and then replaced with the waiting hot one. This would continue until all was finished. Anything that needed a stitch or two would be put on the old treadle sewing machine before putting it away. Wednesday was cleaning and mending day. It meant down on hands and knees to scrub the wooden floor and wash and polish the linoleum floor coverings.

At certain times of the year, curtains were washed and windows cleaned. A ritual when bugs began to breed was to take the wire beds into the back yard, brush with kerosene and set fire to it with tapers to kill the vermin and their eggs. Lice and nits continuously infected hair, especially of school children.

Vigorous scratching of the head prompted an inspection behind the ears, where the telltale white eggs would cling on the warm hairs. An application of kerosene and then the combing through with a fine-toothed comb, head leaning over a sheet of newspaper, would eventually fix the problem until the next time.

If time allowed, after mending was finished on the old treadle machine, some dressmaking would take place. Remaking clothes from hand-me-downs was a skill most people developed. Body hygiene was a daily wash in a dish, and internal cleansing was a weekly dose of castor oil.

Thursday was for shopping. The butcher and the grocer did call and deliver, but the collection of mail, bread, milk and other daily needs was by walking a kilometre or more every day. A daily bus and rail travel allowed visits to other towns. There were very few cars, so horses, pushbikes and walking were the main means of transport. Roads were all dirt, and in wet weather galoshes were sucked off by the sticky mud. Bare feet walking in swollen gutters would collect clinging leeches.

Friday was a cooking day to stock up with cakes and biscuits and puddings, in case of visitors. This

In China with Brigid Sen

On Monday 17 June a group of us really enjoyed a talk by Brigid Sen about her 20 month stay in China last year. Brigid went to China as a Volunteer with Australian Volunteer International (AVI) to teach English. She stayed in a University Compound in Changsha, Hanan Province, which is inland from Shanghai. Her Chinese name translated into Lucky Hundred, although she wasn't game to pronounce it because if she used the wrong inflection it translated into White Chicken! Brigid loves teaching, and her pupils were lively and outgoing. She also joined a choir and had fun singing with them. The choir came first in the Provincial Competition!

Brigid brought along some gorgeous gifts she was given in China. An embroidered wall-hanging, about 2 metres long, a silk Tibetan prayer stole and specially boxed chopsticks.

Norma Bastock

meant many trips to the wood heap, bringing armfuls of cut wood for the hungry stove. Lack of refrigeration, with only ice-chests or meat safes to store perishable food, made a monotonous diet. Plenty of corned meat, potatoes and onions, but fresh fruit and vegetables were seasonable and scarce.

Saturday was bath and hair washing day. All the family participated. The copper would be lit, and each member would dip out a bucket of hot water and carry it into the bathtub. Sometimes the next in line would top up the water, but if too dirty, it would be drained into a bucket and be given to the struggling garden plants.

Sunday was church day. The one and only 'good' dress came out. Hats and gloves and stockings were worn, and mother, as usual, laced up in corsets from armpit to thigh, would lead the procession to the church. Home, and the 'good' dress was immediately hung up, and kept to finally become a hand-me-down for younger sisters.

Nights, the strong smells in summer of mosquito coils burning and citronella being rubbed on bodies. Candlelight and lamps sound romantic, but reading in bed was very difficult, if not downright dangerous. Scary trips to the outside toilet, sitting in the flickering candlelight, in fear of snakes and spiders. On a nail, squares of newspaper and mail-order catalogues, threaded with string, hung for use as toilet paper. "Ouch, was that a redback spider or a splinter from the handmade wooden seat that covered the smelly hole?"

Oh yes, "I Remember When". Thankfully it's only a memory. I just love today's comfort.

Joan Hilton, Illawarra OWN

Health Articles

from journals available for reading at OWN

Health Reader, vol.8, no.1, January/February 2002

p.4 'Herbal Arthritis Remedies' Some treatments have promise, but most also have side effects.

p.6 'And What About Glucosamine'? This dietary supplement seems to work for some people with arthritis – but it is hard to predict which ones.

Health Reader, vol.8, no.2, March 2002

p.2 'Infection and Heart Disease' A link between bacteria, viruses and atherosclerosis has been suspected and now the evidence is growing.

p.3 'HRT and Dry Eyes' Hormone replacement therapy, especially oestrogen alone, seems to increase the risk of dry eye syndrome.

p.4 'New Recommendations for Preventions and Control of Diabetes' The American Diabetic Association recently released new recommendations for the prevention and control of the world's fastest growing epidemic, diabetes.

p.10 'The Wonders of Walking' An old activity gets a new press.

Renate Watkinson

Power Potential

Muscle power is a combination of our strength and the speed we can use it. With increasing age our muscle power begins to recede and with time can become low enough so that the activities we take for granted such as rising from a chair, climbing stairs and even walking, can become difficult or perhaps impossible. However, with appropriate exercise much of the decrease in muscle power occurring with age and inactivity can be prevented and independence maintained well into later life.

Research has shown that high-speed weight training can improve muscle power in older adults.

Balmain Hospital and the University of Sydney are currently recruiting for a study investigating the optimal loads to use during weight training exercise to increase muscle power in people 60 years and over.

Volunteers will first undergo a medical assessment to determine their ability to safely participate in the exercise program. The fully supervised exercise sessions are conducted at Balmain Hospital twice a week for eight weeks using specially designed resistance machines targeting the muscles of the upper and lower body.

If you, or people you know, are 60 years or older, not currently performing weight lifting exercise and would like the chance to improve muscle strength and power, please call:

Nathan de Vos on 9395 2097 (Balmain Hospital) or 9606 6193 (after hours), or Professor Maria Fiatarone Singh on 9351 9755 for more information.

We look forward to hearing from you!

NOTICES

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 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.

happy with half your life

A one-woman-show written and performed by Vanessa O'Neill

Vanessa collaborated with 66 year-old veteran director Sian Newey to create this semi-autobiographical play which celebrates encounters between different generations of women.

"Ambitious and impressive...distinguished by an extraordinary level of energy and physicality...a memorable night of theatre." Helen Thompson, THE AGE October 2001

One night only!

8 pm MONDAY 8 JULY

Australian Theatre for Young People, The Wharf, Pier 4/5 Hickson Road, Walsh Bay

\$20/15 conc. **\$15 for all OWN members!**

Tickets: 9386 9193 or at the door.

Proceeds will help take the show to the 2002 Edinburgh Fringe Festival

Jessie Street National Women's Library

Lunch-hour Talk

12 to 1.30 THURSDAY 18 JULY

Guest Speaker: **Commander Lola Scott**, Assistant Commissioner in the NSW Police Service and Liaison Officer with the Women Victims Advisory Board.

Topic: *The Importance of the Community Involvement in Modern-Day Policing.*

Lady Mayoress' Rooms, 2nd floor, Town Hall, George Street,

Entry \$15 non-members, \$13 members. Includes a sandwich lunch.

Bookings essential.

Contact Shirley on (02) 9876 3927 or the Library 9265 9486 or email shirleyjones@ozemail.com.au

Women in Black

Women in Black is an international network of women who share a common philosophy of opposition to militarism and violence and use a similar style of demonstration.

Silent vigils to protest war and violence are held in Sydney on the first Thursday of every month on the steps of Sydney Town Hall from 5.30pm to 6.30pm.

NOTICES

Fish Lunch

at Bronte Beach



11.30 Friday 19 July

Catch the 10.52 bus (it is a ten minute bus service) from Railway Square or Eddy Avenue. The bus goes to Bronte Beach terminus.

We'll meet at the fish shop closest to the beach. If the weather is grim, we'll go to a cafe!

A Sydney OWN event.

a Cappella Group

We always welcome new members. Join us for fun, fun, fun. This choir combines song and poetry – something for everyone. Come, listen, be enchanted and get involved.

1.30 – 3.30 on 6 July, 20 July and 3 August.

Contact Beryl Winter 9558 2919



Diabetes: The Hidden Disease

Come along to an interesting, informative day on awareness and prevention of diabetes.

Your questions will be answered, you can have your finger pricked to check blood glucose index.

There will be photos, charts etc., to explain the condition of diabetes.

10 am Wednesday 7 August

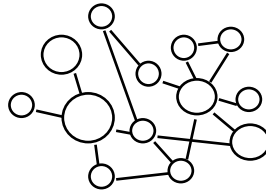
87 Upper Fort Street

Guest Speaker

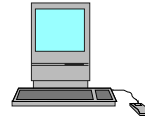
Charmaine de Blicke, Diabetes Nurse Consultant, Prince of Wales Hospital Diabetes Unit.

Bring food to share and stay on for lunch and a chat.

Please RSVP by 1 August on 9247 7046.



Computer Training on Apple Macs ...



We are currently negotiating with Enmore TAFE about holding another computer course for OWN members.

The course is for women with all levels of computer skills and knowledge. So, if you only want to learn how to turn on a computer to write a letter, you'll learn it. If you are already computer literate, you'll learn more.

We need expressions of interest from fifteen women. If we have the numbers, we can probably run the course before the end of this year.

Please contact Dorothy Cora at the office, 9247 7046.

OWN Sydney

Coffee and Chat

10.30, Saturday 20 July

Join us for coffee and an informal chat on topics of your choice. At 87. All welcome.

New Subscriptions to OWN Matters

Individual subscription is \$20 per year – organisational rate on application

OWN Matters is also available on audio tape.

Name _____ Organisation _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Please send your cheque/money order to *OWN Matters* Subscription, Older Women's Network NSW, 87 Lower Fort Street, Millers Point 2000.

**IF UNDELIVERED PLEASE RETURN TO:
87 Lower Fort Street
Millers Point NSW 2000**

**OWN Matters
Older Women's Network NSW Inc.**

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DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in **OWN Matters** are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Older Women's Network.

NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION TEAM

Judith Mustard, Ermes Solari, Helen McMaugh, June West, Polly Gow, Renee Simons, Maureen King, Jacqueline Schofer, Dorothy Cora and Wilhelmina van Dorp.

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