

OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales Inc.
No. 11 September 2002

CONTENTS

At and Beyond the Rocks.....	1
Point of View	2
OWN NSW Coordinators' Report	3
A Valued Volunteer.....	3
Sleep and Relaxation	4
Women's Quilt	4
Country Girls in Newtown.....	5
Being an Optimist	5
The Finest Hour	6
In Pursuit of Love	6
Theatre Group Report	7
For Jean.....	7
Parkinson's Awareness Week	7
Celebrate Shannon's Life.....	7
Letters to the Editor.....	8-9
Premier's Forum on Ageing.....	9
At and Beyond the Rocks.....	10-11
Advocacy Report	12
Singers Wanted!.....	12
Submit a Story.....	12
If I had my life to live over.....	13
Call of the Wild	13
Desperately Seeking SeaChange.....	14
Grabbing Life by the Tail.....	14
The Visit	15
The Guardian Angel.....	16
Have Your Say.....	16
Women into Politics.....	16
Thumbs up for herbal remedies	17
Information for older people.....	17
Do you have an email address?	17
Is this really true?	17
Notices.....	18-19

At and Beyond The Rocks

In the August edition of *OWN Matters* we foreshadowed the revival of the quarterly newsheet, *Beyond the Rocks*, and asked for volunteers to be involved in its production. While we weren't overwhelmed, we did have two generous offers – one for typing and the other for writing.

Since then, however, delegates at the quarterly meeting of NSW groups recommended that the *OWN Matters* Team consider *not* reviving *Beyond the Rocks*, but allocating two centre pages in *OWN Matters* each month for groups to report on their activities, interests and future plans.

The reason for their recommendation was primarily related to the cost of printing and distributing free copies of *Beyond the Rocks* to all members of groups. The OWN NSW budget is very tight. We are still uncertain about how big the hike will be in our public liability and volunteer insurance, so it makes sense to explore alternative ways of saving costs, whilst still promoting strong connections between groups. At its first meeting, the new Management Team of OWN NSW affirmed the quarterly meeting's recommendation.

For the September *OWN Matters*, it was great to have enough articles from groups to fill the centre pages! We hope this pleasing tendency continues, but, realistically, we know from talking to members that there are lots of reasons why many groups don't contribute articles and articles.

The main refrain seems to be, "I can't write", or "There's no time to write". In response to this, we have come up with a strategy that we hope will solve this little problem. Caroline Davis has joined the Newsletter Team. Her role is to contact a nominated member of each group and work with her to ensure that the groups' activities and concerns are reported on at least once every four months. By the end of the year, we'll know what you've all been up to!

Dorothy Cora,
Coordinator, OWN Matters

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.

OWN Matters is copyright.

OWN members can freely
reproduce any material for their
own use. Others should ask
permission first.

OWN Matters is available to
subscribers on audio cassette at
no extra cost.

Contact

Older Women's Network NSW
87 Lower Fort Street
Millers Point NSW 2000

Phone: 02 9247 7046

Fax: 02 9247 4202

Email: ownnsw@zip.com.au

Web: www.zip.com.au/~ownnsw

ABN 36 992 030 904

Point of View

Girl mothers?

During the recent Commonwealth Games one of the Channel 7 announcers was calling the action during the running of the women's marathon, and having a big problem. The three leaders in the final stages were all Australian, two of them were mothers and all were over twenty-five.

He could say "mothers" and he could say "girls", but never once did he get his tongue around "women"! Girl mothers? Is that what he's comfortable with?

Pam Ledden

'Girl' has also made a comeback in the USA

The word 'girl,' which feminists railed against a generation ago as a demeaning and offensive term for women, is making a comeback. 'Girl' is popping up everywhere: in fashion catalogues, newspaper articles, advertisements on Web sites and television and in everyday conversation. The hard-fought battle to get people to stop saying 'girl' and start saying 'woman' when referring to females in their late teens or older is still a fresh memory for feminists active in the 70s.

Users of 'girl' are unapologetic, saying no offence is intended. Kathy Park, a NY Times spokeswoman, says 'girl' is a purely subjective style choice. "We use the word 'girl' to communicate a mood that is feminine, with the qualities of a youthful spirit of independence, enthusiasm, individuality and confidence."

'Girl' may have re-emerged perhaps because many people believe that feminism has achieved what it set out to do, suggests Robin Lakoff, a linguistics professor at the University of California at Berkeley. Ann Ciasullo, a lecturer in English at the University of Oregon, sees "a kind of watered-down feminism that goes along with the use of 'girl' and 'girl' power, and the use of the word by advertisers as yet another reinforcement of the message that women should strive to look sexual and youthful."

Some younger women have embraced 'girl' as a hip, edgy term identified with a movement known as Third Wave feminism. Amy Richards, co-author of *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*, says she thinks it's both a generational reaction and an age reaction, and that 'girl' has a certain freedom. However, there are moments when it's still derogatory. The real issue is context.

The problem with defining 'girl' as acceptable in specific settings and contexts, however, is that others cannot be expected to respect those boundaries, said Jackson Katz, an author and nationally recognized expert on the prevention of gender-based violence. "My biggest concern is the use of the word by men and how it perpetuates sexist attitudes by men," said Katz. "What are men thinking about when they use this word?"

D. McGrath
N.Y. journalist

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

The new Management Team held its first meeting on the 12 August. A warm welcome was given to new members.

Digby Duncan expressed her willingness to take on the position of Treasurer and was promptly appointed. Mollie Smith was co-opted as a member of the team.

Coordinators for 2002-2003 are Pat Simpson, Mollie Smith, Cate Turner and Anne Warren. They have each agreed to spend one day each week in the office.

The new Management Team appreciated Pam Ledden giving us an in-depth overview of the responsibilities and the day-to-day coordination of the activities of OWN NSW.

Members may find it useful to have reminders of how we are funded and the projects and groups we support and provide resources to.

Core funding comes from The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC). Our Wellness Centres in Bankstown, Northside and Sutherland receive funding from the Department of Health and some receive funding from local councils, clubs, etc.

Projects under the OWN NSW umbrella are the Theatre Group, Aboriginal Support Group, *OWN Matters*, the Advocacy Coordination Group, the Health Group and the Wellness Coordination Group. These projects are self-funded, and report to the Management Team on a quarterly basis.

Responsibilities of OWN NSW also include supporting and resourcing seventeen NSW groups. Each OWN group pays a one off joining fee and an annual affiliation fee based on the numbers of members in the group.

Delegates' expenses are paid to attend NSW quarterly meetings, which are important forums for ideas and decision-making.

OWN NSW has two committees – the Finance Committee and the Public Relations Committee. Members with skills in these areas will be enthusiastically welcomed. We particularly need members to help us to promote and publicise OWN.

The Finance Committee will be able to report more fully next month when they have a clear picture of the cost to OWN of insurance for Public Liability cover and the impact on our finances. We are determined to be optimistic!

The previous Management Team has given us an excellent framework to maintain and develop policies. We are fortunate to have three committed and skilled employees, Dorothy Cora, the Information and Resources Coordinator, Kris Ferguson, the Office Manager, and Jan Malley, the Bankstown Project Worker. We look forward to working with them.

We are sure there are many women amongst our membership with skills and expertise in particular areas, for example, submission writing, fundraising, publicity, advocacy and so on. We would love to hear from you, so please contact us if you would like to help.

OWN has re-affirmed its policy that we cannot accept advertising in *OWN Matters* from fee-for-service enterprises. However, we can provide information by phone about access to low-cost services, eg computers.

**Pat Simpson, Mollie Smith,
Cate Turner and Anne Warren**

A Valued Volunteer

Congratulations to OWN member, Helen Murphy, who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the last Queen's Birthday honours list. The award was given to Helen for her service to voluntary organisations which work to improve people's lives.

Helen has been actively involved in voluntary work since she retired around twenty years ago as a welfare officer.

She has been a member of OWN since 1989, and was a member of the Working Committee and a member of the Theatre Group for many years.

She currently produces *OWN Matters* in audio format every month, for which members who are losing their sight, or who have lost their sight, are very appreciative.

For sixteen years, Helen has been a valued member of the board of Radio for the Print Handicapped (2RPH) producing two programs for them each week, *New Ideas* and *Technical Aid to the Disabled*.

Helen's history of volunteering is impressive. She was Coordinator of Volunteers with Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation for three years, and from 1981 to 1998 was an active member of Plan International Australia, an international aid organisation helping children, their families and communities in developing countries.

For many years, until it closed some years ago, Helen ran the Plan Pennywise Opportunity Shop in Glebe, often phoning us when something came in that she thought we might like to buy for OWN – and we usually did!

Dorothy Cora

Sleep and Relaxation

Marilyn Kittle, a consultant dietitian from the northern beaches area, recently gave a talk on Sleep and Relaxation to the Chatswood Older Women's Wellness group. Some of these ideas may work for you and some may not, but if you are having trouble sleeping, it's probably worth experimenting with them.

There are several things to remember about the brain and the body. The brain is a creature of habit. If you read before you sleep, your brain will get used to it and expect to read before sleep. That may be fine if you want to read and sleep, but if you are having trouble sleeping, reading may not help.

If you have trouble sleeping, think about the activities you do before sleep. Think about how much sleep you have during the day. Think about how much physical activity you do in the day.

At least an hour before sleep, try to ensure that you are doing things that will reduce your adrenalin flow.

Dos and Don'ts

Don't excite the brain when you want it to go to sleep

Don't use artificial means (alarms) to wake up

Don't sleep for longer than ten minutes during the day

Don't watch TV or read in bed if you have trouble sleeping

Don't do stimulating exercises, for example, crosswords or surfing the internet for an hour before bed

Don't have coffee or tea (caffeine) after 5pm

Do reduce fluids in the evening

Do go out for a gentle walk (breath of fresh air) in the garden or on the balcony for a few minutes

Do have warm aromatic baths (lavender, etc.)

Do get into bed clothes, and be nice and warm

Do make a warm drink –milk, Horlicks or herbal tea

Do have something starchy to eat (low-fat biscuit without saturated fat)

Do get a nice book that makes you smile, sit up (on the lounge) and read until you feel sleepy, then go to bed

Power naps

A power nap is a short rest for about ten minutes during the day. For many people these work as a fantastic reviver.

Restless legs and cramps

Don't wear socks that make a mark on your legs or ankles – buy socks that are a loose fit or diabetic socks.

When sitting, put your feet up and never cross your legs.

And consider using a cushion that you can push air through while you sit. One brand is called a "push cush" and is available from chemists.

While sitting, you push the air from one side of the cushion to the other, which increases the circulation in your legs.

Great for plane travel, too.

Cara MacDougall

Women's Quilt

Togetherness ... Community ... Harmony ... Friendships

Bankstown Family Support Service has invited the Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre to contribute a patch to a community quilt being prepared to commemorate the collective experiences of women in Bankstown.

The quilt is being sewn by women of diverse backgrounds and cultures and will be displayed for the benefit of the general community in Bankstown Council. The plan is to launch and hang the quilt in November in one of the Council buildings.

After much thought, deliberation and consultation with the Wellness Centre Management Team, and many of our members, Lorna came up with a beautiful sunflower design. The centre of the sunflower is chocolate brown, with the words "Bankstown Older Women's Wellness Centre" sewn onto it. There are ten yellow petals on the sunflower, around which are sewn words in dark green, on a light green background, which encapsulates the philosophy of the Wellness Centre: wellbeing; intellectual; visible; inclusive; physical; empowering; emotional; health; social and spiritual.

The border colour is dark green, and Wellness Centre activities (eg aqua ex; gentle ex; massage; discussion group; tai chi; wellness in your hands; international dance; feldenkrais; craft and drumming) are sewn within a leaf-type pattern in light green. Along the bottom is "Wellness in Your Hands 2002".

Jan Malley

Country Girls In Newtown

The OWN NSW Conference provided a great opportunity for delegates and guests to learn more about OWN, and for the country visitors, it was a chance to see a little of the city. At the cocktail hour at the end of the first day Elizabeth Otteson and I were joined by Robyn Smith and Margaret Connor from the Southern Highlands, Carol Hammond and Marie Beattie from Macarthur, to look at the city as it is now.

We set off to walk off some of what we had eaten, and what set out to be a quiet stroll ended in an adventure of its own. We went down Parramatta Road in the direction of the city. To our amazement, the shops were still open, and the number of people out and about had us gaping. We checked out the odd shops, the op shops, the frock shops and the dollar shops. We did not see any sex shops, and looked the other way when we passed one of the shops that sold women's underwear. I don't know why we did that, for when I had a peep, there was very little there to see. They would never keep you warm in Picton, I can tell you that.

Then we started to walk back towards the College. Here we were, six members of the Older Women's Network, strolling down the road, when a boy on a bicycle rode by, and as he did so, a wallet landed at our feet. Carol picked it up and we called for the boy on the bike to stop, as we thought it could be his, but he didn't come back.

When we looked in the wallet, there were quite a few dollars in it, as well as a driver's licence and several plastic cards. When we asked a passer-by where the nearest Police Station was, he said it was about fifteen minutes back

the way we had come. As we had all been walking for nearly two hours, no one felt like going back. We decided to take the wallet into a chemist shop and ask the staff to ring the nearest Police Station and arrange to have the wallet collected from us at the shop or from the college. When we explained to the girl in the shop what we would like her to do, to our complete amazement, she said, "I hope you took enough money out of it to shout yourselves a meal." We were gob-smacked, and when we said we just wanted to return it safely to its owner, she said, "Well, that's where I'd be going if I found a wallet, I'd at least feel entitled to a meal." She agreed to ring the police for us, and told us that if we cared to leave it with her, she would drop it into the police station after she knocked off work.

I walked out of the shop and saw a man who looked like a policeman. It turned out that he was from the railway police. They had stopped a man from jumping under a train somewhere near Central, and had followed him but had just lost sight of him. About then, several police cars arrived, and as they were fairly busy with the search and rescue, Carol and Marie said they would walk back to the Police Station. The rest of us were all walked out, so we slowly headed back towards the College. We had walked for another fifteen minutes, when who should arrive but the boy on the bike. He asked if it was us who had called out to him about an hour and a half ago; we said it was, he was much relieved to hear his wallet was safe and sound at the Police Station. He seemed a lovely polite young man. He told us he had just bought the wallet that week, as a couple of weeks before he had his wallet stolen and had just replaced it and all his cards.

We went back to the College and joined the still-going cocktail

party. Everyone was sipping drinks and eating little bits of finger food, so we downed a can of Guinness each.

Barbara Malcolm

Being an optimist is good for your health

Optimistic people not only tend to live longer than pessimistic people, but they also have a better quality of life, with higher levels of physical and mental functioning, according to US researchers.

Between 1962 and 1965 researchers from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, assessed the personality traits of 447 people participating in a study called the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI).

Over 30 years later, an optimism and pessimism scale was developed for the MMPI and applied to the original results of the tests returned by the participants. The researchers found that 101 of the participants were classified as optimistic, 272 as mixed and 74 as pessimistic. In addition, all of the participants were required to complete a self-assessment of their health 30 years after the original study.

They found that the pessimists scored below the optimists on the quality-of-life assessment and were also below the US national average on the majority of the other measurements.

"The wellness of being is not just physical, but attitudinal," said lead researcher Dr Toshihiko Maruta, from the clinic's department of Psychiatry and Psychology. "How you perceive what goes on around you and how you interpret it may have an impact on your longevity, and it could affect the quality of your later years."

More at www.surgerydoor.co.uk/news/detail.asp?id=2620

The Finest Hour

For the last few weeks, on ABC TV, I'd been watching a series called "The Finest Hour", about Britain at the beginning of War World II. The previous episode had shown the events at Dunkirk in 1940, when the Germans had occupied France and Holland, and the British troops were on the beachfront at Dunkirk, hoping that somehow they would get back to England. I recalled the day in 1940 when I was working for a firm of grain importers, and on that particular day in May, 1940, all our bargees went over to Dunkirk in their little boats to rescue the men. The bargees came to the office to tell us their stories, and we were open-mouthed listening. Everyone in Britain who had a boat of any kind helped to get the men back, and very few were left behind. It seemed that invasion by the Germans was imminent. The prospect was worrying.

Last night, 7 August, dealt with the Battle of Britain, in 1940. I was transfixed. When it was over, I sat very still for a long time, transported, unable to bring myself back to the present, my mind reeling with the memories that came flooding back. That was 62 years ago, when I was 20.

Children were evacuated from London to safer parts, and some were transported overseas. There was a terrifying story, narrated by the now elderly woman herself, about a girl who, with her brother, was on the way to Canada by boat, when the ship began to sink in a terrible storm, and all the children were thrown into the sea, their lifeboats overturning in the dreadful weather. She and her friend clung to the upturned boat for twenty hours till they were rescued, and miraculously, her brother survived too. Only seven

children were saved from the hundreds who had started out on the journey.

The Battle of Britain started in earnest. The British Air Force drove the Germans out of the sky. The tiny Spitfire planes darted in and out amongst the German bombers, finally putting an end to that part of the conflict. Some of the survivors, now old men, spoke about their experiences.

Then the bombing of London began. Things had been quiet up till then, in what we thought was a 'phony' war. My friend and I had been to the cinema, and when we came out, we admired the beautiful sunset. Till we realised there was something wrong. The sun was setting in the wrong place. It should have been in the west, not in the east. London was on fire... The next morning, I went to work, in the City of London, treading over fire hoses, over puddles, over the ashes, the remains of burning buildings, the smell of smoke all around. And the Blitz began in earnest. The next TV episode will be about that.

London was bombed every night. We spent our nights in the air raid shelters, whether the sirens had sounded or not. One night a huge block of flats, the Coronation Building, only half a mile away, was destroyed. We heard the bomb fall. The next morning we were told that the bomb had burst a water main, and all the inhabitants had been drowned. We spent our nights listening to the bombs falling all around. But we weren't frightened. We laughed, we gossiped, we played cards. Life went on as normal, just as though nothing unusual was happening. There is a lot more to tell, but it would take up too much room.

Renee Simons

In Pursuit of Love

My American friend Nadine in Baltimore recently accompanied her lovelorn neighbour Allen to a 'guru' named Holly.

Holly claims that she can release negative entities and can identify the nine layers of the emotional body. She channels Lashmi, (the goddess of fortune) and also claims to have communication with loved ones in the spirit world.

Holly's training includes: Love's Breath, Hawaii; International Breath Institute, Colorado; Rebirthing; Parapsychology and Butterfly Tantra, Washington, D.C. She is certified as a Shakti Master with Universal Heart Foundation, Los Angeles. Also, she is a Shanti Christo Spiritual Minister of the International Assembly of Spiritual Healers and Earth Stewards Congregation of Santa Fe.

Her most interesting claim is to open the lives of individuals and businesses to prosperity. All that and she is also a Feng Shui expert!

In Allen's consultation, Holly requested him to lie down while she felt him all over. She informed Nadine that she was looking for his emotional core. Eventually she extracted a hefty fee from him and sent him off, supposedly full of positive entities. He did not become particularly prosperous after his visit, however, he did find a new girlfriend. Perhaps Holly exposed some of the nine layers of his emotional body.

Helen McMaugh

Theatre Group Report

September already! Is it because we're getting older that the years seem to be flying by? Hmmm.

August has been a month of highs and lows for the Theatre Group. The WOW tour took its toll on some of the cast members' health, succumbing to that nasty 'echo' like 'flu or whatever it was or still is.

We enjoyed our luncheon with Friends of the Theatre Group, who enthused about our performance. One of the highlights was having our original director, Jill Falson (1990 vintage), see us perform again. Jill spoke appreciatively of our performance and congratulated us for keeping on for so many years. She indicated that it was the best she had seen the Group perform. Jill stayed on for our rehearsal and put us through the routine of some 'footwork' which went well. We didn't put a foot wrong at the next performance.

Unfortunately, the next day we received the sad news of Jean Jacobs' car accident, resulting in her death. We were shattered. It has been very difficult having to carry on rehearsing for a performance in August. We attended her funeral. The chapel was packed – a tribute to the popular and well-loved person Jean was. We sang a song at the service after Louise Anike spoke on behalf of the Theatre Group and Josie Jackson read a poem she had written. Jean was a tower of strength during the four years she was with the Theatre Group and we will remember her always.

Our last performance was at Nepean Hospital for the staff. We provided a mixed script, digging out some of our past material on

Health. It went well, with the audience recognising our satire of the 'Health Business' and what goes on in hospitals. When the organisers of the day were thanked by us for their assistance the reply was that we had helped them, and they saw our skits as support for them.

As a result of the tour, there have been some requests to perform in far-flung regions like Forster, Hunter Valley, Blue Mountains etc. Tell you more about them in the next report.

Peg Hewett

For Jean

We think of you, Jean, in your purple dress

And the red hat that doesn't go.

We think about the laughs we had

Before and after each show.

These are just some of the things

That we wanted you to know.

We loved your gentle nature,

Your sense of humour too,

We loved the way you laughed out loud

And the jokes we shared with you.

When you wrote the words of the Theatre Report

About those "pretty faces" and the times that we

Took off our clothes in many different places.

It made us laugh and I'm quite sure

It raised some eyebrows too.

We remember all the good stuff,

We loved you like a sister,

And this family that we shared with you

By God we're gonna miss ya!!!!

Josie Jackson

Parkinson's Awareness Week

September 9-13 is Parkinson's Awareness Week. Parkinson's is the most common degenerative disease in Australia, affecting over 55,000 Australians who have the disease, and thousands of carers living with them. The disease is more prevalent in people over the age of 60, but 10% of people with Parkinson's receive a diagnosis before 50. On average, people live with the disease between 25 and 30 years.

Parkinson's is caused by a deficiency of a chemical, dopamine, in the brain. Dopamine transmits messages from one nerve cell to another and then to muscles to allow normal movement. In addition to mobility problems, other symptoms are pain, insomnia, lack of energy, depression and emotional turmoil. As the symptoms progress, a person with Parkinson's gradually loses the ability to perform daily tasks of living, and family members have to take on the role of carer 24 hours a day.

While drug treatment is the major key to managing the disease, there is currently no treatment that can halt the disease.

If you would like more information phone Parkinson's NSW 1800644189.

Celebrate Shannon's Life

A celebration of Shannon Simons' life will be held at Liverpool on Saturday, 28 September at 11 am.

Please bring food to share, mementos, stories, poems.

Liverpool Women's Health Centre, Corner Campbell and Bathurst Streets, Liverpool

Please RSVP on 9601 3555 by Tuesday 24 September.

Letters to the Editor

The biggest boob?

The following letter was sent in by Robin Tennant-Wood, School of Social Sciences, University of Canberra.

The author is an older woman. She wrote this open letter to John Ashcroft, Attorney General of the United States, who announced on January 28, 2002 that he spent \$8,000 of taxpayers' money for drapes to cover up the exposed breast of The Spirit of Justice, an 18 ft aluminium statue of a woman that stands in the Department of Justice's Hall of Justice.

John, John, John, you've got your priorities all wrong. While men fly airplanes into skyscrapers, dive bomb the Pentagon, while they stick explosives into their shoes, and then book a seat right next to us, while they hide knives in their luggage, steal kids on school buses, take little girls from their beds at night, drive trucks into our state capital buildings, while our president calls dangerous men all over the world evil doers and devils, while we live in the threat of biological warfare, nuclear destruction and annihilation, you are out buying yardage to save Americans from the appalling, alarming, abominable aluminum alloy of evil, that terrible ten foot tin tittie.

You might not be able to find Bin Laden, but you sure as hell found the hooter in the Hall of Justice. It's not that we aren't grateful. But while we were begging the women of Afghanistan to not cover up their faces, you are begging your staff members to just cover up that nipple, to save the American people from that

monstrous metal mammary. How can we ever thank you?

So, in your office every morning, in your secret prayer meeting, while an American woman is sexually assaulted every 6 seconds, while anthrax floats around the post office and settles in the chest of senior citizens, you've got another chest on your mind.

While American sons arrive home in body bags and heat-seeking missiles fly around a foreign country looking for any warm body, you think of another body. And you pray for the biggest bra in the world.

John, you see that breast on the Spirit of Justice is the spirit of your own inhibited sexuality. And when we women see our grandmothers, our mothers, our daughters, our granddaughters, our sisters, ourselves, when we women see that statue, the Spirit of Justice, we see the spirit of strength, the spirit of survival.

Every day we view innocent bodies dragged out of rubble, and women and children laid out like thin limp dolls and baptised into death as collateral damage, and we see the hollow-eyed Afghani mother whose milk has dried up underneath her burka in famine, in shame, and her children are dead at her breast.

While you look at that breast, John, that jug on the Spirit of Justice, and deal with your thoughts of lust and sex and nakedness, we see it as a testimony to motherhood. You see it as a tit.

It's not the money it cost. It's the message you send. We've got the

right to live in freedom. We've got the right to cheat Americans out of millions of dollars and then just not want to tell Congress about it. We've got the right to drop bombs, night and day, on a small country that has no army, no navy, no military at all, because we've got the right to bear arms. But we just better not even think about the right to bare breasts.

So now John, you can be photographed while you stand there and talk about guns and bombs and poisons without that breast appearing over your right shoulder, without that bodacious bosom bothering you and we just wanted to tell you in the spirit of justice, in the spirit of truth, John, there is still one very big boob left standing there in that picture.

Name Unknown

Computer confidence

Thank you OWN Sydney for arranging the Apple Mac Computer Training Course at Enmore TAFE. I arrived for the first class with some trepidation as I had no previous computer experience, but the atmosphere was so relaxed that any doubts I had soon disappeared and I started to enjoy myself.

As the weeks passed my confidence grew as I slowly began to understand computer technology, thanks to our very patient teacher, Paul, and the encouragement I receive from my classmates.

What started out with a good deal of apprehension has turned into a very positive experience which I wouldn't have missed for anything. I'm now attending the second course to improve my newly acquired skills!

Esme Tulett

Letters to the Editor

Be a good girl!

Right – well, I'm good and mad now. When I think of the pressure that doctors applied in the early 90s to my friends and me to take the new wonder drug, HRT, for the myriad ailments which were bound to beset us with the onslaught of – gasp – the menopause, my blood starts to boil.

Now that we are told of the (possible?) consequences of taking HRT, the media once again advises us to “consult the experts – see your doctor”. I don't think so. What is the matter with us, that we can't work it out for ourselves? Didn't we have mothers? Didn't they regard it as a natural occurrence and not a disease? Were the drug manufacturers concerned that they were losing the army of women who had taken the oral contraceptive (and isn't that loaded with oestrogen to fool your body into thinking you are pregnant? Oh what a good idea – is that why we now have Children's Cancer Wards?) and were now about to experience menopause?

Most Australians are overweight because they are overfed – not because they eat too much dairy produce. We are told to drink milk, which has had all the goodness removed – and then

take a calcium tablet. I don't think so. My husband's mother died last year at the age of 100 without the aid of HRT. The only problem she had was dowager's hump, which her son has not inherited. There isn't a doctor alive who will tell you that it is hereditary and that men have it. No, it's just one of the myriad ailments which will beset women if they don't take HRT.

As long ago as 1989 (I still have the cutting) I remember reading in a women's magazine a letter from a woman saying she had suffered a stroke after taking HRT.

The doctor's reply casually stated, “A stroke is a well recognised complication” – complication! - that's a nice medical term – “of taking hormone replacement...” So there you are, girls. Now, if doctor had to warn about possible cancer and strokes, the silly girls might not take their medicine! Just be quiet and do what the doctor tells you – take your pregnant mare's urine.

Don't think for a minute that the drug companies have given up on us. Ooooh no, we are just too lucrative a market.

Just remember that whatever they are telling us will be good for us this decade, will be bad for the next.

Let's see now, pregnant sow's urine? Horny bull's.....?

Jan Carroll

Useful after death

It has been interesting to read the letters on 'no-frills' coffins.

I have made arrangements to donate my body to the Discipline of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine at Newcastle University. Either that university or one in Papua-New Guinea, Fiji or Australia will use it for students to practice on. Cadavers may not be accepted in certain conditions, one being that the veins will not accept the embalming fluid.

The University retains the remains for up to four years. It then arranges for a simple burial or cremation (your choice) and meets the expenses involved. If your relatives wish to be informed when this has taken place, they let the University know at the time of death. The ashes can be returned by registered post to a relative or Executor.

I am sure that all universities with a medical faculty have the same facility. Next of kin need to be in agreement and have to sign the form when you make the arrangements.

Saving the cost of a funeral was only a minor consideration when I made this decision; I try to be useful while I am alive and I hope to be useful after death. If students do not have donated cadavers to practice on, they are unable to develop the skills needed to keep their patients alive and healthy.

Joan Lambert

Premier's Forum on Ageing

The 2002 Premier's Forum on Ageing will be held on International Day of Older Persons, Tuesday 1 October, 2002, from 11.30 am to 4.00 pm at the Metcalfe Auditorium, State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, Sydney.

This year the topic is consumer protection, in particular, accommodation, credit and banking, frauds and scams. Workshops will be conducted on each of these three issues.

The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and the Department of Fair Trading will also present research findings on older people's general awareness of their rights and experiences as consumers.

To register for the Premier's Forum on Ageing contact the Seniors Information Service (SIS) on 13 12 44. Please note there are limited seats available.

At and Beyond the Rocks

OWN Sydney

Our group is busy preparing for its first Annual General Meeting, which will have already happened by the time that you read this! We hope that new members will have been sufficiently interested to stand for election to the Working Group or to get involved in running our various activities.

At the last meeting of the financial year, Louise Anike summed up the general feelings of the OWN Sydney Working Group, saying that the hand-over to OWN NSW and the formation of OWN Sydney has been a smooth one, with a good spirit and vibrancy maintained.

We are happy to report that recent (and significant) changes to subscriptions to *OWN Matters* and membership of OWN Sydney have gone fairly smoothly. However, a small number of members have paid for their newsletter subscription only. We would love everyone to renew their membership of OWN Sydney – it's only \$5!

A certain amount of energy is going into preparation for the OWN (Australia) conference, which will be held on Monday, 30 September and Tuesday, 1 October in Canberra. OWN Sydney delegates will be elected at the AGM. There are now three state bodies, Western Australia, Queensland and NSW – and they have an important role in strengthening the three tiers of OWN. A program for the conference will be made available soon.

To complete the *Older Women's Right to Safety* quilt, which was begun at the OWN NSW conference, a funding application has been submitted to Sydney City Council. If the grant is successful,

a forum will be held early next year at which the quilt will be launched.

In Sydney we are luxuriating in this lovely sunny weather, but our hearts are with those out west who are waiting on rain.

Joy and Louise
(still on our bikes!)

Fish lunch at Cronulla

The ten members who attended the Cronulla Fish Lunch enjoyed lively and extremely interesting conversations. It was very cold, so it was pleasant to be inside and away from the cold wind. See you at Watsons Bay on Friday, 20 September.

Coffee and Chat

'Poetry which moved us' was the order of the day at our last Coffee and Chat morning.

We also had a special lesson from Kako, a new member, in ORIGAMI – a Japanese art form.

It was a very enjoyable morning.

Beryl Winter

OWN Nowra

During the past year we have shared the variety of interests, skills and talents of our members. They have told us of holidays away, books and poems enjoyed, Jan's and Juleen's studies of Australian women, Norma's involvement in the Theatre Group, and Winifred's work teaching craft skills to the women at Ernabella in Central Australia.

Our guest speakers have included a local naturopath, a physiotherapist, a Tai Chi teacher and a leader in the newly formed Shoalhaven Refugee Support Group.

Members of our group have represented OWN on local and wider issues, such as the public forum on 'Generations in Space 2001' and meetings to discuss the Shoalhaven City Council's Disability Action Plan. Anne Warren and Isabel MacCallum are on the committee of the Women's Health Centre.

In October, six of us joined with other fun-loving OWN members in a weekend of talking, singing and laughter at the Broken Bay Sport and Recreation Centre.

Other areas of interest and participation during the year included the Reconciliation Walks (over the Harbour Bridge and over the Shoalhaven Bridge) and a stimulating discussion on the topic of 'Getting Started, Growing Stronger'. For International Women's Day, we joined in the presentation of the Shoalhaven IWD awards and shared lunch with many women at the Aboriginal Cultural Centre.

A great finale this year was the celebration of OWN Nowra's 10th birthday at the Fisherman's Club Restaurant in Geroa with fifty members, past and present. What a wonderful time we had!

Our plans for the coming six months include the Happy Heart Weekend at Jervis Bay on October 25, 26 and 27. We hope to see lots of you joining us at the Field Station (twin share rooms), Booderee National Park, for a memorable weekend in this especially beautiful area.

Barbara Robertson

At and Beyond the Rocks

What OWN means to me

At one of their meetings, Macarthur OWN members jotted down their thoughts about OWN.

Edie Connellan:

Friendship...Help...Education...Fun. Having a good laugh...Talking and mixing with nice ladies. Friendship of other women... Getting to know what's in the area.

Pat Carter:

Not sitting looking at four walls... Just being with friends... No longer one topic of conversation – the kids! The world being opened to me and many laughs.

Helen Standing:

Courage to get my life back and walk once more. Encouraged to experience new horizons, friendships and new avenues in life.

Marg B:

I enjoy OWN for friendship and a good laugh. I try not to miss a meeting...love every minute of it.

Rosa M:

Friendship, sense of humor plus. Miss not coming when I can't get here for some reason.

Monika Gabriel:

I enjoy meeting new people.

Olive Johannessan:

OWN has helped me feel good about myself and also I enjoy being with all the ladies.

Chris Moore:

OWN to me means companionship, sharing good news and bad, and tolerance and understanding of others, and feeling part of a community.

Beryl:

A life line

Carole: Friendship and happy times.

Valerie Power:

I don't know what I'd have done without OWN after Lyle died. Everyone was so fantastic and full of fun.

Wendy Larven:

I always feel much happier when I've been to OWN, such a lovely group of ladies.

Elizabeth Said:

I always look forward to meeting all my friends on Wednesday at OWN. They are very nice ladies.

Liz Razmowski:

I enjoy the company, and the ladies are very sociable.

Anna Brockmann:

To have companionship.

Marie B:

OWN is just great.

Val B:

Companionship, a good laugh and great people.

Mildred Schaefer:

Good company, very informal and I look forward to Wednesdays.

Tina Hatherley:

I enjoy the company of OWN, sharing stories and common ideas. I'm thankful for being a member.

Lyn Porter:

A sense of sharing a day in our life...a sense of belonging, with common ideals.

Moving Pictures

An 8-minute promotional film of OWN interviews and activities.

Great accompaniment for speaking to community groups. \$16 per copy. Does your groups want to buy one or more?

Please phone 9247 7046 before 14 September!

Tripping with Woy Woy OWN

Through the negotiations of our new leader, Heather McKenzie, we now have the use of a small bus once a month, so we are planning jaunts on the scenic Central Coast.

The first trip was to inspect our local recycling plant. It does not sound like it, but this proved to be an interesting experience with advice re correct recycling procedures and anecdotes about the recycled life of our rubbish.

It is a family business. We learnt that the material gleaned from the paper, tins, glass and plastic ends up in China, where it is used for all sorts of products. The Education Officer explained that the plant owners were looking into ways of producing products in Australia with these materials.

From there we went on to the Calga Springs Sanctuary, where the fit walked on the wild side guided by Adam Cohen, the Sanctuary Manager. The disabled were driven in a 4WD by no less than the former Minister for the Environment, Barry Cohen, who provided the commentary.

We were fascinated by the joeys peeking out of the wallaby pouches, the native finches and other birds, and wildflowers. Our social secretary, Denise Chapman, who is informed on native fauna, also provided information on the types of wallabies and birds, and the habits of the emus strutting around us. Adam took us to inspect Aboriginal rock carvings.

It was a delightful experience, even if tiring for our members. I would commend a visit to the Sanctuary by other OWN groups, just off the F3 at Peats Ridge Road, Calga, phone, 43 75 1100. Our next jaunt is to Old Sydney Town Reptile section, on Friday, 23 August.

Enid Harrison

Advocacy Report

The advocacy meeting on 2 August was attended by Trude Kallir, Ann Warren, Ermes Solari, Renate Watkinson, Betty Johnston, Joy Ross and Pam Ledden.

We spent some time talking some more about the breakdown of discharge plans on leaving hospital after a period of acute illness.

One member spoke of a scheme of comprehensive after care being piloted at Newcastle Hospital and currently being evaluated by the Commonwealth Health Department. This may turn out to be a possible model for the future and we would like to know more about it.

Very much information was shared around the table and it became obvious that both Commonwealth and State governments are stakeholders in this project.

As yet there has been no response from members about their own experiences of the failure of discharge plans and one task is to do another mail-out asking for personal experiences.

We have more research to do and will meet again on 3 September at 10.30am, even more well-informed than we were. Any interested member is welcome to attend.

By way of the general business of advocacy, a meeting of all the current consumer representatives has been called for 10.30 am on 17 September at Windmill Street. Any member who is representing any OWN Group as a consumer on external committees dealing with older women's business is welcome to attend.

Margaret Kay, a researcher with Sol Encel on some of his projects, is coming to talk to us about defining and implementing projects. This meeting is being held on 27 September at 10.30am at Lower Fort Street. If you wish to attend please phone the office and let us know as we need to have an idea of how many are interested in project planning. Regional group members are especially welcome if this sort of discussion would fit in with plans being made locally.

Pam Ledden

Singers wanted!

The Sydney Women's Vocal Orchestra is looking for new members. We are preparing to record the first Australian cd of the music arranged and rehearsed in secret by women in Palembang POW camp during WWII (as seen in the movie "Paradise Road").

The repertoire is all classical music - sung to phonetic sounds - including Ravel's "Bolero" and the Largo from Dvorak's "New World Symphony".

We need more members to make a big, full choir sound.

Rehearsals are Wednesdays 7-9pm starting 4 September at Eastside Arts, Paddington. Recording from late November.

Submit a story

Want to publish your story? Submit your story for publication on the web. Our experiences and actions are important and worthy of sharing and publication.

Guidelines for 'submit a story'.

Sources may include your experience, told to you by a friend or acquaintance, told by someone else you have interviewed, heard and related by you, read (if copyright is obtained or unnecessary).

Stories should be 100 to 350 words or broken up into sections or vignettes of 100 to 350 words; under a heading which describes the contents or creates a new topic or action heading; in English and sourced, whether or not the source is to be published.

The stories or vignettes likely to be published on the net will include situations where:

- you learnt something, such as a conflict in which the nature of society is shown or
- you effected something, such as participation where something new was created or something was effected, however minutely, or
- you reacted to something, such as an injustice
- you experienced something, such as poverty, adventure, life in the 1930's etc.

We will not publish material which is illegal, obscene, insulting, defamatory or humiliating or degrading to women.

For more details go to <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~womenweb/>

If I had my life to live over...

I would have gone to bed when I was sick instead of pretending the earth would go into a holding pattern if I weren't there for the day.

I would have burned the pink candle sculpted like a rose before it melted in storage.

I would have talked less and listened more.

I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained, or the sofa faded.

I would have eaten the popcorn in the 'good' living room and worried much less about the dirt when someone wanted to light a fire in the fireplace.

I would have taken the time to listen to my grandfather ramble about his youth.

I would have shared more of the responsibility carried by my husband.

I would never have insisted the car windows be rolled up on a summer day because my hair had just been teased and sprayed.

I would have sat on the lawn with my children and not worried about grass stains.

I would have cried and laughed less while watching television and more while watching life.

I would never have bought anything just because it was practical, wouldn't show soil, or was guaranteed to last a lifetime.

Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I'd have cherished every moment and realized that the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle.

When my kids kissed me impetuously, I would never have

said, "Later. Now go get washed up for dinner."

There would have been more "I love you's." More "I'm sorry's."

But mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute...look at it and really see it ... live it ... and never give it back.

Stop sweating the small stuff.

Don't worry about who doesn't like you, who has more, or who's doing what. Instead, let's cherish the relationships we have with those who do love us.

Let's think about what whoever put us here HAS blessed us with. And what we are doing each day to promote ourselves mentally, physically, emotionally, as well as spiritually. Life is too short to let it pass you by. We only have one shot at this and then it's gone.

Erma Bombeck

(Written after she found out she was dying from cancer.)

Call of the Wild

What is it that makes our drumming classes so enjoyable...so unmissable? There we sit, banging away, trying to keep the beat according to Liz, and we can't keep the smiles off our faces! Or else our eyes are closed in deep concentration, willing our willing hands to go where they must.

When I heard we were to be entertained at our next meeting by drummers, my first thought was, "Omigod, I'll hate it."

Remembrances of nights past, cursing the bang/bang/ endless/ bang/bang of innumerable rock bands reverberating around the neighbourhood and my sleep-deprived head, rose up to haunt

me. "What will it do to my tinnitis, my sensitive eardrums, my nervous system?" I agonised.

When the day came, I actually went right to the back of the hall, the better to escape the anticipated assault on all of the above. Then the drumming began. In two seconds flat, I was down the front, as close as I could get. Something happened to my feet, what's this? They're dancing...and they can't stop! The old Mott Hall became a Palace of Delight, as we lost our heads in the dance! Well, I did, anyway!

And that's why I front up every Wednesday, come hell or high water. Not to dance, although the temptation is there; but to lose myself in this mysterious call of the drums. It's primitive, it's earthy...it makes no sense at all...it warms up every inch of our bodies, as we keep the beat. Always the Beat; and always Liz up there urging us on with her spiky hair and the bells on her ankles, and the sheer force of her personality. I'm a reconstructed, born again, dedicated drummer.

And so too can you be. Just rock up to the Abraham Mott Hall, 10am Wednesdays. Drums provided, no appointment necessary. Bring \$5 and your willing hands, and see if you can resist the call of the Beat. Trust me!

Dorothy Cox

P.S. On Liz's truck are the words, "Sex & Drugs & Rock'n Roll". But who needs drugs? Not us, that's for sure.

Graphic - drumming

Desperately Seeking SeaChange

Recent analysis of the ageing population in Australia, with particular reference to retirees, indicates many are moving to rural centres, particularly well known beauty spots on our coasts. Apart from retiring farmers who frequently move to the nearest large town, many of those making the sea change are leaving the bigger cities.

Statistics don't clearly reveal the lesbian factor in all this but anecdotal evidence suggests that there is movement in the older lesbian population to rural areas. It seems to be couples who find this an attractive concept. The rise in price of city properties, and the need to self-fund one's retirement have encouraged a selling of the city home and purchase of a cheaper, often better rural home, the surplus being invested for the future. The couple have each other for company and may find their more relaxed life style, a few new friends, their home and garden, and pets, enough to fill their lives. Periodic visits to the city for special events or to visit family and friends add that zest to rural solitude.

Other couples find small, but positive older lesbian networks in their new communities. There is less desire for nightclubs and big events, the smaller social gatherings are enough to fill that need for lesbian contact.

Also, the general community is more supportive and friendly. In addition as we age we often desire more time for our interests and may seek reduced work. Some women in the pre-retirement age group, who can work from home, find the rural life very positive for this. Their surroundings are so much more pleasant to live and work in. But while lesbian couples seem to favour the coast, for singles the sea change is not so

attractive. Building a new social life is always hard, and for older lesbians even more difficult. If the single would like to find a new partner, then the options are fewer.

Some older lesbians make the move back to the city. Despite missing their former home and life, they have good reasons for the return. These often centre on loneliness after relationship breakdowns. "It is so hard to deal with loss when there is only one social group and both you and your ex are in it," said one former country OWL (older wiser lesbian). Other reasons for returning are family demands and work needs.

Apart from the emotional strains of making a new life, the financial cost of returning to a city is enormous. This might account for the growing population of lesbians in nearby semi-rural locations such as Wollongong's northern beach suburbs and the Blue Mountains. Trying to get the best of both worlds doesn't always work out. Unless you have easy access to a bed in the city, long distance driving is less appealing as we get older. One over eighty year old said she finds it very hard to get out of her suburb let alone travel the hour to Sydney.

Sylvia Kinder

Grabbing Life by the Tail

In older age, it becomes obvious that for many of us our days-in-the-sun excesses return to condemn us.

That sea of beer, wine, gin and tonic, brandy and dry, in all probability wrecked my bladder. (Can it be that healthy red wine imbibing will have dire consequences down the track?) Like most people many years ago

my mum sloshed dripping into the pan to fry foods, we ate white bread and butter, enjoyed lardy biscuits, had bread fried in beef dripping (scrumptious!), doughboys with jam for a Sunday night treat and the caramel ice-cream cake we scoffed at Cahill's. I can remember all of it as lovely grub. It all surely contributed to the prevalence of heart disease, but then we knew nothing of cholesterol. Many of us, however, did have a lifetime of good bone density due to all that calcium in the cheese and vegemite sandwiches in our lunch bags.

As for sedentary lives, there was no option for gym in the lunch hour and the only exercise most office workers and shop assistants got was running for the train in the morning and racing around the shops for cheap clothes at lunch time, stuffing a sandwich down as we went.

Our emotional stability was often wrecked as a result of bad men pursuing us until another caught their eye – what fools we could be! The sorrow of our emotional experiences comes back occasionally to haunt us now.

It is only when I had reached the age of maturity that I saw my neglect and understood the need to 'service' my body. Is it any different today? Only when I see all those vulnerable youngies exposing their round little tummies with ringed navels to the winter elements, do I realise that nothing much has changed. Ah, is this sour grapes because it's too late for me?

Do I regret it? Not really. We were grabbing life by the tail, albeit with confused insight. We can now neglect the bad men, but not good nutrition and gentle exercise. My conclusion, trite though it is, is that life is there for the living. It's better than the alternative!

Enid Harrison

The Visit

I sat on the red earth cross-legged, my T-shirt on my lap, the autumn sun warm on my bare skin. Opposite me, Tjukapati* lifted her paint brush and began to chant. I felt the gentle touch of the brush on my breasts as she sang each curving line.

My skin was the wrong colour. It should have been as black as hers. Next to me, a young girl, hands on knees, still and solemn, watched the paint-brush curve down her tiny breasts. We were being painted up, ready to dance, Women's Business at Kaltakatjara, a small aboriginal settlement 250km from The Rock.

We danced in line, tapping our sticks, brushing our feet in the warm red earth as we moved slowly towards the line of chanting women sitting amongst the babies and dogs. My daughter, Susanna, danced with me. We had come to visit her, two older women and me, out there in the desert where she was Head Teacher.

I felt strange at first, very white and alien amongst those oh, so black bodies. Then the magic of the moment overwhelmed me. I may have been the only white woman to be honoured in this way. I became lost in another world, brushing tentatively a culture so far removed from mine. My body relaxed and swayed with an inward undulating movement, and my feet tossed the desert sand from one foot to the other. As we reached the line of older women sitting so easily on the red earth, tapping their sticks, the chanting died away. Tjukapati came and led me to sit amongst them. I knew that direct eye contact was considered intrusive in Aboriginal culture, although some had learnt the white way. Hearty greetings were also not their way. I couldn't speak Pitjinjatjara or any of the other languages they would have learnt, so I just sat quietly amongst them

They have a complicated and, to us, mind boggling system of relationships. Aunts and uncles are mothers and fathers to the children – the caring is multiple. Birthdays are not celebrated. "You must stay a long time with your daughter," Tjukapati nodded wisely at me. She would have shaken her head, puzzled, if I had said, "I can't stay, I have appointments." Daughters are more important than appointments, and there are no appointments in this timeless land.

Schooling is a problem. There was only one regular pupil in Susanna's class – the only one who wore shoes – but even his family could not comprehend coming to school at a certain date after the school holidays. Susanna had to round them up from behind the mulga bushes or in the river bed, playing

under the grand old river gums, or maybe out hunting. Very little left to hunt, but it was in their blood, and they loved it. Bush tomatoes, bush bananas, the odd kangaroo. The men sometimes went off for a week or more on men's business. There was no education after primary school, so it was boarding school in Adelaide. They hated it. A noisy, asphalt high-rise, full of hurrying people – and no family. So they broke down, and came here to a safe environment.

Where is our education leading them, I wondered as I sat in the classroom. A job in the city, maybe, in a white man's world where alcohol is freely available – it is banned in Kaltakatjara. They could so easily become one of the sad underclass of society.

The children were very shy at first, then came tumbling into our Land Rover, laughing, excited. "Fasten seat belts" is a joke.

One night we camped out with Ruby, Susanna's student teacher, at Joonta. "How far?" we asked Ruby. "Quarter tank Diesel," she said. That is how they measure kilometres in Kaltakatjara.

Her young nephew and two nieces came with us, climbing on top of the swags and water bottles. We sang around the camp-fire – the children did not need toys or stimulation. Ruby brought a thin blanket and a Slim Dusty tape for a cold night in the desert! I thought with a smile of my toothbrush, pyjamas and woolly hat. We snuggled into our sleeping bags to marvel at the stars and the magnificent sweep of the Milky Way. "I'll remember this to my dying day," my much-travelled friend sleepily mumbled – forgetting that she had been bitten by a bull-ant when she squatted in the bushes, and had killed a centipede on the spot where she was about to lay her swag.

So, we flew home from The Rock, back to our busy lives after a never-to-be-forgotten visit.

Joan Johns

*Tjukapati – pronounced Chookaparty.

Limerick

There was an old man with Alzheimer's
Who wrote himself notes with reminders.
He placed them around...
But they couldn't be found –
Until he equipped them with timers.

Trudy Davis

The Guardian Angel

You know, every Catholic child has a guardian angel who stands at the right hand shoulder day and night. I don't know about non-Catholic children, and in all these years I've never tried to find out. I think it was one area of privilege I was unwilling to share. It was very comforting, alone at night, to know this beneficent creature was on duty. At other times, it was a damn nuisance. How could we children go about our illegal activities whilst under this constant surveillance? Did God get a report if perhaps his ever-watchful eye had wandered?

It bothered me. How did that baroque figure with those hugely curving wings and that long nightgown manage to squeeze into the small space, somewhere to the side and behind my head? And I know that my aunt, who spread brown paper for me to sit on, would never tolerate a dropped

feather or any other evidence of angelic attendance, and if she did find any, goodbye angel.

Then, like a little miracle, my problem was solved. I found my guardian angel translated into mortal shape. He stood on our corner selling papers and was there whenever I went out. He was about sixteen, and, in my child eyes, a man. He was short and wore a motley selection of clothes. Trousers, which bagged at the knee and were patched in many places and tied with string above a pair of sandshoes which had seen better days. Braces whose clips sported horses' heads held up the trousers. His checked shirt was faded, and around his neck a skimpy scarf was carelessly knotted – a suggestion of the dandy? On his head was an old cap, worn back to front.

His face, snub-nosed, wide mouthed and always smiling, was peppered with freckles. His hair, ginger, no other word for it, stood

up like a stiff brush under his cap. I don't think it was ever afforded the dignity of a barber. This was the height of the Depression, so it was cut at home. Every day his hoarse voice could be heard crying the headlines and the latest winner. One night, in my enthusiasm to impress him, I swung a billy of milk around my head and spilt it all. As I gazed in horror, he pressed threepence into my hand to buy some more. Did he know of the punishment he saved me from? I never asked. But from then on, I was his slave and I loved him. Here was my guardian angel. I just knew that he could more than match my aunt in cunning and would remain undetected.

He stayed with me and on that corner for years, and then, like so many icons of my childhood, my guardian angel was gone. From time to time, I still catch the faint rustle of a wing and a hoarse voice crying the winners.

Judith Mustard

Have Your Say About Legal Issues

The Law and Justice Foundation is interested in assessing whether problems arising in older people's lives could be addressed by legal means, and the need for legal services.

The Foundation is seeking information from older people on:

- legal problems encountered by older people;
 - services and processes to deal with these problems;
 - the barriers that obstruct access for older people; and
 - useful services and processes not provided by the legal system.
- They are interested in the ability of older people to:
- obtain legal assistance (including legal information, basic legal advice, initial legal assistance and legal representation);
 - participate effectively in the legal system (including non-legal early intervention and preventative mechanisms);
 - obtain assistance from non-legal advocacy and support (including non-legal early intervention and preventative mechanisms, non-legal forms of redress, and community based justice; and
 - participate effectively in law reform processes.

For further information visit their website www.lawfoundation.net.au, or write to Julie Perry with your views and experiences on any of these questions. You can also join a focus group.

Law and Justice Foundation, GPO Box 4264, Sydney 2001 Phone 9221 3900 Fax 9221 6280 email: jperry@lawfoundation.net.au

Julie Perry

Women into Politics Annual Dinner

Friday, 27 September

Women's College,
University of Sydney.

We have secured a high profile speaker from New Zealand, Phillida Bunkle, who might be able to explain to us how New Zealand has had two female Prime Ministers, and has females as Governor General and Attorney General! Also speaking are Carmen Lawrence and Marise Paine - both survivors in the male-dominated major political parties. Cost is \$60 per person or a table for ten for \$55 per person.

Call Joan Bielski on 02 9437 6916 for more information.

Thumbs up for herbal remedies in dementia

Aromatherapy with balm oil is an effective treatment for agitation in people with severe dementia, a UK study concludes. Preliminary trials have indicated the positive effects of aromatherapy on behavioural and psychological symptoms in dementia, such as agitation, but this is the first to provide conclusive placebo-controlled proof of the effectiveness of the treatment, say the researchers.

Researchers from Newcastle General Hospital looked at 71 patients to assess the effect of aromatherapy on dementia-associated agitation. The patients were evenly split between those treated with "lemon balm" aromatherapy oil and those who were given the placebo sunflower oil. Caregivers applied the designated ointments to each patient's face and arms twice a day. Sixty per cent of the patients who received the active treatment experienced a 30 per cent reduction in their CMAI score compared to only 14 per cent of the placebo-treated group.

www.surgerydoor.co.uk/news/detail.asp?offset=2478

Quote for the month
**"The manner of giving
is worth more than the
gift."**

Pierre Corneille

Information for older people

The Seniors Information Service is a unique, centralised first-stop shop providing information on issues which are of concern to older people. The service covers Centrelink entitlements, retirement accommodation, concessions, legal information, health services, education, Senior Citizens clubs and much more.

The service was launched in 1996, and is funded by the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. To date the service has responded to more than 125,000 calls from all over NSW. On most days staff handle over 200 calls.

One of the advantages of ringing the Seniors Information Service is getting straight through to a REAL PERSON with no need to push buttons. It can be accessed on Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm by phoning 13 12 44.

Barbara Lorback

Do you have an email address?

Would you like to participate in OWN advocacy projects?

Would you like to receive information about OWN advocacy projects?

Would you like to have a say about OWN advocacy projects?

If you answered 'yes' to one of these questions, please send an email to ownnsw@zip.com.au

with the following message:

Please include my email address for advocacy participation/information.

Is this really true?

The following excerpt from the Australian Royal Commission's investigation into the failed Australian insurer, HIH Insurance Limited arrived by email. Can it really be true?

Wayne Martin QC is cross examining Ray Williams, former CEO of HIH;

Martin: "Could you tell us please if, on your frequent first-class trips to London, you booked the seat next to you for your briefcase?"

Williams: "I don't recall specifically. But that may have been the case, on some occasions."

Martin: "That your briefcase was also travelling first class?"

Williams: "That may have been the case."

Martin: "Did you express the view to Qantas that this briefcase should be eligible for frequent flyer points?"

Williams: "I can't recall that."

Martin: "And were you subsequently informed by Qantas that said briefcase would not be eligible for such points on the grounds that it was not, in fact, a person?"

Williams: "That may have been the airline's position on that issue."

Martin: "Was that briefcase, from that point on, booked a seat under the name of Casey Williams?"

Williams: "Casey Reginald Williams."

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.

September 11 2001:

Feminist Perspectives:

Eds. Susan Hawthorne and Bronwyn Winter

6.30 Wednesday 11 September

Presenting an evening of readings from this new book, at Gleebooks, Glebe Point Road, Sydney.

Phone Gleebooks for more info on 02 9660 2333

Free Legal Info Session for Older People

Making Your Will: Tuesday 10 September at 11am. Will include role of executor, power of attorney, etc.

209a Edgeware Road, Enmore – a one minute walk from Marrickville Metro.

Bookings essential.

Call Mary or Shane on 02 9519 6788.

Dementia Symposium: the Next Public Health Epidemic

Presented by the Alzheimer's Association NSW

Monday 16 September 2002

8.30am for Registration \$170

Wesley Centre, 220 Pitt Street, Sydney

Guest MC – Julie McCrossin

For information about registering phone 9805 0100

or check www.alznsw.asn.au

Buddhist Meditation and Discussion Group for older women

Wednesday mornings 10 - 12
6 weeks from 9 October to 13
November

Sydney Buddhist Centre, 24
Enmore Rd, Newtown.

For information phone Sue
Johnson 9573 1793,

Jenny Carter 9516 4915

or the Sydney Buddhist Centre
9519 0440

Coffee and Chat

10.30 am

Saturday, 21 September 2002

OWN, 75 Windmill Street

What are our special needs at
this stage of our life?

Hope to see you there.

Hedi Roggeveen and Yetty
Windt 9665 2050

Fish Lunch

at Watson's Bay

Friday 20 September 2002

Relax and enjoy stimulating
company and fine fish at Doyle's
Take-Away, Watson Bay.

Fish is available in a range of
prices, starting from around \$6.

Meet at Wharf 4, Circular Quay,
at 11am for the 11.15 ferry.

Ferries return hourly from 1.50
pm.

*If it's raining, we still plan to go,
as there is some under-cover
seating.*

NOTICES

“HAPPY HEART” weekend

A reminder that your final payment for the “HAPPY HEART” weekend in Booderee National Park is due by 27 September.

Numbers are rising! If you haven't booked, be quick!

Jessie Street National Women's Library

Annual Luncheon at Parliament House

Monday 23 September. \$70 non-members, \$65 members.

Speaker: SANDRA YATES

Sandra, who is now Chair of Saatchi & Saatchi Australia, a major multinational advertising agency, has had a fascinatingly diverse career, which has included taking an active role in women's rights.

Booking and prepayment is essential. For further information contact the library on 9265 9486.

The Sydney Institute

Refugees and

Mandatory Detention

What Australians Don't Know Speakers:

Frank Brennan, Director, uniya – the Jesuit Social Justice Centre
Paris Aristotle – member, Immigration Detention Advisory Group

Linda Jaivin, author and translator – her latest book is *The Monkey and the Dragon*.

Wednesday

16 October 2002

5.30 for 6.00 pm

Museum of Sydney Theatre, corner of Bridge and Phillip Sts
Free to associates & associates' partners

Students \$5 Others \$10

Please rsvp on 9252.3366

email sydneyins.org.au or

website: www.sydneyins.org.au

The Rights Stuff Workshop

Time? 15 October 2002

Redfern Town Hall
73 Pitt Street Redfern

This free workshop is for HACC consumers and family carers, not service providers.

You will get:

- Lunch and refreshments
- A copy of the new book, *The Rights Stuff: A Toolkit for HACC Consumers*
- A certificate of participation
- Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses eg taxi fares.

You must register by 8 October.

For more information, or to register, please contact Carolyn Campbell-McLean, Education and Training Officer, Community Services Commission on 9384 4929 or email carolyn@csc.nsw.gov.au

Error

In August *OWN Matters*, it was stated that Glynis Johns, a doctor in the public hospital system, earns \$90 per hour. She earns \$40 per hour!



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 support *OWN Sydney* by including a \$5 membership fee.

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.**

**Print Post Approved
No. PP239 337**

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, Jacqueline Schofer, Dorothy Cora and Wilhelmina van Dorp.

**SURFACE
MAIL**

**POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA**