

OWN MATTERS

Newsletter of the Older Women's Network New South Wales Inc.

No. 28 April 2004

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Oh, Frabjous Day!

High octane vitality, glorious fun, and breathtaking talent! What a combination. More than 500 hundred women (and the odd man) packed the RSL Crystal Room for the Big Afternoon Out concert organised by the Older Women's Network for Seniors' Week.

With no prior get-together for rehearsals, performers from five OWN groups presented the most polished and diverse concert with nary a hitch. Everything worked: the sound system, the stage lights, the music and the different acts, well, they were wonderful.

First came Josie, our MC, inestimable, infamous TV star and an act in herself! She is never lost for a dry, wicked comment on what is happening around her at the moment.

The Macarthur OWN *Melody Makers* opened and closed the concert and entertained with a couple of exuberant acts in between. Those Campbelltown gels, well, they're really something. Their closing song had them dressed as 'trannies' in black leather and fishnet stockings, singing, dancing and stamping to the beat, and finally, invading the audience. The years dropped off as we all leapt to our feet and joined the *Time Warp* dance as the 'the good times rolled'. A grand finale.

The other acts were all superb. Lily Hepher, a 90 year-old performance poet, gave an hilarious account of some 'Compositions' written once by her fellow primary school students. "The bowels are near the heart inside our bodies along with bits of kidney. There are five bowels, a,e,i,o,u..." and on and on till my sides ached with laughing.

Following the hypnotic drumming by Wollondilly OWN and La Vos, the Sydney Creative Movement group dipped and swayed with floating scarves as teacher, Ellin, lithe and beautiful, danced among them, controlled and sinuous as a temple dancer. Our Greek OWN women from Bankstown finished their act with the beautiful, still haunting, Zorba dance after a lively round of age-old Greek dances. Later, there were more folk dances from the *Sole Sisters* from Bankstown OWN Wellness Centre with lively numbers from their very multicultural repertoire. A snappy tap-dance from Elaine King of Southern Highlands OWN had us tapping and humming, and admiring (envying?) those lovely legs of hers.

Continued page 4.

Point of View

OWN Matters

is the Newsletter of the Older Women's Network (OWN) NSW. It is published 11 times a year. Subscriptions are \$20.

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

Who Are We?

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

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

Contributions

Members of all 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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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.own.org.au

ABN 36 992 030 904

Redfern and Beyond

Many people were horrified at the tragic death of teenager T.J. Hickey, and deeply disturbed by the subsequent riots at Redfern last month.

Many questions must be asked and answered within the Aboriginal community, the government and general public as to how and why these situations develop. (The bulldog response of NSW Opposition Leader, John Brogden, to bulldoze the whole area is appalling and should be treated with the contempt it deserves.)

John Howard's comments that strict equality is the solution is total nonsense. The treatment that Aboriginal people have received since white people came to this country is more like strict *inequality*. The treatment of Indigenous people must be based on fairness, not blind equality.

The *National Inquiry into the Separation of Children from Their Families* demonstrated how the trauma of being part of the stolen generations affected Aboriginal people with long standing, ongoing, intergenerational problems in terms of parenting and abusive behaviour. The endemic problem of violence associated with alcohol and drug addiction in some Aboriginal communities needs to be tackled openly, fairly and indiscriminately to allow Aboriginal communities to overcome their despair and hopelessness.

In my opinion, the Federal Government's attitude of indifference and apathy, and its inaction around widespread discrimination and inequality, cannot be separated from the deplorable events at Redfern.

Lucy Porter

Weep for Wilcannia

*She sips at her beer,
She sits by the pub.
"No hope for my child,
No hope for a job,
No hope for us here."
She sips at her beer.*

*Shy, dark-eyed young girl
Buys sweets at the shop,
Then runs out the door.
Bitter white woman
Throws money in till,
"Black scum of the earth,
They all should be shot."*

*"Please, what can I do,
You white, young
policeman?"*

*"Nothing, no nothing,
No hope for this town,
No hand-out or cash
Will bring back their pride."*

*"The elders have gone,
Their spirit gone too.
Kids angry and bored,
They smash and destroy.
We clear up the mess.
That's all we can do."*

*Oh, weep for Wilcannia,
That sad outback town.*

Joan Johns

PS I had to write this poem to get the sadness and anger out of my system.

OWN NSW Coordinators' Report

Every year, we wonder how we'll get through March! International Women's Day/Week comes along and before we know it, Seniors Week is upon us. Cate Turner, who is on the Seniors Week Planning Committee, suggested to the Committee that Seniors Week be moved towards the end of March rather than the middle, but to no avail. "We can't change the date, it's traditional," was the response.

Lucy Porter and Dorothy Cora enjoyed the view, the food and the company at the Premier's Reception on International Women's Day. The Premier spoke glowingly of Louisa Lawson's life and work and how unfair it was that Henry's poetry had totally overshadowed Louisa's important contributions to society. Born on 17 February 1848, Louisa Lawson was a newspaper proprietor, journalist, poet and feminist. The Premier reminded us that her journalistic and political efforts did much to make the vote for women a precondition for a federated Australia.

During International Women's Week, a public meeting was organised by the Community Worker for the Aged at Blacktown Council to see how much interest there was amongst older women in the area for an Older Women's Network group to be established. There certainly was interest! More than 130 women attended with 40 of them saying they wanted an OWN group and 20

saying they would be willing to play a significant role in the group. The meeting opened with the Theatre Group strutting their stuff. Then Dorothy Cora, representing OWN NSW, Mollie Smith, Parramatta OWN, and Rae Paine, Penrith OWN, together painted a word picture of all that OWN has to offer older women.

We are currently exploring a suggestion that came from a number of representatives at a NSW Groups' quarterly meeting last year. The idea is to have occasional meetings so that groups in a region can get to know each other at a more informal level. Each coordinator will shortly be in touch with groups in a particular region to discuss this idea further.

The State Conference (mark your diaries NOW!) will be on Monday 19 and Tuesday 20 July 2004. We are currently compiling a list of interesting women who we think would make excellent keynote speakers. This year we are also looking for an entertaining after-dinner speaker. The Conference Planning Committee is Cate Turner, Anne Warren and Pat Carlton, so if you have some brilliant ideas, please get in touch with them. In April, all groups will receive an invitation to suggest possible conference workshops so please start thinking creatively now about what you want.

You would have read a letter in last month's *OWN Matters* asking why OWN representatives on

outside committees rarely report on their activities. We agree that this would be highly desirable, but do point out that only people who are appointed by the OWN Management Team are required to report back. Many OWN members sit on committees and forums as individuals and so cannot be asked to formally report. In future, the Annual Report will only list the names and details of OWN representatives on committees and forums. Individual representatives are, of course, welcome to write about any relevant issues being discussed that affect older women.

One issue that is back on the table is that of extending accommodation bonds to nursing homes. This is a complex issue of great concern to members of the Management Team and to many members of OWN groups. We will shortly be compiling an overview of the issues – the pros and cons – and will then survey all OWN members in NSW for their opinions.

And then there was our Campbelltown Concert! More than 500 women and a few men had a wonderful time, as did the 80 performers. We have received glowing congratulations from Barbara Haines, Events Coordinator, Seniors Week, and from many others who have phoned and emailed their thanks.

Lucy Porter, Cate Turner and Anne Warren

Your Subscription and Membership Renewal

We will be sending a reminder letter out to you early in June.

If you have been receiving *OWN Matters* you are still financial.

Ermes Solari

Membership Volunteer

Theatre Group Report

The Theatre Group reassembled on 3 February for the new year. The first meeting, with our fearless leader, Josie Jackson, was spent doing some of the usual organisational tasks, marking our performance dates and catching up with each other. We were missing a stalwart, Merle Hight, for the first few weeks, but are now please to report that she is back on deck. One of our faithful fans, Zlata Razmilic, has not returned as yet, but we expect to see her soon.

We've gained a new member, Joan Modder, who is beavering away learning the songs, skits and dance-like movements that Brenda Hardwick is endeavouring to teach the Group. (Brenda must have nightmares after each rehearsal!) We hope to have Joan up on stage shortly.



Our first performance for 2004 was a good beginning – at Blacktown, at a meeting for local women to start a new OWN group! How much better can you get, first up? The gathering had over 100 women, and they wanted an encore – which we gave them, never fear. Let's hope it led to great things for the new group, as unfortunately the Theatre Group had to leave before everything was confirmed.

Next on our list was the much publicised *Women Centre Stage*, which included the Theatre Group. Although occupied as MC for the concert, Josie donned her other hat for ten minutes and joined us for our performance. And that's not all – some of our members had individual spots in the concert. All this, and a bus to and from the Campbelltown location, too!

Marjorie Moffat

Overturing the Stereotype

How wonderful it is to overturn the widely held view in this 'Dark Decade'* – where everything has a money tag and must return a profit – that older women are a constant drain on the economy, that we need looking after, are not very interesting, and lead dull lives which are made enjoyable by being allowed to mind our grandchildren.

How wrong this view is! Not only are the older women I know up-to-date with what's happening in the world (and have strong views about it!), they are imaginative, talented, healthy and actively involved in living their lives to the fullest.

You only had to see the 500-strong audience at Women Centre Stage expressing their appreciation and delight at the creativity and skill of their peers to realise how wrong the stereotype is. And the performers! Well, they ranged in age from 50 to 90 and each one, in her own way, completely dispelled the myth of the older woman as dull and a burden on society. Congratulations to everyone!

Dorothy Cora

* The expression 'Dark Decade' was coined by writer Sylvia Lawson in a delightfully subversive article which recently appeared, surprisingly, in *The Bulletin*.

Oh, Frabjous Day!

Continued from page 1.

The two instrumental acts, Valda Marshall playing her brilliant trumpet, and Marjorie and Olive from Illawarra OWN on their sweet violin and guitar calmed us, so professional they were. The few bawdy jokes told with relish by the Illawarra SilvertOWNs certainly didn't calm us, but the audience loved them.

There were three vocal soloists: Betty Little, Bridget Byrne and Marjorie Moffat. Like audiences everywhere, I always love to hear the beautiful, resonating voice of Betty Little, and was so happy that she sang my favourite, *I come from a line of strong Koori women*.

Marjorie's very funny song, *When the Gas Man Calls*, sung in her really, really glorious voice had the audience in stitches.

My own personal favourites were the Sydney Theatre Group's songs, and an hilarious act by those two born Thespians, Peg and Lucy, playing posh ladies, Mrs Farnsworth and Mrs Twiverton, who find themselves in a dance hall with no gentlemen partners, and are forced to dance with each other. Not 'cheek to cheek' but 'bust to bust'! They ought to be in pictures! After this act, the wicked Josie said, "If you're not in a good mood by now, well, you can bugger off!" That said it all, even if it wasn't very ladylike.

Women Centre Stage was an unbelievable success. Ultimately the success of the afternoon was due to meticulous planning and careful organisation over many weeks. Dorothy Cora had the final responsibility and with the sublimely unflappable and competent Kris Ferguson and Peg Hewett backstage, the afternoon was perfection.

Muriel Hortin

A Chain Reaction

I have always been hooked by people's cultural identities. Born of an Indian father and English mother, brought up in multi-cultural colonial Singapore, educated there and in India and England, at 21 I was thoroughly confused about my identity. Now an older Australian, I know with the certainty of life's experience that it's not important what cultural identity I have as long as I'm happy with it. The real test is – do others accept me and include me as part of Australian society?

Questions of acceptance and inclusion have been 'spikes in my life', so it is not surprising that I was drawn to work in an organisation called Chain Reaction, which is focused on creating a strong, inclusive and sustainable civil society in Australia. Chain Reaction is a national not-for-profit company (www.chainreaction.org.au) whose purpose is to create a truly civil society – one that "*involves harmony, cooperation and respect...individual and collective dialogue...a tolerant society...and inspires citizen action*".

How do we go about achieving this? Margaret Bell, founding President of Chain Reaction, works hard to gain grants for our projects. In 2003, we received a grant to carry out participative research in three different communities – Kempsey, Mount Druitt and Illawarra. Simply described, we listened to and recorded the actual words of people who live and work in these areas as they describe their communities' strengths and weaknesses, as *they* experienced them. The cross section of people was very broad and included Year six children. Our report, *People's Voices*, has been published and is having repercussions with different government bodies and

with people living in these communities!

This year we are working with the people of Mount Druitt in an *Enablers Program*. An 'enabler' is a person who sees the need for change in a community and is willing to work with others to bring about change. In this program we bring together Mount Druitt enablers, named by people across the community. We hope that by the end of a year's experience of learning together, they will be the voice of their whole community. Mount Druitt is one of the most densely populated Aboriginal and multicultural communities in Sydney. I'm hooked.

Joan Modder

Skim milk, please!

Dr Hyon Choi, a rheumatologist at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, spoke to Norman Swan on the ABC's Health Report on Monday 15 March about a study of nearly 50,000 men which was conducted over twelve years, comparing those who got gout with those who didn't. (Did you know that post-menopausal women get gout as often as men do?)

The key findings in the study showed that the consumption of meat, particularly red meat, significantly increases the risk of gout, and that consumption of all types of seafood tends to carry an even higher risk.

The study found a protective effect from vegetables and dairy proteins but, importantly, discovered that increased consumption of low-fat dairy products strongly reduces the risk of gout. Drink more than two cups of skim milk per day and your risk of getting gout goes down by 48%!

Margaret James

Have you recorded your medical wishes?

During 2001, 400 patients admitted to the Royal Melbourne Hospital emergency ward were asked about their knowledge of Advance Directives.* These are documents outlining for family and medical professionals a person's preferred treatment in the event of becoming incapacitated through accident or illness.

While 82% of the patients surveyed thought that an Advance Directive was a good idea, only 20% had discussed them with their family or doctor, and a mere 8% had obtained Advance Directive documentation!

The reality is that if you want to limit the extent and nature of medical treatment following a medical crisis, you must actually *complete* an Advance Directive, not just think they are a good idea or know about them!

In Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory, Advance Directives are legally binding. In New South Wales they are not a legal document, but are seen as strongly persuasive to health care providers and the Guardianship Board, particularly if they are consistent and up-to-date.

We have a number of Living Will/ Advance Directive formats at OWN, so phone us and we will send them out to you.

Dorothy Cora

** An Advance Directive is also known as a Living Will.*

Thought for the Week

There is more money being spent on breast implants and Viagra than on Alzheimer's research. This means that by 2020, there should be a large population with perky boobs and huge erections and absolutely no recollection of what to do with them.

A Win for Residents!

It's not often that ordinary older people will take their struggle for justice all the way to the High Court, but that is what happened last year. Residents of a retirement village in the Bankstown Municipality appealed against the decision, found by the Federal Court, that they had suffered no loss by the misrepresentation and misleading information that influenced them to purchase a lease for accommodation.

It was announced in February that the High Court had set aside the Federal Court's findings by ruling there was indeed loss suffered. The value of this win for residents cannot be over estimated. Many operators will now be questioned more vigorously as to the honesty of their promotional material and the fulfilment of their contractual obligations. The public perception of the retirement village industry might well be revised.

In the light of this reversal of findings the Federal Court will now reassess residents' claims. Most importantly, the huge costs of the appeal were awarded against the operator of the village. These residents have pursued their rights through many courts for over six years, during which time many have reached the end of their days and many have suffered stress, hardship and the many indignities of challenges to their integrity. Their case has initiated moves and prompted governments to strengthen and make changes to consumer protective legislation.

Throughout all this time the residents' legal advocacy has been provided by The Aged care Rights Service (TARS). This independent service is funded from the public purse to advocate for older people with limited income who pursue their rights in accommodation. TARS came into being in 1987 when a number of older people's organisations campaigned vigorously and successfully on the

need for its establishment. The residents of The Heritage Village, a majority of whom are single women, formed their Resident's Committee in 1992 when they first discovered that the influences used to attract them to purchase their lease failed in the reality. The Committee has

continued on the long hard road to address their issues with the operator of this business. Much has been learned about the need to advocate for the protection of rights. This inspiring example illustrates the power of ordinary people who can, by working together, organise, lobby for and persist with great tenacity to achieve an ordinary 'fair go'.

Barbara Burnham

The Alola Foundation

The Alola Foundation was established in 2001 to raise awareness of and campaign against the sexual and gender-based violence inflicted on women in East Timor. Today the Foundation has grown to respond to many other needs of East Timorese women such as advocacy, economic empowerment, education and literacy, maternal and child health and humanitarian assistance.

Friends of Alola are an integral resource in our work for the women of Timor-Leste. In the past, members of our network of Friends worldwide have responded

to fund-raising appeals and have offered useful ideas and advice on a range of issues. We rely heavily upon the support of our friends and we want you to know that your solidarity and the practical assistance you offer does make a difference to the lives of women, children and their communities in Timor-Leste.

Donations can be sent to Janelle Saffin, PO Box 139, Lismore 2480 Email jsaffin@nor.com.au. Or visit www.alolafoundation.org.

Sara Niner

Please see Notices p.18 for information about a fundraising event for The Alola Foundation.

BOOK REVIEW

Caravanserai: Journey Among Australian Muslims

by Hanifa Deen

The lives of other people (people as collective noun, not persons in human interest stories) are perennially fascinating, more so in this country - so far away from anywhere.

Hanifa Deen is a second generation Australian; both grandfathers emigrated from the Indian sub continent in the 19th century. She takes us to meet 200 Muslims of all kinds, old and young, men and women, rich and poor, those who attend Mosques and those who do not. The book describes their experience of migration, marriage, family life and religious observances.

Though written before 1995, Hanifa's book is quite up to date in discussions of experiences of new arrivals and their anxieties, many of which we all share - the future of our children, care of aged, and employment. Some may have spoken more frankly than they would today. Since the events of 2001, people feel less free to speak out.

I read some of the chapters with envy for their traditions - traditions which third and later generations of Australians no longer have.

Helen Monaghan

Letters to the Editor

Highly recommended

I have just read an interesting, inspiring book, written by a feisty older woman, Mary Taylor, who spent her 81st Birthday planning her sixth tour around Australia in her Honda.

As finances were limited, Mary cut down on expenses by stopping in on-site vans at country hotels, making contact with local 'characters'. Booking in with her flask of sherry and cask of wine raised eyebrows!

She writes, "In one such hotel in a small WA town, after a particularly happy evening with friendly locals, as I rose to go to my room, a man who had been sitting quietly all evening said, 'Do you mind if I ask you a question?' Waiting expectantly, he asked, 'Did you used to enjoy sex?' Before I could gather my wits, Mine Host behind the bar produced the perfect comeback. 'Why the past tense?' I retired with my dignity intact, amid much laughter."

I can highly recommend this book, especially for women who have been fortunate to travel around this amazing country. It can be obtained by sending \$15 to Mary Taylor, PO Box 318, Frankston, Victoria, 3199.

Nancy Brown

Are We Still Australian?

I'm getting very annoyed by the Americanisms which are creeping rapidly into our language.

This morning's SMH contained an article by Bettina Arndt where she speaks about a "zit" on the end of her nose. What happened to the good old word, "pimple"? Or "spot"?

My computer is constantly correcting me for putting an "s" where it considers I should have written a "z". Like realise, organise, etc. I take no notice. I prefer the "s". It suggests spelling like "favor", instead of "favour", "odor" rather than "odour". "Labeled" instead of "labelled", "traveler" rather than "traveller", and so on.

We used to have railway stations. Not any more. Now we have "train stations". People say "gotten" instead of "got". We don't talk about High Schools. We leave off the word "School" – as in "Sydney High". I've come to accept "Hi", instead of saying "Hello". We say, "I'll call you," instead of saying "I'll phone you."

There are many more. I refuse to recognise (not "recognize") them. I have to stop. I am getting too worked up. I can't type properly.

Renee Simons

PS I've since learned from my knowledgeable son that Americanisations can be avoided by going into Settings, Control Panel, and clicking on Regional Settings and then Australian English.

Iraq's Women See Victory in Constitution

Women's rights activists in Iraq are pleased with Iraq's interim constitution, signed in mid-March, which states that 25 percent of the seats in the interim government must be filled by women. That is less than the 40 percent quota they sought, but still far better than the 14 percent representation by women in the U.S. House of Congress.

From www.womensenews.org

Henry Lawson remains relevant

On reading again the poems of Henry Lawson, I was struck by the relevance today of his poem, *Second Class Wait Here*.

The Federal Government has reviewed the provisions of Medicare, and has rejected the idea of universal applications for health for all Australians. Instead, it has accepted the proposition of a two-tiered structure, which I see as applying separate conditions for higher income streams and lower income earners.

To illustrate my point, here are the first and last verses of the poem:

*At suburban railway stations –
you may see them as you pass –*

*There are signboards on the
platform saying, 'Wait here,
second class';*

*And to me the whirr and thunder
and the click of running gear*

*Seem to be ever saying, Second
Class Wait Here.*

*There's a train with Death for
driver, that is ever going past;*

*There will be no class compart-
ments when it's "all aboard" at
last*

*For the long white jasper plat-
form with an Eden in the rear;*

*And there won't be any sign-
boards saying "Second Class Wait
Here".*

There is also relevance in the poem, *One-Hundred-and-Three*, about the treatment of prisoners in the 18th century and how suspected terrorist prisoners are treated at Guantanamo Bay today.

We would wish for another such modern poet.

Enid Harrison

Letters to the Editor

Friends of Zainab Appeal

In *OWN MATTERS* February edition p14, Muriel Hortin wrote about Zainab's Friends and the Holroyd High Refugee Education Fund, which prompted some subscribers to ask how they could make a donation.

If you would like to make a donation, here are the details: Donations may be made directly to Holroyd High School Friends of Zainab Appeal, 7 Cumberland Road, Greystanes, 2145 or to the National Foundation for Australian Women, PO Box 5009, Nowra DC NSW 2541 Phone: 4422 2208 . Please indicate that you wish your tax deductible donation to be directed to the Holroyd High Refugee Education Fund.

June West

Not a money-making number

I thought that this might be of interest to members and perhaps placed in the *OWN* newsletter.

Did you know that there is a number for directory assistance that is free. The number is 1223 (as opposed to 12455 where there is a charge of 25 cents) and is exactly the same service.

Apparently Telstra, under Government law, is supposed to provide a free operator - hence the number 1223. Telstra is trying to make as much money as possible with the number 12455.

Jenny Baird

Scuttle it!

Older people are a growing and very powerful section of the electorate who deliver a lot of votes. I think it would be

wonderful if we could persuade more of our members to make their voices heard in the corridors of power by continually bombarding their MPs with letters expressing their wishes and ideas. Letters are noted, and if there are enough of them they do carry weight. It's true!

This week I have been adding my voice to those who are urging the Opposition to scuttle the draft Free Trade Agreement with America. I am tremendously concerned about the threat to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme section of the Agreement. The details are so vague. The Australian Consumer Association says we could be looking at an expensive taxpayer-funded system of review that would undermine the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, delay access to new drugs and increase the prices consumers pay for them. We know the American Drug Companies are just waiting for the bill to be passed.

Pick up your pens, girls.

Muriel Hortin

Older people are the problem now!

The politics of fear and deception won the last election for John Howard and he is now setting the stage for the next election by planting fear about the problem of paying for pensions, health and welfare in future years. And who's created this problem? Older people, of course! We apparently retire too early, are work-shy and totally self-interested.

The reality is that it's older people who keep the economy propped up through the vast amount of

voluntary community work we do. It is easy to see how quickly society would grind to a halt if there were no volunteer carers, no Meals on Wheels volunteers, or no volunteer support groups for people with Schizophrenia, Alzheimer's, Parkinsons, and so on. And what if there were no volunteer guides at art galleries, the State Library or the Conservatorium of Music? The list is endless.

According to John S. Croucher, Professor of Statistics at Macquarie University, the annual amount that women in Australia aged over 65 contribute in unpaid work, such as childminding, volunteering and housekeeping, is \$23.5 billion!

Mary Jenkins

Ten Thousand Steps? Are you sure?

Do you rely on your pedometer to count your 10,000 steps a day, as recommended for reducing weight and heart disease?

Well, according to last November's *Choice* magazine it may not be the most reliable measure. Apparently walking very slowly confuses pedometers, but as the walking pace increases, pedometers perform well. When walking slowly, all pedometers overestimated the distance walked, while at a faster pace they underestimated the distance. Most pedometers were wildly inaccurate at measuring the energy expended at all walking speeds.

So, pedometers are useful to measure the number of steps taken in a day but are not good for measuring distance and energy expended.

Joan Johns

Letters to the Editor

Ways of Silencing

I have always regarded the OWN newsletter as a medium in which members could express their concerns, tell stories and air their views and diversity. In doing so they should feel comfortable and sure of acceptance whatever their writing skills.

The newsletter has fulfilled an important function in this way since its beginning. Many voices, otherwise unheard, have dared to speak. Let us not silence them with an overdose of instructions.

Judith Mustard

Ghost writing?

I was out shopping today and something happened that I wanted to share with readers of the newsletter. I rushed home and sat at the computer and started to write. I had this month's newsletter at my side so that I could take advantage of the tips given by Phyllis Gorman on page seven.

Here goes... What did I want the reader to do, well I wanted them to read what I wrote. Did I want to be formal, no, because what I wanted to say was funny. Did I want to be casual, no, because it was not a casual happening. Did I want to be helpful, no, because I did not have any advice to offer. That takes care of the subject matter.

I then started to think back to what my teacher used to say about writing essays or letters and I could not remember. There were no other sources available to me for the subject that I wanted to write about.

I tried to get an outline of my story but I could not make out where it should start from – that was in the advice given so I must be doing OK. Common terminology is the

only terminology I know so I was going great guns so far.

I could not find four cornerstones anywhere, and even though my spelling was good I was not sure about terminology, grammar and readability. I was ready to criticise my piece of work when I realised I had not written much of anything. I was so busy concentrating on the right way to do things I had not started the story, so here goes.

Bugger it, I can't remember what it was that happened while I was out, sorry, better luck next time, eh?

Josie Jackson

Stupidity tends to endure down the ages

When Andrew Taylor wrote his article (Heckler, March 8), probably tongue in cheek, about what he imagines the office of the future will be like, manned by "oldies", he must have expected it to arouse indignation amongst us geriatrics.

Andrew, it may be a good idea to bear in mind that the stupid old people he visualises were probably stupid in their youth. If you're not very bright when you're young, you won't be very bright when you're old. And vice versa. Physically you change a great deal,

but not so much mentally. I'm an octogenarian and a great-grandmother, and I can do all the things he's worried about, like programming the VCR, using a microwave and a computer (and more). So can most of my contemporaries.

I wonder what he'll be like when he is older?

Renee Simons

First printed in the Sydney Morning Herald 8 March 2004

Woollahra Seniors

Woollahra Council entertained its local senior citizens to a coffee morning on March 15 at Rose Bay RSL. We were entertained by Greg Poppleton and the Bakelite Broadcasters with music from the twenties and thirties. Personally, I would have preferred some Buddy Holly, Elvis Presley or Peggy Lee tunes, but we thoroughly enjoyed it all anyway.

All present received a copy of a book produced by Woollahra Council, featuring the prize winners in the Woollahra Seniors writing competition in 2003. The book, featuring stories from two OWN members, is entitled, *I remember, I remember, too*.

Helen McMaugh

Know before you go

In these turbulent times, a new initiative from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is making it easier to find out about safety at your travel destination.

You can ring them on 02 9356 6222 or visit their website www.smarttraveller.gov.au to find valuable information for planning a safe and enjoyable holiday.

Their website includes country-specific travel advice for Australians travelling overseas; travel bulletins about specific issues or events that may affect overseas travel; the top ten tips for safe travel, and a 24 hour Consular Emergency Centre, available at 1300 555 135 within Australia.

So make your plans, check the travel advisories and have a great trip.

At and Beyond the Rocks

OWN Sydney

We want to extend a very warm welcome to new members who have just discovered Sydney OWN, and to long-time members who have recently retired and are now able to attend some of our activities.

There is always a pleasant chorus of 'hullos' at Wellness on Wednesdays at the Mott Hall, and much swapping of ideas over the lunch table. And down the back, in the Mott Gym, those of us involved in silk painting under Jane Caveney's tutelage enjoy a great sense of pleasure with our creative achievements.

You will note in the Diary insert that there is a change of venue for our Wellness activities, as the Mott Hall floor is being replaced. The program has been turned around a little to accommodate the different venues. Please check the diary page!

A small but lively quarterly members' meeting in February came up with a lot of new ideas for guest speakers – with some members readily agreeing to make it all happen.

Forthcoming speakers and topics include Sr. Pauline Fogarty of the Brown Nurses on her experiences with isolated women and homelessness, issues for younger older women such as the empty nest, menopause and retirement, and loss and grief. One suggestion, called Fabulous Fridays will start on 16 April – please see Notices.

Former OWN member, Freda Brown, who is well known to some of our members, was honoured at a ceremony in Johannesburg, on International Women's Day, to mark her contribution to the overthrow of South Africa's apartheid regime. We join with

many others in congratulating Freda.

The launch of Dorothy Cox's book *A One-off Woman* was a very pleasant and well-attended event. Dorothy set the scene by saying that she has always had a love of words and also likes making people laugh. With the help and support of friends and family, and the confidence she gained with the lessons by Pearlie McNeill, the book took shape. Her enthusiasm inspired members to request a further writing workshop which we will follow up on. Those of us who bought the book are looking forward to enjoying her recollections. We have copies of *A One-off Woman* at the OWN office for \$15 per copy. If you want to order a copy, please contact Dorothy's daughter, Melissa, on 9550 5471.

Our International Women's Day breakfast found some of us feasting under the Robinia tree at 8.30 on a morning blessed by the goddess. Then it was up to Town Hall to join the lively group marching down George Street. It's so heartening to see (and hear!) so many younger women taking part in the IWD march and rally.

The highlight of Seniors Week for us was the terrific concert at Campbelltown showcasing the amazing talents of OWN women. Hats off and thanks to all who performed and made it possible.

The feast of enjoyment continued the very next day with the pleasure of having Dorothy Rowe, well known clinical psychologist and author, speak to us on 'Good Women Get Depressed, But Being Bad Isn't the Answer'. We listened, fascinated, to her explanation of her research and practice.

Louise Anike and Joy Ross

Parramatta

Some of our members have been busy distributing our pamphlets and brochures to local community groups, libraries and GPs. We are delighted to report that membership is now 46, with promises of more to come. Most women are seeking friendship and companionship and that was very evident at our last meeting. We are exploring areas of expertise amongst our members so that we can broaden our knowledge about local services and provide some shortcuts to discovering easy ways to access services.

The Coordinator of Wentworthville Neighbour Aid has asked us whether we would like to form a partnership with them and participate in their Gentle Exercise program. We are very interested and are following it up at a meeting with the coordinator, and sampling the exercises.

A number of our members (and members from Penrith and Wollondilly OWN groups) attended a public meeting at Blacktown in mid-March. More than 130 women were at the meeting, many of them indicating that they would like an OWN group in Blacktown. Congratulations to the organising committee.

I really feel that out here in Western Sydney there is a tremendous spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm within the community. Members from Parramatta are seen at various OWN functions, and we are really looking forward to liaising with our sister groups at Penrith, Blacktown and Mid Mountains.

Congratulations to the organisers of the OWN concert at Campbelltown. What a wonderful day we spent watching and

At and Beyond the Rocks

listening to the talented performers. Five Parramatta OWN members were present and we were all energised and vitalised by the goings on. I guess the organisers probably collapsed in a heap afterwards, but they would surely be delighted at the response from such an enthusiastic audience.

Mollie Smith

Woy Woy

The Gosford Regional Art Gallery was host to an International Women's Day function organised by Margaret Hardy and Audrey McDonald. They held a display of local women from a Register of Women of Significance on the Central Coast and we are pleased to say that two Woy Woy OWN members were nominated – Heather McKenzie and myself.

The day commenced with a Welcome Smoking Ceremony by Aboriginal women. The Hon. Meredith Burgmann, MLC, outlined the history of International Women's Day, and a speaker from the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care spoke about conditions facing older women. Two lovely peace poems were read by actress Diana Shearing with great dramatic emphasis, and then a representative from the Wyoming Multicultural Workforce

Madness?

Australian born James Wolfenson, president of the World Bank, said the world was spending \$1 trillion a year on defence and \$50 billion on development. "This is madness," he said. "We spend 20 times the amount on military expenditure than we spend on trying to give homes to people."

spoke about the situation of women in Iran.

The Red Hot Chilli Mamas entertained with a number of South American songs and dances, and when invited by the Mamas to join in *I Am Woman*, Val Brigden of Wyong OWN, shimmied and shook all over the floor better than any Sister Kate! Australian-Chinese dancers created a wonderful tableau with traditional costumes and dancing. An Irish woman migrant sang *Botany Bay*, and her young daughter, in a divine Irish dress, danced in the folk tradition, while another small daughter sang an Irish air.

The whole program was a delight.

Enid Harrison

Nowra

Shoalhaven celebrated International Women's Week 2004 with the theme, Womanhood: a Journey of Transformation. Two members from Nowra OWN were on the IWD Working Committee and many of us attended the events on offer. Being visible is an opportunity to promote OWN, our group in Nowra, and our hopes for a Wellness Centre in the near future.

On Saturday 6 March, at the annual Tomerong Women's Performance Night, eighty women, all wearing something purple, sang, danced, recited their own work, and played a variety of musical instruments. The International Women's Day Choir sang songs of peace and bawdy ballads of convict women, ending with a perennial favourite, *Menopausal*, sung with raucous audience participation. A wonderful night!

Tuesday 9 March saw the theme continued with a Creative and

Visual Arts Day at Riversdale, Arthur Boyd's Shoalhaven River property. Twenty-eight women attended on a very hot day, but the peaceful setting and the expertise of the two instructors soon calmed us down. Two vistas were prepared: a rain forest area and the all-encompassing view before us. I'm no artist, and views are a blur, but I did my best to produce some works of art, worthy of a place on my fridge door, beside my great-grandchildren's!

Wednesday 10 March and there we were, enjoying an International Women's Day lunch at Berry School of Arts, with more than a hundred other women. Again, the vibrant energy of so many women was amazing. There was International Dancing from the Burrill Lake Group, as well as Filipino Dancers who enthralled us with a head-balancing candle dance, a robust Persian Dancer, meditation, and on the more serious side, women representatives on Shoalhaven City Council and in the corporate sphere speaking about their work.

The week ended with the annual event at Meroogal House, the NSW Historic Houses Trust House of Women where women in the Shoalhaven are honoured with an award for outstanding community service. This year was a special reunion of recipients from the last five years. The event was opened with a Welcome to Land by Aboriginal women, Ethel Little and Ruby Kargarian, followed by singing by the Wand'ring Menstruals. Ryde Council's Citizen of the Year Award winner talked about the lives of the women of Iran and praised the wonderful unsung heroines in the Shoalhaven district. Once again members of Nowra OWN generously provided afternoon tea.

Anne Warren

At and Beyond the Rocks

Newcastle

Our weekly Gentle Exercise class, which began in January, has been a great success, drawing between twelve and eighteen women – members and non-members – each week. We use a free room at ClubNova Panthers in the centre of Newcastle. However the venue isn't perfect, as we don't have our own tea and coffee-making facilities and have to use their catering services.

We were successful in gaining a Seniors Week grant of \$600 to hold a morning event called *Older and Bolder!* – a festival of storytelling and international dancing on Thursday, 18 March, again in a free room at ClubNova. We featured five storytellers – extraordinary local older women

who each told a story reflecting the theme of 'older and bolder' within their own lives. Three different international dances were demonstrated – Jewish dancing, belly dancing and American tribal dancing – with audience participation strongly encouraged.

OWN Newcastle also had an information stall at a huge Seniors Expo on Sunday 14 March. Another great promotion for our group was the hanging of our beautiful OWN Newcastle banner, which features craftwork from many members. The banner was first shown at our 10th birthday celebration last year, in Newcastle City Council chambers.

Thanks to those OWN women who sent in their early deposits for our weekend at Myuna Bay in

November. We only need to ask you to send in the full cost of \$130 by 1 October.

We have been extraordinarily lucky with our guest speakers in the first three months of the year. In January, a fairly new member, Maisie Tucker, told us about her life and her inclusion in a book about verandah music. Maisie and her sisters were great singers and entertainers when younger, and Maisie has been recently rediscovered by the author of the book, which was launched in Canberra last month. In February we heard from Kath Olive, a long-time member of OWN, about her adventures as a volunteer at the Riversleigh Archeological Site in Queensland.

Then, in March, to celebrate International Women's Day, we had the pleasure of hearing first-hand about women's lives under Islam from a representative of the Newcastle Moslem Association. We learned a lot from this talk and are delighted that our speaker has promised to arrange for our respective members to meet as a group some time in the future.

We continue to monitor local developments in the contentious public transport arena, and also continue to participate in the second stage of the development of a Positive Ageing Strategy for the Hunter. At a different level, we are looking at our constitution and possible amendments down the track. We believe the issue of associate membership for those who attend Wellness Activities but do not join OWN, is worthy of consideration by all OWN groups.

Our Seniors Week event was very successful – 60 women attended! Tell you more about it next issue.

Macarthur

Oh, what a day it was! *Women Centre Stage* began with a little seed of an idea that flourished into a mind-boggling experience enjoyed by an audience of more than 500 and 80 performers. The newly formed *Melody Makers* – Macarthur OWN's drama group – had a ball! The most common feedback from our members and from locals who attended the concert was what a diverse and enjoyable range of acts there were.

The *Melody Makers* were so lucky to have Peggy Hewett, Lucy Porter and Anne Cunynghame run a skills workshop for us two weeks before the concert. We had an attack of nerves of course and our first couple of items were atrocious, but with their help we polished our performances and greatly increased our confidence. Catering supremo, Marge Bosley, spoilt us with delicious homemade goodies during the workshop and after lunch we trooped up to the RSL club to familiarise ourselves with the venue for the BIG day.

Our warmest thanks to the stage managers, Kris Ferguson and Peggy Hewett, for their support during the concert, also to Vicki May-Franks from Campbelltown Council, and Cherie Wallace, events manager at the RSL Club. Thanks also to our intrepid concert coordinator, Dorothy Cora, whose organisational skills and encouragement meant so much to us.

We could not have managed without the support of our sisters at Macarthur OWN, who not only supported their OWN drama group in the months leading up to the concert, but on the day offered hospitality and information, sold raffle tickets, ushered people to their seats and dispensed afternoon tea. Caring and sharing is alive and well out here in the south-west!

Helen Standing

Pat Carlton

Women Fight for Fairness

The following welcome address was given by Aboriginal Elder, Joyce Woodberry, at the Premier's Reception to celebrate International Women's Day, Monday 8 March 2004.

Tonight I would like to acknowledge the EORA Nation on whose land we stand, and to pay my respects to the traditional owners of this land and to our ancestors who have passed on before us. On behalf of the EORA people it gives me great pleasure to welcome everyone here tonight.

At the beginning of the last century white women were stirring throughout Europe, Britain, USA and Australia. The industrial revolution had forced many into industries and factories. Working conditions were appalling and dire poverty prevailed. Women thought that if property laws were changed, and they were allowed to vote, they could influence the powers-that-be to start to make changes and improve the inferior position of white women in society.

In Australia, with government laws and restrictions, Aboriginal people had no rights at all and Aboriginal women were completely out of the frame.

On the 28 February 1908, the first Women's Day rally was held in the USA. Women demanded the right to vote and called for economic rights for women. By 1910 the

struggle for justice was spreading and Women's Day was celebrated by feminists and socialists throughout the USA. From these beginnings International Women's Day spread worldwide.

Black rights were still practically non-existent in the USA and black people were still treated as slaves in many states. In Australia, Aboriginal people were still being herded into missions and Aboriginal children were being stolen from their parents by the Aboriginal Protection Board, put into homes and trained to be domestics and farm workers for the white population.

Through the struggles of reformists, feminists and socialists many changes occurred for mainstream women in Australian society throughout the 20th century. More women entered the workforce and equal pay was achieved in theory if not in practice. A higher percentage of the population received a tertiary education. The contraceptive pill allowed women to make life choices, which were previously denied them.

Those who benefited least from these changes were Aboriginal women. It was not until the referendum of 1967 that they were recognized as citizens in their own country and given the right to vote. Aboriginal children were still being stolen from their parents as

late as the mid 1970s. As white women fought for their economic rights Aboriginal women fought for survival.

During the last 30 years Aboriginal women have been in the forefront, fighting for all the things that had been denied us for so long: legal rights, education, health and welfare for our people. It has been a long hard struggle that is continuing to this day. Aboriginal babies are still dying in greater numbers than white babies, and Aboriginal people's life span is on average 20 years shorter than white Australians. Aboriginal women are still victims of violence and rape.

Two centuries of attempted genocide, racism, neglect and discrimination by white Australia are still taking their toll. It has been very difficult breaking through these barriers. In spite of this, tremendous gains have been made in the last 30 years. We are now seeing Aboriginal nurses, doctors, solicitors (even judges), teachers and champion sportswomen.

In the past white domination almost destroyed the Aboriginal people. Our land was taken from us, our culture and language denied us. We were classified as less than human. During the last 30 years, however, we have proven we can and will survive and grow stronger. Attitudes change slowly though.

Joyce Woodberry

Community Transport in the Inner West

My job is Mobility Project Coordinator and my role is to coordinate and develop transport mobility options for HACC clients living in the greater Inner West of Sydney i.e. Ashfield, Burwood, Canada Bay, Strathfield, Leichhardt, Marrickville and Canterbury local government areas. I am also an advocate for people with mobility issues.

Inner West Community Transport Inc. operates shopping, outings, individual and health related transport in Ashfield, Burwood, Canada Bay and Strathfield areas. Our clients are

frail aged people and younger people with disabilities and their carers. Inner West Community Transport owns one station wagon and two wheelchair-modified vehicles which are used for direct services and hired out to community groups.

We also act as an information and referral service to the broader community. Please do not hesitate to contact me on 9745-5800.

Louise Simon

Adelaide Arts

I was lucky enough to go to the Adelaide Festival this year and was so pleased I did, as Stephen Page, Director of the Bangarra Dance Theatre, was running this festival. There was a very strong and affirming presence of Aboriginal talent, and in Victoria Square, the Aboriginal flag was flying the whole time next to the Australian flag.

I saw *Body Dreaming*, an outdoor performance at sunset, highlighting tradition through the ancient art of body painting, story telling, song, yidaki and fire. Then there was the brilliant performance of the Bangarra Dance Theatre – superb. There were art exhibitions, and a performance called *Riverland*, based on a series of paintings by an Aboriginal artist of the Murray River, aimed at families.

For me, Writers' Week, which ran parallel to the Festival, was another highlight. For five days from 10am to 6pm we were able to hear authors from Australia and overseas talking about their latest books, their philosophies and their view of the world. Since there were two tents running concurrently, I could not attend everything, but I talked to lots of people about what they had heard and what had impressed them. The atmosphere was one of excitement, political messages and stimulation of the brain cells.

One day, while waiting to hear Margaret Atwood, I started chatting to the woman next to me, since she was obviously intending to record Ms Atwood's talk. Her name was Megg Kelham. She came from Alice Springs, where she is involved in a volunteer women's broadcasting group, and is also in the process of researching and writing about the Pine Gap Women's Peace Camp of 1983. I was full of admiration for her project and how she was tackling it.

I offered to find out if any members of OWN had been at the Peace Camp and if they would be willing to talk to her. If you are interested, could you please contact me on 9957 6377 or email me on renate@zip.com.au. I am sure she would be thrilled to hear from you.

Renate Watkinson

If only

If only I could drive a car,

I wouldn't have to wait

For ages at the bus stop

For fear of being late.

If only I were fitter,

And could gallop up the hill,

Instead of standing in the rain,

And waving like a dill,

As a bus full of dry passengers

Flies past and soaks me through,

Or the driver picks up one or two

And leaves me in the queue

To wait another half an hour,

Till I begin to rust.

Or turn and creep back home again

As I give up in disgust.

If only I were wealthy,

Had a chauffeur-driven Rolls,

I wouldn't struggle up the hills,

Or even go for strolls.

I'd speed past drivers, passengers,

The crippled and the lame,

Gaze down on them haughtily,

And play the drivers' game.

I'd cut in front, and block their path,

And splash them all with glee.

If only I could have the power,

A bastard too I'd be.

Mary McCusker

Women and Rice

The United Nations has declared 2004 the International Year of Rice in order to draw attention to the spectre of increased hunger, malnutrition, poverty and conflict in developing countries.

The role of women in rice production is critical in Asia. Many men in rural communities now move to the cities to work, as cash is needed to buy improved seed. As a result the women, who already have a high labour burden, now play an

important role in both rice production and post-harvest work.

Despite the increased need for female labour, the introduction of new rice-farming techniques, particularly irrigation, has negatively affected women's right to use certain rice fields. As soon as the new technologies result in increased farm income, men return and take control of the women's fields.

Poverty alleviation and improved

livelihoods cannot be achieved unless the importance of women's work in rice fields is recognised, and a corresponding increase in access to information is available to them.

There is also an urgent need for equitable land and resource policies, to ensure that women can benefit from improvements in rice-based systems. For more information go to www.fao.org/rice2/.

June West

Sorry, we're too busy for work

On behalf of all Australia's aged pensioners, I would like to apologise to Federal Treasurer Peter Costello, and Prime Minister, John Howard, for living so long and creating such an economic burden on the nation.

But let's be fair about this, it's not our fault.

Messrs Howard, Bush and Blair and the other world leaders failed to come up with a world war which could have solved the problem. There were nasty shows in Korea and Vietnam, but they didn't develop into anything that would have solved the current world-wide problem of too many pensioners.

Mr Costello said this week that full-time pensioners were out and part-time pensioners were in. He and Mr Howard want more older people to go back into the work force and not rely on the age pension to enjoy the evening of their lives. In particular, they want the "younger retirees", those aged between 55 and 60, to keep working and not take their superannuation as a lump sum, thus being open to the temptation to

blow it all and then have to fall back on the pension.

The trouble is, a lot of firms won't employ older workers, no matter what their skills.

To help Mr Costello and Mr Howard, this column has come up with some occupations where employers have trouble finding workers. These jobs would also help solve the problem of Australia having too many pensioners.

For instance, the older brigade could be retrained as mine clearance divers in Iraqi ports and bomb disposal officers in Afghanistan and Cambodia. Other jobs going begging are parachute testers for the RAAF and tourist guides in Baghdad. Here on the Central Coast, there's a shortage of taipan and funnelweb spider milkers at the Australian Reptile Park, not to mention night cleaners for the vampire-bat enclosure. Pensioners could also be employed as methane-gas checkers in coalmines, and thus save the lives of many canaries. How about a job as a 70-year-old club

bouncer on Saturday nights? The possibilities are endless.

The Government could also help out by having euthanasia injecting rooms, free how-to-smoke courses and subsidised cigarettes and grog for pensioners.

Of course, pensioners would have to fit this in with the hundreds of thousands of hours each week they cheerfully volunteer to charities, welfare, community, sporting organisations, churches and schools. Not to mention mowing the lawns for frail neighbours, taking them shopping and to bingo, child-minding, weeding and replanting reserves, cleaning beaches, bush tracks and community halls. Without this assistance, given freely and gladly, the system would collapse.

Sorry, Mr Costello and Mr Howard, but us pensioners are far too busy helping the community to go back to work.

This letter, written by Bob Staines, appeared in a recent issue of the Central Coast Express. I think it says it all.
Nancy Brown

My Name Is...

My name is Dorothy. Mum said she got it out of a book, but couldn't remember which book. My four siblings were given dignified family names...they knew where they came from. Perhaps this is what started me on my favourite game of *Foundling Fantasy*, which I played in my head for all it was worth.

Was I the child of a rich financier, who wished to spare his beloved daughter the corruption of wealth? So he arranged for her to be raised in a simple country environment? (I used this one while doing some hated chore like scrubbing the kitchen table.)

Or was I a Royal bastard, kept hidden away for political reasons, while my rightful father plotted and schemed to overcome his

enemies and claim me when the time was right? (This one was handy while minding the baby.)

But there was no escaping reality; it was blindingly obvious whose child I was. It was there for all to see, in Mum's face and mine. I'd even inherited Dad's family secret, webbed toes, on both feet. No doubting my lineage.

But oh, why did they have to make my middle name Jane? Plain Jane! Bad enough to be buck-toothed, straight-haired and skinny.

Would I be any different with a name-change? I flirted, briefly, with Dee, then Thea...and Jane became Jan.

But nothing changed... I was still plain old me. So I took to

embracing Dorothy with gusto. Dorothy...it has a nice ring to it. Why has there never been a song about it?

"Dorothy, Dorothy, tell me true/ Why don't you love me as I love you?"

What do you reckon?

Well, all this talk of love brings me to Kevan, my Canadian lover. All he had to say, in his divine accent, in his divine deep voice, was "*DÛr o thy*", and I was his forever. Maybe it's not what you say, but the way that you say it!

Dorothy Cox

Dorothy's autobiography, *A One-off Woman*, is available from the OWN office for \$15.

TAILOR MADE

I was in David Jones a few days ago with my daughter, looking around the Ladies' Clothing Department. I caught sight of a beautifully tailored jacket on a stand. I didn't look at the price tag, but I'm sure it was expensive, judging from the prices of the other garments. There were jeans at \$339. A child's jacket marked \$627. A pretty dress priced around the thousand-dollar mark. I offered to buy my daughter a couple of pairs of the jeans, but she declined. I think she didn't take me seriously...

The sight of the jacket took me back to the days before the war, when I was in my teens. My mother said that every female should possess at least one tailored suit – jacket and matching skirt. No one ever bought anything off the peg in those days. Everything had to be made to measure.

Our dressmaker was Cissie, dark-haired, plump and pretty. She made all our clothing. It was quite a process, getting the suits made. First you had to be measured. Then you picked the material – gabardine, barrathea, tweed, striped, plain, black, grey, navy – whatever – from a book of swatches. After that, the design was chosen from the several books Cissie possessed. Single breasted, double breasted, single pleat, double pleat, slit at the back, the side, long or short lapels – so many choices. It took a while to get all this sorted out and written down in Cissie's notebook. And the price had to be negotiated.

After a week or so, you went for the first fitting, usually in the evening. Then the second fitting. And finally, you got the perfectly made, perfectly fitting suit.

No one ever bought a dress ready-made from a shop. Cissie made our dresses, too. And of course this involved much the same



process as choosing the suit. Choosing the material, the design, negotiating the price, having fittings.

I don't suppose the garments were all that expensive – we certainly couldn't have afforded them if they were.

Renee Simons



Dear Minister

*Dear Costa, dear Costa,
In your limo you ride,
You're not herded like cattle,
Nor like shrimps on the tide
Washed up on a seashore
All battered and bruised
As we old are in buses.
Pardon me if I'm rude –
But you are corrupted
Because you've got power,
You can tell the wise aged
When to travel, what power.
The hour you've decided!
Have they lost their right
To go when they want to
By day or night?
Through the taxes I've paid
For the last sixty years,
I've paid for your wages
With my blood, sweat and tears.
I've paid drivers' wages
And half of a bus,
So I'm waiting with glee
Till you're old and join us.*

Mary McCusker

The poor old thing

I was spending the weekend in Katoomba with my lover, a very early riser, who regularly jogged to Echo Point. At 7 o'clock one morning he rushed in and exclaimed, "Quick, get up, I want to show you something!" He was not a man to waste a minute, so still in my nightie, I grabbed his dressing gown and threw my feet into his huge old joggers. I didn't even bother to tie the shoelaces.

We drove down in the car and as there was nobody about, I got out and walked down the steps to the Lookout to see a most magnificent sight! Fog was cascading down through the valleys, looking like a soft cottonwool waterfall. It was very beautiful!

As I was admiring it, four well-dressed women wearing skirts, twin-sets and pearls and with beautiful make-up and hairstyles, approached me with concern, "Are you alright, dear?" "Yes, thank you," I said, "I'm just looking at this beautiful vista."

Suddenly, I saw myself through their eyes. I hadn't washed or combed my hair and I must have looked as if I had wandered out of a nursing home. I started to feel embarrassed about my appearance, so I quickly left them and walked awkwardly back up the steps in my sloppy joggers and baggy dressing gown. I fell into the car and Lou and I burst into hysterical laughter. He had been watching the whole scenario!

When I left the next day, I recognised the women on the station platform, but I'm sure they didn't recognise me! In my mind, I could hear them relating the story to friends about the "poor old thing" that they had met at Echo Point.

Jennifer Cole

More Adventure Holidays

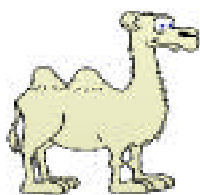
Following our visit to the Flinders Ranges in 1971, Mary and I were eager to see more of the Outback. Our way of eventually achieving this was interesting!

Adventurous colleagues in Melbourne happened to be a step ahead of us. They had chartered Rex Ellis, who ran one of the first 4WD outback adventure companies in Australia, to follow the route of explorer, Ernest Giles, out to the west of Alice Springs. On their return they invited us to hear Rex speak about his 4WD safaris and we were impressed both with his slides of very remote regions in Central Australia and his familiarity with everything to do with the bush.

On a visit to Adelaide, we learned that Rex had expanded his tourist business and begun to use camels – the perfect off-road vehicle! He captured them from the remote north of South Australia and trained them by doing one-day camel treks, so we booked on one of these setting out from Maclaren Vale to experience what camel-riding was like.

Rex's camels were not free-ridden but strung together as a 'camel string' and controlled via tension on a 'nose line'. When we mounted our camels they were crouched on the ground, then at the command of "Ibna" (get-up-and-go), the camels rocked forward and then tilted backward. This felt quite precarious at first. Their forward/backward gait also took some getting used to.

The undulating countryside near Onkaparinga Gorge was blossoming after good rain and we had a grand-stand view. After a picnic lunch, I noticed that my inner thighs had bruised badly, because my weight pressed heavily on the steel uprights supporting the saddle. No amount of wriggling or adjustment of the



stirrups seemed to help. It was especially painful on the steep downhill stretches when my whole body eased forward. As time wore on I was near tears and longed to get down.

Then, just as we were on the home stretch, a motor cyclist came around a blind corner at high speed, swerved when he saw the camel string, and came off his bike. He was injured, but conscious. The camels reared in terror, then bellowed in pain from their nose lines and grouped together in fright, crushing their bulk against our legs so that none of us could dismount. It was chaotic and very dangerous. In those days, before mobile phones, all we could do was to calm the camels and proceed as fast as possible to call an ambulance for the bike rider. We were OK, but emotionally drained and very relieved to arrive back at Rex's homestead.

As Mary and I drove back to Adelaide, we knew that camel expeditions could take us just where we wanted to go.

We had learned that on full-scale camel expeditions, in contrast to treks, the camels were loaded with food, water, swags and luggage and there were only two or three riding camels in the string of twelve or more, so we took turns at riding for perhaps two hours at most. Most of the time we walked alongside. I was encouraged by this and also by Mary's offer to make us two thick sheep-skin jackets to use as extra saddle padding.

And so, undaunted by our first experience, we planned our first camel *expedition!*

Judith Hammond

I know where all the grandmas are!

Well this one, a member of Wollondilly OWN, went to Blacktown for the launch of an OWN group!

I left Buxton early in the morning and drove 15 km to Picton where I caught the 9.09 am train. Audrey, my friend who was supposed to be coming with me, is not on the train. The train doesn't stop at sleepy Bargo. Don't be downhearted, I told myself, be brave and strong. Changed trains at Campbelltown and then I'm on a slow train to Blacktown, which arrived at 10.45!

A momentous day, 10 March, was to be the start of another OWN group. I was welcomed at Bowman Hall with a cup of coffee and the meeting began. There were approximately 135 women in the audience, all of us older women and many of us, no doubt, grandmothers. I was amazed!

Dorothy Cora gave an overview of OWN NSW and its responsibilities and she was followed by Molly Smith from Parramatta OWN and Rae Paine from Penrith, who both provided a snapshot of their respective groups. Parramatta OWN is a new group of eight months, and already they have a grant from Parramatta Council of \$1600. Penrith OWN has a Wellness program operating three days a week and a drop-in centre which is open four days a week.

And then Penny, an older woman from Blacktown, told us some personal things about herself and said how much she would like an OWN group in Blacktown. She was so full of enthusiasm.

Then a delicious lunch and the journey back home again. Out again in the evening to drum? No, I don't think I will, I'm feeling rather tired.

Elizabeth Otterson

**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:

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
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
purpose 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.**

NOTICES

**Garvan Institute of Medical
Research**

Public Health Seminars 2004

- April 6 Arthritis
- July 13 Diabetes and Obesity
- July 31 Pituitary Disease
- August 10 Osteoporosis
- October Mental Health
(date to be announced)

Bookings are essential for each free seminar, held at Garvan Institute, St Vincents Hospital. Catch a 389 bus from the Quay or Pitt Street.

Please contact Liz Eassie on 9295 8110 or l.eassie@garvan.org.au to make a reservation.



Aged Care Workshops

The Aged-care Rights Service (TARS) is a specialist community legal centre which protects and promotes the rights of residents in Residential Aged Care Facilities and Retirement Villages and of recipients of Community Aged Care Packages and HACC services. TARS services cover NSW.

TARS is offering education sessions to groups on:

- * User rights in Aged Care Facilities, Retirement Villages, CACPs or HACC
- * What TARS does
- * Specific Issues in Aged Care Facilities
- * Topics of your choice

For a limited time, TARS has funding to deliver education sessions to groups throughout NSW. To book an education session, call (02) 9281 3600 or 1800 424 079.

**Alola Foundation
BENEFIT NIGHT**

Kirsty Sword-Gusmao – A tribute for Timorese Women

\$29.50 / \$17.50

7pm-11pm Wednesday 21 April

Sydney Town Hall

Timorese performers & speakers plus Jeannie Lewis, Linda Jaivin, Shirley Shackleton, Irina Dunn and many others.

There will be entertainment by the Solidarity Choir, Another Roadside Attraction Choir and the CNNNN News Team.

Contact AETA 9519 4788
Email: jefferson.lee@bigpond.com

Alola Foundation:
www.alolafoundation.org



**Pauline McLeod Memorial
Tribute Concert**

7.30 pm 29 May 2004,

Sydney Town Hall

On 22 May 2003, renowned Aboriginal storyteller, actor, poet and writer, Pauline Elizabeth McLeod, passed away. In showcasing Pauline's life and legacy, this concert will also officially launch the Pauline McLeod Foundation and announce how it plans to nurture and support Aboriginal people in the arts.

For updates, please make regular checks of the website, www.paulinemcleod.com. If you have any enquiries, would like to be a sponsor, or contribute to organising the event, please contact Concert Coordinator, Paul Newman, on 9773 3878 or 0418 440 210.

NOTICES

Ongoing Creativity

March 24 will see the end of the very successful creative art classes that have been running for the last three months at the Mott Hall. Our tutor, Jane Caveney, from the Pine Street Creative Arts Centre, has been an inspiring teacher who has released creative forces in us, which we didn't know we had.

So keen are we to sustain this new found creativity, which we feel is also an aspect of our Wednesday Wellness program, that we will continue to make, paint, draw, print, (whatever!) every Wednesday starting April 7 from 10 am until 12, at Windmill Street.

We hope you will come to the initial meeting to talk about your ideas and discuss the art or craft you would like to pursue.

We might even be lucky enough to get another grant for a teacher. Everything is possible, they say!

Contact the OWN office for more details.



A Tribute to Girl Bands

South Africa's, *A Tribute to Girl Bands*, spanning the 1940s to the present, will tour Australian cities between 12 April and 26 April 2004. South Africans will be celebrating 10 years of freedom, including celebrations for South Africans living in Australia. For further information, contact Beryl Segers 9596 1656 or beryl@soleyproductions.com



Myuna Bay

Please note that the cost of the Myuna Bay weekend in November is \$130, which includes extras such as transport to and from the station, happy hour, etc.

Sydney OWN

Fab Fridays

10.45 for 11am, every Friday, 75 Windmill Street, Millers Point

On Friday 16 April, in a relaxed, casual atmosphere, morning get-togethers will be held where you can bring a friend, catch up with other members, or enjoy guest speakers; and bring your lunch. Let's know if you are celebrating a special event and share the friendly atmosphere.

Don't miss our charming, vibrant speaker at our first ***Fab Friday!*** Narelle is a Psychologist and Psychotherapist in inner west Sydney, speaking about "Loss and Grief". With many years experience in corporate and private arenas, as well as being a published author, Narelle is passionate about women's issues.

Cherie Thompson is the driving force behind ***Fab Fridays*** and will be welcoming you.

For enquiries call her on 9560 0688, after 11am.

Wellness on Wednesdays

Please note changes of program, and venues, for weeks April 7-June 9. There will, however, be a two weeks school holiday break on April 14 and 21 (except for the arts group).

9.30-10.30	Gentle Exercise	(Gym, at the rear of
10.30-10.45	Morning tea	(Mott Hall
10.45-11.45	Tai Chi	(Argyle Street
11.45-12.30	Lunch	(Millers Point
10-12md	Arts group	(75 Windmill Street
12.30-2pm	Drumming	(Millers Point

Films to be seen for the April film discussion

1.30pm, Monday 5 April at 75 Windmill Street
(please note change to the first week because of Easter)

Pieces of April, The Girl with the Pearl Earring, Missing, The Human Stain, Under the Tuscan Sun, Once Upon a Time in Mexico and House of Sand and Fog

DISCLAIMER

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

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Dorothy Cora, Polly Gow, Muriel Hortin, Joan Johns, Mary McCusker, Wilhelmina van Dorp, Jacqueline Schofer, Helen Young, Lorraine Inglis, Renee Simons, Ermes Solari, and June West.

**SURFACE
MAIL**

**POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA**