



NEWSLETTER

JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

Vol 20 No 2
May 2009

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ANNUAL FUNDRAISING LUNCHEON GUEST SPEAKER: ADELE HORIN *Do Newspapers Have a Future and Who Cares?*

We welcome Adele Horin, the well-known journalist, as guest speaker at our fifteenth Annual Fundraising Luncheon. Adele has chosen a very interesting and thought-provoking topic for her talk.

Adele Horin grew up in Perth in a typical baby boom suburb with her parents and two brothers. She enjoyed the non-unusual experience of riding her bike to a State primary and then a State high school. From the age of nine, she had the fine example of a working mother who was the secretary to a State member of parliament. It was rather uncommon in those days to have a mother who worked, but being a latch-key child, and having to put the potatoes on at 5.15 most nights, never seemed a problem. Typical for those times, her parents were not highly educated in a formal sense, but they were great newspaper readers and followers of current affairs.

Adele won a cadetship on *The West Australian* after she finished school; getting a start in newspapers, then as now, was difficult so she took the job rather than go to university full-time. She went to the University of Western Australia part-time and got her Bachelor of Arts degree in the days before media courses, for which she is rather thankful. At an age when kids these days are still

having their lunch made by their mothers, she went to New York to pursue a job with *Women's Weekly* and *Cleo* magazine, and if the truth be told, to pursue her boyfriend. Both pursuits were successful. Thanks to Derryn Hinch, who headed the Fairfax bureau in New York, she was later offered a job writing for *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Then she wrote for *The National Times* from Washington, covering politics, society, and economics for the much-loved and sadly defunct weekly. At the grand old age of 27, after nearly five years in the US, she returned to Sydney for *The National Times*, thinking mor-osely the best of times were over. But she had the pleasure of working with such journalistic luminaries as Brian Toohey, David Marr, Anne Summers, Elisabeth Wynhausen and Marian Wilkinson. After a stint on ABC Radio National Life Matters program, she joined *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 1994 as both a weekly columnist and news/features writer.

Adele has had a long-standing interest in social justice issues and social change, as well as issues affecting women and children. She won a Walkley Award in 1981 for a series on sex and has on two other occasions been a Walkley finalist, most recently last year. She also won the Human Rights Commission award for metropolitan newspaper journalism in 1991.



JSNWL FUNCTIONS Lunch-Hour Talks

Venue: Seminar Room 2, Ultimo Community Centre, Bulwara Road, Ultimo
Date and Time: Third Thursday in the month from 12 noon to 1.30 pm
Entry: \$15 (JSNWL members) \$20 (non-members)
To Book: Phone (02) 9571 5359 or email info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au
Light refreshments served

SYDNEY

MAY—Thursday 21st
Angela Badger—*Charlotte Badger, Buccaneer*

Charlotte, transported from England, was the first Australian female pirate, the first successful woman escapee and the first white woman resident of New Zealand. Angela talks about her latest book, how she became interested in this subject, where her research has led her and describes Charlotte's fascinating and extraordinary life.

JUNE—Thursday 18th
Anna Volska—*Ritual or My Life in the Theatre*

Anna Volska, who has been associated with the Bell Shakespeare Company in Sydney for over 19 years, speaks about her life and the part the theatre has played in it. Born in Poland, Anna came to Australia via England in 1952. Here she attended NIDA, the then newly-established drama school. She left for England in 1965 where both she and her husband were with the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon.

JULY—Thursday 16th
Suzanne Falkiner—*Joan in India*

Suzanne, who has worked in magazine and publishing companies, is now a full-time writer. Her talk is a fairly light-hearted look at the problems of biography when writing about people who don't want to be written about, especially when they are relatives. Suzanne describes some of the adventures involved in tracking down her story in a remote part of Gujarat in 40 degree heat.

AUGUST—Thursday 20th
Professor Jill Roe (Title and details to be announced)

CANBERRA

JULY—Thursday 30th
Libby Lloyd, AM—*From Here to There and Back: Adventures in Community Activism*

Full details on page 4

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL FUNDRAISING LUNCHEON

MONDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER

BOOK NOW
to hear
GUEST SPEAKER: ADELE HORIN

Members are being given the opportunity to book before invitations are sent to the general public. Booking form enclosed.

JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

The Library is open to the public
Monday to Friday, 10 am to 3 pm

Australia's national women's library is a specialist library with its focus on collecting and preserving the literary and cultural heritage of women from all ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

Aims

- to heighten awareness of women's issues
- to preserve documents on women's lives and activities
- to support the field of women's history
- to highlight women's contribution to this country's development

Borrowing Policy

The public may borrow items on interlibrary loan. A loan collection is available to financial members.

Location: Ultimo Community Centre
523-525 Harris Street, Ultimo

Public Transport Services

Trains Central Station or Town Hall Station

Buses No. 501 from Railway Square (Central Station) or from George Street (opp Town Hall Station)

GETTING TO THE LIBRARY

Location We are situated in the Ultimo Community Centre on the corner of Harris Street and William Henry Street, directly opposite the new Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre.

Entry Main entrance is at 523-525 Harris Street (just beyond convenience store). Ring the bell for admittance. The Library is up a flight of stairs. The other entrance is in Bulwara Road. We are on the level, directly across the courtyard.

How to Reach Us

By Bus from the city

Catch the No 501 bus in George Street opposite the Cathedral or at Railway Square near Central Station. It runs every 20 minutes and it's a 5 minute trip to the Library. The stop for the Library is opposite the Powerhouse Museum in Harris Street.

By Train

Get off at Central Station. To catch the bus at Railway Square, walk through the Devonshire Tunnel and up the escalator on the left.

By Foot from Central Station

From Railway Square, walk along Broadway, turn right into Harris Street and continue to William Henry (takes about 15-20 minutes). For a slightly shorter route, walk to the end of the Devonshire Tunnel, along the open space with the tram lines, down the lane beside the ABC building, left along Ultimo Road, and right into Harris Street.

OUR TELEPHONE PROBLEMS

OUR NEW NUMBER is
9571 5359

We apologise to all those who have tried to contact the Library over the past two months and failed.

The City of Sydney Council has changed its telephone provider. We were originally told that there would be a message on the phone advising callers of the new number. This has not yet happened. Nor have we messagebank equipment, so are unable to access voicemails. Having the Library virtually in limbo is a very frustrating situation for callers and a very frustrating and embarrassing situation for our volunteer staff.

There have been lighter moments. A volunteer appeared in the Library recently, announcing that she had come in to say she wasn't coming in! This was the only way she could let us know. And a member of the Council staff, trying to telephone us to deal with a security matter, couldn't get our new number and had to come to the Library in person from Town Hall House.

**We hope that the situation will be rectified very soon.
In the meantime, please make a note of our new number
9571 5359**

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to **Faith Bandler** on being awarded Australia's highest honour. At a ceremony at Admiralty House in Sydney on 29 April the Governor General, Quentin Bryce, (an ex-Chair of our Board) made Faith a Companion of the Order of Australia for her work for human rights and social justice. One of the things Faith worked for was the 10-year campaign to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people to be counted in the census. Faith had protested to Jessie Street, who had suggested that they start this campaign, that it was against the constitution. Jessie's reply was 'Well, we'll just have to change the constitution!'

Faith has always been an ardent supporter of Jessie Street National Women's Library and instigated a meeting at which the Library recorded the stories of those who had known and worked with Jessie. The tape of this event is in the Library's archives.

Congratulations also to **Ms Andrea Connell** on her recent appointment as the new Principal of Sydney Girls High School. Andrea was educated at Parramatta and Gosford High Schools and graduated with a BA (Hons) Dip Ed from Newcastle University. She was formerly the highly respected principal of Leichhardt High School. Jessie Street National Women's Library has a special association with SGHS and students and teachers always attend our Annual Fundraising Luncheon at Parliament House.



NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to all our new members

Laurinda Blow
Vikki Foord
Maureen Humphrey
June Lossius
Dr Wendy Michaels
Tina Trappes-Lomax
Joy Young

MONETARY DONATIONS

We thank all those who have so generously made donations to the Library.

Margaret Bettison
Una Gault
Sybil Jack
Gwynne Jones
Suzanne Marks
Verna Morgan
Janice Nash
Rosa Needham
Alice Oppen
Diana-Rose Orr
Jane Pollard
Christine Smith
Jozefa Sobski
Ruth Sutton
Valwyn Wishart

We thank BPW Ryde/Hunters Hill who made a special donation in memory of the late Sheila Swain. Sheila was a member of the group for many years, as she was of Jessie Street National Women's Library. (An obituary to Sheila appears on page 10.)

LIBRARY MATTERS

LIBRARY NEWS

Poster Collection

Digitisation of the Posters

We have been able to take a group of ten posters to the UTS digital imaging service for a trial run through the UTS machinery. The posters selected were in various sizes and included laminated ones. All were able to be scanned. We have now been given a very reasonable quote to have 484 posters professionally digitised at UTS and the Board has given approval for this to be carried out. A file of them will be put on CD. The remaining posters which are too fragile to go through the UTS equipment will be digitally photographed.

Donation of Posters

Barbara Aroney, who was an art teacher in schools and other places, came into the Library to offer us a collection of posters, some of which were her own work. Very few of the posters were already held by the Library. This is the largest donation of posters we have so far received from an individual and they are a wonderful and exciting addition to our collection.

New Acquisitions

In response to an article about JSNWL in the January issue of the *Senior News*, we received from Ruth Woodward of the Manning Women in Agriculture Forum, a copy of a book the Forum had produced in 2005 called *No Lilies in This Valley*. The book, which had been compiled for Heritage Week in 2001, is a collection of stories told by local residents about the lives of their mothers, grand-mothers and great grandmothers. They give a fascinating insight into the lives of 'ordinary' women who lived in the Manning Valley from about 1850 to 1950. Done on a volunteer basis, the book sold 300 copies within its first week of release.

With the profit from the book the group commissioned four paintings from a local artist. These depict women in scenes typical of the 1850-1950 period. Ruth also sent us photographed copies of the paintings. We intend to have these framed and put on display in the Library.

We also received another donation in response to the *Senior News* article. Shirley Goodbar from Lisarow sent us a copy of her book *With Flags Flying*, an account of her life as a bandmaste, an unusual occupation for a woman.

We are delighted to have received from the Australian Society of Authors copies of the books entered for the 2009 Barbara Jefferis Award. These make a significant contribution to our Research Collection.

Biographies File

We keep a file of biographies and obituaries of Australian women. Volunteer Megan Russell has been working on this file and, as space is running out in the filing cabinet, she experimented with scanning the entries and has created a file on one of the Library computers. The scanned entries are quite clear and easy to read and can be enlarged for easier reading if required.

Visitors to the Library

We had had some interesting people come in to visit over the last three months. These have included June Lossius, who learned about the Library when she visited our display at the Ultimo/Pymont Festival and later visited the Library. June, now retired, was the first Australian woman jockey. (See item under Community Events on page 5.)

A staff member from the ABC carrying out research for a documentary on women poisoners in post-war Sydney and the thallium poisoning cases of 1952 and 1953 was delighted to find we could supply her with the necessary information.

Jane Pollard
Senior Librarian

JANE POLLARD RETIRES AS SENIOR LIBRARIAN

We are very sorry that Jane Pollard is retiring from her position as Senior Librarian and as an ex-officio member of the Board. She will, however, still come into the Library as a volunteer to help with the various facets of Library work she has always been involved in. We are looking for a qualified librarian to take her place.

Jane has been a volunteer librarian since 1996, working initially with Myra Keay when the Library was located in the NSW Writers' Centre at Rozelle. As Senior Librarian she has been responsible for training volunteers in the various tasks needed to keep the professional side of the Library operating effectively and as well as this she has been involved in other areas of Library activity. She was part of the group working on the Women's History Map of Sydney, she has given many promotional talks to women's groups in Sydney and the Southern Highlands, has organised displays and has represented the Library at community functions.

Jane and her husband Brian are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary with a well-earned holiday in Europe, where she will be visiting women's libraries in Turkey and London. We welcome Jane back at the end of May.



ARCHIVES NEWS

Pine Gap Exhibition

I was delighted that our application for a grant to the NSW Arts Council for funding for a Pine Gap exhibition was successful. The exhibition will be opened on 1 September by Dr Shirley Fitzgerald, the City of Sydney Historian, who was herself at the Pine Gap Peace Camp in 1983. The exhibition will remain on display in the Fountain Foyer until 25 September. (See item on page 5.)

Jan Burnswoods, Bridget McKern and myself have made an inventory of suitable material—Story Boards, Posters and Banners—preparatory to making a final selection. We have measured the story boards and the posters and made preliminary calculations to make sure the material will fit into the exhibition space allocated.

Visit from Inner Wheel Members

Chris Kirby and a group of Inner Wheel members visited the Library on 13 February for a meeting with Jan Burnswoods and me. They wanted to discuss how work on the various collections of records from several Inner Wheel clubs could be undertaken. We offered advice and instructed them on how to approach preparation of the papers before they were deposited in the Archives.

Beverley Sodbinow
Archivist

BEVERLEY SODBINOW, OUR VOLUNTEER ARCHIVIST

Jessie Street National Women's Library is self-funded. We have been able to employ Beverley as our archivist for three years, working initially two days a week, then one day a week, through an early grant from the NSW State Government. Unfortunately, we are now no longer able to do this.

We are very grateful to Beverley for offering to work now on a voluntary basis. She now comes in once a week to keep the archives area operating and to train new volunteers in the various tasks required. She has also been elected to the Board.

Beverley has been with us since 1999 and has played a key role in the Library's development as an organisation.

This year's Annual General Meeting was held in Seminar Room 1 at the Ultimo Community Centre on Saturday 4 April. Seventeen members attended. Copies of the Annual Report and the audited accounts were distributed.

Jozefa Sobski, Chair of the Board, welcomed members and outlined the Library's activities during 2008. She thanked Liz Fitzgerald, who took over the position of Treasurer after the 2008 AGM. Liz was on a steep learning curve, helped over the year by Robyn Harriott, the previous Treasurer. The Secretary's Report was received and Bernadette Kerrigan thanked for her input during the year. Christine Lees reported in the Annual Report on the Library Administration, outlining the interaction between the various administration teams and the Board. The Senior Librarian and the Archivist were given special mention. It is their work with the Research Collection and the Archives Collection which is vital to the growth and development of the Library.

The Library held a large number of functions during the year, including the well-attended Annual Fundraising Luncheon in Parliament House, which is our major fundraiser for the year. Also held were the regular lunch-hour talks in both Sydney and Canberra. These are seen as both promoting the Library and raising money towards its day-to-day running costs. The Library also held several special functions, taking part in the Ultimo/Pymont Festival in March and the Ultimo Community Centre Open Day in September. In a combined function with WEL, JSNWL hosted the Sydney launch of Marian Sawyer's history of WEL.

The Chair thanked all those members of the Board and the volunteers who had given so much of their time and energy to promoting the well-being of the Library throughout the year.

Everyone repaired to the Library after the meeting for a get-together lunch.

The Incoming Board

Executive

Jozefa Sobski, Chair
Marie Muir, Vice-Chair

Bernadette Kerrigan, Secretary
Liz Fitzgerald, Treasurer

Board Members

Jan Burnswoods
Robyn Harriott
Sybil Jack
Shirley Jones

Beverley Kingston
Christine Lees
Beverley Sodbinow
Penny Street

Special Appointments

Honorary Auditor, Jann Skinner Public Officer, Christine Lees

DIANA TEMPLE MEMORIAL LECTURES Expanding Our Community Networks

Jessie Street National Women's Library has joined the University of Sydney, ANZAAS and WISENet as a sponsor of the Diana Temple Memorial Lectures. The first in the annual series of commemorative lectures will be held on Thursday 22 October 2009.

Diana was a most supportive member of the Library until her death in 2006. A short account of her achievements is given below.

Diana Temple, AM

Diana taught chemistry at Sydney University, then took up a research position at the Harwell Research Institute in Oxford. She and her husband worked for several years in the US, and after returning to Australia Diana gained a PhD in chemistry and started lecturing in pharmacology at Sydney University. She was part of a group studying the role and achievements of female academics, which resulted in the book *Why So Few?*

Diana was appointed associate professor in the Department of Pharmacology in 1976 and headed the department until 1970. She was an elected member of the academic board before she retired in 1990.

Believing professional women needed to align with like-minded women confronting the same challenges in establishing and maintaining their career, Diana helped establish WISENet (Women in Science Enquiry Network) and worked on the journal from its first issue in 1985. The organisation and the journal are her monuments. She was appointed a member of the Order of Australia in 1999 for 'service to medical and scientific research, particularly in the field of respiratory pharmacology; as an advocate for the role of women in science, and in promoting an understanding of science by the general public.'

FEBRUARY LUNCH-HOUR TALK

**SPEAKER: WENDY BUTTON,
MVO**

Life at Government House and Beyond

On 26 February the first lunch-hour talk for 2009 in Canberra was held. The function was well attended and the audience enjoyed an entertaining and informative presentation by Wendy Button, MVO, about her career at Government House where she served five Governors General from 1987 until late 2008. Wendy's talk was accompanied by an excellent slide presentation, which left the audience in little doubt that she had enjoyed a wonderful career in the service of several Governors General.

Wendy explained that MVO stands for Member in the Royal Victorian Order, which was instituted by Queen Victoria to recognise service to the Crown. Wendy received this award in 1996 and attended the investiture at Buckingham Palace.

APRIL LUNCH-HOUR TALK

The second Canberra Lunch-Hour Talk was held on Thursday, 30 April. The speaker was Caroline Lambert, Executive Director, YMCA, who talked about the 2009 session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

A write-up of this talk will appear in the August newsletter.

JULY LUNCH-HOUR TALK

SPEAKER: LIBBY LLOYD, AM
*From Here to There and Back:
Adventures in Community Activism*

Libby, a former president of UNIFEM Australia and now a member of the White Ribbon Foundation, was appointed chair of the National Council for Reducing Violence against Women and Children in 2008. She advises the Federal Government on issues surrounding domestic and family violence and sexual assault. Libby talks about her work in different capacities, both here and overseas.

Venue: Legislative Assembly Room (Civic Square)

Date & Time: Thursday 30 July 2009, 12 noon for 12.30 start

Entry: Small note donation (suggested \$5 members/concessions and \$10 for others)

To Book: Email to the following: jsnwlc Canberra@yahoo.com.au
OR call Janet on 0448 348 559

*Janet Tomi
Canberra Talks Convenor*

REMEMBERING PINE GAP

The Library is holding an exhibition of historic photos, posters, banners and memorabilia from our archives, which will form part of the celebrations for the Library's 20th birthday. The exhibition will still be on display when we hold our Annual Fundraising Luncheon in Parliament House on 21 September.

The exhibition is a fitting tribute to the 700 women who, in 1983, met at Pine Gap, 19 miles from Alice Springs. Among them was Dr Shirley Fitzgerald, who is opening the exhibition. The women held a demonstration to show their opposition to the nuclear military bases which had been established covertly on Australian land since the 'cold war' period of the 1950s and '60s. The exhibition is also a tribute to the many Australian women like Jessie Street who have promoted peace and freedom, both here and overseas.



*Women at the Peace Camp holding banners
[Photo by Philippa Fincher]*

The items exhibited, with a few exceptions, are all part of the Library's archives, donors to which include the Canberra Women's Archive, women's organisations and individual women who were at Pine Gap. Some items were donated following the 20th anniversary celebration in 2003, at which the Library put on a display of items from its archives.

The emotive photos telling the story of the action have been placed on large Story Boards. These have been carefully restored with the help of a National Library Community Heritage Grant in 2006. This year's exhibition has been supported by a grant from the NSW Arts Council and is made possible by the hard work of Macquarie University student Jessica Hernandez and a committee of volunteers from the Library.

If you have any photos, posters or other memorabilia from the 1983 Peace Camp which you would be willing to have included in the exhibition, please contact Beverley Sodbinow, Jan Burnswoods or Bridget McKern at the Library between 10 am and 3 pm on a Friday.

If you would like to receive an invitation to the opening of the exhibition please contact the Library. You can reach us by phoning 9571 5359 or by emailing info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

is holding

AN EXHIBITION OF THE PINE GAP WOMEN'S PEACE CAMP IN 1983

Fountain Court, Parliament House,
Sydney
Tuesday 1st September - Friday 25th
September

to be opened by
Dr Shirley Fitzgerald, City of Sydney
Historian

INTERACTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Ultimo/Pymont Festival

On Saturday 21 March the Library was invited to join in the Ultimo/Pymont Festival organised by the Harris Community Centre. The theme was 'Living in Harmony: The People and the Planet in 2020.' There were all sorts of multi-cultural performers on stage, and there were stalls, art workshops and many different cultural crafts.

Jessie Street National Women's Library had a small stall of brochures and newsletters in a good position at the corner of Bulwara Road and the park where people passed to visit the farm animals. Christine Lees and Pam Carter enjoyed meeting the locals and telling them about the Library 'just down the road'. One happy outcome was that one of the passers-by called into the Library on the following Monday to become a member and offer herself as a volunteer. It turns out she is a living national treasure. June Lossius was the first woman jockey in Australia. She was thrilled to discover a book we own which portrayed some of her female jockey protégés.

Happily, the Festival has produced the 'Harmony' it was promoting by helping our Library to be part of the local community.

The Barbara Jefferis Award

Three people from Jessie Street National Women's Library attended the Barbara Jefferis Award evening which was held at the Department of Education & Training in Sydney on 27 March, 2009. Kris Clarke, as an employee, was on the welcoming committee of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) which was hosting the occasion. Jozefa Sobski and Christine Lees attended as JSNWL representatives and they appreciated the opportunity to meet people with an interest in women writers and women's issues. It also gave them the chance to promote the Library and show how it could be of value to a wide range of people.

The Award went to Helen Garner for her new book *The Spare Room*, which the judges, Nadia Wheatley, Bernadette Brennan and Susan Wyndham, chose as the obvious winner. The prize of \$35,000 is given each year for the best Australian novel that 'depicts women and girls in a positive way or otherwise empowers the status of women and girls in society'.

The Library was again fortunate to be given copies of all books entered for the award. We are very grateful to the husband of one of our newest volunteers, who works near the ASA and delivered the copies of the books to the Library.

Ultimo TAFE Student Project

Early in March a team of Ultimo TAFE students were asked to find a specialist library for a project for their Certificate III course on Library Management. They contacted the ABC but were told a group had already approached them. However the ABC recommended Jessie Street National Women's Library as an alternative and we were happy to oblige.

On 20 March six women spent a very enjoyable time with Christine Lees discussing the infrastructure, methodology and policies of our Library. They were very impressed with all they saw and realised the value of such a resource which is freely available to all. They went away full of enthusiasm for their project, armed with brochures and newsletters plus photographs of the Library and themselves. This is a wonderful outcome for all. They have material for their project, we will get publicity for the Library, and hopefully this will expand our links with Ultimo TAFE.

*Christine Lees
Board Member*



FEBRUARY LUNCH-HOUR TALK

SPEAKER: WENDY SHARPE
Documenting a War through Art

In her talk on 19 February, Wendy Sharpe kept her audience in thrall with graphic stories about East Timor horror, the inspirational response of East Timorese, and the compassionate and professional Australian troops.

Ideally, to talk about my involvement with documenting INTERFET, Australia's peacekeeping operation in East Timor (1999-2000), I would introduce you to my paintings and drawings. But they are held in the Australian War Memorial (AWM). For their general flavour, there is the AWM's catalogue of my East Timor exhibition in 2000, *New Beginnings: Wendy Sharpe & East Timor* (I'm donating a copy to JSNWL), Betty Churcher *The Art of War*, Scott Bevan *Battle Lines*, and the AWM website. To explore my approach as a war artist, I will take you through some of the stories which inspired my work.

In August 1999 a surprise phone call from the AWM asked 'Would you like to go to East Timor as a commissioned artist?' Now, like everyone else, I'd heard about East Timor's vote for independence from Indonesia, the reprisals that followed—the terrible massacres and destruction—and that Australian and other armies would go to East Timor as Interfet peacekeepers to stop the violence. But I'd never had anything to do with the military before. My career path has been a one track continuum: artist. I painted and drew at school, then as a student did many courses, then exhibited, and then entered competitions. I've been lucky enough to win prizes including the Archibald in 1996. I did not want to be in the line of fire, and I was quite unaware of the AWM war artist scheme or its art collection. What was I being asked to do?

Of course I soon learned that the war artist scheme dating from World War I, had involved many famous artists (including three women in World War II—Nora Heysen, Stella Bowen and Sybil Craig), and their commissioned art is either on display at the AWM or available to the public from its archives. And I realised this was a once in a lifetime opportunity, a huge honour. I said, 'Yes, but I'd like to wait until after the arrival of Australian troops.'

Australian soldiers left Darwin for East Timor in September 1999. In Sydney, I kept wondering what was happening. On 12 December when East Timor had calmed down I arrived in Darwin, somewhat apprehensive about life with the Army, its regimentation, use of acronyms, camouflage uniforms and so

on. With my untidy hair and lipstick, I too had to wear uniform—that of a non-combatant bearing an 'Australian Official Artist' insignia. I had now become apprehensive also about the danger of bad mountain roads in a place like East Timor.

The AWM provided very sympathetic support. 'Your commission is to draw the Australian Army and the East Timorese, to draw your experience.' There were no restrictions on where I went or what I did. This fitted in with my own work style which is always drawing-based. I quickly began drawing what I saw, what happened to me. I had a black satchel with sketch books and drew a lot in charcoal, but I also had gouache which is like watercolour poster paint. I can do that quickly; I can smudge the image and get a lot of tonal contrast. In the morning having breakfast I would draw people around me; wherever we went during the day I would draw, creating in effect a diary in art.

In between briefings on health, East Timorese culture and so on, I started getting to know some Australian soldiers. My bodyguard escort, Private Cameron Simpson, was helpful and very interesting. Other young men opened up to me (myself old enough to be their mother) in a way they might not have to males. Intriguingly, everyone (ages up to 50) gave virtually the same answer to my question, 'Why did you join the Army?' Embarrassed, they would say sheepishly, 'to help people, and be heroic'. The few women (almost all under 25) said much the same. Corporal Alicia Carr asked me to draw her naked. I agreed, provided she wore her Army hat and boots. I suggested that she tell her Army boyfriend in East Timor, 'The artist drew me' so he'd be a bit jealous, assuming 'artist' denoted a man. I believe this is the only AWM painting of a nude female soldier.

When we arrived in Dili harbour, first impressions were of a tropical paradise. The very pointy, lush, green mountains, the palm trees, Portuguese church steeples, and various traditional Portuguese-looking towers resembled a cartoon drawing. But as we drove into the town, the devastation reminded me of Pompeii. Like any small Australian town, Dili had had hotels, shops, cafes, chemists, banks, but they were all smashed and burnt down, except for Indonesian government buildings. It was so deliberate. Out of town, we saw little bungalows, also pillaged. Even from grass huts the bare necessities of life—a saucepan, a couple of plastic plates and a change of clothes—had been taken, and



worse, the people killed. The scale of destruction really shocked me.

So how did people feel about our Army's presence? Everyone waved and cheered. There was great rapport between peacekeepers and East Timorese. I saw refugees brought back into the harbour being reassured by Australia's kind soldiers they'd been told would hurt them. *New Beginnings* shows two drawings of returning refugees, each clutching one small bag of possessions. Incidentally, I heard many stories about the kindness of Australian soldiers. One absolutely wonderful man helped deliver a baby, and had a child named after him whom he was putting through university.

New Beginnings illustrates my most moving experience in East Timor, a visit to Suai, a strongly Catholic town subject to particularly terrible retaliation because of its high pro-independence vote. Everything was burnt and smashed; many people were killed. A few survived by hiding under corrugated iron for three days. Some ran into an unfinished church with a strange zigzag façade, thinking they would be safe, but many were murdered there. Near the church, East Timorese had used charcoal to write all over a white wall 'Thank you' messages in broken English and Tetum (the local dialect). Among drawings of Australian soldiers and hearts, one message read, 'Thank you very much INTOFET my darling'.

On Christmas Eve before midnight Mass, Suai staged a special concert involving all townsfolk and some Australian and New Zealand Army people. In the unbelievable heat, moonlight silhouetted green mountains and palm trees against the night sky. On a brilliantly-lit outdoor stage, East Timorese re-enacted in mime the massacres two months before. English and Tetum narration explained: 'Now they are burning the buildings, now killing the people, now raping the women, now etc. And now INTOFET are chasing them away.' East Timorese wearing white shirts and holding sticks as pretend rifles then ran off. It was so different from how we in the West push away grief and horror. They exorcise it.

For its visual record of Suai, the AWM wanted to complement documentary photography and film with the artist's viewpoint—my impressions, my feelings.

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MARCH LUNCH-HOUR TALK

SPEAKER: DR BEVERLEY KINGSTON

'What Shall We do with Our Girls?'

On Thursday 19 March, Beverley Kingston gave a most illuminating and thought-provoking talk on the recurring anxieties about the adolescent girl in Australia from 1800 to the present day. The talk prompted a large number of questions, comments and discussion afterwards from an attentive audience.

There have been quite a few books recently on how to cope with adolescent daughters, or how to survive as an adolescent girl, e.g. Michael Carr-Gregg's *The Princess/Bitch Face Syndrome* (Penguin 2006) and Kaz Cooke's *Girl Stuff* (Viking 2007). The most recent book, Maggie Hamilton's *What's Happening to Our Girls?* (Viking 2008) is actually quite alarmist. There has also been recent panic about girls binge drinking and renewed concern about rising levels of violence among young women.

There's a tendency to blame feminism for what's happening to our girls. There's also a quite fierce feminist response, much of it focused on rights to newly liberated sexuality such as Emily Maguire's *Princesses and Porn Stars*, (2008) and Nina Fennell's article in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Don't Patronize Ladies Who Raunch', in which she says that, as a 25-year-old woman and a feminist, she feels compelled to comment. The point she makes is that modern liberated women like her friends can take up pole dancing, have boob jobs, enjoy big nights out on the booze, swear, smoke and have sex and still be immensely successful and hold down good jobs.

The fundamental reason for the worry about what's happening to girls in Australia is that they are the future wives and mothers and the quality of society obviously depends on the quality of the breeding stock. In the very early days of the colony there was concern about how girls were treated, because there were so few of them. In the first 50 years of settlement, females were immensely outnumbered by males. Because there weren't enough girls to go around you had to conserve and protect them as part of the breeding stock.

As early as 1800, Anna Josepha King, the Governor's wife, observed that there were quite a few girls running around the streets who had no parents. She decided to set up a school to look after them and make sure that they could be converted into good wives and mothers. She and the Governor set up the Female Orphans School, the first school or institution for children in New South Wales. Only about 21 girls attended, but the idea that girls should be educated to make them useful

as wives and mothers continued to be very strong in all the early schools, which were equally open to girls and boys. Education wasn't compulsory, which meant that most often girls didn't go. Their mothers needed them at home to help with housework and the other children. Nevertheless, quite a lot of girls learned to read and write. They married well because they were in short supply and the men they chose were those likely to be the best husbands, providers and fathers.

There's a general theory that girls were repressed and put upon in the 19th century. I don't think that this was so in Australia. I think that girls, in general, were highly regarded and treated respectfully and given a fair amount of freedom. Many had access to horses and were allowed to ride and to go unchaperoned. Swimming was something that girls did well all the time in Australia. A report from the Chief Inspector of Police in NSW in the 1850s described the girls and the boys swimming together in the Harbour. Visitors to the colony often wrote 'the girls swim like fish!' Dorothea Mackellar of *My Country* fame kept swimming until quite late in her life. Australian girls had a considerable amount of freedom, trust and respect and I think a great many of them actually understood that they were destined for the marriage market.

The shortage of women lasted all through the 19th century. The male/female ratio was only beginning to even out after the convict system came to an end, when the gold rushes occurred, bringing in mainly adult male immigrants. Because the female population was increasing through the birth of girl babies, while the male population grew quickly through immigration, the average ages of females and males diverged quite significantly. Older men were happy to marry younger women and in the latter part of the 19th century, wives tended to be quite a bit younger than their husbands. One of the comments in visitors' accounts of life in the Australian colonies is that the women seemed to age quickly. This may have been because they were exhausted by having big families and starting them so young. Another comment was that they had bad teeth. This may also be related to big families, but it was certainly a product of affluence and access to and a fondness for lollies.

Visitors from overseas often asked of Australian girls 'But would you marry one?' They were generally thought to be a bit forward—not real ladies. Their complexions were terrible, though it was admitted they were very practical and

capable. Most Australian girls could cut and sew a dress. They were acknowledged as good cooks, especially of cakes. You see this in the history of Australian eating practices. Australian women bake cakes for fetes or fundraisers. The number of cookbooks produced in Australia as fundraising ventures is fantastic.

Late 19th century nationalist sentiment was reflected in the way Australian girls were regarded. Whereas overseas comparisons found Australian girls a bit rough, in Australia the local girls began to be seen as lovely, sporty, even feisty. Miles Franklin's heroine in *My Brilliant Career* is a good example. Girls represented Australia in the early Olympics in swimming and running. They excelled at tennis. They also became well known as singers—Nellie Melba, June Bronhill and a host of others. This was said to be related to the climate and a diet that made them big and strong with good lungs. Until about the middle of the 20th century, Australian girls were regarded as good, wholesome, lively and capable. The verdict now was 'they make splendid wives'.

Have things now changed? In 1959, the Education Department at the University of Sydney did a massive questionnaire on adolescence in Sydney. One finding was that, in girls, the years 14 and 15 were frequently marked by rudeness, disturbing to the parents. But after girls turned 17, mothers had little need to fear bad-mannered behaviour.

That finding is the earliest I've seen describing the Princess/Bitch Face syndrome. It recurs thereafter and becomes standard in the literature on adolescence and education. Girls seem to go through a difficult phase in early adolescence, because of hormonal changes due to the onset of menstruation. By 2006 this has become common enough for a whole book to be written on 'how to live with your daughter who's going through this phase'. But there are other factors involved; girls now mostly live in smaller families and don't have so much responsibility for housework or childcare. Up until family size began to decline significantly, most girls juggled both. They became responsible for the things that would be of great significance to them later in their lives at a much earlier age than boys did. Boys were allowed a longer period in education before becoming the head of a family themselves.

Until sometime in the first half of the 20th century, most girls had practical training and experience for what was to be their life's work—childcare and housework. This began changing as families got smaller and girls were no longer needed at home. They could stay

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APRIL LUNCH-HOUR TALK

SPEAKER: MARY BENTLEY

Women and the Royal Flying Doctor Service

On Thursday 16 April, Mary Bentley, an RFDS volunteer, engagingly reminded her audience how much the Service means for remote Australia. She highlighted the link between women's key role in outback life, and their role with the remarkable Flying Doctors.

A bit of history first. Isolation was—still is—the biggest problem for Australia's inland. Early last century, it appalled John Flynn, a young Presbyterian minister, as he journeyed around his enormous outback parish with his two camels. The mailman might come perhaps once every three months. Flynn used to tell a story of coming across a woman all by herself in her little humpy, her husband away. She started to make him a cup of tea, but suddenly began to cry hysterically. She said, 'I've just realised I've used my last match. I will not have another match for three months.' That was reality 100 years ago.

John Flynn had once intended to become a missionary in the Islands. But a Jennie Litchfield turned him in a different direction. 'It's the women of the inland that are going to save this country' she said. 'At the moment it is an all male thing. If we can make it safe for men to bring wives and families to the inland knowing there will be help when needed, we shall sweeten the country.' Flynn knew that Australia depended on primary industry and trade, that the wealth of the country was inland and knew also that if the woman in a family succumbed, the whole family was likely to fall apart. To support women, he recognised that the first priority was to provide the security of medical help. So he persuaded some young women with nursing training to take on bush nursing. They were based at local centres—a store or pub, the sort of place where medicine chests are kept even today. Bush nurses, and later a few hospitals at junction points, even if 300 or 400 miles apart, were a start.

With World War I came radio and aircraft. A young Australian pilot in Europe, aware of the problem of isolation, wrote to Flynn, 'We have planes, we have wireless. This could glue Australia together.' Unfortunately the pilot never came back, but his message did. Flynn continued to lobby influential people for money as he had done since 1908 but it was 1928 before he got the first plane off the ground, courtesy of Hudson Fysh of QANTAS who lent him a plane for a year 'to see how it goes'. So began the RFDS, bringing medical care to everybody, including Aboriginal people, across this big wide land.

Nurses he recruited for the most part came from Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane, town girls in their middle twenties and quite naïve, but they coped with extracting teeth and delivering babies in all sorts of situations. Most did a two-year stint, then a refresher, and back for more. The same with the pilots; they didn't want to go back to landing with lights, bells and whistles. They accepted the challenge of bumpy airstrips.

Radio communication was assured through the pedal wireless, a solution to lack of electricity in the bush. This worked like a telephone party line. Early in the morning, when signals travel best, important calls for business and to the doctor would be made, after which anybody could get on the line and talk. People shared joys and problems in these 'galah sessions', which truly helped to glue the inland together. Unfortunately, modern technology has overtaken pedal radio and 'galah sessions'. People now go direct to the service needed. So isolation is again one of the biggest problems in the inland, which the RFDS is trying to overcome. John Flynn died in 1951.

So what does the RFDS do? It helps those with medical problems who live, travel or work anywhere in inland Australia. In emergencies in childbirth, heart attack and all sorts of accidents we can arrive anywhere in Australia within 90 minutes. Over 50% of emergency callouts are from people on holidays in four-wheel drives. Treatment is free and begins immediately.

Covering Australia, an area as big as the whole of western Europe or the United States is an enormous operation. The 18 to 20 RFDS administrative centres around Australia are interconnected. Each centre has at least two planes, sometimes three, each plane with a dedicated doctor, two nurses and three pilots for 24 hour operation. There have been women pilots, and even one or two women doctors who have been pilots as well. We have leading technology. We have miniaturised intensive care equipment in aircraft. Our system transmits patient records to the hospital or centre of destination so that major treatment can start straightaway. Each plane costs \$10m, plus \$1.5m to customise it as an intensive care unit.

Some 50 planes go out from centres, and all air ambulances, except urban helicopter services, come under the RFDS umbrella. Mostly we fly twin jet props, particularly in the southeast where



we're flying over sea. For the huge distances in Western Australia where single engine planes are preferred, we contemplate in the future using some jets to reduce the transit time. Regulations require take off and landing only on registered airstrips, but most places we go to don't have these. We do our best to comply. RFDS arrived to pick up one patient, to find the airstrip lit, and fenced to keep kangaroos out, but minus a key to the gate. They took the patient up over the fence, then into the plane.

RFDS holds clinics all over the outback every day of the week, providing comprehensive services for major health problems, as well as everyday medical checks (cardiac disease, diabetes, asthma, cancer, mental disorder etc), and immunisation. A 'Fly round' clinic team comprises a cardiologist, GP, dietitian, dermatologist, dentist and nurses. As in the early days, we also have medicine chests, frequently in pubs or roadhouses where people gather. RFDS doctors take a holistic approach: to the individual and the family unit. Treatment begins immediately because a clinic may not return for a couple of months. Aboriginal people accept our treatment and our care and some Aboriginal people are training to join RFDS. We go to where they are, and are accepted in the reserve areas.

We now have women doctors as well as men, a change for the outback from the long time male orientation. There are things women patients hesitate to discuss with a male GP and that could be critical. Several Sydney women doctors leave busy general practices for two or three days a month. We fly them out and they talk especially with women, woman-to-woman. Nine times out of ten, the Flying Doctor stays at the base to continue phone consultations while nurses go out. Each nurse has three qualifications, general, midwifery and intensive care. Monitoring pregnancy is a big job. Another big job is transport, of people to and from hospitals for high technology treatment, and of mothers to and from suitable birthing places.

State and federal governments meet 30% of our day-to-day running costs which include doctors' insurance and registration. The other 70% of running costs and all capital expenditure come from donations, legacies, sponsors and fundraising. Just before Christmas three physiotherapists cycled from Perth to

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Sharpe, continued from page 6

Personally, I also wanted my work to express feelings. But more than that, I wanted the Suai church to be specific and recognisable, and to intensify whatever impression I had by the way I drew—more jagged, more scary, more dramatic. By moonlight I did shadowy drawings in my sketch book—not detail, but main sketches. One soldier looking at my early drawing of the church said, ‘That’s just what it feels like.’ I later did many, many drawings about our amazing visit to Suai, including a large oil, *Midnight at Suai Cathedral*.

I was with the Army in East Timor for only a few, incredibly intense weeks, returning home just before New Year. Over January and for several more months I worked from my sketch books just as intensely, long days every day. I found myself especially moved by the determination of East Timorese. I honestly cannot remember which drawings were done in East Timor and which in Sydney. Photographs served only as reminders. By contrast, Rick Amor, the other official artist for East Timor, shapes his personal perspective working entirely from photographs. Altogether, I did some 500 quick drawings, watercolours, pastels and oils. The AWM also has my sketch books and my work diary which records many soldiers’ stories.

The commission was an extraordinary experience. It gave me the rare luxury of untrammelled freedom to do what I love best: to draw day and night. I had had no understanding of the Army and still have mixed feelings, but I saw such kindness and professionalism. Army people were fantastic, and I realised just how incredibly chancy and volatile war is. I became convinced that we need an Army for peacekeeping to stop terrible things happening to innocent people.

And I’m now on the AWM Council, the only person with no military background. As a representative of the public I have an art education, but it is more significant that my interest is in people—in the AWM’s rich record of life at the time and its fabulous art collection. The past is brought to life through stories like mine from East Timor.

*Transcription by Helen Ruby
Abbreviated version by Margot Simington*

Kingston, continued from page 7

at school longer and there was pressure for them to have access to higher education as well as to the jobs that flow from education.

As average family size declines to one or two children, the likelihood arises that the only children in the family will be girls. So the relationship between parents and children changes. The father’s relationship to his daughters becomes a

matter of some significance, especially for him, but also for them. I think this is where the princess/bitch face comes from. She’s partly the object of her father’s expectations. In the large, old-fashioned family, the father tended to pay attention to the boys, who were likely to succeed him in the business or follow his profession. In these smaller families with only daughters, he’s got to decide if he’s going to treat them as possible inheritors of his business or professional skills. Stories of successful women show that many follow their fathers. Most women politicians have a father somewhere in the game.

The other possibility with a father/daughter relationship is sexualising of the daughter, with the father treating her as a beautiful young girl. This emphasises and enhances her status as a young sexual object. I’ve heard fathers actually talk about the difficulties in keeping their hands off. We know it happens because it comes up in court cases. I’ve also heard mothers talk about what they would do to their husbands if they found them interfering with their daughters. But the more usual development is that the mother becomes a kind of enemy—the old Freudian stuff of the contest between mother and daughter for the father. So the girl is getting dreadfully mixed messages from both parents.

Other significant facts in modern life are: the difficulties where the child in one-child families carries the expectations of both parents; the problem of a broken family; and the increased peer contact between children, particularly through the use of modern technology. Mobile phones and computers enable them to set up networks and gangs in ways that were impossible 50 years ago. The consequences are that many more young females are exposed and vulnerable and are living in a more unstable, unsettled and unsettling world.

Coming back to books and the problems about binge drinkers, it seems that such behaviour is due to several factors—the lowered age of puberty; the uncertainty in the world at the present time; the fact that many young girls no longer have any experience of either childcare or housework; and that they are now encouraged to obtain as much education as possible. I think it’s true that in the pursuit of education—and this is where feminism does have something to answer for—and the pursuit of economic independence and employment, there has been a tendency to drive out all kinds of knowledge and experience that most women still need—childraising, and to a lesser extent, housekeeping. Girls who are no longer needed to look after little brothers and sisters are on the train on their way home from work, knocking off bottles of Vodka cruiser.

There’s been a tendency for us—and we always do this—to push the blame onto the victims. These girls bear an incredible responsibility without either the knowledge or resources to cope. They are allowed to be children until they are suddenly adults without proper preparation for adult responsibilities. When they do become adults, they are told that what they have to do is get well-paid jobs. Lots of them would like to be kindergarten teachers or work in a childcare centre, but you can’t even do either without a degree. There is nowhere really, for a girl of ordinary ability to do the only thing her body tells her she should be doing, which is looking after babies.

*Transcription by Helen Ruby
Abbreviated version by Shirley Jones*

Bentley, continued from page 8

Sydney netting \$15,000. Some madmen in fancy dress drive pre-1970 cars (with backup teams) around the outback off main roads for five days netting \$1.5m annually.

Many women have been part of the effort to support the RFDS and the ‘biggest waiting room in the world’. Not only Jennie Litchfield and pioneering nurses, doctors and pilots, but those running the centres, thousands of volunteers and fundraisers have agreed with John Flynn that RFDS work is essential to ‘Keep Australia Alive’.

*Transcription by Helen Ruby
Abbreviated version by Margot Simington*

OUR 'LIFE STORY' COMPETITION

Weaving Australian Women's Stories

Our competition, run in conjunction with Inner Wheel District 51, has now closed. Thank you to all who sent in entries. The number was fewer than we had expected, but that is not surprising. The Library’s telephone number was changed just before the competition flyers went out and since there was no message on our phone directing callers to our new number, numerous people were unable to get in touch. We are very sorry if you were one of those who tried to, but failed.

The entries have come from all over Australia. At the moment, we are arranging for a panel to begin the judging.

We hope that as many of you as possible will book to come to the Award Luncheon on 17 June. It promises to be an interesting event.

A booking form is enclosed.



OVERSEAS NEWS

UNIFEM—Say No to Violence Campaign

Nearly 250,000 individuals and 35 governments have signed the online petition for this campaign. UNIFEM has handed all names to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and looks to governments to take action to end violence against women and girls.

European Women's Lobby Policies

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest non-government women's organisation in the European Union, representing 2000 direct member organisations and 28 European countries. EWL's main objective is to fight for equality between men and women, thus ensuring that gender equality is in all EU policies.

Australia's Involvement with the International Alliance of Women (IAW)

Australia has always had a high profile in the IAW, since early in its inception in 1904. Pat Giles from Western Australia was President from 1966 till 2004.

Pat Goble, Treasurer of the League of Women Voters of Victoria, is IAW Regional Co-ordinator for the Pacific and has attended all the IAW Board meetings and Congresses for about 40 years.

Priscilla Todd, a member of WEL in Melbourne, was IAW Secretary-General for eight years, and is now editor of the IAW newsletter.

Pat Richardson, a member of JSNWL living in Nambucca Heads, is IAW membership secretary, operating an international switchboard by email for the organisation. She is an ex-officio member of the IAW Board.

Pat, who supplied us with this IAW information, writes that all are volunteers and pay their own way to the IAW Board meetings which are held in different countries each year. She says they have formed great friendships over the years.

OBITUARY

SHEILA SWAIN, AM (1920 – 2009)

Sheila, who died aged 89, believed that there should be no barriers in life holding women back. When she graduated in economics from the University of Sydney, she became secretary to the chief economist at the Rural Bank. These days, she would no doubt have been offered a much more senior position.

Sheila went on to spend much of her time promoting the cause of women in local government. She was councillor on Hunters Hill Municipal Council from 1971 to 1991 and in 1980 became the first elected mayor of that suburb. Active in the Australian Local Government Women's Association, she later became national president. She was a member of the NSW Heritage Council and involved in saving the Vienna Cottage, a workman's house at Hunters Hill now held by the National Trust. Until late 2008, she was still organising monthly heritage talks there.

Sheila Burns Fraser was born in Sydney and educated at Hornsby Girls High School. At 16 she won an exhibition to the University of Sydney, but after her father lost his job, she worked at the Fisher Library to support herself and studied economics at night. Sheila joined the Commonwealth Public Service in Canberra during the war, collecting information about resources in case of a Japanese invasion. She later moved to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, where she started the first survey of production in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation area, a big postwar project. In 1949 she spent six weeks in Geneva as an observer with the Australian delegation to the United Nations.

Returning to Canberra in 1952, she met and married economist Geoffrey Swain. While she was raising their two sons she joined the P&C at Boronia Park Public School and in 1964 joined the Needs of Education campaign, lobbying for more funding for education. Sheila's research showed that Australia's spending on education was one of the lowest in the developed world.

In 1966, Sheila started a new career, teaching economics with the NSW Department of Technical and Further Education, retiring in 1980 as senior head teacher of English and economics at Meadowbank TAFE. She then joined the council of Mitchell College of Advanced Education in Bathurst. Here she encouraged women in all aspects of college life. When Mitchell became part of Charles Sturt University in 1989, Sheila established and funded four scholarships for female students suffering financial hardship. A building at the university is named after her.

In 1986 Sheila was named Outstanding Woman of the Year by the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women, and in 1987 was appointed a member of the Order of Australia. She is survived by her husband Geoff, sons Justin and Doric and two granddaughters.

*Adapted from the obituary by Harriet Veitch appearing in
The Sydney Morning Herald, 28-29 March 2009*

We are very sorry to hear of the death of Sheila Swain. She was a stalwart member of the Library for many years, joining soon after it was established. She donated much material, both books and archival papers. She is sadly missed by those who knew her.—Ed

DID YOU KNOW?

A Forgotten Bit of History

Between the 12th and 14th centuries in Belgium and northern France and Germany, women set up an organisation that became known as the Beguines. These women were devoutly Christian but did not want to enter a convent and be dominated by the male clergy. They provided stimulation and security for each other and a focal point for discussing the scriptures. As wealthy women joined the Beguines, the movement bought houses for members, but women were free to live in them for as long as they wished and then leave.

They provided health care for their sick and aged members. They educated young girls and taught them to spin and to weave, portable skills that would enable them to earn a living. Well-to-do families sent daughters there to be educated before marriage. The Beguines became highly regarded in their communities. As the movement developed both in esteem and wealth, whole areas of cities, such as Strasbourg in northern France, came to be dominated by beguinages.

The Beguines were responsible only to

the Pope. But the bishops became hostile because of the independence from church dictates that the Beguines enjoyed. They lobbied the then Pope, who finally undermined the movement by requiring that the women in the beguinages should live there permanently under the control of the local clergy. In effect, they would become convents. The movement of course collapsed.

This is 200 years of women's history. Little is written about it and nothing of it appears in the history books.

NOTES & QUOTES

Rousseau asserts that the education of woman should always be relative to the men: 'To please, to be useful to us, to make us love and esteem them, to educate us when young and take care of us when grown up, to advise, to console us, to render our lives easy and agreeable—these are the duties of women at all times.'

Woman: the peg on which the wit hangs his jest, the preacher his text, the cynic his grouch and the sinner his justification.
Helen Rowland

Life is easier to take than you'd think; all that is necessary is to accept the impossible, do without the indispensable and bear the intolerable.
Kathleen Norris

The cock croweth but the hen delivereth the goods.
Anon

There is nothing in life but to go on perfectly self-poised, satisfied that you are doing what is best under the circumstances ... and that while we should pay proper deference to man's opinion the real dignity of life is to be independent of it.
Mary A. Dodge

Why are women so much more interesting to men than men are to women?
Virginia Woolf

One reason I don't drink is that I want to know when I'm having a good time.
Nancy, Lady Astor



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