



NEWSLETTER

JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

Vol 14 No 3
August 2003

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THE LOAN COLLECTION

The Library has two separate collections of books — the Research Collection and the Loan Collection. Items from the Research Collection can be accessed at the Library and many are available on Interlibrary loan, but are not available on general loan.

However, all items in the Loan Collection are available for financial members of the Library to borrow. Many items the Library holds are not held in any other library in the country. There are out-of-print books, there are numerous volumes of novels by early Australian women writers, as well as copies of novels by present-day writers. We hold both fiction and non-fiction titles, in fact whatever your interests are, we are sure to have something that grabs your imagination.

Don't think that because you live out of Sydney and cannot come into the library, you will miss out on being able to borrow. Just let us know what books you want and we will post them to you. And you can hold them for five weeks. The Library will pay the postage to your home address, but asks that you pay the return postage. Have you some special title you haven't been able to borrow elsewhere? Look up our website for the names of titles we hold. If you are not on the internet, call us with your request.

Here are some examples of the sort of material the Loan Collection contains.

Novels by

Ada Cambridge, Barbara Hanrahan, Jean Devanny, Eleanor Dark, Miles Franklin, Christina Stead, Helen Garner, Kate Grenville, Kylie Tennant, Thea Astley.

Poetry by

Judith Wright, Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker), Dorothy Porter, Marjorie Pizer and many others.

Jessie Street's autobiography (a revised version is now being prepared) and a biography on her.

Some titles that might interest you.

Heartland by Angelika Fremd — a novel about Inge Heinrich's coming of age as a German migrant in Australia.

Clara Morison by Catherine Helen Spence — a tale of South Australia during the gold rush, first published in 1854. This is the first novel with an Australian setting, written by a woman.

The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism. Written by Robin Morgan, the book includes a chapter entitled 'Wargasm'.

The Weaker Vessel by Antonia Fraser is a chronicle of the lives of women — wives, warriors, heiresses, midwives, preachers — in 17th century England.

JSNWL FUNCTIONS

Lunch-Hour Talks, 2003

Venue The Lady Mayoress' Rooms, Town Hall, George Street

Date and Time Third Thursday in the month from 12 noon to 1.30 pm

Entry \$20 (non-members) \$15 (members). Light lunch included

For catering purposes, please let us know you are coming. Contact tel (02) 9876 3927 or (02) 9265 9486 or email shirleyjones@ozemail.com.au

Note: Venue for the August Talk is Southern Function Room, Level 4, Town Hall House, 456 Kent Street

August Talk — Thursday 28th

Anne Whitehead — *Mary Gilmore:*

Bluestocking in Patagonia

Anne Whitehead, writer, TV producer and award-winning scriptwriter, talks of Australian poet Mary Gilmore's difficult years in Patagonia and of her own encounters following in Mary's footsteps.

October Talk — Thursday 16th

Shirley Jones — *In Our Collection: Readings and Writings*

Jessie Street National Women's Library has a unique and irreplaceable collection of material on women. Shirley, one of the co-founders of the Library, talks about the collection and reads excerpts from some of the more interesting and unusual items.

November Talk — Thursday 20th

Ruth Wilson — *In Another Person's Skin*

Ruth has been training teachers and students to undertake oral history projects in the classroom. She explains how the method can be adapted for students of all ages. A group of students interviewed child survivors of the Holocaust. Ruth shows a video demonstrating the impact of these interviews on the students involved.

PARLIAMENTARY LUNCHEON

MONDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2003

GUEST SPEAKER: FAITH BANDLER — *Jessie Street for Peace*

Don't miss out on this event.

Booking forms were enclosed in the June newsletter.
If you've mislaid yours, contact the Library.

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 sole focus on collecting and preserving the literary and cultural heritage of women.

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 from the Research Collection on interlibrary loan. Financial members of JSNWL may borrow from the Loan Collection.

Location: Level 1, Town Hall House
456 Kent Street, Sydney

Public Transport Services

Trains Town Hall Station

Buses Queen Victoria Building,
George St, York St and Druitt St

DID YOU KNOW ...?

about the great women's peace petition of August 1643 — during the English Civil War? This was at a time when women were not expected to speak in public or to present petitions to Parliament. Large numbers of women arrived at the House of Commons wearing white silk ribbons in their hats to cry for peace. They forced their way into the yard at Westminster, yelling at dignitaries on their way to the House of Lords. "We will have Peace!" and preventing many from passing. By the afternoon, the women had effectively blockaded the House for two hours. When the militia men, sent to disperse them, shot powder, the women hurled brickbats in reply. A troop of soldiers was ordered out to deal with them, but the women simply tore the colours from their hats and assaulted them. Angered, the troops started to use the flat of their swords against the women and one was said to have been killed.

From: Fraser, Antonia *The Weaker Vessel*
(Vintage Books, London, 1985)
pp 228-30

CANBERRA TALKS

JULY LUNCH-HOUR TALK

Speaker: Professor Ann Curthoys

Manning Clark Professor of History at ANU

"From Freedom Ride to Women's Liberation"

The lively introduction to Ann's talk was orchestrated by Liz O'Brien, Convenor of the National Association of Community Legal Centres and long-time friend of Ann Curthoys. In true collective fashion, everyone was encouraged to help introduce the speaker: 'Who was central to the introduction of women's studies at ANU?', 'Who was the first Manning Clark Professor of History?' and 'Who participated in the Freedom Ride of 1965, aiming to raise awareness of the political and social position of Indigenous people and has recently published a book of analysis and reflection on it?' You guessed it- Ann Curthoys!

Professor Curthoys' talk was one of thoughtfulness, honesty and insight, focussing on the politics of exclusion

and alienation that shaped the early relationship between Indigenous women and the Women's Liberation Movement. Issues touched on included the role of non-violence in political action, white women as beneficiaries of colonisation, the assumption of a common gendered experience and the rise of identity politics. Ann Curthoys' interest and academic rigour were well illustrated by her considered and candid responses to the many audience questions. It was another well-attended and fascinating lunch time-talk.

*Wendy Sanderson
Canberra Board Member*

To obtain a transcript of this talk or a previous Canberra lunch-time talk contact Wendy on 6249 7537 or wendyandel@netspeed.com.au.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

September Lunch-time Talk

Speaker: Elena Rosenman

"The Herstory of Toora Single Women's Shelter"

Elena Rosenman, a Resident Support Worker at Toora Single Women's Shelter, has been commissioned to write the herstory of the organisation for its 20th birthday. Elena has been interviewing extensively and will write the herstory reflecting its challenges and changes within a broader feminist context, including the Canberra Women's Movement.

When: Thursday, 4 September,
12.30 to 2 pm

Where: Canberra Museum and
Gallery, Civic Square

Entrance: \$15 (non-members)
\$10 (members)
\$5 (students/unwaged)

Light refreshments included. Pay
at the door.

Bookings essential as space limited.
Contact Wendy on 6249 7537 or
wendyandel@netspeed.com.au

December Celebration

In cooperation with the Canberra branch of the Older Women's Network, Jessie Street National Women's Library will celebrate the day white Australian women first made their way to polling booths across the country. Senator Kate Lundy will join other Canberra women at the Canberra Museum and Gallery to celebrate.

Stay tuned for more information. To join the Canberra contact list contact Wendy at wendyandel@netspeed.com.au or (02) 6249 7537.



LIBRARY MATTERS



VOLUNTEERS' NEWS

There has been much movement of volunteers during the last two months both in and out of the library — volunteers returning to the workforce and new volunteers joining the team. The number of active volunteers overall now stands at 55, including 12 Board members and three on long leave but there is still a need for additional help. Lynn Sitsky has kindly agreed to represent the library volunteers as an ex-officio member of the Board.

During August the Library put on a display on 'Early Australian Women Writers' in the City of Sydney Archives reception area. Then during History Week, 13-20 September 2003, JSNWL will celebrate 200 years of the print media in Australia with a display on 'Australian Women of the Press'. This has been an ongoing JSNWL co-operative project with 12 volunteers contributing their research, editorial or artistic skills. This display will be mounted at the entrance to the City of Sydney Library on Level 3 of Town Hall House.

Wendi Balbi
Volunteer Coordinator



NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to all our new members.

Helena Ackroyd
Judy Ashenden
Jean Bailey
Gillian Barton
Marina Bridle
Jasmine Bruce
Sue Comrie
Aedeem Cremin
Lucy Halliday
Gillian Hopkins
Shauna Jarrett
Anne Johnson
Louise Lake
Susan O'Neill
Elizabeth Pulie
Denise Russell
Bonnie Schumacher
Barbara Smith
and a new organisational member
Film Australia, based in Melbourne

LIBRARY NEWS

Space Problems

As many of you are aware, we have run out of space in our premises in Town Hall House, which will no longer adequately accommodate our growing collection of books and archival material.

We have brought our problems to the attention of the City of Sydney Council, who have come up with a possible space we might move into. We are investigating its suitability.

There will be further information on this in our next newsletter.

Recent Donation

A very special collection of books has recently been added to our holdings. June James, who established The Feminist Bookshop, located in the early days in Eastwood, has had to move from her house at Blackheath and has donated her magnificent collection of books on women to the Library.

So far only four of the 33 cartons received have been sorted. Among these are many volumes of Judith Wright's poetry, a book of short stories by Henry Handel Richardson called *The Adventures of Cuffy Mahoney*, and many of Dymphna Cusack's works that we do not hold. There are also two copies of *The Butcher Shop* by Jean Devanny. One is the 1926 edition, banned in New Zealand and later Australia. The other is a reprint of 1981, with an explanation of the banning. As the blurb says, the book was banned 'for being disgusting, indecent and communistic, in other words for promoting revolutionary ideas about the role of women, and for a bold portrayal of the brutality of farm life'. Fascinating stuff! There are also several books of plays by Australian women, including two by Dymphna Cusack, *Morning Sacrifice* (inscribed by the author) and *Red Sky at Morning*. These plays will help fill gaps in our holdings in this area.

This is altogether a mouth-watering collection and we are very grateful to June for her generosity.

ARCHIVES NEWS

Helen Leonard's Papers

Helen was a superb photographer who, over the years, photographed a huge

number of the women's events which took place between the 1970s and the early 2000s. She also took portraits of many of the women involved in the women's movement during that time.

Volunteer Judith Webb is working one day a week on this collection. She has a Fine Arts degree, majoring in photography and has done a lot of research into how we should preserve the 13,000 photographs. We are very grateful to have been donated \$10,000 from Helen's estate, to help meet the costs of preserving this invaluable material.

New Collection

We have recently received some papers from Sharyn Black, who tried, unsuccessfully, to set up a peace museum. The collection is small but interesting, and in some ways complements our Women for Survival papers and the Pine Gap material.

Beverley Sodbinow, Archivist

NOTES & QUOTES

To tan easily and evenly: Drink rich iron herb teas or add a few drops of iodine to your bath.

To cure snoring: Take 6 drops of olive oil and a pinch of mustard before getting into bed.

Bites of Mad Dogs: Apply caustic potash at once to the wound and give enough whiskey to cause sleep.

Baldness: Rub the part morning and night with onions, till it is red, afterwards with honey — or wash it with a decoction of boxwood.

From: *Household Lore*, compiled by Mrs N. Pescott. This is a collection of recipes, household hints, letters and advice from the early settlers in the goldfields. Published by the Ballarat Historical Park Association, 1977.

This delightful volume was among the books donated by June James

MAY LUNCH-HOUR TALK
SPEAKER: DR JANE HALL
“Just Another Jump”

On 15 May, a day of torrential rain, Jane Hall gave an intimate group gathered in the Lady Mayoress’ Rooms, a fascinating insight into the various directions her life has taken. Jane has a PhD in marine ecology, is a world champion in paddle sport and, among other activities goes abseiling, sea kayaking and mountain bike riding.

Throughout my sporting life and my careers I’ve been presented with a number of challenges. I see them as doors of opportunity and I realise now, that in some cases I’ve had to close doors so that other doors could open.

Prior to doing my PhD in marine ecology, I worked at the Malecology department at the Australian Museum. You could call me a snail dentist. Yes, snails actually do have teeth, and that’s how we classify them. One of my jobs was to extract their teeth and photograph them under the electron microscope. My biggest challenge was to take the teeth out of a genus called a Malogyra, in which the snail — not the tooth — was only one millimetre wide. I went on and did my PhD studying little critters called Ostracods, which live on the sea floor in the harbour. I wrote a few papers and described a few new species. It fascinated me to realise that although we have polluted the harbour there are so many new species still there just waiting to be discovered.

I worked for Sydney Water for a number of years as a marine ecologist, and was in the very first team of divers that dived near the old cliff-face outfalls at North Head where all the effluent went out to sea. Eventually Sydney Water installed the deep-water outfalls and as soon as the water was clear we were able to check out what effect 100 years of effluent had had on the sea life around the old outfalls. People thought that the effluent had destroyed all life. But the first time we jumped in it was like jumping into the tropics. The brown and red algae had died out but the fish were there in their tens of thousands. Not only had the effluent obviously not depopulated the area, but a lot of the fish were coming in for a free feed. And diving along the bottom of the ocean floor you’d come across a huge mass of apple seeds, just huge, all in one area, and a little bit further and there were

enormous fur balls of human hair! I don’t think that was ever reported in the literature.

I’ve also been lucky enough to be involved in Clean Up Australia and Clean Up the World. I was invited onto the Clean Up Australia board through my contacts with sport actually, by someone who knew of my background in science and in the environment. Clean Up Australia didn’t actually have any environmentalists on the board. I think this organisation is probably one of our most successful Australian grown, non-government organisations, certainly in the environmental side of things. We expanded into Clean Up the World, so now there is a weekend in September, in which 145 countries and millions of people are involved also. It’s certainly been a great export from Australia. However, because funding for Clean Up Australia Day primarily comes from sponsorship, and there is no funding from the government, we have suffered in the last few years with sponsorship drying up. Clean Up Australia has a budget of over a million dollars a year so as you can understand and appreciate we need those funds coming in

One of my more recent challenges is adventure racing. This is a very new and difficult sport and I first became involved in 1995. The event I’ve been involved in goes over anything from 500 kilometres to 800. You race it with a team of four, one of whom must be a woman, and I captain the Australian team. You have a map and a compass and you have to plot checkpoints on your map. You must travel between each checkpoint because the race organisers need to know where to look for you if you get lost and that happens quite a lot. The events take place in different parts of the world and they are international teams races. It is always in a wilderness area and that has certainly been one of the attractions for me. We trek or run, we mountain bike, we kayak, and we also abseil and climb. We have had horse-riding sections, we’ve had white water rafting, white water canoeing, and we’ve even had camel riding when we raced in Morocco. On average we slept for an hour and a half a night. In Borneo for example we raced over about 550 kilometres in 5 days so we had 9 hours sleep in that whole time.

I have given a lot of motivational, leadership, team-work talks based on adventure racing. One of my most successful was a talk on leadership I gave to the military. Leadership in adventure racing and in military operations are very different. In the military, the captain tells everybody what to do; in adventure racing everyone contributes. One of the things about teamwork is the need to know people’s strengths and weaknesses, so that you can use all the strengths of some to make up for the weaknesses of others. And I tell this story about an American Navy Seals team. The Seals are an elite military group, which are brought in very early in a lot of these conflicts that we have seen on TV of late. On paper, their team would seem to be very good. They are all very young and fit, they all train together and they all do the navigation and the overnight work that is really required in the adventure races. The team I raced with between 1995 and 2000 has always done very very well. The US Navy Seals team would turn up to the races, a little bit cocky, and brag that they were going to win, which on paper you expect them to. However, they didn’t finish the first three races they entered — they were disqualified from one event, they withdrew from another and they were rescued from the last event, the race we had in Cairns. It was around 570 kilometres, and took my team about five and a half days to finish. The last leg was a 90-kilometre sea-kayak, paddling up the coast from south of Cairns into Cairns harbour. It got extremely rough during that section and the Navy Seals couldn’t handle it and had to be rescued by helicopter. Very embarrassing and very hard for them to live down. The next race they entered was in Morocco; they came nearly last but they did actually finish. They had finally understood that adventure racing was not about ego, it’s about teamwork. It took the Seals captain nearly three years to learn that! But finally he said in a media interview ‘Now I understand that in this race you don’t have to be the strongest and I understand that it’s ok for me to ask for help as well as to give it.’

May and June talks

Transcription by Anne Johnson
Summary by Shirley Jones

JUNE LUNCH-HOUR TALK
SPEAKER: DEIRDRE MACPHERSON
“Betty Archdale: Her Life and Impact on Women’s Education”

On Thursday 19 June, Deirdre Macpherson gave a wonderfully vivid account of the life of Betty Archdale and of her mother. At the end of the talk some women who had been at Abbotsleigh when Betty was Headmistress told their own stories about her.

I was a student at Abbotsleigh when Betty arrived at the school in 1958. Betty encouraged us to taste freedom, to live with generosity of spirit, and to contribute to the community by thinking afresh and righting wrongs. At the same time she managed to convince us that life is terribly amusing and that we shouldn’t be too worthy. Her power to change lives was partly due to the fact that she was largely uncritical of us and liberated us from any sense of inadequacy. We thought she was marvellous.

There are many women who have been influenced by Betty and are now in extraordinary places. People like: Marie Bashir, the Governor of NSW, who was a student at Women’s College when Betty was Principal, and has said “Many of us who were privileged to be at college with her have turned into strong women when we may have tried not to be.” Others were Meredith Burgmann, President of the Legislative Council, Penny Figgis, ex Vice President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, and Christine Fox who worked in cross-cultural and anti-racism movements.

I meant to do a book about Betty’s influence on women’s education until she showed me cardboard boxes of material detailing her mother’s involvement in women’s suffrage and the whole project escalated. The book is almost a double biography of Helen Archdale and her daughter Betty, and through them the story of feminism in England in the early 1900s and its impact on women’s education in Australia towards the end of the 20th century.

Helen married Theodore Archdale, a Lieutenant Colonel, and led an utterly boring life in army barracks in England and in India. She found herself deeply interested in talking with a man attending a course at the barracks who had travelled extensively in the Arctic and elsewhere. This entirely innocent friendship was stopped by her husband’s remark ‘I will not have that man hanging up his hat in my house.’ It was her first harsh encounter with the attitude that assumes male dominance and female submission.

Helen met Emmeline Pankhurst in 1909. Betty was two when her mother left her behind in military barracks for four months and went to Scotland to agitate for Women’s Suffrage. Helen’s vision of the possibilities in life ballooned through reading authors that had not been available to women before. Throughout the manuscript of her autobiography are quotes from Florence Nightingale, John Stuart Mill and Virginia Woolf. She was giddy with self-education. All these references fuelled her speaking in public places.

In 1866, the women gathered to petition the Government for voting rights, but after having had all avenues blocked for 34 years they became militant. They poured corrosive acid through letter boxes, threw cayenne pepper at the prime minister, and smashed shop windows. They held hunger strikes when jailed and were force fed in such a way as to cause great injury. Helen Archdale was in the thick of it, becoming the prisoners’ secretary, having women come and go in the house. Young Betty watched the women go off in vans to prison and come out weeks later, only to be returned to prison again and again until they were exhausted. She went to the Continent with her brother and mother and Adela Pankhurst and was ruthlessly despatched by her mother to Australia. You couldn’t call Betty’s home life normal. She grew up inhibited in forming intimate relationships.

I’m certain she felt her mother applauded her most when she too fought for women’s rights. It is no accident that she appears on the steps of the League of Nations with Jessie Street in the 1930s agitating for Nationality reform and for equal rights for women. Betty was not

as aggressive or assertive as her mother. She worked with people, not against them. She belonged to the second generation of feminists who had the job of developing and consolidating the work that the earlier generation had initiated.

Betty made good use of the opportunities that the first generation gave. Her work in women’s education and women’s sport was exceptional, and she made a niche for herself in the wider community. As Captain of the first English Women’s Cricket Team, being Principal of Women’s College, Headmistress of Abbotsleigh, or as social commentator, Betty encouraged people to embrace change.

Betty believed in education releasing the individual from set expectations and she wanted the young women in her charge to believe that they could do anything. She couldn’t understand why some subjects were considered the domain of males and at Abbotsleigh ensured that the girls were able to study physics and the highest level of maths, subjects that until her time, were only pursued by the boys schools nearby. She bought the first mechanised bowling machine for her cricketers. She attracted wonderful speakers to the school, dancers, musicians, artists, representatives from the Jewish and Islamic religions. She believed the girls should use their intellectual and creative muscle as powerfully as possible.

It was her humanity and humour which endeared her to people. Almost everyone I interviewed over the years smiled when they mentioned her name. Verna Coleman wrote of Adela Pankhurst ‘... [she had] a mysterious inner core of courage and experiment, a larger-than-life, excessive quality.. “Life is nothing without enthusiasm,” she said.’

Many of these qualities existed in Betty. She also resolutely backed what she saw was right, had a similar inner core of courage and experiment, and was optimistic and enthusiastic. In her 80s, when asked where she now most found meaning in life, she replied ‘In improving things, in making life better... in doing something worthwhile.’

JULY LUNCH-HOUR TALK
SPEAKER: JANE INNES
“Towards an Australian Republic??”

Jane Innes gave a most informative talk to an attentive and perceptive audience in the Southern Function Room on 24 July.

Resolving the issue of an Australian republic is a tough exercise in ‘dilemma’ type problem-solving. The dilemma lies in determining what model and what process should be followed. By most criteria, Australia is already a republic: the institutions of government are established under Federal and State Constitutions; we elect our public officials; we have regular elections; we have full adult franchise; we have a system of separation of powers with checks and balances; we have government under law; citizens through their elected representatives have power to control and change the constitutional system; the people are sovereign. Yet the British monarch remains Australian’s formal head of state under a system of hereditary entitlement, entrenched in our written constitution.

In the November 1999 referendum, 54.8% of the voting public rejected the proposal to replace the British monarch with an Australian head of state elected by two-thirds majority of the Australian Parliament. What happened? Here are the views of some authoritative experts.

Professor Elaine Thompson of the University of New South Wales thought things were done the wrong way round and that we should have had a plebiscite that asked ‘do you want to get rid of the Queen as head of state — yes, or no?’ If we got a ‘yes’ to that, then we go to the referendum process. The options would then be put forward. George Polites AC CMG MBE, said that history demonstrates that you won’t get anything up, without bipartisan support. Former Governor of Victoria, Richard McGarvie, QC AC, said, first, the majority of Australians weren’t satisfied that the package proposed was safe for our democracy; second that no attention was given to the States and thirdly, ordinary Australians were treated as ignorant couch potatoes. Dr Kris Walker of Melbourne University said that the mechanism put forward for selecting an Australian head of state was not the most popular. The support in the community was for an elected head and

that wasn’t offered. Professor Leslie Zines of ANU thought the reason for the failure of the referendum was that the Republicans were at loggerheads.

These views are consistent with explanations of the failure put forward by Professor John Warhurst and Dr Malcolm McKerras such as: the elitist nature of the debate alienated the people; achieving a successful referendum with a non-partisan campaign and lack of support from the PM was difficult; the nature of the model proposed was flawed; there was insufficient debate and information on the proposals; the campaign run by the ‘yes’ side was poor.

What did we learn from the results of the referendum? George Polites said it showed that the people can’t be fooled. Professor Elaine Thompson said we learned that what was needed was a big debate first. These things can’t be done quickly. We must give more attention to reserve powers. Any model which empowers a Prime Minister to instantly dismiss a Governor-General is unlikely to succeed.

What Models should be put forward? The late Richard McGarvie emphasised we should keep our democracy operating in exactly the same way as now by having a constitutional council of three Australians chosen by a constitutional formula to perform the role now performed by the Queen. The preferred model would provide that, if there is not a woman in the first two places, then the third place will go to a woman. He also suggested that any citizen could nominate to go on the list for the Prime Minister to consider as Governor-General. He listed the four basic strengths that need to be retained as: the head of state has no mandate; the head of state will be as firmly bound by the important constitutional conventions as now; there will be a built-in delay in the fortnight dismissal; the head of state will be non-political. Dr Kris Walker favours a model where the head of state is elected through the Parliament. Professor Leslie Zines is concerned that the President should not become a competitor for power with the PM and thinks the President should be elected by Parliament, although he

recognises that the people at large want to have a directly elected President.

Professor Elaine Thompson says electing people is the Aussie way of doing politics. We were the first country in the world to elect both Houses of Parliament. We like elections and those who would oppose this election, in essence don’t trust the people. George Polites is prepared to look at a direct elect model if the reserve powers are amended so that you had a head of state with only one power — to order an election if the Government is unworkable.

What should be the process to implement constitutional change? It must be a process that can effectively deliver constitutional reform through political and legislative change. Richard McGarvie said we won’t get change before a political leader of influence can see political advantage in pushing ahead with the resolution. Dr Kris Walker says we’ll probably have to wait for a change in government. Professor Elaine Thompson thinks we should get a minimalist model, merely breaking the link between the GG and the British monarchy — an untying of the apron strings. George Polites thinks we should have a plebiscite first, asking whether we want a republic. If that is approved then a Committee consisting of representatives of the Commonwealth and the States and Territories should work out a process for the appointment of a head of state that would best serve the needs of the community.

Towards a Major Rewrite. Constitutional scholars have identified the need for ongoing constitutional reform. Dr Kris Walker says our constitution is a document that is out-of-date for Australia and sees a need to go back and start again. George Polites would like to remove the power of the GG to appoint the Executive Council and create the post of PM as being the principal administrator of the country.

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MONETARY DONATIONS

We thank the following people for donating generously to the Library.

Cecil Armour
Helen Bashir
Patricia Bellamy
Joan Bielski
Marina Bridle
Verna Morgan
Elaine Murphy
Jan Nash
Wilga Pruden
Marlene Smith
Diana Temple
Valerie Weekes

In particular we would like to thank **Cecil Armour** for giving us a cheque for \$500, to commemorate his mother and aunts. With his approval, we are to buy a bookcase, which will have a commemorative plaque attached and which will house special books from our collection.

OTHER DONATIONS

A lot of people donate in various ways to the Library.

Raffle Prizes

We wish to take this opportunity to thank those who donate prizes for the raffles we hold at our Lunch-hour Talks. These include members **Jan Ebbeck** and **Ceri Ritchie**, both of whom won raffle prizes and wished to give something back in return, and **Alison Storey** and **Elizabeth Mooney** who help organise the lunches and have given many items over many months.

We also thank the following for donating books to raffle: **Gina Lennox** for a copy of *Fire, Snow and Honey: Voices from Kurdistan* at her talk in March; **Jackie Kent** who donated *A Certain Style* at her April talk; **Rosenberg Publishing** who donated a copy of *Betty Archdale: The Suffragette's Daughter* at the June talk and **Allen & Unwin** for a copy of *Bluestocking in Patagonia* to raffle at the August talk.

Cecil Armour has also donated \$100 for us to use for raffle prizes in the future.

Merchandise

We again have Library bags for sale, thanks to Robin Porter who both screen prints the material with our logo and makes up the bags. These are sturdy and very popular and we are very grateful to Robin for donating her time and skills.

OBITUARY

PHILIPPA FINGLETON (1919 - 2003)

We were saddened to hear of the death of Philippa Fingleton, younger daughter of Jessie Street, who died on 30 March this year.

Philippa was born in November 1919, the second child and second daughter of Jessie Street and her husband, Kenneth. She attended Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School where she and another student, Margaret Dovey, later Margaret Whitlam, became lifelong friends. Philippa enrolled to do a science course at Sydney University, but in 1938, when she was 18 and before she had completed her degree, she went on an extensive tour overseas with her mother. The ship was bound for England, but they left it Italy, and visited Paris, before arriving in London. From there they went to Czechoslovakia and Germany where they saw at first hand the Nazi persecution of the Jews. They travelled on to Hungary and toured widely in Russia, before returning to Geneva where Jessie attended the General Assembly of the League of Nations.

It was on the ship in 1938 that Philippa met her future husband, Jack Fingleton, a member of the Australian cricket team travelling to England for the Test series. Philippa met up with him again when she was in London and she and her mother saw him play at the Oval in what was to be his final Test match.

Philippa married Jack Fingleton in January 1942. While he was overseas during the war, Philippa lived with her mother and father in Darling Point. When Jack returned, he took up a post with the Press Gallery and the family moved to Canberra where the five children were brought up.

Philippa was a gentle, kind and generous person, always helpful and always thoughtful for others. She was liked by everyone who knew her.

She lived for her children and she would have been happy to know that the five of them and her 16 grandchildren all played a part in her funeral service.

From information supplied by her sister Belinda, and her daughter, Jackie.

Philippa was a life member of the Library who made very generous monetary donations over the years. We are especially indebted to her for giving us the portrait of Jessie Street, painted by Jerrold Nathan, which now hangs in pride of place in the Library. — Ed

WHEN WOMEN
START ACTING LIKE HUMAN
BEINGS THEY ARE ACCUSED
OF TRYING TO
BE MEN.

Catering

We are also indebted to **Maree Ancich** and **Madison Shakespeare** of 'Designer Catering' who make a substantial donation to JSNWL by providing delicious sandwiches for the Lunch-hour Talks at a considerable discount. If you attend the lunch-hour talks you know how good their catering is.

You can contact them on (02) 9590 8676 or at madshakespeare@optusnet.com



LIBRARY AMBASSADORS

Wendi Balbi has now gathered together a team of volunteer Ambassadors, who are publicising the Library by giving talks to various interested groups and interviews to the media.

The Ambassadors are:

Wendi Balbi, who will talk to groups visiting the Library and to the media

Shirley Jones, who is Public Relations Officer and on the Board of JSNWL — and who will talk to anyone!

Christine Lees, Secretary of the Board, who has been giving talks to suburban groups and interviews to the media

Marie Muir, for several years a member of JSNWL Management Committee and who comperes our Parliamentary Luncheon each year, will talk to groups

Pam Liell, a newly-joined member, who is particularly interested in giving talks to students in schools

Jane Innes, who has also offered to talk to groups of students

THIS YEAR'S TALKS

Christine Lees reports

On **Friday 6 June** I gave a talk to approximately 80 men and women at the Current Affairs Forum of the Leisure Learning Centre, at Pennant Hills Uniting Church. The first half hour was spent breaking down the name of the Library and explaining its value and position in Australia as well as promoting the Lunch-hour Talks. The second half hour was used for discussion of the difference in women's lives between 1900 and 2000 with a consideration of how Jessie Street would view the present situation. This was extremely lively and interactive.

All the brochures and other promotional material were taken immediately and many people said how much they had enjoyed the session. Four women booked to attend the next Lunch-hour Talk and one offered to be a volunteer. Two men approached me afterwards saying they would contact the library for research purposes.

An interesting aside —one man apparently went to the races the next day and put his money on a horse called Jessie. It won!! So he brought a cake to the next meeting to say thank you!

On **Friday 20 June** I did a Radio Interview with 2NSB North Shore Broadcasting. Molly Stock asked me to speak about the Library on this Community radio station. I told the public about the Library, where it is, who can use it and its value as a resource. I also promoted the Lunch-hour Talks and gave the phone number and website

Shirley Jones reports

On **Monday 3 February** I gave an evening talk in Bowral to about 30 members of the Southern Highlands branch of the Australian Federation of University Women. I spoke about the aims of the Library, its importance, the book and archival collections and how they promote the woman's point of view as distinct from the male point of view, illustrating this with quotes from various books in the Library.

Brochures and publicity material from the library went quickly and several women joined the Library after the talk. One, a professional librarian, is now a regular volunteer in the Library.

On **Friday 21 February** I addressed a luncheon group at The Women's Club in their Elizabeth Street premises. I emphasised the importance of having a national women's library and spoke about the wonderful collections of material it holds — both book and archival and mentioned the Tapestry Project, a collection of stories women have written about their mothers and grandmothers and friends. I also gave an outline of Jessie Street's work. The talk was followed by an extremely lively question session.

Tapestry Registration forms, brochures, and membership forms were eagerly snapped up after the talk, as were copies of the short biography of Jessie Street which the Library has had printed for sale. One woman came up to tell me that a friend had forbidden her to throw away a complete set of women's newsletters after she'd had

a clean-up, saying she would find them a home. She did. With Jessie Street National Women's Library!

On **Wednesday 23 July** I gave a talk to about 30 members of the Pan Pacific South East Asian Women's Association at Regent Court in Pitt Street in the city. This was well received. Most of the publicity material was taken and most of the Jessie Street booklets on display were sold. Our five-month advance calendar of Lunch-hour Talks has been put on the noticeboard on each of the five floors of the building.

After the talk a member asked me whether I would be willing to go as far afield as the northern Sydney suburb of Wahroonga to give a talk. As I have several times gone as far afield as Queensland to give talks in Brisbane, Ipswich and Melany, I was certainly willing to go to Wahroonga.

If members know of any groups that would like to learn more about JSNWL, please ring the Library and talk to Wendi Balbi.



A FAREWELL TO BETTY SEARLE (1916 - 2003)

Betty Searle died suddenly on Tuesday 8 July at the age of 87. She was an enthusiastic and supportive member of the Library from its inception and we are proud to hold her papers in our archives. Among them are all those relating to the 'ovulars' which Shirley Fitzgerald mentions in her Eulogy.

BETTY'S LIFE

Born in England in 1916, Betty came to Australia at the age of three. With a Fabian father and a suffragist mother, it is not surprising that she was passionately interested in politics and social justice. She wrote of her mother 'I like to think that we came to Australia so that my mother could vote!' In the mid-30s Betty joined the Communist Party and threw herself into an exciting active political life, speaking on street corners, attending countless meetings and, when the party was illegal, bill posting and hiding banned books, and at the risk of imprisonment.

In the early 1940s Betty worked for Jessie Street helping with the 'Sheepskins for Russia' campaign. At this time she married journalist Rupert Lockwood, who was brought before the Royal Commission during the Macarthyist period. This period was a difficult time for Betty, at home with three young daughters and with her husband often away, but in her usual spirited manner, she gave as good as she got from the ASIO agents in trench coats who hung around the house.

In the 1960s Betty became active in the Women's Liberation Movement and was a founding member of the editorial collective that produced 'Womanspeak'. After separating from Rupert in her 60s she rejoiced that she could now do 'what I damn well like and I aim to prove I'm not a dimwit.' She enrolled in the Australian History course at UNE, gaining a BA and then a M.Litt (with distinction) and at the age of 72 published her first book. At the age of 75, she was invited to tutor at Sydney University in Women's Studies.

Betty always said the highlights of her life were her three daughters, her grandchildren, the strong friendships she made at University and her involvement with the Older Women's Network.

Taken from life of Betty in 'celebration' booklet

Celebration Ceremony Canberra, Monday 14 July, 2003

Betty's instructions were followed to the letter on the 14th of July. In the fashion of her life her organisational skills, tenacity, wit and energy shaped the way in which family and friends celebrated her life. I had only known Betty for year when I attended her funeral, and just looking around I could see that her lifetime work as a committed feminist and social activist had never faltered and had inspired a lot of people. The room was filled with green, white and purple balloons and the service included a rousing rendition of the *Internationale* accompanied by an accordion and members of the Canberra Union choir.

Lenore Coltheart, long-time friend of Betty and member of Jessie Street National Women's Library, was the celebrant. Betty's grandchildren, Loren Lockwood and Althea Kannane, gave eulogies full of warmth and humour, as did her friend from university days, Shirley Fitzgerald. Ros Basile spoke about Betty's life, and Betty's old friend Stewart McCrae recited a poem written particularly for the occasion. Julia

EULOGY

I came to know Betty when I taught her at UNE. One of the joys of teaching at UNE was the external students who were motivated and excited about learning. Betty spent several years at the Mary White Women's College, completing her B A and then an M Litt in 1983, with distinction, when she was almost through her seventh decade. It was brave and it was exciting. At the time when most people are winding down, Betty was powering along a new trajectory and it was exhilarating for her and for people involved with her.

Betty had been involved in 'the women's movement' before she arrived in Armidale. She'd written for 'Womanspeak' and produced some radio programs on colonial women in the 1970s. But it all took off in exciting ways up there in the bush. I'm sure that many of you will have heard Betty talk about the 'Thursday Women' out of which grew a discussion group that called itself 'the ovulars' — to the discomfort of some, but not to Betty. The name was intended to make the point that the word 'seminar' was not exactly gender-free. Although this was derided by the mainstream, it soon became apparent that all over campus, people — which meant mostly men — were holding 'workshops' or 'discussion groups' — anything to avoid the word 'seminar'.

Betty was right in the thick of it and we loved her. I don't say that in a marshmallowy way. Betty could be pretty scary. Words like 'feisty' and even 'fierce' come to mind. She was fiercely feminist, fiercely supportive of other women, fiercely loyal. She was also very good fun. We laughed a lot.

Betty's research led to the publication of her book *Silk and Calico: Class, Gender and the Vote*. The subtitle tracks her life. With her grounded experience in the class war she wasn't about to fall for any bourgeois feminist clap trap, or ever drop 'class' from her analysis. And the focus on 'the vote' reflected in her historical thinking her ongoing commitment to the nitty gritty of social issues of the day.

When I started to think about what I might say about Betty, I made a quick dash to Jessie Street National Women's Library to see if she'd deposited any of her papers there. And of course she had. Plus some other things more poignant, among which was a colourful badge I remember her wearing often — a clenched fist contained within the woman's circle and a smiling face. 'Dare to Struggle, Dare to Grin'. Betty did both. Betty has told us she will be watching today, and I think that is what she would want to say to us all — 'dare to struggle, dare to grin'.

Abbreviated version of the Eulogy by Shirley Fitzgerald

Biles spoke about Betty's work with the Older Women's Network and tributes from Betty's daughters were very moving. My personal experience of Betty was one of support, cooperation and humour and I was glad to experience her vitality one last time.

*Wendy Sanderson
JSNWL Board Member, Canberra*

BOOK REVIEW

WATERMELON BABY

by Lesley Walter

Five Islands Press Association, 2000

Reviewed by Jane Pollard

This slim volume of 82 pages has a very deceptive cover. An infant sits inside a green bubble eating a slice of watermelon. It looks so innocent and charming the reader does not anticipate the tension that is to be found in many of the poems. Many explore quite ordinary matters, but are lifted above the ordinary by Walter's discerning eye and acute choice of language. The watermelon is actually a metaphor for the writer's pregnant belly that: *wore the stretched taut sheen/of the full-term fruit.*

In this poem, entitled 'Fruitfulness', the actual birth experience is recorded positively – *I spread my thighs gladly to give you birth* – yet there is a disturbing note in the line: *Empty yet full, I devoured you.* How many mothers have not nuzzled their infant's body saying: "I could eat you up". It is an expression of overwhelming love but might also signal the greed of possession.

Many of the poems refer to the joy of motherhood and the wonder at the miracle of a child's existence, but there is often an undertow: *and yet, your celebration/ means somehow strangely mourning/the myriad you I never knew/ who failed to find creation.* In 'Innocence and Forgiveness' children draw all the usual pictures of flowers, cats and people, but at the end of the list – set apart by a line space – is added: *mum and dad are only ever smiling...* The image is familiar but that 'only' remind us that it is also as unrealistic as: *butterflies and bees [having] human faces.* In "Blood Stains", the mother feels she has: *stumbled blind – without instrument or map of any kind/ upon that vast, primeval continent, Motherhood.*

Lesley Walter bares her dreams and fears in her poetry. We are made privy to her despair at failure to conceive, her fear that her previously twice-married husband may be unfaithful, the uncomfortable relationship with stepdaughters who: *mock their mid-life stepmothers/ with the breasts of once loved wives.* And she is adept at changing the tone to avoid rousing our unwanted sympathy, as in 'Possessive Case' where she sums herself up as: *a poet in her middle*

years - comfortably - wholly - my own person

And what a poet she is. This collection illustrates a mind that sees worlds in minutiae, a sensibility which can be witty and profound, lyrical and sad, or tender. She writes nature poems about jacarandas and scribbly gums, lyrical love poems to a daughter with hands like starfish; she wittily personifies the domestic accoutrements of her life, and gets more out of observing elbows than would seem possible. Her marital bed provides a setting for the sexy, humorous poems 'Menage a Trois' and 'Shish-Kebab'. In contrast, 'Crowded House', 'Saturday Morning' and 'The Wall', document marital discord, where the house is haunted by spectres of past relationships; the couple fight, *hurling words like spears*, until, in the third poem, a wall of silence separates them: *each argument a line of bricks/cemented in with stubbornness.*

Walter can be political too, as in the poem 'Home Invasion'. Here she contrasts a comfortable suburban family, shaken by balaclava-clad invaders, with the invaders of Australia who raped, killed, dispossessed and snatched away children/They received for these deeds/ tracts of stolen land/and their children's children/went on to be lawyers.

Walter's command of language reaches perfect pitch in the poem 'Polar forces', which describes a walk along a *coastline's lofty edge...* where *land crashes down to sea.* Here we walk with her as she writes of: *that mesmerising surge and suck of waves/on rock, the push and pull, the drag and thrust/the brain-numbing lull and lap, the dying/ sigh, the sinking back.* Imagery and language work together until the reader too feels the sense of struggle between life and death: *this overwhelming urge, this sickening dread -/to step out on the brink, to test the edge/perchance to slip, to draw back, or to leap -/This terrifying struggle of magnetic fields/persists: life force/death wish..*

Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living. We should be grateful Walter has examined hers so closely and so well, and shares it with us.

Jane Innes talk continued from page 6

Parliament should have the supreme exercise of powers. This would require a major rewrite.

Here is a five-step program of viable constitutional change set out for comment and discussion.

1. Conduct a plebiscite as to whether Australia should replace the British monarch with an Australian head of state.
2. Develop a consensus model which moves beyond the Republic/ Monarchist and the Republic/ Republic divide, and which involves the active participation of citizens, with a view to 'untying the apron strings'.
3. Call upon our elected representatives, both Federal and State, to provide the political leadership and bipartisan support necessary for the implementation of a model.
4. Establish regular Constitutional Conventions which engage the views of citizens seeking thorough constitutional reform in relation to issues such as a directly elected head of state, an Australian bill of rights, citizen-initiated referendum and the possibilities of a written constitution that can be readily understood by the community.
5. Ensure ongoing civics education, inquiry and debate on our constitutional evolution over time.

Edited version by Shirley Jones



'His novel was rejected, but he won the short fiction award for his tax return!'

DONATIONS OF MATERIAL

We thank the following people and organisations who have generously donated material to the Library.

Wendi Balbi
Jane Frolich
Leone Healy
June James

ABC Books
Allen & Unwin
Clouston & Hall
Fremantle Arts Centre Press
HarperCollins
Hardie Grant Books
Hodder Headline
IAD Press (Tower Books)
Melbourne University Press
Pan Macmillan
Penguin Australia
Random House
Rosenberg Publishing
Simon & Schuster
Union of Australian Women
(Victorian Section)
University of Queensland Press
Victorian Trades Hall Council
Victorian Women's Trust



BEQUESTS & ENDOWMENTS

Membership subscriptions and donations are not adequate to fully support our Library and its activities.

We need endowments and bequests to supplement our income.

JSNWL is a young and vigorous specialist Library with a collection unique in Australia. It is totally reliant on volunteers for its functioning and on membership subscriptions and donations for its running expenses. It receives no support from taxes or government contributions, except for an occasional grant or small amounts for special projects.

Do you want to make a contribution to the Library but are unable to do so at the moment? Then
Please remember us in your will.

MEMBERSHIP/VOLUNTEER FORM

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Email Date/...../.....

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- Donor member \$100 Life member \$500
- Organisation \$100 Student \$5
- I wish to make a donation of \$ (Donations over \$2 are tax deductible)

I enclose a cheque/cash/money order for \$
OR Please charge \$ to my Bankcard Mastercard Visa

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Signature

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Volunteers Required

I would like to help with (tick where appropriate)

- Fact Files Oral history Newsletter mailout Processing archival material
- JSNWL functions Tapestry project Transcribing tapes Reception work
- Book reviews Staffing Library (Are you Library skilled unskilled)

WOMEN'S RECORDS

Jessie Street National Women's Library wishes to contact women with archival material of interest to other women.

Name

Address

..... Postcode

Tel (h) (w) Fax

Email (please print)

Do you hold records of an organisation or association (if so please name)

- personal papers other (please specify)

Please return forms to
Jessie Street National Women's Library GPO Box 2656 Sydney NSW 2001

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