



NEWSLETTER

JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

Vol 18 No. 2
May 2007

GPO Box 2656 Sydney NSW 2001
Tel (02) 9265 9486 Fax (02) 9265 9646

Ultimo Community Centre
523-525 Harris St, Ultimo

Email info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au
Website www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

THIRTEENTH ANNUAL FUNDRAISING LUNCHEON

GUEST SPEAKER: PROFESSOR ELIZABETH WEBBY *What were Women in Australia Reading in the 1890s?*

We are pleased to announce that our guest speaker at this year's Fundraising Luncheon at Parliament House on 17 September is Professor Elizabeth Webby. Until her recent retirement, she was Professor of Australian Literature at Sydney University, with a particular interest in Australian women writers.

Elizabeth Webby was born in Sydney, but from the age of seven, lived on a property in southern NSW. She spent two years doing correspondence lessons, made somewhat difficult by the lack of electricity in the house, then attended a small, local one-teacher school, riding a bike five miles there and back each day. In sixth class she became a boarder at PLC Sydney, where she finally had books to read!

At school, Elizabeth's best subjects were maths and science, but the very inspiring English and History teachers she had meant she went on to study English, History and Psychology when she enrolled at Sydney University. In the 1950s, careers counsellors were advising girls that these were safe subjects, guaranteeing a career as a teacher. Because she had been frustrated at not being able to study Australian literature at school, Elizabeth wrote her English Honours thesis on Patrick White and her Masters thesis on Henry Handel Richardson. After her marriage in 1966, she started her PhD on the literary

culture of Australia, covering things like the growth of libraries, importations of books, development of publishing, newspapers and magazines, as well what people were reading and writing at the time. What is now called 'history of the book' has remained one of Elizabeth's research areas.



After the birth of her second child, Elizabeth Webby took up a lectureship in English at Sydney University, teaching mainly Australian literature. She was Professor of Australian Literature and Director of the Australian Studies program at the University from 1990 until early 2007. Her most recent publications are *Walter & Mary: The Letters of Walter & Mary Richardson* (2000), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature* (2000) and a scholarly edition of Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* for the Academy Editions of Australian Literature (2006). From 1988-1999 she was editor of *Southerly*, Australia's oldest literary quarterly. She was a member of the judging panel for the Miles Franklin Literary Award from 1999-2004 and chair of the judging panel for the Nita B Kibble Awards for women's life writing from 1993-1999 and again from 2005-2007. In 2004 she received an AM in recognition of her contributions to teaching and research in Australian Literature.

ANNUAL FUNDRAISING LUNCHEON MONDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER

BOOK NOW
to hear
PROFESSOR ELIZABETH WEBBY, GUEST SPEAKER

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

JSNWL FUNCTIONS Lunch-Hour Talks

Venue: The Lady Mayoress' Rooms, Sydney Town Hall, George St.

Date and Time: Third Thursday in the month from 12 noon to 1:30 pm.

Entry: \$15 (members) \$20 (non members), Sandwich lunch included.

For catering purposes, please let us know you are coming.

To Book: Phone (02) 9265 9486 or email info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

MAY – Thursday 17th

Dr Anita Heiss – *Am I Black Enough for You?*

Dr Anita Heiss is one of Australia's best-known Indigenous authors. In this talk she focusses on the preconceived notions of Aboriginality that she constantly tries to break down through her writing. She will discuss and read from her most recent works: *Not Meeting Mr Right* (the first Aboriginal chick-lit novel), *Yirra and her Deadly Dog Demon*, written with the students from La Perouse Public School, and *I'm not Racist, But...* a collection of social observations.

June -- Thursday 21st

Diane Young -- *Publishing: A Business and a Passion*

Diane started The Federation Press in 1988 with two colleagues, knowing that the balance between commissioning the right books and accessing the market had to be finely-tuned. She talks about commissioning books for a niche market, assessing unsolicited manuscripts and the challenges of being a small publishing house in the Australian publishing industry today.

Canberra Lunch-hour Talk

Thursday, July 5th

Speaker: Dr Aedeon Cremin--*The Fabric of Society: Women Archaeologists and the Archaeology of Women*

Dr Cremin, presently a visiting fellow in Archaeology in the ANU, has been working since 2001 with the Greater Angkor Project in Cambodia. Some women archaeologists are now focussing their research on the life of women and 'women's work'. In her illustrated talk Aedeon shows what we can learn from this, focussing on the extraordinary textiles created by the now-forgotten people of Central Asia. (For details of venue etc. see page 5)

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. We are diagonally opposite one end of the Powerhouse Museum and 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.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Review of the Year 2006

A small group of members gathered for the Annual General Meeting at Ultimo Community Centre on Saturday 14th April, 2007. Due to the resignation of our Secretary, Pauline O'Connor in January, Sybil Jack, one of our long-serving Board members, prepared the Annual Report and papers for the meeting.

Members heard a brief review of the year's achievements and the challenges ahead. The Library held an Open Day in Ultimo in March. Shirley Jones was awarded an OAM in June for her service to the Library over the years. Another Planning Workshop was facilitated by Leonie Blair. The Library received a Local Community Grant of \$5000 from the City of Sydney for Pam Scott to carry out a project on Vietnamese Boat Women. We acquired 17 new collections for the Archives and numerous donations of material. Beverley Sodbinow continued in her role as Archivist. Her application for a grant of \$9000 from the National Library Community Heritage Grants program was successful and will fund the restoration of the unrestored Pine Gap story boards. The Parliamentary Luncheon, our main source of funds, was an unprecedented success with Helen Reddy as guest speaker. Marie Muir's organisational skills and her positive approach to all problems, was acknowledged.

The Lunch-hour Talks were well supported and appreciated by those who attended. The Canberra group continued its bimonthly lunch-hour talks, with Kristin Blume, the convenor, successfully applying for a grant from the ACT Women's Grant Program. Kristin stepped aside towards the end of 2006 to be replaced by Janet Tomi.

New brochures were printed and the website was upgraded and updated under the supervision of Jane Pollard. Four editions of the Newsletter were produced by Shirley Jones in her role as editor. With the assistance of a team of

volunteers, Jane Pollard continued her work in the Library with the Book Collection of 9300 titles valued at \$250,000. The Athena Cataloguing System was updated in September.

Christine Lees, a long-serving Board member, continued her work with Library administration and accepted the role of chairing a new Library Operations Committee. The Chair thanked her for her efforts.

The main challenge remained the securing or raising of sufficient funds to keep the Library operational. An important priority was to attract, retain, train and support volunteers. The Annual Report listed all of them for 2006, but particular thanks were recorded for Barbara Marshall, Penny Young, Kris Clarke, Penny Moyes and Janet Peardon.

Membership has remained steady and our financial position was reported as very tight. Robyn Harriott kept a close watch on the figures throughout the year advising the Board when to tighten the reins and review expenditure. Jann Skinner, our auditor, advised that we have the capacity to pay all debts and remain viable for 2007.

The election resulted in a new Board, with Jozefa Sobski as Chair, Marie Muir as Vice-Chair and Robyn Harriott as Treasurer; general members are Clodagh Harrison, Sybil Jack, Shirley Jones, Beverley Kingston, Christine Lees and Penny Street. Jane Pollard will become an ex-officio member as Senior Librarian. Olive Briscoe has resigned and was acknowledged for her contribution as a Board member. The position of Secretary is vacant. Jann Skinner kindly agreed to remain as our Honorary Auditor and Shirley Jones as Public Officer.

The Chair thanked all members for their commitment and on-going contribution to the Library.

Jozefa Sobski, Chair of the Board

RECRUITMENT DRIVE HELP RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS

EARN \$100 worth of Book or CD tokens redeemable at the store of your choice.

The tokens will go to the member who persuades the greatest number of people to join Jessie Street National Women's Library between 1 May and 30 November 2007. Talk to your family and friends about the Library. Let women at meetings know about it. Persuade them to join.

Entry form enclosed. Photocopy it for extra copies, or download it from our website at www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au.

LIBRARY NEWS**Visitors**

Dr Anne Aronson from the College of Arts and Science at the Metropolitan State University in St Pauls, Minnesota, USA, paid a surprise visit to the Library at the end of February. The visit was a surprise to her as well as to us. While she was sightseeing she saw the signage on our windows and immediately came in. Anne is interviewing sportswomen in various countries to try and persuade them to introduce baseball as a women's sport. She was very interested in the Library and spent some time looking through our books on sport in the research collection.

Janice Tamba from the Women's Reconciliation Network (WRN) came into the Library seeking information about the campaign leading to the the 1967 referendum, which eliminated discrimination against Indigenous people in the Constitution. The WRN is having a function to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the campaign. Janice was looking for slogan that was used during the campaign. She had come to the right place. The book, *Turning the Tide* by Faith Bandler is a history of the campaign and a mine of information. Janice was delighted to find exactly what she wanted. Unfortunately, the book was not available for loan. However, do not say the Library is not resourceful. Shirley Jones had recently bought a copy, which she lent to Janice until she can get to The Feminist Bookshop to buy her own copy. This book is out-of-print, but is still on sale at The Feminist Bookshop. It's only \$9.95. Pay a visit and buy yourself a copy!

Kate Grenville, who has been culling her library, came in to make a donation of books and stayed to have a vigorous discussion with Jozefa Sobski and Jane Pollard about her latest novel *The Secret River*. This book, for which she did an immense amount of historical research, both in Australia and England, won seven prizes in 2006, among them the Commonwealth Writers Prize. Kate is now doing research for her next book.

Chase Livingston, a member from San Francisco on a visit to Sydney, came into the Library with some badges for our collection and some items of interest for the archivist. Chase was thrilled to be shown some of the books in the special collection and the research collection. She has a substantial personal library of works on the American suffrage movement and, having recently visited the Pankhurst House in Manchester, UK, is making herself familiar with the English suffrage movement. Chase has made several important donations to the Library in the past—in particular a book once owned by Jessie and signed by Carrie Chapman Catt—and some material for our archives.

Recent Donations

Robyn Woolly, National Convenor of Women in Adult Vocational Education (WAVE) has donated copies of the organisation's journals from 1994 to 2005. WAVE is the only national autonomous organisation for Australian women in the adult community vocational education and training sector.

We have also received early edition copies of two books by Ethel Turner, donated by **Jenny Priestley** (see under 'Talking Heads' on page 4).

Working with the Book Collections

We welcome three new volunteer cataloguers to the Library, Isobel, Aleit and Alla, who have recently joined Ruth, Sue and Monique, skilled cataloguers who have been with us for several years. The extra numbers has reinforced the need for another cataloguing station in the Library. A computer that was donated earlier and upgraded has now been installed to fill this need.

We are pleased to have Barbara Henery join our Library team. Barbara is helping with spine labelling of newly accessioned books.

Library volunteer, **Penny Moyes** has had the onerous task of perusing catalogues, book reviews and looking in bookshops for books which suited our Library's collection policy. For over three years she has been liaising with publishing companies and with Clouston & Hall, requesting donations of books we were anxious to obtain. She has carried out this time-consuming task with great dedication, but has now reluctantly decided that she has to pass the job on to others in order to concentrate on her family and on finishing her degree. We are very sorry to lose her.

Jane Pollard, Senior Librarian

ARCHIVES NEWS

Donations

We thank **Wilga Pruden** for donating \$100 towards the restoration of a photograph of sisters Annie and Bella Golding. Full restoration will cost approximately \$800. When restored and framed, the photograph will complement the illuminated address to Annie Goldie, that hangs behind the reception desk.

Our latest acquisition is from the ACT Older Women's Network (OWN). It consists of three large boxes of material from their Canberra library and will be added to the OWN archives we already hold.

**Visitors**

Robyn Mah, a previous Coordinator at The Women's Library in Newtown, who now runs a children's music program in Lane Cove, came into the Library to look at archival material on women and music for a small exhibition. She was very interested in the scores we hold of some of Meta Maclean's songs. Meta, who wrote the book *The Singing Ship* describing the journey she made to Australia with a load of British children during WWII, was a Queensland musician, composer of songs, entertainer and writer.

Dr Alison Bartlett, Director of the Centre for Women's Studies, English Communication & Cultural Studies at the University of Western Australia, visited the Library to access our Pine Gap material. However, although most of the story boards were away being restored, she was most impressed with what she saw and there is a possibility that she will collaborate with us if we do another Pine Gap exhibition in the future.

Restoration of the Pine Gap Story Boards

Restoration of the last 25 Pine Gap Story Boards has now been completed by International Conservation Services. We were able to have the conservation carried out through a generous Community Heritage Grant of \$10,000 from the National Library of Australia.

AWAP Planning Day

I represented JSNWL at the Strategic Planning Day held by the Australian Women's Archives Project (AWAP) on Saturday 31 March in Canberra. It was attended by academics, members of AWAP and the National Foundation of Australian Women, and representatives of Women's History Month.

AWAP over the next three to five years plans to: be the premier access point for information and resources about women's contribution to Australian society; encourage women and women's organisations to protect their records and deposit them with collection institutions; undertake and publish original research material about Australian women's history; develop communities with an interest in Australian women's history by using emerging technologies.

The idea of encouraging women to write their mothers/grandmothers stories and for family records to be deposited was discussed. I suggested JSNWL members could possibly be interested in participating in this project.

Beverley Sodbinow, Archivist

Display by Jessie Street National Women's Library

**FROM STOCKINGETTE TO SECOND SKIN
AUSTRALIAN WOMEN SWIMMING CHAMPIONS**

**A century of achievement from Annette Kellermann (1886-1975)
to today's golden girls**

At the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games, women won 16 of the 19 Gold medals for swimming. Don Talbot, Australia's top swimming coach, declared the women's team 'the best ever ... better than the men's'.

Visit this display. Learn more about our wonderful women swimmers. See the change in costumes from the early 1900s to the present day.

at

City of Sydney Library, Level 1, Customs House at Circular Quay

20 April until 9 May 2007

Entry free

For more information phone JSNWL on (02) 9265 9486 or email: info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

March was Women's History Month

We hope that, after hearing about it through our emails, you paid a visit to the Feminist Bookshop during March and bought some of the exciting books and other material on display. The theme this year was 'Arm in Arm: Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Women Working Together'. The Feminist Bookshop had two stands of books, one devoted to works by Aboriginal women and the other to works by Non-Indigenous women. Since this year is the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum, copies of Faith Bandler's book *Turning the Tide* were prominently displayed. This recounts the history of the 10-year campaign that culminated in the removal of clauses in the constitution discriminating against Aboriginal people. It's a book that should be in all local and

'Talking Heads' TV Program on the ABC

We have had a lot of feedback about Peter Thompson's interview with Helen Reddy for the ABC-TV 'Talking Heads' program, which showed Australia-wide on Monday 26 February. Part of the interview was filmed in the Library premises at Ultimo. Helen was the speaker at our Annual Fundraising Luncheon in Parliament House last year and because she has become exceedingly interested in the Library, she had asked the ABC to film there. We have had emails from members and supporters from as far afield as Queensland and Western Australia commenting very favourably on the program and expressing their pleasure at seeing our new, light and airy premises.

has wanted to find a good and appropriate home for two books of Ethel Turner that she has in her library, *Mother's Little Girl* and *Little Mother Meg*. Both are first editions and signed by the author. As soon as she saw the 'Talking Heads' program, Jenny felt she had found the right home for them. She came into the Library on 20 March to make this a personal donation of titles which the Library did not previously possess. She was delighted to see so many of Ethel Turner's books on our shelves, many of them first editions, fitting company for the two she has donated.

Shirley Jones looking at the Women's History Month display



An Exciting Spin-off

The day after the program went to air we had a telephone call from Jenny Priestley. She had been interested that one of the shots showed Helen looking at books by Ethel Turner. Ethel was married to Henry Curlewis and Jenny is the great granddaughter of a member of the Curlewis family. For quite a time she



Jenny Priestley with her two donated Ethel Turner books

school libraries – and in your own! Several women who have asked the Library where they can get information about the referendum campaign have been directed to the Feminist Bookshop for Faith's book.

This display was a cooperative one, with information about Jessie Street National Women's Library prominently displayed in the bookshop.



NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to all our new members

- Alison Bartlett
- Nola Bramble
- Barbara Crossing
- Rosemary Gates
- Ruth Geggie
- Juli Gunawan
- Elizabeth Fitzgerald
- Dorothy McRae-McMahon
- Dayman Parker
- Lorna Paviour
- Gwenneth Roberts
- Janice Tamba
- Aleit Woodward



VOLUNTEER GET-TOGETHERS

Yum Cha

Nine volunteers and four Board members enjoyed a get-together over Yum Cha at a city restaurant on 23 February. It was a chance for everyone to talk and get to know one another in a more social setting than the Library. It was voted a great success and get-togethers will be continued as a regular way of promoting understanding between the Board and volunteers and between the volunteers themselves.

Our thanks to Board member Christine Lees, who spent time and effort arranging the function.



L to r: Jane Pollard, Christine Lees, Kris Clarke, Ruth Robinson, Beverley Sodbinow and Ros Leal

Coffee Morning

Following our Yum Cha get-together, coffee mornings have been instituted at the Library.

A group of ten volunteers and Board members attended the coffee morning on 22 March. Over coffee and cake the discussion turned to Suzanne Leal's stimulating Lunch-hour Talk on the writing of *Border Street*, inspired by the experiences related to her by a Czech living in Prague during the Nazi occupation. (See page 7.) This led to much discussion of how wartime memories affected life in Australia for WWII refugees and for migrants who had paid their way from the UK. Refugees often do not want to return to their homeland to see people from neighbouring countries living in their towns and their homes, whereas UK migrants can visit their countries without this feeling of loss. This was a stimulating morning and a convivial opportunity for volunteers to get to know one another and share personal information and ideas.

Kris Clarke, Assistant Editor

MARCH LUNCH-HOUR TALK

SPEAKER: MATILDA HOUSE
Challenges Facing Indigenous Women

The inaugural talk for 2007 in the Canberra lunch-hour talk series got off to a splendid start on 1st March with some 60 people in attendance to listen to Matilda House, who was named Canberra Citizen of the Year in 2006, talk about the challenges which face indigenous women today.

Matilda, who has a most engaging personality, first outlined her own family's strong connections to the local district, which stretch back many generations and for which she had some fascinating and historically important visual images. She then outlined the heavy burden which indigenous women bear in trying to maintain family life and keep their children safe in the wake of widespread drug and alcohol abuse which ravages indigenous boys and men and results in high crime rates and consequent incarceration, all of which means a disproportionate burden of responsibility falling on the shoulders of indigenous women. Matilda recognised there were no easy answers but did emphasise the importance of there being

a holistic approach to dealing with the problems, including having a local gaol.

Matilda's presentation engaged the audience which had a number of questions and recognition that there was a need for the non-indigenous community to work with the indigenous community to fight racism wherever it might occur and try to find viable answers to the challenges.

Matilda's presentation marked the start of Women's History Month in the ACT which was most appropriate given its theme for this year of 'Arm in Arm: Indigenous and non-Indigenous Women Working Together.

Matilda herself acknowledged publicly the important role which Jessie Street had played in seeking to overcome discrimination against indigenous people and has indicated she would like to remain involved in the work of the Library.

Janet Tomi, Talks Convenor

LUNCHTIME TALKS

Second Talk -- Thursday, 3 May

Speaker: Dr Lenore Coltheart -- *Campaigning in the Kitchen: How We changed the Constitution in 1967*

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the most historic event in Australia's constitutional history – the Referendum on 27 May 1967 that finally erased clauses discriminating against Aboriginal people from the Constitution. This was the only Constitutional change initiated by the people, and the only one to receive the resounding approval of 91%

of voters. This was also a campaign where women, including Jessie Street, played a major role. Dr Lenore Coltheart, who is currently completing a new biography of Jessie Street, will let you listen in to an imaginary conversation as six of these women talk about how they changed history.

Third Talk -- Thursday 5 July

Speaker: Dr Aedeen Cremin—*The Fabric of Society: Women Archaeologists and the Archaeology of Women*

Dr Cremin, presently a visiting fellow in Archaeology in the ANU, has been working since 2001 with the Greater Angkor Project in Cambodia. Some women archaeologists are now focussing their research on the life of women and

'women's work'. In her illustrated talk she shows what we can learn from this, focussing on the extraordinary textiles created by the now-forgotten people of Central Asia.

For all Lunch-hour Talks

Venue: The Reception Room, ACT Legislative Assembly Building (Civic Square)

Time: 12.15 for 12.30 start. Light refreshments served

Entrance: \$5 JSNWL members/concession, \$10 non-members

RSVP: Please email jsnwlcanberra@yahoo.com.au

FUNDING AWARD FOR CANBERRA

Jessie Street National Women's Library in Canberra was one of 18 recipients to receive funding to improve the status of women in the ACT and strengthen the capacity of organisations to provide women's services. The funding of \$1200 is specifically to assist with the Library's

Canberra lunch-time talks, held five times a year, and will be used to pay for venue hire, administrative overheads and catering. The grant was awarded in April by the ACT Minister for Women, Katy Gallagher MLA.

FEBRUARY LUNCH-HOUR TALK

SPEAKER: DR ANNE FAIRBAIRN

An Australian Poet: Glimpses behind the Worldwide Anger

Our first talk of 2007 was given by Anne Fairbairn on 15th February. Anne spoke movingly of the causes of the anger felt presently worldwide and quoted from poems of her own and of Arabic poets in answer to this anger. Poetry, she feels is one way to build bridges of understanding between people of different racial, religious and cultural backgrounds. Unfortunately, because of time constraints, she had to cut her talk short. The following version does not do it justice and it has not been possible to include all the very passionate poems she read.

At this uneasy time in the world's history, I believe it is important for us all to understand some of the reasons that have caused anger to increase amongst certain groups and thus seek to grasp the underlying motivation for acts of terror. I have discussed this with many people from a number of ethnic backgrounds. They agree that the prime cause for the growing anger worldwide, has been what they regard as unlawful and humiliating occupation of lands. At the present time, the anger felt by Arabs and many others is being hugely exacerbated by the conflicts in Lebanon, Gaza and Iraq. Given what has occurred in some areas over the last 100 years, it is not surprising that there is increasing anger.

Betrayal after World War I

After the 1918 allied victory in World War I, most Arabs and others in the region believe they were betrayed by the Treaty of Versailles, when the French and British divided Arab lands in order to control the whole area. Many Arabs fought alongside the British and French against the Turks, on the understanding that they would gain freedom from Ottoman oppression, but they found they were not free. The Kurds, who first fought the Turks and then the British to try to achieve independence, were gassed into submission by the British. Now Saddam has been executed for crimes against humanity, including gassing the Kurds. So there's an irony there.

Geoffrey Simons, in a book, says that many discoveries of oil in the region have ensured that Iraq will long be the focus of imperial ambition, and that the oil bounty that could have rightly liberated the Arabs was destined to lead to their subjugation and humiliation. The area now known as Iraq, which before WWI was three Ottoman provinces, was made into one country by a line drawn by the British on a map. This not only meant that oil would be available to them, but would secure another route to maintain their hugely lucrative trade in

India and the Far East. Only a limited amount of its oil revenue was given to Iraq by the controlling powers for the benefit of the Iraqi people until the late 20th century. Simons also points out that what had originally been the Ottoman province of Greater Syria was divided into four separate political entities – Palestine, Lebanon, Transjordan and a much reduced Syria -- for the advantage of the British and the French. Was there any consideration given as to how dividing the region would affect the people living in the area? Many Australian soldiers believed they were fighting to help liberate the Arabs so what actually transpired deeply puzzled them.

Many Iraqi Australians agree that over the centuries there was a healthy atmosphere in Mesopotamian societies between the Kurds, Muslims (Shi'ites and Sunnis) Christians, Mandeans and Jews before the West began interfering. The West forced the Jews to leave, then urged Christians to migrate and backed the Sunnis against the Shi'ites, then backed the Shi'ites against the Sunnis. Against the odds, most Iraqis of different backgrounds were still amicable until the invasion in 2003.

These moving lines from 'Motherland', a poem by an Iraqi-Australian poet, show how deeply Iraqis feel about their homeland:

I adored your morning and evening
fragrance/ Reaching the riverbanks and
murmuring doves,
I adored your ancient temples, your
churches and mosques/ I adored your
white mountains as proud as peacocks/
Your rivers as sweet as honey/ Your
marshes, the Garden of Eden, Your
deserts as vast as freedom!

However, it is important to stress that, while a number of my Iraqi-Australian friends have long realised that there would be a high price to pay, in blood, for the liberation of their country, they made it clear that they would be grateful to the West if this is finally achieved. Other Iraqi-Australians express their strong misgivings about the war. As we now know, Iraq actually had no weapons of mass destruction, but some Iraqi-Australians believe that this information would have derailed America's drive for regime change. There is also anger about the fact that many organisations in the United States are probably being awarded billion-dollar contracts for the reconstruction in Iraq, while the Iraqis firmly believe they are capable of doing this work themselves. Many Muslims



sympathise with radical Islamists and are joining their movement. However, many are against the idea of killing innocent people in order to stop America's unjust and unfair policies.

These words from a poem 'Elegy for a Woman of No Consequence' by an Iraqi poet express the despair many Iraqis are feeling today.

Filthy water seeping into gutters along
narrow lanes while the wind/ Plays a
lonely game with the rooftop door/ in a
half real world.

Palestine

The question of a homeland for the Jews in Palestine arose after WWI. Both the British and the Americans favoured the idea, providing the rights of the Palestinians were never infringed, but many wondered whether providing a homeland for the Jews was perhaps another reason for dividing up and controlling the Middle East. Were there possible financial benefits for the West in creating a homeland for the Jews? Would establishing an ally in the area have been seen as a possible way of protecting Western future interests?

In 1948 came the creation of the State of Israel and 750,000 Palestinians were ejected from their homes and their land. In 1967 came the Six Days War when Israel occupied Gaza, the West Bank, the Golan and Sinai. In 1968 the United Nations Security Council resolution 242 demanded the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territories, in return for the security of all states in the region. This resolution remains unfulfilled.

I sensed there could be trouble when I first visited the Middle East, alone, in the 1970s. Palestinians (Christians and Muslims) would say emphatically: 'our rights are continually infringed.' I could sense an ongoing intense anger and despair. Palestinians love their homeland. A celebrated Palestinian poet made his feelings clear in his poem 'Defiance'.

I shall proclaim in my detention cell/ In
the stable/ Manacled/ In the violence of
chains/ That a million birds/ On the
branches of my heart/ Are singing
fighting songs.

In September 1982 the second invasion of Lebanon by Israel occurred. I was in Lebanon a few days after the massacre of the Palestinian refugee camp where about

continued on page 10

MARCH LUNCH-HOUR TALK

SPEAKER: SUZANNE LEAL

Fact into Fiction: Writing Border Street



On Thursday 15 March, Suzanne Leal discussed the processes involved in the writing of her first novel, Border Street. Her talk, which was a story in itself, was delivered with humour, sensitivity and honesty. That it gripped the imagination of the audience, was demonstrated by the fact that 25% of those present bought a copy of her book, which was on sale afterwards.

I was sitting in a café, where my former landlord told me the story of a desperate man attempting to hang himself rather than allow the Nazis to take his life. He described that scene in such detail, that I felt I was with him in that room in 1944.

Border Street is a book about living in Sydney in the '90s. It's a book about living in Prague during the Nazi occupation. Kate and Cameron are young Australian lawyers sharing a duplex with their Czech landlords, Frank and Vera. Kate is fascinated by them and wants to know what happened before they arrived in Australia in 1968. *Border Street* is a work of fiction, but it draws heavily upon my relationship with my landlords, Fred and Eva.

My talk falls into three sections—fact, then fiction, then fact again. Let's go back to 1993. My boyfriend and I went to an open inspection of a two-bedroom duplex. The estate agent had told me that the landlords were living in the other part of the duplex. Standing to one side of the house was a man of about 70 wearing a terry-towelling hat. Now, you only wear this sort of hat if you're at home, so I thought, 'This is the landlord.' He was clearly German, tall, fair-skinned and blue-eyed and when I said 'hello' he responded in quite a strong accent. He was a bit bemused when I spoke to him in German but we began talking. I asked where he came from in Germany and he said, 'Not Germany, only briefly was the fatherland part of Czechoslovakia.' So he was Czech. Surprise – we get the flat and my boyfriend and I spent six years living side by side with Fred and Eva.

It was the observation of small details that led to my interest in this couple. Fred told me he'd been born in Prague, was there during the war and they'd escaped in 1968. He didn't tell me he was Jewish. The knowledge of what it meant to be Jewish came only from noticing things like a lit candle in their house, a Star of David charm on Eva's bracelet but, in particular, when they came into our house with lentils and pork, a traditional Czech good-luck dish for the New Year. I looked at Fred and he said, 'Don't worry about the pork, it's kosher.'

Our relationship developed slowly but strongly. One day he told me a little about the war. He said that he'd been in a ghetto outside Prague called Theresienstadt. He'd been called up for a transport. When he got the transport form he was shaking. He told his girlfriend, Eva, whom he later married, that he wasn't sure what to do. She took him to her father who was a doctor and he mixed up some powdered milk, took a syringe and shoved the milk mixture into Fred's thigh. Apparently this is guaranteed to produce fever. All night he was shaking with fever and the next morning, when the transport doctor came to see him, he was obviously not well, so he stayed. As it happened that was a transport of 5000 young men, all of whom were gassed upon their arrival in Auschwitz.

I had always wanted to write and Fred gave me the impetus. I asked if he would sit with me and talk. I was thrilled to find someone who does not self-censor. If I asked a question, he'd give me an honest answer. I think we meet few people in our lives like that. He also trusts me and I think when you're very close but not family, it's easier to tell everything. I found myself with a story which was compelling in its honesty and also in its geography, its history and its recall. A problem I found when I started to write was striking the balance between getting all the information you want and protecting people. This causes tension that's often difficult to resolve.

But once Fred and I started to talk—and we'd interview every week-- I thought, 'I've got to start writing.' It was actually stopping the interviews, rather than starting them that became a difficulty. I think that's when I slowly began changing my focus from writing biography to writing a work of fiction.

Now for the fiction part. When I finished the interviews I had reams and reams of tapes, every one of which took hours to transcribe. I daydream that if I had money, I'd pay someone to transcribe for me. But it occurred to me later that that's not what you should do. You've asked the person questions and you need to listen to how they speak and what they say and the rhythm of their voice. Fred's voice is heavily accented in Czech. He's got beautiful vocabulary, and uses his own particular phrases. I think had I not transcribed for so long, I wouldn't have had the speech rhythm that I think I've captured in the book.

When I had about 500 pages I started to write it like a biography, but it's amazing how the spark can go when you do that

because you're trying to be faithful to a person you like and don't want to hurt. I found myself running drafts past him to get his approval. I stopped being a gatherer of information and started being a writer when I decided that it was to be my work. He would provide the material and I'd make the characters. So Fred is Frank and Eva is Vera and Kate who is-- whoever you think! As is Cameron. From that point the story came alive for me. When you've got freedom and when there's nobody you have to please, writing becomes a much more enjoyable pursuit.

I didn't want to do the book as a straight holocaust story. I wanted to describe what happens when a man who has undergone such experiences as Fred's grows old. What do we expect of people who have lived through such terrible experiences? I describe it through the eyes of a young Australian woman who, in the story, has had a very trouble-free life. I think the book asks this question. When you meet people who have lived through extraordinary times, are they necessarily extraordinary people? Or are they ordinary people who have lived through extraordinary times? That's what I was trying to grapple with in portraying Fred. I've given him enough flaws to look at this question of extraordinary times and ordinary people.

The last part of my talk is what happened after I wrote *Border Street*. I'd intended to go overseas and visit all the areas Fred talked about and just check whether I'd got things right. But in the end *Border Street* was published without my having seen any of the areas I wrote about.

However, last year I managed to travel to Prague and went to Fred's house. It wasn't what I had expected. He was remembering it first as a young boy and then as a young man. He didn't know that there was graffiti now on the front wall and that the windows had aluminium frames and that the house was divided into four units. It was these things that started to prompt my interest as to the value of oral history from a person who's describing the time you're writing about, as opposed to the visual history of the concrete, seen 60 years later.

Eva had spoken to me about was the barracks that they both been in in Theresienstadt. There is a reconstruction

continued on page 00

ULTIMO/PYRMONT UPTOWN FESTIVAL

Saturday 31 March marked the occasion of the 21st Ultimo/Pyrmont Festival, with the theme, 'Tropical Fever'. It was an opportunity for people to discover the Library and to hear Dr Beverley Kingston speak about the experiences of women living in the tropics. At 2 pm an expectant audience seated in a relaxed semicircle around the book display listened to an informative and engaging talk.

Beverley, taking a geographical approach beginning in the early 1900s, referred to works about pioneering women living in Papua New Guinea, such as Jan Roberts' *Voices from a Lost World*, a series of interviews; Nene Gare's *An Island Away*; and Beatrice Grimshaw's novel *When the Red Gods Call*.

Perhaps the oldest and best-known Australian memoir is *We of the Never Never*, by Mrs Aeneas Gunn (Jeannie), depicting the hardships of isolation at Elsey Station in the Northern Territory. Despite modern criticism of a patronising attitude towards Aboriginals, Beverley pointed out that Jeannie had a warm relationship with her black servant Missy. Jeannie's writing was understated, in contrast to the more modern attitude shown in by Sara Henderson in her 1990's autobiography *From Strength to Strength*.

Written with northern Queensland as a backdrop are Evelyn Maunsell's *S'pose I Die*; Joan Colebrook's story of growing up in the Atherton Tablelands *A House of Trees*; and Thea Astley's *Girl with a*



Beverley Kingston and the display of books

Monkey, set in Townsville. Beverley remarked that the latter contained an excellent description of 'blokes'. Her talk moved to the present time, and to the Aboriginal women who have contributed their recollections in stories such as *Wandering Girl* by Glenyse Ward, a humorous account of an Aboriginal girl who works hard to rise above her lowly status as a housemaid.

Beverley was asked to tell about her own life in northern Queensland and went on to discuss the difficulties her mother and grandmother encountered there when young. The word 'escape' was always on young girls' lips. The afternoon then developed into an interactive story-telling session, with most of the audience contributing stories or comments. Finally, an appreciative audience relished the difference in identifying a 'tropical' dweller: anyone who walks fast is not from the tropics.

Everyone became so engrossed in the story-tellings and the insights they revealed that the function extended three-quarters of an hour over-schedule. After everyone had left Shirley Jones and I found we were locked into the Community Centre and unable to get down to the carpark!

Kris Clarke, Assistant Editor

A youth organisation, sSquareOne, is moving into premises in the Ultimo Community Centre. Their entrance is beside ours in Harris Street. Like JSNWL, they are a volunteer organisation occupying premises with rental subsidised by the City of Sydney. sSquareOne is a media arts and community incubator for young people (up to 30), where they will learn new skills, meet, talk, network, create and inspire.

Annie Le Cavalier, sSquareOne's Promotions Coordinator, came into the Library recently looking for information for a prospective poster aimed at young women. We were very pleased to be of help to her and feel that our two organisations will have scope for cooperating with each other.

Library Operations Committee

The newly formed committee has now expanded and consists of: Liz Fitzgerald, Ellena Galtos, Clodagh Harrison, Christine Lees, Janet Peadon, Jane Pollard and Jozefa Sobski. This gives a good cross-section of volunteers working in the Library as all aspects of Library operations are being assessed and improved upon.

The Volunteer Handbook has been completely revised and updated to suit the Ultimo venue and current practice. It will be available to all who are working in the Library and will hopefully be of valuable assistance to new volunteers. Policies, procedures and practical operational matters are being scrutinised to enable all to feel confident in the areas in which they are involved.

Volunteer Training

Recent advertisements have resulted in a significant number of respondents of high calibre and expertise and we thank them for applying to be part of the volunteer team. Most of the volunteers have been allocated a specific aspect of the library to work on and have agreed to come in on a regular basis.

Training on specific aspects of the Library will take place in the near future for those who feel they need further guidance. There is a good atmosphere of cooperation on each day of the week and we look forward to more social gatherings to give people a chance to put faces to names.

If you are interested in joining as a volunteer or you have not pursued your initial expression of interest, please contact Christine by email or telephone for further discussion.

Christine Lees, Convenor, Library Operations Committee

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY at NEWTOWN

On Thursday 8 March, four representatives of Jessie Street National Women's Library joined in a function at The Women's Library, Newtown, to celebrate International Women's Day. Gabrielle Jones, the Coordinator, welcomed the 40 or so people gathered, introduced members of The Women's Library and outlined their specific roles. She then spoke about the library's achievements and its vision for the future.

The main event of the evening was a Panel Discussion on 'Safeguarding Women's Herstory'. The first speaker was Gail Hewison from the Feminist Bookshop, who gave a brief history of the shop and explained its importance. She displayed copies of various books, pivotal to the history of the women's movement, which were available at the

Feminist Bookshop, but would be almost impossible to find now in general bookstores. The second speaker, Beverley Sodbinow, our archivist, talked about the establishment of Jessie Street National Women's Library, its aims and its various collections. She emphasised how important it was to have a national library devoted to material about women and preserving women's voice. Gayle Pearson from the City of Sydney Newtown Branch Library was the third panelist. She spoke about the establishment of a section in the library on women's issues, and the receipt of a grant to expand it. Other municipal libraries are following suit, an acknowledgment of the importance to women of being able to access their own material. The evening ended with much applauded entertainments.

JSNWL and The Women's Library will be discussing the possibility of holding co-operative functions in the future.

MONETARY DONATIONS

We thank all those who have so generously made donations to the Library. Many members make a donation when they renew their subscription. We are very grateful for their contributions which help towards our day-to-day running expenses.

Jennifer Alison
Patricia Bellamy
Baiba Berzins
Barbara Briggs
Jill Cahn
Anne Conway
Stella Cornelius
Joan Crawley
Marie de Lepervanche
Juli Gunawan
Judith Harrington
Nola Harris
Sybil Jack
Jennie Keller
Patti Kendall
Robyn Mathison
Jeanette McAlpine
Sue Milliken
Diane Openshaw
Lorna Paviour
Caroline Phillips
Jane Pollard
Fiona Ratcliffe
Jill Roe
Zena Sachs
Bonnie Schumacher
Sharyl Scott
Mary Sexton
Helen Sharpe
Margot Simington
Marlene Smith
Susan Steggall
Penny Street
Sheila Swain
Denise Thomas
Kay Vernon
Rosalind Wallis
Robyn Ward
Joan Webb
Valwyn Wishart
Anne Woodcock
Lola Woodward

DONATIONS INSTEAD OF A GIFT

A member of the Library recently celebrated her birthday with a group of friends. She suggested that, instead of giving her presents, they make a donation to Jessie Street National Women's Library. We only became aware of this when donations began to arrive and were tremendously surprised and pleased. It was a very generous gesture on the part of both the birthday person and her friends.

The donations have amounted to \$270, a very welcome addition to our finances.

Could we recommend this practice to others? It is a way of helping the Library by surrogate giving, as it were.

A BEQUEST

The Library recently received a cheque for \$100, a donation in memory of Mrs Beryl Daley, who passed away on 26 January 2007. The letter was from the Australian Industry Greenhouse Network and said 'the organisation's Board has agreed that this donation would be an appropriate way to express our condolences to John and his family.'

Beryl strongly supported the Library, its aims and objectives and the work it was doing. (See Obituary on page 10.)

A GREAT STEP FORWARD

Establishment of the Sydney Community Foundation Women's Fund

Jessie Street National Women's Library could be a beneficiary.

The Sydney Community Foundation Women's Fund, which is part of the Sydney Community Foundation, will administer donations given in memory of June Williams, one of the founders of WEL NSW. It is part of the movement to establish community foundations in Australia and is the first to establish a Women's Fund. Wendy McCarthy chairs the foundation.

The impetus behind the establishment of a fund directing money towards women's organisations was because so little of government or public donations go to women's service. The WEL newsletter, WEL-Informed, of January 2007 lists among the women's organisations which feminists should consider for membership and/or donations is Jessie Street National Women's Library.

You can learn more about the Sydney Community Foundation at their website www.sydneycommunityfoundation.org.au

DONATIONS OF MATERIAL

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

Kris Clarke
Kate Grenville
Anne Hanley
Valerie Holmgren
Shirley Jones
Christine Lees
Chase Livingston
Sue Nash
Joan Patrick
Lillian Pyke
Jane Pollard
Jenny Priestley
Sue Rhodes
Maude Tooth

Clouston & Hall
Currency Press
Multi-Arts Confederation and Friends of
Caroline Bay
National Council of Women of
Queensland
Random House

A WISH LIST

All the material in the Library collections has been donated. Because we have no acquisitions budget, we are totally reliant on donations of books, archives and serials for the material we have on our shelves. Below is a WISH LIST of books we would like to add to our Research Collection, under the section on 'Women Artists'. If you are able to donate one or more of the items we would be very grateful.

All are available at The Feminist Bookshop, Shop 9, Orange Grove Plaza, Balmain Road, Lilyfield,
Tel: (02) 9810 2666 Email: feministbookshop@iprimus.com.au

Marsh, Jan *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists* (\$49.95)
Morgan, Sally *The Art of Sally Morgan* (\$60)
National Museum of Women in the Arts: *Dreaming their Way* (\$49.95)
Stewart, Meg *Margaret Coen: A Passion for Painting* (\$71.50)
Stewart, Meg *Margaret Olley: Far from a Still Life* (\$49.95)
Topliss, Helen *Modernism and Feminism: Australian Women Artists 1900-1940* (\$94.55)

NOTES & QUOTES

Barbara Walters of Television's 20/20 in the USA did a story on gender roles in Afghanistan several years before the conflict there and noted that women customarily walked five paces behind their husbands. She recently returned to Kabul and observed that, despite the overthrow of the oppressive Taliban regime, women seemed to walk even further behind their husbands.

Ms Walters asked one of the Afghani women, 'Why do you now seem happy with the old custom that you once tried so desperately to change?' The woman looked Ms Walters straight in the eyes and without hesitation said, 'Land Mines.'

continued from page 6
Anne Fairbairn's talk

1700 civilians were killed. I have never seen such despair as was etched on the faces of the survivors. The following few lines are from a poem I wrote at the time.

Eyeless sockets in a skull of stone
Question the stars' geometry
A tongueless mouth, dry with grit
Denies creation's mystery.
Bloodless wounds bound in shadows,
Bleed for the day that is to come
Tonight a Guernican agony
Moans above the restless sea.

An Iraqi friend of mine said that we tend to forget that the real conflict in the Arab world started with the creation of the State of Israel. He believes most Muslim suicide bombers are normal people who feel hopeless, frustrated and angry and feel they have nothing to lose by dying because they are experiencing a living death. From incidents seen in documentaries on TV, I started to understand why people go to the extent of blowing up themselves and others, and recall a Palestinian poet's short poem, 'Suitcase'.

Its ceiling is low, between its walls/ a
warm eternity
Shall I say, then, 'this my home?'/Well,
I have no other home/ I have no other.

A friend explained there is a growing belief in the Islamic world that the US is waging a war against Islam and that the war on terror is no more than a cover for that. He believes America's continuing support for Israel and the unjustified war in Iraq have helped gain support for Osama Bin Laden.

Conclusion

During many visits to world trouble spots, I have observed signs of growing concern that the West often appears to display double standards. To this day, many see Westerners as behaving in a self-important, overbearing and supercilious manner sometimes described as 'the white imperialist syndrome'. Certainly in India and Pakistan there remain very uneasy memories of the whole tragic consequence of the Partition in India in 1947 which is often referred to as 'our holocaust'.

Anger over hundreds of years of humiliation and hardship, suffered by their forebears in Scotland and Ireland under British domination is still sometimes felt by descendants who came to Australia. This country is now very grateful for their contribution and that of more recent arrivals, many of whom are Muslims, and also that of the people of other faiths, all of whom rejoice in the freedom and opportunity they find here. What I'm trying to say is, let's all practice the 'mateship' we have built up over all these years.

*Transcription by Helen Ruby
Abbreviated version by Shirley Jones*

continued from page 7
Suzanne Leal's talk

of these in the museum there. I looked in and saw the beds were made, there was a spoon, knife and fork and metal bowl--the sort of things accurate in Fred's memory. There was a coat hanging up, and old leather suitcases. Then I realised that what I thought were single bunks were actually double bunks. I also realised that a visual representation doesn't give you things Fred had told me about such as the **smells!** Because ten times more people than the ghettos could hold lived there, the toilets blocked all the time.

It also occurred to me that seeing the reconstruction of the barracks was nowhere near as powerful as listening to someone describing, step by step, the business of living there. In the museum there were lists of doctors, amongst them Eva's father's name. That was a confirmation. Things like names you recognise start drawing together the visuals and the orals.

There are two parts to Auschwitz, Auschwitz One and Auschwitz Birkenau. Fred and Eva told me that they had arrived by train at the Auschwitz One camp. My guide, when I gave her the date, thought it was the more notorious camp, Auschwitz Birkenau. So do you take oral history as accurate, or do you take the knowledge of someone who's well versed in the history?

One of the purposes of the trip was that, because I had taken a lot from Fred, I felt I had a responsibility to try and understand what he'd been through. It would have been a selfish act to have taken the story, without trying to understand what all the suffering meant.

To conclude Suzanne read a passage from Border Street describing how Kate set out to try and experience the sort of intense cold Fred himself had so often had to suffer.

*Transcription by Helen Ruby
Abbreviated version by Kris Clarke and
Shirley Jones*



NEWS OF MEMBERS

A Plea from the Editor. Because the library is located in Sydney, most of the news we hear relates to Sydney or near-Sydney members. We are a national organisation and I would very much like to hear from members in different parts of the country. Please send me items that you think would be of general interest to readers – awards, new careers, births of children or grandchildren, travel adventures, interesting snippets about daily life etc.

Bridget McKern is a long-time member and volunteer. We are delighted to announce the launch of her second book *Living the Journey: Everyday Heroes Tell Their Story*. Stephanie Dowrick writes: 'This book is a collection of 14 real life stories of men and women who have faced their individual challenges with courage and determination. These stories are told with outstanding authenticity, honesty and love, and will leave every reader heartened.'

The book will be launched by Dr Patricia Brennan on Thursday 10 May, 6.00 for 6.30 pm at Gleebooks, 49 Glebe Point Road, Glebe (park in Broadway Centre, off Bay Street) RSVP by April 20, 2007 to Gleebooks phone (02) 9660 2333 or online: www.gleebooks.com.au/events

Members are invited to join us there. Everyone is welcome.

Member **Juno Gemes'** exhibition 'Proof Portraits from the Movement 1978 - 2003' moves to Gosford, near Sydney in NSW. The exhibition, which records the movement for justice for Indigenous peoples has been touring nationally and internationally, and now opens at Gosford Regional Gallery on Friday 25th May 6.30 pm and closes on July 22nd. You can view the exhibition online on www.junogemes.com

OBITUARY
BERYL DALEY
(1916 - 2007)

Beryl Daley (nee Spiers) was born in Tumut and went to school in Griffith and Hay, later studying at Wagga Commercial College. She became its principal in 1931 at the age of 25. In 1939 in London, she did secretarial studies and when war broke out, began first aid, ambulance driving and trainee nursing courses, before becoming secretary to the chairman of the British Council. In August 1940, as part of the a scheme to escort British children to Australia on the Batory, she met her future husband who was stationed in Singapore. Beryl returned to Wagga College and established a boarding hostel for students, before joining her husband in India. Back in Singapore, in 1941, Beryl became secretary to the commander-in-chief of the British Far East Command. In January 1942, she and staff officers just escaped the invading Japanese and reached Indonesia. While she was there, Singapore fell and her husband was taken prisoner-of-war. Beryl escaped from Indonesia, the day before the Japanese arrived, flying to Broome and then moving to Melbourne.

Beryl had a distinguished career, working as secretary under highly placed American forces commanders. She worked with General Kenney in New Guinea, Leyte, Manila, Okinawa and Japan and, at the end of the war, aboard the USS Missouri, witnessed the Japanese surrender. Commissioned into the American Women's Army Corps, she rose to the rank of major and received the American Legion of Merit Medal for 'outstanding service', an honour awarded to only one other Australian, General Sir Thomas Blamey.

When her husband was released from prison camp, they returned to Wagga, where they had a son. Her second marriage, to Jim Daley, produced four more children. In 1967 she moved to Sydney where she graduated with BA (Hon) at Sydney University, later lecturing in English literature at the University of NSW.

Among her other works, Beryl established a publishing co-operative; convened a citizen's group concerned with the environment; and became director of an alternative living community near Port Macquarie. She is survived by her husband and five children.

Adapted from the obituary appearing in the Sydney Morning Herald, 21/03/07

We have received a bequest in memory of Beryl, who was a keen supporter of the Library. (See page 9.)

MEMBERSHIP / RENEWAL / DONATION FORM

I wish to: join the Library renew my membership make a donation

Date / / Title Ms / Miss / Mrs / Dr / Other

Name

Address

Tel (h) (w) Fax

Email (please print)

Member \$50 Concession \$25 (pensioner/unwaged)

Supporting member \$100 Life member \$500

Organisation \$100 Student \$10 (conditions apply)

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 Mastercard Visa

Name of cardholder

Card No Expiry date /

Signature

I was introduced to the Library by

AutoDebit Authorisation

I authorise JSNWL to charge this, and all future membership renewals as they fall due, to the credit card number given above on this form

I authorise JSNWL to charge \$ annually to the above credit card as a donation to the Library

Signature

Become a Volunteer

I would like to help the Library by becoming a volunteer
(You will be contacted so that an interview can be arranged)

The membership year runs from January to December.

Members joining after 1st October are financial until December of the following year.

Please forward the completed form to:

Jessie Street National Women's Library GPO Box 2656 Sydney NSW 2001

Jessie Street National Women's Library
GPO Box 2656 Sydney NSW 2001

ABN 42 276 162 418

Print Post Approved
PP233066/00006

**SURFACE
MAIL**

**POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA**



Proudly
sponsored by
the



To keep women's words, women's works, alive and powerful — Ursula Le Guin