

JESSIE STREET
NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY
NEWSLETTER

VOL 22 NO 2
MAY 2011

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

ANNUAL LUNCHEON SPEAKER: PROFESSOR KERRY N PHELPS

At the forthcoming Annual Parliament House Luncheon, Monday 19 September 2011, our keynote speaker is Professor Kerry N Phelps on the topic, ***From Fringe to Mainstream: Turning Unconventional Ideas into Accepted Wisdom.***

Professor Phelps, President of the Australasian Integrative Medicine Association, is known to many as 'Dr Kerry N', a familiar face for many Australians since the 1980s. She has appeared regularly on television, radio and in the print media informing the Australian public on a wide range of health issues. She is particularly focussed on bringing the message of integrative medicine, public health and human rights issues to the public at large. She travels frequently to speak to health professionals and to the general public on all aspects of health, on wellbeing, on the health system and human rights, as well as on leadership and strategy for professional organisations.

In May 2000, she was elected Federal President of the Australian Medical Association, becoming the first woman to head this organisation and serving the maximum three year term. During her presidency, Professor Phelps focussed attention on important issues in the health system:

- establishing an advisory committee on complementary and alternative medicine to develop a position statement on behalf of the medical profession
- developing a climate change/human health position statement



- highlighting the medical indemnity crisis and working closely with Federal and State governments towards a solution
- commissioning a far-reaching report into the Australian medical workforce which ultimately proved that there was a severe shortage of doctors and the need to change the way the government plans for the medical workforce of the future
- developing a report card on indigenous health
 - encouraging discussion of the role of the health system in response to bioterrorism.

In 2003 she was awarded the Centenary Medal for services to Health and Medicine and appointed Adjunct Professor in Public Health and General Practice at Sydney Medical School. In 2010 she was appointed Conjoint Professor in Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales.

She continues to consult with patients at her Sydney clinics, is currently health writer for the *Australian Womens Weekly*, and writes medico-political commentary for the *Medical Observer Magazine*. In 2009 she was host of Channel Seven's top-rating series, 'Last Chance Surgery'.

And she has written the first textbook on integrative medicine, with co-author Dr Craig Hassed. Released in November 2010, the book, *General Practice: The Integrative Approach*, introduces the concept of combining medical and complementary therapies with lifestyle to achieve the best possible health outcomes for patients.

LUNCH HOUR TALKS — SYDNEY

MAY 2011 — Thursday 19

Catherine DeVrye

Hope Happens — turn stumbling blocks to stepping stones

Best-selling author, businesswoman, motivational speaker, 2010 Australian Keynote Speaker of the Year, Catherine began life in an orphanage. She shares her life's journey drawing on her memoir, *Who Says I Can't*, a story of hope and perseverance.

JUNE 2011 — Thursday 16

Robyn Catchlove

Life Somewhere Down a Crazy River

A passionate gypsy wanderer and professional fisherwoman, Robyn tells an extraordinary story in her autobiography, a true-blue Australian story about a gutsy woman surviving the outback. Now a Tibetan Buddhist, she embraces the unknown willingly.

JULY 2011 — Thursday 21

Norma Tracey

Killing the Dream

Norma brings graphic tales from her work with Aboriginal women, tales about adolescence, others about pregnancy and motherhood. She attempts to explain the traumatising many Aboriginal people live with, where trauma kills meaning and nullifies dreaming.

AUGUST 2011 — Thursday 18

Joanne Fedler

The Wisdom of Hunger

Joanne will be talking about her book *When Hungry, Eat*, which is a spiritual memoir about losing weight and immigrating. When just before her 40th birthday she decided to lose some weight, Joanne had no idea of the spiritual journey she was undertaking.

Date/Time/Venue: 3rd Thursday of the month 12.00–1.30pm. Southern Function Room, 4th Floor, Town Hall House, 456 Kent Street Sydney.
Cost: \$16 (members), \$22 (non-members) including light lunch. Pay at the door. Please book by noon Tuesday before the talk: Ph (02) 9571 5359

ANNUAL FUNDRAISING LUNCHEON MONDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2011 PARLIAMENT HOUSE SYDNEY
Members are offered the opportunity to book before invitations are sent to the general public. A booking form is enclosed.

LIBRARY NEWS

Archives Report

We have a new volunteer for our archives. Christine Smith, a long time JSNWL member, is a retired archivist with lots of experience especially in IT. Christine worked for NSW State Records, then went on to do consultancy work for a number of different municipal councils and the Health Department. We are working on getting our Archives up on the new computer system, Koha, as soon as possible. We plan to use the National Library system as a model. Both Christine and I are very excited at the prospect. Christine will be away for eight weeks from Easter but hopes to be able to volunteer a couple of days a week on her return.

In March I produced a small article for the Women's History Month blog (which can be seen online) using the papers of Josephine Kearney nee Downing who is the grandmother of another long time JSNWL member Marlene Arditto. Although the collection is a very small one it is particularly interesting and has a bit of a mystery to it.

Bridget McKern, President of the Society of Women Writers, who volunteers fortnightly at the archives, invited Jane Pollard and me to give a talk on JSNWL at the State Library on 9 March. We were well received and several women promised to give their papers to JSNWL at some future time.

Sadly, Dr. Patricia Brennan, well-known activist, died recently. She was in the process of organising the papers she held from the Movement for the Ordination of Women to be given to JSNWL. Bridget McKern, who was friendly with Patricia and her husband, attended the funeral and will speak to him about the collection sometime in the future.

We had a visit from Adelaide academic, Susan Magarey, who is writing the history of the women's liberation movement in Australia. We were able to find material she had seen in JSNWL archives in 1999. She went away very happy and made a nice donation to the Library.

Beverly Sodbinow, Honorary Archivist

Our Growing Poster Collection

Recently we were very pleased to accept donations of 25 posters: 19 from Col Englington and six from Lynn Thomas. These were collected over many years and only three or four of them were already in the Library's collection. We are grateful to Eva Cox for recommending to Col Englington that we would be able to provide a good home for his posters, and to Lynn Thomas who, when learning from Col about his impending donation, offered her contribution as well. We have also received two copies of a Blue Mountains Festival poster from Anna Coleman.

Sharing Young Women's Stories

On 9 February Lorna Paviour was a guest at the Canberra launch of the Equality Rights Alliance 2011 International Women's Day Project titled 'Sharing Young Women's Stories'. Extracts from JSNWL's Tapestry collection of stories and photographs were featured on a continuous loop and attracted considerable interest.



Quentin Bryce and Jozefa Sobski at Government House Canberra

IWD Centenary Celebration at Government House

On a crisp, clear autumn morning, women from all over Australia gathered at Government House Canberra, at the invitation of the Governor-General, Her Excellency Quentin Bryce. It was 8 March and 100 years since the first truly International Women's Day. This year, three functions were held at Government House: a morning tea to screen a film and launch a book; a special lunch for a smaller group of women; and an evening reception. Never before had Government House been honoured by the presence of so many distinguished women — many of them feminist activists of the 1970's, some of them activists all their lives, and some esteemed public servants.

Member of JSNWL Board and of Women's Electoral Lobby NSW Executive, Jozefa Sobski, a long time feminist activist, attended the morning tea and lunch. Among many others were women from Jordan, South Africa, Slovakia, Norway and Zimbabwe. The day was organised to acknowledge the myriad contributions of women in all walks of life. It celebrated this IWD in solidarity and sisterhood to honour and reinvigorate all contributions made by women for women. The Governor-General spoke of women's many humanitarian contributions. She said of Jessie Street, 'her path-breaking contribution to gender equality at the conference that set up the United Nations in 1945 made sure the "S" word [sex] was embedded in the UN Charter without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. The consequences of that inclusion are evident around the globe every day.'

The film, 'On Her Shoulders', was screened. Jan Burnswoods and Jane Pollard helped with material for the film. It was produced by Andrea Foxworthy enabled by an Australian government grant to UN Women. A book was also launched: Karen Phillips' *Women's Words of Wisdom, Power and Passion* (2011). A copy has been donated to the Library.

Jozefa Sobski

Farewell Sheila McClellan

Sadly, Sheila McClellan passed away in November 2010, after a long illness. A Life Member with keen interest in the Library, she was most supportive and a very generous donor.

Looking Outwards: JSNWL's Public Face

In the last *Newsletter* we looked at the inner working of the Library, its technology and objectives. In recent months Jessie Street National Women's Library has been showing its face to the world. Its 'raison d'etre' has been of benefit in Sydney, across the country and on the other side of the world.

International Women's Day centenary celebrations have prompted many organisations and individuals to turn to the Library for resources, advice and involvement. Not all requests could be resolved, particularly the one from the Alice Springs Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame, which was seeking two specific rare posters which we do not have in our extensive collection. However, visitors to Parliament House in Sydney have been thrilled at the sight of so many lively, confronting and beautifully artistic replicas from our poster collection covering IWD across the decades. Jan Burnswoods did a sterling job as curator, giving the Library wonderful publicity for the whole month of March.

Many JSNWL members organised, participated in or represented the Library during March. This activity included invitations to three events at Government House Canberra, to which Jozefa Sobski was invited. Josefa was one of a select group of only 40 invited to stay for lunch: the Governor-General Quentin Bryce, previously Chair of JSNWL Board, takes a particular interest in the Library.

Christine Lees, invited to speak on 'What Women Want' at a Community and Public Sector Union evening on 9 March, was delighted to find that proceeds from that night's raffle held to raise funds for the Library amounted to \$518. Also on 9 March, Jane Pollard and Beverley Sodbinow gave a talk to the Society of Women Writers NSW which was very well received. Sybil Jack, invited as an Honorary Fellow of the University of Western Sydney, was able to network with participants at the 'Young Women of the West Award 2011' event, held during IWD celebrations.

A record number of people attended JSNWL's February Lunch Hour Talk given by Caroline Graham, 'Juanita Nielson: The Enigma'. Then in March, celebrating Women's History Month we invited our resident historian, Board member Beverley Kingston, to be that month's Lunch Hour Talk speaker. With expertise, Beverley linked the stories of three resourceful women to this year's theme for Women's History Month — 'Kitchen Entrepreneurs in Australia'.

Each year the Ultimo-Pyrmont Festival gives the Library a chance to introduce itself to local people, our neighbours. This year once again volunteers displayed a table with promotional material in the heart of the community. Our membership in the Equality Rights Alliance continues to raise the Library's profile as the Board sanctions the support of various issues.

In response to the survey sent out in our last *Newsletter* (February), we have been offered an exhibition opportunity in Braidwood in 2012. We will keep you posted about this. Our website is prompting numerous requests ranging from large Australian corporations to individuals in UK enquiring about people mentioned in our Tapestry collection. Fiona Lam is doing a terrific job of keeping the website as current as possible. (Please remember that our new website address does not have the 'au'.)

Visitors continue to be fascinated by our collection. The first visitor of the year, an Englishwoman from Provence, France, said she could have spent days browsing through the titles of one section alone. Other reports about the Library's promotion and liaison can be found elsewhere in this *Newsletter*.

Websites, word of mouth, and evident willingness in the wider community to support JSNWL in so many generous ways must surely mean that the Library lives up to its motto and is continuing to be of value in this world.

Christine Lees, Chair



Christine Lees at the CPSU function 9 March. L to R: Christine Lees Chair JSNWL, Annabel Crabb ABC political reporter, Lisa Newman CPSU Deputy Secretary, Suzanne Culph MEAA NSW Branch Secretary, Kristin van Barneveld CPSU Deputy Secretary

From Newsletter Story to Rare Book Collection

Anne Haskell in New Jersey USA heads a small group of friends who belong to the International Alliance of Women. Their aim is to buy books about the early days of the Alliance, many now out of print, and donate them to libraries such as JSNWL. Thanks to Anne and her 'bake sales' we have a good collection of such books.

Anne reads our *Newsletter* from cover to cover. She was particularly taken with the May 2010 account of Mahboba Rawi's Lunch Hour Talk (April 2010) and wrote to say it was a pity Mahboba hadn't written a book about her life. She has, of course, entitled *Mahboba's Promise* (2005). I had bought a copy when Mahboba sold them at the Talk. I sent this to Anne as a Christmas present. The letter I received in thanks said that she and all her friends had been entranced by the book. The upshot is that the group thought the book should be in a women's library in America. They forwarded a copy to Smith College in Massachusetts, one of the now five women's colleges in the US which have chosen not to admit men. Smith College was founded in 1871 through a bequest of Sophia Smith and took in its first students in 1875.

Anne sent me a copy of the letter the group had received from Smith College saying that the copy would be placed in its Rare Book collection. I am pleased that, from a function in our small Library in Australia, such a book should make its way to a prestigious rare book collection in the United States.

Shirley Jones



Far left: Jan Burnswoods

Left: L to R Sybil Jack, Kim Hebden, June Pollard, Jan Burnswoods

Launching the International Women's Day Exhibition at Parliament House Sydney 8 March 2011

Centenary of International Women's Day

JSNWL curated the highly successful 'Centenary of International Women's Day' exhibition at Parliament House Sydney in March 2011 to mark this year's IWD centenary.

Annually since 1911, International Women's Day, 8 March, has been an occasion for asserting women's political and social rights, celebrating women's cultural activities and recognising women's diversity. At times it has been a focus for division and argument about strategies and tactics — but 8 March and surrounding days have also been an opportunity for a good party. Our Parliament House exhibition showed the many ways NSW women have marked the day since Sydney's first IWD rally in 1928.

Exhibition material was drawn mainly from the posters, banners, serials and archives held by JSNWL. There were also striking items from the Trades Hall Association collection, Mitchell Library, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Joyce Stevens' *A History of International Women's Day* (1985), Women's Electoral Lobby historical records and Gail Radford's T-shirt collection. Many individual women and women's centres loaned material. The Library is grateful to all those who helped with the exhibition. Helen Westwood MLC, Karen McKeown and Anne Barber were the principal organisers, while Jan Burnswoods chose most of the material and prepared the catalogue and captions. We also acknowledge a grant from the NSW Government's Office for Women's Policy.

The most enduring theme of International Women's Day activities in Australia from the beginning has been that of equal pay. One hundred years on, women are still marching for equal pay for work of comparable value. Women are still fighting for support services. Women are still seeking proper representation in rewarding jobs, senior management, boardrooms, the professions and parliaments. Women are still fighting for adequate affordable child care, access to abortion, an end to racial and other discrimination, and for safety against violence in the home and on the streets.

This exhibition showcased JSNWL and also highlighted the importance of preserving women's history. The exhibition itself has encouraged the collection of material, and its donation to the Library. We hope the exhibition has also helped inspire women to preserve, research and write the history of IWD and of the women's movement in Australia.

Jan Burnswoods

Warrior Princess

The importance for women of finding a voice and speaking out was the key message of the talk given by Princess Kasune Zulu at the IWD lunch organised by the Australian Women Donors Network in Sydney. *Warrior Princess: Fighting for Life with Courage and Hope* (2009), co-written with Melbourne writer, Belinda Collins, is a testament to the power of the personal story in changing attitudes. An HIV carrier herself, Princess found the courage to speak honestly and openly about her condition at a time when HIV/AIDS in Africa was spreading rapidly but was shrouded in mystery, shame and fear.

Princess, so named because at her birth her father saw she was destined for greatness, has a remarkable story to tell. Growing up in a Zambian village, her life changed forever when she lost both her parents to AIDS. Although just 17 years old, she became head of the household, responsible for younger brothers and sisters. With no income, her only hope was to find a "sugar daddy", an older man with a steady job. She became pregnant, dropped out of school and had two daughters. Aged 21, she was tested for AIDS and discovered that both she and her husband were HIV positive. Her diagnosis was the turning point: from then on, she dedicated her life to supporting the women and children afflicted by HIV/AIDS and raising awareness about the condition.

A Women Donors Network broadsheet, 'HIV/AIDS through a Gender Lens', reports that nearly 60% of all HIV positive people in sub-Saharan Africa are women; and that young women aged 15-24 are eight times more likely than men to be HIV positive. There is a strong connection between female poverty and AIDS: with women as the primary caregivers, and so many people ill from the virus, women's time is totally consumed by nursing members of their extended families. Unable to earn an income or tend animals and vegetables, they become locked into a cycle of poverty.

Princess opened a free school at her home for AIDS orphans. On the opening morning, Princess discovered about a hundred people standing on her lawn. Children as young as six had walked great distances to the school, barefoot and alone. Princess taught the children herself, without classrooms or resources. As the school grew, Princess appealed to her community to help. Many people, including complete strangers, came forward to clean, provide food for the children, teach and fund the operations.

Continued on page 11

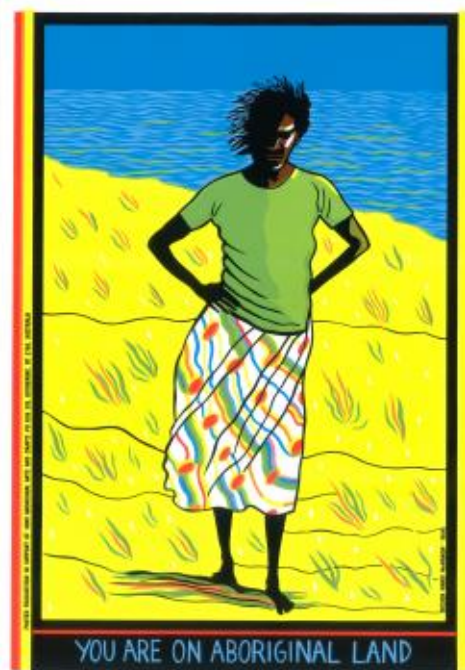
BLACK CHICKS TALKING: Indigenous Women's Writing in JSNWL's Collection

The Library has a small but growing collection of Aboriginal material in the form of books, posters, audio-visual items and a few journals. This article overviews these holdings and makes a plea for more donations in this area.

While older Aboriginal women tell sorry stories of loss of culture, stolen childhoods and poverty, today's younger women are proud to call themselves 'black chicks' and are talking – loudly. *Black Chicks Talking*, the title of Leah Purcell's 2002 book of interviews with nine young Aboriginal women, expresses the mood and attitude of more recent indigenous writing: proud, non-deferential and also witty. Like the works of Anita Heiss – *Token Koori* (1998) and *I'm not a racist but...* (1999) – there is humour in these books that mitigates the satirical view of black/white relations. Earlier titles tended to be more sombre or prosaic, eg *My Bundjalung People* by Ruby Langford Ginibi (1994) or *Through My Eyes* by Ella Simon (1978). The change demonstrates a gradual shift from indigenous women finding a voice to tell their personal stories, and the educated young women of today who move comfortably in white culture while re-examining and re-affirming their Aboriginal heritage.

No article about Aboriginal writers can ignore Oodgeroo Noonuccal of the Noonuccal tribe of Stradbroke Island. As Kath Walker, she published the first book of poetry by an Australian Aboriginal: *We are Going* (1964). She joined Queensland's fledgling organisation for Aboriginal advancement and worked towards the 1967 referendum. Always a passionate defender of her people, in the bi-centennial year 1988 she protested against continuing racial injustice by abandoning her white name. In 1994 Queensland University Press published *Oodgeroo* – written (or collated) by her friend Kathie Cochrane from papers given to her by Oodgeroo. This 235 page biography contains family photographs, poems, an appreciation by Judith Wright, and four speeches given by Oodgeroo between 1982 and her last major speech in 1993, not long before she died. This is a precious testimony to a remarkable Australian who, as did Judith Wright, became a Patron of the Library.

The David Unaipon Award for an unpublished work by an indigenous writer was inaugurated in 1989. Of 13 women who have won this award, the Library holds the books of six. One is *The Sausage Tree* (1994) by Rosalie Medcraft and Valda Gee, sisters, and descendants of the Trawlwoolway people of north-east Tasmania. Like many people of Aboriginal descent their family 'secret' was kept until after their father's death in 1985. The father's dark skin and black curly hair were somehow explained away although, looking at the family photos today, we would readily acknowledge he was not Italian or Greek – or Indian, as Sally Morgan was told by her family. A more recent award winner is Marie Munkara, author of *Every Secret Thing* (2009). This is a tough, rollicking tale set in a Mission in the far north; 'told with biting wit and riotous humour' (Judges' comments). At last year's Sydney Writers' Festival, Marie Munkara read from her book to a very appreciative audience and had listeners convulsed with laughter. She spares nobody – Bush Mob or Mission Mob or those hapless clergy trying to convert them.



Much is heard today about Stolen Generations. This is largely because of Commissions of Inquiry and subsequent reports, but it is the personal stories of the victims that most bring the fear and pain to light, not official statistics or government records. Two books vividly deal with the lifelong effects of such treatment. Doris Kartinyeri wrote her account in *Kick the Tin* (2000). She was born in 1945 and her mother died soon after. A few months later her father signed a paper giving her into the care of Colebrook Home until she turned sixteen. He thought he was signing the form for child endowment. It took years for the scattered siblings – 5 girls and 2 boys – to find each other as adults. Doris struggled with years of domestic slavery, had difficulty with relationships and suffered bi-polar depression.

At the age of five, Donna Meehan, author of *It is no Secret – the story of a stolen child* (2000), was taken from her large Aboriginal family in Coonamble and given to a childless white couple in Newcastle. Although brought up in a comfortable home with caring parents, Donna's loss of identity and sense of belonging brought her close to suicide. The healing began once she was able to trace her birth family.

With so many indigenous languages now lost, it is good that the Library holds at least a couple of bi-lingual books. *Two Sisters – Ngarta & Jukuna* (2004) is told by women who grew up as traditional hunter/gatherers in the Great Sandy Desert, belonging to the Walmajarri/Juwaliny language group. In the 1960s when their families finally met white people they were surprised to learn that they were not only Walmajarri but 'Australian'. Another oral history publication is *Warlpiri karnta karnta – kulangu yimi* (1995). This title translates as Warlpiri Women's Voices and seven women speak of their lives on the Lander River in Central Australia both before and after the arrival of Europeans. The text is in Warlpiri and Standard English, side by side on the same page.

BOOK REVIEW

Faith Bandler's contribution to Aboriginal advancement is well-known. The Library holds *Turning the Tide* (1989), her personal history of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. She was also co-editor for *The Time Was Ripe – a history of the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship* (1956-69) published in 1983. Diane Bell, anthropologist, and Pam Ditton, lawyer, in 1980 prepared a report for the Central Australian Legal Aid Service to further understanding of women's roles in traditional or customary law. This was important in facilitating land claims where ritual song and dance could provide witness to ties to country. Another book, *Women, Rites & Sites* (1989) edited by Peggy Brock supports many of the findings in the earlier work as it examines Aboriginal women's cultural knowledge throughout vast areas of South Australia. Further recognition of the importance of women's roles, largely ignored by early anthropologists, is *Women's Business – report of the Aboriginal Women's Task Force*. This was prepared by Phyllis Daylight and Mary Johnstone in 1986 for the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet through the Office of the Status of Women. It was the first such report for Government.

Apart from this selection of books it should be noted that the Library holds several interesting videos, such as *Bread and dripping; Rainbow Serpent (episode 5); Daisy and Alma; The First Australians; Nice Coloured Girls; Women of Utopia*; etc. All these are being converted from VHS to DVD but should be available in the Library again shortly. At present we hold three relevant theses and are keen to collect more, particularly written by Aboriginal women. Our journal holdings are poor – only three titles. The most interesting of these is the *Olive Pink Society Bulletin*. The May 1994 issue contains, among other articles, an interview with Josie Farrer and a speech recorded during a conference at Charles Sturt University in 1994, and 'What's Design got to do with it?' – a critique of the 1958 Aboriginal Gallery at the Australian Museum.

JSNWL is proud of its small collection of Aboriginal posters – 15 out of a total of about 1500. In this case we must note quality, not quantity: all the Aboriginal posters are vivid representations of Aboriginal issues from land rights to domestic violence, education to art. Marie McMahon, whose poster, 'You Are on Aboriginal Land' is illustrated, is a well-known painter, printmaker, poster and decorative/design artist who has worked extensively in Northern Territory and NSW and whose work is found as etchings, linocuts, lithographs and screen-prints.

We hope that members and friends of the Library reading this article will be interested to donate further examples of indigenous women's works from their own collections, or will make recommendations for Library staff to follow up. While we currently approach publishers for reviewed books and in that way can often obtain new works, we also need to fill gaps in past publications. That is where individuals can help with items they already possess, or through browsing at book fairs or in second-hand bookshops. Readers are invited to check our catalogue – available through the Library website – before donating items.

Jane Pollard

Mary S. Lovell *A Scandalous Life: The Biography of Jane Digby* London, 1995.

This is the first full biography of Jane Digby, whose life from 1807 to 1881 spanned virtually the whole of the somewhat puritanical Victorian era. Born into an aristocratic and wealthy English family, Jane was a beautiful, alert and highly intelligent child. Her biography is engrossing reading. Had any author produced this story as a novel, it would have been seen as completely unbelievable.

Jane was a passionate woman with a magnetic attraction for men. A radiant beauty, she was also intelligent, charming and witty. She was well-travelled and spoke fluent French, German, Italian, Greek and Arabic. But – her marriages, her divorces, and her affairs brought her notoriety throughout her life.

She had affairs with an Austrian Prince, and King Ludwig of Bavaria (with whom she remained friendly throughout her life). Her husbands included an English politician, a German baron, an English baron, and a Greek count. After a marriage breakup, Jane had journeyed to Damascus, determined to visit Palmyra, Zenobia's fabled city, sacked between 200-300 AD and uninhabited since. Many of its beautiful buildings still stood and the light there made Palmyra an unforgettable sight. However, the three day trip there by camel, made highly dangerous by marauding Bedouin tribesmen, could only be successfully undertaken with a Bedouin escort. Jane's escort was Sheik Medjuel and his group.

Jane married Medjuel when she was nearing 50 and he was 20 years younger. Their life together, spent mostly in the desert near Damascus, was a happy and adventurous one, and lasted till Jane's death. At first the tribe would not accept her Western ways and appearance. The men were all highly skilled at riding their small, very fast and mettlesome mares. But Jane demonstrated equal ability to ride these horses. Medjuel's tribe were also impressed by Jane's wealth, which she used in importing thoroughbred mares from Europe, buying modern guns for the tribe and medicines of which the tribe had none. She finally came to be regarded as the tribal matriarch.

Jane had a large house with huge gardens built in Damascus, in which she accommodated European visitors. Her reputation and knowledge of the area were responsible for drawing the large numbers of overseas visitors who came, anxious to see Damascus and visit Palmyra. Perhaps the most famous of these was Edward, Prince of Wales, then aged 20 on his grand tour.

Mary Lovell has done an enormous amount of research for this biography. She was lucky enough to be given access to Jane's voluminous diaries, sketches, paintings, and letters to her family and to King Ludwig, held by family in New Zealand.

This is a fascinating account of a fascinating woman. Margaret Fearnley has donated *A Scandalous Life* to the Library. Although it is now out of print, there will be copies available in secondhand bookshops (ISBN 1-85702-469-9).

Shirley Jones

Juanita Nielson: The Enigma

SPEAKER: CAROLINE GRAHAM

Herself a lifelong activist (NSW Women's Electoral Lobby, peace movement, Green Bans, Palestinian human rights), officially 'retired' but currently campaigning with the Rivers SOS Alliance to protect NSW river systems from mine damage, Caroline reviewed the chilling disappearance in 1975 of Juanita Nielson, a courageous apolitical campaigner murdered for her activism.

This talk overviews Juanita Nielson's activism at Kings Cross, Sydney. My themes include her own interesting background, emerging community action groups, the Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF) NSW Branch, Green Bans contesting the free rein given developers by the NSW government, union factional struggles, the 'Sydney Push' etc. For background I recommend Meredith Burgmann and Verity Burgmann, *Green Bans, Red Union: Environmental Activism and the NSW Builders Labourers' Federation*, 1998, and Peter Rees, *Killing Juanita: a True Story of Murder and Corruption*, 2004.

Juanita as a private schoolgirl at Methodist Ladies College Gordon in Sydney was a wild, precocious teenager. She went abroad in 1959 aged 22, and against her parents' wishes married Jorgen Neilson, a Danish merchant navy officer. They lived in Denmark, and later in Morocco. After the marriage ended, in 1965 she returned to Sydney.

In 1968 she bought No 202 Victoria Street, Kings Cross. The National Trust once described wide, leafy Victoria Street as Sydney's 'Montmartre', its elegant run-down Victorian terraces converted to low rent lodgings full of artists, musicians, wharfies, labourers, city workers. There, Juanita lived a semi-bohemian life. Later dubbed by the media a 'Mark Foys heiress', she seems to have inherited little. Her wealthy parents, still alive, were separated. A \$50,000 present from her father (making peace after a family 'blue' over the Mark Foys business) covered her \$16,000 small terrace, renovations, smart clothes, shoes, and make-up galore, with balance to spare. Her outrageously complex beehive hair-do towered higher even than the then current fashion. She had a few lovers, and a water bed with black satin sheets. At a rolltop Cutler desk in No 202 she ran a small newspaper, *NOW*, on local issues and politics, surviving on 'classifieds' – business advertisements



including from some of the more notorious Kings Cross nightclubs, strip clubs and bars. To sell ad space, she sipped champagne with dubious characters like Sammy Lee of the 'Latin Quarter'.

In this era, high rise building was transforming Sydney, the skyline full of cranes as

money poured into residential and commercial development. NSW Premier Askin was hand-in-hand with developers. At the same time, full employment freed builders' labourers to go on strike, yet find work the next day at another site, thereby enabling Jack Munday and his Builders' Labourers Federation union to delay development using 'Green Bans' – adjudged by Meredith Burgmann to be an 'Australian invention', 'an entirely home-grown [trade-union] contribution to international environmental politics'. The first Green Ban, June 1971, set the Green Ban pattern: non-violent protest through union imposition of work bans at building sites when invited by local residents. Later that same year a Green Ban on Sydney's Rocks area (probably the most well known Green Ban) prevented the Government destroying Sydney's most historic area through construction of a multitude of 40-50 storey office blocks, apartments and hotels. Juanita, although herself apolitical and conservative, in hoping to save Victoria Street, came to approve of Munday's Green Bans.

Developer Frank Theeman who lent his home for Liberal Party fundraising, planned a \$70 million development in Victoria Street (three 45 storey towers, a 15 storey office block with 64 terrace apartments, a huge car park) and demolition of all existing buildings. In early April 1973 eviction notices given to 300 tenants requested they leave within a week. Told their buildings were condemned and utilities would soon be shut off, those who left quietly at that point were given \$20-\$300. Theeman, nervous about the consent procedure, what with Green Bans helping poor tenants and National Trust deliberation over whether the streetscape should be preserved, hired a gang of thugs led by karate expert Joe Meissner to 'persuade' tenants to move. The thugs forcibly evicted an 84 year old, who had been there 40 years. They removed locks, kicked down doors, hurled bricks through windows late at night: vandalised, uninhabitable houses would help the case for demolition. On 11 April residents formed a VSAG (Victoria Street Action Group) to fight back, only to find on 14 April that their elected leader, Arthur King, who had contacted the BLF for a Green Ban, had been abducted. King reappeared two days later, packed up, left and never involved himself in the struggle again. Later it emerged he'd been traumatised – blindfolded, locked in a car boot. Munday said 'I wouldn't be surprised to see actual death in the struggle [over] which way the inner city goes'.

By the time a Green Ban was placed on Victoria Street, only 14 tenants remained. Colourful Mick Fowler, a seaman who when in port shared a flat in No.115 with his elderly mother, returned to find his belongings ejected, his mother sitting on the steps. About 50 unionists helped him reoccupy his flat, throwing out three security guards. To help remaining tenants, while thugs lit fires and brandished crowbars, about 80 supporters organised a 'squat' pending resolution of the development issue. They repaired houses, planted vegetable gardens, organised communal kitchens and child care, and paid \$10 per week into a fund for Theeman. One key supporter (of the 'Sydney Push'), Wendy Bacon, is now Professor in Sydney's University of Technology Faculty of Arts and Social Science. Despite National Trust approval in June 1973 of Theeman's compromise plan preserving Victoria Street's essential

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The Cook, the Chef, and the Hotelier

SPEAKER: DR BEVERLEY KINGSTON

When Beverley was researching articles in C19 newspapers for her PhD in history, she became interested in the cookery columns and how recipes have changed. The gift of an 1890s cookbook sent her in search of other old Australian cookbooks. She published her first book in 1975, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia*. Since then she has written on various aspects of Australian history, always with an eye on what women were doing. This topic was chosen for Women's History Month.

New Eating House. Victuals dressed in the English way at the house formerly occupied by Michael Nolan near the new windmill on The Rocks. Rosetta Stabler respectfully acquaints the public that she prepares boiled mutton and broths every day at 12 o'clock, and a joint of meat, roasted, always ready at 1.00 which she flatters herself from its quality and mode of serving will attract the notice of the public. Visitors from remote settlements, mariners, etc will find a convenient accommodation at a moderate expense and every exertion will be made to render satisfaction at Rosetta Stabler's house.

This advertisement appeared in the first edition of the *Sydney Gazette*, 26 June 1803. Within a few weeks the restaurant was moved to Pitts Row, now Pitt Street. Rosetta's new advertisement in the *Gazette* says, 'Tea and coffee made', so there in 1803 we have the first cafe, boarding house, and coffee and tea shop in Sydney.

I want to talk about three serious cooking entrepreneurs in the late C19 and early C20, a time when women were probably the only entrepreneurs of food and cooking, about whom I have written entries for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

The first is Mina Rawson. It was her book, *Mrs Lance Rawson's Cookery Book and Household Hints*, published in the 1890s in Rockhampton, Queensland, that started me collecting cookbooks. Wilhelmina Rawson, known as Mina, was born in 1851 in Sydney. She married at 21 and moved to a remote property near Mackay in Queensland in 1872. After a couple of failed attempts at living on the land, the Rawsons ended up in a fishing camp on Wide Bay QLD, bankrupt. Mina began writing, she said, partly out of loneliness, but during this time she published four stories and was paid for her writing — so she was the only one bringing in any money. She also kept chooks, used the feathers to make feather pillows, made hammocks, and pickled the shallots she grew, all for money. Her books were not only cookery books with recipes for goanna pie, but were full of advice and instructions on how to do things, for example on how to convert beer bottles into jam jars, for pickles or jam.

Between 1878 and 1900 she produced quite a few of these books, such as *The Queensland Cookery and Poultry Book*, and *The Australian Poultry Book*, aimed specifically at women. She advocated jobs women could do to be independent, such as

keeping fowls, selling their eggs, and making feathers into pillows and mattresses. Then she wrote *The Australian Inquiry Book*, a 'make do' book, using things at hand, with instructions on building a shed and training a dog. The books were first published in Rockhampton and then in Melbourne, and



hundreds of thousands of copies were sold over a period of 30 years. She was also social editor for the *Rockhampton People's Newspaper* and she taught swimming for girls in Rockhampton in the 1890s as she believed they should know how to swim. Her husband died in 1899 and a few years later she married his partner. They came to live in Sydney, and as she no longer needed to earn money she gave up writing new books.

The next one, Harriett Wicken, was a very different woman. Born in London in 1847, she was married at 18 to a carpenter who died of TB, as did four of their six children in infancy. As a young widow she became one of the first women to graduate as a trained cook from the National Training School for Cookery at South Kensington, which also qualified her to teach. Soon afterwards both she and her two surviving sons emigrated to Australia. In Melbourne she worked as a cookery teacher and demonstrator, and published an Australian edition of her *Kingswood Cookery Book* (1889). Harriet presented a copy of her book to the Governor's wife, who helped her with getting jobs and introductions. In Sydney she did the same thing — seeking not only the help of the Governor's wife but also of the NSW Minister for Education, Joseph Carruthers. With her qualifications and connections, she was appointed to head the cookery and domestic economy department at Sydney Technical College. Her students could later be found training teachers in domestic economy all round Australia.

She soon produced a textbook of domestic economy for Australian conditions for teaching purposes. She also met Dr Phillip Muskett, who was a neighbour in Macquarie Street. Muskett was an expert on the health and diet of children and had strong views on what was wrong with both the diet and lifestyle of the Australian population in general. In *The Art of Living in Australia*, he wrote of the desirability of eating less meat and more fish, fruit and vegetables, of drinking more wine and less beer and tea. Harriett contributed recipes for healthy food.

Another of her sons succumbed to TB in Sydney, and when her only surviving son became an experimentalist at Hawkesbury Agricultural College, Harriet helped him to promote exotic

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character, the BLF and VSAG continued to demand low rent accommodation for all tenants. Theeman's public relations firm pictured him as the victim and in January 1974 he had squatters evicted (the Victoria Street 'Siege'), and windows and water pipes smashed. Fifty three squatters were gaoled, then released on a promise not to return. Askin and the media screamed law and order. Theeman later said the three year development delay cost \$3 million in rates and taxes, \$2 million loan interest, and \$3,000 a day 'holding charges' – probably payment for thugs, and perhaps corrupt police.

'Big' Norm Gallagher, BLF Federal Branch President (Melbourne) and Maoist member of the Communist Party of Australia, ousted Munday from NSW BLF leadership in October 1974 (Munday in another CPA faction, whose exciting Green Bans were upstaging Norm) and lifted the Victoria Street ban. But other unions continued to demand low rent housing. Theeman further modified plans so work could start.

By 1975 Juanita Nielson was Theeman's last real obstacle. With the squatters, the VSAG and Munday's BLF defeated, she continued the campaign in *NOW*, reporting meetings of Council and developers, keeping Kings Cross residents informed. She was now romantically involved with John Glebe, Secretary of the Water and Sewage Employees Union (basically plumbers) which threatened a WSE ban on Theeman's development. It was rumoured that Glebe would enforce bans until Theeman's plan included extensive low rent housing. The promise of an advertisement lured Juanita, just 38, to the Carousel nightclub early on 5 July 1975 never to be seen again.

Juanita's murder was no crime of passion. Her two lovers at the time of her disappearance – business partner David Farrell, and Glebe – were cleared of suspicion. She was murdered for her activism, an unusual occurrence in Australia, as was Donald Mackay. Those who have investigated seem to agree Theeman's thugs were involved, others argue corrupt police were too. We may never know the truth.

Was Juanita very brave, or simply foolhardy? In 1975, Juanita had no circle of close friends. An only child, she'd fallen out with her parents to a degree, lived some years overseas, and had no political affiliations. A 'Mark Foy's heiress', she may have believed cops and crims would never touch someone of her high status. She endorsed union bans but had not broken the law. She distanced herself from the squatters: *NOW* in April 1975 said the campaign did not need the 'help' of 'professional protesters, squatters, itinerant anarchists and assorted militants'. In Leftist terms a bourgeois individualist, she did not identify with feminists or any political movement or organisation. She was aware of criminal elements and no doubt of corrupt police too. She no doubt knew Theeman had links with criminals (Abe Saffron, James Anderson). She certainly knew of Arthur King's abduction and must have known the risk of encouraging Glebe's work bans. As a businesswoman from a wealthy family she would understand Theeman's financial straits.

I feel she was more brave and determined than foolhardy and arrogant. Loners tend to be forgotten. I celebrate Juanita Nielson as a courageous, passionate woman, proud of her upper class background, not a joiner. Her one-woman campaign shows you don't need to be politically correct to be a heroine. In the end,

Victoria Street's streetscape was not entirely lost – bohemian life disappeared but the original plans were radically modified because of opposition from people like Juanita. I hope her memory will continue to inspire those defending much loved environments.

Edited by Margot Simington

Dr Beverley Kingston continued from page 9

vegetables like okra and aubergine. She built up a clientele for commissioned cookery books highlighting particular ingredients, and became a demonstrator for cooking with the newly developed gas stove. When her son married and took up a job in Perth she moved there too, finding yet another job teaching cookery. She died in 1937. Harriet was quite an entrepreneur, demonstrating perseverance, resilience and great imagination.

Hannah Maclurcan, nee Phillips, was born in Tambaroora near Hill End NSW in 1860. Her family moved to a hotel in Toowoomba in Queensland and Hannah grew up working in her father's hotels. At the age of 15 he sent her to Townsville QLD to manage one of them. Together with her second husband, Donald Maclurcan, whom she married in 1887, she managed the Criterion Hotel and then the Queens Hotel, both in Townsville. In the late 1890s, the Maclurcans took over the lease of a boarding house at Church Hill in Sydney called the Wentworth. Hannah's first cookery book based on living in Townsville, used tropical ingredients, fruit and fish. Over some 30 years, Mrs Maclurcan's cookbook was revised, enlarged and adapted to suit to the more fashionable tastes of her clients at the Wentworth and went through 20 editions.

After Donald Maclurcan died in 1903, she transformed the Wentworth. To a boarding house with 32 rooms, she added two more storeys and increased the number of rooms to 83. Having acquired land next door, she built a grand ballroom, said to have room for 1000 dancers and diners. The hotel was furnished with antiques acquired on her regular overseas trips. She made it the centre of social life in Sydney, with art exhibitions, charity and society functions constantly featuring in the social pages.

Hannah even had a magazine produced for the hotel, which included the poems, stories and artwork of well-known Australians, as well as accounts of what was happening at the Wentworth. In 1928 she added parking facilities, a 'car laundry' and a filling station adjacent to the hotel for the convenience of her clients. But the depression of the 1930s impacted heavily on the business and she was getting old. She left her son and daughter to manage the hotel and retreated to her house at Bilgola Beach, Sydney where she continued to play the grand hostess. In 1931 she remarried. Her husband's occupation was given as 'gentleman'; she gave hers as 'home duties'.

One theme that runs through these stories is that all these women had to work out of economic necessity. Another theme is how they turned what were traditional female skills into fundraising and business skills. Could it be done today? I doubt it. Our economy has changed so much. But perhaps there are other ways in which women can rediscover and use their special skills.

Edited by Kris Clarke

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Subsequently, Princess took up the challenge of changing men's behaviour. With Zambia's fragile economy, men are forced to take jobs where they spend long periods away from home, as drivers, soldiers, traders and miners. Unbeknown to her husband, she embarked on her next project — masquerading as a sex worker and hitching rides with truck drivers to educate them about AIDS. While her message met with a mixed response, the power of her personal story influenced many of them. At times she asked drivers to drop her off at factories so she could educate male workers about AIDS. Her life took a new turn when hitch-hiking back from one of these trips she met a doctor who was searching for someone to break the silence about HIV. Despite being banned by her husband from speaking openly about AIDS and being ex-communicated by her church for disobeying her husband, Princess became a popular broadcaster on the doctor's radio program.

Princess then worked with World Vision in Zambia's poorest communities, educating children about AIDS. Addressing a New York AIDS conference, she received a standing ovation. There she met a doctor who ran an AIDS clinic in Chicago. He offered to treat Princess and her husband, a gift they could never have afforded for themselves. The White House invited her to a forum with President Bush. Her influence on the President was powerful: subsequently he committed \$15 billion to fight AIDS.

At 35, Princess now travels as a freelance human rights activist, using her exceptional communication skills to boost awareness of the AIDS impact on children and raise funds to fight the disease. Her campaign also addresses the elimination of poverty, child and maternal health, eradication of debilitating diseases such as malaria, and the education of AIDS orphans and girls. Some book proceeds support children affected by AIDS. A copy of *Warrior Princess* has been donated to the Library.

Chris Burvill

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The JSNWL Board is delighted with the response to the recent Capital Investment Fund initiative. Since it was launched in September 2009 it has now reached \$67,927. Our target is \$500,000, the interest from which will provide essential support for Library operations. If you would like to contribute please indicate on the membership renewal/donation form on this page.

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