



# NEWSLETTER

## JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

Vol 17 No. 4  
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### OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISING LUNCHEON A Resounding Success

After days of rain and chill in Sydney, Monday 18 September was fine and sunny when 340 guests took their seats in the Strangers' Dining Room at Parliament House at our 12th Annual Luncheon. Co-hosting the event were the Hon. Meredith Burgmann, MLC, and the Hon. Robyn Parker, MLC.

Jozefa Sobski, Chair of JSNWL Board welcomed everybody and introduced the speaker, Helen Reddy, well-known internationally as a singer and performer, and especially well-known for her song I Am Woman. She took as her topic 'Building a Better World towards a More Feminine Future'. Her talk was illuminating, intensely interesting, humorous and inspiring. She said she was delighted to see so many high school students present and deplored the fact that in her schooldays young women were taught nothing about famous women and that she at that stage knew nothing about Jessie Street, who was such a forward thinker.

Helen said she wanted to talk about the future, because we were at such a crucial period in the history of the planet. Quoting a friend, she said that, when you wanted to paddle a canoe downstream in a straight line, you paddled to the left and then to the right. If you paddled just to the left or just to the right, you went round in circles. Helen believes all paddling at the present time is being done to the right and that to get us back on a straight course, we need a little left-thinking. In the last 100 years, 90% of the casualties in wars were soldiers; 90% of the casualties now are civilians, mainly women and children.

War, she said, is not a feminine value.

Helen gave examples of four forward-thinkers, whose ideas and beliefs have led to changes which she thinks could promote a better future. They were all men, and all from different religions.

They are:  
the Dalai Lama a Buddhist, who believed that miracles happened everyday, but because they were never reported in the media, we never heard of them;  
a Catholic priest who, in the 1970s, started a system of peaceful co-existence between Arabs and Jews in a village called 'Oasis of Peace' near the Israeli/Palestinian border.

The new generation growing up in this village speaks both Arabic and Hebrew and are the ones Helen feels are most likely to be able to help negotiate a peace between Israel and Palestine;

Professor Yunus, a Muslim economist from Bangladesh, who believed the poor should be eligible for loans. He founded the Grameen bank which made minuscule loans, mostly to women, to purchase materials to make stock for sale. This has enabled them to lift themselves out of poverty;  
Ghandi, a Hindu, whose philosophy of non-violence influenced Martin Luther King jnr and led to the civil rights movements in the US. Helen pointed out that Ghandi had borrowed his philosophy from an ancient, all-women sect.  
'What have these four men in common?' Helen asked. 'They know how to paddle to the left.'



*continued on page 2*

#### JSNWL SPECIAL NOVEMBER WEEKEND FUNCTION

#### CHINESE WOMEN'S DRESS: DELICATE HANDS, DELICATE FEET

An Illustrated Talk and a Display of Embroidered Garments  
(See enclosed flyer for details)

### 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 9846 or email [info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au](mailto:info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au)

#### November – Thursday 16th

#### **Pam Scott – *My Midlife Crisis in Hanoi***

Pam Scott lived and worked in Vietnam from 1994 to 2002 and again from 2003 to 2005 and has written two books about her experiences, *Hanoi Stories* and *Life in Hanoi*. Pam talks about the delights and frustrations of living and working in a communist country and the essential survival skills she learned there, such as how to ride a motorbike side-saddle while wearing a straight skirt and high heels and carrying a wreath.

#### February – Thursday 15th

#### **Anne Fairbairn – *An Australian Poet: Glimpses behind the Worldwide Anger***

Anne is a widely-published poet and journalist. In her talk, she examines the causes of the increasing worldwide anger over the last 100 years, especially that directed towards the west. Anne has found poetry to be the true universal language, and for 25 years has been using it to build bridges of understanding between people of different racial, religious and cultural backgrounds.

#### March – Thursday 22nd

#### **Suzanne Leal – *Fact into Fiction: Writing 'Border Street'***

Suzanne is the author of the recently-published first novel *Border Street*. The impetus for her book was her friendship with Fred, a Czech who was in Prague during the Nazi occupation. She talks about how she came to write his story, and how she transformed it into fiction. Suzanne believes no novelist can continue to write without borrowing, appropriating or stealing facets of other people's lives.

## 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.

*From page 1*

Helen said that, although a lot of the rights women had won over time had been severely eroded in the 1980s, she had a strong belief in feminism and in the future.

She then called for questions. Nearly all came from the students, who proved themselves to be articulate, intelligent and self-assured young women.

Roslyn Leal thanked Helen for her inspiring talk and presented her with a small gift from the Library.

Jane Pollard was then called on to talk briefly about the Library's book collection. Jane told guests that, because the Library hasn't yet sufficient funds to buy books, all 10,000 in the collection have been donated. Although the fiction we collect is by only Australian women writers, we collect internationally in non-fiction, which means, said Jane, that for researchers, the lives of Australian women can be reviewed in the broadest possible context. Jane told guests that it was the passion and dedication amongst the volunteers that kept the library going and quoted the Library's slogan 'To keep women's words, women's works, alive and powerful.'

We were extremely pleased to welcome as guests, 11 teachers and 69 students from the following schools: Abbotsleigh, Asquith Girls High School, Cheltenham Girls High School, East Hills Girls Technology High School, Granville South High School, Meriden, Mosman HS, Queenwood School for Girls, Strathfield GHS and Sydney GHS. Sydney GHS this year booked two tables and brought 38 students!

After the talks students from four of the schools were called upon to draw the raffle prizes. First prize was drawn by an Abbotsleigh student, second by a student from Asquith Girls High School, third prize by a Mosman High School student and fourth prize by a student from Strathfield GHS.

### Special Thanks

This year's function was a huge success and the Strangers' Dining Room at Parliament House had every table filled. Everything ran extremely smoothly, thanks to the large number of volunteers who gave so willingly of their time to make the event such a success. We thank the Luncheon Committee, who worked tirelessly behind the scenes beforehand, and all the volunteers who helped on the day. Special thanks go to Marie Muir who acted as convenor, most effectively as always, and to our co-hosts, the Hon. Dr Meredith Burgmann, MLC and the Hon Robyn Parker, MLC.

## RAFFLE WINNERS

### First Prize

Erica Joblin and Jenny McNaughton  
(Ticket 0100)  
(a framed painting by Max Mannix, valued at \$1100 and donated by the artist)

### Second Prize

A. De Salis (Ticket 2420)  
(an oil collagraph by Jasmin Forbes-Watson valued at \$300 and donated by the artist)

### Third Prize

Wendy Fothergill (Ticket 0647)  
(a dozen mixed wines, valued at \$240, donated by Dindima winery, Orange)

### Fourth Prize

Sheila Swain (Ticket 1701)  
(book tokens valued at \$200, donated by Penny Street)

We would also like to extend a special thank-you to the diningroom staff, whose organisation beforehand was impeccable, and to those who waited on table on the day with quiet efficiency and dealt with all visitors' requests with courtesy.

Our special thanks also go to Jan Wood, who willingly donates her time each year to make a video recording of the function. These are now placed in the Library.

We have had a lot of very positive feedback from guests, who thoroughly enjoyed all aspects of the event – the food, the atmosphere, the new friendships made and particularly the talks. We look forward to seeing you all at Parliament House again next year!



## NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to all our new members

Georgia Bouris  
Jacqui Cole  
Daria Galic  
Barbara Henery  
Gai-Louise Holden  
Sonia Hunt  
Alla Kamaralli  
Andrew Mackay  
Jenny McNaughton  
Robyn Russell  
Val Shears  
Caroline Thompson

## LIBRARY NEWS

### Progress in the Library

Cataloguing came to a stop recently while we waited for our cataloguers to return to work. Two were on overseas visits and one was looking after a husband who was ill. We need more volunteer cataloguers and have advertised through the Helpdesk column in the Sydney Morning Herald. The response, as always, was very good and the six who replied have been contacted and interviews arranged.

The books in the Research Collection in the compactus are all in order again. Although they were put in shelf order in the new compactus after our move, there were later problems and the compactus had to be emptied to level it to ensure its smooth running. After this was done the workers replaced the books, but not in shelf order, and the whole process had to be repeated.

### Evaluation of the Book Collection

Baiba Berzins, a member of the Library and an accredited Library valuer, has recently done an evaluation of our book collection. She did a comprehensive overview, assessing the bulk of the books from the accessions register and carefully examining individual copies of many of the special books that have been added to the collection since her last evaluation in 2004. Over the two years, our book collection has increased in value by \$25,300 to its present value of \$250,695.

We are very grateful to Baiba, who does an evaluation for us free, every two years, as a donation-in-kind to the Library and manages to fit us into her busy schedule.

### Organising our Tape Recordings

Janet Peardon, one of our Library Coordinators, has taken on the task of looking after our collection of audiotapes. These include some early tapes of lunch-hour talks, as well as tapes that have been deposited with the Library by various organisations. At the moment, Janet is organising and indexing the collection. When this task is completed she will make a start on transcribing the untranscribed tapes we hold.

Helen Ruby, a member from Toowoomba, transcribes our lunch-hour talks. When she transcribed Rosemary Block's talk on oral history (see page 7) she was so inspired by it that she has restarted her old lapsed business, Here and Now Biographies. She records clients' stories, family histories etc, transcribes them and arranges to have them printed. She feels this is a valuable service to the community. From advice Rosemary gave in her talk, Helen bought good tape recording equipment rather than going digital and is very pleased with the result. Two people are working with her, one transcribing and the other editing.

Helen offered to do transcriptions for the Library when she and Shirley Jones met at the Governor's reception for JSNWL in Queensland in June 2005 and is very pleased to be involved in this way. It is encouraging, too, for us to see such a positive outcome from a lunch-hour talk and a Queensland member's involvement as a volunteer with the Library.

### WISH LIST

Jessie Street National Women's Library is self-funding. It should therefore come as no surprise to learn that it has no acquisitions budget. All books on our shelves have been donated. We are putting out a WISH LIST of rarer books we would like to add to our collection. If you are able to donate one or more of the following items, we would be very grateful. Most of them have been sighted in antiquarian book stores.

Furniss, Clifton (ed) *Genteel Female* - an anthology. Signed (Alfred A. Knopf, N.Y., 1931. \$100)

Halstead, Gay *Story of the RAAF Nursing Service* (Nungurner Press, 1994 US113)

Isaacs, Jennifer *The Gentle Arts: 200 years of Australian Women's Domestic and Decorative Arts*

Topliss, Helen *Modernism and Feminism: Australian Women Artists 1900-1940* (Craftsman House, Roseville, NSW, 1996)

Wadia, A.R. *Ethics of Feminism* - a study of the revolt of women (Allen & Unwin, London, 1923. \$50)

*Jane Pollard, Senior Librarian*

### DONATING BOOKS

We welcome donations of books – in fact we rely on them. We have no acquisitions budget and all our material is donated. However, to avoid duplication we would ask prospective donors to please

#### SEND US A LIST

of what you wish to donate. We can then let you know which books from your list we do not already hold and would like to receive.

### ARCHIVES NEWS

#### Recent Acquisitions

Among our new acquisitions are three tape recordings entitled *Life Memories of Pam Ledden*. The tapes are accompanied by a timeline of the key dates and events in Pam's life. Pam, who died in 2004, was an active feminist.



We have received some papers from Lizette McCallum, State President of the Association of Civilian Widows (ACW) in NSW and the ACT. The organisation, founded in 1949 by members of the United Association of Women, is now defunct. The papers document the foundation of the ACW and with them is an exercise book containing handwritten minutes of the first few meetings. The third meeting, dated November 22, 1949, was attended by 'Mrs. Jessie Street', who was quite involved in the early activities of the ACW.

The Australian designer, Gloria Mortimer Dunn nee Smythe, has donated four A4 books recording her career in fashion in the UK. Gloria was a designer with Speedo in Australia from 1962 to 1990, designing swimwear for 21 countries competing in the Tokyo Olympic Games and a range of women's wear for the Australian Gymnastic team for the Moscow and the Los Angeles games.

### Letter of Annie Golding

Chase Livingston, a member in San Francisco, has donated a letter (with its original envelope and the official Certificate of Authenticity) written by Annie Golding in 1916, to one Ellicott Morrison, Esq. In this very brief letter, written during WW1 she says that introducing conscription would be a 'national disgrace'. We are very pleased to have been given what is apparently one of the very few items in Annie's own handwriting that has survived.

Dr Beverley Kingston, a Board member, who has done research into Annie Golding and her sister Belle, says this is the only example she has seen of Annie's handwriting. Carrying out research for the Australian Dictionary of Biography, Beverley found information was sparse, but she had managed to trace Annie's career as a teacher, as a political activist, and as a lobbyist lobbying MPs about the need for women as magistrates and prison warders. The letter itself, said Beverley, is valuable more because it is a sample of her handwriting than for what it says.

### CAN YOU HELP WITH RESTORATION?

Our small but good archival collection on Annie Golding includes a photograph, unfortunately in very bad condition, of Annie and her sister Belle. This will cost \$800 or more to restore. We would be most grateful if members could help by contributing towards the cost of restoration.

**Canberra Lunch Hour Talk  
Thursday 9 November 2006  
Canberra Museum and Gallery  
(12:45pm for a 1:00pm start)**

**SPEAKER: PETER SCHMEDDING**  
*Looking under the Proverbial Carpet*

Peter Schmedding, children's counsellor, tutor and advocate, examines how we can bring unconscious processes which dictate much of our attitudes and conduct in the world, into our awareness and so enrich our lives. Peter suggests solutions to some of these hidden factors, such as why teenagers have more accidents than older drivers; what prevents us from establishing rapport with our children; and what factors create so much discord and hostility in our lives.

Cost: \$5 JSNWL members/concession | \$10 non-members  
Light refreshments will be provided from 12:45pm.

Please RSVP to [jsnwlcanberra@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jsnwlcanberra@yahoo.com.au) or Kristin on 0407 525 863 by Tuesday 8 November.

For further information on the Jessie Street National Women's Library see [www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au](http://www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au)

## CAN YOU VOLUNTEER YOUR HELP?

We are looking for two or more volunteers to convene the Canberra talks in 2007 and beyond. The talks provide vital fundraising for Jessie Street National Women's Library, as well as giving Canberrans the opportunity to hear talks from a diverse range of speakers on a wide variety of topics.

We hold five talks a year, bi-monthly from March through November. Preparation requires around four hours prior to each talk, plus another four hours on the day (generally a Thursday lunchtime). We have prepared resources for the 2007 talks, along with a list of potential speakers.

If you would like to become more involved in the Library and help organise the JSNWL Canberra lunch-hour talks, please contact Kristin or Amy at [jsnwlcanberra@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jsnwlcanberra@yahoo.com.au) or Kristin on 0407 525 863.

## Archives News

*(ctd from page 3)*

### Recent Visitors: An Accolade

*This is taken from an item in the Older Women's Network newsletter of July 2006, written by Peggy Hewett.*

I recently visited Jessie Street National Women's Library with Dorothy Cora, who has generously offered to research and write the history of the OWN Theatre Group. We had an appointment with the Archivist to look through old OWN newsletters in the Library.

Archives, in my mind, have always been associated with small, dark, dusty rooms and musty librarians. So I packed a voluminous long-sleeved top and old shoes to scuff around in, and soap and towel to clean up afterwards. Imagine my amazement to find a large, bright, airy Library attended by an extremely welcoming archivist who, since the time we had made the appointment, generously sorted through boxes of material hastily sent to them in 2001. After a friendly chat about our needs, we busied ourselves photocopying Theatre Group reports published in OWN newsletter from 1993 to 1998.

I was so impressed to see women's history being so cared for--they really do our wonderful Jessie Street proud. If you have an interest in researching women's history, I can heartily recommend you use the Library's resources.

## LOCAL COMMUNITY GRANT

We are very proud to announce that JSNWL has received a Local Community Grant of \$5000 from the City of Sydney. This is for an ongoing project called 'Recording the Lives of Sydney Women of non-British Background. Stage One: More than Boat People: Vietnamese Women in Australia.' Dr Pam Scott, who is in charge of the project, is producing a 30-minute DVD documentary of selected Vietnamese women who settled in Sydney after the Vietnam War. The grant will enable us to buy the necessary equipment to carry out the project and to follow up the project later with documentaries on different groups of immigrant women. The women's stories will promote understanding in the community, telling as they do of the struggles they have gone through in their own country, the hardships they have endured in getting to Australia and the lives they have built for themselves in this country.

We thank the City of Sydney for their encouragement and support.



## HOLIDAY CLOSURE DATES

**The Library will be closed from  
MONDAY 18th DECEMBER 2006 to FRIDAY 5th JANUARY 2007  
It will reopen on Monday 8th January**

**We wish all members a  
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year**

It was with regret we had to say goodbye in July to Deborah Barratt, who was one half of the Coordination team with Barbara Marshall. She has been accepted to do some study at UTS and felt she could not devote 100% of her time to both activities. We appreciate the work she did in the Library for the short time she was there.

During the year it became clear that a new drive for volunteers, particularly in office reception and administration was necessary, as people come and go and some move across to other areas of interest and need in the Library. Thanks to the Sydney Morning Herald volunteer advertisements in July we had a wonderful response in both quantity and quality. Ideally the preferred Coordination role would be a paid position for about 20 hours per week but without sufficient funding for this, the next best option is a shared Volunteer arrangement. As a result of the advertisement we now have a large group of new volunteers. Jan Peadon is working with Barbara Marshall as co-ordinator; together they cover all aspects of Office and Volunteer Management. There are also a number of new excellent computer-efficient volunteers willing to be part of the team to cover the diverse and sometimes complex processes which are part of running a Library with Volunteers. The Board thanks all newcomers including Janet Peadon, Jan Craney, Narelle Anderson, Kris Clarke, and Gia Bouris for offering their services.

The Board also thanks all the many volunteers who have worked with such commitment during 2006. Without their involvement the Library could not continue to function.

*Christine Lees, Board member*

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**NEWS FROM THE IIAV**

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We have received a copy of the 2005 Annual Report of the International Information and Archives Centre for the Women's Movement (IIAV) in Amsterdam, which celebrated its seventieth anniversary last year. The report is beautifully produced, full of interesting information and an inspiring read. In the accompanying letter, Professor Dr Saskia Wieringa, the Director, says that it was a year of ambitious plans in which they founded the European Sexuality Resource Centre, with Lin McDevitt-Pugh, who has worked with the IIAV for a long time, as Director. The IIAV has a large collection of material on sexuality. To improve services to all who search for information in this area, the IIAV invited 12 Dutch organisations to enter into a joint venture and in 2006 other European partners will be invited to take part. The Centre aims to create links between the work of researchers, policy makers and activists.

The IIAV has also expanded their documentation of the Second Feminist Wave by making portraits of leading women and eye-witnesses of that period. They are also continuing their work with international partners to provide information on the intersection between women's rights and human rights.

If you are planning a visit to Holland, make a point of seeing the IIAV. It's at Obiplein 4, 1094 RB Amsterdam and their email address is [info@iiv.nl](mailto:info@iiv.nl).



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**OVERSEAS NEWS**

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**MEXICO 2006 KNOW HOW DECLARATION**

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We have received the following email from Lin McDevitt-Pugh at the IIAV.

Dear friends and colleagues,  
I am proud to present you with the Mexico 2006 Know How Declaration. The Know How Conference 2006 took place from 23-25 August, with over 60 countries represented amongst the hundreds of participants. This conference built on previous conferences and on the work of the Know How Community over the past years. Academics and activists, indigenous women and librarians analysed the role of information in women's rights and human rights, looked at best practices in the field and planned together how to increase their impact on gender justice today and tomorrow.

Feel free to use this document, distribute it widely, quote from it and refer to it. A French, Farsi and Spanish translation are forthcoming; all will be available shortly on the Know How Community website, ([www.knowhowcommunity.org](http://www.knowhowcommunity.org)) under the heading "Know our past".

**Not the Centrefold—but we're there!**

Annette Mevis, archivist with the IIAV in Amsterdam, has sent us a copy of the September issue of the magazine published monthly by the Dutch Society of Archivists. This issue is devoted to 'Women and Archives' and contains photographs of women's archives from around the world. At her request, we had sent her a photo of Beverley Sodbinow, our archivist, working in her new premises in the Ultimo Community Centre. We are delighted to see it in the magazine and to be represented in this way.

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**'DEBBIE REYNOLDS LIVE'  
A Special JSNWL Fundraising Event**

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Thirty-five people joined the JSNWL group to see 'Debbie Reynolds Live' at the Opera House on the 11th of August. It was a most memorable show, which everybody thoroughly enjoyed. Debbie at 74 is a wonderful trouper and entertained a full Concert Hall with songs, including the showstopper 'Singin' in the Rain', dance routines and anecdotes from her life. The special JSNWL group gathered after the show to meet Debbie, who personally greeted all those present, autographed photographs of herself, and willingly and patiently posed for photos with those who asked for them. This, of course, was everybody!

We thank John Frost of the John Frost Organisation, who organised this very successful fundraising event for us, and hope to be able to put on other similar events during 2007 and 2008.



*From left to right Marie Muir (Vice-Chair)  
Shirley Jones (Public Relations Officer)  
Debbie Reynolds and Jozefa Sobski (Chair of  
the Board)*

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## JULY LUNCH-HOUR TALK

**SPEAKER: SUZANNE BAKER**

### *Back-to-Front Career: One of the Positive Results of the*

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*On 23 July, Suzanne Baker, well-known as a journalist, TV producer and writer, as well, of course, as a feminist, gave a fascinating account of her widely varied career to a most appreciative audience. Questions and comments afterwards came thick and fast, attesting to the interest her talk had aroused.*

Because my early adult and key working life took place during an early peak in second-wave feminism, I thought it would be useful to talk about my experiences. When I thought about it, I realised that I only ever stayed in work that gave me an opportunity to learn something of particular interest to me. I left school at 15 in the late 1950s, after the Intermediate exam, but had I been better educated before leaving school, I don't think I would have had such a successful career. And by delaying university studies until six years ago, I was able to write a feminist honours thesis that would not have been possible, even 20 years earlier.

First I am going to talk about my personal background and early influences; then about key events in my working life, which alternated between print journalism and television; and finally about my late university education and how it enabled me to question the absence of women in my father's key work, a book called *The Australian Language*, first published in 1945.

I had generations of journalists on both sides of my family. Before leaving England (where I was born in 1939) my mother, Sally Baker, took letterhead from the *Daily Express* where she worked as a telephonist. Her own mother, who had had to work to support her children, always emphasised how important it was for a woman to be financially independent. On the *Daily Express* letterhead Mum wrote her own successful reference for a job in Sydney in 1943, helped, of course, by the fact that many male journalists were away at war.

My father left my mother when I was seven and my sister one. Five years later my mother married Lindsay Clinch, a newspaper editor well known for promoting women into positions of authority. Mother and my stepfather had both left school at 12, so getting the Intermediate was to them advanced education. I left school and went to work as soon as I had finished a typing and shorthand course. Possessing shorthand, and touch-typing skills as well, enabled me a few years later to take a job as a program secretary at NBC-TV in New

York. With my journalism background too, this led quickly to a research position

Nepotism served me well in my early career. I went to New York in 1960 when my stepfather was sent there to run the John Fairfax office. I did a summer school course in TV production at the University of New York so that when I arrived home in 1961 I had what was considered extensive 'overseas' experience, well before second-wave feminism came into its own. Because the media was ready to accept the occasional woman doing 'boy's work' on camera, I was offered a job on an ABC-TV program as an occasional interviewer. Later, Bob Raymond when he left ABC's *Four Corners* program signed me up and I soon produced and appeared in documentaries of my own. I found the work pleasing but overwhelming. Turnaround time for a 50-minute documentary was four weeks and I had five roles--researcher, presenter, director, writer and producer. After two years, I left for the UK where I took on a job as a researcher at Thames TV, but returned to Australia and worked as a journalist on the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

My return in 1971 was just before the surge in second-wave feminism and the *Sydney Morning Herald's* news editor invited me to contemporise the women's section into what became known as *Look!*. In Canberra in 1972 at the Women's Electoral Lobby's first conference, I recall the electrifying moment when we all realised that the new push for women's rights was 'an idea whose time has come'. This was the moment in Australia that helped trigger a widespread shift in thinking about women's role in society.

The content of *Look!* in its first two years mirrored this. One of our earliest features-with-a-difference was on housewives' abuse of tranquillisers: 'At the end of her Tether? went the headline. Later we focused on a little-known phenomenon called anorexia nervosa: 'I Just Want to Die Thin'. Some of the issues we addressed were: equal opportunity; patronising daytime TV; the media's treatment of women; overmedication in society; hypocrisy of the wedding dream; and the career vs. home responsibilities dilemma. By 1972 we had introduced letters from readers. Often ideas were followed up at a reader's suggestion or even under their authorship, such as how a male experienced being brought up by a single mother.

I left the Herald to become the first woman producer at Film Australia. The management had been unsuccessful in getting a male for the job and I was recommended. Three years later I became the second Australian to win an Oscar with the Bruce Petty animated film *Leisure*. I felt most comfortable and capable in my role as producer and in 1978 I led the first non-socialist documentary film team into China to make a series called *The Human Face of China*, shown worldwide in 1980.

I often regretted not having a higher education, but had I gone to university in the late 1950s, I would not have been able to study either Australian history or Australian literature which were not then considered worthy of study. But by 2000, these were thoroughly respected subjects and took good account of the role and depiction of women in both history and literature. And I would not have been able to do the history honours thesis I decided on.

The interwar period, 1915-1945, was a time of nationalist fervour and the use of English and its special applications in Australia meant that women writers, who wrote more extensively than men in this period, made great use of Australianisms. Because my father, Sidney J. Baker, was a diligent researcher, the evidence for this was there in his own papers. However, it missed his conscious awareness that so much of his key material had come from novels written by women. My thesis, 'Realising an Absent Presence', argued that the extensive use of slang and idiom by the women writers during the interwar years provided substantial, and largely unacknowledged material in Baker's social history, *The Australian Language*. Subsequent works on slang and idiom have tended to emulate the pattern Baker set of not overtly recognising women writers as producers and contributors to Australian language culture, or in their roles as important preservers of that culture. My thesis pointed this out and I suggested that the editors of the *Australian National Dictionary* did some more homework before the next edition.

Is feminism alive or dead? In her April talk here, Kathy Bail said that many

*continued on page 9*

## AUGUST LUNCH-HOUR TALK

**SPEAKER: ROSEMARY BLOCK**

### *'If Only I had asked Aunt Esther': Oral History and the Family*

*On August 17th, Rosemary Block, curator of the Oral History Program at the State Library of NSW, gave a captivating talk about the processes involved in recording oral histories, and the importance of recording stories before it is too late. At the end of the talk she invited the audience to respond with stories of their own experiences in taping oral histories, which led to some fascinating questions and answers.*

The short definition of oral history is: 'Oral history is a record of information, gathered in oral form, usually on tape as a result of a planned interview.' That's the bare bones - you have to have present an interviewer and an interviewee. If you just spoke into a tape recorder, that would not be oral history because there was no interviewer.

An expanded definition is: 'Oral history is a record of information, usually on tape, as the result of a planned interview. Its purpose is to create a record where none exists or to supplement existing records for future research. Oral history is a method of recording spoken language, eye witness accounts and insights into society and its changing values and attitudes. It also gives a voice to those previously denied the chance to contribute to the recording of history.'

Oral history is a democratic process. It's hearing about people like you and me - about our lives and how we live them in certain spots. It's used primarily for family history, which is the purpose of my talk today, and also for local history, and more and more for the history of corporations and government agencies.

Part of my talk today is urging and part is warning. Ted Hughes, one time British poet laureate, writes in an untitled poem about his uncle talking about his (Ted Hughes') mother, who is dead. And that's my first warning--don't leave it too late. Towards the end of his poem, Ted Hughes says of his uncle, 'He has brought me my last inheritance--archeology of the mouth--treasures that crumble at the touch of day.' What a lovely definition of oral history-- archeology of the mouth. It is true that they crumble easily and that's why, for a long time oral history was not collected in the Mitchell Library. The librarians thought everything on paper lasts and everything else, including fragile cassettes and even quarter inch reel-to-reels cannot last. Luckily one of the recent librarians believed in oral history, and some wonderful projects were begun,

interviewing elderly members of staff, icons like Phyllis Manda Jones. They also interviewed people who had known the late Ida Leeson, the first Mitchell librarian, an eccentric and wonderful woman.

Oral history differs from oral tradition where elders in a clan or tribe or family pass on the lore to younger members. Oral history is a process in which the interviewer plays a central role. In 1947 a professor who was a social historian at Columbia University in New York City decided to interview people in New York State about how they survived the Great Depression. He took with him, not a tape recorder which didn't really exist then, but his secretary who was an ace Pitman shorthand writer. She took down all the business of the interview and she then typed it up. The scripts still exist and that is oral history. As the interviewer, you can't take the notes; it has to be a second person.

Now that tape recording is so easy, oral history is not only oral but aural. It came to Australia in 1957. Hazel de Berg, who described herself always as 'only' a Sydney housewife, offered to do talking books for the Royal Society for the Blind, and she was given Dame Mary Gilmore's *Old Days--Old Ways* to read. In those days the Dame was alive and well. Hazel knew her and said to her 'Dame Mary, I've got to read this book on tape. Would you like to read some of it?' Dame Mary answered, 'Not this side of the grave, thank you very much.' 'But' she said, 'You come and visit me and I'll say something on the tape for the blind people who will listen to my book.'

Dame Mary Gilmore's book *Old Days--Old Ways* is not well-known, but it's a book that she said she had created from memory. The interview with her lasted one minute and 21 seconds and Hazel was 'hooked'. Interviewing on tape is addictive. From then on she went out interviewing people, mostly those in the arts in which she was interested. Later, in science she interviewed a very old Lord Florey and a very young Gus Nossel. These interviews went into the National Library of Australia, starting the oral history collection called 'Eminent Australians'. Luckily the National Library paid Hazel to do the interviewing, requiring her to do 60 interviews a year. Before she died in 1984 she had done nearly 1300 interviews--27 years of doing what she always called 'her recordings'.



[Rosemary then read a section from Michael Holroyd's preface to his latest book on his family called *Mosaic--Portraits in Fragments*. Michael Holroyd is known to you for his marvellous biographies. Here is a small portion of what she read.]

*'I've tried to present an anatomy of well researched if wayward, family history. The characters in this book are all ordinary people but their exploits and adventures reveal how compelling fantasies as well as mundane facts guide our lives. It is how a writer mixes these facts and fantasies that divide the historian from the novelist and determines whether a book is classified as fiction or that most mysterious category--non-fiction.'*

The non-fiction part is of course what we are doing with oral history. [Holroyd produces] a most wonderful tale as he moves through various connections in his family and discovers that certain myths were certainly not true and others were ignored, secrets were kept but eventually revealed. It is as wonderful a talk as you can hear about family history. His aunt, who actually began his interest in family history, died a spinster in her 90s in a nursing home. He visited her about every fortnight, and when he started to get interested in family history he took some photograph albums with him, but her memory was fading and she was very vague about who the actual people were anymore. He says, 'The past was dying for her, even as it was coming alive for me.' So my urging is--don't let it die before it's too late.

Di Rich, Hazel de Berg's daughter, who is herself an oral historian, spoke about her mother many years after her mother's death in a talk that she gave at the State Library to the Oral History Association. She mentioned Hazel's brief interview with Dame Mary Gilmore in which Dame Mary said '*memories are the things that make history*'.

This was 1957 and Mary Gilmore speaks about memory in a very positive way. Oral history went through decades of being rejected by academics who said people's memories were inaccurate, constructed, unreliable and that people told lies. Now that we're in the post-modern age, where

*continued on page 9*

**Women's Suffrage. A short history  
of a great movement**

**by Millicent Garrett Fawcett**

**About the book and the author**

**by Dr Beverley Kingston**

The shiny new compactus shelves that now house the Library's book collection contain some intriguing and wonderful treasures. One of the older and more historic items in the collection is a small book, 11 x 16 cm, dull olive-green with an old ink stain on the spine and only 94 pages. Entitled *Women's Suffrage. A short history of a great movement*, it was written by Millicent Garrett Fawcett and published in 1912 as No 47 in a series called 'The People's Books' by T.C. & E.C Jack of 67 Long Acre, London. There is no indication of its previous owner or how it came to be in the collection, but someone has written in a very neat hand on the front endpaper, 'a very short history' with 'very' underlined.

Millicent Garrett was born in 1847 in Aldeburgh. Her older sister Elizabeth was one of the early women to qualify as a doctor and as Elizabeth Garrett Anderson established a hospital in London for women and children staffed entirely by women. Millicent married Henry Fawcett, an economist, historian and MP, in 1867. Fawcett was blind as the result of an accident in his youth and Millicent effectively became his eyes. Together they worked for constitutional reform so that women would be able to vote in the UK.

By the first decade of the twentieth century Millicent had become the respectable and respected spokeswoman for the moderate campaign for constitutional reform. When she wrote this book she was confident that the long struggle in England to get women the vote was about to end with the desired legislation. However, the complications of party politics and the outbreak of war in 1914 meant that it was 1918 before any women in Britain were entitled to vote and then only if they were married or rate payers and over the age of 30. The first woman to sit in the British parliament, Lady Astor, was elected in 1919. Millicent Fawcett's account of the suffrage movement in the UK from 1832 when for the first time electors were defined as 'male persons' (a few women may have exercised a vote as a rate payer before then) to 1911, concludes with a brief list of places where women had already won the right to vote, including all the Australian states and the Commonwealth of Australia.

Millicent Fawcett lived till August 1929, long enough to see all women in the United Kingdom over 21 eligible to vote in the general election in May that year. Fourteen women were elected, including one Australian woman, Marion Phillips, the first Australian woman to be elected to a national parliament anywhere in the world, and one, Margaret Bondfield, became Minister for Labour in Ramsay Macdonald's cabinet. The Fawcett Society and the Fawcett Library were later named in honour of Millicent Fawcett.

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RESNET (The City of Sydney  
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NEWS OF MEMBERS

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**Beverley Sodbinow**, our archivist, has recently returned from an overseas trip with her husband. Here is what she writes: It was the trip of a lifetime for me and especially for my husband Gabriel who is of Russian parentage and speaks Russian but had never been to that country. Our train journey of 9000 km began in Beijing and finished 28 days later in Finland.

After a week in Beijing, doing all the things tourists do, including attending a performance of the Peking Opera, we took the Trans-Mongolian Express to Ulaan Batar where we stayed in Gers, the traditional accommodation, and attended the annual festival that featured wonderful horsemanship, wrestling and archery. Later we visited the Lotus Children's Centre, a self-funded orphanage established in 1995, and met the founder Didi Kalinka an Australian kindergarten and yoga teacher. We next went to Irkursk in Siberia for a wonderful day on Lake Baikal, before joining the Trans-Siberian Express to

Moscow. Here we saw all the sights, spending our last day at the old village of Kolomenskoye where the relics of Russian history were created and kept for centuries. The collections of the museum include Late Stone Age findings, and rare print issues, including the first Russian print book "Moscow Apostle" dated 1564.

After Moscow we spent time in St Petersburg, then went by train to Helsinki, where our tour ended. We came home by way of Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and the UK, visiting friends.

Congratulations to **Kate Grenville**, whose novel *The Secret River*, about an Australian convict, was short-listed for the Man Booker Prize in October 2006. This is the most prestigious literary prize in the English-speaking world and Kate has made history by being the first Australian woman writer to have been

nominated for it. The prize was won by Kiran Desai. *The Secret River* has already won several awards – the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, which was presented to Kate by the Queen in London in May 2006, the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction and the Community Relations Commission Award.

**Kristin Blume**, convenor of the Canberra Lunch-Hour talks since 2003, has recently returned from working as a volunteer teacher in Cusco, Peru. She describes the experience as 'living in the first world while working in the third'. Cusco has many different faces, including the westernised Cusco designed for the convenience of the many tourists on their way to Machu Picchu, and the tiny room in which she taught poor but happy Andean children aged 2 - 5, which had a dirt floor, no electricity, and a constant stream of animal visitors including dogs, chickens, the pet monkey from next door, and even a sheep!



young women today do not want to identify with the underdog tag associated with feminism, yet they appreciate many of the advantages second-wave feminism has delivered them. However, not only should we be quick to claim the positive results of feminism, we should also be aware when it is misused. Have you noticed the way spokespersons for problematic enterprises are now often women, because they are softer, more 'believable'? Remember the three suicides at Guantanamo Bay in June this year? A woman government representative explained them as a 'cynical PR trick by the enemy'.

I have had several very interesting and possibly even useful careers. I believe one of the reasons I have arrived at this age of 67 as a very happy person is largely thanks to outcomes from second-wave feminism. What a marvellous era I have been fortunate enough to live through.

*Abbreviated by Shirley Jones from notes supplied by the speaker*

we question everything, memory has come into prominence because, when we think about it, everything IS memory. We remember what we did yesterday (if we're lucky), remember, perhaps, what we did ten years ago, and remember 20 years ago as clear as a bell. At universities now people speak about looking at events, at eras and at times through people's memories, because that's really all we have. If you keep a diary or a journal or write letters, you are writing from memory. Captain Bligh wrote to his wife when he got to Kouping in Timor saying 'My dear, dear Betsy--I have lost the Bounty' and went on to recount his memories of the mutiny.

Certain things trigger memory. One of the most vivid, of course, is smells. What smell takes you back 20, 30 years or more into your childhood? What smell makes you think 'Gosh, that reminds me. ...' The memory of it haunts us, does it not? That's the magic of oral history and interestingly enough, it's often when people remember particular incidents, that they find the feelings they experienced at the time are reinvoked and you get a welling up of the same rage or embarrassment or sorrow you felt at the time. That's how powerful memory is.

When you interview people you need to set them within their own life. We have a marvellous collection of interviews done for the Institution of Engineers, and necessarily the questions asked are about the early life of the engineers and obviously then their commercial and professional lives. Within that, you always get a family history. I am passionate about

the whole idea that you set everybody within his or her own life. Not everyone does this. When Richard Racksworthy did his famous bridge builders' interviews, he started with the words, 'What was your first day on the Bridge like?' This means that they talked about their work, and made few references to their family life. If you set someone within their life, that's an archive for future generations to consult.

Do not despair, gentle listeners; there are various books to help you along the way. *The Oral History Handbook*, which is the national standard, has all the new stuff about digital technology. I wish you luck and a large purse for that, but I'm recommending to small groups and individuals that they still do their interviewing on cassette tapes. The humble little cassette tape has got a decent track record; it has been around since the 60s and our collection is perfectly audible. *Family Memories* by Bob Price is composed of questions which give you an idea of the topics you might address. It's divided into parts--'growing up' is one and 'the house that you remember' and 'was there any one person of whom you were especially proud and why?' Bob Mitchell has recently published *A Thousand and One Questions for Life Story*. It suggests questions like--'how did you cope with the transition from primary to high school?' Now that's a big step, if you think back. What was it like to be cock of the walk at primary and suddenly you are one of a million in a high school? These three books are all available at the State Library shop. Then there's a very useful little book called *Talking Together* which is the guide to community oral history projects. I also give seminars on how to do oral history.

*Transcription by Helen Ruby  
Abbreviated version by Shirley Jones*



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## OTHER WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

### WHAT'S ON?

#### Lane Cove Women's Action and Information Group (WAIG) ANNUAL SEMINAR-- 'MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS'

Saturday 18 November, 1.30 to 5 pm  
Queen Elizabeth Queen Mother  
Centenary Centre,  
180 Longueville Road, Lane Cove  
(registration begins at 1.00 pm)

A panel of women from diverse walks of life will share their stories of being a daughter and a mother. We have engaged the services of Playback Theatre. Members of the audience will be invited to tell a story or recount a moment from their lives. Actors from the Theatre will then spontaneously recreate the story using acting, music, vocalisation and movement.

## OBITUARIES

### DR SHELLEY PHILLIPS (1924-2006)

Shelley Yole was born in Melbourne, Victoria, and contracted polio soon after her birth. Her determination to overcome this obstacle accompanied her throughout her life, enabling her to achieve her goals.

Shelley went to Melbourne University on a scholarship, graduating in literature and history. She married Jack Phillips and they spent three years in Britain, where her first daughter, Catherine, was born. Back in Melbourne, her second daughter, Odette, was born. The family moved to Perth where Shelley studied psychology at the University of Western Australia. After doing a PhD in the Education Department at Sydney University, she was appointed Lecturer then Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of New South Wales.

Shelley became a leading authority in child studies, a media personality and a writer, and established the innovative Unit for Child Studies. As Director of the unit she put children on the public agenda in Australia, making university research about children available to the community. Her more than 50 research papers about children and relationships were published in leading international journals and she also wrote several books.

She held a number of honorary academic appointments in the US and Canada and during her travels abroad as an academic, met many world-famous figures in child psychology.

After Shelley retired she became a consultant and counsellor in private practice. She was an enthusiastic member of the Australian Society for Women Writers, producing a novel based on her own childhood experiences and family history in a Victorian country town and spanning the decades of the depression. This was full of colourful characters and strong women rebels. She also left bequests to the universities of Melbourne, Sydney and NSW to be used as scholarships for rural women to attend university.

Shelley believed passionately that the world could be a better place. She especially wanted to improve society's attitude towards children, and believed in enabling women to achieve their goals. She was not someone who just passes through. She tried to make a difference to the world.

*Abbreviated from an obituary supplied by her daughter, Catherine.*

*Shelley also believed in the necessity of preserving women's words and was a supportive member of JSNWL until her death. -- Ed*

Shelley's memorial service and interment of her ashes will be held at 2pm on Saturday, 9th of December in the North Chapel of the Northern Suburbs Crematorium, Dehli Rd., North Ryde, NSW, Australia.

For further details please contact: Dr. Catherine Phillips, 1053 Schmidt Lane, North Brunswick, NJ 08902, USA  
tel +1 732 940 8379, email: Cphillips@biology.rutgers.edu

### DR DIANA TEMPLE, OA (1925-2006)

Diana Temple was 17 when she started work during WWII as a laboratory assistant at Western Australia's Great Boulder mine. By the time she retired in 1990 she had published 100 scientific papers, delivered keynote speeches at 60 conferences, had become associate professor at Sydney University's Pharmacology Department and founded the Women in Science Enquiry Network (WISNet).

Diana was born in Kalgoorlie and matriculated in chemistry before gaining a BSc from the University of Western Australia in 1947, an unusual choice for a woman in those years. In 1949 she started teaching chemistry at Sydney University before taking a research job at Harwell Research Institute in Oxford, where she married a fellow scientist, Richard Temple. After working for several years in the US, she and her husband returned to Australia. Diana gained a PhD in chemistry at the University of Sydney, where she took up lecturing in pharmacology and also started a family. In the mid-1970s she was part of a group studying the role and achievements of female academics, which resulted in the book *Why So Few?*

Diana was appointed associate professor in the Department of Pharmacology in 1976 and headed the department until 1979. In her field of respiratory pharmacology, she published 100 scientific papers. She was a fellow of the university senate from

1985 to 1987 and an elected member of the academic board before she retired in 1990.

Believing professional women needed to align with like-minded women confronting the same challenges in establishing and maintaining their careers, Diana helped establish WISNet at ANZAAS in 1984 and worked on the journal from its first issue in April 1985 through to May 2003. She promoted the journal as disseminating the important message of WISNet to people who were never able to attend meetings. The organisation and the journal are her monuments.

In 1999, Diana was appointed a member of the Order of Australia 'for service to medical and scientific research, particularly in the field of respiratory pharmacology; as an advocate for the role of women in science, and in promoting an understanding of science by the general public'.

Diana cultivated a wide range in interests. She was a woman of boundless energy, respected by all who knew her, especially those in science. For generations of people she was a mentor and role model of great consequence. She is survived by her husband, and children Helen and Jonathan and grandchildren, Charlotte and Nicholas.

*Adapted from the obituary appearing in the Sydney Morning Herald*

*Diana took a keen interest in Jessie Street National Women's Library and its activities. She was instrumental in helping a young Iranian Library volunteer with a science degree, to gain a full-time job.-- Ed*

## NOTES & QUOTES

### WOMEN ON WAR

There is no force in the plea that 'if women vote they must fight.' Moreover, war is not the normal state of the human family in its higher development, but merely a feature of barbarism lasting on through the transition of the race, from the savage to the scholar.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902)

We have always borne part of the weight of war, and the major part ...Men have made boomerangs, bows, swords or guns with which to destroy one another; we have made the men who destroyed and were destroyed ...We pay the first cost on all human life.

Olive Schreiner (1855-1920)

You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake.

Jeanette Rankin (1880-1973)

When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?

Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962)

War is a malignant disease, an idiocy, a prison, and the pain it causes is beyond telling or meaning; but war was our condition and our history, the place we had to live in.

Martha Gellhorn (1908-1998)

The anthropologists' definition of man as a weapon-making animal should be modernised to read: man is an animal enslaved by his weapons. We pay for our weapons first and pay for our real needs with the left-over cash. .... Year after year, every nation economises on money for life in order to spend more on weapons ... Perhaps we have finally reached the moment of truth when we must decide which is obsolete, war or the human race.

Martha Gellhorn (1908-1998)

I said 'What are you fighting for?'  
He said 'To stop another war.'  
I think that God must often say  
Man moves in a mysterious way.

Anon

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