

Australian Coalition '99

15
Edition

National **UPDATE**

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Total AC '99 Partner Tally: 1244

Australian Coalition '99 is an IYOP initiative supported by the Commonwealth Government of Australia
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A Year of Beginnings

A special letter from the Editor

AC '99 (National) wishes to extend its sincere gratitude and best wishes to the countless individuals and organisations who have been involved in IYOP. Importantly, 1999 can be seen as a year of beginnings, and everyone involved should be extremely proud of the concerted step we have taken together to move closer to an Australia for All Ages.

AC '99 National is funded by the Commonwealth Government of Australia until 30 April 1999. There is already evidence that many of the partnerships between the AC '99 partner organisations will continue, and we hope that many of the groups and individuals involved in IYOP will continue to build on the developments and achievements of the Year.

If your national partner organisation is yet to advise AC '99 of recent achievements and future plans, we will be very pleased to hear from you in the early months of 2000. The next and final commemorative edition of 'Update' will be circulated in April 2000 which will include a report and overview of IYOP.

We wish you very happy greetings of the season.



'Great Products' by Pride & Partners/Utteridge Pty Ltd
Highly commended entry in the recently awarded
Ad News poster competition. See story page 15
Image courtesy of Austral Photo Library

A Good Age

Feature Article by Helen Elliott

Plato says that the eyes are the windows to the soul. Rosalie Hudson has unforgettable eyes. So dark they could be black, large enough to conventionally be called 'lovely'. But it isn't any conventional aspect that makes them arresting. They reflect who she is without any guile. In a world where artifice is accepted currency, eyes like this can shock.

Rosalie Hudson is Director of Nursing at Harold McCracken House, a Christian-based non-denominational residential care centre for fifty people in the inner Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy. She has degrees in both theology and nursing and is currently writing a work-related PH.D.

We talked on a Saturday morning in her office, an airy reasonably untidy space scattered with books, flowers and papers. Her work and her heart are centred around the idea of 'community' and how best to make that happen.

'There are two stories here that make me passionate about what I'm trying to do. One happened some years ago - a woman who had to drive twenty kilometres to visit her mother here who had dementia. She didn't know her daughter, she didn't know who she was, or where she was and the

daughter told me that she would often drive here, walk to the door but couldn't bring herself to come in. She would turn around and drive home again. I had to ask myself what is it about us that we can't provide a place of community so that this woman felt she could come in as part of it?

The other story is more recent: we had a masked ball, with live music and dancing. (Music has the most extraordinary power and we have a brilliant music therapist here). There was some discussion about whether one of our demented residents should come or not, but she came. At one point in the night there was gap in the music and the silence was broken by this plaintive voice asking:

'Will someone please tell me who I am and where I am?' It was this woman. And she wasn't asking for geographical location. She was speaking from the very core of the nature of our care - as one human being to another. It says everything.'

Residential Care Centres are currently used by 5-10% of the population, but as longevity increases the number of people who need the particular care of gerontological nursing will increase. Most of us do not want to think of Residential Centres as part of our lives, as part of the wider community, but as there is the increasing possibility that they will be and Rosalie Hudson would like to change some attitudes.

She gently points out that, despite all the good intentions, the focus of this year in empathising 'the positive' aspects of ageing has perhaps neglected some of the more complex issues.

Those who have been through the near death experience have reported a startling range of after effects and changes. One woman said:

'The things that I felt slowly were a very heightened sense of love, the ability to communicate love, the ability to find joy and pleasures in the smallest and most insignificant things about me... I developed a great compassion for people that were ill and facing death and I wanted so much to let them know, to somehow make them aware that the dying process was nothing more than an extension of one's life.'

reprinted from 'Glimpse After Glimpse' by Sogyal Rinpoche (Harper Collins 1992)

For children having to admit a parent to residential care centre feelings of shame, guilt, despair and grief are all common. And for the people being admitted the effect can be cataclysmic, because whether we like to say it or not, generally a nursing home is a prelude to death. Rosalie Hudson believes that it is this knowledge that many are not prepared to accept. Yet her understanding of Residential Care is as not

'an end' but another stage in a life. A stage where life can flourish right up to the very end.

'I see it as a very distinctive opportunity to bring out the best in relationships between nurses and older people ... to see how we can make their lives flourish even in their most extreme frailty. You need other people in order to flourish when you've lost the capacity to move, to speak to articulate your needs... you need other people to understand - as far as we ever can understand what another person is going through - from their side what it is to be in that particular situation. Personhood, the dignity of being human, is conferred by one person upon another.'

Nursing homes, says Rosalie Hudson, are often pushed to the margins of society because part of our own human frailty is that we like people to be like ourselves. We shy away from that which is 'different' in any way. And there is also the fear that 'we might become like them'. And a nursing home is a place where death is faced daily and Rosalie Hudson suggests that this fear of nursing homes is, ultimately, a fear of death. And death, too, is part of any individual human story. 'Pushing us out of sight is doing a grave disservice to our own humanity, as well as to the humanity of the people we are caring for.'

What Rosalie Hudson is desperate for people to understand is that there is no shame, no burden, in one person being dependent upon another. After all her years of nursing she is still profoundly affected at each individual death, or, as she puts it, 'each unique life'. And the way to validate these 'unique but ordinary lives', she sees, is through a strong sense of community.

'Nursing Homes are often regarded as NOT community - residential care against 'community care' - they're often juxtaposed. The nursing home is part of this community in Fitzroy and it's a part of the human community.'

When a person is first admitted to Harold McCracken House, the staff take a detailed history of their immediate past, their locality, social history and lifestyle and try to incorporate this into the new life. They also try to talk about their longings, their desires. A new resident is never just seen as the person as who they are in their frailty and as needing twenty-four hour nursing care, but who they are in the continuity of their life history. The continuity of life isn't broken.

She tells a marvellous story about the recent Armistice Day Service when one of the newer residents, a highly decorated veteran of 93 who had been reluctant to mix with other residents came out of his room to participate in the wreath - laying ceremony at the Centre. 'This particular gentleman hadn't wanted to come out of his room before this, but this ritual - a ritual terribly important in his life - gave him the opportunity to dress in his best clothes and to participate in something that was extraordinarily emotional and moving to him, to us all. After he had laid the wreath he turned around, placed his hands on his heart and said 'Lest We Forget' with such gravity and emotion - it was so moving.

And interestingly, since then, he's become far more involved. So we shouldn't assume that just because people say they want to be left alone that they do. There are still possibilities, as I said, to flourish in new ways.'

In the early hours of Saturday morning, an 89 year man who had been resident for ten years had died. He was Greek, from a peasant background and for the ten years in the centre imprisoned in his dementia and physical frailty. He hadn't spoken, hadn't acknowledged anything from the outside world in all those years, yet the staff at Harold McCracken House brought in Greek food for him, played Greek music beside his bed and talked to him. They had no idea if anything was tapping into his conscious but no one would have questioned 'if it was worth it'. What that man had been given was warmth, sharing and compassion as part of a community. And everyone that morning was diminished by his death.

'So what does the catchcry a 'society for all ages' mean to us in residential care?' asks Rosalie Hudson. 'Each one gives what they can in our community but ... I don't think that catchcry is answered by stressing the positive aspects of ageing and by inference the negative aspects are seen as those which are not marketable, not pretty, not sexy, not stimulating. The cult of youth and the cult of self, which is what I think society is now about, takes prominence everywhere. And what it really denies is who we are in relation to other people. Society crosses all ages and the success here is the social microcosm - we show that difference doesn't mean alienation. Diversity and difference, right up to the point of death is what that continuum of life is about. And finally, the common meeting place of just the touch of one human being to another, something that defies the technological imperative. Residential aged care gives us the opportunity to get back to this fundamental thing - the touch of a hand.'

'Unique and Ordinary: Reflections on Living and Dying in a Nursing Home'
by Rosalie Hudson and Jennifer Richmond
is available from Ausmed Publications
PO Box 4086, Melbourne University VIC 3052
Tel: 03 9344 4000
Cost \$35.95 (incl. postage and handling)

Outstanding Senior Australians honoured and winners of positive images celebrated

Outstanding Senior Australians from across the country and as far away as Kalgoorlie and Thursday Island were honoured at events held in Canberra on 18-19 November.

At an afternoon tea at Government House hosted by their Excellencies the Governor-General, Sir William Deane, and Lady Deane, the achievements, commitment and valuable contribution to the community of 147 Outstanding Senior Australians from almost every electorate throughout the nation were acknowledged.

'I am delighted by the continuing level of participation and involvement in the community by so many seniors,' the Minister for Aged Care, Bronwyn Bishop, said.

The Commonwealth Recognition Awards for Senior Australians have been established by Mrs Bishop as an initiative for the International Year of Older Persons. Under this program, the most outstanding senior Australians were brought to Canberra for special events in their honour. The awards have been established to recognise the ongoing contributions older people continue to make to society.

The Minister honoured the Outstanding Seniors further, along with the winners of the inaugural Commonwealth Media and Advertising Awards, at a luncheon at the Great Hall, Parliament House.

'Challenging negative stereotypes of senior Australians is one of the Government's most important aims for the International Year of Older Persons,' Mrs Bishop said.



Mrs Bishop presents Vickie Burkinshaw of The Body Shop with a Commonwealth Media and Advertising award for the company's advertising booklet, Full Voice.



Outstanding Senior Australians from around the nation were honoured at functions in Canberra

'The media and advertising industries have a significant influence on how older people are publicly portrayed and, therefore, how our seniors are perceived by the wider community.

'These Awards reward professional communicators for excellence in portraying senior Australians in a realistic and positive way.'

More than 1,100 nominations from every Australian State and Territory were received for the Awards, a Federal Government initiative for the International Year of Older Persons managed in conjunction with Older People Speak Out.

Girl Guides step into action

Guides Australia, an AC '99 National Partner, has established a partnership between the Australian Program Adviser, representing the needs of girls 5-18 years old and the Australian Trefoil Adviser, representing older women, who were once leaders, who still wish to be involved in supporting and encouraging guiding. A special badge project has been developed to bridge the gap between generations and further enhance understanding and appreciation of the needs of older persons. The badge syllabus was designed to encourage the involvement of both older and younger members to work together.

Guides Australia has also developed an alliance with The Body Shop to produce the booklet, 'Girls Get Real', to enhance self-esteem and a positive body image. Workshops have been held in all states of Australia. One exercise outlined in the booklet calls for girls to interview an older person in order to develop an appreciation on the societal issues which face women of all ages.

Providing better support to families of aged care facility residents

A small action research project is being carried out at one of Villa Maria's aged care residences in Melbourne. The project: Facilitating Family Involvement in Residential Aged Care is being carried out by Lincoln Gerontology Centre, Latrobe University and is funded through the Victorian Department of Human Services' IYOP Positive Ageing Grant Scheme.

Since July, small discussion groups have taken place with Villa Maria management, staff and friends who have residents living at the facility. Individual interviews were carried out with residents. A wide range of issues were raised across the different groups. Four main areas were identified as key themes:

- Communication
- Getting the best quality of care and quality of life possible for residents
- Providing the right support and encouragement to families
- Information and Education

The immediate outcome for Villa Maria is the development of a strategic plan which identifies specific issues that need to be addressed, proposed actions and timelines.



The plan will feed into the Centre's overall policy development work for accreditation against the Residential Aged Care Standards in December 2000. The Family Participation Reference Group constituting family members, staff, management, residents and a representative from Carer's Association will oversee the development and the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The project will also culminate in an overall report published and disseminated by the Victorian Department of Human Services.

If there are families and carers with relatives in other residential Aged Care Facilities that are addressing this issue through the implementation of specific policies and procedures, the Lincoln Gerontology Centre would be very interested to hear from you. Please contact Heather Russell Tel: 03 9479 5826.

Senior volunteers recognised in ACT

The Senior Volunteers' Recognition Award seeks to recognise older people who have made a personal and significant contribution to the Canberra community. The work must be voluntary or unpaid and the contribution being recognised must be of an outstanding nature.

Older people represent a major group of volunteers in the community. Without their valuable contribution a wide range of organisations would not function effectively. Older people provide practical and financial assistance to their families and possess a wealth of skills and experience that they can impart to others.

This year's recipients, Mrs. Marcia Steibel and Mrs Margery Smyth received their awards as part of the celebrations for the International Day of Older Persons. Marcia Steibel was nominated for her work with the Tuggeranong Seniors Centre and Margery for her dedication to organisations including the National Council of Women and the RAAF Widows Association.

Looking for credible nutrition resources on the Internet?

Finding credible nutrition information can be very difficult. This is particularly true if you are looking for information that is scientifically based and most importantly, unbiased. Australia's peak nutrition body Nutrition Australia, formerly the Australian Nutrition Foundation, has launched a new website at: <http://www.NutritionAustralia.org> to take the confusion out of food, nutrition and dieting.

This comprehensive website provides up-to-date and unbiased food and nutrition information for the general public, health professionals and their clients. The site is updated each week and provides food and nutrition information including a Recipe of the Week, an events calendar, Frequently Asked Questions, media releases, position papers, and publications.

A key message that comes through the web site is to encourage a healthy lifestyle by promoting enjoyment from eating a wide variety of foods based on the Healthy Eating Pyramid and physically active.

For more information check out the Nutrition Australia web site at:
<http://www.NutritionAustralia.org>



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Progress In Old Age Psychiatry
 by Professor John Snowdon, Chair, Faculty of Psychiatry of Old Age, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

The Faculty of Psychiatry of Old Age was established on 1 January 1999. During the previous decade, the Faculty was known as the Section of Psychiatry of Old Age within the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. Through Faculty status, recognition was given to the importance of the specialty and the development of a training program for psychiatrists wishing to focus attention on older individuals. The Faculty sits on the College Council, which enables increased advocacy for issues concerning older people.

Members of the Faculty have used IYOP to draw attention to the needs of its patient and client population.

In Sydney, in January, there was a well-attended luncheon at Parliament House, where the Health Minister announced the allocation of \$150,000 to the NSW branch of our newly formed Faculty in order to draw up guidelines for services and improve its scope to provide good assessment and care. Meetings have been held in most parts of Australia, including country areas, to educate and inform health care workers on mental health problems.

On November 30 and December 1, 1999, the Faculty will be holding its first two-day clinical meeting. The program will allow discussion of a wide variety of mental health disorders, and what we can do about them. Visiting speaker from the United States, Dr Trey Sunderland, will present data on factors associated with development of Alzheimer's Disease, and on reactions following bereavement. The Faculty will be showing off its breadth of talent, knowledge and experience. Australia can be proud of what is being developed within old age psychiatry, and of the contributions of Faculty members to the international literature. It is exciting that the world's peak representative and educational body in the field, the International Psychogeriatric Association, has chosen an Australian, Associate Professor Ed Chiu, as its next president.

The Faculty of Psychiatry of Old Age welcomes close liaison with other bodies that focus on older persons. Its chief aim is to optimise the quality of life of older persons.

For further information, contact:
Dr John Snowdon Tel: 02 9556 9666
Email: jsnowdon@mail.usyd.edu.au

Wild Women's Weekends
 by Helping Hand Aged Care

The concept for this initiative was developed by the Manager, Healthy Lifestyles Program, Merike Mannik, as an alternative to bus tours and bingo. The focus is on self-reflection, self-indulgence and self-renewal in retreat settings, providing women with an opportunity to 'recharge their batteries' and develop fresh life direction.

Weekends are run according to demand and are tailor-made to suit participants. The ages of participants has ranged from 46-84 and feedback from the three weekends held in 1999 being extremely positive. New linkages and bonds have been created by the experience with a strong support network being formed to sustain each other in achieving their goals. Comments from participants include:



'A brilliant, fun weekend with lots of laughter, love and learning.'

'The whole program has been very enlightening and satisfying to me. It has given me much to think of in regard to my own future and has shown me very positive things to strive for.'

'I was struck by the freshness (of the concept)... after ploughing through reams of information on preparing wills, pre-paid funeral and retirement villages. ... We came away exhilarated and determined to put into practice our discoveries about how to age 'disgracefully.'

Helping Hand Aged Care plans to continue the Wild Women's Weekends in 2000 as well as developing a similar program for men. For further information, contact Merike Mannik Tel: 08 8344 2222

News from the Secretariat

Hot off the press from our National Partners

HESTA Superfund has recently launched 'Generation Inspiration', a collection of winning short stories which were submitted to the 'Retire to Inspire' writing competition held earlier this year. The competition was developed to both celebrate the positive aspects of ageing and raise awareness of the financial realities of retirement.

The publication is available for \$25.00. For more information contact Cathryn Harland, HESTA Super Fund Tel: 03 8660 1692

The National Council of Women of Australia has launched an anthology to pay tribute to IYOP. The collection, entitled, 'From a Camel to the Moon' is a collection of short stories that reflects a poignant, courageous, humorous and dramatic look at what Australia has to offer.

For more information contact NCW Tel: 03 9662 9177

City of Nedlands (WA)

On 1 October 1999, the City of Nedlands held an awards celebration for International Day of Older Persons. Back in July 1999, the Council launched a competition for children to nominate their favourite older person through a story, poem or drawing. Competition entry forms were delivered to all local schools and advertisements placed in local papers. By closing date in September, 164 entries had been received. Winners in each of the three age categories attended the afternoon tea award ceremony on 1 October with their favourite older person and family members. The event received very good local press coverage and the Council is hoping to make this an annual event.

City of Knox (Vic)

Knox Community Volunteers and Do-Care (Knox), held a Garden Party in the grounds of Historic Millers Homestead on Friday 1 October. Highlights of the day included an address by the Mayor of The City of Knox, Karin Orpen. Entertainment was provided by The Velvet Lounge Suite, with their wonderful 30's and 40's music. The Ringwood Croquet Club encouraged people to experience croquet first-hand on the lawn. The Knox Historical Society also had a display of interesting photos and facts from the local area.



Waverley Council (NSW)

Competitions have been the order of the day during IYOP as one meaningful way of engaging intergenerational enthusiasm. Waverley Council ran their 'Back to the Beach' Competition. Entry details were simple: invite people to interview someone over 50 living in Waverley (which includes Bondi and Bronte beaches), on their memories of the beach - either a local beach or a beach in the country of their birth. Entries could be in writing, taped audio or video interviews, or as a drawing. Winner, Christine Engel, submitted a poem which recounted her love affair with the sea. Following the Award ceremony, Christine formed a storytelling group of local residents who get together regularly to enjoy each other's company and share their experiences.

Snapshots from around Australia 1 and 2 October 1999



Cliff Young, photograph courtesy of AURA

A message from Cliff Young, one of Australia's best known senior sportsmen.

Cliff sent us this message on the occasion of the Global Walk.

'I am a firm believer in exercise to keep your body in good shape. Walking is very good, but you must walk as quickly as you can without getting distressed, start at a comfortable pace and as you get fitter, gradually increase your speed - always listen to your body, if it starts crying out for mercy cut back on the speed. Jogging is also very good but be careful with it as well, if you are overweight take it easy until some of the weight disappears. Swimming is also very good for a body, but take it easy 'til you feel good. Then gradually increase the distance and the speed.'



Northern Territory: STAR series takes seniors to new heights

The STAR (Senior Territorians Active in Recreation) Series coordinated by 'Life. Be In It' in conjunction with The Office of Senior Territorians invited thrillseekers to put aside their fears and launch themselves into Dragonboats. Next, they were scaling to new heights at the Indoor Rock Climbing Centre. With harnesses on and heart rates up, the sky was the limit with many participants managing to make it to the top of the wall. 'Who ever would have thought we would be paddling Dragonboats and climbing up walls at our age,' said David Hussin, one of the STAR participants.



Tasmania: Dawn chorus meets global embrace

'My love of nature made the International Year of Older Persons Global Embrace morning walk extra special for me. Recognising that birds welcome each morning with their songs world-wide regardless of war or peace and spending time with my good friends painting silk and making bird shaped kites, amongst chuckles, bursts of song and gentle wisdom, were the magic features for me. The Saturday morning parade was a great adventure, stringing up the birds on fishing line and poles. I was surrounded by tall wading stilt people in enormous bird costumes and a tinkling of music that set a scene of tranquility and togetherness...'

Robyn Gates, participant in the Lauderdale Canal Walk on 2 October 1999



South Australia: Marching in time to the bagpipes!

In South Australia, statewide, there were 13 walks throughout October involving approximately 750 people. To add to the festive atmosphere many walks featured entertainment by musicians and singers and included either morning tea or a barbecue lunch at the conclusion. Schools were encouraged to become involved and participants needing assistance with mobility also participated. Feedback was very positive with organisers looking forward to running the walks again in 2000 as part of the Celebrate Seniors Program.



New South Wales: Walking 'round Wingham

The inhabitants of Wingham are lucky to have a lady as dynamic as Elsie Cromarty in their midst. Elsie was the driving force behind the Wingham Walk in which about 350 people participated. Local organisations and Nestles Australia were extremely generous in their contributions for the event. Each walker was given a badge to commemorate the occasion. The local band, located in the middle of the park, spurred the walkers on. The band includes 2 musicians who will in fact be playing in a band at the Sydney 2000 Olympics.



Queensland: Wake up & walk down under with a difference

Entering into the spirit of the IYOP global walk 'Wake Up and Walk' the Rotary Club of Nundah, Brisbane, Australia sponsored a walk with a difference. Some 35 walkers took part in an informative walk along the 'Billai Dhagun' track. The walkers were accompanied by wetlands guide, John Bowden, who pointed out indigenous plants, birdlife, aboriginal culture and history. Multi-talented John then entertained the gathering with a demonstration of the didgereedoo, complete with bird calls!



Victoria: Walkers limber up in Melbourne

Sunday 3 October was the Global Walk which saw 200 people in the City of Melbourne join with people from 96 countries around the world promoting the message that walking is a great way to enjoy life and promote good health and active ageing. Participants were given the option of following one of Melbourne's Heritage Walks, the new Footprints children's walk or 'Another View' Koori Heritage walk. Melbourne City Council Information kiosk volunteers and traffic officers were encouraged to wear Global Walk badges and many overseas visitors joined in on the walks.

AC '99/Australian Women's Weekly 'Time of your Life' Competition- The Final Chapter.

As attitudes towards ageing are shaped at an early age, AC '99 set out to engage younger members of the community in IYOP. The concept was a creative writing competition for primary and secondary school students that would get them thinking about their notions of ageing and attitudes towards older people.

The Australian Women's Weekly agreed to partner AC '99 in this exciting project. Collins Booksellers was the key sponsor of the event, sponsoring some of Australia's top children's writers to pen the first essays, and providing book prizes to winners and their school libraries, as well as runners up. IBM generously provided three laptop computers for the category winners. Schoolsnet emailed the competition details to schools and students around the nation. The Body Shop demonstrated again its commitment to changing attitudes towards ageing in the community by sponsoring the initiative. Everything was in place. The September issue of The Australian Women's Weekly hit the streets, the schools were emailed, we posted the information on our website. And then we waited.

AC '99 was inundated with over 1,000 entries, each essay more than 1,000 words. The judges were confronted with a big challenge: would they ever be able to shortlist them? The winning entries were selected on the writer's sensitive understanding of how it might feel to be older, as well as their ability to address other issues, including, for example: the advantages and disadvantages of being an older person; recognising the inevitability of the ageing process; and illustrating the value of intergenerational exchange. The three students who best demonstrated this were Lauren Kajewski (9-12 year olds), Letitia Barnett (12-15 year olds) and Meg Wheeler, (15-18 year olds).

The Presentation Day was held on Friday 5 November. Darling House was the chosen venue, an historical building in the Rocks area of Sydney and an aged care residential facility- the perfect setting for the presentation and burial of the time capsule. AC '99's Journalist and Media Consultant, Helen Elliott and Gwen Gilbert, AC '99's Office Coordinator and Webmaster were present to greet the guests. The Federal Minister for Aged Care, the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop, MP spoke about the importance of the intergenerational approach to positive ageing.



Winners of the story writing competition.
From left to right:
Lauren Kajewski, Letitia Barnett, Meg Wheeler

Certificates were presented to the three winners, Lauren Kajewski (11), who delighted the audience with her carefully prepared speech and Letitia Barnett aged (14). While Meg Wheeler, (17), was sitting her final Year 12 exams, her father, Chris Wheeler, accepted the certificate on her behalf. The residents of Darling House mingled with the winners and guests, creating a truly intergenerational celebration. Even the resident black cocker spaniel joined in the festivities. After the speeches, Minister Bishop, assisted by Lauren, Letitia and Chris, carefully buried the time capsule under one of the pavement stones on the front verandah of Darling House.

We now have great pleasure in featuring the winning story in each of the 3 age categories.



Category: 9 -12 Years.

Winner: Lauren Kajewski (11) in Year 5 at Yenda Public School, NSW

'In the year 2050 I'll be 62 years old!', I said to Professor Drake, with a very worried look on my face. 'I'll be old and grey. I don't think I can handle this'.

'It's all right, Harriet, be brave you'll be right, and, quite frankly, my dear, 62 isn't that old!' he replied. Professor Drake and I had been searching through my Uncle Julius' house. The house stood at the end of Jacaranda Avenue, abandoned since my Uncle's death in 1963. The Professor was a teacher at my school and had a keen interest in local history. He was a short, thin man with white curly hair springing out all over his head, he wore small glasses which were constantly sitting on the end of his nose. He knew the local gossip of the town was the house was haunted and Uncle Julius had been mad. On his deathbed he was rambling about bugs that would bring havoc to the world. This didn't worry the Professor, and so one hot summer afternoon, after school, the two of us decided to explore.

We wandered into the hallway, and came face to face with an elderly woman who looked vaguely like my grandmother. She smiled and said

'I've been waiting for you, come into the kitchen and sit down'.

We roamed every room of the house, until we came to the library. Both of us were very interested in examining the books that were left in the house. As I lifted one from the shelf we heard a loud click, part of the bookcase opened up revealing a dusty old staircase leading downwards. Descending the stairs we found a strange vehicle. It was like nothing we had ever seen before. I felt sure it had been made from old junk collected at the tip. Pipes and hoses were hanging from everywhere. A note was attached to one of the doors. It read:

TO THOSE WHO DARE TO FOLLOW;

I HAVE TRAVELLED TO THE YEAR 2050.

THERE, I WAS WARNED OF THE BUG THAT THE NEW MILLENNIUM WILL BRING. I AM TOO WEAK TO DESTROY IT.

I HOPE THERE WILL BE SOMEONE TO COMPLETE MY MISSION.

The Professor and I instantly knew that Uncle Julius had been warned about the Millennium Bug, we knew what we had to do - complete Uncle Julius' mission! We dialed the year 2050, put our seat belts on, and pressed the start button. The machine shakily rose off the ground, billowing smoke and spun around rapidly. After a few minutes it lowered itself to the floor and stopped. The Professor and I slowly got out. I was feeling very dizzy and sick, I could see the Professor was in the same condition. Climbing the stairs we found the door leading back into the library still ajar. The room was basically the same as when we had left, but was dark, dreary and smelled musty. It wasn't what I had expected from the future, in fact, it looked as if time had not progressed at all, instead as if things had deteriorated. We wandered into the hallway, and came face to face with an elderly woman who looked vaguely like my grandmother. She smiled and said 'I've been waiting for you, come into the kitchen and sit down'. We followed her into the kitchen, and sat down at the table. The Professor was still suffering the effects of dizziness, he was quite willing for me to handle the conversation.

'Who are you?' I asked.

'Don't you recognise me, have a good look Harriet'.

I looked straight into her face, I saw red curly hair, freckles splattered over her nose, large round blue eyes and triangled shaped ears, I knew those ears anywhere, I'd been trying to hide them under my hair for as long as I could remember. She was me!

'Let's get down to business' she said, 'There's no time to waste. I gather you know why you're here?'

'Yes, to learn the secret of the Millennium Bug virus, and how to destroy it'. I answered.

'Yes, my dear, what people didn't realise, back in your time, was the bug wasn't just a computer virus, it was the real thing. Alive, living and thriving inside computers, the size of a bee, it traveled from computer to computer by way of E-mail and the Internet destroying all data in its path. Not only will all computers cease to exist if the bug is allowed to live, but as you can see from our existence, all modern technology will stop working. You must destroy the bug and you only have until New Year's Eve, otherwise at the dawn of the new Millennium it will be strong enough to take over'.

'But how? How can we do this!' It was a wonder I could get these words out at all. How was an 11 year old girl and an old Professor going to save the world.

'I can't give you any answers, Harriet, I can only advise you that you mustn't use any chemicals, as the bug feeds and grows on pollutants. You must return to your own time now and get to work!'

We returned to the time machine and dialed 1999. Both of us were too stunned for any conversation, our minds too preoccupied with the thought of what could be used to kill this insect invader.

As we entered my home I heard my Mother's voice and it dawned on me. 'Mum', I yelled. 'Where's that thing you used to hit the flies with years ago, have you thrown it out?'

'Of course not, dear', she answered. 'You know me, I never throw anything out. It's hanging up in the broom cupboard'.

I searched the cupboard and there it was. I grabbed the fly swatter and turned to the Professor.

'This is it', I said displaying my prize. 'See no chemicals!' I slipped the swatter into my belt, the Professor and I headed for the front door, I looked at my mother and gave her a wave goodbye.

We were armed and off to save the world.

Category: 12-15 Years

Winner: Letitia Barnett (14) in Grade 9 at Brisbane Adventist College Qld

'In the Year 2050 we will complete the Perfection Process. Tests on the Memory Perfector will start next week'. 'Mrs. Melanie Hutchinson, leader of the Older Persons against the Perfection Process, you may speak.'

'On behalf of the OPAPP, I must say that we strongly disagree with testing the Memory Perfector on humans. No one knows just how much of the memory could be erased with the use of the Memory Perfector.'

'We have conducted preliminary tests which have all come up with the results we expected.'

'Yes, but you don't know what could go wrong. There could be a breach of rights.'

'We have tested it enough to know that no part of the human memory that is protected by the 2049 memory protection act will be eliminated.'

'The Memory Perfector in itself is a breach of rights. Maybe not in today's laws, but people have a right to know about their past. They have a right to know what it was like for their ancestors.'

'But they don't want to know. Their world is so much better now.'

'You wouldn't know if it was better or not. You have no idea what it was like before. You weren't born.'

'Mrs Hutchinson, please show respect. This man is the President of the Earth.'

I went home from the conference depressed. Although the Memory Perfector was created to stop things like that, right now it was the cause of all my unhappiness.

I couldn't understand how people could want to live in a perfect world.

Old people are now oppressed like black people used to be. We can't vote, we can't buy land, no older person can speak in a public place unless they have permission. It took [Older Persons against the Perfection Process] years to become a fully recognised organisation.

Everything was so boring now. Everything in the world had been enhanced to the point of perfection. One perfect colour, one perfect smell, one perfect taste, even one perfect human. Most people looked much the same now, blonde hair, blue eyes flawless, complexion. That is except for the members of the OPAPP. People born in the 20th century that can remember life before the Perfection Process all came together to fight against it. We've been fighting for twenty years and now the fight is almost over. We've won a few small battles, but now we have accepted that in the end we will be defeated. The government is much too powerful and we are only old people. Old people are now oppressed like black people used to be.

We can't vote, we can't buy land, no older person can speak in a public place unless they have permission. It took OPAPP years to become a fully recognised organisation. We are oppressed because the government is making sure that no one tries to bring back 20th century ideas.

'Hi granny,' my granddaughter Gisela came into the lounge room where I was sitting.

'Hello love. How was school?'

'I had a bad day. I was telling my friend, Shelly, the stories you told me about when you were little and the teacher got me into trouble. She said that if I ever said anything about it ever again, I wouldn't be allowed back to school,' she said.

'Oh, dear. Granny shouldn't be telling you about it, should she?'

'But I like you telling me stories about when you were a little girl. I wish I could live back then.'

'So do I.'

'I'm home Mel,' said my husband, Scott, walking through the door.

'How was your day?' I asked him from the kitchen where I was finishing cooking the tea.

'Not so good. The bus driver was an opher and wouldn't let me on the bus,' he said, using the term opher, which stood for old person hater and was usually used in contempt. 'So I had to walk to work and I ended up being late and the boss, also an opher, told me that if I was late again I'd lose my job.'

'Oh, dear.'

'So how did the Memory Perfector conference go?'

'Waste of time.'

'Oh, dear.'

One Year Later

My feet pounded up the steps and into the Perfection Process centre. I had to stop them from destroying the world. I ran down the halls and flung open the door of the Head's office. The Head of the Perfection Process and the President of the Earth were both in there. They looked at me in surprise as I burst in the door. 'You can't do this' I said. 'You will ruin everybody's lives. You just can't go through with this Perfection Process.'

'Mrs Hutchinson,' said the Head. 'I don't know what you think you're getting at bursting in here and telling us what to do, but we will certainly not stand it. Would you please leave immediately.'

'But you can't do it. You will destroy my life. You'll destroy the whole world.'

'If you don't leave right now I will have to call the security guards to escort you out.'

'Don't you people, have any hearts? Don't you have a conscience?'

'I am calling security.' 'No! Don't, please don't,' I said, now in tears.

The two of them looked at me in disgust as I collapsed to the floor.

My body shook with uncontrollable sobs as I screamed at them not to destroy my world.

'Would YOU please escort Mrs. Hutchinson out of the building?' the Head asked two security guards who appeared at the door. They took one of my arms each and hauled me up. I continued to scream and cry as they took me out of the center. They let go of my arms once I was off the steps and I managed to calm down and walk to my car. Once I was in the car I lay my head on the steering wheel and cried and cried.

Now I'm in the car driving to the Perfection Process centre. In a matter of hours I will be the first person to have their memory 'perfected' by the Memory Perfector. Every person on earth will have it done, starting with the members of OPAPP. So this is the end of the battle. We have been defeated. Their perfection will reign all powerful. So goodbye imagination, goodbye curiosity, goodbye originality, goodbye initiative, goodbye everything that makes humans human and hello perfection.

Category: 15-18 Years

Winner: Meg Wheeler (17) is completing Year 12 at Mt. St. Patrick College, Murwillumbah NSW

In the year 2050, I always presumed life would follow as it had for my grandparents - retire, breed a pack of greyhounds, race them, have the kids up of a weekend for a Sunday roast, then stroll down to the park and watch the steadily rising concrete jungle on the horizon. The evening news would still shock, and yet with each headline trying to outdo the next, my senses would become more dulled, less effected by the bloodshed. There was, however, one thing I vowed would set me apart from my predecessors. It always proved highly amusing indeed to see the subtle, yet poignant expression of agony on Nan's face as I reached for the volume dial when Grinspoon came on the radio. Whilst she was a gem when it came to making an effort to stay abreast of the latest fashions and Hollywood sagas, which I confess captured my own obedient following, music often took second place to B grade chat back radio stations.

Good ol' Nan always had an opinion when it came to pinpointing MP's of dubious behaviour, the dinner table conversation often being devoted to one scandal or another. Pop put in his two bob's worth too, mind you. The funny thing was though, between the two of them, they had an uncanny knack for smelling a crooked player. I sometimes thought it was they who first masterminded the slogan, 'Keep the bastards honest!' They would have been squillionaires if they had collected royalties for the amount of times they used that expression. Not that all the money in the world would have changed anything at all. Pop would still spend hours in the shed up the back grooming the dogs and exercising them on the running machine that we used to muck around on when we were kids. Nan would still make the best gravy I've ever tasted and both would retire to faithfully catch Wheel of Fortune on the telly when evening came. If indeed music was to fill the small house where mum and her siblings were raised, it was always Frank Sinatra or Nat King Cole. And in my youth, whilst I appreciated each in their own small doses, I could never grasp my grandparents affiliation with the music of old, as I fondly called it.

The grand kids still groan when I revisit those good old days. Although I can never understand why, for if it had not been for their grandfather's quick thinking, they wouldn't even be here.

In retrospect, I suppose I was just as set in my tastes of music in the 90's as were they in the 50's, although I viewed myself as having right to do this because I was a teen. After all, I was supposed to belong and try to fit in, wasn't I? And if that meant throwing myself into a surging mosh pit and crowd surfing to a pulsating beat that rang in my ears for days afterward, then so be it. As with everything though, the novelty of crowd surfing soon wore off for me. It came when I disappeared through the canopy of hands and fell to the darkness below. The forest of legs and crippling humidity zapping my faith in pit hospitality in an instant. As I grappled midst the rally of Doc Martins and army boots, it was the one time in my life I thought I was truly going to die. How ironic that my entire 17 years had come to this. Dying alone, surrounded by thousands of people. This was short lived however, as a strong arm reached down to retrieve my ailing frame. And that was how I met my husband to be. The grand kids still groan when I revisit those good old days. Although I

can never understand why, for if it had not been for their grandfather's quick thinking, they wouldn't even be here.

Yes indeed, the kids sure have it different nowadays. Moshing, I'm informed by my 18 year old grandson, is now considered way passe. With a great lack of tact he tells me it went out of fashion yonks ago. Talking just last week he was saying how they now do this thing called spackering, which entails some form of robotic dancing to a synthesised hip hop multi-media light show. Or something along those lines. He said they all drive around in el-bugs. Another fang dangily word referring to those electronic cars which were introduced after the regular car was banned due to lack of powering resources. It broke my heart to see the back of my prized '63 model Volksy Beetle. To be sure, allot of social restructuring took place after the announcement of the complete diminishment of natural resources.

Ultimately, we had no choice but to endure the change as result of our incessant greed. Around the turn of the century it started. I remember the earthquakes, floods, a constant reign of natural disasters. I think it was the earth telling us it was sick, you know? Letting us know that we were destroying it. Giving us a warning. At last people started to take notice. After a lady named Sal Moore became the first female president in about 2015, everything became solar, wind and hydro generated. My grandson was doing a project on the history of our nation not long ago and I think he was quite impressed to know his Nan was around when all this was happening. He said that he wished stuff like that happened these days. Oh, and the music thing, even though I remember vowing to remain 'funky' and up to date with the latest trends, I've found that there are simply some things one finds comfort in, tunes which bring back memories of the past. I now understand why my own grandparents preferred King Cole to Korn, because it took them back to a time in their life which they wanted to remember. Explaining it to my grandson, I put it simply. I suppose every generation has their own songs, dances, fads and most importantly, stories which bring you back to when you had the time of your life ...

I now understand why my own grandparents preferred King Cole to Korn, because it took them back to a time in their life which they wanted to remember.

Our congratulations also go to the runners-up in the competition. They are:

9-12 Year Old Category

Amanda Hedl, St Felix Primary School NSW
 Katherine Maglovski, Ivanhoe Girls Grammar VIC
 Elizabeth Brumby, Strathmore Primary School VIC
 Katie Rowles, Woree State School QLD
 Richard Hannan, Scotch Oakburn College TAS
 Ellen Young, Buranda State School QLD
 Candice Liddy, Nakara Primary School NT
 Katie Roberts, Bangor Primary School NSW
 Phillip Stevens, The Armidale School NSW
 Rosina Muir, Telopea Park School ACT

12-15 Year Old Category

Joanna Timms, Byron Bay High School NSW
 Aaron Harre, Alice Springs High School NT
 Caitlin Tyler, Marryatville High School SA
 Noni See, Stromlo High School ACT
 Cassie Hunter, Toowong State High School QLD
 Mark Turner, Durack Primary School NT
 Jade Stunden, St Patricks Marist College NSW
 Ellie Wakefield, Parkdale Sec. College VIC
 Kellie Macdonald, Preston Girls Sec. College VIC
 Kathryn Drew, Colo High School NSW

15-18 Year Old Category

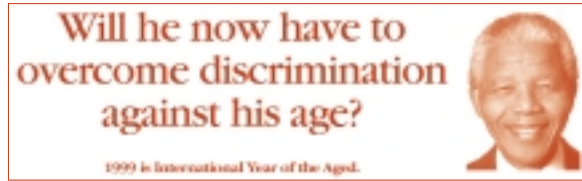
Sarah Weicek, Caroline Chisholm College NSW
 Catherine Shepherd, The Macdonald College NSW
 Frances Warwick, Open Access College SA
 Brendan Lindsay, St Bernards Sec. College VIC
 Leanne Watt, Monivae College VIC

IYOP targets the Advertising Industry

'Poor vision' and 'wearing daggy clothes': these are just two of the debunked myths about older people featured in the winning entry entitled '12 Myths' submitted by Mish Mash Multimedia, Sydney, in the International Year of Older Persons 1999 competition run by the trade magazine, Ad News in conjunction with Australian Coalition '99.



Winning entry '12 Myths' by Mish Mash Multimedia



'Nelson Mandela' -highly commended entry by Collins Thomas Cullen

The competition brief was to create a print advertisement or outdoor poster targeting 18-39 year olds to heighten their understanding and acceptance of older people in the community. The initiative attracted over 100 entries from both Australia and New Zealand. The general consensus, amongst the judging panel, was the importance of entries being simple and displaying an understanding of both the product and target audience.

Peter Ness and Jerel Smith of Mish Mash Multimedia were delighted to hear of their success, and explained the idea behind their agency's entry. 'We wanted to hold a mirror up to prejudice and see how it reflects on those who dish it out. In this case we took twelve myths held by the target audience towards older people, and applied it back to them. That way, 18-39 year olds would not only see themselves but their misconceptions as well.'

The winners will enjoy Lauda Air 'Amadeus' business class airfares to Vienna, accommodation staying with The Leading Hotels of the World at the luxurious Schloss Fuschl and Sacher Hotels in Austria, plus a Tag Heuer watch.

Two other entries were highly commended by the judging panel. They were 'Nelson Mandela' by Collins Thomas Cullen, Sydney and 'Great Products' by Pride & Partners/Utteridge Pty Ltd, Sydney. Competition entries received in the Tertiary Institution Category did not meet the judging panel's expectations and consequently, no winner was selected for this category.

This advertising industry initiative has highlighted the need for further work in promoting the role of older people in the community. Many judges agreed that there was evidence of a lack of 'dignity' and 'sensitivity' shown towards older people, in a number of the entries submitted.

The winning and highly commendable entries can be viewed on AC '99's website www.vicnet.net.au/~ac99

Calendar of Events

December 1999

- 1-2 Geodemographics of Ageing in Australia Symposium**
Venue: Brisbane
Organised by: Ageing Symposium Secretariat c/-Royal Geographical Society of QLD Inc
Tel: 07 3252 3856 Fax: 07 3252 4986
Email: rgsq@gil.com.au
- 1-4 The Adult Learning Conference of the Millennium**
Venue: Melbourne, VIC
Organised by: AAACE (Vic), ANHLC, ACE (Vic), Brainfood, National Link
Contact: Alan Tonkin
Tel: 03 9652 0656 Fax: 03 9654 6759
- 2 Catholic Identity**
Organised by: Catholic Health Australia
Contact: Judith Ryan
Tel: 02 6239 7633 Fax: 02 6239 7634
- 2-4 Crossing Thresholds, Adult Learning in Times of Community Transition**
Venue: Melbourne, VIC
Organised by: Aurora Practical Solutions
Contact: John Shugg, ACE 03 5367 1061, Alan Thompson, CAE 03 9652 0656 or Dea Morgain 03 9654 1104
Fax: 02 6887 1449 (Aurora Practical Sol's)
- 3 International Day of Disabled People**
- 5 International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development**
- 5-8 Summit on International Managed Care Trends**
Venue: Florida, USA
Keynote Speaker: Archbishop Desmond Tutu
Organised by: American Ass. of Health Plans
Web: www.aahp.org
- 10 Human Rights Day**

January 2000

- 21-25 Ageing, Spirituality and Pastoral Care in the 21st Century**
Venue: Canberra, ACT
Organised by: National Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies Tel: 02 6248 0302
Email: aspccon@interact.net.au
- 24-26 2nd Asia Regional Conference on Social Security**
Venue: Hong Kong
Organised by: The Hong Kong Council of Social Service HK Fax: 852 25284230
Email: ira@hkcss.org.hk

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