

Membership renewals

IF your membership subscription (and parking permit if you have one) expire at the end of June or July 2008 you will have received a membership renewal form with this edition of *Meridian*. Renewal forms for memberships expiring at later times will be sent to the members concerned closer to their respective expiry dates. Your membership expiry date is printed on your *Meridian* address label in the form *mm/yyyy* where *mm* indicates the month of expiry and *yyyy* the year of expiry.

To use the club facilities and participate in club activities you must be a financial member (and have a current parking permit if you want to use the car park). You can renew your membership for either one or three years at a cost of \$10 per year. You can also apply for a new parking permit if you need one valid for one or

three years at a cost of \$10 per year.

To renew your membership subscription and apply for a new parking permit:

- (a) complete the membership renewal form which will be sent to you by either mail or e-mail;
- (b) enclose the completed form in an envelope, endorsed with your name, together with your payment; and
- (c) leave the envelope in the membership renewals box at the office or mail to the club.

Your receipt and parking permit will be available for collection from the office one week later.

If you require your receipt and parking permit to be sent to you by mail you should include a stamped self-addressed envelope with your renewal form.

We're in the money!

As *Meridian* was being completed we learned from the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services that the club has received a grant of \$50,000 towards its building fund. Great news!!!

Xmas in July bigger and better than ever

THE club's annual Christmas in July - always one of the highlights of the year and well-attended - will take place this year on Monday 28 July, at 12.30 (meal served at 1pm).

The cost will be \$20 pp only.

This year the club is fortunate indeed, as catering will be by Albert Nordin and his team of talented and experienced club members. Albert was a top chef in Norway, before coming to Canberra, where he was chef at various Canberra restaurants.

The meal will be a traditional one - turkey, ham and Christmas pudding. Wine and soft drinks will also be provided.

Not only has the club secured a top chef, it has also secured talented entertainer Rodney Clancy, instrumentalist and vocalist.

People intending to come are advised to book early, with Alan in our front office. Bookings close on 21 July, by which time payment must be made.

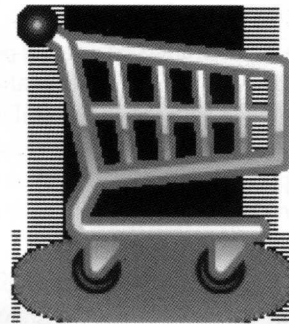
Fashion parade at club in October

KAZANNE Boutique (Southlands Shopping Centre) will hold a fashion parade showing their 2008 Spring and Summer collection on Friday 24 October at 1.30 at the club. Tickets \$10. Tea and biscuits will be served.

Kazanne Boutique prides itself on having offered 29- to 99-year-old ladies quality fashions since 1988. The store has won a richly deserved reputation Australia-wide for tasteful, age-appropriate clothing.

Wedding, evening and mother-of-the-bride fashions are a speciality.

Kazanne will go a step further to assist ladies with special physical needs, and the more mature lady is well catered for.



YOU can help the club raise money for the building fund just by shopping at some generous businesses.

The club will receive 12% (that's \$1.20 for every \$10) of what you spend on presentation of a card at:

The Australian Pharmacy Group/Priceline

(for non prescription health care items, makeup, toiletries, chocolates, gifts etc). You will forgo any seniors discount.

Office Essential

(for home office supplies and photocopying).

Chill

The club will receive \$5 for every \$45 card you buy (at the club office) to spend on food and drinks at Chill, and you will receive a 10% discount and the club will receive a further 1% of what you spend.

Health Way Developments

(Chinese medicine) will give the club *all* the proceeds of the \$100 vouchers you can buy from the club for their health care package.

Support these businesses and at the same time help the club.

Get your cards/vouchers from the club office *now*.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Christmas Party in redeveloped area?

I AM delighted to announce that our building redevelopment for Stage 1, and a section of Stage 2, of the Master Plan is ready to action!

At the time of writing this, a meeting has been arranged with our principal architect, Ric Small, of Small Quinton Coleman, and the successful builder. The contract will be signed and our expectation is that our Christmas party activities will spill over into our beautiful new rooms.

The friends of Woden Seniors program is of paramount importance

to our financial management of the development.

Since November last year we have raised \$20,000, including more than \$9500 from the Baby Boomers show.

Unfortunately we were unable to proceed with our proposed DAM (dinner, auction, music) Good Night, but instead have placed the high-priced auction items in a raffle and will sell some of the other goods to members and friends (see elsewhere in *Meridian*).

We are planning a Spring Concert, on Sunday September 21, at the Hellenic Club, and this is sure to be a wonderful event. Further details will, of course, be announced closer to the time, but put 21 September in your diary!

You will have noticed a large display sign in our car park facing Melrose Drive and Corinna Street. This was an expensive item funded by the Bendigo Bank. We are now negotiating lighting for it, and then imaginative and exciting messages will appear on it.

Best wishes to you all.

Anne Murray

You are urged to be an activity leader in jewellery making

THE club has been successful in getting a Seniors Grant (\$1,000) to develop a new activity – jewellery making with glass beads.

The idea is that the club will employ an experienced trainer in jewellery making to teach a small group of people the art of designing and making simple glass bead jewellery. This group will then form a pool of voluntary tutors who will offer classes and workshops to interested club members.

The grant money will cover the cost of a professional trainer to train

the small group of potential activity leaders, the cost of equipment such as tools and bead mats for use in the later classes and the cost of beads etcetera for making some demonstration samples.

The training will be conducted in two blocks – the first offering four two-hour sessions covering basic techniques and the second offering two two-hour sessions covering more advanced techniques..

So if you have always wanted to lead an activity, think you would love

to learn how to make jewellery with glass beads and are committed to sharing your newly acquired skills with club members, add your name to the list on the activities notice board in the main hall or phone the club.

The dates and times for these classes will be worked out to suit the group.

If you are not interested in becoming a voluntary trainer but would love to attend a class, watch the notice board for class times. In a few weeks time there will be some trained activity leaders raring to go!



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Tel 6287 3466

Support our Friends: they are supporting us!

Woden Seniors have attracted the support of business leaders throughout Canberra. These Friends of Woden Seniors have provided cash donations, vouchers for services, discounts on purchases, provision of venues for club events, and provision of auctioneering, playwright and musical services.

Friends with whom the club has shopping arrangements, where the club receives a percentage of sales made to members, are Ken Cox (*Australian Pharmacy Group/Priceline*), David Dudderidge (*Chill*), John Yu (*Office Essential*) and Haisong Wang, *Health Way Developments*. Cards to enable club members to access these services are available at our office.

Other business leaders are to be invited to become Friends of Woden Seniors.

Members are encouraged to, in turn, support those who support us.

First-class service is assured, members benefit and, of course, the club benefits at a time when it is seeking to add to its building fund, in order to build a better club for members.

Raymond Haley
Bendigo Bank
Shop 19-21
Calwell Shopping Centre
Units 13/14
Wanniassa Shopping Centre

Rodney Clancy
Canberra Youth Music
Ainslie Arts Centre
Eloura Street
Braddon
Tel 6247 4714

Greg Mitchell
**Canberra Southern
Cross Club**
Corinna St, Phillip
Tel 6283 7200

Haisong Wang
**Health Way
Developments**
Chinese medical services
1/18 Corinna Street, Woden
Phone 6282 8898

Peter Taylor
AutoCo
Specialists in motor
engineering and repairs
5 Rickerby St, Phillip
Phone 6281 9844

John Yu
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Raffle for the Building Fund

Over the next few months the club will be conducting a raffle of eight attractive prizes, with proceeds for the Building Fund.

The prizes are items that were donated for the auction to be held during the evening of A DAM Good Night, which was cancelled.

The raffle prizes are listed below:

1st prize - Three night Murray River Wetlands Cruise for two donated by Jetset Southlands and Captain Cook Cruises valued at \$1800

2nd prize - Painting *Riverbed Dreaming* by Rick Cochrane valued at \$900

3rd prize - Framed Tour Down Under Jersey donated by Hindmarsh valued at \$500

4th prize - Voucher for car detailing donated by Melrose Automobiles valued at \$400

5th prize - Matching luggage travel case and backpack valued at \$200

6th prize - Basket of beauty products donated by Priceline Woden valued at \$200

7th prize - Dinner for two on *MV Southern Cross* donated by Canberra Southern Cross Club valued at \$100

8th prize - Dinner for two on *MV Southern Cross* donated by Canberra Southern Cross Club valued at \$100

As this is an important fund raising event, members are invited to support it strongly.

Volunteers to sell tickets are welcome. If you are willing to help, please tell Anne Murray or Allan, Office Manager.

And members might consider buying one ticket each week during the period in which the raffle is run.

\$2000 raised for club from mini fetes

"Thank you everyone who contributed goods, who gave support in setting up, dismantling stalls, selling and for being there", said club president Anne Murray following a "mini fete" on 3 May.

"The cake stall was great and we made over \$200 from it. The cakes were delicious".

Anne said almost \$2000 was raised for the club from the "mini fete" and a similar one held recently.

Workshops, recital for recorder players

The English professional recorder player Andrew Collis will be at Woden Senior Citizens' Club all afternoon on Wednesday 25 June to present workshops for recorder players.

These will begin at 12.30, and continue, with two short tea breaks, until 4pm.

All recorder players are invited to attend, and music will be provided. Donation \$10; children \$5.

More refreshments will be provided, then at 4.30pm Andrew will give a 40 minute recital to demonstrate the marvels and mysteries of the recorder when played by a professional.

The whole afternoon is open to any interested people, especially the recital, for which a small charge will be made. For more information contact Margaret Wright on 6286 2428.

Orchestra rehearsals

The U3A Orchestra continues to rehearse at the club each Saturday morning from 10-11.

Anyone who'd like to dust off an old instrument and play along is very welcome to join the group. Contact is Margaret Wright.

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Richard Luton
P R O P E R T I E STM

Boomers - rich entertainment, incisive social commentary

WODEN Seniors profited by more than \$9500 from *Baby Boomers* at the Canberra Southern Cross Club at the beginning of April, and those who attended were privileged to see a show that was by any measure an outstanding success.

Beginning with Chifley's announcement that the Second World War had ended and images on a big screen of the Dancing Man (that iconic footage of an unknown man dancing exuberantly through the streets of Sydney), the show featured a strong narrative line tracing the history of the generation born in the immediate post-war years, the generation that has become known as the baby boomers.

It was this inspired use of narrative that ensured the show's success, melding the musical numbers - delightful in themselves - into a cohesive whole. For this we must thank Louise Rostron, who devised, wrote and directed.

"Making Whoopee" captured perfectly the exuberance and confidence of the times, *Another bride, another June, another sunny honeymoon*... the lyrics enhanced by images of what was for so many people their post-war dream - a three bedroom/one bathroom family home, with a large yard and Hills clothes hoist at the back and a picket fence at the front; the very real possibility of owning a motor car; the popularity of radio; and Aeroplane Jelly, Vegemite and Weet-Bix.

The social conscience that emerged in the '60s was expressed in songs such as "The times they are a changing" and "Blowing in the wind", and we were reminded of the liberating influence of The Pill, and mini-skirts, and Jean Shrimpton attending the Melbourne Cup. We heard the music of The Seekers, and the Beatles, Presley, Johnny O'Keeffe, and Hal David and Burt Bacharach, and the first half of the show ended with "Bui Doi", from *Miss Saigon*, a sombre reminder of the Vietnam tragedy and, for some of us at least, the devastation being visited on Iraq.

After the interval, the baby boomers were shown as having grown older, and less innocent. We revisited *Number 96*, when "Australia lost its virginity, five nights a week at 8.30",

and drugs, demonstrations seemingly against everything, hippies, *Hair*, homosexuality and Germaine Greer. The emerging issue of "women's rights" was exemplified by "Nine 'til Five" and Helen Reddy's "I am woman", pointedly contrasted with the saccharine-sweet sentiments expressed in songs of previous years, such as "How to handle a woman" (*Camelot*) and "Wives and Lovers" - *Hey little girl, comb your hair, fix your makeup, soon he will open the door*...

"I am what I am", from *La cage aux folles*, was an impassioned, and sad, plea for sympathetic understanding of transvestism, and we moved on to *Countdown* and Molly Meldrum, and John Travolta and "Saturday Night Fever", and so to laptops and mobile phones as our middle-aged, now comfortably-off baby boomers enthusiastically embraced computerised gadgetry, and women square shoulders and "power dressing". And to today, when one-third of all baby boomers have divorced at least once; when consumer credit ("Money, money, money") brings everything to everyone (except perhaps contentment); when baby boomers out-do each other "spending the kids'

inheritance", and turn to Viagra for when, to borrow from Louise Rostron again, *your blood is hot but the rest is not*...

It would be unfair to single out individual members of an excellent ensemble cast. Suffice it to say they all deserved our admiration and applause. But equally it would be unfair, having already congratulated Louise Rostron, not to acknowledge talented musical director Lucy Bermingham. Lucy accompanied the cast at the piano, sang delightfully (her "Close to you" and, with Colin Miller, "Breaking up is hard to do" were particularly well received), and wrote the music, to lyrics by Louise Rostron, for the wealth of original material, which included "The burbs" (the growth of suburbia), "The Pill", "Spend the kids' inheritance", "Viagra" and "Baby Boomers". An inspired collaboration between a talented pair.

Choreography by Annette Sharpe, costume design by Christine Pawlicki and set design by Brian Suffding drew spontaneous and well-deserved applause. We did not notice the sound levels, because they were just right (so often they are not), and finally congratulations and thanks to executive producer Linda Tregonning, without whom Woden Seniors would not have benefited from this outstanding show.

Dennis Blewett

One for our dancers from way back

It was a hot Saturday evening in the summer of 1960 and Fred had a date with Peggy Sue. He arrived at her house and rang the bell.

"Oh, come on in!" Peggy Sue's mother said. "Have a seat in the living room. Would you like something to drink? Lemonade? Iced tea?"

"Iced tea, please", said Fred.

Mum left, coming back a few minutes later with the iced tea.

"So, what are you and Peggy planning to do tonight?" she asked.

"Oh, catch a movie, then maybe grab a bite to eat at the local cafe, maybe take a walk on the beach..."

"Peggy likes to screw, you know", Mum confided.

"Really?" Fred gulped, narrowly avoiding spilling the tea in his lap.

"Oh yes," the mother continued.

"When she goes out with her friends, that's all she ever wants

to do. She says she just loves it".

"Is that so?" asked Fred.

"Yes", said the mother. "As a matter of fact, she'd screw all night. We don't mind. Peggy Sue has always been popular with the boys".

"Well, not surprising is it?" Fred said, no longer interested in what was screening at the local cinema. "Thanks for the tip!"

A moment later, Peggy Sue came down the stairs looking pretty as a picture wearing a pink blouse and hoop skirt, with her hair tied in a bouncy ponytail. She greeted Fred warmly.

"Have fun, kids!" the mother said, "and be careful".

"Trust me", Fred reassured her.

Half an hour later, a disheveled Peggy Sue burst back into the house, slamming the front door behind her.

"Twist, Mum!" she said angrily.

"The Twist, dammit! It's the *Twist*!"

Givvus a kiss, then!

Nelson: "Order the signal, Hardy."

Hardy: "Aye aye, sir."

Nelson: "Hold on! *That's* not what I dictated to Flags! What's the meaning of this?"

Hardy: "Sorry, sir?"

Nelson (reading aloud): "England expects every *person* to do his or *her* duty regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious persuasion or disability - what gobbledegook is this?"

Hardy: "Admiralty policy, I'm afraid, sir. We're an equal opportunities employer now. We had the devil's own job getting 'England' past the censors, lest it be considered racist".

Nelson: "*Racist!* Gadzooks, Hardy. Hand me my pipe and tobacco".

Hardy: "Sorry sir. All naval vessels have now been designated smoke-free working environments".

Nelson: "In that case, break open the rum ration. Let us splice the main-brace to steel the men before battle".

Hardy: "The rum ration has been abolished, sir. Its part of the Government's policy on binge drinking".

Nelson: "Good heavens, Hardy. Well, I suppose we'd better get on with it. Full speed ahead".

Hardy: "I think you'll find that there's a 4 knot speed limit in this stretch of water, Admiral".

Nelson: "Damn it man! We are on the eve of the greatest sea battle in history. We must advance with all dispatch. A report from the crow's nest, if you please".

Hardy: "Not possible, sir".

Nelson: "*What?*"

Hardy: "Health and Safety have closed the crow's nest, sir. No harness; and they said that rope ladders don't meet regulations. They won't let anyone up there until proper scaffolding can be erected".

Nelson: "Then get me the ship's carpenter without delay, Hardy".

Hardy: "He's busy knocking up a wheelchair access to the foredeck, sir".

Nelson: "Wheelchair access? I've never heard anything so absurd".

Hardy: "Health and Safety again, sir. We have to provide a barrier-free environment for the differently abled".

Nelson: "*Differently* abled? I've only one arm and one eye and I refuse even to hear mention of the word. I didn't rise to the rank of admiral by playing the disability card".

Hardy: "Actually, sir, you did. The Royal Navy is under-represented in the areas of visual impairment and limb deficiency".

Nelson: "Whatever next? Give me full sail. The salt spray beckons".

Hardy: "A couple of problems there too, sir. Health and Safety won't let the crew up the rigging without hard hats. And they don't want anyone breathing in too much salt - haven't you seen the advertisements?"

Nelson: "I've never heard such balderdash. Break out the cannon and tell the men to stand by to engage the enemy".

Hardy: "The men are a bit worried about shooting at anyone, Admiral".

Nelson: "What? This is mutiny!"

Hardy: "It's not that, sir. It's just that they're afraid of being charged with murder if they actually kill anyone. There's a couple of legal-aid lawyers on board, watching everyone like hawks".

Nelson: "Then how are we to sink the Frogs and the Spanish?"

Hardy: "Sir! The *Frogs*? Actually, we're *not* going to sink the *French* or Spanish".

Nelson: "We're not?"

Hardy: "No, sir. The French and the Spanish are our European partners. According to the Common Fisheries Policy, we shouldn't even be in this stretch of water. We could get hit with a claim for compensation".

Nelson: "But you must hate a Frog - er, *Frenchman*, as you hate the devil".

Hardy: "I wouldn't let the ship's diversity co-ordinator hear you saying that sir. You'll be up on a disciplinary report".

Nelson: "But Hardy, we *must* consider every man - er, *person* - an enemy who speaks ill of the King".

Hardy: "Not any more, sir. We must be inclusive in this multicultural age. Now, I urge you to put on your Kevlar vest and hard hat; it's the rules. They could save your life".

Nelson: "Don't tell me - Health and Safety. Whatever happened to the good old days? Rum, sodomy and the lash?"

Hardy: "As I explained, sir, rum is prohibited! And the lash would be a clear violation of human rights".

Nelson: "What about sodomy?"

Hardy: "I believe *that* is now legal, Horatio".

Nelson: "In that case, kiss me Hardy. Dear Tom".

Sale!

Sale!!

Sale!!!

The club has items for sale at favourable prices, with proceeds to the Building Fund. These items were donated to the club for auction at our planned fund raising event, A DAM Good Night! However, this event was cancelled due to insufficient ticket sales.

You are invited to inspect the items, as detailed below, at the club and purchase them through the Office Manager, Allan.

Item	Description	Estimated value	Price
1	Pink Inc voucher for ladies' clothing	\$100	\$75
2	Hair cut and style by Franco of Canberra	\$100	\$75
3	1 doz Gooromon Pond Reisling	\$140	\$100
4	Cricket stump autographed by Mike Hussey, donated by Commonwealth Bank, Woden	\$75	\$50
5	The Complete Atlas of the World donated by Paper Chain	\$70	\$60
6	Bottle of Mecklenburg 1975 Vintage Port Bin SR 17 bottled on 24.11.76, No 3762	\$50	\$40
7	Tudor watch in genuine Rolex case	\$400	\$200
8	Bottle of port, commemorating the opening of the Canberra Labor Club by Gough Whitlam in 1977	\$50	\$40
9	Pure wool check double blanket	\$120	\$100
10	Bottle of Chateau Yaldara Limited Edition Tawny Port	\$40	\$30
11	2008 Essendon Football Club framed poster, with authentic signatures	\$400	\$300

Reflections on Perth, and Canberra

By Dennis Blewett

WHEN we came to Australia in 1964 it was to Perth. From London to Perth on a 707 with stops at Rome, Cairo, Calcutta, Karachi and Singapore. Thirty-six hours. A miracle.

Perth had been in the news. John Glenn, orbiting the earth, had been reassured by the city lights, glittering below, and our first sight of Australia was those same lights. We reminisce about our first impressions. The warm night air as we disembarked (we had left a still-wintery England), and the smell of eucalyptus. And, when we awoke the following morning, red earth, blue sky, and light so intense it almost hurt our eyes.

It is a long time ago. We did not stay long, opting to travel east (on the Indian-Pacific - in itself an indelible memory). But we recall the dawn, "coming up like thunder" (Kipling), and the "different" taste of eggs and tomatoes, buying half a sheep, sacks of oranges, T-bone steaks as big as a dinner plate, "chooks", and fortified wines at 12/6d a flagon. Then there were middies and schooners, and drive-in cinemas, and we learned from hospitable neighbours what was expected when invited to "bring a plate", and it was neighbours who explained the mysteries of the "trade-in" and bargaining with salesmen as one would in an eastern bazaar. Everyone drove 6-cylinder Holdens, Falcons and Valiants, and the price of petrol was of no consequence. Bus drivers spoke to us, and everyone addressed us by our Christian names, and expected us to address them the same way.

Then there was the *West Australian*, a newspaper whose typography was that of a bygone age and whose content reflected a city divorced not only from the rest of the world, but from the rest of Australia. The sense of isolation was pervasive, and people appeared apprehensive of losing their jobs, because there were few alternatives other than to leave Perth.

In all the years since we have not revisited Perth, other than on business - airports, cars, hotels, offices - but recently we holidayed there. Perth is booming, carried along by the exploitation of its mineral wealth. Home owners have enjoyed a windfall in the form of rising house values while would-be buyers find prices climbing beyond their reach. Not a situation

unique to Perth, of course. Cranes dominate the skyline, as the developers cash in. Even the cricket ground, the historic WACA, is to incorporate two residential towers, two office blocks and a retail and entertainment precinct as the price for its continuing occupancy of the remainder of the site.

We did not expect Perth to have stood still. Of course we didn't. All our cities have changed in 40 years (Canberra's population was 68,000 when we arrived), so it was unthinkable that downtown Perth should not now be reaching for the sky. All about us was change - iconic London Arcade, built in 1937 and connotative of Tudor England, now diminished by development, Hay Street a pedestrian plaza, the big three's 6-cylinder cars replaced by Asian "fours", "sweats" and "trainers" worn where previously there had been tailored shorts and long socks, ethnicities of all persuasions, and steaks and middies superseded by noodles and wine bars. We couldn't smell eucalyptus, either, and the light was, well, *normal*. (When we go to Europe it is as though the lights have been switched off.)

Rather than comparing Perth 1964 with present-day Perth, we found ourselves comparing present-day Perth with present-day Canberra. First impressions are unflattering to Canberra. There are the city buses, every few minutes and free, the spotlessly clean express trains and stations, and the equally clean and welcoming ferries on the Swan, and taxis to be had by raising a hand. Hay Street shops have retained their viability, rather than having being overwhelmed by undercover shopping centres from which customers rarely escape. The parks and gardens are green and cared for - as indeed, it seems, are residential gardens, despite prolonged drought (particularly severe in the west), and the broiling sun. The absence of graffiti would perhaps only be remarked on by a visitor from Canberra. As would the presence of police patrols.

A visit to the casino is not to be missed. Set in a meticulously-maintained park, it has a multiplicity of restaurants, bars, shops, and entertainment (*Miss Saigon* was showing at the theatre). Northbridge is a major attraction, with James Street having become what Lygon Street is to

Melbourne. Our taxi driver told us there are 128 restaurants there. One can cruise down the Swan to Fremantle and Rottnest; cruise up it to the wineries; and cruise across it to the zoo. King's Park is an adornment, and the views from it to the city breathtaking. Ascend Perth's carillon, and compare it to its inaccessible, concrete counterpart in Canberra. Perth, too, takes vicarious satisfaction from Alan Bond and the former Rose Hancock, and tourists are taken to see where they live/lived. Visitors go to Perth and are entertained, and perhaps reflect dolefully on how dull Canberra is.

But then, after about a week, one recognises that some things - important things - are unchanged. Perth is *still* surrounded by nothing. The *West Australian* has changed hardly at all. Its tabloid format is the same and, most significantly, it remains West Australian-centric. Australia, far away across the desert, and the rest of the world remain largely irrelevant to the west.

So, Canberra begins to appeal more. It is part of Australia; it is at the centre of things. Okay, the halcyon days of the National Capital Development Commission are long gone, and nowadays Canberra appears to be being cobbled together in an *ad hoc* sort of way. It is looking tatty, and we worry about its future. Confused, for instance, by confident predictions of thousands of extra people while at the same time being admonished to save water because we haven't got enough for those who already live here. We look with astonishment and dismay at the wind-blasted arid slopes that are to be the site of an arboretum, and contrast this with *existing* recreational areas so sorely neglected. We marvel at new suburbs without adequate roads to them, and the fiasco all about the airport, and arterial roads that are obsolete before they are even completed. We feel we are trapped in a *Grass Roots* nightmare; we are *disappointed* by Canberra, and wish respect for it.

Yet, Canberra *is* home. It is not exciting, but it is *comfortable*. For the present it remains a good place to live. *Convenient*. What does the future hold? Well, that scarcely concerns us.

What, then, is the difference between Perth and Canberra?

Perhaps, it is that Perth is a great place to visit; but you wouldn't want to live there.

Canberra is a great place to live; but you wouldn't want to visit. Not for more than a day, anyway.

What is the meaning of life?

By Grahame Hellyer

I WAS once asked over lunch for my philosophy of life. I answered that we only had one life and we should make the most of it. I realised afterwards that I had probably given the questioner a misleading impression by my brief answer. Afterwards the question kept popping back into my head as I wondered how I could have explained my beliefs better. This is a somewhat longer answer.

I have no doubt that this is our only chance at life and we do need to make the most of it. By that I mean there is no use accepting a mediocre or unhappy life in the hope that we will somehow get a second chance, or we will be better off after we die. Our birth is an accident, a chance meeting of certain genes which makes us the person we are born. It is not going to happen again. However this also means that all other people are in the same position – they, too, only have one chance and we need to bear that in mind. If we accept that, then we won't be maximising our pleasure at the expense of others. In fact if we can we will try to help others enjoy *their* one chance at life.

As a result of these beliefs I feel sorry for people who believe they have to suffer in this life in order to have a better one in the next, and I have no respect for those who make others suffer in order to maximise their own happiness – frauds, unscrupulous business people, bureaucrats and others in service positions who seemingly enjoy making life hard for clients who they should be helping, and people who are just plain nasty.

There are undoubtedly a number of questions which occur to the reader. Is it possible to live a happy life, for example, when so much of it is spent working to support a family? Don't we sacrifice some happiness when we settle down to a mature (boring?) adult life? Can we help others without sacrificing some of our own happiness? You can probably think of others.

To tackle the first, I would just say that I feel very sorry for people who are unhappy in their job. I personally don't think that jobs are inherently bad or good (just think of the film *Kenny*), certainly people may be frustrated in jobs where they can't use an

inherent talent, but in most cases what makes a job unpleasant is the people we have to work with. Anyone stuck in an unpleasant work situation should look around for a change – remember, there is no law which says we have to suffer through our working life.

What about the "boring" life? Is this philosophy a justification for dropping all our responsibilities and going off "to find ourselves" because "we only have one life"? Anyone who thinks this should consider the saying "far fields are greener", as we know, they usually aren't. We might also consider the moral of Stravinsky's *A Soldier's Tale*: you can't have everything. Perhaps those who keep chasing an elusive happiness are being driven by fantasy, which is actually likely to make them, and those around them, unhappier. I remember seeing an elderly couple being interviewed on TV: they said they had fought for 40 years and been miserable until they decided that they were being unhappy unnecessarily, and now were being embarrassingly affectionate on national TV. Anyone who thinks that happiness in a relationship means every moment is bliss and doesn't require patience and tolerance of human foibles is living in a fantasy land. On the other hand someone in an abusive relationship should not feel they have to stay in it because of some religious obligation; they really do need to consider that they have only one life.

How far do we have to go to help others be happy? This is undoubtedly a matter of opinion but I don't believe anyone should make *themselves* unhappy to help others. There should be plenty of ways of helping others while gaining pleasure for ourselves:

we just need to find the right one. I doubt whether there are many people who don't get some satisfaction out of knowing that they have made a difference to other people's lives. Some may want to share the skills they have gained during their working life, others may feel like a complete change of activity: an accountant might be ideal as a club treasurer but may prefer to be the club gardener! There are undoubtedly many women whose management skills have not been recognised because they have been purely devoted to managing a house and family, but who in later years can gain satisfaction by applying them in voluntary organisations. However, if you are helping others, but making yourself miserable doing it, don't accept that that is an inevitable part of "storing up brownie points for a future life". Take a good hard look at the type of work you are doing, and the people you are working with, and ask yourself if some other form of helping activity isn't likely to give *you* more satisfaction.

We humans are very fortunate. Most other animals whether a few cells, a moth, a gazelle or an eagle spend their lives simply trying to find the food to keep up their strength while exercising the urge to procreate. They usually finish up being eaten alive when they become too frail to avoid predators or to catch their own prey. Humans, like some of the other higher mammals, have developed to the stage of being able to look after each other, but the ability to think has led to them worrying about questions like, "What is the meaning of life?" Perhaps if we accept there is no meaning in life, and just get on with living it, we will all be a lot happier.

Of course, even if you think there is a second life, why not make the most of this one anyway?

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