

OPSO

OPSO Media Awards Edition 2004

Thanks for 11 years of enjoyment.

A record number of entries, and some excellent journalism, celebrate our move into the second decade of OPSO Media Awards.

We have personalised the running of these awards by initiating a dialogue founded on friendship and goodwill between us and our media colleagues.

This has meant that journalists all over Australia now recognise us as a multi-dimensional source of news and comment.

In reviewing these results we have to admire the entrants' enthusiasm and the enormous trouble they take in the presentation of their entries.

This means that as volunteers we look forward each year to unwrapping your entries . . .

2004 Media Awards



Peter Bull, 'Out bid', The Sunday Mail

A message from the Minister for Ageing, Julie Bishop

On behalf of the Australian Government I congratulate the winners and nominees of the Older People Speak Out media awards for your efforts influencing community attitudes about older Australians.

By watching your programs, reading your words, hearing your voices and viewing your images, Australians are able to appreciate the many positive stories of older people.

The media is a vital tool in shaping public attitudes and perceptions about older people, and the process of ageing.

Many younger Australians do not meet with older people in their community or even their social circle. Through your work as media

professionals you are helping to bridge the generations.

Tonight's awards celebrate how life can be an exciting, rewarding and positive experience, regardless of age.

The Australian Government is proud to sponsor these awards, and in doing so to help to promote appreciation of the contribution of older Australians to the well being of our nation.

*Julie Bishop MP
Australian Government Minister for Ageing*





A message from the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors

The critical role the media plays in presenting older people in a realistic and positive way should not be underestimated.

With the number of older people increasing in our communities nationwide, it is more important than ever that the community has a realistic picture of ageing, rather than one that focuses only on the negative.

The OPSO Media Awards recognise how the media strive to portray older people and their issues in a fair and balanced way. I commend OPSO for its ongoing positive promotion of ageing and the contributions older people make within Queensland communities.

By 2021 more than 20 percent of our population will be 65 or older. Currently more than 25 percent of older people contribute to the Queensland economy through volunteer work. They are often the driving forces in sporting, social and service groups, and they help shape the future of their communities by serving on local councils and other community organisations.

One of the greatest barriers older people face is community attitudes towards them with ageing too frequently portrayed negatively in our language, the media and popular entertainment.

For the past 11 years since its inception, the Queensland Government has supported the OPSO Media Awards and I am pleased the Department of Communities is able to continue this support. It is vitally important we continue to recognise the contributions of older Queenslanders to our communities, social groups and families.

I congratulate all the media professionals who received awards in the Queensland and national categories. Your efforts continue to help break down stereotypes and community and intergenerational perceptions of ageing.

*Warren Pitt, Minister for Communities,
Disability Services and Seniors*

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Main Sponsor National Awards:



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

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Wouldn't be without them



The judges

Philip Castle, BA (ANU), BA (CCA), MA (QUT).

Janice Crawford, BVA

Emeritus Professor Tom Dixon, MA, PhD.

Grant Dobson, of Edit Plus,

Harry Garlick, MA, PHD

Patsy McCarthy, BA (Qld), MA (QUT) LSDA, FTCL.

Trina McLellan, B.Business Communications (Journ), MA by research (Journ).

Anne Ring, PhD (Sociology), MA, BA, Grad. Dip Health Education.

John Teerds, editor and publisher

2004 Media Awards

The winners

Queensland

inter-generational journalism

Winner: Daryl Passmore, 'The last line of defence', The Sunday Mail

Runner-up: Kellie Riordan, 'When the Gran is Mum', Triple J – ABC Radio

Finalist: Tracey Bange, 'Spirit of Diggers inspires local teen', Herbert River Express

Queensland

senior-specific newsletters

Winner: Round-a-Bout for Seniors, Burdekin Community Association

Judges' comments: Innovative work that links a community, produced by a tireless and creative crew.

Runner-up: Rockhampton 60 & Better newsletter

Finalists: The Skylarkers, published by 60 and Better Program

Village Breeze, Forest Place

Winton 60 & Better Healthy Ageing Program newsletter, Winton 60 & Better

Queensland regional & suburban newspapers

Winner: Debbie White, 'Elderly fight new tax slug', Bayside Bulletin

Judges' comments: Her series showed an in-depth, well-covered important issue on GST affecting retirement villages following through to the Government's amendment to clarify, which made it a national success. She showed an empathy for the people concerned, good research and determination to follow it through.

Runner-up: Tracey Bange, 'Passion for deep water adventures', Herbert River Express

Finalists: Ken Vernon, 'A growing grey spectre', Gold Coast Bulletin

Valerie Jones, 'City shame', Gold Coast Sun
Melissa Anderson, 'Fight for pension', Quest Newspapers

Debbie White, 'Moving to create an ageless workforce', Bayside Bulletin

Debbie White, 'Mature age workers want fair go', Bayside Bulletin

Queensland news and current affairs

Winner: Stateline – David Curnow reporter & producer, 'Older bytes', Stateline – ABC TV

Judges' comments: A very professional piece of work that shows a sympathetic understanding of those who don't want to be left behind.

Runner-up: Samille Muirhead, 'Date with Destiny', Seven Local News – Maroochydore

Finalists: Dan Nolan reporter & Glen Armstrong cameraman, Network Ten, 'Hay legend', Network Ten News

Mandy Mauloni, 'Clown Doc. Workshop', Seven Local News – Pialba

Richard Bruinsma, 'Widower cooking classes', Seven Local News – Sunshine Coast

Queensland photography

Winner: Peter Bull, 'Out bid', The Sunday Mail
Judges' comments: Vividly tells a story and technically extremely good.

Runner-up: Chris Higgins, 'Be bolder while growing older', Quest Newspapers

Finalists: Derrick Tonkin, 'Nonsense', Quest Newspapers

Scott Radford-Chisholm, 'Bright life', Townsville Bulletin

Derrick Tonkin, 'Gymwork', Quest Newspapers

Brett Wortman, 'Volunteer coastguard and aspiring pilot', Sunshine Coast Newspaper

Derrick Tonkin, 'Perfect Pecs', Quest Newspapers

National advertising

Winner: Fiona Strykowski, executive manager customer segments, Commonwealth Bank

Judges' comments: This is a lot more than an award for advertising. It pushes the whole concept of positive retirement to the forefront of people's consciousness. Its photographic display could stand alone as an illustration of the essence of these awards. The initiator of this campaign deserves the highest commendation for her sensitivity, research and creativity. This campaign, made up of a book, booklets, posters and a television advertisement is an education in positive retirement – a plan for what can be the most fulfilling time of people's lives.

Runner-up: Jeff McGarn, Graphic by Design, 'Living Choice', television and print campaign

National city and regional radio

Winner: Paul Bodington, Mylo House Choir, ABC Radio

Judges' comments: Brilliant style of the interviewer – wonderful versatility. Great choice of subject to hold interest and inform.

Winner: Radio Adelaide series producer Laine Langridge, 'Keep on keeping on – working and connecting regardless of age' series, Radio Adelaide

Judges' comments: A brilliantly comprehensive series – informative but entertaining.

Finalists: Beatriz Wagner Miranda, Portuguese language program, 'Happy 76th Birthday', SBS Radio

Anna Daniels, ABC Capricornia, 'Amazing Eileen', ABC Radio Capricornia

National photography

Winner: Peter Bull, 'Out bid', The Sunday Mail
Judges' comments: Vividly tells a story and technically extremely good.

Runner-up: Chris Higgins, 'Be bolder while growing older', Quest Newspapers

Finalists:

Don Simmons, 'Todd McKenney & Friends', The Australian Senior

Darren Seiler, 'Anzac Kiss', The Advertiser, Adelaide

Toby Zerna, 'Uncle Ron', The Advertiser, Adelaide

Jacklyn Wagner, 'Norma Forest – train traveller', The Northern Star

National senior-specific print media

Winner: 50+, Examiner Newspapers, Lana Best – Editor

Judges' comments: An excellent piece of work that treats its readers with respect. The editor is to be congratulated for recognising that seniors are an important, diverse and intelligent market. A refreshing change from those who still mistakenly regard seniors as wanting/needing a diet of retirement village advertisements and holiday advertorials.

Winner: Brisbane Seniors Newspapers, publishers Greg & Cheri Kane

Judges' comments: This newspaper covers the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast market, and now has taken courage in both hands and moved into the big-time in Brisbane. It gives good coverage to local issues and is not afraid to follow them through. It provides information on what's on, and gives publicity to organisations meeting the needs of diverse groups who would otherwise have no means of reaching their market.

Runner-up: Looking Forward, Christine Arnold – Editor, The Advertiser, Adelaide

Finalists: The Australian Senior, Cheryl Field – Editor

Bayside Seniors Lifestyle, Brian Hurst – Editor

Individual awards

Linda Muller, Bayside Seniors Lifestyle

Kaye Healey, 50 Something

Colleen Geebel, Sunshine Coast/ Gold Coast / Brisbane Seniors Newspaper

Don Simmons, The Australian Senior

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National inter-generational journalism – print

Winner: Daryl Passmore, 'The last line of defence', The Sunday Mail

Judges' comments: A well researched article that takes a sympathetic and well written look at all the aspects of an important issue.

Runner-up: Zoe Satherley, 'When a village dreams', The Northern Star

Finalists: Adam Harvey, 'Saluting our unpaid grandparent army', The Sunday Telegraph
Rob Burgess, 'Picking up the pieces', The Age
Bruce McDougall, 'He's our best friend', The Daily Telegraph

National inter-generational journalism – electronic

Winner: Today Show, 'Grandparents as carers', Today Show – Channel 9

Judges' comments: This is an excellent piece of television current affairs for which all those involved, both those doing the interviewing and those passionately putting forward their point of view, are to be congratulated.

Runner-up: Radio Adelaide, series producer Laine Langridge, 'Breaking down generational barriers' from series 'Keep on keeping on', Radio Adelaide

Finalists: Radio Adelaide series producer Laine Langridge, 'A grandparent as full-time carer is a hard task' and 'Learning from the elder' from the series 'Keep on keeping on', Radio Adelaide
Meni Caroutas, 'Granny sitters', Today Tonight

National inter-generational journalism – photography

Winner: Darren Seiler, 'Anzac Kiss', The Advertiser

Judges' comments: Appealing interaction between generations, technically very good.

Runner-up: Don Simmons, 'Todd McKenney & Friends', The Australian Senior

Finalists: Paul McGovern, 'Log on for friendship', Post Newspapers
Derrick Tonkin, 'Nonsense', Quest Newspapers

National news and current affairs – under 5 minutes

Winner: Today Show, 'The Lauers – grandparents as parents', Today Show Channel 9

Judges' comments: An excellent story highlighting an increasing problem of retirees caring for grandchildren. It was presented with sensitivity, honesty and depth pointing to the almost hidden struggles, financial, mental and physical experienced by many grandparents.

Runner-up: David Curnow, 'Older bytes', Staline, ABC TV

Runner-up: Kathy Bowlen, 'Older drivers', Staline, ABC TV



Darren Seiler,
'Anzac Kiss',
The Advertiser

Finalists: Samille Muirhead, 'Date with Destiny', Seven Local News, Maroochydhore
Dan Nolan reporter & Glen Armstrong cameraman, 'Hay legend', Network Ten News

National current affairs and documentaries – over 5 min.

Winner: George Negus Tonight – producer Adam Collins, series producer Tim Mitchell, executive producer Margot Phillipson and reporter Melissa Cunningham, 'Musical couple', George Negus Tonight, ABC TV

Judges' comments: A wonderful story full of life, wisdom, music and humour portraying an older married couple (once divorced and remarried to each other) who make our society so special as they use their special musical talents.

Runner-up: Enough Rope – Andrew Denton, 'Don Chipp', Enough Rope, ABC TV

Finalists: George Negus Tonight – producer & series producer David De Vos and executive producer Margot Phillipson, 'Olga Green', George Negus Tonight, ABC TV
Australian Story – producer Wendy Page, camera John Bean, sound Kim Lord and editor Ian Harley, 'In realms of Gold', Australian Story, ABC TV

George Negus Tonight – producer Nicky McGowan, series producer David de Vos, executive producer Margot Phillipson and reporter Melissa Cunningham, 'Later love', George Negus Tonight, ABC TV

National regional and suburban newspapers

Winner: Debbie White, 'Elderly fight new tax', Bayside Bulletin

Judges' comments: Her series showed an in-depth, well-covered important issue on GST affecting retirement villages following through to the Government's amendment to clarify, which made it a national success. She showed an empathy for the people concerned, good research and determination to follow it through.

Runner-up: Zoe Satherley, 'Marlene's can do attitude', The Northern Star, Lismore NSW

Finalists: Tracey Bange, 'Passion for deep water adventures', Herbert River Express
Andrew Miller, 'At 77 she's full bottle and runs on oxygen', Preston Leader
Doug Conway, 'Grey power hits home', Illawarra Mercury
Dinah Arndt, 'Living life to the max', Moreland Community News
Verity Edwards, 'Perfectly simple practice', The City Messenger

Jason Gordon, 'Fertile pastures', Newcastle Herald

National metropolitan daily newspapers, Sunday newspapers and national magazines

Winner: Deirdre Macken, 'Lonely business for the lost workforce', The Weekend Australian Financial Review

Judges' comments: Her article was well researched, touching on important social issues in employment for both older people and prospective employers. Well balanced, well put, and effective.

Runner-up: Andrew Nieuwenhof & Karen Milliner, 'The apprentice', edited by Karen Milliner, The Courier-Mail

Finalists: Lisa Yallamas, 'Surgical service with a smile', The Courier-Mail
Steve Butler, 'Spirit of the Sprint', The West Australian

Anna Merola, 'The big test for our road veterans', Sunday Mail, Adelaide
John Wright, 'World in black, white and grey', The Courier-Mail

Awards for outstanding achievement:

Electronic: Andrew Denton for Enough Rope
The man is brilliant. He magically draws out the character of his subject . . . often without the subject being aware of what is happening. Never patronising or cruel, he simply gives his characters just enough rope to . . . be themselves. Long may he reign!

Electronic: George Negus Tonight
This show well deserves its big following of G'n T fans who thank George, his team and the ABC for a program of short intelligent pieces, always interesting, always entertaining . . . anchored firmly by George Negus . . . an example of what being a senior is all about. Negus has never been better.

Print: Christine Arnold
For her persistent and consistent understanding over many years of the diversity of the senior market. Some 10 years ago the Adelaide Advertiser put forward the idea of a 16-page quarterly advertorial feature for a long-suffering seniors' market. Christine Arnold disagreed with the concept and decided it should be filled with interesting articles that people actually WANTED to read. The result is a consistently excellent award-winning gift to seniors.

Val French, AM, M.Lit.Std, BA



by Arlene Palmquist

“There

is nothing you cannot do to change things. You just have to want to enough.”

Val French grew up with those words echoing in her head. As children do, she took for granted they were true because her father was always saying them. She also assumed they were true because she watched her father live by them.

He was the medical superintendent of various New South Wales mental institutions and worked to change both the appalling conditions and vicious perceptions of mental health patients, then commonly referred to as ‘loonies’, because, as he said, “patients are people”, despite societal labels.

This was not an accepted belief in the pre-war years. Brought up within the mental hospitals, Val watched as her father tried to explain to a hostile media that mental illness was just that, and that helping the ‘loonies’ to heal and regain their self-worth and self-confidence would benefit the community, not threaten it.

By the time she went to university in the early 1940s, she had learned these lessons well. Challenges were opportunities, not problems to be merely tossed into the ‘too-hard’ basket. Not surprisingly, in the patriarchal Australian society of the mid-20th Century, challenges abounded.

Bulldog tenacity

Val took up the gauntlet. She knew from her father’s successes that education, not open confrontation, was one key, so she studied to be a teacher. She had learned from her father about the power of the media, so she also became a journalist.

She now had in her arsenal all the weapons she needed to fight ignorance and social injustice from within the system – education, communication expertise and bulldog tenacity.

Whatever anyone said a woman couldn’t do, or couldn’t be changed, she did it – and merrily encouraged others to join her. And slowly she began to see changes in government policies and their effects within the larger community.

It has become a game she loves, from forming the first female debating teams in Queensland schools, developing new systems for rehabilitation in Brisbane prisons, fighting for the rights of women in the media, (eventually becoming a senior lecturer in male-dominated universities in days when a woman’s

Champion of empowerment

place was still in the home), through to getting government funding for carers, tackling the problems of nursing home care, breaking down the damaging stereotypes of older people held by the community, and developing an inter-generational voice to advise government on re-creating an integrated society.

Ignored or marginalised sections of the community are potential causes for Val to champion, and the social reforms she has instigated, too numerous to mention, have been such that she has been publicly recognised on a national level, becoming a member of the Order of Australia, and a Commonwealth Senior Australian Achiever, and receiving a Centenary Medal.

Val has more vision, energy, courage and inspiration than anyone else I know. Most people think only of improving their own lives; Val’s focus is, and always has been, on creating a better life for everyone regardless of gender or social status, and her enthusiasm ignites that passion in others.

Despite working on advisory councils, continually conducting grass roots consultation, producing educational kits and media material and lobbying tirelessly for the less vocal all over Australia, Val somehow finds the time to mentor timid ‘wannabee’ writers like me.

She takes the time to listen patiently as we read out the articles we have each spent hours agonising over and then she just as patiently, ruthlessly but kindly, suggests how we can improve them.

Mine is just one life that is being empowered by Val French. Tens of thousands of other lives throughout Australia have also had the quality of their lives enriched through Val’s work; they just don’t know it. And that’s OK by Val. ❖

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Ilma Ferguson

by Ilma Ferguson

In the late 1990s, OPSO learnt that if you want something done and done thoroughly, you ask Tracey Douglas. OPSO had established Connect the Coast and were in need of a co-ordinator.

The job required someone who understood social isolation, an issue that was just coming to the attention of government. And Tracey was just the right person for the job.

She has a prodigious memory and the ability to see connection between issues and initiate systems, and a

Faces of OPSO

Ilma Ferguson, BA, B.Ed (Hons)

“If it’s not fun, it’s not worth doing,” says Ilma Ferguson, Vice-president of Older People Speak Out. And a thing worth doing should be done well is her philosophy.

Ilma is passionate about older people being valued in the community and, together with OPSO President Val French, whom she met through Community Radio 15 years ago, and a few other stalwarts on the team, she aims to dispense with the stereotypes of older people.

“Older people sometimes become invisible, she says. “We want the community to see accurate and realistic portrayals of older people.”

This self-confessed perfectionist, once an editor with the Queensland Education Department and the Queensland Council of Carers, has a background in teaching and broadcasting.

“I’ve got red ink in my veins,” says Ilma, who uses her writing skills and her knowledge of the media to try to effect social reform.

For the first 9½ years of her life, Ilma was an only child. “I was treated as the surrogate son.” Back then, she enjoyed doing what she does today, breaking down stereotypes. This girl pursued predominantly male activities such

by Florence McBride

as fishing, rowing, swimming and cycling. The latter, at her insistence, was on a boy’s bicycle.

“Pig-headed, both of us, not caring what people think,” she laughs about her father, a high school principal with a love of Latin and a good command of the vernacular. “My father always said, ‘no such word as can’t’.” He insisted she matriculate and was proud of her educational achievements in a system that overlooked girls.

Unstoppable

What would her father think of the vibrant, unstoppable Ilma of today? Eyes flashing through rimless glasses, she admonishes, “Don’t forget – life is not a rehearsal. It’s the real thing and you have to wring out every drop to the very end.”

Then tapping a pen on each arthritic finger, she lists salient points about reform for older people – social isolation, elder abuse, lack of money, poor work opportunities, even grandparents raising grandchildren, to name a few.

But most of all, Ilma deplures patronising attitudes towards older people.

“The way some people look at you,

the way they treat you. This has to be turned around.”

To this end she looks for examples of “intergenerational connections” in the media and the community explaining, “The Media Awards are designed to familiarise the community with the value of older people and the contribution they can make if they are asked.”

Ilma’s role in OPSO is multi-faceted. “It all depends on what lands in front of us – mostly editing but I do a lot of the organising for Speakouts, Media Award judging and road safety presentations, and other public speaking.” Her work ethic and Val’s are a perfect match. She and Val do things straight away. “Just do it,” says Ilma. “What really gets up my nose, is just talking about things.”

Ilma sees herself as the junior partner, sometimes filling in for Val although she doesn’t particularly like the limelight. “She’s the creative bit and I’m the corrective bit. I’m a low flyer – you see the details and you don’t have so far to fall.”

A too-cautious approach to the sometimes delicate question of age elicits an indignant toss of Ilma’s wavy grey bob, a glimpse of her father. “Seventy-five. I don’t give a damn about my age. What’s age got to do with it?” ♦

Tracey Douglas, M.Ed.Std, BA

depth of understanding of people in need.

She came highly recommended from her work with Queensland Shelter of which she is now Chairperson, the Board of Defence Housing Authority and Home and Community Care.

According to President Val French, Tracey, like all OPSO Forum members, is a tireless worker.

“Above all, Tracey is a fantastic resource of information, networks and useful contacts in the broader community,” she said. “She has a memory like an

encyclopaedia of the latest government policies and procedures.

“She is not only our secretary, she is also Chairperson of the Council of Grandparents, Coordinator of Connect the Coast Inc. and is on the Gold Coast Mayor’s Advisory Board for Seniors and many other offices.

“In her spare time she has a position held by the rest of the executive: she is a grandparent.”❖

At the age small boys collect stamps, or marbles or autographs, Alan Victor Hales collected words.

“I started my own dictionary at 7,” Alan said. “I saw, heard and noticed words and wrote them in a special notebook.”

At that age he also became a prolific reader and accumulator of information, and still is.

Alan’s father, an engineer, always told people Alan would be an engineer or a metallurgist while Alan was telling people he was going to be a “writer” and to his father’s horror, but his mother’s delight, he obtained a cadetship at a leading newspaper and set out to be a journalist. In hindsight, Alan thinks it was discovering “writers” were paid lots of money in the advertising industry that set his career path.

He joined the office of an international advertising agency just starting in Sydney and, being a creative lateral thinker, moved onwards and upwards on an international scale. He created television commercials for products that are household names – Coca Cola, Spray Fresh, Levis Strauss, Eveready, Colgate, 3M, Bunnings et al.

“Also a very memorable Aerogard one,” Alan said. “When I had to put my arm in a cage full of bush flies because the hired model refused.”

Alan’s creativity was in much demand and for 15 years worked for his company in Thailand, the US, UK, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and France, solving

communication problems for international corporations.

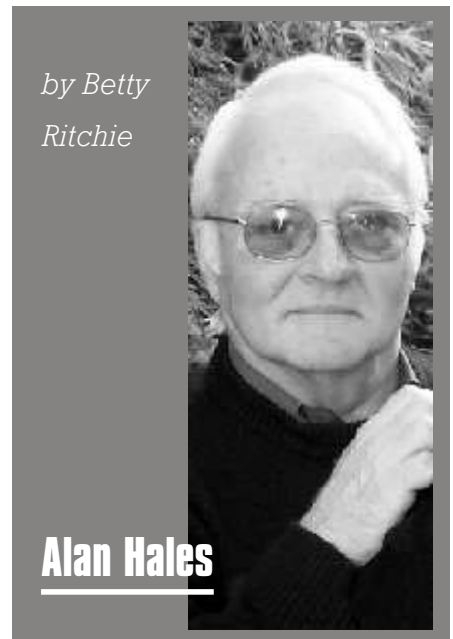
Returning to Australia, he worked in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and eventually Brisbane, where he was appointed Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Business, School of Marketing and Advertising at the QUT. The course was soon acknowledged as the premier advertising course in Australia.

In 1996, the United Nations invited Alan to work with it in Vietnam to develop environmental awareness communications programs which, Alan recalls with pride, “changed Vietnam and continue to be used today”.

Alan now operates his own Tactical Marketing Group, which works closely with government and private enterprise. He is responsible for the television campaign featuring Wally Lewis for the Department of Employment & Training. Over the past five years, this campaign has created more than 60,000 apprentice/traineeships in Queensland.

‘Driving force’

For some years Alan has been a member of OPSO and was pleased to be elected their Senior Adviser. He created the OPSO Older and Wiser Project, which set out to educate employers on the value of employing mature age people. “Alan is an essential driving force in OPSO”, said President Val French. “We bounce ideas off each other continually in early morning or late night phone calls . . . in fact any time either of us gets a great idea how to



change the world!”

At this year’s AGM, however, it was Alan’s bravery that won him accolades – he made a three week fact-finding bus trip to the outback with six other OPSO members . . . all women . . . including the driver!

This warm, caring, larger than life character, leads a varied and interesting life. A highlight of which was driving across the Nullabor accompanied only by his Burmese cat Claude, who thinks he’s a dog and his dog, Dougal, a standard Schnauzer, who thinks he’s a boy in a dog’s coat!

A highly articulate educator, Alan’s early love of words has never left him and he’s seldom at a loss for one, even when solving his daily dose of crosswords, to which he is addicted. “When teaching I always encourage people to do crosswords” Alan said, “It’s a great way to exercise the brain”.❖

by Arlene Palmquist

Bill Benson – a retired man who is never retiring – has been a Vice President of OPSO for the past three years. He brings to the organisation a wealth of experience and wisdom.

Trained in engineering, Bill joined the military in 1951 and over the following 30 years served in Korea, Japan, Malaya, Singapore, Borneo and Malaysia, with extensive travel in other eastern countries. He eventually rose to the rank of Major, and his many roles included technical, managerial, diplomatic and administration.

In 1980, Bill's achievements were such that he was rewarded with a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE), Military Division, for services to the Royal Australia Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in the fields of management, organisation, computerisation of systems and community involvement.

He returned to civilian life in 1981 but 'retired' shortly after that, only to take up a new career – full-time community service.

Bill's interest in community had already begin during his military career when he became interested in youth problems which led him into working with the Guide and Scout movements, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and youth welfare centres for over 20 years, during which time he held positions at all levels in Australia and Singapore.

"I've always been interested in community life," Bill said. "In my postings in other countries, in the very early stages, I couldn't really work within the Asian countries unless I understood where their culture came from." While it wasn't intended originally, I found my work within the community of younger people opened many, many doors between Asian countries."



He decided that giving back to communities was more important than taking from them. This has been the challenge that he has worked with for many, many years – "trying to give something of my experiences back into the community, and it just kept growing and growing."

Three years ago, OPSO approached the RACQ to assist in their Years Ahead, a road safety program for older drivers throughout Queensland. The project grew so quickly that OPSO appointed Bill to organise it. What began as a 12-month assignment has now been going for three years. At the same time, the Police Academy approached OPSO to take part in its community education program for police cadets, and Bill took on organising the lectures.

Bill speaks throughout the community as part of OPSO's Community Voice: "We've got to get the people in the community involved with things, and hopefully get our society back to working, not as individuals

behind closed doors, but with governments at all levels."

Bill is serving, or has served, on the councils of dozens of local community organisations and groups, including the current Police Task Force on Crime against Seniors. He is also Co-Chairman of COTA/NSA's State Policy Council.

"What I find fascinating is all the interesting people," he said. "The stories I hear – it's very humbling when you hear of other people battling through. It really touches my heart. You've got to try and do something to relieve each particular problem." ❖

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Faces of OPSO

Florence Nixon

Just ask Florence

One thing Florence Nixon is known for is her understanding of the value of money, which is essential in her position as Treasurer of OPSO.

People have been known to quake in their shoes if they temporarily mislay a receipt or don't get the best price for something OPSO needs to acquire.

If you want to know where any product is sold at the best price, simply ask Florence. She is a

walking directory of where goods are available, or what goods would best suit your needs.

"Let's save time and ask Florence where we can buy it" has become the catchcry of our members.

Florence has been Treasurer since our inception and her services are sought by organisations like Connect the Coast Inc.

She likes to tell the story of how she and Val went to Canberra to lobby for a grant to set up the

Queensland Council of Carers and returned with \$1.25 million.

Florence is an accomplished role-player and has entertained many communication course participants as a bank manager, local member, and the president of the Society for the Protection of Sidehill Gougers.

Anyone wanting to know more about these can *JUST ASK FLORENCE!* ❖

– Val French