



Meridian



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The monthly newsletter of the Woden Senior Citizens' Club

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Overheard in the Bridge Room:

"When I called in yesterday your husband had the table covered with Animal Shapes biscuits. How come?"

"Well, on the box it said Do Not Use If Seal is Broken."

The present extensive development of the Woden town centre has the potential to impact on the Club in many ways. Your President has been busy exploring several avenues by which the changes may be turned to the Club's advantage. This has left little time for the preparation of the usual monthly report, and consequently this will be held over until next month.

In its place, I thought some of you (particularly the newer members) may be interested in the following extract from some notes on the history of the Club. They provide an illustration of how the Club has always been a developing entity, and a reminder that it still remains so.

Editor

The Beginning.

The first steps towards a club for the elderly in the rapidly expanding suburbs of Woden appears to have been made late in 1971, when a small group of people met in one of the rooms at the Church of Christ in Marrawah Street, Lyons. It is not clear who convened the meeting or arranged for it to be advertised in the local newspaper (the Courier), but it is likely that it was an initiative of the Womens Group of the Church Guild, since Mrs. Helen Cunningham, a member of the Guild, and president of the Australian Council of Women, was present and was later to organise the inaugural meeting of the new club and eventually become its Patron and a Life Member. There was already a club for senior citizens

in Canberra under the presidency of Mrs. Win Arthur, but this was much too far away from Woden. Besides, as a spokeswoman (Mrs Walker) was to say later in a press interview soon after the formation of the new club, "the members do not consider themselves old enough to join a club designated for "senior citizens!" Although not formally constituted the group called itself "The Southside Over 50's" or simply "The Over 50's". Incidentally, Win Arthur, although President of the Club in Civic, was actually a South side resident and was concerned in the initial formation of the "Over 50's" club in Woden. But by mid 1972 (probably due to her commitments to the Civic club) she appears to have lost track of the progress being made by the Woden contingent, since on 28th. July 1972 she took it upon herself to write to Kep Enderby seeking the use of a room on the south side where the elderly could meet, citing the difficulties and expense of transport as the reason why the Civic club was not a viable alternative. Mr. Enderby pursued the request, to the point of inviting Win to his office to a briefing by his secretary. (See Telegram dated 13th. January 1973). By this time rumours of this unilateral approach had reached the members of the Over 50's, and on 12th. February Harry Link wrote to Mrs. Arthur pointing out that there was already a thriving club in Woden and suggesting a cooperative approach.

The group continued to meet informally at the Church of Christ for about a year, chatting or playing cards for two or three hours on Monday afternoons.

Matters were placed on a more formal basis on 16th. October 1972 when, at a meeting held in the Church of Christ hall, it was decided to form a club to be called "The Over 50's Club". From the beautifully handwritten minutes we learn that the following Officers and Committee were elected:

President	Mr. Harry Link
Secretary	Mrs. Marjory Walker
Treasurer	Mrs. Ivy Smart
Publicity Officer	Mr. Tom Ingram
Committee	Mr. Davidson, Mrs. Ireland, Mrs. Link, Mrs. May, Mrs. Munton, Mrs. A. Smith, Mrs. Whitfield

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

Smiling is infectious,
You catch it like the 'flu;
When someone smiled at me today
I started smiling too.

I walked around the corner,
And someone saw my grin,
And when he smiled I realised
I'd passed it on to him.

I thought a bit about that smile -
I now realise its worth
A single smile like mine today
Could travel round the earth.

So if you feel a smile begin
Don't leave it undetected -
Let's start an epidemic, quick,
And get the world infected.

FROM THE RECORDS CLERK

The end of the financial year is approaching, and if you intend to continue your membership next year, **please watch the notice board to see the date on which the Office staff will be ready to process renewals. This is likely to be June 10th.** The deadline is June 30th.

In the past, early renewals have caused some confusion in the Office because Parking Permits were not ready. This year, a plentiful supply of permits has been prepared in advance.

The danger of delaying your renewal until the last minute, is that you run the risk of a lengthy wait in a queue. The Admin. Team is thinking of changing the mechanics of membership renewal to avoid this problem - perhaps on the lines of the method used by the Southern Cross Club. But with no committee meeting this month, any new system is unlikely to be up and running by June 30th.

Of course, many newly joined members are

already financial for next year by virtue of Section 9(3) of the Constitution. **Be aware however that this concession does NOT apply to your Parking Permit, which will need to be renewed on or before June 30th., like everyone else's.**

A reminder too that it is a custom of the Club to waive membership fees for persons 90 years of age or more. If you qualify for this but have not been given it, please let the Office Administrator know.

And while I am in reminder mode, there is the perennial one about changes. The Club is required by law to maintain an up-to-date list of members' names and residential addresses, so if yours has changed recently PLEASE let us know - otherwise you could be landing the Club in the proverbial clag.

I haven't done a precise count lately, but our membership is now well over 600 - if you all came to the Club at the same time we could play Sardines!

The Records Clerk.



Cynical Sam says:

Experience is something you don't acquire until just after you need it.

EDITORIAL

Once again, no one has sent in a plug for their Activity Group or an account of its progress. There have been no Letters to the Editor berating the Committee or asking it to "please explain". No one has submitted a joke or asked that a "For Sale" item be inserted. If it wasn't for the number of cars outside I would think all our members had died! Remember, with no contributions (and no apparent interest) any newsletter or magazine will quietly fade away. Perhaps more importantly, without input from the general membership, Meridian ceases to be the vox populi and is in danger of reflecting only the views of the Executive.

The annual subscription was set at 50 cents. The secretary, Mrs. Walker, was a "natural" for the job having already been a founder member of a senior's club in Queensland.

The first committee meeting was held on 23rd. October, at which specific areas of responsibility were allocated to each committee member (a practice only recently revived). For the first meeting of the new Club a Beetle Drive was arranged.

Although the Church of Christ had not asked for any payment for the use of the hall, it was agreed to make a donation of \$4 per month. Use of this hall had certain limitations: for one, at about this time bus routes were changed with the opening of the Woden Interchange, and this entailed a comparatively long walk. A press cutting from this period tells of a member arriving in a state of exhaustion, and describes the Committee's negotiations with the Minister for the Capital Territory (Kep Enderby) to provide a bus stop or a shuttle service. Secondly, by this time the original membership of 25 had doubled, and it became necessary to look for larger premises. (Does this sound familiar?) With the help of Helen Cunningham, the use of a room one afternoon a week was negotiated with the newly opened Southern Cross Club. The afternoon negotiated appears to have been Monday, but unfortunately the records are not clear as to whether the meetings there were in lieu of the Church of Christ meetings or in addition to them. Certainly after April 1973 all committee meetings were held at the Southern Cross Club, and in May the arrangement with the Church of Christ was terminated.

Looking at the minutes of the first few committee meetings reveals some interesting facts. For example, the first auditor to be appointed was a Mr. B. Martz, who only agreed to do the job if the Club's financial year coincided with the calendar year, January to December, thus defining an accounting period. It is not clear how long this definition of the financial year continued, but it is certain that some time before 1979 it had been redefined as 1st. September to 31st. October. Also, on the 11th. October 1973, the Committee resolved that

subscriptions should become due on the anniversary of a member's date of joining, an arrangement which is still suggested from time to time today. With a small membership this would not have been too difficult administratively, but without the computer assistance available today it would have become unworkable when the membership rose into the hundreds. In any case, it was short-lived, for on 18th. February 1974 a new Committee determined that all subscriptions should become due at the start of the financial year.

These early minutes also show that the original "cards and chat" meetings very soon gave way to a varied programme of activities including talks (the first was by a hospital matron), social events, craft and excursions – the birth of the Travel Group" which was to flourish so strongly in the 1980's and 90's under Jean Manley. The first recorded excursion was a Lake Burley Griffin trip on the old SS. Mimosa on 21st. February 1973, and the second was a sapphire fossicking expedition to Grabben Gullen on 11th. April; but already overnight trips were being planned, to the South coast and the Snowy Mountains. Afternoon teas were being held, raffles organised, and the Trading Table was providing income. As the President Harry Link said in a press interview at about this time "We don't want to be club where members wait for things to happen. We want something different for members to look forward to each week."

By mid-1974 the question of accommodation had to be considered once again. Not only had the membership of the Over 50's Club grown, so had that of the Southern Cross Club. It is greatly to the credit of the Southern Cross Club management that at no time did they so much as hint that they would like their room back, although it was clear that they could put it to good use. Consideration had already been given to hiring a room at the Churches Centre in Woden Town Square, which would be conveniently close to the bus interchange. At a Special General Meeting on 5th. August 1974 it was agreed that the Southern Cross room be retained for Monday meetings but that the Churches Centre room be booked for Wednesday afternoons for a trial period of three months. Incidentally, although it merited only a fleeting mention in the minutes, a farsighted decision

had been made by the Committee immediately prior to the start of the SGM. That decision was to start a building fund, and this was ratified at the subsequent AGM in October.

The use of both venues continued until early in 1976. At a Committee meeting in December 1975 it was resolved that a Special General Meeting be held in February at which it would be proposed that as the Southern Cross room was now too small for the numbers attending, the Club should use the Churches Centre exclusively. The Special Meeting duly took place and the motion was carried.

The use of the Churches Centre introduced the members to some innovations – for example the novelty of having to access the room via a lift – but one feature which was to have a major impact was the presence of a piano. One of the members, Arthur Last, was an accomplished pianist, and he, together with Walter Wrigley formed a “Singing for Pleasure” group which performed for the entertainment of members and led “singalongs”. This was the forerunner of our present very popular Woden Senior Singers.

Reading the minute books for 1976 to 1979 affords interesting and instructive information on the development of the Club, and should this document ever be expanded into a fuller history they will prove a rich source of information. Of course, there are times when an inveterate nose par – er, historian would wish that the minute secretary had provided a little more detail. For example it is recorded in the minutes of a Committee Meeting held on 6th. February 1978 that “A rather disturbing letter was received from Mrs. McWauna” but gives no details of what was in the letter or what response was made. Now we shall never know, because at the same meeting the Committee resolved to destroy all correspondence “of no further interest”. (Again it is interesting to reflect that today there would be no need for such an action as several years correspondence can be stored on a small disc.)

Let us therefore leave the years 1976 to 1979 for possible future consideration and move on to the next major event, the construction of the Corinna Street premises. Before doing so however it is worth recording when and how the expression “Over 50’s” came to be dropped from the name of the Club. The matter appears to receive its first mention in the minutes of a committee meeting held on 18th. February 1974 at which a motion was carried to change the name to “Over 50’s and Senior Citizens”, with a proviso that this title be put to the Minister for approval. There is no record of a response from the Minister but presumably the motion was implemented. The question of a name change is next mentioned in the committee minutes dated 6th. February 1978. It was decided to hold the matter over until the next General Meeting. The General Meeting was held on 3rd. April 1978. Discussion appears to have been lively, with the old name being supported mainly on sentimental grounds. There is one rather significant phrase in the minutes which unfortunately is not attributed to any named person: it reads: “It is felt the present name could be a drawback as the inclusion of “Over 50’s” in the name may give the impression that we are a social club.” Can one infer from this that by this time the Club saw itself as having some role to play in Welfare and Social Services? In the event, the minutes record that a proposal by Sam Bennett, seconded Doris Clark, to change the name to “Woden Senior Citizens Club” was carried overwhelmingly. It seems therefore that the members no longer wanted a reference to “over 50” to appear in the name; but it is not clear whether the members’ wishes in this respect were carried out, because the minutes of an AGM held more than over a year later (11th. June 1979) contain the following passage:

“The change of name was discussed. Mrs. Emery explained about grants being made to the Club being cut to the minimum, and felt that the inclusion of “Over 50” in *the present name* could affect the reason regarding this matter, and that the “Senior Citizens” in the name is more realistic in that the Club is for senior citizens rather than a social club.”

However, the minutes later go on to record:

“The official name of the Club is now Woden Senior Citizens (formerly Over 50 Club) in brackets. This was carried unanimously.”

So in fact, the reference to “over 50” never actually vanished from the name of the Club until it became a body corporate, with a radically changed Constitution.