

# alga NEWSLETTER

*Australian Lesbian & Gay Archives Inc*

*Incorporated Assn No. A0000240Z*

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## An Historical Year – and More to Come

Whether or not the Centenary of Federation had much of an impact on the wider community, it certainly provided a fillip for Australian gay and lesbian history. Government funding in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide allowed for the staging of three very different events that celebrated our part in the national story.

In Melbourne, Pride March secured funding for a portable exhibition – photos of dozens of people, places, events from our history graced boxes on sticks that were displayed at Midsumma and carried by a lively and colourful contingent in the Melbourne federation march. The Archives assisted in identifying and tracking down many of the images used.

In Sydney, an exhibition – Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know – staged by the Gay and Lesbian History Project, occupied a large space in the public areas of state parliament building and was formally opened by Meredith Burgmann, President of the Legislative Council.

In Adelaide, funding enabled work to continue on the Pink Files, a remarkable musical based on John Lee's interviews with Adelaide gay men about their lives in the 1940s and after. Many of us had seen the earlier version of this piece – a cast of four enacting many of the stories – and were impressed. The all-singing, all-dancing (and occasional bum-flashing) version developed was a revelation of just what is possible with our histories.

Congratulations to all those involved in getting the money and doing such great things with it.

### Photo opportunity!

*Saturday 1 December, 2 pm at VAC Training Room, 6 Claremont Street, South Yarra. See page 3 for details of this and other coming events.*

### Joan Nestle slideshow

On 12 May this year, Joan Nestle, co-founder of the New York Lesbian Herstory Archives, presented a slideshow and discussion, 'Our Queer History', to a packed house at the Builders Arms Hotel in Fitzroy, as a fundraiser for ALGA and the Victorian Women's Liberation and Lesbian Feminist Archives. Joan spoke with her characteristic eloquence and warmth about slides depicting lesbian lives in all their variety, across generations, colours, class and sexual proclivities. Among the highlights was Joan's reading of a wonderful account by a woman recalling her first encounter with a dildo when coming out as a young lesbian in the American butch/femme scene of the 1950s.

The day of the slideshow happened to coincide with Joan's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday and ended with cakes, candles and a rousing rendition of 'For she's a jolly good lesbian'! Our thanks to Jodie Joyce, Helen Pausacker and Jean Taylor for their work in staging this memorable event.

### AHH4: Adelaide turns it on

Adelaide hosted a very successful fourth Australian Homosexual Histories conference on Friday-Saturday 19-20 October at the Adelaide University Student Union. The program was full of interest, the entertainment superb, and the hospitality ... well, very Adelaide.

Highlights included a most enjoyable reception on the Friday night at Darling House, which houses one of the best libraries of gay-related materials in Australia. On Saturday night we saw a fabulous performance of the Pink Files, a full scale musical production scripted by Ian Purcell, adapted from oral histories collected by the late John Lee of Adelaide camp life in the 1940s – 1970s.

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AHH4 – cont.

On Sunday, as a post conference treat, Dr Gertrude Glossop, aka Will Sargent, took us on a walking tour of central Adelaide, evoking many of the stories we'd seen the night before in the Pink Files. For those who've not had the chance to enjoy Gertrude's blending of queer history and theatre, don't miss ALGA's next history walk as part of Midsumma, when GG will make a guest appearance (see Coming Events p3).

There were many fine presentations at the conference, in a range of styles. In a session titled 'Body and Spirit', we heard David Hilliard's erudite history of gay Anglicanism in Australia, followed by Bart van der Wel's slideshow (with surprises) and talk about the Adelaide Happy Wanderers walking group, complete with a community singing rendition of that old 50's song 'I love to go a-wandering...'. This was not your run-of-the-mill history conference.

Elise Duffield spoke about the evolution of the Sexuality Officer position at Adelaide University (a position she shares with a gay man), Barbara Baird presented an entertaining and informative paper titled 'Sodomy, Human Rights, Civilisation, Federation and Everything: Debates concerning homosexuality in letters to the editor in Tasmanian newspapers 1994-2000'.

Clearly there is a lot of interesting research going on about all sorts of queer history around Australia, not all of it in universities, and the conference provided a good forum for airing that work and thoughtful discussion of it. The session on 'Life Issues', which heard Peter Robinson, Jo Harrison and Paul Van Reyk, talk about different aspects of GLBT ageing, aged care, inter-generational communication and parenting, stimulated discussion which could have occupied a conference in its own right.

The next conference is going to be in Newcastle in October 2002, shortly before the Gay Games in Sydney.

*Gary Jaynes*

A selection of papers from the first two Australian Homosexual Histories conferences is available in *Gay & Lesbian Perspectives Vol 5*, jointly published in 2000 by ALGA and the Centre for Gay & Lesbian Research, Sydney, edited by David Phillips and Graham Willett. Cost is \$20 plus \$3 postage for ALGA

## History walk unearths new material

The Archives conducted a History Walk last January as part of the Midsumma Festival. Over 50 people took the walk which began at the Melbourne Town Hall, moved north along Swanston Street, turning into Lonsdale, Exhibition and Collins Streets, before ending at the Fitzroy Gardens. The walk included fresh material emerging from Wayne Murdoch's researches into Melbourne *Truth* back to 1913. Another highlight was the commentary by Rohan Storey on the colourful camp history behind Melbourne's theatre district.

See page 3 for details of the 2002 History Walk.

### Dr Heather Nix

19.12.1951 – 29.8.2001

The Archives was saddened to hear of the death this year of Heather Nix, a volunteer with the Archives in the early 1990s. Heather had a great love of books, although her special contribution was to the organization of ALGA's t-shirt collection. A tribute to Heather was published in 'Nexus', the staff magazine of Victoria University, Oct 2001, where Heather worked as a lecturer in the Department of Communication Studies.

## Thesis Prize 2000 awarded

The second ALGA Thesis Prize has been awarded to Lyndon Barei for his thesis on the 'Attribution of culpability in sexual domestic violence: the effects of sexuality and level of resistance', which was submitted in the School of Behavioural and Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Ballarat in Victoria.

The prize of \$250 is for the best fourth year thesis (or equivalent) dealing with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer themes in any discipline.

Theses were submitted from across the country and included topics such as anti-vilification legislation, attitudes towards male homosexuality among Chinese students in Australia, performativity in Sedgwick and Butler, performing the Asian-migrant-lesbian body.

ALGA thanks John Waugh for joining the committee's nominee in judging the award.

The prize is again being offered this year. We see this as a means of encouraging research in this newly developing but exciting area of study at the undergraduate level and of making sure that the Archives gets copies of such work.

## Coming events:

### Photo opportunity!

*Saturday 1 December*, 2 pm at VAC Training Room, 6 Claremont Street, South Yarra. ALGA invites interested people to help us obtain information about photos for which we currently have little or no context. Among such photos are Melbourne 'scene' pics from the late 1970s onwards, photos of community events and demonstrations in the 1980s and 1990s, and gay lib demonstrations around 1978. Most are Victorian but some are from other states. Esther Singer, a volunteer working on ALGA's photo collection, will have a tape recorder on hand if people have recollections about photos that they would like to contribute.

If people would like to use the occasion to donate photos of their own, along with accompanying information, that would also be great. This is what our photo history project is about – asking people to supply one photo that captures a moment or an event that has personal significance for them in terms of gay and lesbian history, and telling us a little about that photo.

### ALGA AGM

*Thursday, 13 December 2001*, VAC Training Room, 6 Claremont Street, South Yarra, at 7.30 pm. All welcome, voting rights only to 2000/01 financial members.

### History Walk

Archives History Walk as part of Midsumma on Saturday 2 February at 11 am. Meet at the Floral Clock. Walk to be led by Dr Gertrude Glossop.

## WL & Lesbian Feminist Archives – new home

The University of Melbourne Archives is now the home of the Victorian Women's Liberation and Lesbian Feminist Archives collection, and on 31 May this year, the University hosted a function to formally announce the arrival of the collection.

For 30 years the collection lived with Jean Taylor, but in early 2000, VWLLFA formed at Jean's request to make decisions about relocating the Archives. The arrangement with Melbourne University allows VWLLFA to retain ownership of the collection but it is managed and made accessible to researchers by the University.

## Binding sponsorships a success

This year ALGA invited members when renewing to consider becoming binding sponsors, to help fund the considerable cost of periodicals binding. The idea is that for a donation of \$50 or more, if the donor is agreeable, their contribution will be acknowledged by a slip within the bound periodical. The \$50 can be from more than one person, all of whom will be acknowledged.

About a dozen sponsors contributed to the scheme which went a long way towards offsetting the \$1220 we spent this financial year on binding.

Next year we expect the outlay will increase as we catch up with binding periodicals for which we have been seeking missing issues. Large runs of *Lesbians on the Loose*, *National AIDS Bulletin*, *Sydney Star Observer* and *Capital Q* are among those on our list.

Binding is ALGA's largest ongoing expense, and a growing one in recent years with the increasing frequency of print media in most Australian capitals. But as well as being an expense, binding is one of our core functions, because binding helps preservation, accessibility and space management.

## Books listed

Until this year we never really knew the extent of ALGA's book collection. But now, thanks to the work of volunteer Kym, we have an electronic list of all titles, authors and publishing details. There are about 2300 books, and one unanticipated benefit is that we also know how many duplicates we have. So when you see queer books for sale at our Midsumma Carnival stall next summer, don't think we're selling off the collection – these will be strictly those books for which we have more than two duplicates!

Because of space limitations the books are in storage, but Kym has sorted the collection so that as soon as it is able to go on to shelves it will be organised into fiction and non-fiction by subject categories. In the meantime the electronic list gives us ready access.

## Oral history - DIY

ALGA is always on the lookout for people who are prepared to speak about their lives. Recently however the oral history project took a different twist when some gay men contacted us for advice about interviewing their friends. The friends, men in their 70s and 80s, were reluctant to be interviewed by strangers., but were happy for a summary of their interviews to be given to the Archives.

## New Periodicals List

The 7th edition of the ALGA periodicals list was published in October 2001, and includes all periodicals held in the collection as at 31 December 2000. Compiled by periodicals secretary Graham Carbery, this edition is 61 pages, and for the first time includes a lists of bound volumes and key missing issues. It sells for \$10 plus \$3 postage.

Recently we have been fortunate to complete series of several important publications, and for this we thank Marja Berclouw (*Lesbiana*), Sol (*Libertine and Stallion/Gayzette*), Gordon Balfour from *Fruit Juice*, Silke Bader from Avalon Media, publisher of *Lesbians on the Loose*, Jude Dennis from *Lesbiana*, and the publishers of *B-Glad Newsletter* (Ballarat),

## Do You Happen to Have?

**The following issues are being sought by the Archives to fill gaps in otherwise complete series:**

- ◆ *Adelaide GT* No 114 (16 May 1997)
- ◆ *ALSO News* No 5 (1999) and any issues in 2000
- ◆ *Bliss* (Melb) No 18 (1995)
- ◆ *Brother Sister* (Qld) No 33 (1994), No 137 (1998), Nos 163-165 (1999), and any issue after No 167 in 2000.
- ◆ *Campaign* Last two issues, thought to be April and May 2000.
- ◆ *Capital Q* (Sydney), Nos 332 (March 1999), 369, 370 (Nov 1999), Nos 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385 (Jan-March 2000)
- ◆ *Country AIDS Network* (Castlemaine) No 42 (1999) and Nos 50, 52 & 55 (2000).
- ◆ *G* (Sydney) Any issues after no. 3 (late 2000) and clarification of whether still current.
- ◆ *Gayline Newsletter* (South Australia) Nos 213 and 221 (1997), No 240 (1999), Nos 250 and 252 (2000) and any issues after No 253 (Sept 2000).
- ◆ *Melbourne Star Observer* Nos 281, 283, 286, 288, 290, 293,(1995) 298, 300, (1996)
- ◆ *Panda* (Canberra), Vol 3 No 4 (1995) and Vol 4 No 8 (1996)
- ◆ *Sydney Gay Liberation Newsletter* Vol 1 No 4 (1972), No 14 (1973)
- ◆ *Sydney Star Observer* Nos 369 (August 1997) and 513 (June 2000)
- ◆ *SX* (Sydney) We only have copies of Nos 1 & 8. We have been unsuccessful in contacting the publisher, so we would be grateful if a reader could fill in the gaps and/or tell us if this publication is still current. If it has ceased we would like to know when.

## Thanks

The Archives acknowledges the following people for making donations to the Archives this year:

Gay and Lesbian History Project, NSW	
Qld Gay & Lesbian Welfare Association	
Tropical Fruits Inc, Lismore, NSW	
KWA	W Abrahams
Paul Andrew	DB
Laurie Bebbington	M Berclouw
Michael Carnes	Gary Clarke
John Cook	G Davies
B Francis/B Newman	A Gartner
Robert Gibbs	Terry Goulden
D Hilliard	KL
Leigh Keen	David Menadue
Dale Paul	Ian Purcell
Richard Stone	J Storey
Alison Thorne	Paul Van Reyk

## Oral history tapes on CD

Thanks to Barry McKay for copying ALGA's oral history tapes to CD. This will assist in preserving the tapes, which are subject to more rapid deterioration in cassette form.

## Volunteers at work

The Archives is an entirely volunteer-based organisation and without the participation and involvement of volunteers, very little would get done. This has been a good year for us.

Kym is working on cataloguing and we now have our book collection (more than 2000 titles)

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## Volunteers – cont.

catalogued. It will soon be on our website, allowing people to see what we have. He has now turned his attention to the badges and to copying our video tape collection.

Esther has been ploughing through the photo collection, boxes and albums full of irreplaceable visual records of our community's history. They are being stored in archivally-correct acid-free pockets and labelled. As noted elsewhere, we are working collectively to try to identify people and events.

Alan is cataloguing the videos, and preparing a detailed content listing as he goes.

As noted elsewhere Graham Carbery has completed a new edition of the Periodicals Listing and Barry McKay has copied a number of our audiotaped interviews on to CD for preservation purposes.

If you would like to help out the Archives, finding a project that interests you and working away at it is perhaps one of the most useful things you can do. If you think you might be interested in getting involved get in touch.

## Visitors and their work

The Archives has had a larger than usual number of visitors in the past year, reflecting both the increase in gay and lesbian studies and in the visibility of the Archives as a resource for such work.

Among the topics that have been researched recently have been the Barbra Quicksand election campaign, the history of gay choirs and bands in Australia, Queer Collaborations (student activism) and a number of essays for the Melbourne Uni 'History of Sexualities' subject.

We expect an further increase in the coming year focused on the research essays for the new Melbourne Uni subject, 'From Mateship to Mardi Gras'.

## Recent acquisitions

**We thank the people mentioned below for their donations of the following materials:**

- ◆ Photographs and memorabilia from Pokeys, donated by Jay Watchorn. Jay, a well-known and long-standing contributor to the gay media since the 1970s, has retired overseas – we were pleased that he agreed to be interviewed before he left.

- ◆ CD of oral histories & audio excerpts from the 'Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know' exhibition curated by the NSW Gay and Lesbian History Project
- ◆ Major collection of papers and memorabilia by Geraldine Kirby spanning many of the activities of the ALSO Foundation over the 1980s and into the '90s.
- ◆ The Greg Weir papers, a major collection relating to the history of gay and lesbian political activism in Australia. The collection fills some 40 ring binders. The printed index alone has 794 pages. Thanks to David Studham for organising the handover of the Archives' copy. A full index is on the National Library website:  
<http://www.nla.gov.au/ms/findaids/8915.html>
- ◆ Papers and the banner of Homo Defactos, a group which campaigned through the 1990s for the legal recognition of the same-sex relationships
- ◆ Sol whose donation helped complete series of *Libertine* and *Stallion/Gayzette* and who has started us on a collection of Australian Women's Forum. (And congratulations to Gary Jaynes who cracked what may well be the most obscure numbering system ever created for a periodical!)
- ◆ Videos, books and posters from Geoff
- ◆ A major donation of *Man's World*, a physique magazine from the 1950s. While the magazine itself is American, these copies were bought in Elizabeth Street in Melbourne, reflecting the international circulation of this kind of material.
- ◆ Photographs, memorabilia and bound periodicals kindly donated by friends and family of the late Jan Hillier.

## Photo Project

During Midsumma 2001 the Archives launched its Photo Project through which it is seeking donations of photographs which capture any and all aspects our queer lives. Activism, celebration, just hangin' out – all of this is us making history. And the Archives wants to collect it!

We want pictures of: a lesbian or gay group you have been involved in; you and your GLBTQ friends; queer graffiti; historic spots (bars, beats, meeting places)... And don't forget to tell us the who, what, where's of the image.

And while we're at it: thanks to Ken and Mannie and Paul van Reyk for small bundles of photos.

## Relationships registry proposal

*Following is a letter from a Melbourne man, Murray Little, who submits this proposal for consideration by ALGA members at our next AGM.*

Dear members,

I write to further the concept of a registry of Gay & Lesbian relationships, and the celebration thereof at the Archives. This would be based on the same guidelines and methods as civil relationships are currently recorded by the State of Victoria, so that the information could one day be incorporated into a state register when the

appropriate changes to the legislation and constitution have been made.

This would be open for all celebrants to use, and for all citizens to use as is the current state one. It would provide a central focus for the conducting of

ceremonies and an insulated and secure central store of a registry of relationships. The integrity of the registry must be compatible with that of the state one.

It is in keeping with the concept of 'Living History', and where appropriate could be used for census and other practical areas of evaluation.

**Murray Little (Pahran)**  
[murrayphoto@hotmail.com](mailto:murrayphoto@hotmail.com)

## Why an Archives – and how you and your friends can contribute

**The Archives is the memory of the gay and lesbian community. We aim to preserve records of Australian homosexual life, past and present, for use by future generations.**

The Archives has been going since 1978. The collection of periodicals is probably the core of the Archives' collection. But we also seek records of gay and lesbian life outside of organised groups, through personal letters, photographs and other memorabilia, including from times before there was a gay movement. We also encourage those with recollections of pre-movement days to record their recollections for posterity through the Archives' Oral History Project. Requests for confidentiality are strictly adhered to.

**You can support the Archives financially** by becoming a member (\$20, \$5 concession), or by making a donation. All donations to the Archives are tax deductible.

**For those with the time and interest, you can contribute as a volunteer.** There is a range of tasks to suit people's different talents and levels of commitment. For example:

- ◆ writing to groups around Australia to let them know about the Archives, and seeking their support
- ◆ listing and ordering parts of the collection that are of interest to you, eg. t-shirts, banners or posters
- ◆ taking care of the collection of a group that has special significance to you – ordering and listing that group's papers, maybe interviewing some of the people who are involved in running the group
- ◆ photocopying and ordering press clippings
- ◆ liaising with other collectors of gay and lesbian material, and arranging swaps of duplicate material
- ◆ helping with fund raising and organising major events (trivia nights, conferences etc)
- ◆ helping us distribute ALGA publications to bookshops
- ◆ writing promotional material to help raise awareness of the Archives
- ◆ arranging displays
- ◆ helping us solve the perennial problem of insufficient space.

**The Archives lives in the basement of VAC at 6 Claremont Street, South Yarra. We are open on most Thursdays nights from about 7pm to 9 pm, but we ask that people phone to let us know when they are coming. Tel. (03) 9482 1184, or email on [gwillett@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:gwillett@unimelb.edu.au)**