Building Extensions Open

Though the paint was still drying and some of the new furniture had yet to arrive, the much-anticipated grand opening of our building extensions was celebrated on Saturday 13 April.

Over 150 invited guests and residents enjoyed the autumn sunshine in our rejuvenated JCR courtyard, dwarfed by the cathedral roof of the new M E Wood Theatre and Senior Common Room.

The hum of people chatting and the clinking of glasses were a welcome change to jack-hammers and concrete mixers. The whole project took just over four and a half months to complete, but the weeks of noise and disruption were soon forgotten when the “Men at Work” signs came down to reveal the fantastic finished product.

Guests at the official opening were equally impressed with the new facilities as they strolled through the upper gallery admiring the computer room (complete with residents surfing the net). Our younger guests marvelled at Snow White and Seven Dwarves being shown on the M E Wood Theatre’s large screen, while their parents tried to figure out how everything worked!

One former resident from the 1970’s commented that it was a far cry from the days when there was one television set in the whole college, and that was for use by members of the Senior Common Room only – undergraduates had to amuse themselves by playing cards and drinking coffee.

One other former resident who remembered those coffee drinking sessions fondly was Dr Sue Boyd (1966-69). In recognition of her distinguished career, Sue was invited back to St Catherine’s on April 13 to unveil the plaque and announce the building extensions officially open.

Dr Boyd delivered a marvellous address, reminiscing about college and university life in the late 1960’s. Sue recalled fondly the many happy times she shared with her fellow residents, some of whom were present on the day. Jackie Musk, Penny Ferrier and Shan Ralph enjoyed catching up with her and the recent developments in the College.

As the only college accommodating female students at the time, Sue recalled that residents of the 1960’s did not consider that colleges would ever be co-educational. It seemed “right and proper” that the women could be themselves and if they chose, strut along the corridors covered only in a towel without worrying about bumping into Fred from room 78.

There were many discussions late at night about enjoying one’s womanhood without giving too much away. Current residents were amused by such revelations because of course they have much greater freedom now than in the 60’s. These days our residents can entertain guests in their rooms and are not bound by the same morals that existed at that time.

INSET: (l-r) Yvonne Rate, Head of College, Dr Sue Boyd and Samantha Holmes, Student President

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The other concern during Sue’s residence was that the Cook murders were taking place and when the residents went out, they were required to sign a book indicating their destination, whose company they would be keeping and their expected time of return (before midnight of course). It seems that the majority of the residents at the time were “Going to the drives with Joe Bloggs”.

Many of the leadership skills that Sue developed during her student days have held her in good stead for her distinguished career as an Australian Diplomat. Sue recalled the lobbying undertaken whilst she was a Member of the Student Guild and subsequently the first female President of the Guild. In those days, the President was a full-time student and conducted the Guild responsibilities in their spare time. Sue believes that all of her experiences as a resident and student leader have been invaluable.

As a student, she appreciated greatly the facilities that St Catherine’s offered. Following the death of a fellow resident when she was crossing Stirling Highway, Sue and her fellow students lobbied the University to provide an underpass to provide safe access to the campus. Obtaining permission to construct this proved difficult because the land was at a junction controlled by four authorities. Staging a student sit-in on Stirling Highway brought about immediate results. The media reacted to the drama and very quickly, the Senate and other parties decided that the underpass was a necessity and thus was constructed. The student newspaper “The Pelican” dubbed the underpass “Boyd’s Passage”.

Sue acknowledged the huge support of the women and men who undertook the task of fund-raising to establish St Catherine’s College. It was a credit to such pioneers that their support has continued to the extent that the College has been able to develop them to their current state.

On 11 April, The University of Western Australia bestowed an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters on Sue Boyd. Dr Boyd is currently the High Commissioner to the Republic of the Fiji Islands.

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Building a History

By Cathleen Harrison

Noel Stewart in her book published by the College in 1978 neatly and systematically presents the story of St Catherine’s. The book is dedicated to Malvina Evalyn Wood, our first Warden. Reading St Catherine’s College from Dream to Reality 1928–1978 is a rewarding experience – highlighting as it does firstly, the actions of Dr Roberta Jull (member of Senate and inaugural President of the West Australian Women’s Graduates Association), who recognised the need for a Women’s College. Secondly, the book demonstrates the lasting commitment of M.E. Wood to our interests in the past and as our history shows, well into the future. Thirdly, the roles of so many notable women who gave their time willingly and systematically to win college places for us. Finally, the men who gave support to the realisation of the dream should also be remembered.

It is hard to imagine the strength of the dream that these women shared even before WW11 and the building of the military establishment that became the University Hostel. These heroines planned and worked for years even before being given a start in the form of temporary quarters in part of the free wheeling self-governed hostel. The Hostel did not offer students the kind of conditions the University wanted for students so it was just a matter of time before the Hostel would undergo extensive change. In the meantime the dream continued to take shape. The Hostel Committee were willing hosts to St the pace quickened with the foundations and footings going down causing great excitement!

Finally it is sad to note that M.E. Wood never resided as Warden in the new College, because of her failing health. Miss Barbara Leven our Deputy Warden also an important person in our history, became Acting Warden. And so, the transition was made under her leadership and St Catherine’s occupied the land and the accommodation we see today. I feel privileged to have been a part of this transition, and to see very real evidence of the vibrant nature of St Catherine’s College.

Cathleen Harrison (nee Field) lived at the Women’s College/St Catherine’s College from 1939-1960, whilst studying Anthropology at UWA. Cathleen has returned to the College and UWA this year to complete a Master of Creative Writing. Her photographs of the construction of St Catherine’s, taken back in the late 1950’s, are a valuable addition to our college archives.

ABOVE:
Cathleen Harrison

LEFT: Sue Boyd, Guild President, at the 1970 UWA Ball with former Vice-Chancellor, Sir Stanley Prescott.
Can you remember walking around the Park Road Wing in your platform shoes and flares? Did your empire line gown for the College Ball have batwing sleeves and geometric stripes (and your daughter probably wants to borrow it now?).

Well, we are dusting off the mirror ball and organising a reunion for all women who were residents of St Catherine’s at any time from 1970 to 1979. The event will be held Saturday, 23rd November.

If you are a student of the 70’s and have names of other ex-residents to add to our list of college disco divas, please let us know.

Mary Argese (nee Cosenza) has kindly volunteered to help with this task. Mary was senior student in 1981 and is very keen to meet up with everyone again. If you have any names and addresses, please call Mary on 9445 2290 or ring the College on 9386 5847.

RIGHT: Mary Argese (right) with Sue Wilson – 1978.

Amelia’s Sporting Chance

Nineteen year old Amelia Carr, is currently studying in her second year of a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Biology and Human Movement at UWA. A dedicated student, Amelia is equally as dedicated to her chosen sport of athletics, in which she has represented the state several times as a junior. Although currently recovering from a knee injury that has prevented her from competing in athletics, Amelia has found the combination of training and studying at University to be complimentary. She has also enjoyed living at St Catherine’s, finding it to be a positive and supportive environment, which is also close to training facilities.

Amelia took a year off after she completed year 12, to concentrate on her athletics training. She found that the break from studies gave her valuable time to consider and clarify her choice of University course and future career plans. It also gave her time to make the transition from her country home in Donnybrook, to city life in Perth, before she hit the books!

Culminating an enjoyable first year at university and college, Amelia was recently awarded the UWA Graduates’ Association Prize for first year Human Biology and Human Movement students, and also received a UWA Sports Development Award.

Amelia is eager to resume competition in state athletics, representing UWA, and also aims to pursue a career in exercise physiology or biomechanics.

RIGHT: Shirley de la Hunty (Olympic Gold Medalist), presents Amelia Carr with her award.

Council Member Profile

Jane Thompson

Jane Thompson, a UWA Law Graduate, joined the St Catherine’s College Council in 2001. Jane has been involved with numerous community organisations and was recently the President of the Karrakatta Club.

In October 2001, Jane resigned from her position as Secretary of the Legal Practice Board, which was previously known as the Barristers’ Board. Jane had a pivotal role in the regulation of the legal profession. She was also Registrar of the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal which was established in 1992 under the Legal Practitioners Act to hear and determine disciplinary proceedings affecting practitioners.

The West Australian model for hearing complaints against practitioners is recognised as probably the best in Australia and has been imitated by other states in regulating their legal professions.

One of the innovative decisions made by Jane during her career was the introduction of lay representatives onto the Tribunal. According to the Legal Practitioners Act, such people cannot have been a legal practitioner. Although there were misgivings voiced at the time that this significant change was introduced, Jane believes that they were unfounded.

In her retirement, Jane plans to spend more time with her husband, Professor Peter Thompson in the development of their vineyard at Wilyabrup, which she hopes will become renowned for its Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Pinot grapes.

Jane and Peter have three children, Alexandrea and James who are both lawyers and Angus who is studying medicine at the University of Queensland.

www.stcatherines.uwa.edu.au
1. View of the guests from the SCR balcony
2. Milly Ingate from the UWA Study Abroad Office with Dean of Residents, Dr Brett Degen
3. Former Senior Students 1970 – Shan Callow (nee Ralph) and 1968 – Penny Ferrier (nee Gibson)
4. (l-r) Pauline Coghlan, Principal of Shenton College, Kathy Kinnane from TISC and Lady Monica Prescott
5. (l-r) Mollie Lukis, fellow of the College; Dr Sue Boyd and former Warden, Patricia Church
6. (l-r) Former residents Jackie Musk and Leith Taylor with newest member of Council, Steven Heath, Chief Magistrate
7. Dorothy Ransom from the AFUW and Patricia Hatch
8. Residents enjoying the day