Though exams were well and truly over, the carpark was empty and the rooms vacant, the shrieks of female voices rang through the College. “OHMIGOD, I haven’t seen you in over 20 years!!” was a phrase that was repeated continuously at the 70’s Reunion on Saturday, 23 November. More than 100 former residents from the years 1967-1979 revisited the College for an afternoon of reminiscing, rediscovery and much laughter. The celebrations continued well into the night with a buffet dinner for 70 in the Withnell Dining Hall.

It was a fantastic event and we thank all of those former residents who attended and provided us with information for the day. Special recognition must be given to Mary Argese (nee Cosenza) for the amazing effort that she put in with tracking people down and getting everyone into the spirit of things! Thanks also to Sheralee Gonder (nee Edwards) for her assistance.

We hope that you enjoy, and can relate to, the recollections that some of the reunion attendees shared with us (maybe you recognise some of the faces in the photographs, 20 and 30 years on!).

Continued on page 2

LEFT: Mary Argese and Sheralee Gonder
Women of Excellence
A HISTORY OF ST CATHERINE’S COLLEGE

The small band of women who comprised the pioneers of University Women’s College struggled for 18 years simply to acquire the meagre space of the ex-servicemen’s barracks at UWA. The current St Catherine’s facilities must have been a seemingly impossible fantasy to them. Today St Catherine’s houses five times as many women than in its first days, and occupies about six times the space. The changing nature of St Catherine’s has not, however, displaced the original sense of camaraderie that the first young women residents at University Women’s College enjoyed as they shared the experiences of studying and growing together.

Today St Catherine’s is home to some 150 young women who have come to the college from all areas of the world. The College hosts visiting scholars and international conferences bringing many different worlds of experience under one roof. It is St Catherine’s women’s enduring culture of welcoming new ideas, new challenges and new people that has shaped the reputation of the College worldwide.

It is no wonder then, that we are proud of the history of St Catherine’s, and we are proud to honour the 2003 75th Anniversary of the College with an updated written history of its development from Roberta Jull’s first ideas to St Cat’s as it thrives today. It is being written by Chloe Britton, an ex-resident and tutor and History Honours graduate.

The history is taken from College publications, minutes of meetings, and other archival documents but will be accompanied with photographs and eyewitness accounts by ex-residents. We have received much help and information from interested people, but if you’d like to include your stories of college or how College played a role in your success please don’t hesitate to contact Tara Houlahan at St Catherine’s College reception or Chloe Britton directly via email: chloebritton@bigpond.com.au

In particular it would be very helpful to receive accounts of these incidences:
• the change-over from the hostel to St Catherine’s building
• the experiences of the St Catherine’s College Auxiliary
• the experiences of the Lady Mitchell Appeal
• the fires of the mid seventies
• the erection of the new Prescott building
• the debate over St Catherine’s as a co-ed college
• the cultural exchanges among students at St Catherine’s
• the rivalries among colleges on College Row
• the college during the 1980s.

Final submissions to the history must be received by Monday, 17th February and the book will be launched in 2003 as part of celebrations for the 75th Anniversary of the College. Don’t miss out on this opportunity to tell your history of St Catherine’s!

PICTURE BELOW (L-R): Mary Argese (nee Cosenza), Sheralee Gonder (nee Edwards), Samantha Holmes (Senior Student), Jan Rigden (nee Braid), Chloe Britton

“Finishing High School and leaving my home in country WA was an event I had eagerly anticipated; to escape the limitations of small town life, to experience opportunities previously unavailable and to be an “independent person” (despite the fact I would be financially dependent on my parents for the next four years!). However at the same time, the move was fraught with uncertainty and self-doubt.”

“My initial misgivings about being at a unisex college were quickly alleviated. There were plenty of opportunities to interact with the Georgians and Kingswood boys, in fact at times there seemed to be non stop social events. There were two male colleges needing female partners and only one St Cats, so it was all go! More significantly, St Catherine’s gave young women an opportunity to adopt leadership roles and develop skills and confidence that many would have found difficult in a co-ed environment.”

“I grew up, had fun, made friends, got a degree and felt part of a community which fostered cooperation and tolerance, encouraged young women to accept responsibility and regularly won the WICSA cup! Go Cats!!”

Jan Rigden (nee Braid) 1976-1979

“Never laughed so much. Never got away with so much!”

“I also remember fondly the Inter-college activities including the Dramatic Society with St George’s College. These were the days when St George’s was an all-male college. I do remember spending many nights in the St George’s College tower.”

Jane Fenwick 1977-1980

“With great trepidation and excitement I moved into St Cat’s in 1970. I knew only one or two people who were going to St Cat’s. But I had nothing to worry about. From the first day I met many people and formed many friendships that have lasted over 30 years.”

Liana Fitzpatrick (nee Greene) 1970-1971

“Being on phone duty was a nightmare... running up and down the corridors to find people often out. Locking up duty was another responsibility of residents.”

“(As the Prosh Director in 1972), we designed placards and a float satirising the Women’s Liberation Movement (it was the era of Germaine Greer’s The Female Eunuch). We paraded through the streets of Perth on the back of a truck and ended up being featured with a photograph in the Daily News... such fame!”

Ann Osborne (nee McIlroy) 1971-1973

“My father would never have allowed me to go to university if I had to live in a co-ed College. St Catherine’s was a safe and secure environment and my friends from College will always be very special to me.”

Mary Argese (nee Cosenza) 1978-1981
Transitions Seminar

Young women were the target audience of a seminar hosted by St Catherine’s College entitled: ‘Transitions: Planning Your Future’ held on Saturday, 24 August. The seminar was designed to attract Year 12 students who were unsure about where they were headed in life. Students from TAFE, Merredin, Narrogin, Bunbury, Mandurah and metropolitan high schools attended.

Seminar participants listened to the stories of some current and recent residents of St Catherine’s College as well as several faculty members from UWA. There was also a display of Cameos that featured recent graduates. These Cameos provided examples of the career paths chosen by many former residents of St Catherine’s College and illustrated the wide range of choices available. Some of the women included in the Cameos also attended the seminar.

A former resident, Indigenous student Kiarna Adams who is completing her third year of medicine at UWA, previously studied health sciences at La Trobe University in Melbourne for two years. Kiarna grew up in Darwin and was sent to live in Ballarat in Victoria with her grandmother when she was 14. Although she hated leaving her family and friends in Darwin she realises now that she would never have achieved her goals if she had remained there. She’s reached the half-way mark towards qualifying as a doctor.

Well-known musician Sibian Joddrell charmed the students with his stories of survival in the music industry. Currently working with young people delivering motivational seminars, Sibian’s session was entitled: ‘Goal Setting’. He stressed that being flexible is an essential quality that young people need to develop. Sibian spent several years studying at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. He is now busking in Northbridge and contemplating further studies.

Faculty members at UWA including Dr Andrea Gaynor, Dr Annette George and Dr Brenda Walker shared their stories of their evolving career paths. All three speakers mentioned that they had not really known where they were headed when they left school but each of them had “followed their dreams”. Andrea told the Year 12 students that “It is not necessary to meditate on a mountain-top in order to know oneself, but some honest and critical reflection is necessary and important, especially at times of transition”. Geologist Annette George said that “It would be terrific if there were some ‘magic markers’ along the way but instead we have to rely on our courage and common sense and not be afraid of change or of perceived failure.”

Feedback from students who attended the day was excellent. A former resident who had completed a Bachelor of Commerce with Honours made the decision that she was going to change direction and has since secured a place at WAAPA in Theatre Arts for 2003. Well done Rebecca Parsons! Several of the Merredin students decided that they wanted to live at St Catherine’s College in 2003 and we like that too!

M E Wood Theatre a hit with Residents

Since opening in April this year, the ME Wood Theatre has been the venue for numerous student activities and functions. The facilities were christened with a Senior Common Room wine, cheese and chocolate night – a very successful event that was repeated the following semester. All of the wings have staged movie, popcorn and icecream extravaganzas in the theatre at various points in the year. The SCR screened foreign films every second Sunday in the Theatre, and the young people delivering motivational seminars, Sibian’s session was entitled: ‘Goal Setting’. He stressed that being flexible is an essential quality that young people need to develop. Sibian spent several years studying at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. He is now busking in Northbridge and contemplating further studies.

Faculty members at UWA including Dr Andrea Gaynor, Dr Annette George and Dr Brenda Walker shared their stories of their evolving career paths. All three speakers mentioned that they had not really known where they were headed when they left school but each of them had “followed their dreams”. Andrea told the Year 12 students that “It is not necessary to meditate on a mountain-top in order to know oneself, but some honest and critical reflection is necessary and important, especially at times of transition”. Geologist Annette George said that “It would be terrific if there were some ‘magic markers’ along the way but instead we have to rely on our courage and common sense and not be afraid of change or of perceived failure.”

Feedback from students who attended the day was excellent. A former resident who had completed a Bachelor of Commerce with Honours made the decision that she was going to change direction and has since secured a place at WAAPA in Theatre Arts for 2003. Well done Rebecca Parsons! Several of the Merredin students decided that they wanted to live at St Catherine’s College in 2003 and we like that too!