

\$2.00

# WA Bush Poets & Yarn Spinners



## Newsletter : September 2000

### RULES OF ENTRY FOR POETS' WRITTEN COMPETITION

As with all competitions and challenges, rules are formulated so as to give guidelines to participants, and to make for simpler judging.

The Rules for each club or association tend to differ to one degree or another, so we have tailored the W.A. Bush Poets & Yarn Spinners rules to resemble, in the main, the other Associations that are involved in the interstate heats that we are endeavouring to reach, i.e. Winton for poets .

### WRITTEN WORKS SPECIFICATION

All poetry **MUST** be the author's own work. A signed statement to that effect must accompany each work.

Australian Poetry is bush and urban poetry relevant to Australia and the Australian way of life.

The work must be of a length that can be performed in Three to Seven minutes including 'preamble' (introduction to poem) to use the definitions of the Australian Bush Poets Association.

Works should have a rhythm and rhyme consistent with traditional Australian Poetry.

The length of each stanza should be the same unless the stanza lengths vary in predictable manner. For example the length of one stanza might be 6 lines and the next 4 and the next 6 etc

*Material of a tasteless nature will be penalised or disqualified. Please remember the Wireless Hill finals are a family event.*

*The main pre-requisite of the written Poem is that entertains*

**"Come All Ye" gatherings at the Raffles Hotel  
(Upstairs in the River Room)**

**Next Meeting Friday 6/10/2000 at 7:30pm**

HP 540, THANKS FOR POEMS IN MAIL. BARRY HG





## AROUND THE TRAPS with the Top Dog



G'day from Rotto,

Plenty of good news this month folks.

Firstly, a free annual membership will be awarded to the best "First Timer" at each Come All Ye gathering, commencing this month.

Further positive progress has been made in Geraldton and Margaret River. Negotiations are in place for weekend performances in both these centres for April and May 2001. It is also anticipated that heats for the Australia Day Awards will be conducted in the two centres and hopefully other country areas, next year.

The committee are currently considering how to define "bush poetry". Any suggestions from members will be gratefully received.

Have just heard from Geoff and Michelle in Switzerland. Geoff reports emails with membership subs have tracked him across Europe! So if you haven't paid your membership fee yet, no need to send it to Europe, just forward it to Unit 1, 8 Hill Street South Perth 6151 as soon as possible please.

Good Luck to all contestants in the forthcoming Australia Day Award Competitions. Hope to see you all when the first heats commence at the Raffles Hotel on Friday 6 October 2000 at 7:30pm.

Cheers,  
Stinger



G'Day Everyone

Firstly may I say a big [welcome](#) to the new members, who joined us last month and to those who renewed their memberships.

The Editorial Sub-Committee is most heartened by the written and vocal feedback that we received in response to the first two issues of the new style Newsletter. By taking the trouble to respond, you energised the people who go to the trouble of making the Newsletter a reality. Thank You.

The September and October editions of the Newsletter are being produced and printed by a very willing band of volunteers, who stepped into the breach, when the Geoff and Michelle fled our shores for Europe, for the next 10 weeks. My special thanks go to the Poets who contributed their material ahead of our departure. Thanks to Barry Higgins, who volunteered to be the coordinator of Newsletter events and Tess Stubbs the write-up of the October and November "Come All Ye". Also a big thank you to my daughter Rachael, who put up her hand to do the production and printing work.

One of our new Committee Members Phyllis Tobin has roped-in her husband Trevor to be the Stand-in Treasurer, while Geoff is overseas. Trevor and Phyllis are those two redoubtable folk, who greet you at the door on "Come All Ye" nights.

If you get an opportunity, please make sure that you give support to the Children's Poetry Competition at the Australia Day Challenge, by encouraging children, whom you know, to enter.

Good Luck to those people who enter the Heats of the Written and Spoken sections and well as to the Yarn Spinners.

**Geoff Bebb**



## Come All Ye for September 2000

This column will be presented in an abridged version, as restrictions of time (Flight QF 71 bound for London awaits Geoff and I) and space in the pre-prepared, bulging September Newsletter, allows me only a page. I will endeavour to relay the overall flavour of the evening and naturally mention all our valued performers, but may omit the actual titles of their poems this issue. As for all meetings, the infinite variety of spontaneously presented traditional and contemporary works, always amazes me.

The evening was once again an incredibly lively and humorous. I would call it a 21poet salute to the resurgence of traditional style, Bush Poetry, which came from the grass roots. The 21 performers we had last night constituted  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the attendees at the meeting.

MC **Ron Evans** had an extremely busy night coordinating every one. The meeting was vaguely reminiscent in spirit, of the old traditional gather-round-the-piano evenings, where the family and friends entertained each other. Indeed Ron had his whole family there (ALL alive and well); we welcomed them all.

At this meeting we had visitors from England who will take back a rather interesting view of Australians I'm sure. **Keith Lethbridge, Peter Capp, Barry Higgins** and **Connie Herbert** regaled our visitors with poems and tall tales of rough bush characters from strangely named places like Meekatharra, Wongan Hills, Ironbark, Wagin, Mt Augustus and Elsewhere. Judging by our overseas visitors' response it certainly was a memorable night for them. Through their friends, I wish them Bon Voyage back to UK. I do hope they don't think we have a "Lousy Attitude"

Themes inadvertently crept into the proceedings once again. I enjoy discovering these anew each month. This month it was body parts again. Male "dangly bits" and "behinds" being badly mishandled were featured when **Jeff Swain, Rod Lee, David Sears** and **Stinger Nettleton** took the podium. Perhaps it was as a male counter attack to **Kerry Lee's** mammogram poem. (I'm not taking sides here, I feel as sorry for Rod's mechanic as I do for Kerry's ordeal.) How's that for diplomacy? Besides I hate to split up a husband and wife team.

Whatever the reasons for this theme, we will need to be careful not to present "gratuitous nudity" as they say in the movies, but for 'arts' sake. The results of *this* meeting were certainly original and hilariously funny. Sometimes however, I do wonder, whether we can truly class our evenings as *family gatherings*. I have received some verbal comment about this from some of our members. Could this be a discussion point in "Letters to the Editor"?

Man's best friend, the drover's dog did not escape the body parts theme, when **Kel Watkins** and **Rusty Christensen** took the floor. I felt *equally* sorry for poor old "Razzle" and "Blue", the subjects of two very different, equally convoluted and exquisitely funny tales. You really have to be there, live, to get the full impact of these tales. Indeed, if laughter is the best medicine, then attending the Come All Ye's is the cheapest preventative medicine I've ever encountered.

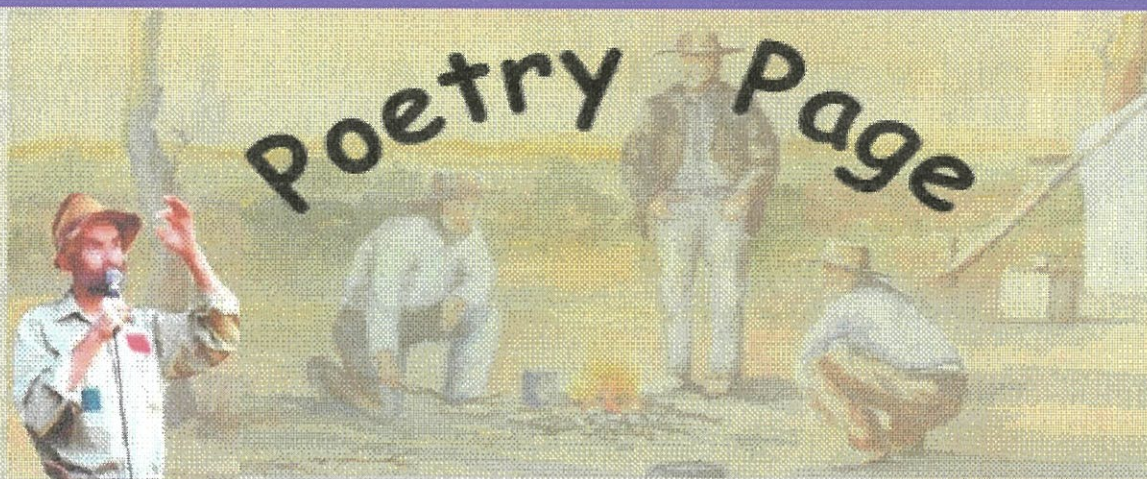
Thinking of medicine, I was glad to see **John Hayes** return after an 18 months absence due to illness. Thanks to "The Mobile Phone" and "The Quiet Life" John is here with us getting the best medicine for recovery. Difficult times must also be mentioned in poetry as in real life. **Frank Harrison** recited a serious poem dealing with loss, as did John. In real life, I hope **Joan Strange** from Meridin, at present in Kalgoorlie Hospital, recovers equally well. Your friends in poetry send their prayers and best wishes to you for a full recovery.

This brings me to **Jean Ritchie** who recited Joan' Strange's "Salt Water Widow". She was one of the many lady performers on the night, a very unusual occurrence. Jean was in good company with 'sisters', **Connie** and **Kerry**, and was joined by **Beth Scott** with a timely Father's Day and family message. **Trish Matthews** contributed a sentimental, clean, romantic poem, while **Tess Stubbs**, who is definitely not 'arsenic and old lacey', turned into quite a vamp in front of our very eyes. I finally also took the plunge in such supportive feminist company to make a debut last night with some animal poems. It wasn't such an ordeal after all!

**Tess Stubbs** will show an entirely new side of herself next issue, when she wows us on stage and page as she takes over this column, while Geoff and I are away. Before signing-off for two issues, I must not forget my own resident poet, **Geoff Bebb**, who came up with his own unique composition. I do hope he gets "Cleared Through Customs" at Heathrow next week, with fewer problems than his poem suggests. Thank you one and all for a wonderful night.

Cheers from Michelle Sorrell





### COBBER'S TALKING DOG

There are many good yarns on a dusty track,  
 And all of them can't be true,  
 But I've spent years in the great out-back,  
 And can verify quite a few.  
 I once sat down on a crocodile,  
 In mistake for a fallen log;  
 I spent two years with a camel team;  
 I've mustered bullocks and skinned 'em clean,  
 But the most remarkable thing I've seen,  
 Was a genuine, talking dog.

"Hey, can't you read?" the barman said.  
 "No dogs allowed in here!"  
 But Cobber just grinned and shook his head,  
 As he ordered a jug of beer.  
 "This aren't no ordinary, pot lickin' mutt,  
 "What's developed a taste for grog.  
 "That's canine royalty there, y'know;  
 "The star of many a country show  
 "From Badgingarra to Bendigo:  
 "The original talking dog!"

The barman was an agreeable bloke,  
 With a liberal point of view.  
 "I'll play along with yer rat bag joke,  
 "But how can y' prove it's true?  
 "I know there's a horse that can count to three,  
 "And I've witnessed a dancing frog.  
 "I've heard of a boxing kangaroo,  
 "A billy-goat playing the didgeridoo,  
 "And a snake what swallows a billiard cue,  
 "But never a talking dog!"

"I'll tell yer what; we'll give him a try.  
 "You can stay, on the one condition.  
 "If your smart Alec dog can identify  
 "This classical rendition."  
 He lifted a record from the shelf,  
 And a needle from the jar,  
 And while Cobber scratched his receding hair,  
 And settled back on his rickety chair,  
 Sweet, classical music filled the air,  
 And wafted through the bar.

The magical, lilting melody  
 Of Chopin's Polonaise.  
 The old dog listened diligently,  
 And his eyes began to glaze,  
 And Cobber sipped from his pewter cup,  
 Just as happy as any lark,  
 While every customer turned around,  
 With eyes transfixed on holy ground,  
 To face that wise, inscrutable hound,  
 And Cobber's dog said "Bark!"

"Get out of here!" the barman roared,  
 "And remove that mongrel, too.  
 "It's plain to see he's a total fraud,  
 "And the same applies to you."  
 So Cobber adjourned outside the pub,  
 In misery and disgrace,  
 Then, like a lovable, lop-eared pup,  
 Clutching his master's pewter cup,  
 The faithful animal lumbered up,  
 And licked his whiskery face.

He paused to scratch a determined flea,  
 Then rolled back a mournful eye.  
 "I'm sorry, Cobber old mate," said he,  
 "But I gave it a dinkum try.  
 "I'm not that much of a classical dog,  
 "So I possibly missed the mark.  
 "I could name each one of Tchaikovsky's songs,  
 "And most Rachmaninov's sing alongs;  
 "With Handel or Mozart I'm rarely wrong,  
 "But ... I could have sworn that was Bach!"

So life rolls on, in the great out-back,  
 According to yarn and rhyme,  
 And those of us still on the dusty track  
 Are pretty well past our prime.  
 A lot of good mates have gone to rest,  
 Where the creeks run high with grog,  
 And those few hardy remaining men,  
 Regret that we'll never see again,  
 That fine example of man's best friend:  
 The incredible talking dog.



## The Potted and Abridged History of Kel Watkins

1950	Sprouted in the wheat belt, hatched under a rock in the hot sun
1950-57	Weedy, insignificant, somewhat poorly, didn't know a ballad from a grapefruit
1955-62	Mukinbudin Primary School, shy, skinny, long eyelashes
1963-67	Guildford Grammar School, Chapel eight times a week but was not saved, became even more shy
1967-71	Apprentice mechanic in Kojonup, discovered girls, didn't know what to do with them, (but tried) still shy
1971-73	Transplanted to Perth, began to wilt
1974-78	Transplanted to Mukinbudin and opened Holden Dealership
1978-86	<p>Back to Perth. Discovered folk music and folk clubs. Eventually found "The Fire at Ross' Farm" and memorised that and 75 other ballads. Began to write his own ballads. Blossomed. Began a career as a balladeer and went through several metamorphoses from there to poet, storyteller, yarn spinner, tall storyteller, comedian and now has a resulting identity crisis! Wrote four books, recorded a cassette, and in 5 trips around the world took news of Elsewhere and Merv and the Missus to all and sundry.</p> <p>Traveled the USA, Canada, UK, Europe and Asia dropping seeds of Australiana poetry, ballad and yarn spinning. From a base in Adelaide traveled Australia and performed in all States, all State festivals, radio and television and generally had a 'beaut' time until lack of nurturing caused severe nutrient deficiency. Pruned. Burned out.</p>
1986-92	Reincarnated as a Futures Commodities Broker, just for something different - or was it? Ended up in Melbourne for 18 months (well, we all make mistakes) and it was either go onto Prosac or go home to WA
1993-	Came home to WA. Now performs occasionally when lured out by chequebook waving enthusiasts, has a website <a href="http://www.eastman.com.au/kel">www.eastman.com.au/kel</a> , has a CD of "Yarns from Here, There and Elsewhere", enjoys getting to the Raffles whenever he can. Was featured on Australian Story and won the Australian Yarn Spinning Challenge in 1996 and 1997.

### The Olympic Torch

Now I've been around the world a bit  
Crossed our country many times  
I've merged with other cultures  
And survived their different climes.

I've seen the Coronation  
And those luscious tropic isles  
Rubbed noses with the Eskimos  
And shared their friendly smiles.

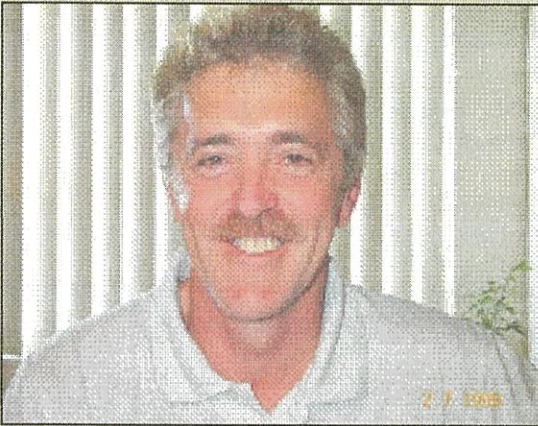
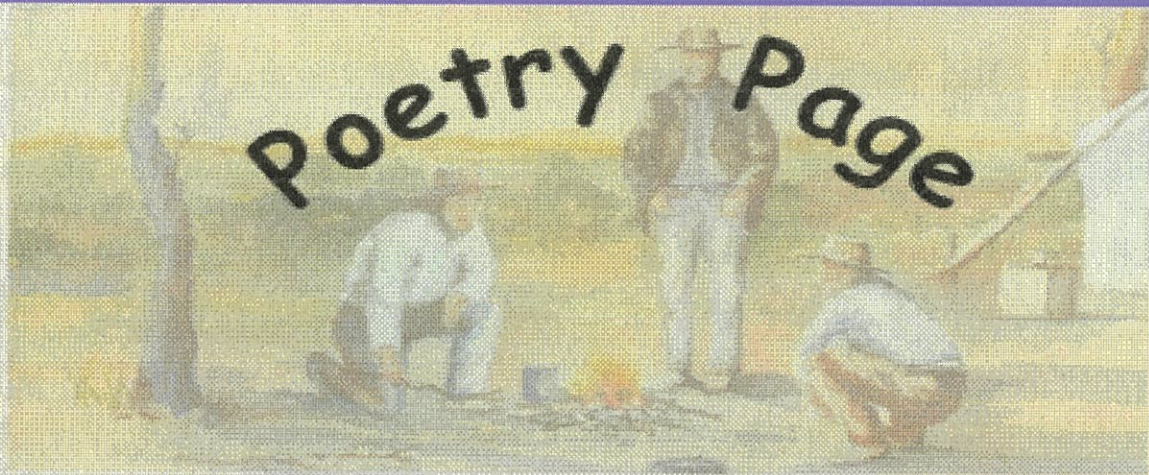
But this morning proved the best of all  
Though the wind blew with a bite  
When I held it high along the way  
And made sure I got it right.

Now I'm quite patriotic  
And share Australia's pride  
But I never thought I'd feel the thrill  
That I felt deep inside

So there's one time I'll remember  
When I'm rocking on my porch  
This day in the year two thousand  
When I carried the Olympic torch.

© Beth Scott  
7<sup>th</sup> July 2000





## After Harvest

©Kel Watkins 1980

She sat facing the fire, knees drawn together and the mallee root coals glowed fiercely with heat  
 A wisp of grey hair hung over her face and a hand-crocheted rug encompassed her feet.  
 She was reading from something that lay on her lap, something that troubled, reflecting her face  
 Then I saw that damned book from the glow of the fire. That book of dress fashions, all satins and lace

The page danced with shadows from the tilly and fire but I remembered the colours as being all bright  
 Those pictures of splendour, of townfolk and wealthy were eons away from our shanty that night  
 Pictures of ladies with manicured nails and smiles of red lipstick and fashion-waved hair  
 Pictures of people, who knew not the trials of living like her, gazed back at her stare.

The tear rolled freely, unashamed down her cheek as she fingered the cotton of her faded old dress  
 Her nails were broken and cut to the quick, there was no red on her lips, no life in her tress  
 Her hands showed the toils of a wheat-cocky's wife, of ploughing and sowing and harvesting grain.  
 She stared at the fashions, one last envied look and placed the thumbled book on the shelf once again.

"They are rather nice" she said with a smile, but the smile was grey. It never reached her eyes  
 "I'll have one next year, if the harvest goes well". But she knew she was dreaming, a cloud in the skies.  
 "Still, I guess I could dye this old dress again, what use are bright colours? They just fade away"  
 She wiped off her tears and we reached and joined hands and stared at the coals. There was nothing to say.

**See Page 5 for Kel's Background**



## Committee Contacts Year 2000 – 2001

Name	Position	Postal Address	Phone	Email
Peter Nettleton	President	46 Coolbellup Avenue, COOLBELLUP WA 6163	9314 1313	stinger@iinet.net.au
Lorelie Tacoma	Vice-President	16 Gratwick Terrace, MURDOCH WA 6150		
Rusty Christensen	Past-President	51 Coogee Road, ARDROSS WA 6153	9364 4491	
Trevor Cooksley	Past-Treasurer	PO Box 679, SOUTH PERTH WA 6151	9474 2344	
Michelle Sorrell	Secretary	Unit 1, 8 Hill St, SOUTH PERTH 6151	9367 4963	mdsorrell@hotmail.com
Geoff Bebb	Treasurer/Editor	Unit 1, 8 Hill St, SOUTH PERTH 6151	9367 4963	geoff@surpac.com
Phyllis Tobin	Committee	8 Fionn Court, ARDROSS 6153	9364 4323	
Kay Stehn	Committee	5 Bell Court, BAYONET HEAD WA 6330	9844 1656	swagmail@telstra.easymail.com.au
Joan Macneall	Committee	23 Streatham Street, BECKENHAM WA 6107	9451 6008	
Barry Higgins	Committee	140 Bernard Road, CARABOODA WA 6033	9407 5311	

### Coming Events

#### Spring in the Valley – October 14-15<sup>th</sup>

Held throughout the Swan valley at different venues, wineries, restaurants and art galleries. Our Bush Poets will be performing at Whiteman's Abroad Restaurant in Guildford. Contact **Peter Nettleton** if you wish to participate.

#### Proposed Social Night at The Raffles 27<sup>th</sup> October

Joan Macneall has organised a social get-together of members outside of the regular Come All Ye, so that we may get to know each other better. The Raffles management has agreed to open the bar in Riverview Room for us for the occasion and there are two restaurants open within the complex

The evening will cost \$3 per head for Members \$5 per head for Non Members **Please contact Joan on 9451 6008 ASAP to confirm your interest.**

#### The Royal Perth Agricultural Show – 30<sup>th</sup> Sept – 8<sup>th</sup> Oct

The WA Bush Poets are going to perform at the Royal Show at a special Poet's breakfast on 4<sup>th</sup> October. The breakfast will be held in a marquee in the Elder's Show ring, complete with Bales of Hay and a Folk Band. It is the Agricultural Committee's intention to make this an annual event with a competition for Bush Poets – similar to our own Australia Day event. **Peter Nettleton** is coordinating the event this year, so contact him if you wish to be involved.

#### Australia Day Challenge at Wireless Hill 26<sup>th</sup> January 2001

We are seeking a Member who would like to coordinate this function – arguably the most important function on our calendar. The coordinator is not the person who does all the work, but rather the one who delegates the work and supervises it all so that it comes together on the day. We have written guidelines that can be used to lighten the load. Please contact **Peter Nettleton** if you would like to volunteer.

### Advertising

\$5.00 for members \$10.00 for Non-Members

**Camper Van Mazda E1800**  
**1983**  
**\$2500**  
**Fully fitted out pop-top**  
**Good motor, body needs attention**  
  
**Contact: Peter Nettleton**  
**Ph: 9314 1313**

**POETS REQUIRED FOR BOYUP BROOK FEB 2001**

SAT FEB 17 at Hotel Beer Garden 9am – 1pm,  
relaxed morning of reciting

SUN FEB 18 at the Town Oval 7:30am – 9:30am  
Poets Breakfast

\$400 to be divided amongst participants  
Organizer Brian Gale Margaret River 9757 2431

**The Members of the Editorial Sub-Committee  
Would like to thank all those,  
who contributed to this Edition of The Newsletter.**

**Without their support and enthusiasm,  
a Newsletter like this would not be possible.**

**Many Thanks**

**Geoff Bebb - Editor**

### **Calendar of Events for Australian Bush Poets Association,**

In June 2000, we joined the Australian Bush Poets Association, a.k.a. ABPA, so as to keep in touch with events that are happening in other parts of Australia. Here is a brief calendar of their events to the end of October 2000. We will keep this updated so that if you are interested you may enter their competitions or just attend.

Sept 29 – Oct2	<b>Cooree Festival</b> Gilgandra NSW. Phone Visitor Centre 02 6847 2045
Oct 7-8	<b>Australian Camp Oven Festival</b> MillMerran
Oct 28	<b>Dorrigo Mountain Top Poets Spring Festival Bush Poetry.</b> Ph Murray 02 6657 2139
Oct 31	Closing Date Dubbo Outback Writer's Centre Library Competition. PO Box 2994 Dubbo NSW 2830
Nov 5	<b>Land of the Beardies Festival,</b> Glen Innes, NSW 7:30am Town Hall Poets Breakfast and Performance Competition
Nov 25	<b>South Bank Poets Mini Competition.</b> 1pm Board Walk Theatre. Ph Wally or Mary Finch 07 3886 0747
Nov 30	Closing Date for The Blackened Billy Verse Competition for Written Australian Bush Verse.

#### **Return Address**

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