

When I looked through my Swagmail to put this newsletter together, there was no poem. Then at the death-knock this sobering reminiscence arrived by fax 9844 1656 with a note from Kel "Here's an old one if you have space in the newsletter." Thank you, Kel. I think a lot of hearts will be touched.

Ed.

AFTER HARVEST

She sat facing the fire, knees drawn together
 And the mallee-root coals glowed fiercely with heat.
 A wisp of gray 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 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.
 The hands showed the toils of a wheat cocky's life
 Of ploughing and sowing and harvesting grain.
 She stared at the fashions, one last envied look
 Then placed the book on the shelf once again.

*They are rather nice, she said with a smile.
 But the smile was gray and 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 sky.
 I guess I could dye my old dress again
 Still, what use are bright colours? They just fade away.
 She wiped off the tears, we reached and joined hands
 And stared at the coals – there was nothing to say.*

© Kel Watkins

*(after remembering seeing his mother pouring over the Boan's catalogue)***DROPPINGS FROM THE BOSS COCKY**

In an idyllic setting at the botanical gardens at 7.30 on Sunday morning July 19th, the Derby Country Music Club, as part of their segment of the annual Boab festival, staged a memorable FIRST Bush Poets' Breakfast. The capacity crowd of over 100 were treated not only to a hearty breakfast prepared by cheery, willing helpers, but a feast of Australian verse from the wandering ambassador of the art, South Australian based Bob Magor.

Joining Bob was our own exponent extraordinaire Keith Lethbridge, some local and visiting performers and Yours Truly (suffering from the now unusual effects of a hangover.) It was great to have the support of a top-liner in Bob Magor, also our mate 'Cobber' Lethbridge who with wife Maricor and the four billy lids travelling in an ailing vehicle, made it into Derby on their way home from Kunnunurra after visiting Keith's father and brother in that Kimberley wonderland.

A pat on the back is well earned by Cheryle Holmes, chairman of the Derby Country Music Club for her foresight of having the idea of a poets' breakfast and also for her energy in getting Bob Magor there, organizing the event, performing and arranging accommodation for the various blow-ins. I am sure the Lethbridge children have grown centimetres after camping in the horse paddock. The Happy Hours at the caravan park will not be the same after the passing poets put on four impromptu shows throughout the week, the last two to capacity crowds of over 200 with standing room only after the word got out. It was good to see (and hear) our mate Bill McAtee who is working in Derby on the School of the Air until the end of the year.

Once again "Congratulations Cheryle" and if I am an judge (and there are those who would disagree), I would suggest that the Poets' Breakfast at the Boab Festival will be on again next year, so when making your northern travel plans for next winter, remember "Derby will be fine in '99!"

The Boss Cocky

A Rose by any other Name:

A man of many aliases, 'The Boss Cocky', K.J. 'Rusty' Christensen our Chairman, is in fact the President of the WA Bush Poets & Yarnspinners Assn. He's been known as Rusty since Adam was a boy, he's been The Boss Cocky since the bush poets and yarnspinners of Western Australia turned to him as leader. He's been the Chairman of the Association since he stated that the title President sounded too presidential for him. The speech that K.J. Christensen presented as President of the WA Bush Poets & Yarnspinners Association Inc. at the A.G.M. 98 may be read on page 2 of this newsletter.

INTRODUCING THE NEW

WA Bush Poets & Yarnspinners

1998-99 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairman: Rusty Christensen

Vice President: Peter Nettleton

Treasure: Trevor Cooksley

Secretary: Lorelie Tacoma

NEW COMMITTEE

Jeff Swain

Joan McNeill

Kay Stehn

John Hayes

Anne Hayes

Ron Evans

Hector Crawford

The new committee, elected at the A.G.M. in July, at its **first meeting on 13th August**, will consider the possibility of holding workshops for people who would like to learn the skills required to encourage school children to write poems and stories.

Another opportunity is a workshop for teachers to assist them to introduce poetry writing to children.

A competition on bush poetry amongst schoolchildren has also been suggested.

SENDING SMOKE SIGNALS OO OOO O

Remember Bob Jardine's request for more of "Down at Tumba bloody Rumba shoot'n' Kanga bloody Roos" Well, the runner just got here with the news "Its from the SONGS OF A SOUR DOUGH". Now, does anybody have access to that book? Bob's phone number is 9582 1375 if you can help him.

Julie Matheson of North Perth is interested in other members' views of the book "Johnny Come Lately" and the yarns it tells about life of an Australian Character. And then, what was *really* meant by that term "Johnny Come Lately?" If you know, write to the Secretary Lorelie Tacoma, 16 Gratwick Tce, Murdoch, 6150, or phone her on 9310 1500. Lorelie will let Julie know, and I'll publish your response. We'd all like to know what you think. *Ed.*

Cobber's Trek to the Boab Festival

Had a long and delightful telephone conversation with Keith 'Cobber' Lethbridge last Thursday. Just back from a few weeks on the road with his family to show the children the northwest towns of his past. Keith said the children were beginning to question his yarns about days of his youth and what he did up north, so he combined a family pilgrimage with the Poet's Breakfast at the Boab Festival in Derby. He was able to meet a grown son at Newman, and caught up with his own father who lives somewhere out bush in the Kimberleys.

I was told the Poet's Breakfast on Sunday 19th July in Derby was very well attended - about 80 or so folks - in the Botanical Gardens opposite the Shire Office. Keith said it was a beautiful setting, full of ferns and palms and other wonderful things. Something like a dozen performers, Keith recalls several locals, someone from Queensland, a lady from our own wheat-belt, Rusty, himself and Bob Magor. All performances were quite good and the morning was very good value. Cheryl Homes as M.C. kept things rolling and there was a little bit of country music. Keith played the button accordion for an intro and was accompanied by two daughters; one on the larger-phone and the other played the spoons.

The outcome of these frolics is that the Poet's Breakfast will no doubt remain a feature of the Boab Festival and it has stimulated a group of locals to become active poets and performers. Residing up there, Geoff Hendricks, of Bronze Swagman fame, a writer of songs and verse with bush subject matter who has been recited often by bush poets 'over East' is enthusiastic about gathering the troupes, and Rusty handed out lots of subscription slips hoping to enlist new members. Bob Magor was generous in sharing 'professional know-how' and audiences appreciated poetry of all flavours, not requiring poets to select recitals to suit the mood of the crowd. All in all, bush poetry performances were given a very good reception and were in demand at impromptu performances at the caravan park.

He had a wonderful time up there, Keith tells me. He renewed friendships made in Queensland last year when he performed at Winton. An enthusiastic follower even had him signing a hat. Keith was a bit non-plussed when he saw it was already signed by "eh, real bush poets, and that fellow that does the music, you know, Williamson." Bob McAtee was sighted with his brother, but did not perform at the Poets' Breakfast because of a commitment involving his wife and an aeroplane. Keith managed to keep Rusty in line (at least until his own bedtime; what Rusty did then he takes no responsibility for.) Bob and Beryl Magor with Bill and his brother, Rusty, and Keith and Co. shared a lovely evening by camp-fire in Cheryl Holmes' horse paddock - "disputed land" Keith said it was (is there a verse here?) Rusty flew home, the Magors set off in their caravan and Keith and his family returned in their Toyota Lite Ace. Keith sold a few books - sufficient to get car repairs to get home, slowly. Good weather followed them, and six poems have already emerged from the trek. Keith is well on his way to his fourth book, thanks to this break in the routine of earning a living.

Kay Stehn, Albany

Donnelly River Retreat Weekend

Amongst the busy months of winter, a free weekend was finally found to enjoy a weekend at Donnelly River Village. Don and I, with six other friends took advantage of this opportunity to have a longer than usual catch up with friends, and visit somewhere we had not been before. So after heading off around 9 am Friday morning we eventually arrived at Donnelly 5 pm that night. (6 hours travelling, but lots of stops for chats, drinks and eats, map analysis and the never-ending loo stops!) As always it was fun to travel in the same vehicle and in convoy. So we all survived the long trek. We were warmly welcomed by the owners at their well-stocked and homely looking village shop.

The sight of old forest cabins hidden amongst hundreds of huge karri and red gum trees was quite breath taking, especially for us more accustomed to the flatter and barer wheatbelt! Our cabin was more than adequate with nice soft beds, practical and well equipped bathroom and kitchen (Kitchen Chris was quite at home!!) And of course the essential comfy sofa and big log fire.

Draining the good old fire starter, diesel, from the vehicles, and piling wood at the back door to keep it dry meant we could keep our fire burning nicely. The heavy soaking Donnelly downpours and the chilly outside air suited our idea of just sitting inside, talking, drinking, eating and card playing. All of which created a lot of laughter and frivolity. And YES I took up the warmest place near the fire and took our friends through their first hearing of bush poetry. Sleeping in a deserted log cabin with a monster appearing seemed the appropriate theme, but seeing their looks of amusement on their faces, I don't think I scared them too much that they would shiver with fear in their beds that night (then again port, sherry, scotch, muscat helped the slumber!)

We enjoyed wandering through the village including the interesting old timber mill, and the large dam being restored. Bush walking amongst the forest growth was enchanting with different bushes, wildlife and birdlife. That kookaburra bird does laugh at the most opportune or inopportune times doesn't it? (Depending who is being laughed at!)

Tackling the fitness/survival course of ropes, swings, tyres, wires, logs and drums was a challenge not to be missed. But those watching us trying to prove our youth, used more calories and skills in controlling their laughter. As always, it is easier said than done! But with all our exploits on a very activity filled Saturday no injuries were incurred.

Donnelly River is an exciting and picturesque spot and we would encourage everyone to try and join in the weekend on the 19th of September when the Association of Poets and Yarnspinners has a get-together there.

Unfortunately for me that weekend clashes with a local wedding that our small recorder group has been asked to recite at. (This is as nerve racking as poetry reciting – why do I do it to myself?) However we have your Association to thank for giving us the opportunity to enjoy Donnelly River and we wish you all the best for a wonderful weekend in September. Chris Sadler, Wongan Hills

DONNELLY RIVER IN THE SPRING 19/21ST SEPTEMBER

THE DONNELLY RIVER WEEKEND IS ON.

We have lots of starters; we need more to make it *more* fun. We need to confirm acceptance with the Village by 14th August, but of course, once confirmed we will accept others. There are plenty of activities for children, so bring them along, also lots of friends who will enjoy the performances and they might even become members. Chris Sadler paints a clear picture of the delights of Donnelly River Village. If you have never tried to tell a yarn or a poem before, this is your opportunity to try out and to get some tips from the more experienced. You may read material if you wish or even sing us a song! So, if you have had difficulty getting your party together, or if you have any queries, just phone the Secretary, Lorelie Tacoma, on 9310 1500 or send in your name and a deposit pronto.

COMING EVENTS

PATERSON, LAWSON & ANON (OF THE ERA)

RAFFLES HOTEL, CANNING BRIDGE - UPSTAIRS IN THE RIVERVIEW ROOM

Friday 7th August 7.30 pm.

Master of Ceremonies for the night – Kel Watkins

Everyone is welcome to participate.

There is no competition, just enjoyment. Pieces may be read or recited.

Bar will be open – Bring your own nibbles.

\$2.00 admission

BIG SMOKE & BUSH BARDS (or, ANYTHING GOES)

RAFFLES HOTEL, CANNING BRIDGE - UPSTAIRS IN THE RIVERVIEW ROOM

Friday 4th September 7.30 pm

Tales and poems about anything that takes your fancy.

Do you have a good yarn or poem from Grandfather's day?

Have *you* written any poetry lately?

Read an anecdote from the past -- or the present.

Test your skills at spinning a tall yarn before a supportive audience.

Bar will be open – Bring your own nibbles.

\$2.00 admission

DONNELLY RIVER IN THE SPRING (page five this issue & page one of the June News)

Weekend of September 19th, 20th and 21st September, 1998

Bookings Lorelie Tacoma, 16 Gratwick Terrace, Murdoch 6150

WONGAN HILLS WALK-ABOUT 17/10

There are whispers in the air that something is planned for Wongan Hills

Keith 'Cobber' Lethbridge is going walk-about to get there,

possibly early in October. Could 'Kitchen Chris' Sadler be in on this?

Contact Keith Lethbridge if you want to get involved, phone 9346 5208

THE THREE HEATS FOR THE AUSTRALIA DAY CHALLENGE

RAFFLES HOTEL, CANNING BRIDGE - UPSTAIRS IN THE RIVERVIEW ROOM

Friday 2nd October Friday 6th November Friday 4th December

ALL FINANCIAL MEMBERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO PERFORM

Contestants may perform at one or all of the Heats

Finalists from each category will go forward to the Finals on Australia Day at Wireless Hill Park

You could be the Champion Yarnspinner or the Champion Bush Poet for 1999

START COMPOSING AND PRACTISING NOW