

April 97

# WA BUSH POETS & YARN-SPINNERS

Dear Fellow Eccentrics

The Waltzing Matilda Bush Poetry Awards were held in Winton - outback Queensland - over the weekend of 24-27 April 1997 and as you are aware, the winner of our Australia Day event, Keith Lethbridge, went across courtesy of QANTAS and the Rotary Club of Melville. As Keith is a "true blue sandgroper" and valuable property to the Bush Poets movement, yours truly (Rusty C) made the journey with him.

Although Keith was not successful in the awards, despite performing admirably and was in the top three or four finalists who I believe were only separated by mere points out of an aggregate of 1000 plus, he was an excellent ambassador for Bush Poetry in Western Australia. The winner of the male open was Mark Kleinschmidt, with the winner of the female open being Helen Avery, both from Longreach (Longreach is the home of some excellent poets).

It was not until later during campfires and other impromptu events that

Keith's talent and versatility was fully appreciated by the attendant Bush Poetry fraternity, but such is the nature of these events. The experience and knowledge gained will be invaluable for putting faces to names when following up contacts made over the period of both Winton and the National Outback

Performing Arts at Longreach over the following weekend of 2-4 May 1997.

We met some fine writers of bush verse, reciters, yarn spinners, buskers, business folk and even a fair dinkum swaggie who makes a living from busking poetry and posing for tourist photos. Yes, Bush Poetry is flourishing in that other country across the Nullarbor, but even so, our own Bush Poets here in the West do not pale by comparison and we have the potential to emulate anything that is done in the East.

One of the areas that is imperative for us to gain some influence in is the children, in Queensland. They have gone a long way in a short time in this direction, but it cannot be left up to the individual

teachers, except in isolated cases, it requires consistent input from poets and other enthusiasts willing to volunteer a little time and effort, it would be great if we had a "Carmel Randle" here, but then she is but one of a rare breed. A youth or schools group initially would be a step in the right direction.

As Dagworth Station, where Paterson wrote about the down-on-his-luck swaggie is on the track out from Winton and the event is named after it, there was an emphasis on traditional poetry, mostly "AB's" works, but Lawson, Ogilvie and others had an airing. We felt that there is a place for this type of performance along with the contemporary stuff that dominates our activities.

A lot of the Bush Poets we met were conscious of rhyme, meter and construction of their verse, this is not saying that it is better than ours, but it was a constant topic of conversation along with rhyming patterns, delivery techniques and interesting words and phrases. Subject matter was another feature and as it was "out West" the drovers, farmers, sheep, horses, dogs called "Blue"

(not Rusty), lost children and patriotism was used to good effect. Written competitions are a popular form of expression for the more serious writers who don't see themselves as extrovert performers.

It was interesting that they had separate sections for lady performers. This obviously works, as not only were there numbers in the section, but the standard was good and even.

Clubs or groups are widespread and there is a healthy rivalry between them. Representatives came from Bundaberg, Pine River (near Brisbane), Goondiwindi and even Sydney to compete and it is also an area that we must look at in order to spread the good news of our Australian cultural revival.

Most of the poets have books of their verse and are into exploiting their skills either through entertaining, guest speaker spots, busking, or will perform at the drop of a hat. They may perform free of charge, but they always sell books.

Yarn spinning is not treated as a separate entity, but among the Bush Poets (who are natural yarn spinners, who put their yarns to rhyme) were some very

good exponents of this. Bill Hay, an 80 year young bush poet, liar and larrikin was a wonderful example of poet/yarn spinner and is a legend among the Bush Poets on the East coast. Bob Magor, a farmer from Myponga, South Australia, is another excellent poet who expresses his humour in rhyming verse. Bob is expecting to be in Perth some time in September, so watch this space.

To sum up, our pilgrimage to Western Queensland apart from being an enjoyable trip (despite the twenty hour bus trip, both out to and back from Winton was most interesting and informative. It will be of great benefit to our young association in forging links with like persons on the East coast and even beyond and once again, on Keith's behalf, I thank all the folk including Hans Merks and Rod Price (Western Australians Sportsmens Club, Inglewood) for making his trip possible, he did you proud.

So now we must focus our eyes on the ball here in our own bush poetry world. As we are now an incorporated body, we are compelled by law to hold elections and voting must be held for all positions including office

bearers, ie. President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, plus seven Committee members. The accompanying nomination forms must be with Secretary (extraordinaire) Lorelie by 14 June 1997 and the results will be announced at the AGM, which has been scheduled for 7.30 pm (sharp) on 11 July 1997 at the Raffles Hotel, Canning Bridge (the Bulldusters will beat the Bulldozers), PLEASE MAKE THE EFFORT TO BE THERE! At the conclusion of the meeting, members will be given the opportunity to express themselves and you know what that means?

Other items to be discussed are:

- ◆ Competitive/Non competitive events.
- ◆ Annual Fees (suggested to start at \$10 per member).
- ◆ Students or youth involvement.
- ◆ New Groups.
- ◆ Appointment of Bookings Officer.
- ◆ Any other General Business.

*Rusty C  
Chairman*

**STOP PRESS** - Discussions with interested parties have commenced with a view to forming a group of Bush Poets Yarn Spinners in the Armadale area - further details later