



JABBER JOURNAL

Grafton U3A Inc. (University of the Third Age)
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"Sharing our knowledge, skills and experience in a friendly convivial way"

DECEMBER 2015

NOVEMBER JABBERFEST WRAP



Over 100 members attended the November Jabberfest and appreciated the variety of speakers and their topics. Vice-President David Abrahams apologised on behalf of President Maree for her absence – welcomed new members and spoke about this being the final Jabberfest for 2015 as 7 December would be our Christmas luncheon. With the winding down of activities for the year there were no special announcements and the Chairman introduced the first speaker, Lesley Apps - Community Editor of the Daily Examiner who spoke about the dedicated email address community@dailyexaminer.com.au where we can send latest news and photos which will be featured in "Local Life" section of the paper's website and possibly the print edition. A more efficient method to get

our stories across is to access the "Your Story" option within the "Local Life" and upload the media release for almost immediate publication (subject to checking) Lesley was thanked for her interesting address and presented with a U3A memento.

David Abrahams then introduced Frank Heppell with a few words about the genesis of our Men's Shed – Frank then gave a very interesting talk on the concept, development and achievements of this very remarkable facility which has greatly enriched the lives of the participants, Grafton U3A, our Community and the many organisations who have material benefits to show from its activities. Frank detailed the rather wonderful effort in respect of the rocking horses built and renovated by our expert 'Horseketeers' and spoke about the contribution made to the community celebration of the city Sesquicentenary by building the Rotunda in Pioneer Park. He also spoke of the replica Clock Tower in the Hotel and other high quality items produced by the members. He rounded off his talk with reference to his own Caravan, IOWNER, which has remarkably travelled 33,000 kilometres in 3 years.

The Jabberfest date November 9th was 10 years to the day that the Shed opened its doors and to further mark that occasion he had crafted 2 very special pink cedar jewellery boxes as lucky door prizes – winners Dot Mears and Greg Ryan! A very entertaining and interesting address was well received, with a slide show of many shed activities running in the background on the big screen and Frank was also given a U3A memento.



VOYAGE OF THE GOOD SHIP 'GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY' – NICK & ANN REEVE



Following morning tea and get together, Pat Connolly introduced Nick & Ann Reeve who provided a rather wonderful account of their 12 month journey with their two young sons from England to Australia in 1976-77 in their yacht, "Golden Opportunity". Nick talked about his crew, which consisted of Ann and his two sons (8) and (9), with assistance crossing the English Channel from an experienced skipper. Preparation was all important and getting supplies and packing them away was understandingly difficult but they

finally set off from Plymouth on November 13th 1976 on a two day journey across the channel to Le Havre at which stage the skipper departed and the Reeve family were on their way.

The journey through European canals and rivers was full of adventure with experiences through the massive locks that will take large ships to small locks that required self-service! Moving along the Seine through Paris and reaching



Avignon on the Rhone River offered a different aspect of France and its people. They reached the Mediterranean, celebrated Christmas out of the locks and set sail on Boxing Day, progressing slowly through extreme weather along the coast to Gibraltar where they were to discover why Nick spent a great deal of time manning the pumps. The ship was taking water and needed urgent repairs. The Naval Dockyard came to the assistance of their former Royal Navy member and the ship was lifted from the water where the problem was exposed, fixed and they were on the way again. At this stage, Nick posed the possibility of pressing on or ending the adventure there, an idea that was soon dropped after they sailed from Gibraltar and found some sunshine

when they reached Tenerife in the Canary Islands. There, they had time to draw breath and then set off across the Atlantic. Nick's decision to travel through the Panama Canal rather than the Suez was to pay off with the trade winds across the Atlantic giving them an exciting 25 day crossing – some of the high winds caused a few anxious moments but they all weathered that until sailing into the Caribbean, visiting Barbados and St. Vincent and then the exciting journey through the great canal to the Pacific. They found quite a few other yachts at Panama including one with which they were to become very friendly, striking them at many points across the Pacific and indeed after arriving in Australia. The Pacific crossing was easier and they called at many of the Pacific islands to warm and friendly welcomes, consuming the local delicacies and picking up a supply of fresh coconuts to tide them to the next paradise. Australian landfall was at Coffs Harbour and from there a sail down the coast and through the heads into Sydney Harbour on 7th November 1977

A truly magnificent adventure by a great family – the story accompanied by excellent photographs and enjoyed by the large audience. A small memento from the Men's Shed was presented by David Abrahams who thanked Nick and Ann for their contribution. *David Abrahams*



Monday 7 December South Grafton Services Club. Cost - \$25.00. Tickets available from Carole Cairns 6642 4615 must be purchased in advance. **Tickets will not be available on the day.**



VICE PRESIDENT'S LETTER.... Dear Members



Our President, Maree is indisposed for the time being and we all wish her a speedy recovery to enable her to resume her excellent patronage of our organisation.

As the festive season approaches and activities for this part of the year wind down, I offer a few thoughts about our rather special Grafton U3A; thoughts which I am confident would be supported by our President.

We continue to enjoy the excellent support of our Special Interest Groups and Classes coordinators, who are fundamental to the success of this aspect. Members of your

Committee are all great contributors to the ongoing management of all facets of our organisation and continue to cooperate to the benefit of all. Our Jabberfests continue to attract well over 100 members and the speakers have all contributed to the interest – 2016 will provide continuing and challenging participation.

It is a fact that after the end of each financial year, a certain number of members do not wish to renew and last year was no exception. However, we do attract replacements and it is pleasing to note our numbers increase – we have had several expressions of interest in the last few days and look forward to an even wider involvement.

We look forward to a great Christmas Luncheon with entertainment from our 'Good Vibes' group, resident poet Gladys Anderson, the new 'Ukulele' ensemble, lucky prizes and some special surprises!

On behalf of Maree and the Committee, I wish you all a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year and look forward to seeing you and more in 2016.

David Abrahams



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Below is an excerpt from an email received from Michelle Child the area coordinator for this project.

Hi Everyone

Well, what a great year we have had! 2014 saw 542 shoeboxes out of Grafton folk and this year that increased by exactly 100 to 642!! What a great result and all through the generosity of donors who have a heart for children and to see them receive the Simple Gift of Joy👤👤👤❤️👤👤👤

The shoeboxes were transported by Lindsay Bros last Wednesday and should be at the warehouse in Sydney now & may even be packed into containers and on their way✈️🚚 Again, thank you for being involved this year ... it is so appreciated. May you and your family have a great Christmas.

Warm regards
Michelle



SNIPPETS FROM THE SHED

Members attending the November Jabberfest would have heard Frank Heppell give a talk about the Grafton U3A Men's Shed being formed 10 years to that day.

A summary appears in the report above, however the Shed has (at date of publication) celebrated the occasion with a dinner attended by State Member, Chris Gulaptis, representatives of our Federal Member, Clarence Valley Council and our earlier benefactor Steve Cansdell. Many stories and reminiscences will have been told about this rather remarkable Shed which is arguably one of the best.



After all is said, it takes nous to

receive this



And deliver this



For The Man Who Hated Christmas

By Nancy W Gavin



It's just a small white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past ten years or so. It all began because my husband hated Christmas – oh, not the true meaning of Christmas but the commercial aspects of it – overspending....the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the talcum powder for Grandma – the gifts given in desperation because you could not think of anything else. Knowing he felt his way, I decided

one year to bypass the shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in any unusual way. Our son Kevin, who was twelve that year, was wrestling at the junior school he attended and shortly before Christmas there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue and gold sparkling uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes. As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. And as each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that could not acknowledge defeat. Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly "I just wish one of them could have won" he said. "They have a lot of potential but losing like this could take the fight right out of them." Mike loved kids – all kids - and he knew them having coached little league football, baseball and lacrosse.

That's when the idea for his present came. That afternoon I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes to their team. On Christmas Eve I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year and in succeeding years. For each Christmas, I followed the tradition – one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a donation to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on. The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning and our children, ignoring their new toys, would stand with wide eyed anticipation as their Dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents. As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents but the envelope never lost its allure. The story doesn't end there. You see, we lost Mike last year to dreaded cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree and in the morning it was joined by three more. Each of our children unbeknown to the others, had placed an envelope on the tree for their Dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing to take down the envelope. Mike's spirit like the Christmas spirit will always be with us.

This true story was originally published in the 14 December 1982 issue of American Woman's Day magazine. It was the first placed winner out of thousands of entries in the magazine's "My Most Moving Holiday Tradition" contest in which readers were asked to share their favourite holiday tradition and the story behind it. The story inspired a family from Atlanta Georgia to start the White Envelope Project and Giving 101 a non-profit organisation dedicated to educating youth about the importance of giving.



We note with sadness the passing of U3A members Judith Sherwood and Sharon Walsh. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families at this time.

EDITOR CONTACT / CLOSING DATE

Contributions to the Jabber Journal are welcome. We reserve the right to edit or refuse material submitted for publication.

Closing date for February 2016 edition **Monday 25 January 2016**. Editor: Dennis Kelly thehifields@bigpond.com

I would like to say a special thank you to all contributors to the Journal during 2015. The Journal is very reliant on a constant supply of articles of interest and details of course and interest group activities to keep members informed. I am grateful for the support of the committee, course/interest group leaders, members and others who have provided articles of interest during the year. A special thank you to David Abrahams, Bob Cuming and Peter Smyth for their assistance during the year.