

The Sally White – Diane Barwick Award

The Sally White – Diane Barwick Award of \$1000 is awarded annually to a female Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander tertiary student who is about to start or is already studying at Honours level.

The Award can be used for any purpose.

Candidates are invited to apply in writing at any time for selection in April of the following year.

**Apply to Aboriginal History Inc. PO Box 3827,
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Notes and documents

Elspeth Anne Young 1940–2002 Board member of Aboriginal History 1987–2002

The world has lost an extraordinary woman with the death of Elspeth Young in Britain on 10 August 2002. Her determination despite being in such poor health to get to Britain to say goodbye to her Scottish family and friends characterised her nature. Strong and determined in everything she did, she wore with pride the label 'wee toughie'. She was born during the Battle of Britain and her sister recounts 'it became a family joke that Elspeth, the little fighter, came into the world at that time'.

The strength of mind and body that got her back one last time to Britain characterised everything she did in life. As her colleagues Ritchie Howitt and Gerry Ward (p 85) note, 'When talking about her diagnosis, Elspeth reflected on her life very positively, saying she had fitted so much in, and seen so many places she'd never imagined she

would see, that she should really be about one hundred and fifty!' A lot of this travel was to complete challenging fieldwork as an undergraduate in the Scottish Highlands, as a PhD student in Highlands New Guinea and over the last two decades working with Indigenous people in central and northern Australia, Botswana and Canada.

Elspeth studied geography at Edinburgh University – where her grandfather, father and sister had studied before her. She completed a Masters (Honours) thesis based on research with the remote sheep farming communities of Glen Elg in the west of Scotland. After a stint of school teaching, first in Scotland and then in Trinidad, she took up a research assistant position in geography at the University of



Papua New Guinea in 1971. This was the beginning of a long association with Papua New Guinea. After completing her PhD thesis on *Simbu and New Ireland Migration* she commenced her long and productive work on Indigenous issues in Australia. She played a key role as a Research Fellow in Dr Fred Fisk's landmark project on the 'Aboriginal component in the Australian economy'. In 1981 Elspeth published an influential volume, *Tribal communities in rural areas*. In 1982 she joined the Darwin based Northern Australian Research Unit. Her years in Darwin were extraordinarily productive both for her own publications and the amazing support she gave to so many researchers working in northern Australia.

In 1985 Elspeth took up a position in Canberra at the Australian Defence Force Academy of the University of New South Wales. In 1994 she moved to the Environmental Management and Development program of the National Centre for Development Studies at the Australian National University. During her last seventeen years based in Canberra she excelled as both a teacher and a researcher. I had the very great good fortune of starting my career as an academic geographer in Canberra during this period. While I was never in the same department as Elspeth she was my greatest source of support. She was the most wonderful mentor – unfailingly positive and supportive. I had always known I was not alone in having had her as a key mentor but I have been stunned since her death to find out how many other people regard her in the same light.

For me, and for so many others, she was always there when needed to provide a supporting word or comments on a draft, or to be a referee for a promotion or grant application. Her sharp mind and refreshing willingness to say what she meant made her intellectually incisive and challenging to be near. As one colleague at the celebration of her life held at the Australian National University's Grand Hall last year put it, 'You challenged me in ways and demanded more thinking than anyone I ever met. You cared and gave beyond your ken, you will be missed.'

Far from slowing down in her sixties, Elspeth was full of plans to spend more time in the field and had reduced her administrative load at the university to make such work possible. It was with enormous sadness that I found myself flying off to the Northern Territory the day after she died to work on a project we had developed together. There was however no way I could have stayed in Canberra grieving, for I knew how disappointed she would have been in me if I had not gone ahead with the work we had put so much planning into.

Elspeth lived her life simply, with integrity, enjoyment and humour. She had an extraordinarily wide range of friends in many different circles in Australia and overseas. In Canberra, for example, she was active not only as an academic but also as a community planning activist, a bushwalker and as a singer. On the national and international stages she had equally broad networks – playing a key role with the Australian Antarctic Division, the International Geographic Union and numerous informal networks of scholars and Indigenous people working on Indigenous issues. I had the rare pleasure of attending my first two international conferences with Elspeth and on both occasions was amazed by the breadth of her international friendships and networks.

Elspeth was an inspirational teacher who made a real difference to the lives of so many of her students. Emotional tributes from students from around the world were a highlight of the celebration of her life. As well as this worldwide cohort of former stu-

dents Elspeth leaves behind many other important legacies. These include her contribution to the successful Northern Territory Aboriginal Land Claims to Ti Tree and Mount Allen and her ground breaking research on Indigenous land management issues in Australia: for example, she was the earliest researcher to champion the 'caring for country' concept (see Young 1987). She carried out landmark comparative work on Indigenous land management issues around the world. This work lives on both through the pages of her remarkable 1995 volume *Third World in the first: development and Indigenous peoples* and the ongoing global networks of Indigenous people and academics that she played such a key role in fostering. She provided support for a whole generation of Australian researchers working on Indigenous issues and for Geographers more generally. Howitt and Ward (2003) provide a moving and detailed summary of her contribution to Australian geography. She has contributed a direct and ongoing legacy in an extraordinarily generous bequest of over \$700,000 to support Indigenous students studying at the Australian National University.

Elspeth taught so many of us the power of socially committed research. Her research was never done in an ivory tower – it was always aimed at improving the lives of those she was working with. Elspeth's research focused on capacity building and empowerment of people and communities. It is therefore fitting that so many people feel so empowered from having known her. As one friend put it, 'Elspeth was a person who always gave more to those things in which she was involved than she took. We will all miss her.'

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‘Leave it to me’: an appreciation of Peter John Grimshaw 1932–2003

One man made it possible for *Aboriginal History* to become a reality and that man was Peter John Grimshaw. Bob Reece and I, as self-appointed editors, had spoken and written to most Australian scholars with an interest in Aboriginal history at the time and we received many letters of support and encouragement. We had also formed a committee, the forerunner of the Editorial Board, which first met on 4 September 1975. But how would we be funded? Having been a founding member of *The Journal of Pacific History* I knew that it was necessary to have enough money to pay the first printer’s bill after which the journal would become self-supporting through subscriptions. In the case of *Pacific History* we started with a consultation fee that had been paid to Professor JW Davidson for constitutional advice. While I hoped that the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University would provide an umbrella for *Aboriginal History* I was less sanguine about receiving financial support. I went to see Peter who was then Business Manager for the Joint Schools (Pacific Studies and Social Sciences). To my delight and surprise Peter was enthusiastic about the idea. He seemed to know where he could find the funds. ‘Leave it to me’, he said in his characteristic way. In no time he had won Professor Wang Gungwu, Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies, to his way of thinking and some days later we were summoned to the Director’s Office. An account was opened with \$2000 and we were told we would be supported as an academic committee but the journal was not to be recognised as an official organ of the School. Professor Wang had been involved with a cultural minority journal in Singapore which had been taken over by political activists and, despite our assurances of objectivity, he was closing the door on any formal link. We also received a small grant from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies as it then was.

Some time later, after discussing the matter with Bob Reece and Diane Barwick, who had agreed to be one of the editors, I invited Peter to be our treasurer. Peter not only accepted the role of treasurer but also arranged secretarial support which continued until 1992. He was the principal architect of our constitution when we became incorporated and he performed the dual roles of treasurer and public officer until his death on 2nd March 2003. As a member of the Board Peter’s commitment to education and concern for research opportunities for Australian Indigenous scholars was expressed in his administration of the Stanner Fellowship funding and the bequests for the Sally White – Diane Barwick Awards. For 26 years he regularly attended Board meetings giving sound financial advice and sage counsel. He will be sorely missed.

Peter Grimshaw had a strong feeling for Indigenous causes. His father Colonel JS Grimshaw, MC, was Commissioner of the Royal Papua and New Guinea Constabulary from 1947 to 1954. and Peter spent part of his early life in Papua New Guinea. His great aunt was the prolific Pacific writer Beatrice Grimshaw.

Peter was born in Adelaide on 3 January 1932. Educated at Unley High School he later studied for an Arts degree from the University of Queensland and obtained a Master’s degree in Education (Administration) from the University of New England. While at the Australian National University he continued his historical studies and just before his

death he had completed a manuscript on the history of the Papua New Guinea constabulary.

Through his principal sporting interests, boxing and rugby, Peter had a common bond with many Aboriginal men who excelled in both sports. Peter himself was South Pacific Amateur Heavyweight Boxing Champion in 1953-54 and he was a Rugby League representative player in 1952-54. From 1949 to 1957 Peter served in the Department of Civil Aviation in Papua New Guinea. He also joined the Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles in which he was commissioned. His links with the Australian Army led him to take a special interest in the largely undervalued role of Aboriginal servicemen and together with John Mulvaney he was co-editor of a volume of *Aboriginal History* (Vol 16, 1992) devoted to the subject.

After six years with the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority Peter joined the staff of the Australian National University as Business Manager in 1964 and held that post in different capacities until his retirement in 1997. A founder of the University Credit Union he was active on a number of staff and business committees in the ACT, serving on the University Council in 1976-80. He played a major role in providing excellent working and accommodation facilities for researchers in Port Moresby and Suva and was prominent in setting up the North Australian Research Unit in Darwin. On one of his many inspection visits to the New Guinea Research Unit at Port Moresby he walked up to the lakeside laboratory on Mt Wilhelm (11,500 ft) surprising the resident scientists. He was the recipient of both Australian and Papua New Guinea honours.

As Business Manager Peter earned a reputation for efficient management and solving problems of the moment. One knew that there was a solution when he said 'Leave it to me'. In his funeral address, Professor Gerard Ward, former Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies, gave a typical instance.

I recall, for example, a late evening phone call from University Security. They had taken a frantic phone call from the transit lounge at Singapore airport. Two young Russian scholars, en route to visit the School, were stranded there. Their institution had put them on the plane from Moscow, but without onward bookings and tickets for the Singapore-Sydney leg! And they had no visas for Singapore. They could stay in the terminal for 24 hours but would then be expelled back to Moscow – and their embassy in Singapore was not interested! My solution was a phone call to Peter! By 9 a.m. next morning he had obtained bookings and arranged for tickets to be issued to them in the transit lounge. They duly continued their journey, greatly relieved, and somewhat astounded at what an academic administrator could do from a quarter of the world away.

This was the Peter we had the privilege of knowing on the Board of Aboriginal History. His budgeting was impeccable and no problem was too difficult. With his passing, his family have lost a valued member and *Aboriginal History* and the University an advocate, friend and lynch pin.

Acknowledgments

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‘Tribal loyalties’: reconnecting with the land

A tribute to Mrs Alice Kelly, 1919–2003

On Friday, July 11th, a ritual of great cultural significance was being enacted in the Melbourne Town Hall. Bobby Rose, arguably the greatest exponent of Aussie Rules was being farewelled by some 400 dedicated supporters of the game. A champion in the black and white guernsey of the Collingwood Magpies, his passing enlisted the presence of both local and regional followers of that tribe. And in the best tribal tradition, the stage, complete with every past and present member of Magpie warriors, raised the Town Hall rafters with the rousing chorus of the tribal war cry ‘Good old Collingwood forever’. Rarely outside a grand final have the good (and not so good) citizens of Melbourne witnessed such a passionate expression of tribal solidarity.

On the day before Bobby Rose brought Swanston St to a standstill, another crowd of 400 people had gathered to another funeral. But unlike the Collingwood publicity, this passed without media attention. But like Bobby Rose, the deceased embodied great, even greater tribal traditions.

The funeral was of Mrs Alice Kelly, a great Elder of the Mathi Mathi people who was ritually united with the red soil of the Mathi Mathi lands at Balranald, just a short drive north of the Murray. In her long life (84 years) Alice Kelly had seen the harsh times, the good and many not-so-good times of an Aboriginal person growing up in a community that, in early days at least, was alien and often outrightly hostile to her traditions. From the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, where she saw her father cut his own bark canoe, she was married at 15 years to a young man, Alf Kelly, and became a dedicated wife in Alf’s droving days. That fertile liaison nourished a family of 11 children, the foundation of ‘the Kelly clan’ now numbering no less than 177 direct descendants.

Throughout droughts, family struggles and hard times, Alice Kelly sought and found constant support and companionship with her Aboriginal traditions. She remembered language, observed traditional laws and above all, developed a passionate love of the land to which her people were intimately attached.

In 1969, events took a strange turn, a turn that was to change the lives of both Alice Kelly and myself. In March of that year I brought a group of archaeologists, geologists and soil scientists to inspect a deposit of burnt bones I had located on the shores of then un-named dry lake in western NSW. It was a site of clear archaeological significance. When the late Rhys Jones removed a large carbonate block, out dropped a piece of burnt human mandible. We were dealing with Australia’s then oldest known human burial and the world’s oldest example of human cremation.

Within the next 12 months, we named that place, Lake Mungo. Meanwhile, back in Canberra Dr Alan Thorne at the Australian National University had reconstructed the remains demonstrating the death and cremation burial of a young woman on the shore of the then brim-full lake. Known now as ‘Mungo Lady’ we have ascertained the age of her death and burial 40,000 years ago.

The realisation that people of such antiquity had been living and dying in this now arid landscape startled many Australians, offering new ways of viewing past

changes in both the land and its ancient occupants. But none were more enchanted than the Aboriginal Elders of that region, and foremost amongst them, Mrs Alice Kelly.

Mrs Kelly immediately identified with her ancestral spirits of Lake Mungo. Specifically, she saw a direct and continuous lineage with that young woman who had lived and been nourished by that land, by the very lands that had supported Alice and Alf Kelly with all their people.

The family of Aboriginal continuity knew no fracture. Mungo Lady was brought to life in the heart and mind of Alice Kelly. But science had defiled her by removal of her remains from her ancestral homelands. Alice began a long battle with science to redress these wrongs, to return Mungo Lady's remains to her homeland and to teach science and scientists of the ritual links between body, spirit and land, links that science so often ignores or even denies. As one of many who have been irrevocably touched by Alice Kelly's tireless endeavours, her legacy invites us to share her philosophy with fellow Australians.

It was the strength and integrity of Alice Kelly's Aboriginal traditions that have now brought Indigenous Elders and scientists in the Lake Mungo region to new levels of collaborative interaction. Gone are the embattled stand-offs of a few years ago when Aboriginal people fought for ownership of their own cultural history, protection of sites and especially protection of graves and human remains. It has been a long journey on a sometimes bumpy road. But even more importantly for some of us, that journey has involved another, extending the boundaries of science far beyond those that constrained us in 1969 when Mungo Lady first reappeared after 40,000 years of silence. This involves the connecting links between people, both living and dead, and the wonders of the lands, lands within which we, like our Indigenous cousins, were born and with which we interact throughout our lives. Those connecting links, hard to encapsulate, where language fails us, reside somewhere in the concept of spirituality, of belonging or in some mysterious way, related to our very being. We of the western world have lost something precious.

We too were once tribal, and not just in the Collingwood sense. Who of us can imagine where our ancestors roamed 10,000, let alone 40,000 years ago? For us, in a technological age, dominated by a consumer culture where nature is to be exploited more than nurtured, the challenge of crossing the boundary to explore those links where spirit enjoins land and people in strange harmony remains a largely alien venture. Like those who have experienced the healing powers of Alice Kelly's synthesis of people, land and spirit, the challenge for us all is to venture into those dangerous waters, to preserve and celebrate the natural wonders of this land, to rediscover our own tribal roots. Indeed, it is that tradition exemplified by both Bobby Rose and Alice Kelly and other great inspirational elders that will help lead us into a new enlightened age of understanding people and environment. It is a journey in which the memory of both Alice Kelly and Mungo Lady invites every Australian to explore.

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