



ZONTA
CLUB OF
PERTH INC
MEMBER OF ZONTA INTERNATIONAL
EMPOWERING WOMEN
THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY

in-zert

August 2015

Special Edition

Issue No: 131

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Club Meetings

- o Second Thursday of the month (except January)
- o 6.15pm for 6.45pm
- o St Catherine's College, UWA

Apologies

- o By 12 noon previous Friday
- o zontaperth@gmail.com

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1. A Tribute to Yvonne Burgu

It was with great sadness that the club heard of the sudden death of Yvonne Burgu in a car accident on the Gibb River Road.

First contact

Yvonne first became a friend to the club when 12 members camped with senior Ngarinyin Law women beside the Gibb River Road in 2004 – midway between Kununurra and Derby. Our intermediary was Kathy Charlesworth, a photo-journalist who was good friends with Yvonne and who used to live with the Ngarinyin community for a few months each year. Ngarinyin senior law women, Yvonne, Pansy, Gilgi, Maudie and Lucy taught us what it meant to be 'in country' and together we shared our stories and became friends.

They showed us how to find frogs in the sand, how to use them as bait to catch fish, how to pick bush onions from the river, how to find sugar bag and showed us which trees were used for clapping sticks or didgeridoos, which produced the best smoke for smoking ceremonies and pointed out those that produced the best fruit. It was an amazing experience to be smoked into and out of country and appreciate the Wandjina rock paintings of their ancestors from 40,000 years ago. Yvonne's mother, Maudie, was a 'first contact' woman whose family first made contact with white people in the 1960s. We laughed with each other as we shared our happy days and cried together as we shared the sadness of the stolen generation. We were very privileged to learn from these women.



Yvonne Burgu's Art Show



Maudie (Yvonne's mother) and Yvonne.



Yvonne, Pansy Nulgit and Karen Groves sealing our club's friendship by the River



Yvonne and Sciona at Yvonne's favourite fishing spot



Yvonne on right prepares to smoke us out of Crocodile Rock



Yvonne shows us how to dig for sugar bag



Yvonne and Lennie preparing clapping sticks



Sciona Browne with the Wandjina painting that we used on greeting cards

The friendship continues

In 2005, Yvonne was invited by the United Nations to fly to Geneva to display a banner she had painted to commemorate the end of the decade of indigenous people. Our club hosted her through Perth and 'kitted her out' for the Northern Hemisphere. On her return she gave us a Wandjina painting to thank the club members for their hospitality. We took a photo of the painting and used it on greeting cards that we sold to raise funds for Ngarinyin projects.

The Ngarinyin girls at boarding school at Lesmurdie were occasionally brought by Sister Frances to meet up with Yvonne when she was in Perth and Zontians would host 'catch ups' at Cicerellos in Fremantle with the girls 'kicking on' to Wendy MacGibbon's house for afternoon tea.



Kathy Charlesworth, Yvonne Burgu and Becky Boo visit a club meeting

Club members were kept up-to-date with activities in the Kimberley whenever community nurses Mary Jane Lynch or Angie Fisher were in town. Kathy, Yvonne and Yvonne's granddaughter "Becky Boo" visited us at club meetings and whenever they were in the city they caught up with the Zonta mob!

In 2005, Yvonne and Kathy hatched up an idea to raise money to buy a vehicle so that the women could access the traditional hunting grounds in the wet season when the roads to Derby and Kununurra were closed. Yvonne painted her heart out for a month and Zonta mob helped her to stage her first solo art show.

This was a wondrous event that saw Yvonne blossom from a shy woman to a confident leader of her community. Members and friends rallied to support Yvonne and together found a venue for the 'gallery', learned how to hang the paintings from professional curators, transcribed Yvonne's verbal stories into text, created a range of promotional materials to promote her show and Kathy arranged for feature stories in the West Australian newspaper. Yvonne's paintings were beautiful and around \$40,000 was raised—sufficient to purchase a Toyota Hilux ute that was dubbed "the White Angel" by Becky Boo.



Sister Frances with Yvonne's woomera at the Art Show launch

A special launch night was held at which Sister Frances spoke of Yvonne's life and work. She showed a carving of a woomera that Yvonne had created many years before – we did not realise Yvonne could carve so this was a surprise to us all! Sister Frances spoke of the stories behind the paintings and for a while the audience was transported to the ancient times in the Kimberley. Two of Yvonne's largest works were later displayed at the Zonta International Convention in Melbourne in 2006 and caused quite a stir.



Yvonne prepares for her art show



The White Angel ready to go to her new home in the Kimberley



Some of the paintings



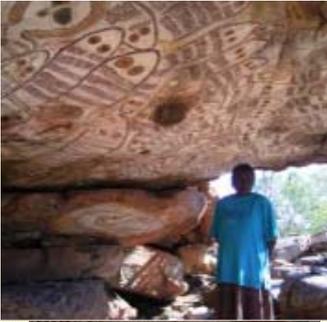
Yvonne – mission accomplished

The return journey



Glen Wilson and Yvonne at Yvonne's house (Kathy, Sciona, Mary and Maudie behind)

In 2007, five members returned to the Gibb River with Kathy Charlesworth: Sciona Browne, Fiona Crowe, Mary Gurgone, Carole Theobald and Glen Wilson. This time we camped in Yvonne's garden for a couple of nights before moving on to a special fishing spot called Mungaray and also to Miner's Pool. On one night there were nearly 30 of us camping by the river. Thanks to the generosity of a Zontian in the USA, we purchased enough fishing lines for the students at Wanalirri Primary School at Gibb River Station and Mount Barnet Primary School. The children at Wanalirri wrote their names on the lines and a few of us went fishing at Yvonne's favourite fishing spot at Mungaray to try them out. It was a privilege to be accepted by the community and it touched our hearts to be called 'auntie' by the young ones.



Yvonne at Ngallungunda – the source of Inspiration for her paintings



Fiona Crowe, Yvonne Burgu and a little 'un prepare the fishing lines



Yvonne watches as Sciona and Fiona cut off the padlock to get access for Nancy to visit her custodial site of Donkey Creek



Yvonne with a fish caught on a seaside fishing trip with Kathy Charlesworth

One day Yvonne and Nancy took us for a walk to see their special Ngallungunda art – the source of Yvonne's inspirational work. It seemed to take ages in the heat to walk to this special place – but it was worth it. We just sat together and soaked up the history of this magical place – imagining the people from thousands of years ago that painted it. On this visit we were in awe of the generosity of the senior law women – they 'grew up' children in the community and gave each and every one a cuddle before they all went to bed – these children knew they were loved. Yvonne was often 'growing up' a number of children and always made sure they ate before she did. She was also crazy about her three little dogs and we had great fun playing with them. Yvonne made the most magnificent damper and was a dab hand at making a cup of tea anywhere in the bush. She always had her large tea mug handy and a pack of cards in her pocket.

Another day we went to Donkey Creek, where Yvonne's good friend Nancy was the custodian. The gate to the site had been padlocked by a local tourist operator – denying Nancy access to her sacred site of which she was the custodian. So, together we sourced some bolt cutters and cut off the padlock and all cheered when we were able to drive through to Donkey Creek.

Ngarinyin customs are complex and Yvonne asked us to help her complete some 'sorry business' following the death of a relative, so that she could once more be reunited with her extended family. This was an absolute privilege and I will never forget Sciona Browne shaving Yvonne's head, us all helping Yvonne and her sister Pauline prepare for the ceremony, laying out clothes and food, finding the correct leaves for the smoking ceremonies whilst trying to be respectful of the ceremonies by 'keeping in the background'. Yvonne was so happy when it was all over and it was wonderful to see her reunited with her extended family.



Yvonne was part of the bush puppet camp that was an element of our club's Yarri Wada project. Unfortunately she could not come down to Perth with Pansy Nulgit and the team for the World Puppet Festival that was held at the Perth Concert Hall where the 4m high gwion gwion puppets they had made were displayed.

Yvonne would arrange for her granddaughter Becky Boo, together with other relatives Daniel and Nelita to stay with Carole and David Theobald for weekends from boarding school at Bindoon Agricultural College. It was great fun being able to reciprocate some of the hospitality we had been shown in the Kimberly and share the sights of Perth with the next generation.

The club kept in contact with Yvonne mostly through Kathy Charlesworth and when Kathy was very sick, Yvonne came down to be by her bedside, literally sleeping on the floor next to her, in the hospice. We made up a book of the 'Ngarinyin experiences' and Yvonne and Kathy looked at the photos in it together and re-lived old times.

Yvonne was a selfless woman, a senior law-woman who took a great pride in her culture and traditions, a caring woman who 'grew up' children when needed and a well-respected community leader.

Farewell to Yvonne



David, Carole and Sciona at the start of the journey



Sciona and David fit the tarp on the ute



David at the Boab prison tree



Two white crosses mark the site where Yvonne and Narelle were killed.



Magnificent Kimberley country

Yvonne's funeral was held on Saturday 1 August 2015 at the Gibb River Station. Club members Sciona Browne and Carole Theobald just knew that they had to go to say farewell to their dear friend as they held her in such high regard. They were accompanied by Carole's husband David, who had also known Yvonne through the White Angel and Art Show experiences, hosting her young relatives on weekends from boarding school, impromptu visits when she was in town and of course telephone calls. This is Carole's story of the journey...

The first challenge was getting to the Kimberley – in the end we flew to Derby on Thursday 30 July and hired a four wheel drive from there. Four wheel drives were in short supply as there were two weddings and a funeral on in Derby that weekend – so even though we had booked a few weeks ahead, the only vehicle available was an old manual dual cab ute. The first stop was to the hardware store to get a huge tarpaulin to cover the back tray so that our luggage etc would have some protection from the dust of the Gibb River Road. When the car hirer learned that we were going to Gibb River and intended to take fresh provisions with us, he also lent us a very large esky and some tie down straps.

David and I spent the day making lists, shopping having a good look at the Mowanjum Art Gallery, Derby Town Airport, Derby jetty and visiting the boab prison tree. This gave Sciona chance to have a rest at the Spinifex Hotel as she had literally worked through the night before. We met up for dinner and had an early night in readiness for the long day ahead.

The next day our first stop was to the supermarket where we filled the big esky and a couple of large foam eskies with fruit and vegetables and loads of ice. We took a 'slab' of water bottles, as with all the dust on the road it can make you very dry. We had been told that the site of Yvonne's accident was about 95 km out of town, so we set the trip meter so that we could stop at the site for a moment of reflection.

Two white crosses covered in flowers marked the site of the accident where Yvonne and her friend Narelle were killed. The road was straight, though unsealed - and only a couple of hundred metres from the start of the bitumen. Apparently, the tyres were worn and they got two punctures and the vehicle rolled – throwing Yvonne out in the process. We all added some yellow roses to Yvonne's cross and spent some time in reflection.

It is about 475 km from Derby to Gibb River Station and the road was in quite good condition compared to previous years. Many of the tricky sections have been sealed and the road must have been recently graded as there were not many 'ruts'. The rivers, that are impassable in the wet season, were mostly dried up. The country was magnificent – big blue skies and long horizons.

Imintji Store has closed – so the first fuel (and ice cream) stop is now at Mt Barnett, 306 km from Derby. There was quite a bit of traffic on the road – but that was to be expected as it is the tourist season. Occasionally trucks passed by and the dust was blinding. About 40 km from Gibb River, we noticed a car that had broken down so stopped to help. This turned out to be Terrence and his family – relations of Yvonne – who were also on their way to the funeral. Unfortunately, the hired ute did not contain any tools, so we left some bottles of water and went to get help from Gibb River. We arrived at Gibb River Station just as the sun was setting and went to see Yvonne's son, Quenty, and he drove out to rescue his cousins.

At Gibb River Station we stayed with the Principal of Wanalirri Primary School and his family. Dean and Michelle Savoia and their young children Daemon and Kieran and Michelle's mother, Joan, gave us a very warm welcome. Sciona had first met the Savoia's in Halls' Creek and they had only moved to Gibb River about eight months previously. Over the next couple of days we were spoiled with kindness and wonderful food. It was lovely to see Sister Frances too as she was also staying in the Savoia's house. Next door, the Bishop Christopher Saunders, his driver and Father Nicholas Kipkemboi from Kalumburu had taken up residence for the weekend.

Gibb River Station community was overflowing - with the population swelling from around 60 to over 300 – there were people and vehicles everywhere. There had recently been a muster and the cattle pens next to the house were full and a few scary looking bovines with large horns were wandering around the road by the house!



When cars pass the dust can be blinding...



Arriving at Gibb River at sunset



Wanalirri Catholic Primary School



David Theobald and Sciona Browne at Gibb River graveyard



Kathy Charlesworth's ashes are in the graveyard



Yvonne's grave

The school was the site for the funeral and tissue paper flowers were used to decorate the pillars on the verandah. Everyone in the household helped to put chairs on the lawn and set up the sound system for the funeral. Yvonne's coffin arrived by plane from Derby. It was transferred to a 'troopie' and taken to her house for the family to have a private farewell before coming to the school for the funeral service.

Interestingly, the funeral was themed with everyone wearing either blue and black or white and black. Sciona became 'support crew' to Sister Frances and could be seen driving off in her ute to meet people from planes or deliver items around the community. They did an amazing job.

The coffin was made of beautifully polished wood with brass handles and when it left Yvonne's house the whole community walked slowly behind it. The coffin was carried by Yvonne's relatives to a place of honour under the school's verandah and covered with flower arrangements and a large framed photograph. It was very moving to see that people of all nationalities had come from throughout the Kimberley (and Perth) to say farewell. There were over 300 people on the school's lawn.

Given the private nature of the funeral, Sciona, Carole and David did not take any photographs as they did not think it was respectful to take photos of people in their grief. The Bishop conducted the service assisted by Father Nicholas and Sister Frances. Mary Jane Lynch (the community nurse), Michelle and Sciona handed out the beautiful orders of service and memorial booklets of Yvonne's life that had been prepared by the Savoia's. We had also brought a framed photograph and this was placed near the temporary altar. There were many tears and people came bearing boxes of tissues that were distributed among the congregation.

During the funeral Bishop Saunders spoke about Yvonne's life and the importance of 'stepping up' – this was timely as we are all concerned about who will fill the vacuum that Yvonne has left. The children from the school sang songs and read kind words and together we reflected on how Yvonne had touched our lives. After the mass had been completed the coffin was once more placed in the troopie with the doors opened. Yvonne was taken on her final journey to the graveyard followed by hundreds of people who had loved her. I couldn't help but notice the eagles soaring above the school and Yvonne's little dog following the coffin.

The graveyard at Gibb River is very small and you have to have special permission to be buried there. A grave had been dug the day before – no mean feat given the hard ground – and after a short service the followers placed handfuls of soil onto the coffin. A group of young men, including Daniel who used to stay with us when he was at boarding school, took turns to fill in the grave.

The final salute to Yvonne took the form of hundreds of flowers being placed on her grave – a mass of colour. Sister Frances had brought a beautiful white engraved cross for the grave that she decorated with a rosary. Yvonne is now at rest only a few hundred metres from where she was born. She is now near her mother, Maudie White and her close friend Kathy Charlesworth.

We went to visit Yvonne's sister Marcia. She is also on the community's board and we stressed that if she needs support that Zonta mob is there to help her. Standing outside her house as the sun set we noticed Yvonne's grave suddenly light up – thanks to the solar lights that had been placed on it. This was a gorgeous idea and will be my lasting impression of the day.

Following the funeral, the community had arranged a 'wake' on the village green and teams of people had been making sandwiches and cooking an animal for a feast. It is not often that families are able to get together 'in country' and through the sadness familial bonds were strengthened as they grieved together.

We retired to the hospitality of the Savoia's home where we shared a lovely evening reminiscing about Yvonne with the family and the Bishop, his driver, Father Nicholas, Sister Frances and Mary Jane. We learned that Yvonne had written the first letter that saw the primary school established at Gibb River and Sr Frances was one of the first teacher's at the school. Yvonne was also a community leader and was on the board of directors that operated the community. On the day of her death, she was driving into Derby so that she could be a character witness for someone in a court case.

The next day (Sunday), there was no water in the taps as with all the extra people in



Sciona, Carole and David put 30 yellow roses on the grave – one for each member of the club.



Mary Jane and Carole



Yvonne's woomera (second item from left) and her photo on wall of school staff room



Simba finds a new home...



Michelle and Sciona 'by the river'



Kieran, Daemon and Sister Frances 'by the river'



Dean and Sciona pour the tea 'by the river'



Daemon, Kieran and David by the river

the community, the header water tank had emptied – this problem was soon rectified, but it served as a reminder not to take anything for granted in the Kimberley.

Following a mass at the school, the Bishop and his driver returned to Broome and Father Nicholas to Kalumburu. In the school staff room, Yvonne's woomera, that Sister Frances had shown us at Yvonne's Art Show, was proudly on display and the framed photograph of Yvonne was hanging in pride of place nearby.

David and I had morning tea at Mary Jane's house and she told us about some of the experiences she has had working as a community nurse for 14 years at Gibb River. David was a former paramedic and was fascinated with how she attends accidents on the Gibb River Road, often going out in her four wheel drive at night on her own – quite a different experience to the city. In the afternoon, we all went with the Savoia's for a memorable 'afternoon tea' by the river – not far from where the Zonta mob initially camped on their first stay in the Kimberley...and that night we had a lovely dinner with the host family and Mary Jane.

Yvonne's little dog, Simba may have a new master. She adopted Kevin Weira from Kulumburu (who is usually a cat man but who was prepared to make an exception to this rule). The dog just kept following Kevin. Sciona kindly arranged for Simba to be checked out by a vet in Kununurra and be spayed before moving to her new home.

It was quite sad to say goodbye on the Monday morning after the long weekend at Gibb River. We went to the graveyard to say a fond farewell to Yvonne, Kathy and Maudie and gathered up the flowers that the birds and wind had conspired to distribute around the graveyard. We then went to the school to say cheerio to Dean, Michelle, Daemon and Kieran – and thank them once more for their kindness and hospitality – and set off on our return journey to Derby.

We stopped off at Manning Gorge to show David where Zonta mob had learned to dig for frogs and fished and went past the Mt Barnett primary school where some of the fishing lines had been distributed. After filling up at Mt Barnett we soaked up the Kimberley sun and scenery and stopped once more at the crash site where we noticed even more flowers had been added to the roadside crosses.

Not long after this we noticed a car broken down that looked familiar. It was the car that had been sent to rescue Terence and his family on the journey to Gibb River and it had radiator problems. As it was only about an hour to Derby, we left all of our water with the family so they could wait for help in a bit of comfort. It's a small world in the Kimberley!

We were very tired when we arrived in Derby – satisfied that we had been able to get to the funeral, sad that Yvonne was no longer around, but hopeful that the Ngarinyin friendship will endure.

A huge thanks goes to the Savoia's at Gibb River for making us so welcome. All those that knew Yvonne, were touched by her compassion, wisdom and creativity. She was a 'bridge builder' between the cultures and a 'community builder' for her people. We were inspired by her and will miss her. She taught us so much, so when we think of Yvonne remember her legacy: her art and her big heart. If we were all a bit more like Yvonne, the world would be a far better place.