

Archive No. 36

Susan Hawthorne (30 November, 1951 -)

Susan Hawthorne was raised on a wheat and sheep farm not far from Wagga Wagga, NSW and educated at the local state school before becoming a boarding student at Melbourne Girls Grammar. She became a feminist activist in 1973 when she joined the roster at the Women's Liberation Centre. She was active in student politics at La Trobe University, was a member of the WL Women's group and successfully ran for the SRC on a Feminism First ticket.

In the following years Sue was active as a volunteer at the Rape Crisis Centre and at Halfway House. She attended meetings of the Non-sexist Children's Book Group and became active around a number of issues including Women's Studies, abortion and later in the arts. She went on to teach courses in women's literature and arts at Melbourne's CAE and give lectures in a number of Women's studies courses.

In the early 1980s Sue produced radio programs at 3CR and joined a bush band. In 1984 she was appointed Music, Theatre and Writing Co-ordinator of the Women 150 program and became immersed in women's writing. After organising the very successful nine-day Women's Writers Week in September 1985, 'The Language of Difference', she then went on to work in the first year of the Koori Teacher Education Program at Deakin Uni.

In 1987 Sue began a four-year stint as an editor at Penguin Books where she worked at initiating the Penguin Women's Library Series. She was also responsible for getting Penguin to publish poetry titles and for getting into print titles by Aboriginal women, migrant women, lesbians and a number of experimental as well as mainstream authors. She co-founded the Australian Feminist Book Fortnight which involved two weeks of national events in 1989 and 1991.

In 1991 Sue in conjunction with Renate Klein co-founded Spinifex Press which celebrated ten years of successful feminist publishing in 2001 with a backlist of over 300 titles. She initiated the bid for the 6th International Feminist Book Fair, held over five days in Melbourne in July 1994, which brought together around 350 Australian and international women writers.

In late 1994 Sue joined the Women's Circus and in 1995 she was a founding member of the Performing Older Women's Circus where she participated in aerials, acrobalance and writing scripts.

Sue is the author of *The Falling Woman* (1992 & 2003) *The Spinifex Quiz Book* (1993) and *Bird* (1999). She co-edited *Difference* (1985) *Moments of Desire* (1989) *The Exploding Frangipani* (1990) *Angels of Power* (1991) *Australia for Women* (1994) *Car Maintenance, Explosives and Love and other lesbian writings* (1997) and *CyberFeminism* (1999).

Sue continued to work on poetry and performance scripts. And after successfully completing her PhD in Women's Studies towards the end of 2002, her thesis was published by Spinifex Press as *Wild Politics* in 2003.