

Archive No. 85

Sarah Yeomans (30 June 1948 -)

Born in England – Australian parents, father working as journo. Hence much travel in Canada, US, England, before Melbourne 1955, to Sydney 1957 and finally 1959 to modernist 'family home' built (much by family) on rock at Balgowlah overlooking Manly, where mother still lives. Father died 1995. One brother born New York 1951.

Public primary schools all over the place, then Abbotsleigh for secondary, because mother an old girl, and I won scholarship. Hated school, home, and life in general, always in trouble. Mother worked full time always as a secretary, father on newspapers and own books. Mother very talented carpenter, photographer, embroiderer, but I was too busy on detention to notice at the time. She worshipped father, aka god, to nauseating degree.

Left parental home at 18 and went to Sydney Uni for Arts degree in languages, supported myself as waitress, bus conductor, the usual. Lived in various rooms and flats in Glebe then house in Balmain with Tony, causing further wars in the family. Teaching 10.5 years in three high schools in Sydney till 'jumped before pushed'. Had become alcoholic when became lesbian in 1977 – eloped with lesbian neighbour. First years as lesbo based around dyke pub scene, despite strident earlier feminism as het woman and frenetic activism around American war in Viet Nam, the 1975 coup, Movement Against Uranium Mining (set up Sydney newsletter etc), Lesbian Teachers Group, Women Against Nuclear Energy, unions (as rep), school-based causes. Part time got Certificate in Horticulture. No idea where I got the energy, but I was one helluvan angry woman.

So fled overseas, June 1981, through Asia to Berlin where I lived with German lesbo separatists for nine months and eight lovers, all very intensely. Worked as cleaner, drank. Returned end of 1982 for equally intense Sydney lesbo era; cleaning, job schemes, dole. Reclaim the Night, Talkin Dirty Group, SEPS magazine, Casuarina Housing Co-op, Lesbian Witches Coven, Bicentennial Support Group, stuff I can't remember. Haberfield house (shared) a quasi-lesbian centre, with Harpies Café weekly in back yard for summer. Non-monogamous mayhem. First visit to Birdwood women's lands 1988 with Jan Gladys, began ongoing attendance at National 10/40 Conferences and national Lesbian conferences; Roxby Downs women's camp

1984; Sound Women's Peace Camp in Freemantle December 1984. More TAFE landscape courses meanwhile.

Fell apart mid 1986, began long stretch of depressive episodes and psychotherapy. Gave up smoking 1985, drinking end 1986, about the time Bess the border collie entered my heart. Fled to Port Macquarie end 1990 to be in Casuarina Housing Co-op, but it foundered. Spent 18 months in profound depression.

Saved by move to Melbourne February 1992. Studied Master of Landscape Architecture full time 1992 - 96. Lived first two years in Alphington then in Plant Street, Northcote, house 8.5 years – scene of Leso Soup Nights and assorted meetings. Collective work on Amazon Games 1995, 1996, 1997 and 2000 (I think), Journal of Australian Lesbian Feminist Studies editorial group 1995 - 96. Lapped up LesboRaves and other Melbourne leso culture, plus the famous festival calendar.

Became passionate ballroom dancer first with Judd's classes, then as foundation member of Dance Cats with Annie Salerni. With Judd in March 1995, nine of us presented for first ever same-sex medals exams. There followed many more medals, and two Gay Games – Amsterdam in 1998 (in team of six Dance Cats: Joy and I, Stacey and Barb, and Anah and Kim who won GOLD for Australia); Sydney 2002, dancing with Rebecca and Anah. Dance Cats continue to thrive without me these days.

Moved into own house in Preston in June 2002 (money from mother), sharing mainly with overseas students as leso sharing fashion seemed to have passed. Bess died in December 2002.

Did Master of TESOL (had been teaching casual ESL and earning a micro income on landscape design) full time 2003-'04 so could teach English in Italy – accomplished briefly August 2004 – January 2005. July 4, 2004, fell in love with my darling Elvyn who agreed to arrange her life around joining me for travels and moving to Melbourne where we now happily co-habit and are setting up a business: Sanctuaries By Design. Current era seems more privately political – groups of friends meeting to discuss issues of interest, spend weekends and holidays together. Also re-acquainting myself with mother from whom I was estranged for 20 years.

All this comes under the disclaimer that my memory is shot to buggery!!!!!!!