

## **Archive No. 90**

### **Pat Rooney (25 April, 1935 - )**

Pat Rooney was born in Glasgow, Scotland and arrived in Australia in June 1970. She was a trained nurse and had organised to go bush nursing but after a skiing weekend she got a job on the ski lifts instead. After she became pregnant Pat moved to Melbourne and had her son at the Royal Women's Hospital in 1971.

Hearing about the formation of a group for unmarried mothers Pat went along to her first meeting and joined the Council for the Single Mother and her Child. CSMC was active around rights for single mothers and, as there was no government financial support for single mothers in those days and many women gave their babies up for adoption because they couldn't afford to support them, politically lobbying for a Single Mothers pension.

Even though the Single Mothers pension was granted in 1973, Pat didn't have to apply for it because she always worked as a nurse and paid someone to mind her son. While she was raising her son as a single mother Pat had no time to be involved in WLM groups although she did attend various functions and was out and about in the lesbian community.

When Pat retired from the workforce in the mid-1980s and opened a gift shop in Gertrude Street, Fitzroy (next to Shrew Women's Bookshop) called Gertrude's, she became much more involved in lesbian events and activities, including the Lesbians Over 40 group.

After her son died tragically in a motorbike accident in 1989, Pat took on the task of challenging the medical establishment about their policies around organ donations. Eventually she sold Gertrude's and moved to country Victoria.

Pat joined the Performing Older Women's Circus in 1995 as a founding member and was an active participant in the music group, concentrating on drumming but also learning to walk on stilts and doing acrobances, amongst other things. She performed in several of POW's shows, including Act Your Age (1995), Still Revolting!!! (1996), Every Witch Way (1996), Unstopped Mouths (1997), Over the Top with Tarot (1998) and the Art of Falling is Never Landing (2000) as well as several gigs for fundraisers and women's events.

In 1997 Pat joined the Music Group of the Women's Circus and participated in several shows including Pope Joan (1997) and Soles of Our Feet (1998). She ended her circus participation being winched to the ceiling in the finale of Lilith in 1999.

Soon after this Pat was diagnosed with breast cancer and after going through various forms of treatment she sold her house and moved to Geelong where she continued to be an active participant in various lesbian community events.