

## My Life Since TPHS

I started work at the end of November 1968 in what was intended to be a 'holiday job' with the Public Service while I decided whether to go to uni or teachers college. The attractions of a regular income and an emerging social life won over being a poor student and I accepted an offer to stay with the Public Service in what became a long and, for the most part, satisfying and enjoyable career in Human Resources.

In 1969 I moved to Sydney to begin studies at the Australian School of Pacific Administration as a Cadet Education Officer to train to teach in Papua New Guinea. However part way through training I met, and married, a charming New Zealander and fell foul of the 'marriage bar' in my contract which meant that I was not allowed to finish my training. I moved back into the Public Service and stayed in Sydney for a couple of years. I had the joy of travelling to and from work each day across the harbour from Mosman to Circular Quay by ferry; the office building was in the heart of Sydney at the corner of George and Market Streets – in the days when big parades were held to farewell (but not welcome back), soldiers, including national servicemen, off to Vietnam.

The call of family and lifestyle in Canberra was strong and I moved back to Canberra, where my husband worked as part of the construction crew for Cameron Offices. Nothing like being caught in my nightie on Belconnen Way when the car broke down after I had driven him to work early one morning! We bought a home in the brand new suburb of Macgregor where we were the second home occupied there (avoiding rabbits on the road on the way home in the evenings). I had a personalized 'door to door' bus service to and from my job in Woden each day.

Work continued – Department of Education, Commonwealth Teaching Service and later ACT Schools Authority, Attorney-General's Department, Public Service Board, Director of Public Prosecutions, Department of Finance, Joint House Department, Merit Protection and Review Agency, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. Very varied jobs, most of which I enjoyed, meeting a range of people in various circumstances, from the bad to the mad, the bewildered to the genuinely hard-done-by, the famous to the notorious, and all in between. Until at least the early 1990s there was still a lot of covert discrimination against women in senior positions – in one department there was no progression unless you were male, married, catholic and with at least 4 children (I missed out miserably on all counts), in another I was refused a higher position because I was 'a girl', and in yet another I was set up to fail (egg on lots of faces when I refused to co-operate with that plan and was instead very successful in the job). Despite this, there are lots of happy experiences and memories – including in one office where I was nicknamed 'Mrs Fawltly', in another where an enduring picture remains of a senior officer lying on the tearoom floor imitating the 'electrocution of the priest' scene from the TV series *Ballykissangel*, and in yet another conciliating a very serious staff mediation in the pub at Ceduna on Melbourne Cup Day.

With the Howard Government's purge of the Public Service in the late 1990s I 'retired'. I worked as a contractor for a while (paid far too much tax for it to be worthwhile) and

then went back into the public service. But as I rapidly reached the level I was at when I had retired previously (so much for my plan to stay at a low level with few, or no, responsibilities) and I was getting tired of working 6 1/2 days and 4 night each week, I resigned. I worked in private enterprise for a couple of years but fully retired about 3 years ago. I could write a book, but I would need a good lawyer!

On the personal side, my marriage disintegrated in the late 1970s and on the 'once bitten, twice shy' principle I have not remarried. That's not to say I have lived as a nun. I have no children. Through work, and privately, I travelled extensively within Australia, including to Tasmania and Norfolk Island, and to NZ. Since retiring I have travelled overseas – USA (including New York the year before the World Trade Centre disaster), Canada, Alaska, Hawaii, UK and France (evacuated from the Eiffel Tower because of a 'credible' bomb threat and got stuck in a lift in the Metro). I am planning to return to France and the UK in 2012. Add to all this lots of interests and good friends, and I never seem to be home. I may have retired from work but I have certainly not retired from life.

I am the only one of my family still in Canberra. My mother died suddenly and unexpectedly in 1987 and my father stayed in the house in La Perouse Street until his death in 1996. My sister, Kathryn, married a farmer from near Wagga and remains there. She has three children. My brother, Mark, is married with three children and is currently the postmaster at Adaminiby.

An ordinary life – perhaps. An interesting and satisfying life – definitely. A boring life – never.