

## **Introduction to the IAF Archive – Helen Onopko**

Many of you know that the IAF was formed out of the demise of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust in November 1991. The Theatre Trust had been operating since 1954.

Since those early days of the 1950s, there has been a continuing thread of fundraising activity around performing arts and literary events.

**Jill Argent** whom you all know, is working with me to discover our history, to gather in one future collection, our records and photographs of our past activities, and to have an organised and catalogued archive which one day might resource the writing of our own book.

In doing so we are discovering a rich and brag-worthy history of:

- our support of young and emerging artists
- events and activities provided to members
- internationally famous people who have performed or contributed to IAF.

These include:

- Bryce Courtenay
- Edward de Bono
- David Williamson
- Prof Paul Davies
- Jill Kerr Conway
- Blanche d'alpuget
- Nancy Bird Walton
- Derek Nimmo
- David Malouf
- Patrick McNee
- Tim Winton

And so many more of that ilk.

We thought as an entrée to the archive, I might reproduce an extract from a letter in the Archive, written in 1984 to "Bill" by Nora Milliken - one of our long-time members . It describes a couple of functions the Adelaide Committee held to coincide with the Adelaide Festival that year, and all three were concerned with the Playwrights Committee which existed at that time. The Playwrights Committee conducted a competition annually.

What follows is an extract from Nora's letter....

<<This year (1984) we had 97 entries from all over Australia.... The awards were announced and presented during Writers Week by John Bannon in the presence of august and prominent citizens and afterwards we served drinks and exquisite savouries on the lawns around the Writers Tent. As you can imagine, it was difficult to exclude gate-crashers, and consequently quite a few interestingly loutish citizens who were neither august nor prominent came lurching in, lured by the chilled white wine.... The fact that the wine was chilled – *Nora goes on to say* – was due to me, which is why I mention the fact....

I had to get a special permit so that a delivery van could enter the sacred ground of the Torrens Parade ground, drive across it and deliver the goods. But it all worked beautifully and I am now regarded as an expert at getting drink delivered in awkward places.>>

*Nora goes on to talk about a subsequent and related event – her ‘piece de resistance’ as she calls it.....*

<<This year, the Theatre Trust gave us \$5000 to workshop the winning play. The Stage Company under the direction of John Noble (and isn't he lovely! *she says*) were engaged to carry out the workshop, so we decided to do something stylish.

We hired a train to take us to Mt Lofty Station where we were greeted by a brass band, and buses which took us to Eurilla (the home of Kym and Julie Bonython) where a marquee housed the play workshop and a magnificent buffet. Then back on the bus, the train and return to Adelaide.

The organisation was complicated with 310 on the train and another 90 driving themselves.

The train had to be decorated, we served champagne and crayfish sandwiches on the way up, and port and cheese and meringues on the way back.....

I had to get to the Station early on the Sunday morning to get the champagne and glasses etc on to each carriage.

The weather wasn't particularly good – in fact it was bloody awful – like rain and cold – but the hardship coupled with the abundance of wine seemed to bring people together and everyone had a marvellous time.....>>

Jill Argent and I wish to gather more of these delightful stories for the Archive, and would welcome your recollections, memorabilia, records, photographs for our growing collection of records.