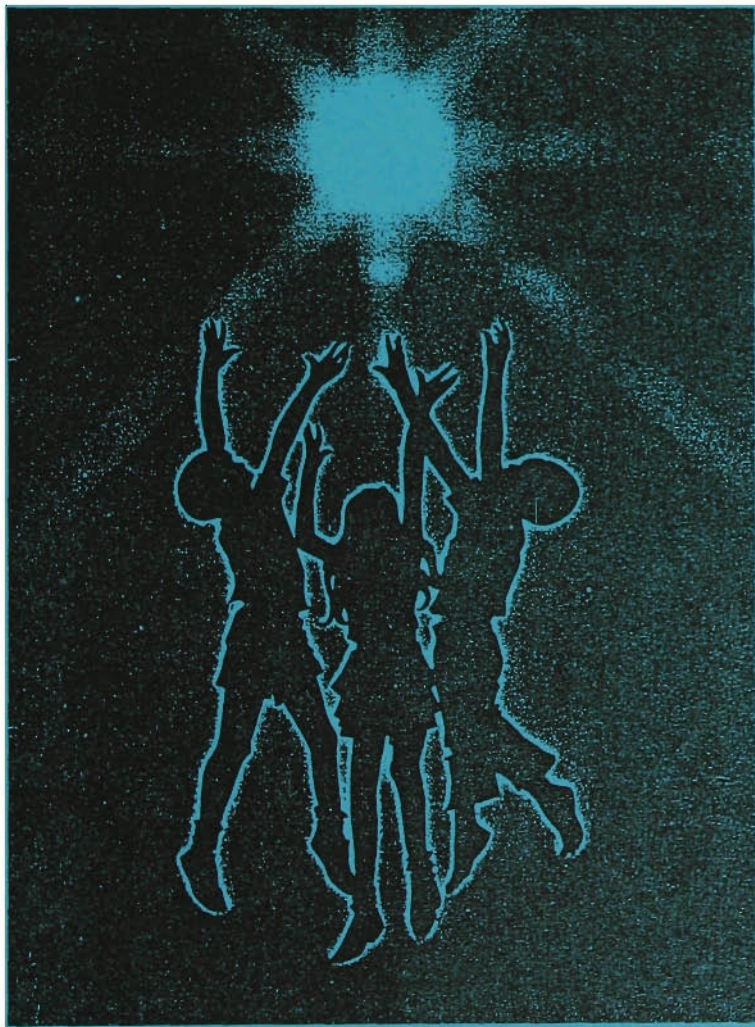


*We Celebrate  
Her Life and Work*

# *RUTH HOPE CROW AM*

## *Una Voce*

*14.9.1916 ~ 9.4.1999*



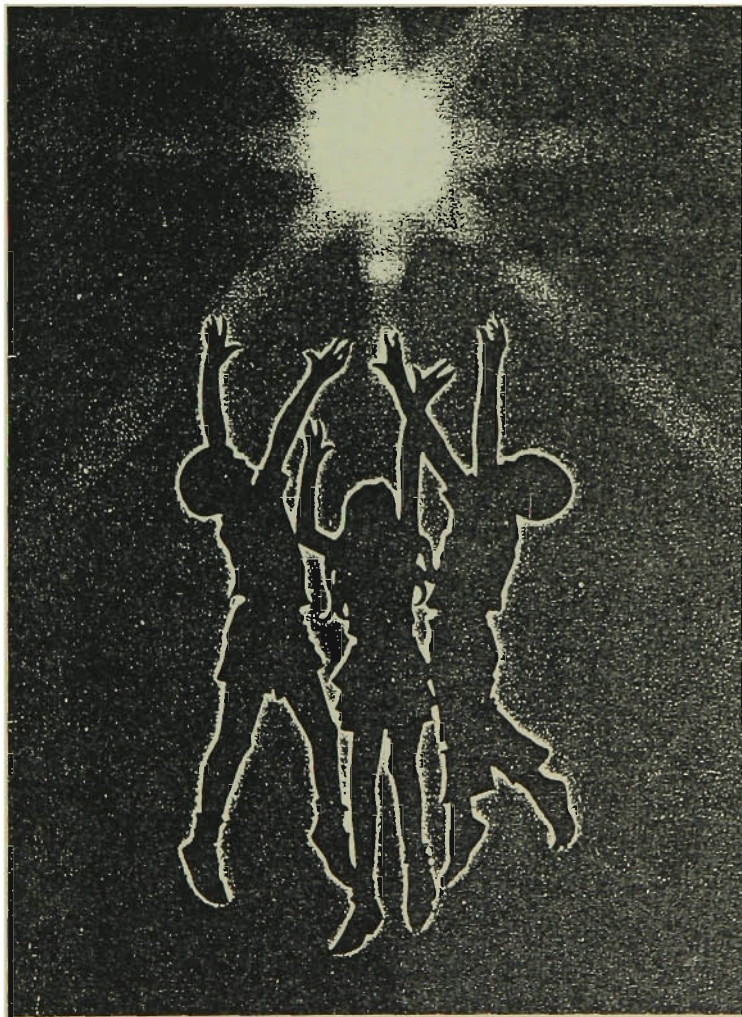
*"Tomorrow is a Glorious Day"*



*We Celebrate  
Her Life and Work*

**RUTH HOPE CROW AM**  
*Una Voce*

14.9.1916 ~ 9.4.1999



*“Tomorrow is a Glorious Day”*

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John White  
Val Yule  
  
And Ruth Crow

# **RUTH CROW**

**14/9/16 – 9/4/99**



*Photo: Tony Gough, Leader Press.*

## **WE WILL REMEMBER**

When we feel the warmth of a glowing fireside,  
When we see the gladness of a welcoming smile,  
When we walk amid the calm quiet of the soaring trees,  
When we catch a vision of starry skies at midnight,  
When we see people working together for a friendlier world,  
We will remember Ruth.

**Len Fox**  
***April, 1999***



## TRIBUTES TO RUTH CROW

### *"The legacy she left is a rich tapestry"*

It was an honour to know Ruth in life. The legacy she left is a rich tapestry, woven with integrity, compassion, insight and commitment. Through her generosity, Ruth has bequeathed to us all a share in that energy and determination to work for a more just world for all.

Joseph & Rita Camilleri  
9<sup>th</sup> May, 1999

oOo

Ruth Crow was a foundation member of the Union of Australian Women. She was an energetic, vital woman who was committed to peace, to giving local communities a voice and to the well-being of women and children.

Ruth regularly participated in the UAW general meetings, putting her point of view and offering her perception of what action was needed. She was active in the community and had strong grass roots connections, yet she always sought to connect her work with the UAW. She was instrumental in writing "The Quest", the publication that was the first stage of the UAW's Women's Charter in 1990. She was always supportive of the organisation's activities.

Ruth was generous with her knowledge and her skills. Her energy and her enthusiasm were a reflection of the humanity and compassion of this remarkable woman.

Anne Sgro  
Union of Australian Women  
May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1999

oOo

Ruth's great strength lay in her belief that people acting together had the power to change life for the better. It made her an optimist and an eager participant in community organisations. A creative thinker, always ready to canvas ideas, Ruth had the satisfaction of knowing that

her contributions to policies on child care, urban development and social planning were recognised and valued by professionals and community activists. Her enthusiasm, cheerfulness, energy and determination will be remembered and missed.

Morag Loh  
May, 1999

oOo

Vale Ruth. An inspirational resident activist. We were poles apart politically but united in our quest to protect the urban environment we both loved and respected. Among many other interests, she shall be sadly missed by kindred planning groups and by the North Melbourne Association that she and Maurie co-founded. Outstanding memories.

Pat Rayson  
*The Age* 17<sup>th</sup> April 1999

oOo

I was working in the Holeproof Hosiery Factory in Sydney Road, Brunswick; this is where I first met Ruth Crow. She came as a dietitian to take over the canteen; she made a big difference - the food improved immensely both in quality and variety.

I was again associated with Ruth when I was on the Camp Committee and she came to Camp Eureka with the Eureka Youth Leaguers.

From discussions with Ruth, I put her advice to good use in setting up a child care facility centre at ICI, Ascot Vale.

I already miss the long discussions we would have in the office of the Union of Australian Women when she came to use our photocopier.

Thelma Prior  
May, 1999

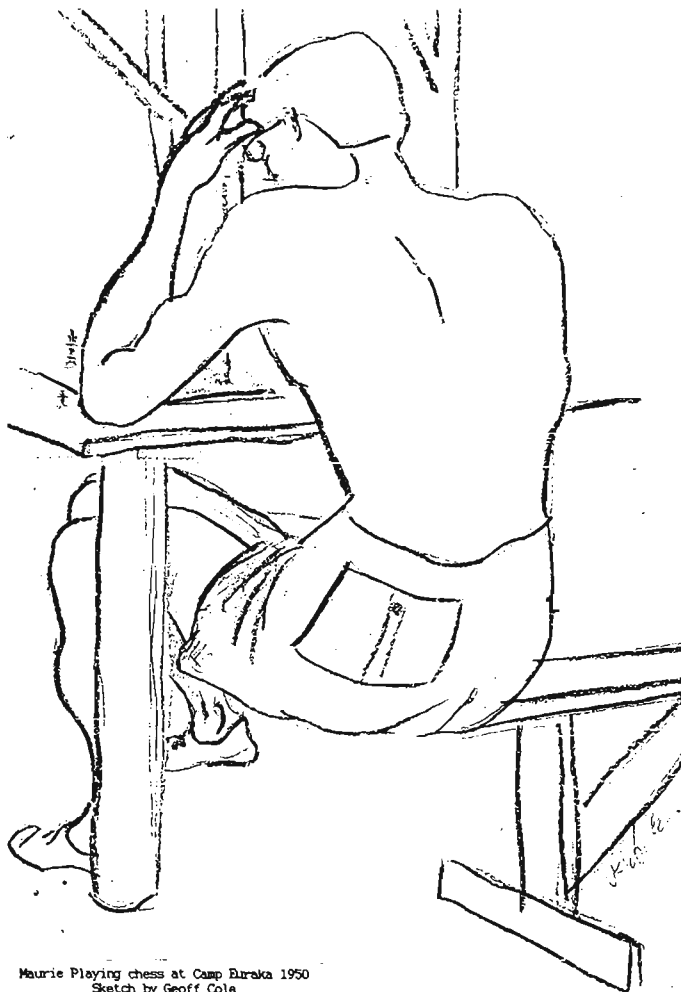
## The Australian Sunrise

by J. L. Cuthbertson, from the Eighth Book, Victorian School Readers

Supplied by Ruth's elder daughter, June Muir

***"This was her favourite poem"***

The Morning Star paled slowly, the Cross hung low to the sea.  
And down the shadowy reaches the tide came swirling free;  
The lustrous purple blackness of the soft Australian night  
Waned in the grey awakening that heralded the light;  
Out of the dying darkness, over the forest dim,  
The pearly dew of the dawning clung to every limb  
Till the sun came up from ocean, red with the cold sea mist,  
And smote on the limestone ridges and the shining tree-tops kissed:  
Then the fiery Scorpion vanished, the magpie's note was heard,  
And the wind in the she-oaks wavered, and the honey-suckles stirred,  
The airy golden vapour rose from the river's breast,  
The kingfisher came darting out of his crannied nest,  
And the bulrushes and reed-beds put off their sallow grey  
And burnt with cloudy crimson at the dawning of the day.



Maurie Playing chess at Camp Eureka 1950  
Sketch by Geoff Cole

## MY MUM - RUTH HOPE CROW

I'll tell you a childhood story to give you a glimpse of my Mum – Ruth Hope Crow.

We lived upstairs in a flat in Brunswick. As a child I often felt too weary to climb the stairs. Mum would willingly place the heavy shopping bags at the bottom of the stairs and lovingly carry me to our front door at the top of the stairs. From my lofty bird's eye view of the world, the stairs ceased being an obstacle and I enthusiastically ran down the stairs to help Mum carry up the bags. From that simple example (and countless others), Mum taught me much about life. Mum let me travel my own road, to make my own choices and my own mistakes, but she was always there (if I needed her) to willingly carry me back up the stairs: to see the world from a different perspective, a different view point. That was her special gift to me. I believe Ruthie, my Mum, also gifted everyone who crossed her path because she beautifully combined wisdom with love, and she never lost the gleam of justice or the merry twinkle in her eyes.

For me, the saddest thought about my Mum is that she did not truly accept or believe that people loved her for herself. One day when she was talking about her dear friend Margaret Warren, she said *"You know I think Margaret really likes me for being 'me'"*. When I affirmed this statement I added *"Everyone likes you for being 'you' Mum"* - her reply was *"They like me for my ideas"*. I tried to contradict that false belief, but I'm not sure she truly heard. It's evident from the countless phone calls and tributes that poured in while Ruth was sick, and since her death that she was loved and generated her love to many, many people.

I remember the answer she gave when I queried who would organise her memorial gathering when she died - *"There will be no need. There will be no political gain"* she replied. Ruthie, my Mum, this is one political lesson you will have to learn next time round. You were truly loved and your ideas and vision were embraced more fully because you came from the essence of your being. You wove a golden thread bringing ideas and people together. You talked about bridging gaps – of generations, politics, class – but you did more than build bridges, Mum, you worked with others to weave a gigantic golden web. And the lovely thing about this web is that as new strands are added it continues to grow from strength to strength, uniting all with a vision of a better tomorrow for everyone. Your unpublished book *'Tomorrow is a Glorious Day'* is how you lived. All my tomorrows will be glorious because you will always be in my heart. I love you Mum. I'm glad I chose you to be my Mum.

Your daughter, Julie

---

## RUTH HOPE CROW (NEE MILLER) AM

My older brother Maurice Stuart Crow married Ruth just before World War II commenced. It was a turbulent political and social time for young people.

They formed a wonderful team working together, formulating their ideas, putting them into practice, forming networks in a wide range of interests over the whole of their life together.

Ruth was a very courageous woman, both in her political and social activities. Full of noble ideals which she put into everyday practice as an example to others, and encouragement to the rest of the community towards a better way of life.

She will be remembered as an inspiration to us all, with her kindly enthusiastic love of life. Her parting words were always – "See you around!"

Jack Crow



## TRIBUTES TO GRANDMA RUTHIE

During my early years I used to wonder why my grandma was not like anyone else's. No chocolate cake, no fussing over us grandkids and certainly none of the spoiling I observed other children to receive from their grandparents. I remember my sister and I saying "Why can't our grandma be like other people's grandma's?" Well, now I know why.

Ruthie was one of those truly special and unique people that really make a difference to the world. Together with Maurie, she worked for a better world for all people. Ruthie wasn't like anyone else's grandma because she was Ruth Crow, a woman of such vision, strength and determination to make things possible.

The gift that Ruthie gave to me is one of indeterminable value. I know that I am who I am today is a reflection of Ruthie. My values and beliefs in life have been formed from a strong connection with Ruthie. What I hold dear and really feel passionate about are all reflections of Ruthie's passions in life: cultural understanding, appreciation of diversity, equality for women, quality child care, environmental protection and so the list goes on.

Ruthie spoilt me with many things: provision of a positive, strong female role model, knowledge of a wide range of community issues, sharing the history of her working and personal life, connecting me with many wonderful people and helping me believe in myself. Ruthie also gave me the gift of my wonderful mother. My mother is all that she is because of Ruthie (and, of course, Maurie).

In my adult years, I began to pay far more attention to all that Ruthie had to share with me (and I'm very glad that I did). As a youth, I did not fully appreciate all that Ruthie had to offer and I now know how fortunate I am that I can always access her brilliant mind through her writings.

My memories of Ruthie are many and varied. Here are but a few:

My early memories of visiting Ruthie and Maurie in their North Melbourne apartment was the amazing toy cupboard with the most unusual toys I had ever seen. There were knitted clowns with bells on them and Russian dolls and paper clown puppets.

I remember the way Ruthie and Maurie were the complete Ying and Yang, yet complimented each other so well. I used to find it very amusing the way Ruthie (ever practical) would send Maurie on ahead of her when they were walking somewhere. Maurie would amble off in his slow assured gait and there would be Ruthie, power walking along 10 minutes behind him, only to quickly catch up and stride on ahead.

I remember TV nights with Ruthie and Maurie. It was like going to the pictures. The lights would be off and two rows were set up in their study. Ruthie and I would sit in the front row and Maurie in the back row and we would watch 'Derek' on SBS with Ruthie giving a running commentary of exclamations.

I remember hiking in the Dandenongs with Ruthie just a few years back and how, to my amazement, I had to struggle to keep up with her.

I remember how Ruthie was amazing, too, the way she changed over the years and embraced change with open arms. It was Ruthie who first taught me how to use a computer. While I was afraid of the technology, Ruthie was taking it all in her stride teaching herself to be computer literate.

I remember how Ruthie never stopped learning, thinking and contributing to the community. How she took up a creative writing class in her 80's and churned out fantastic stories, of recollections of her life.

My memories are many and Ruthie will always be in my memory. Ruthie's heart and soul will remain forever in my heart and I know I will continue to be a reflection of her values and beliefs in the way I live my life.

No, Ruthie was not like other grandma's and I'm very glad of that.

I love you Ruthie and know you will live on forever in my heart and the hearts of others. Your work will continue through the work of the many people whose lives you have touched with your presence. Thank you for all that you have given me.

All my love,

Lindy O'Brien

Ruth Hope Crow was an amazing woman. She dedicated her life to social change. She had vision. She believed in Humanity. She believed it was possible to work together to make the world a better place for our children. She was my role model and my grandmother.

I remember my sister and I thinking that our grandmother was a bit different to other grandmas. Not only did Grandad cut her hair by putting a bowl over her head but she would talk about Durkheim's ideas of anomie, a nuclear free society, about the car way of life, and thinking globally and acting locally. Grandma helped and guided me through high school and two university degrees.

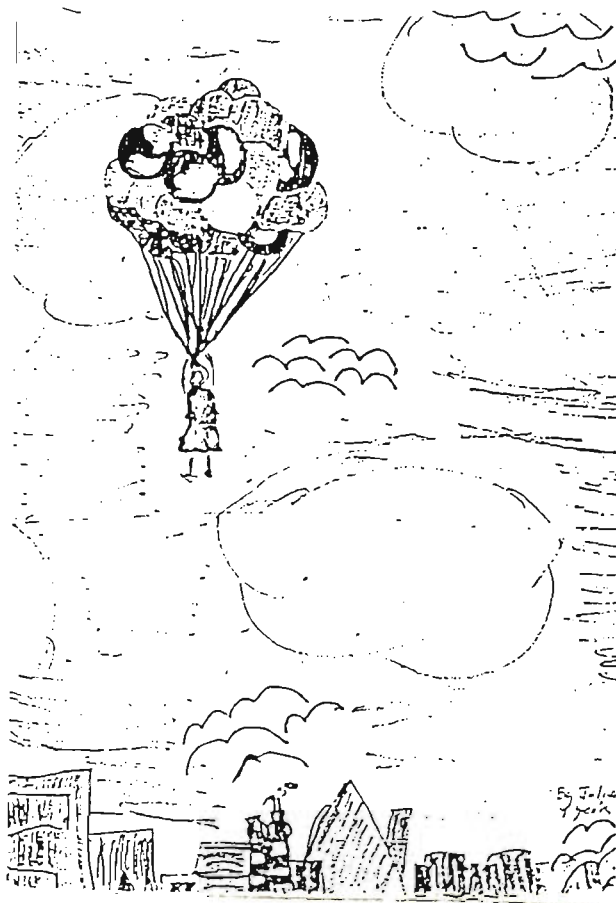
I remember being in awe of her energy, and wishing I had as much vitality, commitment, dedication and selflessness. I loved to hear of her campaigns, rallies and projects and to hear her 'skite' as she called it.

I am proud of Ruth Hope Crow, proud that I have known her and that I am her granddaughter. In a society where the 'me' generation and economic rationalism are flourishing and consuming, I pray that the legacy of grandma's work continues to touch others to keep the dream alive. Realize, we can all work together to make the world a better place for our children.

Grandma wrote to me at the birth of my son named Kaleb in 1997:

*"In the Bible in the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses put his hand on Caleb's head and said words to the effect, you will be one of the few people to see the promised land. It reminded me of Maurie's and my thoughts when June and Julie were born, how we dreamed about passing on to the next generation what we then called a 'better world' I don't expect to tread in the 'promised land' myself but (to quote the Bible) Caleb he shall see it ...(at least I hope so!!)".*

Kylie O'Brien



## RUTH CROW AND THE JUNIOR EUREKA LEAGUE

*Written by a participant with a little help from her friends*

Sometime in the late forties and certainly in the early fifties, Ruth Crow took the main responsibility for the organisation and leadership of the Junior Eureka League (JEL), the children's arm of the Eureka Youth League. The JEL, which was for young people between ten and sixteen, was very much based on the model of the young pioneers in the Soviet Union. Indeed, the young people elected to the leadership of the JEL were called pioneers, but the red scarves the JEL pioneers wore were changed to deep blue with a white corded edge as the cold war deepened. This matched the blue and white of the Eureka flag.

Activities included picnics, excursions to places of interest, work days preparing for May Day, club meeting days, gymnastics, folk dances, concerts, outings to the ballet, etc. and camps at Camp Eureka at Yarra Junction. The camps were run by people such as Ruth and a team of youth leaders and the pioneers.

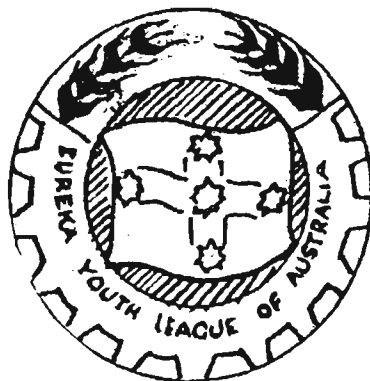
The JEL provided the children involved, who were mainly the children of communists, with a place to be, away from the cold war attacks and away from the peer pressures at school. Participation in the JEL gave you values of sharing, of valuing people, valuing peace and cooperation, of treasuring other cultures and your own. We were on our way to being internationalists. We valued physical fitness, appreciated differences and were mostly inclusive in practice. Boys and girls were expected to do the same activities. At the camp, we became dancers, group singers, actors, gymnasts, team players, cooks, caterers, scientists, cinema watchers, naturalists, artists, friends, confidants, bushwalkers, learners, leaders and especially, volley ball players. Incidentally, Camp

Eureka is in existence and is generally available for hire (tel. 9497-2130).

It was mainly Ruth, with a number of others, who set up all of this for a generation of children on the left. The opportunities presented to us through the JEL put us way ahead of our time. We had multicultural camps and learned about Aboriginal issues fifty years ago. We learned the value of the trade unions and the left. We were helped to acquire lifetime skills in organisation, in writing and speaking, in art appreciation and appreciation of our own cultural heritage, etc.

Ruth means various things to various people. One of us remembered very vividly the fact that JEL meetings were very democratically conducted. This was unusual in those days. One person remembers her as enthusiastic and full of energy. The attitude that Ruth fostered set up a framework that others picked up and followed. This process of thinking about our heritage and speaking together about the JEL has led us to plan a reminiscences day about the JEL, where we intend to put it on tape and record our thoughts in detail. We were lucky young people and, as elders now, we look back in gratitude to Ruth and her comrades who gave us the JEL.

by Marie, with help from Dave, Ina, Joy, Karl and Sonja  
May, 1999



## Ruth Crow - Lover and Carer for People

Ruth Crow - woman of the biggest heart whose lifetime was spent in sharing, caring, advancing and enjoying people. We shall miss her beaming smile inclusive of all.

Ruth was one of the foundation workers for the Free Kindergarten movement created by Mrs. Alfred Deakin and other leading citizens.

I first worked with Ruth in her teens in the Playgrounds Association when we were battling the MCC for public open space for peaceful pass-times and sports, for supervised playgrounds and trained play-leaders. At this time I was on a placement as a Social Work student under Miss Piper at Thistlewaite Street playground, South Melbourne. From this time in the early Thirties, Ruth and I moved in and out of each others lives for 66 years, working for 'people power' especially in relation to better facilities for families with children and the aged. When District Health Councils were established, Ruth and I were delegates from the City of Melbourne.

Ruth and Maurie were the ideal pair who early learnt how to organise and lobby, pressing for better amenities – playgrounds, open space, childcare facilities and other supports needed for families & individuals. Together they were major contributors to making Melbourne the most liveable city in the world.

I shall always hold Ruth in my heart as a perfect example of warm friendship. She was one who spread love, joy and concern for others where ever she went. Vale Ruth – an outstanding woman who shall always be remembered.

Jessie Clarke OAM, one of the Bicentennial Sixty.

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*Man's dearest possession is  
life  
And since it is given him to  
live but once  
He must so live, that dying  
he can say  
I gave all my life and  
all my strength  
To the finest cause in  
the world –  
The Liberation of Mankind.  
V. I. Lenin –*

These words of Lenin personify Ruth's life – Nancye Smith

# IN MEMORY OF RUTH CROW

## *The Earth Needs Friends Like Ruth*

The world is a poorer place since my friend Ruth left it, for she was a friend of the Earth, who fostered sustainability and its people.

She was a friend to everyone's children, not just her own, but particularly her own. Her pioneering in child care helped to secure a 'truly magical time' for many a child, as she hoped it would. Older children of the Junior Eureka League and teenagers of the Eureka League owe her a particular debt of gratitude.

She wanted a society in which human values were the prime objective, 'not material wealth, nor status, nor freedom at the expense of others'. That was the objective to which she devoted her life, her talents, energy and time. In the process, she never sought the limelight, but was always helpful, willingly undertaking unspectacular tasks, like catering for functions to help the cause and organising the clean-up afterwards.

She liked working with people and seldom missed an opportunity to encourage others to participate in planning and struggling for their own needs. By doing so, she helped sow many 'Seeds for Change' towards a better world.

The creation of 'Cosy Cottage' as a temporary home for a country family needing to visit a child hospitalised in Melbourne, exemplifies Ruth's participatory style. Volunteers renovated the building, Kaye Hopwood designed the outdoor mural, which was painted by artists (and others) at a North Melbourne Street Party on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1982. The slogan for passers to read was:

*"Children .....  
Our most endangered species  
Give them a peaceful world  
And a nuclear-free future."*

The slogan was endorsed by 23 organisations, mainly from North Melbourne. Inside, the cottage was fully furnished and maintained by volunteers, including Ruth, of course.

She advocated family assistance as well as women's rights and was a friend of our indigenous people, of multiculturalism, of our natural and cultural heritage areas – from Kakadu to Niddrie.

Ruth foresaw many needs, and initiated and took part in many campaigns, including ones for reduced traffic in residential streets, for health services, for public housing, education

and transport, for better working conditions, for peace and justice.

Through the establishment of the Crow Collection at the Victoria University of Technology and the publication of *ECOSO*, she has preserved many ideas for city planning and 'Making Melbourne Marvellous' – ideas that could still be useful. So, she will be a 'Friend of the Earth' for the future.

by Alvie Booth

P.S. Ruth was more than a dedicated activist for a better society. She was a friendly, hospitable, caring person, always ready to help others. I enjoyed every meeting I had with her. Her very active mind was always brimming over with ideas and she was fun to be with.

During the short time she taught with me at Pascoe Vale Girls' Secondary School, she actually had the girls singing while they worked on mundane domestic tasks, like dish washing in the Home Economics class. Such frivolity had never been heard of at that time. Ruth made up little rhymes to accompany different jobs. I'm sure there had seldom been such happy home-keeping classes.

Ruth was very self disciplined and well organised and taught me many things, especially about childcare and involving children in decision making. Knowing her made me better organised than I otherwise would have been.

Like many clever people with fertile minds, Ruth was a great talker, not about trivialities – world affairs, ideas, plans, projects for change. Once during 1947, I wondered how I would be able to keep my next appointment. But I need not have worried. When I hesitantly said, "Sorry to interrupt, Ruth, in ten minutes I'm due ...." "Oh!" she said at once, "Byee, I'll see you soon." Few prolific talkers can do that! I kept the appointment, and knew that I'd never need to worry about 'escaping' from Ruth again. Whenever it was necessary, she would switch off like the light when the sun sets in the tropics.

How I wish I could switch on for a long conversation with her right now!

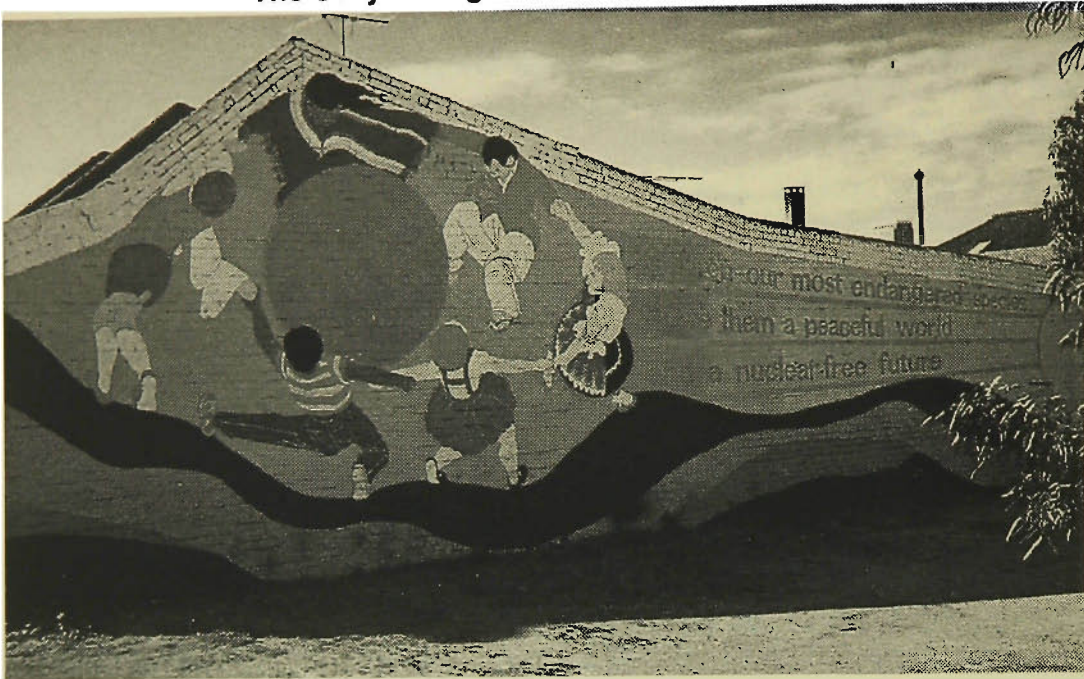
We miss you, Ruth, for your contribution to the World & for YOURSELF.

[AB]



## **“Putting Magic into the Lives of Children”**

**The Cosy Cottage mural, North Melbourne**



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### ***“Seeds for Change” - Creatively confronting the energy crisis***

I first met Ruth and Maurie at the Radical Ecology Conference. Ruth proved to be extremely helpful in ensuring that the child care arrangements for my two young children were right and sensitizing me to child care issues. The consequences of this interaction was that I became involved in establishing a child care cooperative in Ballarat East.

Maurie wanted to continue developing many of the planning arguments that he and Ruth had developed in *Plans for Melbourne*, Vols. 1,2,3. Maurie convened a working group to discuss many of the issues and after several months the concept of a publication evolved. After much discussion, work writing and rewriting *Seeds for Change* was born, developed and evolved over a thirty month period. There were times that this process seemed to be out of control. All through this time Ruth succored and nurtured the gestation of the book. It is not unfair to say that without her support *Seeds for Change* would not have happened.

Ruth made a number of important contributions to *Seeds for Change*. She was instrumental in ensuring the synergy between land use planning and social arrangements.

The *Seeds for Change* project developed with an eclectic group that met on what was to become a two weekly basis at O'Shanassey St., North Melbourne. I had the privilege of staying over at night with Ruth and Maurie. It didn't take long to discover that Ruth came from Ballarat and that I knew her sister Win and we developed a friendship from there!

The time that I spent with Ruth and Maurie made me aware of the power of Ruth's ability to network on a wide range of issues ranging across the North Melbourne Association, Union of Australian Women, Community Child Care, the Cosy Cottage and her regular comments in *The Melbourne Times*. Her unique way of organizing her and Maurie's life, her optimism and humanity, her generosity with time and information, and her role as a mother and grandmother.

Ruth had a natural ability to incorporate and to encompass new ideas and to then encourage others to reach for a better future. One of her lasting legacies is the impact that she has had on other people's lives.

John Dick



# RUTH HOPE CROW AM

## Tribute from former *Community Child Care* colleagues

***"Women must keep telling their histories, otherwise they'll get lost."***

**Ruth Crow, community activist**

Ruth's innumerable contributions to the social movements and communities in which she lived and worked will ensure that her history will not be lost. The *Crow Collection* contains all the details that are needed about the chronology of Ruth's history. This short tribute celebrates Ruth as a powerful and inspirational friend of the community-based children's services movement.

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Ruth Crow devoted her entire life to creating a society that would be better for everyone. Her vision of a better society was one that would offer strong support to mothers and children, that planned ways to increased everyone's quality of life, that was environmentally cleaner, more just, more democratic, more peaceful.

While Ruth presented as an unassuming and very practical and pragmatic person (which she was), she had a great intellectual capacity. She applied her great zest for life, her fine intellect and defined set of values across many issues and causes. She initiated *Action for Adequate Child Care* in 1970, and was a progressive influence on the ground-breaking Victorian Consultative Council on Pre-School Child Development. Out of this work, she forged a set of '10 golden principles' which underpinned the revolutionary introduction of child care that swept across Australia during the 70s and early 80s. Her advice was always practical - and memorable: *"You sometimes have to make compromises along the way,"* she said, *"but never do anything that cuts across the thirty year goal"*.

Ruth totally understood the connections between families' need for support, community development to generate that support, neighbourhoods that 'work' and urban planning that simultaneously protects the environment and 'creates community'. Long before most people had any inkling of the ways in which information technology would transform global communications, the Crows' conversation and writings were laced with the concepts of 'creating webs' and 'hubs'; of 'clustering' the complementary services needed at neighbourhood, regional and central levels, and 'connecting' them with safe, comfortable, efficient and affordable public transport. *'Think globally, act locally, then think globally again'* was a guiding principle of Ruth's life.

She was a gifted teacher, inspiring several generations of participants in the women's

and children's services movements. But her passion for knowledge and ideas meant that she was also a great learner. Studiously avoiding the temptation to proselytise about her own extensive life experience, she was open to and interested in others - especially of the younger generation coming through.

And the younger generation related to her, possibly because - despite a mischievous sense of humour, she was always kind and gracious - and such good company! She was also the most genuinely inclusive person one could ever work with, noticing and acknowledging every contribution, however slight, and going to great lengths - even to the arrangement of the chairs in a room - to make it easy for everyone to participate. The sharing of nutritious food was very important to her. As a young woman, she carted nutritious foods - on the train - to the families of the striking Wonthaggi coal-miners. *"I don't cook"* she pronounced, *"I prepare balanced meals"*.

Her hard life during World War II may have developed the ascetic dimension of her personality. She had a minimalist approach to material possessions: nearly empty cutlery and crockery cupboards would be airily explained: *"Oh, I had to set someone up last week"*. Always well groomed (Maurie cut her hair), she would joke about which of her two dresses - both blue - she would wear for a special occasion.

Ruth loved working with people from all ages and backgrounds, helping them to appreciate both the common threads that bind us and the diversities that enrich us all. She was a rare person who combined a forceful intellect with vision, passion, and a great generosity of spirit - and whose lifetime of campaigning for a better society left tangible results.

We will miss her loyal friendship and her unerring wisdom.

Ann Morrow & Colleagues

## She always said that "Hope" was her second name

I first met Ruth when she came to give the CPA's submission to the Victorian Health Minister's Consultative Council on Pre School Child Development in 1972. She did on that day exactly what I saw her do from that time on to the very last day I met with her (three days before she died), which was to exercise her critical faculties on behalf of those getting the rough end of the pineapple, and carefully not for the furtherance of those already privileged. Her interests then ranged across not only the children of the working class needing both child care and kindergarten experiences, but also the children of the working class, ethnic and Aboriginal parentage who should be trained as pre school centre staff, *and* that such training should be in a college situated in the northern or western suburbs.

And then there was Ruth, throughout all the years with Community Child Care in the 1970s and all the campaigns and activities of the 1980s and 1990s, urging us on, kindly but insistently, *'Come on, come on, keep going, keep going'* - while we were falling about, rocked by the efforts of multiple razor gangs and the rolling back of all that we'd achieved. Ruth, who'd seen far worse than we knew, remained ever optimistic. *'Why didn't you tell us that local government was part of the repressive state apparatus?'* we wailed! It had something to do with hope. Ruth moved with the times, seeing the new movements, the new contradictions, the new fault lines, and turned her hand to work with them. Why shouldn't the next generation be given the chance at expecting otherwise?

Yet each new development was closely scrutinised, watched and judged - like for example this new fangled 'participatory action research'. Like the Science for the People that had gone before, Ruth judged it 'A Good Thing', even while contradictory. She specially liked Simon Kneebone's cartoons, and 'lifted' them whenever she could see a new use for them!

As she moved with the times she seemed to get younger rather than older. At a Ruth-memories dinner I had soon after she died, Kath McKay recalls her coming to a Rural Women's Festival at Erica in Gippsland in 1992. Kath had reserved one of the few bunk beds for her and Ruth was aghast at the thought that she might not get to sleep

in a tent. Kath also has a wonderful picture of her 'bebopping' with Rose Read.

And of course she remained forever interested in anything that would further the cause of humanity, scrutinising fiercely for signs of justice, human dignity and peace, right to the end. I had some precious minutes with her on the Easter Tuesday in the acute Coronary Care Unit at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. I kissed her hand - a mock gesture I'd used along with a curtsy since she won her gong. It made her laugh with simultaneous horror and pleasure, but this time it was the only part of her not hooked to a machine that was available for the purpose. She, brisk, efficient, summed up that she'd been very seriously ill and that she still wasn't clear of it, but that she *'would be getting out of here'*. Having dealt with such personal trivia, she said there wasn't much else she could say. I showed her the plastic bag of fragrant snippets I'd brought from my garden - she toyed with the nasturtium leaf; there was a lemon leaf, some lavender and an autumn leaf, some lemon balm and a daisy. Then I pulled out the long brown paper poster for the Ross House Open Day. For *this* she leaned forward with characteristic interest. Despite pain and discomfort and whatever else rippled through her as her body fought against the last ebbing away, she squinted, reading carefully, critically assessing what was to be offered, quickly analysing the signifiers ... International Year of Older persons. Aboriginal welcome. Self help groups. Natural therapies. The Internet. Older Tenants Housing Report... And then delivered her considered verdict: *'That looks very interesting'*.

Ruth's vital legacy was her unflagging hope, her sharp critical perception and her heart politics. (Although of course 'heart' would be a bit too, well, 'soppy' I can hear her saying ... there needing always to be room for a little irreverence.)

Vale dearest elder and sister comrade.

(What's that you're saying now? - *'Come on, come on, that's enough of all of that - get back to it ...!'*)

Yoland Wadsworth

## **Ruth's contribution to the Melbourne City Council Childcare Consultation**

In the late 70's the Department of Community Services started to put pressure on Melbourne City Council, encouraging them to take a more active role in planning for children's and family services. Workers in surrounding suburbs were pleased to have the issue discussed. At an initial planning meeting of services and local government it was agreed that a municipal consultation would be held with parents, children and residents about what they needed in terms of services for the following five years.

The planning group members were excited about taking on the task. Community Childcare lent their expertise to help us begin by planning and writing a small book on how to hold a community consultation. Different strategies for data gathering were used in each suburb. Surveys and a few focus groups were held in Parkville and East Melbourne. More extensive approaches such as community meetings, asking parents and young people to tell stories about their lives, demographic analysis, discussions with community organisations and interviews were held in Kensington, Flemington and North Melbourne.

Each suburb wrote a report about their needs. Then the plan was to write an overall report for the municipality. By the time we had got to this stage we had run out of steam. One of the women who had been part of the planning Ruth crow offered to pull together a final report. I didn't know of Ruth's work so was a bit sceptical about whether she could manage the job. At the same time we were exhausted and relieved that someone was prepared to have a go. A month after taking the document Ruth brought back a draft. It was wonderful. Somehow it captured in accessible language the essence of what we had been saying.

Ruth wrote that much of the best assistance is provided outside what is conventionally understood as the 'welfare system': within the family, neighbourhood and personal circle. This document argued that the involvement of the community in every aspect of children's services is the key strategy for this policy of resurrounding the family with supportive relationship of neighbours and friends. She had recommended five main principles for children's services. These principles pulled together much of what was already practice wisdom and later

became the corner stone for many other services.

**1.The importance of the neighbourhood as the focus of planning:** As many needs of children and parents as possible should be met within their own neighbourhoods. Services should be close by, of small size with flexible hours and an informal homely feel. Services should help local people to see that the service belongs to the local community, and encourage people to use it as though it were their own place.

**2.The importance of encouraging families to form supportive relationships with each other:** Services should recognise that ordinary people living close by can be of great help to one another. They should make sure that the service provides opportunities for people to make friends and find ways of helping one another.

**3.The importance of community involvement in planning and development:** Parents, local community members and children themselves should have the chance to take part in the planning and running of services. Every service should make sure that information about what it is doing is available. The ideas and agreement of the local community on the running of services should be sought and at least a majority of local people should be included on the management committees. They should also provide opportunities for parents to take part in activities with their children, and if they wish, to help in some way in the service.

**4.The importance of ensuring that services are culturally relevant:** Services and new groups should remember the different countries, cultures and social backgrounds the parents and children come from and make sure the way they work suits those different ways of life.

**5.The importance of co-ordination:** Existing and proposed services and supports should work together to avoid duplication of some services and a lack of others. Care should be taken to ensure the available resources are used as effectively as possible.

Without Ruth's work we would never have been skilful enough to write a message which countless people in the municipality could make sense of. Not only were her words important to us but many people from other areas and the work and took it back to their community to use as a planning document.

Lesley Hoatson, April 1999

# Ruth Crow - A Passionate Life

1916 - 1999

Ruth Crow, who had been an active North Melbourne resident for over twenty years, was a passionate person. She wore her heart on her sleeve; you knew exactly what was important to her, and how you could share in her vision for a fairer and more participatory society. She was very enthusiastic but always respectful of alternative positions. Ruth was direct and transparent in all her projects; there was no hidden agenda and no silly games.

## The Communicator

It is difficult to imagine Ruth without a pen or a typewriter; she always had something to communicate. The *Ecoso Exchange* Newsletter was an important vehicle for the sharing of ideas. Even when not a resident of North Melbourne, Ruth would be a regular contributor to the *North Melbourne News*. She would write for the News, help to produce the paper, and help to distribute the paper; it was a very hands on involvement.

## The Networker

And what is your name? It would be impossible for any spark of enthusiasm to go unnoticed by Ruth. To the end, her filing system was a constant source of contacts. Whatever the project, Ruth would always be building bridges with both people and organisations to consolidate the effort. It was a very cooperative approach. Ruth was always supportive of community initiatives that had fair outcomes as a central concern. This support included the 'Bread not Circuses' campaign [no justice - no games] and the North Melbourne based People's Committee for Melbourne.

## The Human Values

The breadth of Ruth's concerns was reflected in recent contributions to the *North Melbourne News*:

March 1998: *Days of Hope - Emphasising the value of the participatory planning approaches of the 1970's*

June 1998: *The Brown Bus is my Life-Line: emphasising the importance of public transport as a means of gaining access throughout the city.*

December 1998: *The Reconciliation Dance: Ruth reminds us that the idea of reconciliation has existed for a long time - especially in the union movement during the 1950's.*

We must be grateful that Ruth recorded many of her concerns in print; Ruth has left behind so much of value. An incredible commitment to the community over many decades; an approach that emphasised fairness and transparency; enthusiasm without arrogance; a sense of urgency without impatience and the willingness to work cooperatively with a very diverse range of people and organisations. It is an enviable record; thank you Ruth.

Ewan Ogilvy  
North Melbourne

I think it was Eric Benjamin who introduced me to Ruth and Maurie Crow when I moved from Parkville to North Melbourne – around 30 years or so ago.

Dear Ruth soon had me involved in moving from the Parkville Association to the North Melbourne Association meetings – which I strongly supported until my move two years ago to the Old Colonists Association in Clifton Hill. I am sure that my strong attachment to North Melbourne is because of my involvement in local issues there through my association with dear Ruth.

One local activity I well recall is being 'on duty' at the tram stop at the corner of Abbotsford and Haines Streets – to my shame, I cannot now recall why it was that Ruth arranged this roster at the local tram stops in North Melbourne. (And how we need Ruth now to help keep our tram conductors on duty!)

I still go (infrequently these days) to the Zoo as a Volunteer Guide. Ruth always gave me the impression that I could have put my time to better use in a local activity! I well recall her saying to me every now and then that she had wanted to ask me to a meeting on a local issue – "*but I thought you'd be at the Zoo*"!

Dear Ruth, I thank you too, for *ECOSO* – to which I shall always subscribe – and I know my grandson Daniel, also a subscriber – always wanted to meet you in person to discuss issues with you! I never arranged that meeting!

With affection in memorium, Lillias O'Dea

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Ruth Crow was the greatest facilitator I have ever known. She took our fledgling interest, involved that interest by way of a particular project, nurtured it and watched it grow into a fully blown commitment and involvement in community issues and organisations. She tendered it as a loving garden, always encouraging our growth with words of enthusiasm and praise. These were often penned on quintessential Ruthie 'notes' decorated with Ailsa O'Connor's street scene or cartoons or her 'treetops' sketch from the balcony of the upper storey O'Shanassy Street flat.

Ruth built on the rich garden bed of history and her (and Maurie's) experiences in early social planning, but the sense of the future was very much to the fore. Cross-fertilising our ideas with others, expanding concepts and visions - with other groups and organisations, cultures and, as always, with the encouragement of young people - is a legacy Ruth and Maurie have given to the North and West Melbourne community. The high profile of our community over many years and, in particular, the North & West Melbourne Association, in participatory planning, the environment, social and other issues is a result of Ruth and Maurie's inspiration, enthusiasm and encouragement – and it lives on.

I certainly am the richer for having known Ruth and will greatly miss her.

Kaye Oddie  
North Melbourne





## FROM CAFÉ SOCIETY TO ACTIVE SOCIETY: A TRIBUTE TO RUTH CROW

[Extract from a longer tribute]

At this time (1972), I was trying to understand contemporary urban politics and planning in Melbourne and Ruth and Maurie became my teachers, far more so than my academic supervisors back in Canberra. At that first meeting, they gave me copies of their recently published three-volume *PLAN FOR MELBOURNE* (1969), as well as newsletters from the North Melbourne Association, which they had gotten off the ground, and sustained. The plainly titled *Plan for Melbourne* was an astonishing document. It was a critique of the existing planning system and its official plan - which wanted to knock down half of the inner city, base the future of the metropolitan area on the motor car and provide Melbourne with 300 miles of freeways. *Plan for Melbourne* was a fully formed vision of an alternative city, based on the privileging of neighbourhoods and the communities they nourished. It was a neighbourhood-based, metropolitan plan and, as such, was heir to a distinguished tradition of thinking about cities and planning, which I would later trace back to such unsung heroines as Mary Simkhovitch and her neighbourhood plan for New York in 1909, and the better-known Jane Jacobs and her devastating critique of the technocratic megalomaniacs who were intent on destroying New York's neighbourhood fabric in the 1960's (in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*). The *Plan for Melbourne* deserves a place in the canon of great books on cities in the twentieth century, sharing the humane vision of such other luminaries as Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, and Paul and Percival Goodman's *Communitas*. With almost thirty years hindsight on this document, I believe it is the single most important planning document and vision produced in Australia this century. Other contributions may be more widely known, such as Hugh Stretton's *Ideas for Australian Cities*, but only because that book had the advantage of better distribution. Ruth and Maurie's *Plan for Melbourne* - which I have always wanted to re-title as *The People's Plan for Melbourne* - was published by the Communist Party and had a sort of underground existence, rather than the mainstream life it deserved.

There were many more meetings and many more cups of tea over the next twelve months as I continued my research and continued to benefit from the Crow's insights into what made Melbourne tick. At that time, and in large part because of the inspiration of their work, I joined the Communist Party of Australia. In 1977, when I got my first academic job, at then Footscray Institute, now VUT, my friendship with Ruth and Maurie picked up where it had left off in 1974 and we found ourselves often sharing the same platform, agitating against some undesirable development or advocating for a more community-based approach to urban planning in this city. By this time, they were also deeply involved in researching and writing about environmental issues and *Seeds for Change* became another influential work.

But I think Ruth's influence and inspiration, in the long run, came less from her writing than from her '*being*', from her tireless pursuit of justice wherever it led her, and from the example that this provided for others, old and young, about how to live, and what was worth living and, therefore, fighting for.

I left Melbourne in 1981 and spent the next 15 years, firstly in Sydney, then in Los Angeles, but always keeping in touch with Ruth through *Ecoso Exchange* - Ruth the networker. When I returned to Melbourne to a job at RMIT in 1996, Ruth welcomed me back effusively and turned up to my first public lecture at RMIT - which was a presentation about shopping malls entitled '*Shut Up and Shop*'. Ruth appreciated this title and, in question time, she cracked us all up with her comment that she just couldn't understand why everyone nowadays spent so much time sitting around under umbrellas drinking coffees and eating. This, to her, was not the good life, but rather the decadent life. Two years before the Department of Infrastructure's celebratory publication, *From Donut City to Café Society* (1998), Ruth had put her critical finger on the same trend, but one that bothered her greatly because it was detracting from that active form of civil society in which she had been engaged for so many years. ...

Leonie Sandercock  
Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning  
University of Melbourne



## A STORY ABOUT FEELING POWERFUL 1988.

### I Just Want to Go Home !

The Day We Marched to Peter's Tune ... Dah, Dah A Dumpty Dee.  
by Ruth Crow

"If you go home, Mr. Crow, you'll be dead within six weeks"

*"I just want to go home !".*

"Mr. Crow, if you go home you won't have access to our life saving machines. You will be dead within six weeks."

*"I just want to go home !!!".*

"If you go home, Mr. Crow, it may not be possible for you to be readmitted to hospital. You will be dead within six weeks."

Were my heart beats breaking the silence ? What would happen if I burst into tears ? What is Maurie caved in ? He hung his head even lower.

*"I just want to go home !!!".*

Over night the news of Maurie's decision must have reached some of his friends who were employed at the hospital. So,

#### IMAGINE THE PROCESSION

First, came MAURIE in a wheel chair,  
then a couple of social workers,  
after them, a wardsman, walking beside a nursing aide,  
next came a doctor in his white coat  
An occupational therapist joined in and soon after,  
a physio-student,  
And I was trailing in the rear,

#### HUMMING

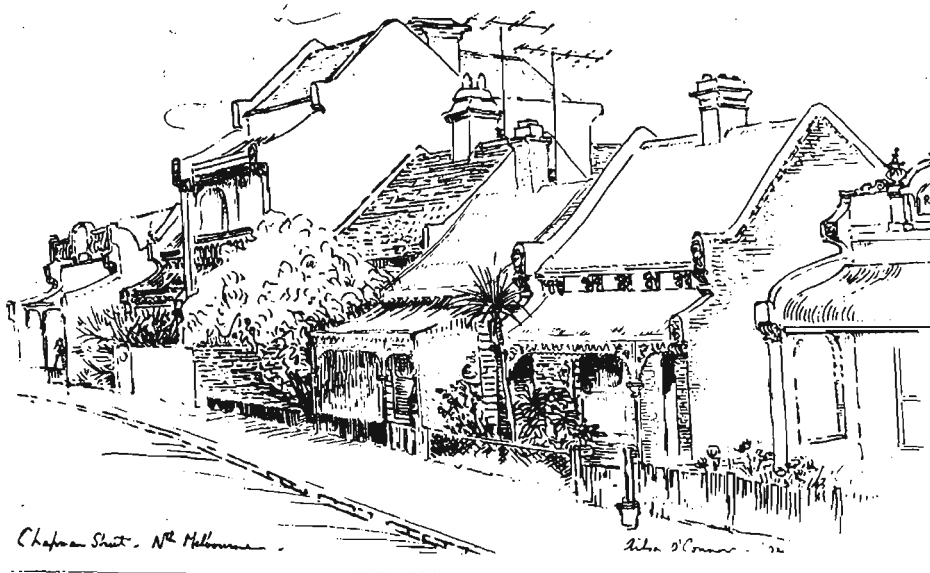
*A dah, dah a dumpty dee, a dumpty, dunpty dumpty dee, A dah dumpty dah, dumpty dee ....*

*Dah dah a dumpty dee, Maurie's coming home with me !*

*For one whole month we will be free ... a dah dumpty dah dumpty dee ...*

*But what if he had said "I don't want to die, let me stay in hospital", What then ?*

**DAH, DAH, A DUMPTY DEE !! MAURIE'S COMING HOME WITH ME !! A DAH, DUMPTY DAH.**



## **In Tribute to the Late Ruth Crow**

The flyer was green.

The map was metropolitan and extensive.

“Forest finger-ways?”

From the central city area, radiating outwards, in all directions, to the peripheral suburbs, were walkways, pathways, planted, forested, green-fingers: reaching outwards from the inner city built-up environment towards the places where the sky, the air, the green grass and the green trees and shrubs could still be reached - by walking -

this concept rivetted us.

We loved the idea.

Every time I moved house, that precious, fragile, green flyer moved with me, carefully preserved - from Upwey, to Richmond, to Clifton Hill, to Box Hill - until I moved house once too often, and the flyer was lost.

But the idea - never.

The flyer remains in my mind's eye, and the concept - to turn freeways into forested walking tracks - persists as a political and social goal.

Elizabeth Coldicutt

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## **From Rosemary Ward, with love**

I first met Ruth and Maurie in 1984, through the environmental movement. They befriended me at a turbulent time in my life and encouraged my endeavors; through their inspiration my horizons expanded, their all-embracing outlook aided my own development of a big picture.

I found Ruth's ability for warmth and enduring care of both people and principles most wonderful. Ruth and Maurie will remain with me, dear friends and perpetual inspiration for always.

## MY PERSONAL TRIBUTE TO RUTH HOPE CROW AM

I first met Ruth at what was then called Moorabbin TAFE in 1989. I was a community development student in my second year of study and was waiting outside the room to welcome Ruth who was our guest speaker. I was drawn to Ruth's passion and knowledge. I don't remember the topic or even the particular subject. I just remember the impact Ruth had on me.

I offered Ruth a lift home and, in Ruth's inimitable style, she took me under her wing. When there was a particular issue she felt I was concerned about (or should be), Ruth let me know about it. It wasn't long before I was co-opted onto the Crow Collection Committee, where I was a member for several years.

And, in due course, my daughter Marnie was drawn into Ruthie's magic and she was offered a place in Ruth's life. Marnie was a year 11 student and interviewed Ruth for the Crow Collection video. Ruth had then won the two of us over!

I used to enjoy Ruth's walks utilising public transport. I became part of a small group who occasionally would wander (albeit purposefully, of course) along tracks. One I particularly remember was a trip to the Dandenongs, where Ruth and Maurie lived early in their married life. Ruth assured us the paths were public and they weren't marked because walkers were not encouraged. I really enjoyed the walks and the company. My mother came along on one of the walks and she was the third of us to be won over by Ruth.

When I first started working after graduating I was a purist - I believed that community development should not create a dependency and therefore I should only stay in any one

position for a maximum of 12 months. Ruth put me straight, telling me that many people put in a lot of time training up workers and there should be some commitment to the community to stay longer. The fact that I always listened to Ruth and followed her advice was evidenced by the fact that I stayed in that position for 9 years.

Ruth always encouraged me and provided the opportunity to share my passions - community theatre, community circus. She was always supportive attending events I had organised or was involved with. Often, she would bring her nephew Colin, who worked on theatre projects I was involved in.

I enjoyed the 'Gatherings in the Gloaming' in January each year. I used to take friends to introduce them to Ruth, her friends and colleagues, and to see the bats. I rarely visited those beautiful gardens at other times; Ruth introduced me to them.

I will always treasure Ruth's friendship and the special gift she had of involving people of all ages and her ability to bring diverse groups together.

In research projects, I always now include a section on "unexpected outcomes", which comes straight from my experience of knowing Ruth. I shared Ruth's love of encouraging and discovering changed perceptions where previously considered not possible.

An "unexpected outcome" was my meeting Ruth Crow and I will always be thankful for that.

Julie Statkus  
28/4/99

## RUTH CROW

***“She is the spirit of eternity, the spirit of hope and the spirit of self help.”***

The living, breathing Ruth Crow is no more, sadly for us all who knew her, but, like all life, that's not the end to the matter. “*Seeds for Change*” and the Crow Collection are two little caches left behind for sensitive souls to find in the future, giving them keys to a much better world and much better lives.

I recall one of our last one-to-one times together. We met on a tram going up Elizabeth Street. Ruth was carrying a new computer she had just bought and, in her inimitable style, was focussed on using it, but also on organising another event soon to eventuate. She encapsulated her indomitable spirit of doing, of working into the future, of making a better place and of mobilising and enlarging the community life of individuals. In that, she is the spirit of eternity, the spirit of hope and the spirit of self help. She will live forever, even as a seed after a holocaust.

We were privileged indeed to have known Ruth Crow.

Rod Charles

One-time Crow Collection Association Committee member

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No doubt the memories of Ruth's wonderfully dynamic character will always remain vivid for us all. What I hope will never be forgotten is the way in which she orchestrated so many positive and engaging gatherings. These gatherings brought together the network of connections and friends that Ruth developed during her many years of active involvement with the community. As usual the planning and organisation began a year or more earlier, yet on the day, Ruth always made things seem so naturally together and lacking of rigidity.

Ruth always felt that it was important to involve every section of the community in her work. In no way were these people invited along to play purely token roles. Instead they were invited to participate and share their experiences as well as make valuable contributions to the lively debates that always evolved at her gatherings. It was hoped that they would then take back some of the ideas bounced around to their gatherings and continue the interaction of knowledge between community groups. Ruth's successful gatherings were a symbol of the ingenuity of Ruth and her way.

I know that I will tell my children and grandchildren about Ruth and her work, because I believe that she was not only a special person in our community, but also a reminder that we lived in a community. I hope that we will be able to continue her work, as well as ensure that the Crow Collection continues to remain a living library.

Thanks for everything Ruth!

Alex English

## Struth!

Lived her belief that joy is our birthright.

I asked her and Maurie how they kept going through all the setbacks. Maurie: *"I'm a communist"*. Ruth, smiling,; *"Celebrate every victory, no matter how small. One step forward, three steps back, is still one step further forward"*.

The Crow vision of community development and seeds for change is the background logic of my political, economic and social thinking. Just feels like commonsense – and I'm still surprised when others don't share it.

Mystified that I went to India to study Buddhism, deeply open to me after.

The image alive in her eyes, she tells of the early days when they ran the teahouse atop Mt. Dandenong: *"To wax the floor, we'd break up old candles and dance on them"*.

At 80: *"I get tired. I have to sit down and have a cup of tea when I get in."*

Talking about her childhood, her family, daughters, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, in-laws – what they're up to, humorous things they said, where they fit in the grand picture.

Her work – vast, visionary, benefitting others, well though and well felt, continuously put into practice through creative construction, collaboration and meticulous attention to invisible detail and the feelings of others.

Thanks Ruth.

Jennifer Lane



## **CITY OF MELBOURNE - TRIBUTE TO RUTH CROW (1916-1999)**

Ruth Crow lived and worked for seven decades as a community researcher and community activist. Her first published article in 1933 was titled "Enthusiasm" and it was this quality that characterised her life and work for social change. Ruth was one of the first women to be awarded a Senior Technical Scholarship to the Emily McPherson College to study dietetics and management. She applied this training to research and to work as secretary-organiser of the Brunswick Children's Centres, South Yarra Day Nursery and as a member of the Committee for Co-ordinating Child Care in Wartime.

Following World War II, Ruth was appointed to the Exhibition Youth Centre and then as Education Field Officer for the Victorian Association of Youth Clubs, and introduced many innovative programs. In the 1950's, Ruth worked with the Eureka Youth League and became involved with the Union of Australian Women. This period saw the beginning of Ruth's contributions to local newspapers on community issues. Ruth and Maurie, together, later established the newsletter '*Ecoso Exchange*' as a written forum on planning, social and other issues.

Ruth was a co-founder of the North Melbourne Association, which began as the North Melbourne Community Development Association in the late 1960's and an early campaign was to save the Happy Valley shops in Abbotsford Street from the Housing Commission. Ruth was one of the four campaigners who led the action.

The early Association then went on to develop a strategic plan for the North and West Melbourne area in response to the Melbourne City Council's initiative for a municipal-wide Strategy Plan. The Citizens Action Plan for North & West Melbourne (CAN) was published in 1973 as the local plan for the North and West Melbourne area. Ruth and Maurie were very much involved in this initiative and continued to foster community participation in the planning process and in environmental and social issues for many years.

Ruth's own initiatives included development of the North and West Melbourne Community Health Centre and the Neighbourhood Centre. Her 'Cosy Cottage' Project saw the use of an unoccupied union-owned cottage in Errol Street to provide accommodation for country families with children in the Royal Children's Hospital. She helped establish Community Child Care and was later made a life member of this organisation. Ruth also facilitated community input to the model MCC Consultation on Children's Services.

Ruth felt very strongly about community consultation and participation and was a great organiser and facilitator of local issues and events. She continued her contributions to the local newspapers, usually under the pen name of "Una Voce", including the *Northern Advertiser*, *The Melbourne Times* and the *North Melbourne News*.

Ruth left North Melbourne in the late 1980's after Maurie Crow's death to live in the Princes Hill Village in Carlton. Appalled at the turn-of-the-century management practices and the facilities there, she set about reform and was asked to join a Ministerial advisory committee on housing for elderly persons.

In Ruth's later years, as Senior Associate in the Faculty of Arts at Victoria University, Footscray, her efforts were concentrated on the Crow Collection, which comprised Maurie and Ruth's extensive collection of working papers and documents donated to the University.

Ruth was never one to seek personal acclaim, however, she was made a Member of the Order of Australia for her services to the community through the promotion of participatory environmental and social planning.

Ruth died on April 9<sup>th</sup>.



## Awards:

Maurie & Ruth Crow	Robin Boyd Environmental Award (1972) Royal Australian Institute of Architects
	Barrett Medal (1973) Town and Country Planning Association
Ruth Crow	Senior Technical Scholarship, Emily McPherson College (1935) Free Place, Melbourne University Social Work Department (1946) Life Member, Community Child Care (1979) Member, Order of Australia (1993) Life Member, Town and Country Planning Association (1997)

Address delivered by: Martin Brennan, Flagstaff Ward Councillor, City of Melbourne

Address prepared by: Kaye Oddie, North & West Melbourne Association  
Sheila Byard, Secretary, Crow Collection Association  
Martin Brennan, Flagstaff Ward Councillor, City of Melbourne

## RESOLUTION

*"That the Council acknowledges and pays tribute to the life's work of Ruth Crow, community researcher and activist, and her contribution to the lives of those living and working in North and West Melbourne yesterday, today and tomorrow, and her wider contribution to the promotion of participatory social and environmental planning across this city and this country.*

*That a plaque be installed in the Royal Park Native Garden in celebration of Ruth and Maurie Crow – their partnership with each other and with our local and global community."*

City of Melbourne

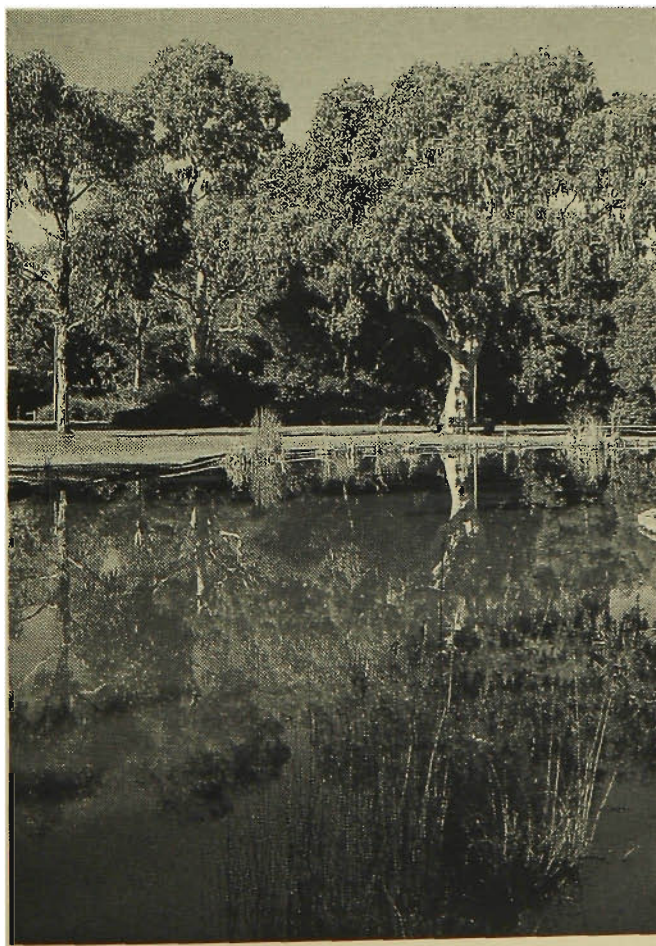


Photo: David Tatmall

**“The history of the distinguished social work of you and your husband remains firmly embedded in the Crow Collection, which should proceed into the future with ever increasing importance.”**

It is with the feeling of a serene sadness that I write this brief tribute to Ruth enlightened with gratitude, warmth and respect for her indomitable opposition to the ills which shred our society. Although inwardly exploding with rage and indignation, Ruth invariably kept her calm and could relieve tensions by a lighter relevant comment before shrewdly advancing solutions aimed at achieving justice.

I first met Ruth in the late 1930s, when she and her lively husband, Maurie, lived in Brighton. We were full of revolutionary zeal and ambitions for a peaceful socialist future, and took part in many meetings and demonstrations.

Came the 1939-45 war, I was discharged from the army early 1946 and the Crows had left Brighton. For many years we only occasionally met, such as greeting the Dean of Canterbury and Paul Robeson. Then in 1988, the University acquired my mostly Australian literature collection & the following year, Ruth donated the Crows' extraordinary accumulation of social struggle material which is now housed securely beside it at Footscray Park campus.

The Crow Collection needs no recommendation from me. But I welcome the chance to say a few words about Ruth. Her strength of purpose is wonderfully reflected in the manner in which the Crow Collection is displayed on the shelves. Nothing is left to chance. Just to quietly enter the room, gently close the door to pause and meditate in the stillness of the cosy bookish atmosphere, then to let your mind wander into the possibilities of all the contents you survey, and you will feel and sense Ruth Crow and also her Maurie. It is uncanny!

Ruth was entitled to be extremely proud of both their achievements, but pride never poked its unctuous head into her conversations; it was replaced with humility. This humility was never more so unconsciously expressed than when people praised her for the A.M. award.

So vale dear Ruth! You have departed our company but you will long remain in our memory, and the history of the distinguished social work of you and your husband remains firmly embedded in the Crow Collection, which should proceed into the future with ever increasing importance.

John White

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**From Martin Powell**

I first met Ruth in 1974 when she and Maurie were guest speakers at an INSPECT camp at Steiglitz. INSPECT was a secondary students/youth environmental movement. They introduced us to many ideas and principles linking together social & ecology issues, public transport, energy and town planning. Since that time I have worked with Ruth on various projects. She never ceased to amaze & inspire with her breadth of skills & experience. Ruth helped initiate and organise the national Radical Ecology Conference. Her support & enthusiasm was greatly appreciated by all at the Environmental Action Centre in North Melbourne from 1978.

Ruth was a very principled person who also had a good sense of fun. A few years ago she organised a bushwalk in the Dandenongs for a group of us. Ruth was pretty fit & we were certainly striding out to keep up. Always helpful, Ruth would post to me various articles & publications. She gave me great encouragement for my own project, making and exhibiting circus & cinema models.

We will all remember Ruth as a wonderful inspiration, a good friend & colleague. Well done Ruth!

## **A benefactor for the university and our community**

Ruth Hope Crow AM, benefactor of the Victoria University Library and honorary member of the Faculty of Arts, died on 9 April. Because of poor health she had moved to Horsham but she continued active work for the Faculty of Arts and the library, finishing issue 51 of the quarterly *Ecoso Exchange* newsletter a week or so before she went to hospital for the last time.

For more than ten years she was an associate of the Faculty of Arts, spending a day or more per week at her desk in the special collections area of the Footscray Park Campus library. Her main work in this time was to make the special collections material, especially that from the Crow Collection, as accessible as possible. Researchers – from year 12 students to visiting academics – found her assistance invaluable.

Other archives were recommended to Ruth for the gift of the Crow Papers. She chose Victoria University because of its commitment to research and education in the 'west'. The meticulously arranged material in the collection – working papers and publications from five decades of involvement by Ruth and her late husband Maurie Crow – became the basis of a series of projects designed "*to make the lessons of the past the basis for planning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*"

Among the projects set up by Ruth was a participatory history of children's services in the western region supported by a grant from the Reichstein Foundation. In 1996, the Crow Collection Association facilitated an Ideas Exchange Day that brought 150 secondary students and community members on to campus to talk about planning for a sustainable future. This project was the model for a later University-wide project along the same lines.

In 1997–98, Ruth helped organise a joint University/CCA seminar on 25 years of public participation in planning in the City of Melbourne. Her last public lecture was in September 1998 when she was a guest speaker at a Western Region Social Planners conference on 'Building Communities'. Here she spoke of the importance of Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Paul Clark's Community Partnership Model to the future of the University and the region.

A strong believer in the need for partnerships between the University and the community, and between professionals and lay people, Ruth was always at pains to acknowledge the collaboration of others in this work; in return many are grateful for her leadership and encouragement. In 1993, she was made a Member of the Order of Australia "*for services to the community through the promotion of participative environmental and social planning*" and, in 1997, the Town and Country Planning Association made her a life member, recognising her continuing work in this field.

It is fitting that Victoria University has helped with the celebration of Ruth Crow's life and work was held at in the North Melbourne Town Hall on 21 May 1999 since she has given much to the university and its community

Sheila Byard.

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### **From Zula Nittim**

I regret that I am unable to leave Sydney in time to participate in the celebration of Ruth Crow's life and work. I remember that John Shaw, the first Professor of Town Planning at the University of NSW, introduced me to the work of Ruth and Maurie Crow. I was impressed by their perception of the importance of involving the community in decision making about planning for cities, and by their dedication to the protection of important historical evidence. When I later met Ruth I was also impressed by her quiet, unpretentious integrity and by her writing ability, especially in the Crow Collection ECOSO Newsletter.



## The Crow Collection

Ruth Crow's donation of her papers and those of Maurie Crow to the Victoria University of Technology Library in the late 1980's has enabled a valuable collection of resources which are not generally available in libraries to be accessed by the general community and by students and staff of the University.

The Collection comprises appropriately 2,000 items and is housed in the special collections room at the Footscray Park Campus.

The Collection includes books, periodicals, reports, working papers, news clippings, educational aids and other materials on a wide range of urban, environmental, social and political issues.

At the time of donating the Collection, Ruth Crow formed the Crow Collection Association to help pursue her ideals of making the Crow Collection a truly 'living library' which will 'make the lessons of the past the basis of planning for the 21st Century'.

During the past 10 years, Ruth spent a great deal of time at the Victoria University Library personally assisting students and members of the community in the use of the Collection.

The Crow Collection Association plans to maintain and develop the Collection so that its valuable resources continue to be used effectively by community activists and researchers.

Doreen Parker  
University Librarian  
Victoria University of Technology  
6th May, 1999



The 1997 City of Moreland Housing Expo was an example of the type of work Ruth undertook while at Victoria University. She was involved in the organising committee assisting with the preparation of the material for exhibition, much of it from the Crow Collection, and gave a paper at the Expo seminar. She is seen in this photograph with other speakers Phyl Slattery from Housing for the Aged Action Group, and Dr. Greg Barrett of the University of Canberra who also gave papers at the seminar.

# When I Look in My Mirror I Don't Only See Me.

By Ruth Crow, May 1997.

(My mirror reflects an uninterrupted view west from my fifth  
floor flat)

When I look in my mirror I don't want to see  
Two watery eyes peering at me,  
False teeth reminding of the seering pain  
That I suffered from toothache again and again,  
Sunspots which seem to get bigger each night,  
Lank hair turning grey, like a witch in a flight.

When I look in the mirror, I do want to see  
Out to the World that is all around me,  
So, I have hung my mirror in a special place  
Where I see a view instead of my face.  
Wheat silos standing straight and tall  
And in their shadows wool sheds sprawl.  
On the horizon, towering into the sky  
The high rise flats dwarf the church nearby  
And sometimes, glittering in the sun  
A train snakes by on its suburban run.  
There are houses too with roofs, green red and white  
And thousands of lights doubling stars at night.

I look to the east for the western sky  
Left changes to right and I know that I  
AM PART OF THE WORLD AND  
THE WORLD'S PART OF ME  
When I look in the mirror that's what I like to see!

(But before I finish this I must confess  
I do use my mirror to check on my dress  
When I look in my mirror I like to see  
That the clothes that I am wearing are OK for me.)

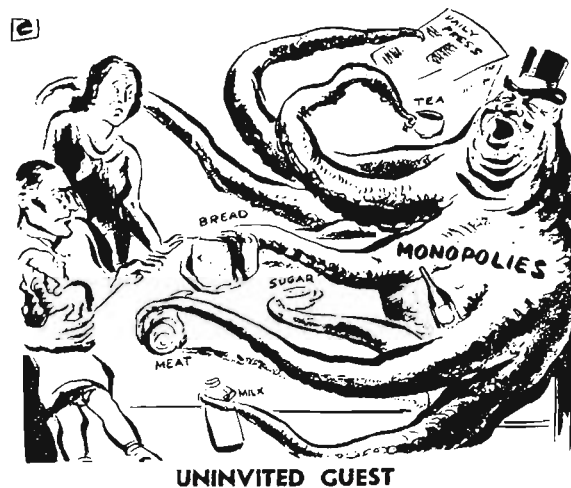
## RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF YARRA, 10 MAY 1999

Council acknowledges and pays tribute to the life's work of Ruth Hope Crow AM, community researcher and activist, and her contribution to inspiring the lives of those living and working in those parts of Fitzroy and North Carlton which have become parts of the City of Yarra, and her wider contribution to enriching all aspects of community planning and environmental debate throughout this City and across the nation.



### From '*Progress against fascism*'

ECOSO 2/51 introduced the Dunstan Accolade, taking up Don Dunstan's recent comment "The only way ahead in a democracy is to have people who have the courage to get out there and tell it, not only as it is now, but also how it was ...." The recent Len Fox publication '*Progress against fascism*' was the first recipient of the Dunstan Accolade. Because of Ruth's life long passion for food for the people, here is a relevant sample of Tom Challen's brilliant drawing with an accompanying verse by Len. Copies are available from International Bookshop, Trades Hall, Carlton.



### Octopus

He climbs right on your table,  
This uninvited guest;  
Grabs meat and sugar, bread and milk,  
— And you can have the rest.



## THE REDS REVIEWED:

Ruth Crow gave this speech in honour of the people she had worked with in the Communist Party of Australia at the launch of *The Reds* in 1998. This book by Stuart Macintyre, Ernest Scott Professor of History at the University of Melbourne, was published with SEARCH Foundation support. (The speech was published in SEARCH NEWS in July 1998)

This book is being launched at a turning point in Australian history ... people are talking to each other again! They are talking POLITICS!

Read this book. Study its lessons! Future struggles will be far more complex than those faced in the 1920s and the 1930s but the basic struggles of the past will recur and a strong united left will be needed. Whether there is ever a left party again, or not, future generations will decide.

When I told some comrades that a history of the Party was being written, the general reaction was "That is impossible! No one can really do that! You can't put down on paper what it was like to be a party member! The lives of comrades was unbelievable!"

So, Stuart Macintyre and the team had a formidable task. Firstly how to record what was happening in the party branches when the main documentation is about the Central Committee and other such "leading bodies". Secondly they had to try to give facts about what was happening Australia-wide when most of the documents were about Sydney and Melbourne. And most importantly, how to critically present the historic facts about Stalinism without destroying the Left's confidence in itself.

Today I want to describe what it was like to join the Communist Party in 1936. Stuart quotes Jean Devanney's words on joining the Party: "I hugged to myself that warm and wonderful feeling of belonging". That is exactly how I felt and no wonder!

My main memory of the 1930s is of the strong women I met. I was most impressed by the women who managed to be active politically and care for huge families. These were women the same age as my mother, and thus looked very old to me (although they were probably only 50). For example Mrs Farrall and the Farrall family of Brighton. There seemed to be no end to the number of Farralls and to the friends they had. Similarly, the Green dynasty in Brunswick where Mrs Green was the mainstay for her family of 11. For the past 60 years, May Day would not have been May Day for me if I did not meet up with a few Farralls and Greens.

Of course, I was inspired by the women who were pursuing their own careers. Cath Clarey in the Trade Unions, and Doris McRae, one of the first women to be a State School principal. And there was inspiration too, from the international heroes – Marie Curie in France and La Passionara in Spain. There seemed to be hundreds of young women, some with their first babies, for example Olga Silver and Audrey Blake, and brilliant young debaters like Dulcie Vera and Rivka. Stuart refers to the debate on Spain when Santamaria's violent

thugs turned the hoses on supporters of Republican Spain. Rivka Matthews was one of the platform speakers.

It is timely to pay tribute to Letty Nunan of Prahran and Mabel Elliot of Brunswick. Stuart again quoted Jean Devanney's words as she described "the unconquerable optimism, indefatigable zeal, flaming enthusiasm of the paper peddlers". This aptly applied to Letty and Mabel.

Stuart describes the eviction struggles in the 1930s, but by the time I joined the Party the main housing campaign was for a Fair Rents Court. Leila Mullett and Winsome Forbes are two CPA women whose names are recorded in the documents of the 1930/1940s tenants Council.

Women contributed to the politics of the day in ways that are specifically related to their power lives. Here are two examples. Firstly, in the campaign against the re-arming of Japan, we supported the main slogan of "No Scrap iron for Japan", but also raised our own banners, parading in Bourke Street chanting "Lisle for style! Boycott Japanese stockings!"

Similarly while campaigning with the trade unions against the "Bread and Treacle Basis Wage", we drew attention to the plight of children, calling the "Hospitals Monuments to Malnutrition", pointing out that 25% of the children were undernourished through poverty. In Mothers Clubs we spearheaded the campaign for child endowment and for free milk for schools.

There is no time today to pay tribute to the men in the CPA, but I would like to list the names of four men who played a significant role in my life in the 1930s. Jack Legge, who came to the College where I was a student and warned us about the threat of fascism, Ken Coldicutt, a zealous seller of the youth newspapers, my brother Ken Miller who was one of the main people to establish the League of Young Democrats, and of course my partner Maurie Crow.

With hindsight, my four main reasons for joining the Party were to free women from domestic drudgery, to campaign against fascism and war, to improve living standards and to study and popularise humanistic ideas.

I would like to praise the SEARCH Foundation for making this book possible, to congratulate Stuart and the team of researchers, and Allen & Unwin for publishing it. *The Reds* challenges us to face up to the full realisation of the evils of Stalinism and the need for a human and democratic concept of socialism. Please buy it, study it and encourage others to do so.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE CROW COLLECTION ASSOCIATION**  
**and**  
***ECOSO EXCHANGE NEWSLETTER***  
*Eco – ecological, Soc – sociological, Exchange – non – authoritarian*

The Crow Collection Association (Incorporation Number A0022696P) has the aim of enhancing the comprehensiveness and the accessibility of the books and manuscripts in the Collection at the Victoria University Library (Footscray Park Campus). The *Ecoso Exchange Newsletter* is one way this aim is implemented.

Since 1990 the *Ecoso Exchange Newsletter* has been the publication of the Crow Collection Association. However, the forerunner of *Ecoso* was first published in 1967 as a follow-up publication to the trade-union based Living Standards Convention which was held in that year. Until 1973 it was called *Irregular* but then this was changed to *Ecoso Exchange* and four guidelines were adopted:

**THE ECOSO EXCHANGE GUIDELINES**

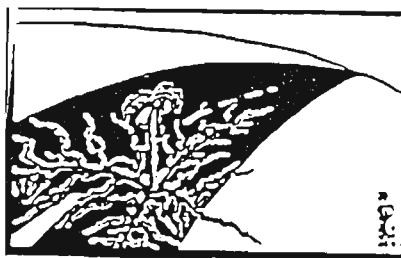
Adopted 1973 and endorsed by the Crow Collection Association 1990

- 1. The promotion of community participation**
- 2. Popularising changing life styles which combat consumerism**
- 3. Advocating restricted use of non-renewable resources**
- 4. Achieving these objectives through participation**

The main funds for the Crow Collection Association come from subscriptions, \$10 a year.

**Postal address:**

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PO Box 14428, Melbourne CMC, Australia, 8001



This booklet of tributes was published by the Crow Collection Association for distribution at the gathering to celebrate the life and work of Ruth Crow AM, held on May 21, 1999 at North Melbourne Town Hall. The image on the back cover designed for the Ideas Exchange Day 1996. Printed by Victoria University Printroom.



