

ASCA NEWS

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40 YEARS OF ASCA

2014 marks ASCA's 40th year, a wonderful achievement for us all. The occasion was marked with a lunch at the Banjo Paterson Cottage Restaurant on August 17.



As you might expect there was no shortage of speeches which covered the whole history of ASCA and included some most entertaining stories.

Carolyn McKenzie, ASCA's Treasurer, spoke about Gina Pioro, the founder of ASCA. It is included in its entirety below.

On the occasion of the Australian Speech Communication Association's 40th anniversary it is fitting to speak about Gina Piore - the founder of ASCA.

Gina Piore (formerly Gina Penkeyman) was reared in Fleetwood, Lancashire. She contracted polio at two years of age however her perseverance and strength of character did not let it restrict her. Speech was her passion. In the UK she taught drama, examined for the English Speaking Board, worked in radio, was a councillor on her local municipal council in Lancashire, president of numerous committees as well as being nationally known for her work as an adjudicator. She was well respected in these circles. In fact for the past 45 years Fleetwood Music and Speech Festival have annually presented a Perpetual Championship trophy in her name.

Trinity College soon snapped her up and she examined in the UK, Italy, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, New Zealand and Australia.

A most interesting full page article about Gina was published in the Australian Woman's Weekly in November, 1972. The following extract shows her determination:

"There was an occasion in Calcutta where people were rioting and no one had been able to leave the hotel for 3 days. Gina courageously and firmly addressed the crowd, saying that she had nothing to do with their dispute and that she intended to walk right through – and she did. And later in the day she safely walked back. She said that it was a case of communication being vital!"

On one of these tours to Australia Gina met Bob Piore whom she married and they settled in Sydney. Bob was the love of her life and they were inseparable. Bob supported Gina totally in anything she wanted to do. He was ASCA's treasurer until his death in 2002.

It was in 1971 that I met Gina near the old Trinity Office in George Street and we had a chat. She mentioned that she had met a wonderful man and that she wasn't returning to the UK. I asked if she was teaching here and she said that she was. I was fortunate to study with Gina as did Paul March, Florence Johnson and also Margaret Harley. We are all beneficiaries of Gina's vast knowledge.

At that time the English Speaking Board was operating in WA so they invited Gina to be in charge of operations to introduce their exams in the Eastern States of Australia. It fitted her plans perfectly and so ESB exams began in 1973. In June 1974 ESB NSW became formalised with its first Constitution and Executive.

I would like to read a report that Gina put together to be presented at the first Awards Ceremony and I think that it sums up Gina's vision and her aims for ASCA.

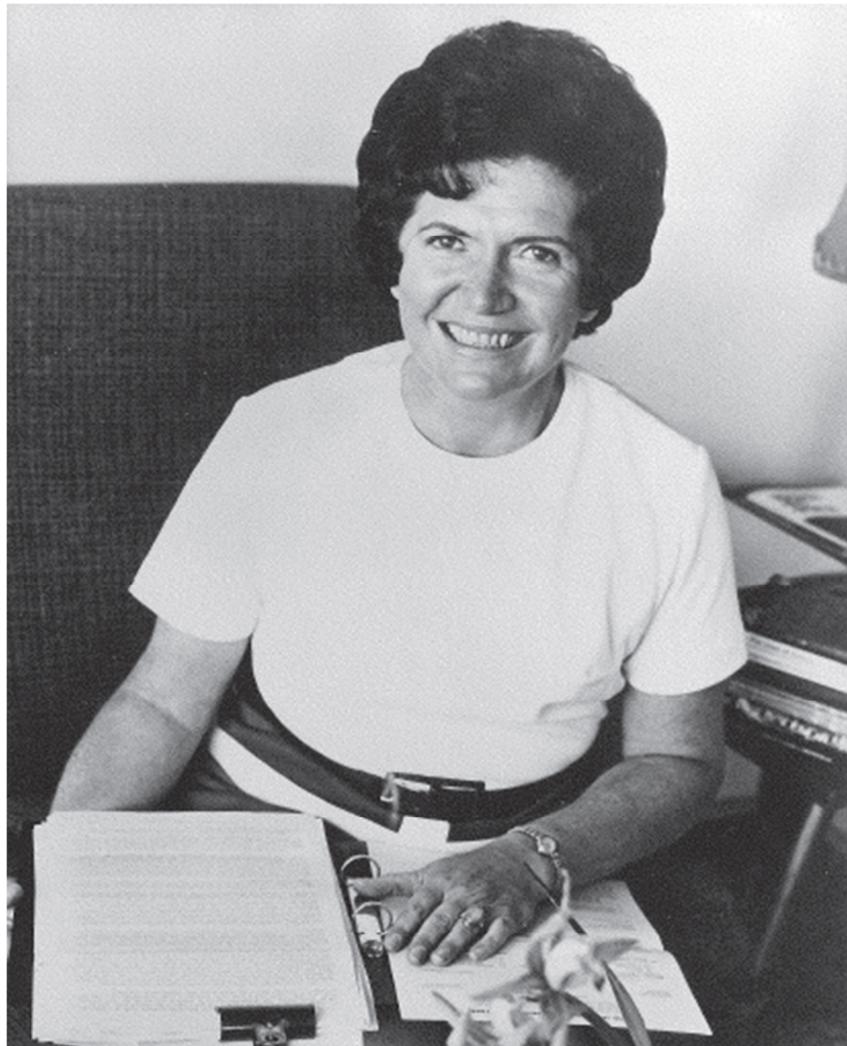
Many of her students were interesting people. One of them was Bob Carr. In an article in the SMH, referring to the launch of Bob Carr's book, it states that there are two women who had influenced his career. One of them was Gina. It read:

"Mr Carr's voice coach, Gina Pioro, picked his ambition the minute she met him. 'It was when he was on The Bulletin working as a journalist and feeling his way into politics' Mrs Pioro said. 'Wisely he decided to learn to communicate. He has a wonderful voice which he decided to work on. He now has every trick in the book and a few extra.'"

For many years Gina Pioro was the ABC's only television voice coach, helping presenters, news readers and journalists improve their speech and presentation on screen. This involved travelling interstate. The ABC held her in high esteem - even sending a taxi every day to transport her to work. When Bob passed away they begged her to return but his death had had such an impact on her that she declined.

Today Gina resides in a nursing home. Her majestic manner and rich resonant voice are still with her - but sadly her memory has faded.

Gina would be very proud of the progress that ASCA has made in the past 40 years.



Paul March, the Secretary, spoke about the early years and an account of how it was that ASCA became ASCA as reported in *The Story of ESB (English Speaking Board)* by Basil Harvey.

"In New South Wales ESB was flourishing, though registration of our name was refused owing to a complaint from the ESU (English Speaking Union) that the two would be confused. So the local body re-constituted itself as the Australian Speech Communication Association (affiliated to ESB International Ltd.), avoiding the embarrassment of a legal hassle by adopting that singularly clumsy name, with its incidental reminder that antipodean speech is not in their view English. The Administrator of the ASCA, Gina Pioro (formerly Penkeyman), reports a steady increase in membership under the active presidency of John Bell, OBE, the Artistic Director of the Nimrod Theatre. She herself has conducted workshops in voice and speech in a Sydney maximum security prison. Whether the inmates were preparing for ESB assessments she does not say; some of the Personal Projects could well have interested criminologists. She had travelled thousands of miles in Australia, lecturing and examining, and it was fitting that our President Sir Michael Redgrave, on tour there, should have presented her with her well-merited FESB. This he did at a small ceremony, driving through disastrous floods to keep the appointment.."

This presentation included stories of first formal ESB NSW Executive Meeting held on June 18 1974 in the Lane Cove town Hall and the complexity of the Constitution thanks to Don Hocking, an expert on meeting procedure as well as many more detailed recollections of the events mentioned by Basil Harvey.

At a meeting special meeting at The Nimrod Theatre, Sydney on the 24 February 1977, our name was changed to 'The Australian Speech Communication Association' (affiliated with The English Speaking Board [International] Ltd) by a unanimous vote.

The story that stood out most in my mind was that of the workshops at Malawa Prison (now known as Silverwater Women's Correctional Centre). At first the visits were challenging and the members of ASCA had trouble connecting with the women and felt they were making little progress until they changed tacts and hit on a success. Rather than sitting in a group and talking they focussed on movement and used techniques developed by Kai Tai Chen. Focussing on movement allowed the women to open up and experience something new. The program was so successful that Channel 7 filmed it and Channel 10 showed an interview in the Midday Show.

Paul included a few gems from past newsletters as well, these included 'Student Howlers' where hilarious quotes from students exams were shared, these included:

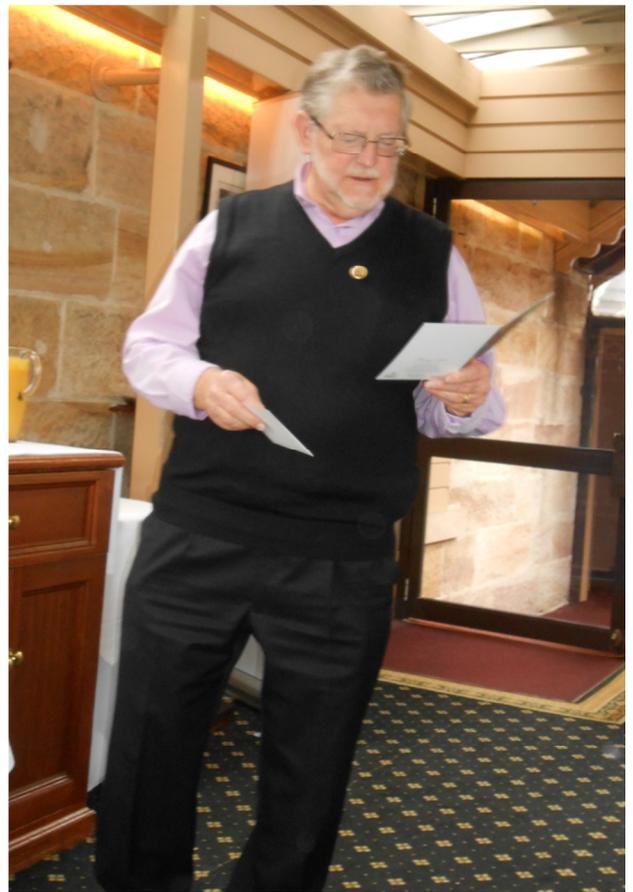
- The sun in the centre of the solar cistern.
- Maternity allowances are given to mothers in the months of grief

- Louis XV was a French king who had a lot of furniture named after him. They are now collected by junk dealers.
- Sodium is so dangerous that it isn't handled by human beings at all, only by chemistry teachers.
- The human body is composed of three parts; the Brainium, the Borax and the Abdominal cavity. The Brainium contains the brain. The Borax contains the lungs, liver and living things. The Abdominal cavity contains the bowels of which there are five, A, E, I, O, U.

And my personal favourite

- Beware the ideas of March.

It was an entertaining walk down memory lane for some and an education for others, myself included. ASCA has had a rich and varied history and it was truly enjoyable to hear so many stories.



Genevieve England shared stories about ASCA in Queensland and the great success that it has had there as well as the immense impact completing the higher grade examinations with ASCA can have on students. In Queensland students who complete grade 7 and above, including the Certificate of Communication and Diploma of Communication, can have those marks taken into account when they apply for a place at University. This means students may be given an opportunity to go to university where they would not have been able to without the extra marks that ASCA exams are able to provide.

Jillian Burgess, the Minute Secretary and Sandra Carter, the Chairperson, both spoke about where ASCA can take you and some great stories of their experiences working in schools where Speech and Drama has grown into a large and popular part of the school. Both recalled the various “classrooms” they had been given over the years. These included stage wings, store cupboards and various nooks and crannies, I am glad to say they now both have large rooms well suited to their needs, although it has taken 20 to 30 years to get there.

Sandra shared some of her experiences of teaching Speech in a school in Darlinghurst, experiences few people present had shared. In one of these the Primary teachers of SCEGGS Darlinghurst had gathered in the meeting room for a staff meeting. At one point during the meeting one of the teachers kicked her foot out and kicked someone, she apologised to the teacher opposite who looked quite confused and said she hadn't kicked her at all. After some confusion someone peered under the table to see a homeless man under the table having a nap. It turned out he had wandered into the school and found a quiet warm place for a little lie down. She then had the very important job of cutting the cake.



Meg Haynes, a year 8 student from Ravenswood School for Girls spoke on Banjo Paterson, his life and his contribution to Australian Literature and Culture. Truly fitting in the location and surrounded by so many lovers of literature. Stacey Konstantopoulos also received her Diploma of ASCA, a reminder that ASCA is going strong and has a positive future ahead.



When put together these presentations represent the rich history and wide reaching impact that ASCA has on so many people. From a famous English Actor, a prison inmate who expands their skills and experiences, one of our most loved theatre directors, our formidable Founder and her dedicated husband and treasurer, the numerous teachers who have supported ASCA over the years, members of the Executive and of course the students. ASCA has come into all of our lives in one way or another and changed us all.

If you would like any of your memories included in the next Newsletter please email them to the ASCA Newsletter email address so we can all enjoy them.



Queries

If you have any queries about ASCA, the syllabus or examinations, please contact us by email, or write and they will be handed to the committee for an answer.

CONTRIBUTIONS – to the newsletter will be gratefully received by the editor.

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