

## YVONNE CORRELJE: EDUCATOR, HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER, ARTIST



Yvonne Correlge, 1960s. My family came to Australia from Rotterdam in Holland, but the family origins on my father's side are from France in the time of the religious wars that followed the French revolution. They were Huguenots who migrated to Holland because at that time Holland offered religious freedom. About the same time, John Locke, that leading English philosopher and political theorist, also went to Holland for the freedom and lived there for a while. The Dutch were quite progressive socially.

The family of my paternal grandmother were German and quite well to do. They were definitely part of the middle class socio-economic strata in Holland. My father had an uncle who went to Indonesia with the East India Company so the family had second cousins who grew up in Java, as they called it then. My mother was of Dutch origin but born in the US. Her parents migrated there because her father used to work as a steward on a ship for the Netherlands-America Line. It was in the early 'twenties and there was a lot of emigration to America as the promised land. My grandmother didn't want my grandfather travelling on the ship because she thought sea travel was dangerous. They then moved to Hoboken, New Jersey, where my mother was born in 1923. When the Titanic went down my grandmother feared that something might happen to my grandfather so she convinced him to quit the job as a steward. Ironically, he started working on the wharves, because that's all he could do, and he was killed in an accident on the wharves. Life's full of irony.

My grandmother did come into some money in compensation for his death because the shipping line was owned by Rockefeller, and that money was invested for my mother. My grandmother and mother went back to Holland when my mother was about three. However, my grandmother was still young and vulnerable, and everyone was her friend and everyone was in need, especially in the 1920s when things were getting tight and the Depression was approaching. She married a widower with two children and that money helped keep the family going.

My parents, Anton and Hendrina Catharina Correlje, married in 1947 after the Second World War. Holland had been occupied twice, so after the war my parents felt there would be more opportunities in another country. They considered America, because of my mother having been born there it would have made it easier for them. They also thought of South America and Australia. The family came to Australia in December 1954. We had connections here and these people lived in St Albans. They organised accommodation for us because the word was around that hostel accommodation left a lot to be desired.



### Coming to Australia

We were fortunate in Holland. We had a flat - because in the cities people lived in flats - and we also had a holiday house, which we shared with my grandparents. There was a limit as to how much money my parents could take out of the country, so a lot of possessions they had were sold or given away. When they came to St Albans it seemed as if they had arrived at the last frontier. We weren't used to going to the toilet in a dunny out the back.

The attitude towards migrants at the time was that we had to be so thankful that we had come to the land of milk and honey, but we were used to a much more sophisticated lifestyle in Europe. Even though we'd suffered war, we weren't deprived. Being here really was like being at the last frontier, and it was so hot and dry.

It took six weeks on a ship to get here. I will always remember our first contact with Australia because my birthday coincided with the ship docking in Fremantle. We left Holland in middle to late October and arrived here in summer, and the summers in the 'fifties were hot. Maybe we felt it was hot because in St Albans there weren't many trees and there weren't many gardens, there was no air conditioning, and there was no insulation. We were baking on the western plains.

I remember the ship leaving Rotterdam and the family crying. It was winter and I remember waving to the family standing on the wharf as the ship pulled away from the pier. I remember the very strict quarantine conditions. When we left, all our clothes had to be fumigated and our shoes as well as a precaution against bringing in rabies or certain other diseases. When we actually got on board the ship my father lifted me up and they even sprayed the bottom of my shoes. We went through the English Channel along the coast down past the Straights of Gibraltar and I remember seeing the Rock of Gibraltar. We went through the Mediterranean Sea and the Suez Canal. I can remember that trip vividly, even seeing Arabs on camels on the shores of the Suez Canal. We went to Aden and Port Said. I can't remember whether it was Aden or Port Said where they sold water in bottles to us, which is not unusual in this day and age but at that time, for me, the only thing that came in bottles was lemonade. The water on the ship was undrinkable – it was really horrible so you had to have the bottled water. My brother and I, and another boy from the ship went ashore to walk through the streets and have a look at a mosque. We couldn't get onto the shore directly but these little boats would come out and ferry you across.

The ship then crossed the Indian Ocean where I saw flying fish for the first time. We experienced a storm which was so severe we couldn't eat in the dining room and weren't allowed on deck because the waves were washing overboard, and this was a big ship. In the dining room all the tables and chairs had to be tied together because as the ship lurched and pitched from side to side all the tables and chairs would just slide across the floor. All meals were served in the cabins while the storm lasted. When we crossed the equator they had all these celebrations which I found to be scary, because they all got dressed up in fancy costumes and I found the King Neptune costume to be very scary, he looked as if he had emerged from the depths of the ocean. We stopped at Fremantle on my birthday; I had turned seven. From there we went to Adelaide and then Melbourne, where many passengers disembarked but many went on to Sydney.

### **Coming to St Albans**

We arrived in Melbourne in 1954 on Friday 5 December, the day on which the Dutch celebrate St Nicholas Day. We don't celebrate Christmas with gifts, we celebrate St Nicholas Day. Christmas is dinner with the family. On Monday I went to the old primary school in West Esplanade. It was horrendous because I didn't speak any English. I had gone to school only for a couple of months in Holland. My brother and I had gone to a Montessori kindergarten in Holland, this was very progressive and my mother initiated this. Therefore for us to go to kindergarten on the boat seemed to me a backward step, besides the kindergarten on the boat was run like a little prison, I told my brother this so we escaped.

In Holland school started in August or September, but I broke my collarbone and that interrupted my education and consequently I didn't have much of an introduction to schooling there. When we arrived in St Albans I think my mother had had enough of me with six weeks on the ship and having to cope with three little children, so she was happy for me to go to school immediately even though the school year was virtually over.

## **St Albans Primary School**

So it was off to school on Monday to the St Albans Primary School. I had this little girl appointed to sit next to me and help me with the assimilation process, but because she couldn't sit with her friend she refused to talk to me. I spent a very unhappy two weeks at school before the end of year break up. I had no idea what was going on because in Holland we had a long lunch hour when everyone would go home for lunch. Here we had all these bells and I didn't know what they were for, so it was just miserable and I didn't learn much English.

Then during the school holidays all it took me was six weeks and I knew the language.

My brother Anton is 13 months younger than I, but the two weeks of school that I had experienced weren't enough to put me up into grade 2 so consequently in 1955 we ended up in the same class. We went to the old hall in East Esplanade because with the influx of migrants they didn't have sufficient space at the old school site. They had a couple of grade 1 classes at the school and I went to one of those rather than a prep grade. In those days you sat on the floor and wrote with chalk on a little blackboard. They thought that Anton and I were twins. At first my brother and I were in the same class and then they decided to separate us and have one in Grade 1A and one in Grade 1B. Don't ask me why.

I think my primary school years were much happier than my high school years: the school was at the end of our street, I used to go home for lunch, and it wasn't far to walk to school.

## **Housing**

At first we were living in two little bungalows in West Esplanade. After a year my parents had saved up enough money to buy a block of land in Ruth Street and my father built two rooms: a kitchen and a bedroom. The kitchen was everything in one, including kitchen, lounge room, and laundry. We all slept in the one bedroom. It was very difficult for my family to save that money. My mother hardly worked at all in the getting paid sense. My father was a carpenter and one of his earliest jobs was to work on the Snowy Mountains scheme. That helped bring in some money even though the family was separated.

When he returned from the Snowy Mountains my father worked as a carpenter around the area and went into partnership with another Dutch man by the name of Kropman. They set up a building company and worked as builders in partnership for a long time. Kropman had two sons, Anton and Peter, who also started working in the company when they left school. With the company proceeds now covering three of the Kropman family they were going ahead, while we were still struggling with only one income. The financial situation of the partnership became unsatisfactory and to comply with legal requirements the partnership was disbanded. My father then continuing working on his own.

## **Disciplining Children**

St Albans had many people from different cultures and different backgrounds. Some of them were sophisticated and some of them were peasants from rural backgrounds with little sophistication. Some of the ways they communicated with and brought up their children left a lot to be desired. When I was at primary school I've actually seen children being belted quite harshly by their parents. It was just horrendous and not something I was used to. We were never hit with a belt, ever. They used to hit you at school with a belt or a ruler, boys and girls. I was hit on my calves with a wooden ruler because I laughed or talked, and the teacher kept hitting us until one burst out crying. I had welts on my legs as a consequence of one of these episodes, which was uncalled for. We didn't grow up with that in Holland.

Physical punishment was more prevalent then. I remember seeing the brother of a friend of mine being chased around the back yard being whipped by his father with something that was like a

cat-o'-nine-tails. I couldn't cope and had to go home. One evening while at the back door I heard a great commotion at our neighbour's place and through their window I could see the father laying into this nine-year-old girl. I got such a shock and was so upset I went in and said to my father he's killing her. He went next door and said he would call the police if the beating continued.

There were so many different backgrounds and different standards, different ethics, and communication was difficult. When we first arrived our neighbours were Yugoslavs who saw my brother and I - blond haired and speaking Dutch - and asked us in their broken English what our nationality was. We said Dutch but they thought we said Deutsch, and consequently they wouldn't speak to us because they associated us as being German. We had asked for water but they wouldn't give us any, they just closed the door. It was all about communication and perceptions. You learnt a few common words eventually – in Polish it was dzien dobry and baba jaga and few other things. We used to taunt "baba jaga, baba jaga."

### **St Albans High School**



High school wasn't as pleasant as primary school. I think it was because at primary school in years 4 and 5 I was teacher's pet, and those years would have been my best years at school. I was a runner and the teacher coached me; he mentored me a lot. In grade 6 they did an experiment and put all the girls together with one teacher and all the boys together with another. I don't think that worked too well. The boys had Mr Lck and the girls had Mrs Leigh. I didn't enjoy that year so much.

I went to St. Albans High School in 1961 and was there for only four years, till the end of 1964. It started off alright in years 7 and 8, but then I lost my friends. Margaret Fielder went to Castlemaine, Susan Kosher moved to Blackburn, Yolanda Eder, with whom I was also friendly, went back to Germany, so I felt a bit lost. I was very friendly with Dace Svaizne, who is now at St Andrews and has four children.

Despite the departure of friends I had intended to complete high school. Education was seen as one means available to us to better ourselves and our situation, because we had nothing else. We really had nothing.

I've been making my own clothes from the age of 13. We had no money and I had no clothes. I used to wear the same thing day in and day out – luckily we had a school uniform – otherwise I didn't have very much. None of us had much. I had a school uniform that my mother bought for me when I was in grade 6. We had to have a winter uniform, two summer uniforms, two shirts for the winter, and a school blazer. That lasted me four years. When the elbows started falling out of sleeves I darned them myself. From the age of 13 in year 7 we did sewing, and my mother also taught me to sew. From then on I made all my own clothes, and I still do a lot.

Then my parents, after telling me all my life that whatever I wanted to be I could be, that whatever I chose as an occupation or profession was available to me, suddenly they did an about face and said my brother and I had to leave school. This was in year 9. I had an enormous fight with them and managed to stay on for year 10, but it took the gilt off the ginger bread, as the saying goes. They said they just could not afford it. My parents weren't the only ones in that situation. My mother never worked so my father was the only one earning an income. When I was 14 my younger brother was born so he was the apple of their eye. They said they just couldn't afford for us to continue at school. I think at that time too the business partnership of my father might have been dissolving as well. Then we had a credit squeeze in the '60s.

I had some money in the bank because they had this scheme at school where every week you put a shilling in the bank, so I had a little bit of money in the bank. My mother insisted that the money be taken out to buy me clothes, because they didn't have it. Things were very tough. My brother went into bricklaying, because they said you could make good money doing that, and I stayed at school an extra year. But funnily enough they gave me a horse, which is something I really wanted.



Form 4A, 1964. Yvonne Correlje in front row second from right.

### Physical Activities

I used to love athletics and ballet, which I was good at but my parents couldn't afford to continue paying for lessons. I wanted to do ballet when I was 7 and they took me to lessons. Then in grade 4 or 5 I went by train after school to Footscray for lessons. It was surprising that it was really quite safe to travel by train in the evening at that time. For thruppence you could buy chips that were wrapped in newspaper – delicious. You'd make a little hole in the top and pull out the chips. I don't know why I stopped going to lessons, but I started up again when I was at high school until the money issue arose again, and then the lessons stopped. Not many people at St Albans High School did ballet, or had a horse.



I liked the sporting side of school life. It was compulsory that we do Phys. Ed. once a week and that we do sport. I loved sport, maybe because I was good at it, which is always a big plus. I was good at running, high jump, long jump, and hurdles. I did all of those events and even some swimming. There were some teachers there who gave up their time and I especially remember that Mrs Cameron's husband, who wasn't really at the school, gave up his time and taught swimming at the Sunshine pool. The Camerons did a lot for kids through the school and the youth club. Mrs Cameron was a typical Australian woman in that the heart was in the right place.

Another activity I really liked was horse riding, but that indulgence was outside the school. My interest in horses developed in grade 4 when I spent a lot of time drawing horses and reading about them. Later I would go to the riding school in Gum Road and learnt to ride. That was a lovely time. Horses were expensive to keep, so when my parents bought one for me in 1963 they said the upkeep was up to me. I would save up my pocket money to pay for the horse's upkeep and rode bareback for a while until I'd saved enough to buy a saddle.

I used to keep the horse on Mr King's property. He was the former milkman of St Albans. I used to pay him 5 shillings a week to keep the horse there. I became very friendly with Mr King and he was very kind to me. He ended up buying the horse off me when I bought another horse.



Yvonne Correlje horse jumping in the back paddocks of St Albans; 1960s.

### **Reflection on High School Years**

I think the reason high school wasn't pleasant for me was that it was a long way to walk to school and back (I sometimes used to ride my bike), and it was less personal. At that age you're going through your adolescent years, which are not easy years. I think too the fact that I lost friends and then knew that I wasn't continuing made a lot of impact. My brother was sent off to the technical school in Sunshine because my parents thought it better for boys to have the technical side of education. Had I known that I was going to have to leave early I would have done the secretarial course. At that time we could choose to do either the commercial or the professional stream, and you could choose to do French or German. If you chose to do the professional stream it meant you were going to channel yourself to either teachers' college or university. Those who did the commercial stream could still end up going through to higher education, but they had the typing and shorthand, which would have been a good skill to have to become a secretary.

What affected me academically was that some of the teachers that came from Germany or Russia had strong accents and it was hard to understand them. Mr Pavlov, who we had for maths, was a chain smoker and had the most diabolical reek of cigarettes about him that you couldn't ask him to come and talk to you because it would be so overpowering. That was a problem for me as I did really well with maths in years 7 and 8, then in year 9 it tapered off and I failed the subject in year 10.

## Teachers

We had some very strong female teachers. The headmistress, Miss Taylor ... well, you did not cross her path, or that of her offsider, Miss Bowles, the music teacher. Miss Taylor was so strict with the uniform; it had to be just so. When she left and Mrs Glyddon came onto the scene, she was also very strict. For a western suburbs high school in a deprived area, which is what it was, she reinforced that the girls had to wear their hat, you had to wear your jacket, you had to have the shirt and tie, and in winter you had to have grey gloves. Everything had to be 'spot on', and if you weren't well dressed representing the school, you got detention. The prefects would be monitoring you and even in summer you could not go home without wearing your jacket over your summer tunic. This is the way the public schools treated their students and we were no different. That was good because it set a standard. You'd quake in your shoes if you were sent to Miss Taylor for any misdemeanor.

Music was part of the school curriculum, and we learnt a lot about music from Miss Bowles. She did give us a very good appreciation and she introduced us to classical music. I loved being in the school choir.



Choir performing at the Speech Day, 1963. Yvonne Correlje and Margaret Fielder are in the back row, third and fourth from the left.

Mr Wilkinson was a nice man though I don't remember him very well. Mr Torpey was pretty strict. I think there was more control and discipline than there is now. You had to behave, and if you didn't you got into trouble. If you came late you got detention. They had standards to which they adhered to and they enforced them. By and large we had respect for the teachers. Miss Murray did a teaching round at the school and she spoke French with an Australian accent. She then came to teach at the school. I thought she was very straight laced and didn't have much of a sense of humour.

The year 9 and 10 boys were shocking; they could give the teachers a hell of a ribbing. Mr McLeish was a good teacher who looked very Scottish and in year 9 we had him for English. Lindsay Chatterton used to sit in the seat right in front of the teacher's desk. One day Mr McLeish came into the first class after recess and put his foot up on the chair, leaned forward, and started talking to the class. Suddenly Lindsay raised his hand and said, "Sir! Sir! in an insistent manner.

McLeish ignored him until Lindsay said "Sir! Your fly's undone!" Of course there was immediate uproar and we all dissolved into laughter. He went absolutely beetroot red and walked out of the classroom and didn't come back for the rest of the period. We laughed and laughed.

### **After High School**

I left school at the end of year 10. I remember walking home on the last day of school feeling very alone and thinking this was the last of my school years - how do I feel? I realised I didn't feel anything. I remember that walk home clearly.

I went to work for the Commonwealth of Australia on the seventh floor of that green building in Spring Street. I had a clerical job with Family Allowances and I should have stuck at that but I'm too peripatetic. In those days if you worked overtime you got paid a meal allowance and you got sent home in a taxi as well as being paid overtime.

I always had the intention of going on to university so I started doing night school, but that took some adjustment. I was working full time and travelling to the city by train, and then it was all too hard.



Botanical artwork in watercolour by Yvonne Correlje.

### **Evening Studies**

In 1966 I was going to night school at University High, where I did two subjects, and the following year I did another two subjects. Unknown to me, doing four subjects in two years meant you could not go into Year 12; you had to have done five subjects in two years. So I couldn't do my matriculation. I was absolutely devastated.

I wanted to go to teachers college but I had to have an income because my parents would/could not keep me. The following year I did a preliminary year of art and design at Prahran, which was four subjects, and I also did English Expression for Year 12 at University High School. I thought that would give me the ability to do teachers college. Consequently I was working full time and doing 15 hours a week of study after hours, which was four evenings a week and Saturday morning as well, and all by public transport to Prahran and back. It was really hard going. It started off fine but come winter the only way I could cope was to drop one class per week and

rotate that for each subject, which meant I missed one class a month in each subject. I was very determined and got credits for everything. At one stage what I wanted to do – and this was also a childhood dream – was become a flight attendant. I had gone for an interview with Qantas when I was 20 but nothing ever eventuated, so I went back to the idea of teaching.

### **Being Assaulted**

Constant travel on that long trip from the city to the end of the line at St Albans exposed one to the seamier side of public transport and being on the streets late at night.

One night coming back from night classes about 11 o'clock at night I was attacked by a psychopath. That's what he was, because there were some real nutters out there. No harm came to me on that occasion but I was fortunate because he was frightened away. I was coming home from night class with a girlfriend who was going to Melbourne Uni. Normally we were picked up at the station by her father, my father, or my brother Anton (they would take it in turns) because it was a long walk and the roads weren't made. We arrived at the station and stood there waiting and waiting – there were no mobile phones then to contact each other, and few people had the landline phones. What had happened was that my brother got bogged and it took him a while to get the car out. After waiting a while we set off for home on foot. My friend lived near the Ajayoglu shop in West Esplanade, I said goodnight to her and then continued on my own.

When I walked past the shop there was a guy standing there but I ignored him and decided to walk through the school because least the yard was dry – it had been raining and I was weighted down with bags and an umbrella. As I walked through the school ground I could hear his footsteps following me closer and closer. I thought: If I run I'm done for, because he's going to catch me for sure. I hastened my footsteps and just as I managed to get out of the grounds he put his arm around me and I saw his face under the street light. I shook him off and kept walking. This is another thing about St Albans and the people there. I did not feel confident in knocking on someone's door and asking for refuge; not at 11 o'clock at night. They would be suspicious, they probably wouldn't ask me in, they wouldn't understand what I was trying to say, and they wouldn't have had a telephone. This crossed my mind many times and so I decided to keep walking.

There was a car parked on the side of the road so the man dropped back, but as I got to the corner of Emily, Gertrude and Ruth streets he jumped on me and tried to throw me on the ground. I struggled with him and hit him on the head with the umbrella. The umbrella broke but it made no impact on him. Then I started screaming for help and at that moment my brother turned the corner in the car. As soon as the headlights appeared this guy ran away. My brother saw him and asked me what was happening. I told him what had happened. Anton then set off in the car trying to find him. It was winter, late at night so there wasn't anyone around, not many cars, no people. We reported the incident months later when by sheer coincidence I saw the man. We then went to the police and reported the assault. About six months later there was an article in the local paper about this guy because he'd raped his 14 year old sister. I could tell a couple of other stories, but I won't.



### **Marriage**

I met my future husband while I was studying at Prahran and then in the following January we got married. As he was a first year out teacher he was sent to the country for his first position. We went to Wedderburn, which is north-west of Bendigo, and lived there for two years. That was where my daughter Samantha was born, at the Bendigo base hospital. Simon, my first son, was born in Charlton in the bush nursing hospital. It was all very casual - the doctor would turn up in his shorts and knee length socks that men wore in those days. A year later in 1971 we moved to Kerang where my youngest son James was born. It was while we were there that my ex-

husband played football. As captain-coach he was paid, and by living in an education department house, which had a wonderful lot of fruit trees in the back, we were able start saving for a deposit for our own house.

I made absolutely everything: I made bread, I made all the clothes, I made jam, I made everything because we were on a mission: we had to save money. We had a goal. We managed to save quite a bit, fortunately. We then came to Melbourne and lived with my parents as a means of saving more money. We lived in a 14-foot caravan with three little children at the back of my parents' block in St Albans. So my daughter Samantha's first school was St Albans Primary, the same one I went to. I used to go and pick her up for lunch.

### **Son's Critical Illness**

Then my son James became critically ill with a disorder known as 'protein losing enteropathy', which is a very rare lymphatic disorder. He ended up in the Alfred Hospital in intensive care and was there for about three months. Winter was approaching so living in the caravan was very, very difficult. We were able to move into my brother-in-law's house while they were in Europe on long service leave. That was in East Brighton, where we stayed all of second term, and it was much closer to the Alfred Hospital. James had a lot of health problems: salmonella, septicaemia, pneumonia, internal haemorrhaging, and thrombosis. He was so sick he was only given 24 hours to live. At one stage the hospital asked whether I wanted them to try absolutely everything to save his life, and my answer to them was if he can cope and get through it, who am I to say no. I'd be letting him down if I didn't try. Fortunately he pulled through.

It took a lot out of me because you're hanging in there and hanging in there with all your reserves and you've got two children and one of those just starting school, she went to 3 schools in her first year. Simon was only three years old. My children still have vivid memories of washing their hands in disinfectant and putting on a gown and mask whenever we went to see James. It takes a lot out of you emotionally and as a result of that I couldn't cry. I couldn't cry physically for years and years. Now I'm better.

Everybody deals with grief in very different ways. I think I just internalised it so much in order just to get through each day because that's all you can do, take it day by day. If anything upset me I'd get a headache but I couldn't have an outlet for my emotions. People go through grief and hardship and everybody deals with it in a different way. Even in the '70s there was no counselling. People don't know how to approach you, so they stay away because they don't know how to deal with it. People need to talk about what they're experiencing but people stay away. Whether that was the cause of the marriage breakdown ... but lots of things contribute. James was on a special diet for years, but you wouldn't know that now. He developed into a strong and athletic young man and ended up playing league football like his brother. Now he is senior business analyst for Melbourne Football Club.

### **Returning to Study**

Yvonne Correlje, 1970s. I think I needed something else to focus on. In 1974 while James was in hospital I read in the paper there was a new scheme accepting mature age students at university and you didn't have to have that piece of paper that I had been try to get for years to enable me to study. We moved to Montmorency and I did one subject, HSC English Literature, in a very relaxed environment at the neighbourhood house in Greensborough. We sat on couches drinking coffee and the teacher was very relaxed. That year I applied for and got into Latrobe University. Whitlam was in power and introduced changes in the tertiary education sector. He made a lot of mistakes but he had a lot of vision, and if it wasn't for him I wouldn't have got into university.

I was doing English at Latrobe and it was the encouragement of my ex-husband for me to do Dutch. Then I did Dutch at Melbourne University as complementary studies and I obtained first class honours. I started doing second year honours and transferred from Latrobe to Melbourne

and ended up doing my degree in languages in Swedish, Germanic studies, and old English. I studied Beowulf in the old English, and The Battle of Maldon, and Alfred's Wars with the Danes ... It was fascinating stuff. When you study language you study a lot of the culture, history, and the society of the people, and even the food. While I was doing psychology I heard about ESL



(English as a Second Language) which was starting as a teaching method and that was very new at the time. I knew that that was what I had to do. After finishing at Melbourne I went back to Latrobe in 1982 to do ESL and English methods in Diploma of Education.

### **Teaching Languages**

In the interim I was teaching Dutch at Dandenong TAFE. It was nice. By doing the Dutch there I got to know the head of department and I got a position as an ESL teacher in their Access department teaching English in a community house to migrants. We had some very interesting people: Chilean refugees, Ethiopians, Vietnamese boat people and Cambodian refugees, Polish refugees as well. Lots of interesting adults. I moved across to teaching communication skills and in between my husband and I separated, and I lost my father in '88.

### **Father's Cancer**

My dad was diagnosed as having cancer May 1988, and he died in August that year on his birthday. He said the fact that so much of the building materials

he'd been handling in the Snowy Mountains had been fibrous asbestos cement may have contributed to his death ... But he was also a smoker, which doesn't help.

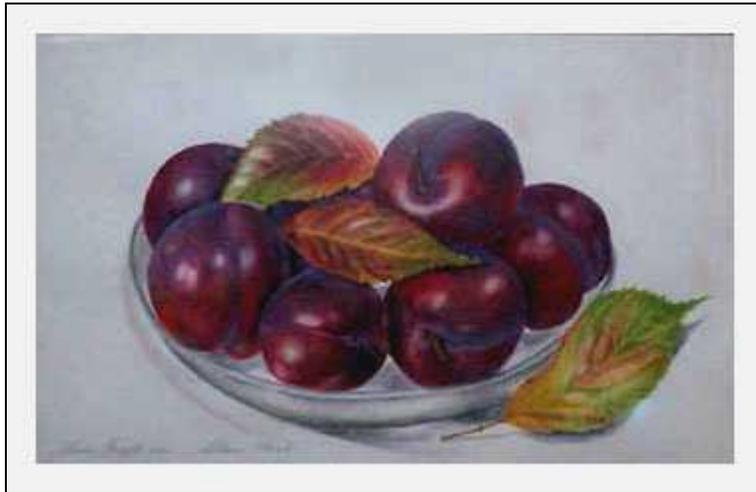
I then enrolled in a post-graduate course in human resource development. That was run by Victoria College which has since amalgamated with several others and become Deakin University. We did things like instructional design, facilitation, career counselling, and organisational development.

### **The Corporate World**

I managed to leave teaching and get a position with the SEC Credit Union as their operations manager. I left after 18 months because I got a position with a second tier chartered accounting firm and I became their national human resources manager. It was a difficult position in that I was on my own in Melbourne while their head office was in Perth and I was supposed to manage the HR function in Melbourne. Their organisational structure is like a partnership in a law firm with their partners and also their other hierarchical structure. Trying to get all that information into a database that was just coming into being for reporting purposes was quite challenging. When they were rationalising their structure I became a casualty of that rationalisation. In other words, I lost my job.

Then in 1993 I got a position with Lend Lease in Brisbane, so I sold the house in Montmorency and moved north. My daughter was doing engineering at Monash, and Simon had moved to play football for the West Australian Football League for South Fremantle. James was the last one at school and he didn't want to come to Brisbane with me. I took my dog to Brisbane as my only companion. I worked in Brisbane as a Human Resources consultant, which entailed mainly working for external clients and getting their systems onto data bases. We did a lot of travelling

for Lend Lease, which was a good company. I travelled to the gold Coast, Tweed Heads, Coolangatta Hospital, Tweed Heads RSL, Queensland Health, the equivalent of the RACV, and others. I bought a lovely home, a Queenslander, in Bulimba. Unfortunately the job was not really what I thought it would be as a lot of the work became more technical than the HR side. I had a discussion with the state manager and we agreed to part. They were good because they paid for my removal expenses back to Melbourne. They're a good company. They work you tough but they also do the right thing by their employees.



Botanical artwork in watercolour by Yvonne Correlje.

### **Coming Back to Melbourne**

When I came back in 1995 I was living in Greensborough and my son Simon decided to come back from WA because he then went to do phys ed at RMIT. At that stage James was going to Deakin. When he started university there were so many other students applying for courses he ended up at Deakin in Warrnambool and lived in a caravan at the age of 18! He just had to get in somewhere. Samantha in the interim had finished her engineering course. My children did really well.

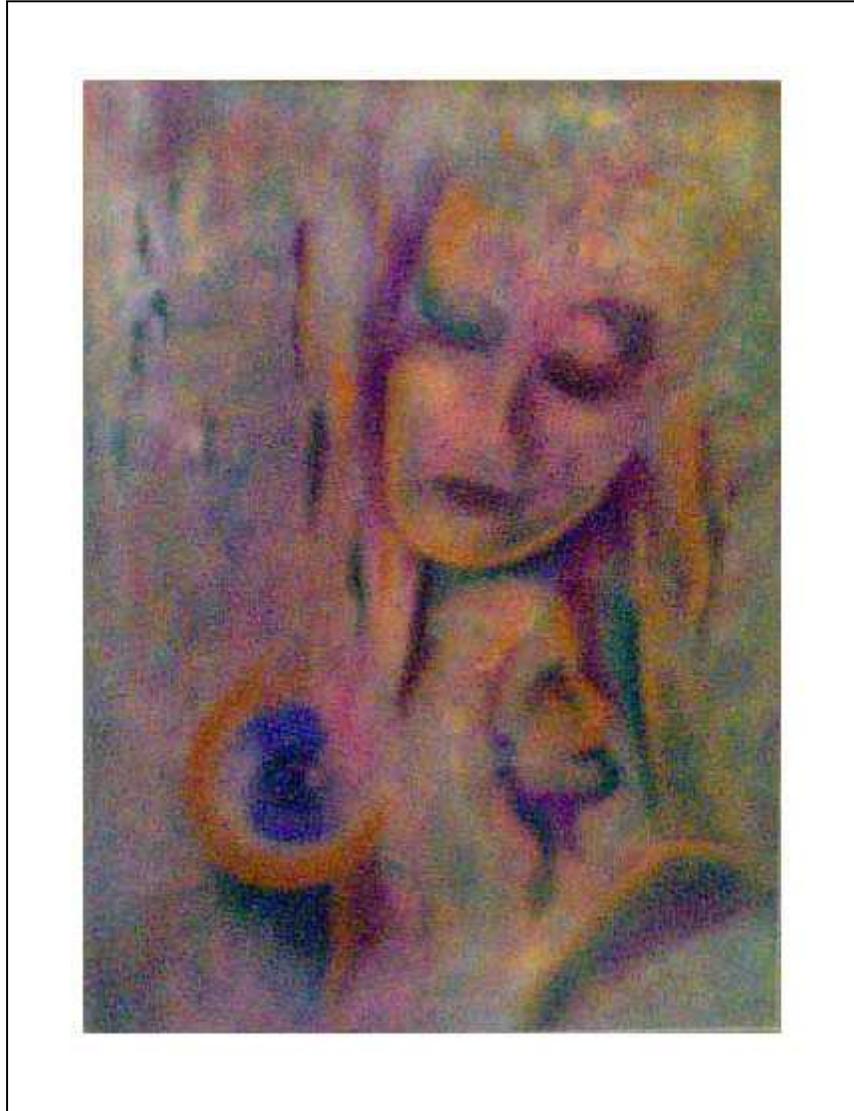
After a while I got a job as project manager with the ANZ bank where I managed a team of instructional designers in lots of customer service and sales training. However there was a change in the head of department to a real number cruncher. I advised against appointing particular training consultants because I had assessed they would not be able to meet our requirements, but I was overruled due to a bit of nepotism. Because of that action on my part my boss more or less told me that my days there were numbered. When my forebodings proved to be correct I could see it was becoming a case of shooting the messenger to save the ego and I got fed up with the bullying that ensued and left. That was in July 1997 and I really haven't had a full time job since.

### **Seeking Employment**

I got a part-time position at Monash University and worked there for one year. My daughter Samantha is a traffic engineer and has Masters in Engineering Science. She was senior lecturer at Monash and set up the bus and coach course, because all bus drivers, owner operators had to go through this accreditation. I worked on that course for a year and during this time I applied for a position as a director on the Members Australia Credit Union Board, which was a three-year term. I probably should have stayed on there but during my term they were offering redundancies to reduce the number of directors on the Board. This was the first time ever I had an opportunity to get some money for a redundancy so I took that. I then went back to part-time teaching.

I've also done stock broking and even traded futures. I worked as a stock broker and put a lot of my own money into shares. When I was employed at Monash and I was a Director as well I decided to buy my current place in Clifton Hill. I've now been here 6 years.

When I was at the ANZ my aim was to work there for a number of years, and I was on a good salary because I was in a management position. My aim was to buy a big old place in the country and run a bed and breakfast, and I would still like to do that but you need a partner to do that as it would be hard work on your own.



"Untitled" by Yvonne Correlje.

### **Interest in Art**

I was always interested in art and drawing since I was very young. My grandfather painted and my father painted. When I was in Grade 2 one of my drawings – it was something with lots of fairies - was put into an art exhibition at the Footscray Town Hall. I didn't win a prize but it was an honour to be included. My parents gave me some oil paints when I was doing secondary school. At school, art, music, English, sport, even French, were my favourite subjects.

After high school I didn't practice art until I enrolled in the art and design course preliminary year. That gave me another opportunity to be creative again, which I really enjoyed.

Art is something I should have done earlier as I'm very creative and it's a passion. I have a strong creative need. I put art aside while I was going to university and had children and didn't pick it up again until I was in Brisbane and did a drawing course. That took me back into it and when I came back to Melbourne I did life drawing and then started doing botanical art in water colour. I'm now dabbling with some oils and have some "work in progress" sitting on the easel for the past year. It's something I'll get back to when I can because I find chasing full time work is a full-time job.

### **In Conclusion**

After all this tenacity and aspiring to get my university degrees and work in the corporate world, which I did, here I am, still looking to find my niche in the world. But life is a process; it's not the destination, it's the constant seeking, discovering and learning and doing. After all, to arrive at the destination is to die.



Yvonne Correlje, 2006.



Yvonne Correlje-Scott taking master class, Launceston, 2013 .



Tasmanian Landscape, oil on canvas by Yvonne Correlje-Scott, 2015.

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