

Archive No. 125

Maureen O'Connor (14 September, 1945 – 24 September, 1998)

Maureen O'Connor was born, raised and lived in inner urban Melbourne all her life. She had a variety of jobs including many years as a Storeman and Packer, as an Owner-Driver and finally as a Public Servant in the Department of Housing and Construction and left when she was offered a package by the Kennett government. She identified as working class and was a dedicated and active member of several unions during her working life.

Maureen was a member of the Lesbian Festival 1990 organising group where she devised the ticketing system for the program of events and was involved in the overall running of the LesFest. She went on to be involved in the organizing of the Lesbian Festival 1991 the following year and attended her last Lesbian Festival in Daylesford in January 1998.

In 1991, Maureen joined the Women's Circus Techies for their first show, Women and Institutions, at FCAC and enjoyed it so much she was a dedicated Techie for all their subsequent annual shows up to and including Pope Joan in 1997. She also volunteered as a techie on lights for several community performances including Amazon Theatre's plays in the early 1990s.

Maureen was a founding member of the Performing Older Women's Circus when it started in 1995. She attended the circus skills workshops for the next three years and performed for the first time in all four of POW's earlier shows: Act Your Age (1995) Still Revolting (1996) Every Witch Way (1996) and Unstopped Mouths (1997). She was a consummate clown and a reliable base for the group pyramids. She also took overall responsibility for the technical aspects of POW's shows.

Maureen came out as a lesbian at the age of 17 and was a significant role model in the lesbian community. She attended many of the events and gatherings in the women's and lesbian communities over the years and helped organise the National 10/40 Conference in Healesville in 1992.

After she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 1996, Maureen was instrumental in setting up the Lesbian Cancer Support Group in December 1996, and continued as an active member of the LCSG for the next couple of years.

The C-Word, by Jean Taylor, (Maureen's partner over the last eight and a half years of her life) published by Spinifex Press, 2000, documents how Maureen dealt with cancer and her

subsequent treatment while continuing to be an active and much-respected member of the lesbian community in Melbourne till her death on 24 September 1998.