

Archive No. 127

Thelma Solomon (2 April, 1936 – 19 February, 2003)

Thelma Solomon was born in Adelaide to an Italian mother and an English father and moved with her family to Melbourne when she was six months old. When she was five Thelma's mother remarried an ex-communist who brought Thelma up with a strong sense of social justice.

Thelma was educated at MacRobertson Girls High School and worked as a Therapy Radiographer at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute for several years before retraining to become a teacher.

When Thelma saw the article about Zelda D'Aprano's radical action she was inspired to join her. Ten days later, on 31 October 1969, when teachers were on strike, Thelma with her friend Alva Geikie and Zelda chained themselves to the doors of the Arbitration Commission to protest about the lack of equal pay and other inequities against women. It was an action that changed her life.

Thelma, Alva and Zelda went on to set up the Women's Action Committee in March 1970. Thelma participated in all the radical actions WAC organised over the following two years, including the equal pay tram rides, the anti-Miss teenage Quest protests, and the challenges to the male-only rule in the front bar of hotels. She also helped organize the National WL Conference on Women and Work and Women and the Trade Unions in 1971.

While Thelma was a student at La Trobe (1972 – 1980) she helped set up the Women's Group and turned every essay into a treatise on the WLM.

Over the 30 years Thelma was a lesbian feminist activist she was involved in a range of feminist and lesbian collectives and activities. These included: facilitating the Friday night C-R group meetings at the Women's Cultural Palace in 1979, answering the phone as a member of Lesbian Line, the first phone information, support and referral service for lesbians set up in 1981, and joining the Women's Liberation Archives Group in 1983 to help put out their first calendar in conjunction with Sybylla Press.

Thelma was a member of the organizing collective for the National Lesbian Conference in 1990 and again for the National 10/40 Conference in 1992.

Thelma was a founding member of the Matrix Guild of Victoria in 1992, the Performing Older Women's Circus in 1995, where she performed in POW's first three shows (Act Your Age, 1995, Still Revolting!!!, 1996 and Every Witch Way, 1996) as a clown and was one of the aerialists at age 60, and the Lesbian Cancer Support Group in 1997. During the 1990s she was also a member of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women.

Thelma rejoined the Victorian Women's Liberation and Lesbian Feminist Archives Inc at the end of 1999 and the Lesbian Cancer Support Group at the beginning of 2002 and was an active member of both these groups till the end of her life.

Thelma's remarkable contributions to the lesbian and women's communities were honoured in several obituaries including The Age (10 March 2003), the Herald-Sun (10 April 2003) and Lesbiana, April 2003.