

Archive No. 27

Alva Geikie (29 January 1936 –

Alva Geikie was born and raised in Brunswick, attended state schools in Coburg and Preston before successfully studying for a three year Diploma in Needlecraft at Emily MacPherson. She made clothes for Myer for two years, studied at the technical Teachers College for a year and went on to teach needlecraft at Tech schools and eventually at Prince Hill High School (1963 – 1974) while studying at night for a BA at Monash Uni. During travels overseas for three years in the early '60s she made costumes at the Old Vic Theatre in London.

In 1969 Alva read the article about Zelda D'Aprano chaining herself to the Commonwealth Building on 21 October and was so intrigued she rang Zelda and offered to be involved at the next chain-in. As a result, Alva, Zelda and Alva's friend Thelma Solomon chained themselves across the doors of the Arbitration Court on 31 October 1969 during a teacher's strike so that Alva and Thelma who were both teachers could attend. This radical action was the beginning of Alva's involvement in the Women's Liberation Movement.

Four months later Alva, Zelda and Thelma held the inaugural meeting of the Women's Action Committee on 2 March 1970 at Alva and Thelma's house. Alva was an active member of WAC and was involved in many of the radical actions organised by WAC including the Equal Pay Tram Ride (1970), the anti-Miss Teenage Quests (1970 and 1971) and the protests at the men-only public bars. She also gave talks and participated in many campaigns to challenge sexist advertising and the like.

WAC disbanded after the WL Centre was set up in 1972 and Alva began attending WL general meetings and joined various activist collectives including Vashti's Voice where she wrote articles and did layout, amongst other things, and did a lot of pro-abortion work with Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC). She also worked on writing the joint WLM and WEL equal pay submission for the Equal Pay Case with Sylvie Shaw, (who presented it on 3 November 1972).

Alva moved to Lennox Head, NSW, in 1979, trained and worked as an ESL teacher to adults in TAFE and in Thailand, taught adult education with Aborigines at Cabbage Tree Island and retired in 1999. She has also been involved in various women's and art and craft groups and planted lots of trees.

In 2005, Alva was successfully nominated by Zelda D'Aprano and received an Edna Ryan Award in Sydney, NSW, to honour her contribution as a feminist activist over many years.