



ETERNITY



Photo: Ida Fenn

*Yellow Suede
Simpsons*

The search for a missing airliner, the devotion of a missionary's wife in Papua New Guinea, the joy of parenthood and the loneliness brought about by depression – all these stories will be introduced into the *Eternity* gallery this month.

In 1937 the search for a Stinson aircraft, missing en route from Sydney to Brisbane, captured the imagination of the nation. The disappearance sparked a huge land and sea search that failed to find any trace of the aircraft and was abandoned after seven days. One man didn't give up the search. Bernard O'Reilly reasoned that the aircraft could have come down close to his own home in the McPherson Ranges and so he set out alone to find it. After two days of battling through extraordinarily dense and rugged country, O'Reilly found the wreckage and, to his immense surprise, two survivors – Joe Binstead and John Proud.

I was only 15 yards away when I saw the wreck... When I struck them first, Mr Proud had been writing his last message on a piece of metal from the plane, scratching it with a penknife. Within five minutes, they were asking me about the test match – how many had Bradman made? I made them some tea and left them what food I had – which was very poor, I admit – and I started back for civilisation. Bernard O'Reilly, 1937

Over the years walkers through the area have souvenired parts of the wreckage. Many of these souvenirs eventually make their way back to the O'Reilly's Rainforest Guesthouse, including a part of the Stinson's wing. This has been loaned to the Museum and accompanies O'Reilly's story.

The story of Ida Fenn will be introduced into the theme of Devotion. Ida Fenn and her husband, Revered Edward Fenn, were missionaries in Papua New Guinea (PNG) from 1937 until 1952. The Fenns built the first church at the Aird Hill Mission Station in the Gulf Province of PNG and together learnt that the duties of a missionary in PNG involved more than the preaching and teaching they had expected. Known to the local people as Bohobo Puripuri Upi – white medicine woman – Ida Fenn treated everything from tropical ulcers, ringworm, lacerations and broken bones to gashes from crocodile attacks, often in cramped and dirty conditions and with limited medical supplies. Mrs Fenn was greatly disturbed by the high infant mortality rate in Aird Hill and the neighbouring villages and, despite disapproval from other senior missionaries and government officials, she devoted fifteen years to helping the Papuan women through their pregnancies and labour. Along with her other responsibilities, Mrs Fenn managed the hospital at Aird Hill, operated a rest home and established a post-natal class for new mothers. The Papuan women fondly told her, 'You are not like a real Sinabudua (white woman), you are like one of us'.

Two of this month's new stories exhibits have been inspired by stories left in the 'Your Story' interactive located in the *Eternity* gallery. In this interactive visitors are invited to contribute their own stories to the Museum. Two recurring themes in these recordings are the joy of parenthood, and the loneliness of those suffering from depression and mental illness.



Bernard and Viola O'Reilly

Susan Pfanner's story of becoming a mother will be added to the theme of Joy. Most people are able to regard conception and birth as natural parts of life but in Susan's case, conception was fraught with many difficulties. In the early 1980s *in vitro* fertilisation treatments were still relatively new and the prospects for many couples with fertility problems were grim. The difficult struggle with infertility is one experienced by many Australian families and is an important story to explore within the Museum.

The new story in Loneliness will provide a different angle for the theme. Many stories featured in the theme of Loneliness have revolved around distance, the outback, remoteness and physical isolation. Ingrid Ozols' story will show a different type of loneliness, that experienced by people suffering from depression and anxiety. Ingrid Ozols has lived with the stresses, trauma and stigma of depression for much of her life. Ingrid now works closely with Beyond Blue – the National Depression Initiative – in order to promote greater understanding of the problem of depression and the support networks that are available to other sufferers.

Also going on display in *Eternity* this month is the newly acquired Sydney Cove Medallion. The Museum purchased the original issue Wedgwood medallion at auction in May this year. The medallion was made in 1789 of clay from Sydney Cove. In 1788 Governor Arthur Phillip sent a sample of clay to Joseph Banks for an assessment of its potential for making china. Banks passed the sample to Josiah Wedgwood who declared it to be 'an excellent material for pottery' and set about making the Sydney Cove Medallion. The full title of the medallion is 'Hope encouraging Art and Labour, under the influence of Peace, to pursue the employments necessary to give security and happiness to an infant settlement'. This important addition to the National Historical Collection will accompany the Arthur Phillip story in the theme of Hope.

These new stories and objects are part of our ongoing commitment to keep our permanent galleries fresh for our many returning visitors. We hope you enjoy them and continue to inspire us by recording your own stories for *Eternity*. 📍

Sophie Jensen & Cheryl Crilly, Curators Eternity Gallery