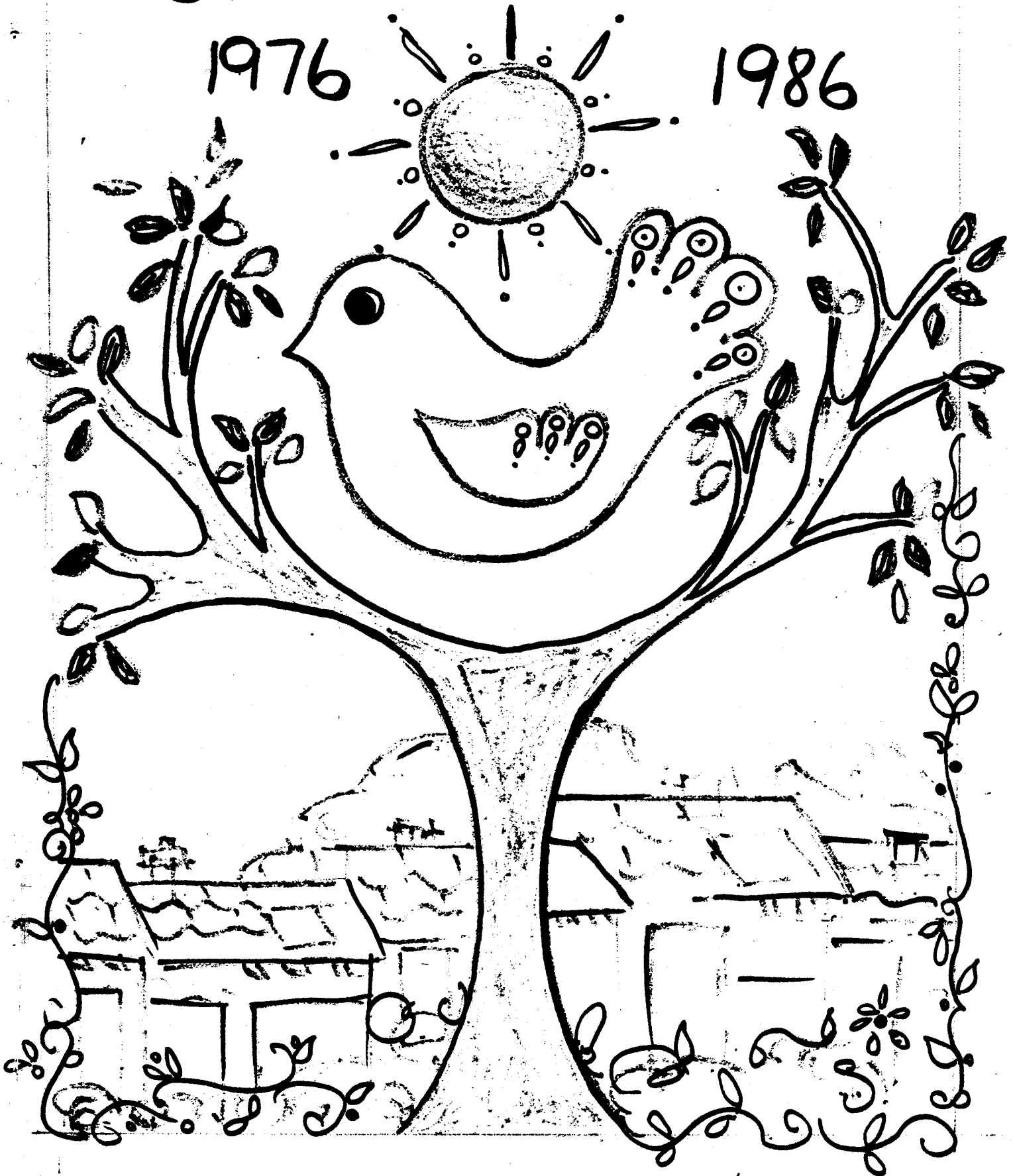


URAMBI VILLAGE

1976

1986



THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE OF URAMBINEWS

Ten years have passed since Urambi Village was officially opened by Mr Tom Uren and Mr Tony Staley in November 1975.

To mark the occasion this special edition of URAMBINEWS has been produced to coincide with the Tenth Anniversary Dinner to be held in the Community Centre.

It has been compiled at rather short notice from more or less voluntary contributions, some on the Village's development from "Founding Fathers and Mothers", and some on topics or themes of the writers' own choosing. The result reflects many of the things that are valued by past and present residents, including a not-too-heavy "sense of community".

I believe that a special mention should be made of Jim Batty, without whose vision there would have been no beginning, and of Michael Dysart, who provided the architectural framework for our living which has worked so well.

On behalf of the present Body Corporate Committee, thanks to all who have helped create Urambi Village as a good place to live.

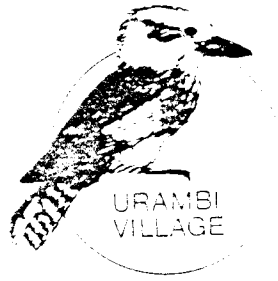
*David Watson
Convenor, Body Corporate Committee
15 November 1986*

A CHRONOLOGY OF URAMBI VILLAGE

- Late 1973 Jim Batty creates a group interested in alternative housing - a development with a sense of belonging.
- Early 1974 The Urambi Association is formed with 10 foundation members and an executive of 7.
- Early 1974 Site at Crozier Circuit, Kambah, is chosen for a cluster housing development - other possibilities were at Holt and ?. Cost was \$151,000 for a 10 acre site.
- Apr 1974 Architect from Sydney, Michael Dysart, visits Canberra for a meeting at 7pm in the Hughes Community Centre to present site layouts, housing style sketches and house designs. Jim Batty proposes that Urambi members join the Baranbali Cooperative Society to free them from 'the enormous burden of undertaking the building part of our operation'.
- May 1974 Meeting at Weston Creek High School to choose appliances, fittings etc for houses and discussions to determine facilities to be included in the Community Centre and guidelines for landscaping.
- Late 1974 The Urambi Cooperative Community Advancement Society is formed following the amendment of the Unit Titles Ordinance - the legal entity to enter into contracts now exists.
- Dec 1974 For \$40 would-be purchasers join the Society, and for \$400 they have an initial deposit on a particular house. The \$4,000 full deposit is to be paid on signing a contract later.
- Aug 1975 When site work by Mogo Constructions Ltd commences, 60 units 'spoken for', but contracts are not formally made as legal aspects are sorted out.
- Aug 1975 General meeting of 30 members at Weston Creek High School to obtain guidance on ways to cut costs; a builder's cost plus contract is foreshadowed; first mention of individuals contributing to landscaping is mentioned.
- Sep 1975 Annual General Meeting at the Lithuanian Club, Lyneham; Ian Lowe elected chairman; Alastair Christie secretary; board meetings are held weekly.
- Nov 1975 Stocks and Holdings Pty Ltd is chosen as the builder of the project. Total cost is estimated at \$2.75 million.
- Nov 1975 General meeting at Hughes Community Hall to discuss individual contracts, including the 'rise and fall' clause.
- Dec 1975 Whitlam Government loses office, and many reconsider plans.
- Feb 1976 Lease for the land is signed in the name of the Society, but up to \$1,000,000 bridging finance must be negotiated before Stocks and Holdings is prepared to commence work; financier insists on sighting individual signed contracts.
- Mar 1976 Building contract with Stocks and Holdings becomes effective, and house construction commences
- Apr 1976 Architect Michael Dysart sets up an office in Canberra; 40 contracts are exchanged by this time.
- Jun 1976 Peter Bell takes over as supervising architect for both Urambi and Cook-Aranda Cooperatives.
- Jul 1976 Volunteers from Society members to help sell houses at weekends are called for, as it becomes clear that word-of-mouth is not enough.
- Sep 1976 Annual General Meeting; Geoff McAlpine puts forward landscaping proposals; some houses now have roofs; 5.5% increase in costs of houses; Urambi Village adopted as name for selling purposes.

- Oct 1976 Alastair Christie is elected chairman; Geoff McAlpine arranges 500 railway sleepers for landscaping of common areas
- Nov 1976 Houses 39, 40, 41, 42 and 43 are completed and Urambi Village is officially opened by Tom Uren and Tony Staley. It is part dust bowl, and part building site, but morale is lifting.
- Dec 1976 The first residents to move in are Shanns, Langs, Healys, and Battys.
- Feb 1977 Advice that working bees will be held each Sunday from 10am to landscape the site, involving residents and future residents; 18 houses still unsold.
- Jun 1977 The first AGM of the Urambi Body Corporate held in the common room of houses 19, 20, and 21; Mary Hodge elected convenor; Alastair Christie reports on the negotiations with Stocks and Holdings on completion of the Community Centre as a usable building, and the 16 unsold houses.
- Jul 1977 Body Corporate Committee is formally set up to manage affairs for those in residence.
- Jul 1977 First Edition of Urambi News is published to succeed newsletters issued by the board.
- Jul 1977 Laying of brick paths commences, as one of many milestones in the voluntary working bees.
- Dec 1977 First Christmas party in the Community Centre.
- May 1978 After ten months of working bees the two ends of the spine path join near house 28 - Starwine from Ian Lowe found at short notice is used to commemorate the occasion.
- Nov 1978 First Art Fair at the Community Centre. Organised by Maureen Mutton and others, it is a social and financial success.
- Mar 1979 Swimming pool is proposed by Body Corporate Committee after much preparatory work by the Healys.
- Jul 1979 First screening of the Urambi Film Society with plans for screenings every second Friday; membership \$3 per household.
- Oct 1979 Halloween Party for young and old - some youngsters are still recovering.
- Feb 1980 Bob Hodge as BCC convenor announces Sunday working bees at monthly intervals on specific tasks to give a sense of achievement.
- May 1980 Community Centre is properly finished; ceiling added to activities area, carpet and furnishing to the meeting room after extraordinary efforts by Arminel Ryan and others.
- Jun 1980 Arminel Ryan reports that the Community Centre has been booked on 160 occasions in 1979/80, including the second Art Fair, Christmas parties, and bonfire night.
- Aug 1980 The BCC agreed that a group of residents be allowed to use the land off the spine path for a communal vegetable garden.
- Feb 1981 Maintenance supremo Marian Powell appeals for help with the dog faeces problem; is this why the Mahers left the Village?
- Mar 1981 Jan Robbins advises that chain barriers will be erected across access points to the spine area to discourage vehicle usage of this area.
- Nov 1981 Fifth Anniversary Dinner is a memorable occasion; Steve Shann delivers a memorable oration.
- Jul 1982 Ball court proposed.

- Oct 1982 Swimming pool is opened one gala Sunday morning; 'King Neptune' Christie parts the waters.
- Nov 1982 Craft Market Afternoon á la Francaise is held to exhibit and sell craftwork and provide a true French Patisserie afternoon tea.
- Nov 1983 Champagne brunch party at the pool is held to declare the swimming pool open; Andrew Kay probably swam.
- Dec 1983 Frank Swayn, a Urambi resident, agrees to assist with the maintenance of common areas on a paid basis. Working bees become far fewer.
- Dec 1983 Swimming pool pergola is erected, the public lights perform well under Frank Swayn's influence, and the Christmas dinner is \$10/head for food and wine.
- Apr 1984 Solar heating for swimming pool is working well, as are working bees to complete basic landscaping, planting and chipping around the Community Centre and ball court.
- Jun 1984 Ball court is completed and Geoff McAlpine press-gangs the unwary to play volley ball on Sunday mornings; Urambi fireworks tradition now in its eighth year.
- Dec 1984 Sheila McAlpine, Keryl Rutter and the social committee create an elegant atmosphere for the adult Christmas dinner, after advising that suits would not be inappropriate.
- Dec 1985 Children's Christmas party tradition continues with *Santa*, a unique nativity play organised by Margaret Shann. There is present giving.
- Feb 1986 Latest plans for the Murrumbidgee Country Club are for commencement in July/August 1986; Hindmarsh is the developer of the three-year project involving 400 residential units.
- Jun 1986 Gravel path between swimming pool and houses is brich-paved; now all major paths are bricked.
- Nov 1986 Tenth Anniversary Dinner for 80 people from as far afield as Paris, Maryborough (Victoria), and Sydney.



DEVELOPMENT

and

ACTIVITIES

THE CONCEPTION

The idea that became Urambi Village was simple enough at the beginning, but it developed in ways which could not have been foreseen.

Towards the end of 1973 I was living in Farrer, ACT, a very attractive suburb. However I was always struck by the incongruity of quite different architectural styles which were built side by side. Occasionally 3 or 4 houses of complementary architectural style would be built side-by-side and the result, to my mind, was always impressive.

At about that time a lecture on alternative housing was sponsored by the Department of the Capital Territory. There was support within Government for new ideas to come forward, and ordinances were altered to allow co-operative societies to develop housing. These legal changes took some time and these delays were to cause some problems for Urambi as it grew.

I discussed the matter with some like-minded friends and decided to form a group to pursue the idea further. This led to a body we called the Urambi Association with ten founding members of which I can recall eight:

John Mant
Peter Ellyard
John Wood
Michael Eyers
Helen Kortlang
Richard Dow
Steven Litchfield.

Certain principles were laid down, which from memory were:

- * the development would engender a sense of belonging (e.g a village);
- * the development would be built to a high architectural quality;
- * there would be private open space to each dwelling;
- * there would be common facilities available to all;
- * there would be a minimum of traffic internal to the development.

I approached NCDC to see if a new cul-de-sac in Kambah could be allocated, on the basis that I could get together a group to purchase the blocks without competition. I also had in mind that we would approach a builder such as Pettit & Sevitt, whose styles I admired, and all build one of their houses of our own choice.

NCDC's response was to point to the block in Crozier Circuit, as well as some other less attractive land. NCDC and the Department of the Capital Territory considered that a direct sale would be easier for a medium density site, although the development would be a lot bigger than I had envisaged.

At this stage John Mant made two suggestions which were to be critical to the way the project turned out:

- * that a co-operative society be formed to carry out the development;
- * that Michael Dysart be approached to be the architect.

This approach was adopted by the Urambi Association. Michael Dysart first came to Canberra in early 1974 and brought with him a representative of Baranbali Association, a University of NSW based co-operative society which was interested in carrying out the development. In the event the link with Baranbali did not proceed.

Michael produced some preliminary plans and some brochures based on ideas put forward by interested people. These became the basis on which members were recruited to the Urambi Co-operative Society.

The Co-operative Society took some time to register. However there was a growing number of members who were taking an increasing role during 1974 including Ian Lowe, Jack Goldring, Michael Eyers, and Geoff McAlpine.

URAMBI VILLAGE - THE BEGINNING

One of the first people I met in Canberra when I arrived here in 1973 was Jim Batty. Jim was a totally laid back guy with a good sense of humour and an enormous amount of enthusiasm for any idea which was new or which he thought might make money or improve a person's lot.

Jim was considered as upwardly mobile in a star studded cast, either employed or being recruited by the then Department of Urban and Regional Affairs (DURD). At the time of our first meeting he was involved in an ongoing examination of land allocation and housing in Canberra and as such had been studying overseas housing developments, in particular, those in the USA.

One evening at his house in Farrer, as we were doing justice to a second flagon, the conversation switched to some of the more alienating aspects of life in Canberra. What made families break up? Especially, why did the women leave to go back to their home towns or cities after having chalked up monumental telephone bills? What made people drink so much? Surely the Government didn't have a policy of recruiting alcoholics. Why did everyone evacuate the place at weekends? The list could go on for pages.

Chatting around these issues, a remarkable consensus was reached that at the core of the problem was the make up and layout of Canberra. New people for the service were usually recruited outside Canberra and many arrived with a family containing small children. These families either rented or sought to buy fairly quickly as prices in those days were well below equivalent prices in the capital cities.

This, combined with the prevailing social attributes of Canberra, was in many cases a recipe for disaster. In those days, and I suppose it must also be true to a degree today, if people did not force themselves to find social activities then it was extremely rare that anyone came to their aid. In many cases the houses these families occupied were unimaginative, aluminium windowed, brick veneer numbers often with the basic foundation bricks in a different colour to those which clad the upper section. They were set in rows on the terrain that the NCDC had endeavoured to simulate as a lunar landscape. Coupled with this there was a distinct lack of restaurants in Canberra, apart from the local Chinese, and there were only two major picture theatres. At the time Canberra boasted the highest rate of divorce, alcoholism and suicide per head of population in Australia.

With this in mind, we decided that rather than talk, we should try and do something about it. One of the first people to be involved was Steven Litchfield who was a friend of mine and happened to be an advisor to Tom Uren, who just happened to have a passion for trees and their preservation.

The original concept was to request ten acres of land on which fifty free standing houses would be built. The figure fifty was based on the standard allocation of houses to the acre at that time. What ever happened to the quarter acre block? This of course was carefully calculated to minimise servicing costs, eg. sewerage, water, etc., and incorporate roads and fences. The results being that for a town-city such as Canberra with untold land and no reclamation problems, houses were being virtually piled on top of each other.

One of the main ideas of Urambi was to do away with roads and cul-de-sacs which were designed on the turning circle of existing garbage trucks, to do away with fences and to locate fifty houses in a peaceful Australian bush setting.

Initial thinking was that the houses should be tri-level, separate dwellings in a brown texture brick and that the land released by the non intervention of roads and fences should be communal parkland.

The whole idea went down like a lead balloon with the NCDC. For a start the idea of servicing such a development, which would have to wait until the design was complete before the water and sewerage lines could be laid, which would defy the strategic placement of telephone posts and had no roads was mind blowing and it was gently shelved.

It took intervention at the highest level in the form of Tom Uren and Gordon Bryant to have the idea reluctantly re-examined. In those days Gordon Bryant had just given some fellow the verbal right to build an international hotel on Norfolk Island, so we felt we must be assured of success with our puny request. We proved right and with a high degree of push from Jim and Steve Litchfield, began negotiations with the NCDC and the Department of Capital Territories.

The first milestone was to select a block of land for the development. After a series of attempts to have a joint effort to look at available land, Jim ended up one day with officers from the Department in the new

Tuggeranong Valley where we had decided the best views and prospects lay.

Three sites were outlined, one on the edge of the then Kambah Pool road which was a dusty extension of Namatjira Drive which cut out at the end of the new no Government house suburb of Chapman; another was at the northern end of Kambah looking down the valley, which would have looked over an ocean of house roofs and the third was to be a new area called Wanniasa, again in the side of the hill looking south. Jim decided on the Kambah Pool site, basically because most of it faced north and the population of large trees was by far the best. Furthermore, the whole site would eventually overlook a golf course which, it was considered, was far better than house roofs.

Having chosen the site, Capital Territories went through another agonising twist as the site was to have been a number of cul-de-sacs off Crozier Circuit, to be offered free of charge to a developer who would put in the golf course. There was no money under the new get tough regime in Canberra for subsidised golf courses and anyone who would take on the \$1 million plus project was to be given free land around the course out of which to make a profit sufficient to attract a reputable developer. The land we had chosen was considered one of the prime give away sites.

Having gone as far as this we decide to hold on and not give up the chosen site. Needless to say, we succeeded with a little help from some friends, not the least being Tom Uren, as we had sold him on the preservation of the wonderful trees on the site, a great number of which had been destined for the chop. Needless to say, the NCDC and the Capital Territories were distraught, but capitulated.

Not to be outdone, Capital Territories informed us that the proposed allocation of the houses for the site was too low a density considering that no roads were to be included in the complex and a dangerous precedent could be set for future Canberra development. They proposed a doubling of the density to one hundred house. This of course was unacceptable and a wonderful round of negotiations started with only one obvious answer in sight; seventy five houses. We were finally to claim victory after the design of the complex when this number was reduced to seventy two by the architect.

Much of the original concept prevailed however, of their being no internal roads, no fences (some exist now), peripheral parking bays and a community centre.

Originally it was envisaged that the community centre would provide the central link to overcome such problems as isolation created by existing housing layout and general social problems. Our imaginations ran wild and, apart from a swimming pool and meeting room which could accommodate craft classes and child minding facilities, there was to be a comfortable area with fireplace where people could gather for a drink in the day or evening and where booze would be available on an honour system; a squash court (the site of the ball court); a communal laundromat (the site of the crafts room beside the childrens' play area) and a shop for bulk purchasing.

Having decided this we went in search of an architect. It was a toss up between Michael Dysart and Ken Wooley, both from Sydney, but we settled on Michael Dysart as we believed that Wooley was really AD (after Dysart) and copying his tri-level designs which were all the rage in Sydney at the time. We invited Michael to look over the job and he accepted willingly, having thoroughly approved of our choice of site. I don't know, but I think he may have lived to regret the whole thing, even though he got paid well and we channelled him into the Cook-Aranda Project when it looked like foundering.

In saying he may have lived to regret it, I mean that he was a really exceptional conceptual architect rather than a personal architect. This was probably brought home to him at the first major Urambi meeting at which the basic designs were unveiled. The meeting was held at the Weston Creek High School and while the people present appeared impressed, immediate demands were made for the re-organisation of internal walls and room placements. After holding a number of counselling services with prospective residents over a series of months, he withdrew to Sydney and placed the house details in the hands of a few subordinates that he left behind. But he showed his faith in the project by purchasing a house (now in the hands of the Sways).

So with site in hand, a design concept, a new Unit Title Ordinance to cover ownership, the project, under the name of the Urambi Co-operative Community Advancement Society Ltd., was ready to go. The only thing lacking at that stage was a financial backer.

Discussions were held with the then Bank of New South Wales and at one stage it appeared that the Bank's superannuation fund might become the sole backer of the project. Just when we thought we were ready to

sign with them, another group with a similar proposal at Cook-Aranda, with whom we shared information, approached the Bank with a similar but incomplete proposal and the Bank abandoned ship on both of us.

Subsequent discussions with the Civic Permanent Building Society together with the Bank of New South Wales and the Mortgage Guarantee Insurance Co. produced a combined financial package.

As a mark of commitment, Civic Permanent asked that each member of Urambi deposit \$4000 with them. This was a perfectly normal move on their part but caused some consternation among registered members and the membership dropped quite dramatically, leaving the serious players to be built on. The number of initial depositors was around about forty and with approximately \$160,000 as a commitment, the lenders decided to proceed.

The first Constructors to attempt the site works went broke in the process. One memorable piece of construction was the retaining wall between where the Community Centre was to go and car park B. The reinforcing bars inside the concrete block wall were placed in the front section so that when the earth was filled in behind the structure, it gently leaned forward at a graceful 45 degrees.

These constructors were followed by the highly reputable Stocks and Holdings Ltd, but that is another story.

At this stage however, Urambi had developed into quite a cohesive bunch of people who, in the main, believed in the concept and were determined to carry the project through to completion.

A major belief was that by undertaking such a large construction, purchasing economies would be realised and prices would be held down accordingly. In many cases this was true but an escalation of prices, permitted by a well designed but unfortunately open ended contract with the builder, caused some problems including loss of some members.

As a beginning for Urambi, this is possibly enough to give a general idea without boring people too greatly. At this stage also, quite a number of committees and working parties for this and that had been established by prospective Urambi residents and the people involved in them can give a far better factual account of developments.

Richard Dowe

URAMBI VILLAGE - SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF THE BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

My earliest recollection of the existence of a plan to build Urambi is of the conversations which I heard Jim Batty conducting on the other side of an office screen in the late and much lamented Department of Urban and Regional Development. At that time, in mid 1974, we had just arrived in Canberra and Jim was endeavouring to get the Urambi project off the ground. His negotiations and discussions with the architect, new members and Government Authorities proceeded daily and was so convincing that we had to join.

Although the planning for Urambi had started as early as late 1973, by the middle of 1974 it was little more than a concept, almost 100 enthusiastic potential members and a lot of discussion with some rather skeptical Government officials and financiers. It is hard to know who were the most crucial. The NCDC had to be convinced that our concepts would not become merely another blot on the face of their beautiful city; the Department of Territories had to be convinced that changes to the leasing and unit titles ordinance were both necessary and workable; while potential financiers in their usual flint eyed way were concerned about financial feasibility.

Apart from the endless discussions with architects, financiers and planners I wonder how many people would recollect the importance of the amendment to the Unit Title Ordinance which now allows the progressive sale of individual titles before the development is complete. In our case this was an essential part of the process since bridging or construction finance for the whole project would have knocked it out of court. Even so our \$3 Million (in those old big fat 1976 dollars, about \$9-10 Million today) required about \$1.1 Million in bridging/construction finance.

The major pillar of financial support was the Civic Cooperative Permanent Building Society who provided

almost all the bridging finance and the long term money for intending owners. Without John Kirby's positive support Urambi would probably still be a dream.

The planning and design process dragged on, interminably it seemed at the time, through 1974 and 1975. The professional advice required extended from the architect and the lawyers to include both civil and electrical engineers. Eventually late in 1975 the site servicing contract was signed with MOGO Constructions and subsequently the main building contract with Stocks and Holdings. Work had started in earnest by 1976.

My recollection of the MOGO contract involved endless arguments between workers and supervisors over the summer of 1976 as the contractor vainly attempted to beat a recalcitrant talcum powder-like dust into a compacted material having sufficient strength to convince the engineers that it would support the weight of concrete slabs and double brick walls. Eventually the intermittent visits of the Sydney based civil consultants became too exasperating and we were forced to employ some considerably more satisfactory local people.

After the dust of summer, the building proceeded reasonably well during Autumn 1976 until disrupted by an unfortunately wet winter. Days seemed to be spent waiting for something to dry out and on some spectacular occasions site machinery was bogged to its axles in mud. Nevertheless building proceeded and progress was made. For the Urambi Board of Directors this was getting to a rather nerve racking phase. The seemingly perpetual process of liaison and negotiation with builders, architects, engineering consultants and legal advisors had to be mixed with meeting the real concerns of intending residents.

The building process had been very carefully designed to provide the Co-operative with the best possible cash flow and of course the overall building budget determined the prices charged to purchasers. The passage of time, inflation and a rather less than satisfactory building program which was not just the fault of the weather produced more and more strain in this delicate financial balance. Nevertheless, over the 6 months from 1976 to May 1977 some 36 houses were completed and their new owners took possession.

During 1976 the monthly juggle of the Co-operatives finances to pay the builder and meet the various miscellaneous bills was manageable, notwithstanding the 3 month delay in completing the first houses in November of that year.

However, by mid 1977 the juggling process became impossible when the builder finally admitted to a cost overrun equivalent to about 20% of the total project budget. Consequently, the Co-operative's financial position had become unmanageable and after extensive negotiations with financiers and the builder it was agreed that the only way to complete the last 16 or so houses was for the builder to effectively take over the affairs of the Co-operative, complete the buildings and manage the sales of the last 16 houses. The crucial part of this negotiation was that existing members with whom we had uncompleted contracts should be able to purchase their houses at the agreed prices. These had been fixed a month or so previously after taking account of escalation factors in the contracts.

The Canberra property market of the late 1976 was very difficult and completing all the sales proved to be slower than predicted by the professionals. From the viewpoint of the Co-operative and existing residents, the key point at this time was the completion by the builder of the bulk of the community facilities - specifically the community centre and the public lighting. This eventually occurred, although the standard was reduced from our original intentions, but considering the loss made by the builder this was justifiable.

The net result of this financial process was that while members of the Co-operative had accommodation in the form of their individual homes and a basic community centre structure, the planned landscaping, swimming pool and other community facilities were not completed. The further development of Urambi Village to the standard which we see today is essentially the result of considerable enthusiasm on the part of the community who participated in working bees over a considerable period of time. The community itself buckled down and completed not only the selection and planting of trees and shrubs, the cultivation, raking and planting of the open grassed areas, but also laid perhaps 20-25,000 bricks which form the pathways. No, the community did not lay those nice smooth professional paths which run on to Crozier Circuit! We laid that 500 metre, long spine path which winds and undulates its way in rustic splendour between the trees and shrubbery. Some of us can still probably remember the feeling of pride when we sampled the very cheap bubbly which was produced magically when the last sections of the spine path were joined, near the Community Centre. But I wonder if anyone can remember the bricks under which the empties are buried?

The Community Centre developments - both inside and outside - and ultimately the swimming pool and ball

court are the product of the same co-operative spirit with various people taking their turn in sharing their expertise, time and labour. The building process was of necessity, mainly the work of the few (perhaps 10 or 12 in total) who served as directors on the board of the Urambi Co-operative Community Advancement Society Ltd, but the final flowering of our Urambi Village environment is the work and monument of the many.

Alastair Christie (House 27)

LANDSCAPING

Urambi, Urambi, Urambi

How can one write about a love affair, for all to read? And what can one sensibly say about anything having just flown half way round the world, from the noise and bustle of Europe to the rural pleasures of western Kambah?

Well, let me try to put down a few of the million thoughts. Urambi for me started sometime in early 1974, I think, as gossip between people in the offices of Tom Uren and of Moss Cass where I was working - a vague idea, but one somehow full of the sorts of hopes we all had for developing a more environmentally sensible way of life - in terms of both the natural and social environment.

Soon the ideas began to take shape - gatherings of people in rooms in Lombard House (now Natwest House) and other DURD offices and in people's homes - visits to various green field sites in far corners of Canberra where this vague new group housing idea might be located (perhaps at a safe distance from normal civilisation?).

The core group was formed. We were on the list, part of the insiders, an achievement in itself it seemed at the time: owners of a share of the gold mine. Little did we know that the shareholders list was to alter quite a bit between conception of the idea and its concrete realisation (and yet, many of those original subscribers stuck it out through those next couple of years, and on)

At some stage, I don't remember when, our site near the Urambi Hills became the chosen one - well, after all DURD and the Environment Department were going to be located at the Tuggeranong Town Centre in just a year or two, weren't they? So there we were, on a thickly grassed hillside off the Kambah Pool track just past the cement batching site. No circuit, no asphalt then. I had loved this area from the time that I had first known Canberra and had wandered around all the old farm tracks - going back to the days I had spent at Duntroon which commenced with a camp not so far away at Point Hut, and included barbeques over the years at Pine Island and Red Rocks Gorge and Kambah Pool - frontier land in those days.

Again the details are vague, but at some stage during 1974 a group of us began to develop a special interest in the possible landscaping. Peter Ellyard, Mike Robbins and I and then at some stage Keith McIntyre joined in. Also associated was Helen Miller because we all thought that the landscaping could be a fully budgeted, fully professional part of the deal. The housing plans were proceeding apace and there was a full interaction between the ideas for shapes and colours of housing and the landscape concepts. All of us, architects and others, were in broad accord that somehow or other it would all be "native". After all, this was an integral part of the Australian spirit of that particular Labor Government wasn't it? Myself, I could never conceive of anything but an Australian landscape in such a site overlooking the Murrumbidgee River - so much a part of Australian history.

But, of course, there is room for all sorts of interpretations of what makes a "native" landscape. Books have been written about it, conferences held - I know, I've been there. Should we only use trees and shrubs endemic to this area - a bit boring surely? An untamed, unstructured landscape or a formal English landscape with gum trees in place of the oaks? Large bunches of one sort of plant here, another there - or just a relatively few sorts of key plants repeated here and there to create some sort of coherence and unity. I had one idea (more the latter option) and others had different opinions.

I seem to recall that Helen Miller had a vision which perhaps derived from the broad acre landscaping with which she was familiar, full of stands of casuarinas and a few sorts of eucalypts. More an idea for the edges

than the centre of the site. Michael Dysart's plans provided some context or constraints to whatever would be done in that he envisaged an extensive pergola walkway system which meant that most of the site would be very much "man made".

Well, time and money changed some of the hopes and plans. Instead of a fully professional job, labour, materials, machinery provided, it became a do-it-yourself job almost all the way. And d-i-y on top of bare compacted clay with half of the drainage on the site going in the wrong direction. At least Stocks & Holdings, the builders, gave us a few mounds and plants to brighten the place up in early 1977 when they were trying to encourage some of the later sales.

Although some might not believe it, Urambi is a form of democracy, so our landscaping solutions, like so many other things, had to be negotiated. (One proof of the reality of the democracy is that some people look at the activities of people here as anarchy, others see it as an autocracy.

I had my own view or a vision for the landscaping of Urambi, but I knew it had to fit reasonably well with the views of others - to the extent that they had them. One part of the view was that the balance of building to vegetation had to be tilted more towards the latter than Sydney-based architects might have planned. That became easy in the end when finance dictated the "postponement" of the pergola-covered walkways - that left the central connecting of the site to be dealt with in a different way which is, I suppose, the bit where I have tried hardest to exert my view, such as it is.

I don't want to dwell too much on that (and it changes and, I hope, develops anyway) but perhaps it's worth a few lines. Overall, an island of green with the superb strong clear architectural lines softened - but never fully concealed - by plants. Privacy on the Crozier Circuit side, but no forbidding unfriendly barriers. Tying in to the golf course (if ever there is one) on the other boundaries. Linked to the river, paddocks and hills by the repetition of the big indigenous gum trees (how fortunate we were to keep so many). A green canopy of all sorts of different heights. Plants for all seasons. A strong repetition of a relatively few key plants at all parts of the site to give one type of unity (for example, some of the callistemon species, the ubiquitous grevilleas, three or four wattle types, some westringeas - it almost did not matter what). And above all, a transition from the straight architectural lines to the curves of nature (someone told me that the curve thing is very Celtic - well I don't mind if my Australian environment links me back over the years to Scotland or even the more ancient Celtic heartland in Central Europe). In my view the centre piece of the landscaping should be the main spine path. Michael Dysart had it in the straight lines and geometric intersections - and that could have worked quite well, I have no doubt at all, but we turned it into curves and bends and even little wiggles and squiggles, such was our brick laying genius! In my mind it should be an area of evolving panoramas - mostly quite long views linking one end of the site to the other, but also with some slight changes along the way, and some unexpected sights. Especially where the little blocks of attached houses end and there are gaps with views to the outside world. I have always felt it was important to maintain these "windows" to the outside, not block them up.

Well, anyway, whatever the theory, we built paths and dug holes for plants, and watered (sometimes too little, often too much) and shifted mounds, tons, acres (and the metric equivalent) of wood chips. We spread paper and we laid chips and we got stiff backs and splintered fingers - and we were proud, I'm sure. Some did it in groups and some did it alone. Some did it to an agreed pattern, some did not - it didn't matter (and some didn't seem to want to do anything - that mattered a little I always thought). Those who did it together gained things more enduring than gardening skills - who can forget the Community Centre lunches, and the walk around the site last thing on Sunday to marvel at what others had done. And, above all, who can forget Paul Maher's barrow, the pinnacle of his freely used carpentry knowledge (an acronymic skill).

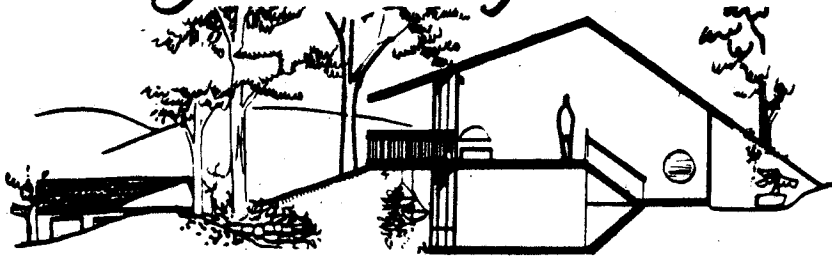
Has it all been worth it? Probably you shouldn't ask someone on a sentimental odyssey from grey old Paris to give an objective comment. And not ask a fanatical gardener who can see the gaps and dead plants like missing members of an old school class. And not ask someone who used to walk around with a pair of secateurs like an extension of his right hand (will those habits return in 1988?). But, anyway, the answer is that the place is lovely, and different, and still evolving, and a credit to all concerned.

Urambi Village will never, should never, be the way everyone ought to live. But I am convinced that, both physically and in the social, human values which its layout and environment reflects and supports, Urambi Village holds some examples of use to others in this most urbanised of empty continents.

Geoff McAlpine (Paris, France)

A town house in a country setting

Late 1976
Alastair Hay
(house 71)



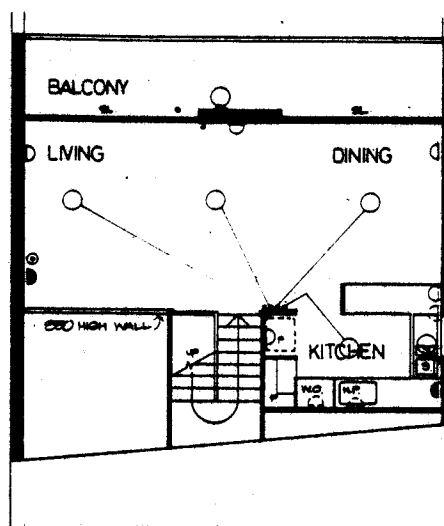
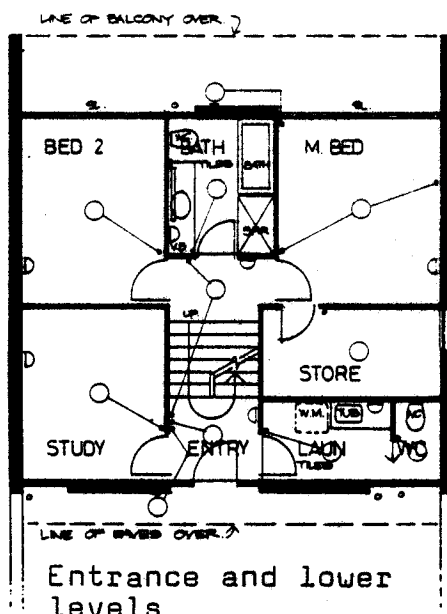
Urambi Village Crozier Circuit, Kambah

You are cordially invited to visit this highly imaginative 72-house village at the western extreme of Kambah. Each house has uninterrupted views of the Brindabellas and surrounding hills, and yet is only 5 minutes from Woden Town Centre, and is also handy to schools shops and bus services. Designed by architect Michael Dysart, the houses are grouped in clusters of 3 to 7, in a traffic-free environment landscaped with predominantly native plants.

There are still a limited number of soon-to-be completed houses available. They are contemporary tri-levels with raked ceilings, natural timber finishes, private balconies and courtyards. The emphasis is upon personal privacy within a community setting.

Type U2 - Two bedroom and mezzanine study	\$34,300
Type U3 - Three bedroom, with extra laundry	\$43,000
Type U4 - Three bedroom plus study plus separate playroom	\$51,000

The 3 - Bedroomed House - U3



Inspect weekends 2-5 p.m., phone Alastair Christie 317585
or write to P.O. Box 666, Civic Square, A.C.T. 2608.
URAMBI CO-OPERATIVE COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT SOCIETY LTD

THE SELLING OF URAMBI VILLAGE

In 1973 it was certainly novel to have a co-operative body acting as a developer for a building project as large as Urambi Village. Initially it was a 60-house development, but later it was expanded to 72 houses to keep unit costs low. The Co-operative was its own selling agent from the early days of 1973-74, and continued to be so until late 1977, when the builders (Stocks and Holdings Ltd) took control because it was the major creditor and there were still some 16 houses unsold.

When Heidi and I first came to Canberra in March 1975 with our two young children, we intended to buy an established house to avoid having to start a garden from scratch. Jim Batty, Ian Lowe and Alastair Christie were among my new work colleagues, and they soft-sold us on the merits of the exciting new place to live which would be built by about the end of the year (i.e. 1975).

For the co-operative approach to work financially, buyers had to be waiting to pay their money as houses were completed. By October 1975 it was already clear that construction would take much longer than earlier planned, but there was still strong interest by people wanting to buy houses. More than 60 of the 72 units had a name against them, and most had conveyed their special needs to the architect to enable drawings to be produced. However because of delays in finalising the contracts between the Society and individuals to allow release of individual houses as they were completed, there were no legally binding commitments at all for people to proceed with their purchases until November 1975. This was to prove important to the project as events unfolded.

As early as the end of 1974 it had been decided that a payment of \$40 was required to become a member of the Co-operative Society, and \$4000 would be the holding deposit for all houses. To meet early expenses an advance of \$400 was requested of members, but this was refunded in the event of withdrawal.

The dismissal of the Whitlam Government at the end of 1975 was the single event which caused by far the greatest difficulties for the project. Many people's presence in Canberra was tied up with the Whitlam Government, and the building industry was in an overheated state because of the strong public service growth at the time.

Many people walked away from the project in the ensuing months, resulting in great administrative, building and architectural difficulties. By July 1976 there were only 42 firm contracts to purchase houses, and by this time there had been a rapid loss of confidence in the building industry as the slow-down in public service recruitment started to bite.

In July 1976 the Board of the Society decided to step up sales efforts, using as its main resource the talents and time of people already committed to purchasing houses. I assembled a "sales team" of about twenty-five individuals who went to the site on Saturday and Sunday afternoons to sell the remaining houses to people enticed there either by word-of-mouth or advertising in the Canberra Times.

Alastair Hay's graphic design skills were called upon each week to design catchy ads, and Angus Houstone, as I recall, made some boards to point people to the site. Usually two volunteers were on site at the one time, one to receive enquiries and one to escort would-be buyers around the ever-changing building site.

Doing our own selling resulted in a saving of agents' fees, and emphasised the community aspects of the project, which either turned people on or off.

Many of the team will remember the two sessions held by Fred Smith at Stocks and Holdings' Office in September and October 1976 for the sales team on how to sell houses. Some were affronted that we should use "professional" methods to persuade buyers to choose something so personal, and others found it amusing. But I think overall it was helpful, and by March 1977 there were twelve more contracts than there had been nine months before. Of course, it was hard to know whether word-of-mouth, the newspaper advertising or the persuasion of the sales team had been decisive. Richard Dowe's Coolabah winecask was said to be influential on one wintry afternoon.

The residents' sales team was still sticking to its task of selling the remaining 16 or so houses when Stocks and Holdings assumed control of the unsold houses in May 1977. Those on the team included Richard Dowe, Vince Blackburn, Elizabeth Sharp, Jude Schou, Stephen Shann, Noel Pratt, and Bob Hodge. It was a relief for all concerned, and led to the landscaping of the unsold north-facing trilevels at Stocks and Holdings' expense to make them more saleable. This explains why some houses have professionally made brick paths to their front doors and brush fences enclosing their courtyards.

Events proved that the Board's prices and selling methods until May 1977 had been sound. Stocks and Holdings put the prices up after the landscaping, and played down the community aspects of the development in their selling approach. If memory serves me well, there were still houses which had not been sold as late as 1979 or even 1980.

I believe "the sense of community" engendered by having to sell ourselves to others in the early years was an important influence on the subsequent growth of the Village. In recent years many houses have been sold privately in the same word-of-mouth way that Jim Batty, Ian Lowe and the early Society members built up interest.

The pioneering days are receding in our memories, and most of those involved who still live here would say "thank goodness". But in a sense it is still important to "sell" the community aspects of the Village to existing and prospective residents - these centre on the community facilities and a concern for harmonious living in a community of individuals.

David Watson (House 25)

URAMBI ART AND CRAFT FESTIVALS

Bonjour Urambi,

From this distance of time and from this number of miles, it is difficult to remember "WHY??" we all put so much time and energy into the three Art and Craft Fairs that were organised, the first one in 1978.

For those Urambi's not there at the time, Art and Craft Festivals were organised as a venue for the exhibition and sale of Urambi and other craft work. A small commission was taken by the Village. Demonstrations and activities were set up by a number of craftpersons and games, food and plant stalls were provided. The atmosphere generated was warm and friendly assisted by the wine and music, with the meeting room being the perfect venue for a small intimate exhibition.

There was at that period (and still is) in the Village a great deal of artistic talent and also there was a great deal of unfocused energy and time.

The Art and Craft Festivals drew the Village together and they were successful not only as a fund-raising activity (e.g. the fireplace) but also as a means of promoting the developing community atmosphere of Urambi.

Everyone worked hard to set up displays etc., and also to offer a variety of activities for adults and children. The Art and Craft Fairs were another important aspect in Urambi's development.

Congratulations on your ten year anniversary.

Maureen Mutton (Paris, France)

BREAST STROKE, SIDE STROKE

Yet again my weed patch must wait, as I have at the last minute agreed to write this article on the swimming pool.

So it was in the summer of 82/83. I remember clearly that I was working on the area between my place and Digby's lawn when the call came. I don't exactly remember by whom I was called, maybe God or the local equivalent. Anyway I spent the next two years tied to the swimming pool. Boy, did I enjoy winter, with only BCC and Pool Club meetings to attend and the odd working bee etc to organize. During the season it was hectic; the daily cleaning, the additional running around and the meetings (oh yes, we're democratic at Urambi). The Pool like so many things at Urambi is the result of many peoples efforts. The following is a quick rundown on what I can remember and has not been checked for accuracy.

The Healys, that's who probably deserve the gold star for having it happen. That's not to say that they did it alone. Margaret acted as the secretary of the group who got the pool built. Terry was convener, and as a member of the Body Corporate Committee steered us through the difficult legal waters. Chris Lang acted as treasurer. Besides doing that job very capably, he kept excellent records for which I was very grateful.

Of the others, Tony Pratt, Bill Mutton, Geoff McAlpine, and Ralph Goldstein come readily to my mind. It is rumoured that Tony Pratt took on collecting money from people almost as a dare, convinced that he'd never collect enough for the pool to be built. He was so persuasive (what did he carry under his coat) that we founders not only put up the amount first requested, but when told that we were too few to have enough funds we dug deep into our pockets for another \$100 each. Bill Mutton, the quiet reseacher, checked out designs and construction techniques and who we should employ to build the pool. It's rumoured that he started this work many years before the Healy's even knew what a swimming pool was, but I expect the truth is that he's just fast, an early bird, maybe a duck. Geoff McAlpine, well, name me one project in which he hasn't been involved. I'm told that the quality of gossip around the Village has dropped considerably since Geoff went to Paris. And Ralph Goldstein, the devils advocate, not a member of the Swimming Pool Club, but the BCC secretary who ensured that all members of the Village were consulted and that a fair and effective resolution was reached. No wonder the ombudsman has him on staff.

In those early days we'd hoped to have a bigger pool but that was all the founding 25 families could manage. Oh, what we could have done had we had 40 plus families in the club as we have now!

Those legal shoals took oh so long to navigate it all seemed like pie in the sky, but then so had Urambi. And then there was this big hole in the ground and we knew we'd be swimming soon. But like Urambi that soon was a bit longer than we thought. Then it was finished and we were swimming, except we weren't! There was a pool which had water in it, and the water was warm, but it was also full of little beasties and algae.

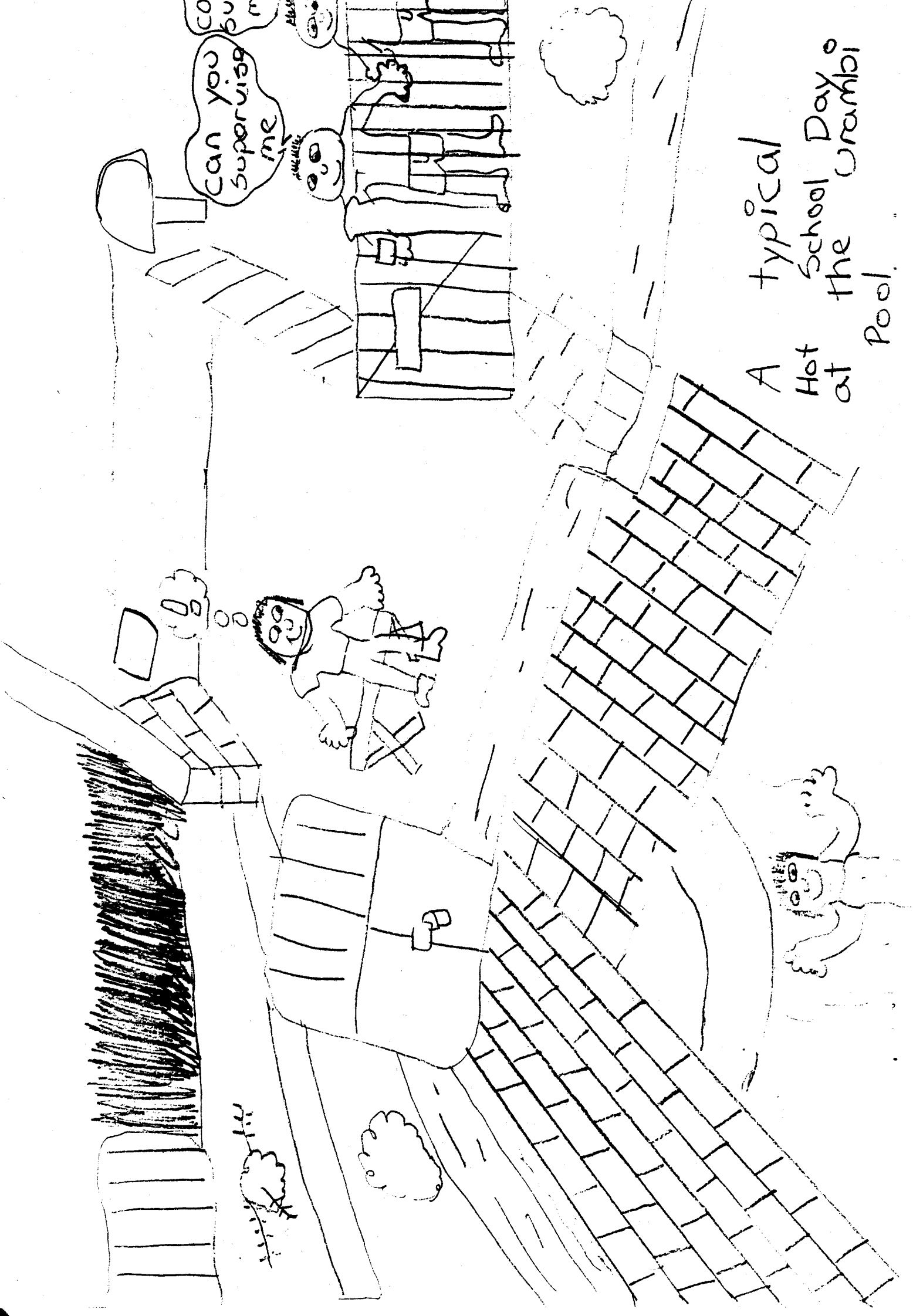
Enter Michael Robbins. Who called? Maybe it was the beasties, maybe the children waiting to enjoy a swim (they say it and lots of friends are some of the best things about Urambi). Who ever it was, with hind sight I might not have accepted. I expect the others feel the same about the amount of work it took them to get the pool in the ground.

Andrew Kay, Alastair Christie, Peter Fox, Margaret Shann and Lisa Barker all help me over the next couple of years. I was particularly grateful to Andrew who buoyed (no pun intended) me up when I felt it was all getting too much. I'll also take this opportunity to record what a fantastic support group the people at 19, 20, and 21 have been over the last ten years.

Now it's John Bevan's, the new chum's, turn. Thanks for taking it on, John! He and guess who (yes, the hard working Frank Swayn) are now the main movers. Margaret and I and the others now just go along for a swim. Oh, and the occasional working bees etc!

Watch it weeds I'll get you yet. Maybe in another ten years when Rachel and Benjamin are Tanya's and Angus' age I'll be as House and Garden as the Watson's. I somehow doubt it.

Michael Robbins (House 21)



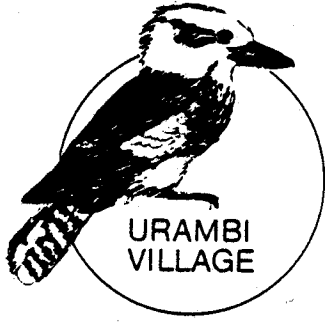
A typical
Hot School Day
at the Grambol
Pool.

Can you
supervise
me

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REFLECTIONS

FROM A FIRST SETTLER

". . . . a sense of privacy, of belonging and of space." (Canberra Times on Urambi Village May 1977)

On 10 December 1976, when our house at Urambi was finally completed and we had moved here to live, the attainment of a sense of privacy was a high priority for me as I had felt rather threatened at the prospect of living in a setting characterized by community living, close contact and co-operation between village residents. I also knew my brick paving and gardening skills were poor and wondered how I would ever be able to participate in working bees. (I soon discovered I was quite a good scone maker and so was able to take part, after all!)

Ours was the second household to move here, the Shanns being the first. On the first weekend after we took up residence every other prospective resident must have visited us at No 39, exclaiming with delight (and perhaps not a little surprise?!) that the taps worked, toilets flushed (although not hot water as in the case of Vince and Kaja Blackburn's house, some time later!), carpets were soft and cork tiles glowed. Geoff McAlpine was planning to lay the cork tiles throughout his and Sheila's house in the near future, so he took a very close interest in the aspect of the Lang house.

We returned to Adelaide for Christmas to finally allay the long held suspicion of our family and friends, that Urambi Village would never be built.

When Steve Shann notified us on Boxing Day that parts of our house had been flooded during torrential rainstorms I had cause to begin reflecting seriously for the first time on the 'belonging' aspect of living at Urambi. For our neighbours, including Margaret and Terry Healy, Steve and Margaret Shann and Geoff and Sandra Hawker, had taken all necessary steps to minimize water damage to our home and furnishings. I will never forget that first neighbourly act.

There was certainly plenty of space at Urambi a decade ago and now, as trees and shrubs have flourished and matured and most beautiful gardens have been painstakingly created in uninviting soil, there is an even greater sense of space - and of tranquillity. I am reminded of a comment made by one of our dearest friends, Alastair Swayn, long before he bought his own home here, that when he came out to visit us, his spirits rose as he rounded the corner past Margaret Healy's house and walked along the path to ours.

The ideals of privacy, of belonging and of space have been reconciled for me over ten years of living in Urambi. Unquestioningly, individuals' desires for and need for privacy are respected and yet equally, our desire for contact and communication with fellow villagers is met - in a variety of contexts, formal and informal.

The other evening while cooking dinner I saw Steve Shann removing Birnam Wood to Dunsinane - he later claimed he was merely moving his front garden around into the courtyard! Who would have thought ten years ago, that any one of us would ever have to prune a tree or a bush, and yet here was Steve carting a mountain of cuttings away, to make room for other things to grow beautifully!

As urban dwellers our lives comprise a complex and diverse mixture of elements including commitments to home, family, work, community activities, leisure and study. I am therefore immeasurably heartened that our small son, Edward, has had the opportunity to begin his life here and that he can say, as he did a few days ago, with all the wisdom and lack of self consciousness of a three year old, "The whole world is Urambi Village."

Like many of us here of all ages, he is starting already to value privacy, a sense of belonging, and space.

Annie Lang (House 39)

BEING HOME WITH CHILDREN

There is a whole other world out there which you only get to know if you're at home during the day. Those of us who are around in the evening and at the weekend, would have no idea that the spine path could be such a busy thoroughfare and the community centre used by socialites no more than a metre high.

For myself, it was with a few pangs that I returned to full-time work when Ruth was well-settled at school. It was the end of a very enriching and rewarding period of my life and, when I have an invitation to things like the Melbourne Cup Lunch, nostalgia touches me momentarily for that gently golden time.

I sometimes hear women talking about the problems they had when they were at home with small children in the isolation of Canberra's suburbs. They describe days when they began to long for the advent of the postman or the milkman to punctuate the emptiness; when they dragged small children on treks around the suburb, looking for nappies on someone else's washing line and plucking up courage to introduce themselves; of the stresses and strains involved in trying to be patient, creative, imaginative and organised amid chaos and conflicting interests. I listen and, although I do know what they are talking about, my experience was different from theirs because of one crucial fact: I lived in Urambi Village.

There were about ten of us who had chosen to be at home (basically) with our small children and, of course, that decision alone meant that we already had some things in common. A playgroup was soon formed and my children were involved in it from their earliest weeks. That time with the big group of Urambi children was a highlight of our week. Each person who organised the activities injected their own personality and interests into the life of the group and the children also had the chance of having a wide friendship group, which included the parents, siblings and pets of their friends!

Playgroup, you see, was by no means the end of the matter. It would come to lunch-time and so often we'd all end up having some simple, thrown-together lunch in order to prolong the pleasantness of it all. In fact, playgroup was the springboard for a network of other activities which formed a support system for each of us.

For instance, we had informal child minding- or, more accurately, child swapping- arrangements, that enabled us to sleep, have haircuts, buy clothes, read, eat cream cakes and drink coffee in elegant solitude, visit an exhibition, work, study or even simply be sick - that luxury for mothers with small children.

There were also all those times when the children had some toys and a few vegemite sandwiches tossed in a corner for them because it was our needs and our problems that were the clear priority for the morning. Playgroup and its informal offshoots were our chance to explore our metamorphosis into parenthood.

Other rituals developed over this period too, like the Christmas play, where we have all delighted in our children's perception of birth, life, society, relationships and religion! These rituals serve as a focus for different age groups to come together in activities which increase their identification with this leafy place.

We've had a lot of fun over the years!

So when colleagues and friends recount their personal horror stories of life with babies and toddlers, I sit quietly, smiling and sorting through my store of memories, knowing that for me it was different.

Margaret Shann (House 20)

VILLAGE COLLAGE

Winding paths, tiled roofs, brown chimneys,
 Poolside gossip, carpark greetings.
 Natives, pets, parochial problems,
 working bees, half empty wine casks.
 Cockies, kids and kookaburras,
 Sprinklers, sunsets, silence; then
 Mushroomed lights and stars.

RLJ (house 18)

THE SUMMER OF '84

I've often wondered why it was not until 1984 that I discovered the great richness and diversity of Urambi bird life. I suppose it has been here since the beginning. Indeed, as I remember, we at one time had bird notes in Urambinews. And of course Magpies, Peewees and Kookaburras, not to mention Galahs, Rosellas and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos were always with us, as they are everywhere in Canberra. Maybe all the other birds were here too, but I regret to say I hardly noticed them. Not until 1984!

It was in the summer of that year that I started to take long walks in the evenings after work. As often as not I would find myself down by "the lake" - my euphemism for the the big, old farm dam on the north-western side of Urambi. I was amazed and delighted at the number and variety of birds I found there. Every evening I would see something new to surprise and delight me.

There were always the Wood Ducks. They would come homing in, in flights of up to twenty birds, swerving in and calling with low mournful calls to their fellows already cruising peacefully on the iridescent waters. They would swim about for a while and then waddle up on to one of the sandy beaches to settle down for the night. I sometimes saw as many as three of these mass arrivals.

If the sun was still warm there would be Cormorants - Pied and Black - perched on any rock or branch protruding from the water, wings hanging out to dry, or just sitting motionless, waiting for a fish to come by. Occasionally, one or two would take off and make a bee-line for another water hole, always seeming to know exactly where it was. No weaving or reconnoitring for them.

Two Masked Lapwings were permanent residents. (They still are). Mainly they used to stalk about with their queer, hunched gait on the far shoreline. If I caught them on a near-side beach, they would immediately take off with strident, staccato cries of alarm. The other "regular" was the graceful White-faced Heron. He (or she) would strut about in the shallows looking for fish. I once saw him (or her) dart out his (or her) long neck - this is ridiculous, I hereby declare my heron a female - and come up with a small fish in her beak. She too would take off at my approach and soar gracefully away. So beautiful!

When I first saw the Spoonbills I wondered what on earth they were - great white birds moving slowly along in the shallows on the far side of the lake, submerged heads sweeping from side to side as they searched for "goodies" in the mud. I only saw them a few times.

Then there were Grebes. Hoary-headed Grebes seemed to be visitors, while one family of Little Grebes seemed to be staying a while. They'd swim about, ducking under the water much more often than the ducks seemed to.

There was a Nankeen Night Heron which would sometimes put in an appearance just on nightfall. It would perch unobtrusively on a bare branch, "sussing out" the possibilities of some nocturnal fishing.

And of course, need I add, flocks of screeching Sulphur-crested Cockatoos would come down to the far end to take their evening refreshment, before returning to the gum trees to clown about for a bit, and strip the tree of a few more twigs, before retiring for the night.

When it started to get dark I would wander back up to the house to check up on the Yellow-faced Honeyeaters which were nesting right outside my front door in a hakea bush. Alas, the fledgings didn't last long. One morning the nest was on the ground and the babies had no doubt provided a tasty meal for a stray cat.

The birds disappeared from the lake in the autumn. All winter I looked forward eagerly to the next summer. But it wasn't the same. Neither is this one. The "lake" is too full and I suspect the fishing is not as good. Still, there are lots of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, Weebills, White-eyes, Eastern Spinebills, Wattle Birds and a host of others.

I notice them now.

Elizabeth Sharp (House 3)

WORKING AT HOME IN URAMBI

In May, 1985, I resigned from my fulltime job, and used some accumulated long service leave money to take a break from teaching, and, I thought, to enjoy a few relaxing months at home at Urambi. I had all sorts of plans. I was going to work in the vegetable garden. I was going to spend at least half an hour each day exercising - jogging round Urambi when it was cold, and swimming when the warmer weather arrived. I was going to practise playing my recorder for at least an hour a day up at the Community Centre, where the acoustics are so wonderful that I could fool myself that I was making music. And I was going to bake bread.

And that's the way my time at home began.

But one day - in about June or July - I got a phone call from McPhee Gribble, a publisher in Melbourne, telling me that they wanted to publish a manuscript I'd sent them about three months earlier.

I was over the moon. Twenty eight earlier rejection letters had convinced me that the manuscript would never see the light of day. And now an acceptance. I'd made it.

What I didn't realise was that my daily routine was about to be shattered.

The publishers wrote to say that they had a few changes to suggest. I had visions of polishing the draft up in a couple of weeks, perhaps three or four at the outside. But, when I sent in my "polished draft", the message came back that it was rough, that more rewriting was necessary.

Meanwhile, as I began to become increasingly obsessed with 'my book', the weeds began to grow outside, the recorder lay in the cupboard untouched, and I rediscovered the convenience of shop bread. I bought myself a word processor, and set myself up at home. Spring came and went, while I worked on my third draft. Occasionally Frank Swain would come by, and ask politely about the book. "Take my advice, Steve," he would say. "Don't reread what you've written. Write the thing, and be done with it." As the weeds began to seed, I could see his point.

In October I sent the draft off, and in November I got the message from Melbourne that, though there were marked improvements, there was still work to be done. It needed re-writing. I took my frustrations out by digging furiously in the vegetable garden one weekend, and then returned to my desk.

For the whole of January, while Margaret went off to a holiday job and Patrick looked after the kids, I worked on the fourth draft. For five weeks, I typed for three or four hours in the morning, then would walk down to the dam or around Urambi, then back to work after a quick lunch. In the evening, or whenever I came to a passage that I was having difficulty with, I'd go on another walk. Frank would be mowing, and would give me a rueful smile. The kids would be at the pool, Chris, Annie and Edward Lang would be outside in the cool of the evening, chatting with Janet or Alastair. Margaret Healy would be watering or weeding her garden. It all looked so idyllic.

By about June of this year (I'd gone back to fulltime work by then), all the final problems had been ironed out, and today I received the proofs. The book is now virtually out of my hands, some eighteen months after first hearing that my manuscript was going to be published.

And I'm back into the garden. The tomatoes are growing every day, and soon I'll have my first swim. Perhaps, when I've finished typing this, I'll dust off the recorder, get my Community Centre keys, and pretend I'm James Galway again.

Steve Shann

DECADE OF DECADENCE

I was asked to contribute something to a gala anniversary edition of the Urambi News and International Gazette. This was a piece of minor flattery which I found difficult to resist. It is a pretty rare request. The Editor warned me not to sign it d'Maher or attempt to flog it in Crozier Circuit, but beyond that and some insulting suggestions, I was offered a free hand and no reward.

Nostalgia beckons the occasional author in these circumstances, especially the distant occasional author. I have sternly resisted her guiles. The Maher memories for Urambi have, in any event, been a little sullied of late, from some unhappy experiences with Woodgers, and more accurately, with a number of gentlemen engaged by Woodgers to mend leaks, gaps, drains, doors and other deficiencies which vigilant tenants have uncovered. We own one of the finer collections of original diagrams of the evolution of leaks, particularly in relation to showers. We have an equally fine collection of plans which show step-by-step how craftsmen outshine Canute to turn back the tide.

On these plans following various expensive treatments, it is absolutely clear that not one molecule of water will ever escape again. And nor do they until our cheque is paid. There then appears a kind of sympathetic trigger and effusion of Maher cash and water flow - and away we go.

Instead of slipping into the nostalgic gear, it seems appropriate at this time to pass on some rather hush-hush research which has been conducted at Urambi, and will probably soon be released anyway.

I will need to background the story a little.

As the mental conurbation that was Urambi began to settle from various cerebral cortices onto paper, a number of Government Departments became involved. At some stages half the Public Service was doing little else but expedite or hinder its realisation. Both Territories and Urban and Regional Development, and Canberra and Urban Neighbourhood Teams* asked some of the planners to conduct on-going studies into the personalities of those buying the Urambi dream, and the effects of sheltered environments on such individuals.

Footnote:(* These Departments acronymically were related to the early construction firms)

Those conducting the study were the Father Figures of early Urambi and of course their names cannot be revealed. A hint, however, is that the Federal Government has not, as one example, paid the travel fees of a gentleman from Paris to arrive back at this time without good cause.

To ensure homogeneity in the study, the Founding Fathers carefully vetted would-be purchasers. This is, of course one reason it took so long to sell sites. White, middle-grade public servants, male, circumcised radially, National Times readers, heterosexual dog-haters scored highly. Single male species were encouraged to provide a control group. Affirmative action spouses, and Women Who Used to Want to be Women received special attention, and probably in this area the Fathers were a little heavy handed.

Total surveillance and personality studies were clandestinely performed at six months, and repeated at ten years. The final analysis is on Bill Cushing's computer and the trends, in broad, are ready to scan. (I must ask that these early results be respected as private communications, and leaks limited to safe respectably academic publications, such as the above National Times.)

At six months, the effects of the rigorous preselection were as predicted. A number of dogs were found strangled. Two or three Women Who Used to Want to be etc., etc., removed T-shirts at working bees, which for a time became well-attended. Bill Cushing did the same and was asked to put it back on. The orgasm rate (O.R) settled around 72% nightly, with a peak along houses 4 - 27 group. Of this figure there was a quiet orgasm rate of 41%, noisy at 15%, and screamers recording 5% (+ 50 decibels) and 9% were doubtful or not proven. The pregnancy rate was high for ZPG disciples, alarming FPA who, some will remember, sent around with Levy notices some instructive pamphlets and rubber samples. Serious "domestics" on serious topics - baby sitting duties; who said what to whom last time and why not - was stable 1.2 ph.pw*. National Times circulation rate was 100%, rubbish bins cleanliness index 94%, and incidence of rubbish bin parasitism unrecordably low. Accordingly, a well earned Yuppie rating of 2.6 was allotted, by Moodys.

Now for the revelations. At ten years, the computer fused! The Yuppie ratio is 5.6, and Des Keegan has predicted the curve will not peak till the 90's! Hardly any Women now Want to be Women and a startling 21%

*per household/per week

of men do not want to be men, or are unsure, and three or four can't remember. The O.R. is down despite increased penetration by average of 1.4cm. Body Corporate rules have of course outlawed screaming, but even so the results are alarming. The dog-throttling and chid-biting rates are both down, despite registration of each species.

Sheltered living, as Tom Uren said when cutting the red-tape to officially open Canberra's greatest single pre-completion nightmare, is for sheltered people, to develop their inhibitions in their own way, and vote ALP. Nothing so emphatically underlines the computer's findings at ten years, than its own prediction of the appropriate person for the Urambi community's value system to officiate at its anniversary, and I can now confirm that that person, The Honourable Michael Hodgeman, will drop in on his way back from Queanbeyan, and open the function and his mouth and fly. (The Honourable W Tuckey is first emergency.)

I am sorry to be the bearer of such tidings at this time of celebrations but facts must be faced. Our race as the first Urambi generation is run; our children must carry the torch forward into the Murrumbidgee Country Club. Meanwhile, we can all help by attending working bees, and please pick up your dog's droppings.

Happy Anniversary.

(Editor's Note: Bill Cushing has just notified a procedural error in the computer, which has put the Yuppie index at a most respectable 2.4, and Michael Hodgeman on that basis has refused to attend. All is not lost, however. We are contacting H R Nicholls)

Paul Maher (Carisbrook, Victoria)

URAMBI

Houses close together
hidden in the trees,
people in the sunshine
laughing in the breeze.

This is where I live,
the place so nice and free,
hidden in the trees,
this is Urambi.

The houses, pool and ball court
mean a lot to me,
but the thing I really love the best
are the people there, you see.

*Ellen Lloyd-Jones
aged 13*

WHAT IS A VILLAGE?

Must it have an ancient church in its centre, where the villagers have met to worship since the 14th century?

Does it need a mellow pub on the village green where the locals gather to yarn over a pint? Or a village Post Office Store where stamps are sold at one counter and nearly everything at another, and where chapters and volumes of gossip have been exchanged down the ages?

Well - apparently not.

Our lovely village is alive and well and it has none of these things. What it does have is a group of warm and caring people who have been prepared to give up time to plant and build and prune and weed and mow, lay thousands of bricks in paths, tend the swimming pool, take office on committees, cook and babysit, etc., etc., over the last ten years.

The village is good to look at, good to live in, and great to come home to.

Lee Mills (House 23)

URAMBI NEWS NOVEMBER 2001**BODY CORPORATE MEETING NOTES**

1. Annual levies recommended to be reduced to \$150,000.
2. The decision whether or not to allow resident computers a vote at the next AGM was deferred again. Unresolved questions include the status of super mini micros belonging to computers being rented by the children of absent owners. It was felt this created a dangerous precedent. A counter proposal raised was....

Murrumbidgee Country Club

Plans for the country club can be seen at the 15th floor of the Community Centre in December. The management expects to commence work on the first phase of the golf course in the near future.

Pets

Following the tragic mishap to a visitor crossing the bridge to number 19, 20 and 21, residents are reminded that;

- a) Alligators must be registered
- b) They must be desexed and wear bells.

Creche News

The creche for retired public servants will not meet again till the new year. This follows over boisterous behaviour by Messrs Christie, Watson et al.

Moves in the Village

The Jones family have moved again to number 71. They have now lived in Nos. 22, 25, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 35, 36

Silver Jubilee

Preparations are in hand for the Anniversary Dinner. A special edition of Urambi News is being planned. Please send copy to Dame Noel Pratt as soon as possible.

R L Jones (House 18, for the time being)

CAN 'IT' LAST?

Certainly looks that way. What's "it". The community spirit, the creation and recreation of a village and all that implies - the support, the gossip, the shared activities, the stability and change. So why am I so sure.

The present body corporate committee is convened by an original, David Watson, the treasurer, Thomas Leffers, is a resident of several years standing and the secretary, Sian Hall, is a new comer; the other members also represent both old and new faces.

The social committee - Keryl Rutter (also baby sitting club convener) who has been here a while now, Annie Lang (also Playgroup convener) an original, Patrya Kay who moved in body later than she did in spirit - all self elected (decided somebody better do the job) and they work like trojans to put on fantastic dinners and other events for the rest of us.

And this newsletter. The same story; David Keightley is one of the newer members of the Village, and even claims that he's glad he wasn't here early in the piece, "it sounds so hectic", but he's working with David Watson, Andrew & Patrya Kay, Annie Lang, Robyn Lawson, Noel Pratt, all the contributors new and old and myself to make it happen.

Thank you everyone for making our 10th anniversary so successful, and such a great beginning for the next ten years.

Michael Robbins (House 21)

SONG OF THE URAMBI PIONEERS

(for the Tenth Anniversary of Urambi Village)

In Nineteen seventy-four we took a little trip
Along the Murrumbidgee to the Kambah Tip
We saw some hills and we drank some beer
And said, "One day there will be houses here!"
And said, "One day there will be houses here!"
"If we build our houses co-operatively
We can all live together here at Urambi".
*"If we build our houses co-operatively
We can all live together here at Urambi".*

Our Community Centre will be a smarty
With a workshop for the crafty and a theatre for the arty.
And just to show we're all good sports,
A sauna and a swimming pool and two squash courts!
A sauna and a swimming pool and two squash courts!
A laundromat and cable TV
We'll only have the best at Urambi.
*A laundromat and cable TV
We'll only have the best at Urambi.*

Then Big Jim Batty said, "I know a man
Who'll coagulate our thoughts into a building plan:
Michael Dysart's the one to invent
A Semi-Rural Traffic-Free Environment".
A Semi-Rural Traffic-Free Environment".
And Dysart's plans so suited we
That he became the architect of Urambi.
*And Dysart's plans so suited we
That he became the architect of Urambi.*

When things got slow and we all felt glum
And nothing seemed to show for all the work we'd done
We'd generate a spirit of community
With a friendly and co-operative working bee.
a friendly and co-operative working bee.
So we'd all plant a shrub or tree
In predominately native Urambi.
*So we'd all plant a shrub or tree
In predominately native Urambi.*

We moved into our houses in their neat short rows
With their trendy stained timber and their bricks exposed
And their low-pitched roofs and skylights too
And everything was fine until the rain came through!
And everything was fine until the rain came through!
And we cursed at the cause of this catastrophe
"What have bloody Stocks and Holdings done to Urambi?"
*And we cursed at the cause of this catastrophe
"What have bloody Stocks and Holdings done to Urambi?"*

So one and all, wherever you may live,
Pray listen for a moment to the toast we give.
Whether you are dwelling in a hostelry,
Or a farmhouse, or an igloo, or a UC3.
A farmhouse, or an igloo, or a UC3.
God Bless Urambi Village! Let the champagne flow!
May all who've ever lived in her make pots of dough!
*God Bless Urambi Village! Let the champagne flow!
May all who've ever lived in her make pots of dough!*

