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Jean McCaughey Oration

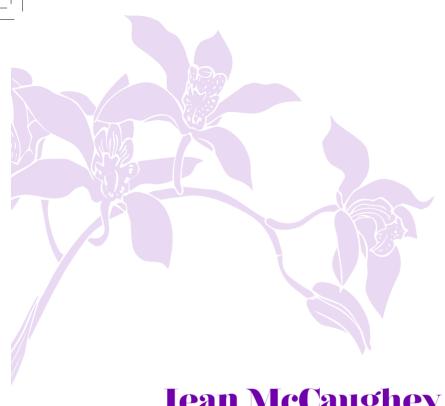


This oration was delivered by Mary Crooks AO, Executive Director of the Victorian Women's Trust, on 8 May 2013, at the Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas, Melbourne, Australia.

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17 JUNE 2013





Jean McCaughey

1917 - 2012



It is a privilege to have this opportunity to deliver a public oration to celebrate and honour a special woman, Jean McCaughey; to help enshrine her name and contribution on the public record; and to provide a philanthropic avenue that - in an enduring fashion - will nourish and support the social justice values she held dear.

In doing so, I want to pay tribute to the McCaughey family for their (at first) gracious reluctance to proceed with this gesture, and then their affirmation. Their gracious reluctance was due to the fact that they eschew displays of hubris and ostentation. I also want to pay tribute to Dr Sarah Martin for making the time for me recently — and indeed for writing her important book on Davis McCaughey, published late last year. Insightful, scholarly and beautifully written, Sarah's account captures the extraordinary duality present in the McCaughey marriage and partnership. Along with her recent biographical essay on Jean, now published as part of the Ormond Papers, Sarah's research and writing provides a rich vein to tap regarding Jean's life - her values, interests and social contribution - and I have drawn substantially on these accounts in piecing together this paper tonight.

Preparing for the occasion, however, has also led me to go back and read Jean's own published work - which provides great insight into her capacity as a social researcher and policy thinker.

The invitation that you would have received to come together tonight and celebrate Jean's life described her as occupying a unique place in Victorian community life for over six decades, from the early 1950s until her death in 2012.

It referred to her as a champion of social justice values; a mentor to many; a tireless community advocate, researcher, and author; a woman of sharp intellect, empathy, compassion and great civility; and as the proud wife of Davis, proud mother of their five children - James, Patrick, John, Mary and Brigid - proud grandmother of eleven grandchildren, and proud great grandmother of seventeen children.

It suggested that a reflection on Jean's life leads us to an inescapable conclusion - that her contribution is actually beyond measure.

Beyond precise measure it is. But this should not stop us from gaining, with some confidence, a sense of the enormity of her contribution to public and community life.

In one of several obituaries following Jean's death in September last year, Rev Dr John Smith remarked: "It is said that the reality of a person is revealed by what they engage in" $^{(1)}$

So let me start by considering, in a somewhat bare-bones chronology, the breadth and depth of so much of Jean's engagement. I am presenting here what I have been able to establish over the past several weeks, in the full knowledge that there will be inadvertent omissions and of course many gaps where there is simply no or little record of Jean's actual involvement.

Jean (Henderson) was born in County Antrim on this day, 8 May, 1917.

She became engaged to Davis McCaughey in March 1939, they married in 1940. Jean and Davis arrived in Melbourne, at Station Pier, on 23 February 1953, with their five children in tow.

In 1935 Jean commenced a medical degree at Queen's University, Belfast. Quickly and keenly involved in the Student Christian Movement, she was (in 1939) an Irish delegate to the SCM conference in Amsterdam.

Four years after arriving in Australia in 1953, she served on the YWCA national executive, and in 1963 she became Acting General Secretary of the Australian Student Christian Movement.

Throughout the 1970s Jean was closely involved in an array of significant Victorian organisations. She was a Board member at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. She later served on its Medical Appointments Advisory Board, the Medical Ethics Committee, the Nursing Services and Education Advisory Committee and the Hospital Inspection and Patient Welfare Committee.

She served on the Victorian Government Social Welfare Department's Urban Advisory Committee for Family and Community Services Programme. During this time she was also a part-time staff member of the Uniting Church Community Services Advisory Unit, and President of the YWCA.

After several years assisting with others in the planning and establishment of a new College for women at Melbourne University, St Hilda's College, Jean chaired the College Council for four years, from 1972 - 1976.

From 1966 - 1977 she was involved with the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, first as a computer programmer, then becoming a Research Assistant to Professor Ronald Henderson, and later becoming Research Fellow.

Working with migrants, she contributed a chapter to the study *Migrants* and *Poverty*; she wrote two chapters of the influential work *People* and *Poverty* published in 1969 as documentation for the Poverty Line that Ronald Henderson established in 1970. She joined the team that presented the results of the Poverty Inquiry to the Federal Government in Canberra.

She co-authored, with Sheila Shaver and Helen Ferber, Who Cares? Family Problems, Community Links and Helping Services (Sun Books 1977) - a report on family needs and welfare services that put the case strongly for government support.

In 1981 Jean was invited to be a consultant to the Family Support Network, on a study being carried out by the new Australian Institute of Family Studies. She gradually became more involved and co-authored (along with Des Storer and Arthur Faulkner) Social Support in an Australian Community: First Report to Respondents of a Survey, conducted in Geelong, May 1982.

Through her time at Government House, and working alongside Davis in his vice-regal duties, Jean continued to fulfil her role at the Institute and her book A Bit of a Struggle: Coping with Family Life in Australia (Penguin) was published in 1987.

Apart from completing and publishing these works, and while still at Government House, Jean undertook a study on homeless families for Hanover Welfare Services. A further book, Where Now? Homeless Families in the 1990s was published in 1992.

Soon after, she was appointed to a Ministerial Committee on Housing.

The 1980s saw her widening her involvement even further. She was the First Chair of the Key Centre for the Study of Women's Health in Society

in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Science at Melbourne University.

She served on the Board of the Brotherhood of St Laurence for a decade (from 1980 - 1990, including a time as Chair) and in 1984, she delivered the GT Sambell Memorial Oration at the Brotherhood of St Laurence.

In the four years that she resided at Government House in 1986 - 1990, she was Patron to over 100 societies.

In 1994 she agreed to become Co-Chair (along with Ben Bodna AM) of the People Together Project. Jean, at this stage, was 77 years of age.

In 1999, and as part of the work of the People Together Project, Jean collaborated with Carolyn Atkins to produce Social Justice Report Card - Women: Balancing Social Justice with Economic Efficiency.

She received Honorary Doctorates from Melbourne and Deakin Universities.

She was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1988 for service to the community, particularly in the field of social welfare. In 2001, she was awarded the Centenary Medal for outstanding community service, especially (as the citation read) as wife of the Governor of Victoria. In 2001 Jean received Life Membership to the Victorian Council of Social Services in recognition of her service.

And in 2007, the McCaughey Vic Health Centre at the University of Melbourne was named in honour of both Davis and Jean, and Jean was the Centre's founding Patron.

These listed engagements are impressive - a real mark of a significant public contribution. Yet so much is missing from a chronological account that captures titles and roles only. Threading through Jean's tireless family commitment were the speeches and their preparation, the conferences, the hours spent on her research and writing, the countless hours in meetings and informal discussions around projects and initiatives, the media interviews, the amount of time and effort in discussions with Davis on matters relating to his time as Master of Ormond College, the time spent in pastoral care and mentoring countless numbers of students, friends and colleagues, and the time spent on more mundane but crucial tasks like fundraising.

As recently as last Saturday, I breakfasted with an old friend of mine, Jacqui Mason, who recalled being on the YWCA National Executive Committee with Jean. Jacqui's strong memory is of Jean as a fundraising stalwart. She would hold dinners at their family home in the grounds of Ormond College. People would bring food to share, as well as their recipes - which of course, being women, were collated and sold to raise funds.

And in the last two weeks, fellow Director of the Victorian Women's Trust and current Convenor, Diana Batzias, emailed me with her strong memory of Jean, hosting at Government House several long lunches around the big table in the dining room. The Burdekin Inquiry into youth homelessness was underway and Jean invited many workers from night shelters and small community services, researchers, and government staff implementing the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). These meetings themselves had many positive outcomes assisting, for example, the development of community-based services for young people, including a new service for young women. Diana recalls Jean's gracious hosting and great management of conversation as well as being taken for an obligatory visit to the vegetable garden.

We can gain from this account of Jean's considerable engagement a real sense of her capacity and commitment. We gain more however, when we explore why she chose to build her life in this way; what underpinned her drive and effort; and what sustained her through the breadth, depth and extent of her significant community involvement.

The first major clue lies in Jean's family life.

Family and family life (even allowing for its inevitable demands and stresses) was a major and constant source of pleasure and personal validation. Indeed, in a private conversation between the two of us in the late 1990s, when we were wringing our hands with some despair under the Kennett era, Jean made it clear that having her five children was the greatest achievement of her life.

Jean's memory of her own early family life was positive. Sarah Martin tells us that it was rich and happy, with childhood adventures on the farm and in Belfast, with her brother Arnold. There were bustling, large family and neighbour gatherings, masses of aunts and uncles, and cousins.

Her mother was an excellent cook and her father was equally at home winning ploughing competitions or banging the table with passion as he urged his fellow farmers to stand up for their rights as tenants. (2)

When Jean married Davis in 1940 and had her first child, James, in 1941, family life now took on a crucial duality: Jean was Davis's soul mate, best friend and confidante, supporting him during low times and in periods of intense work; as well as being mother and primary carer of their expanding family. (3)

Jean was the stable centre of this familial life. Even with its stresses and strains, she never wavered from what she saw as a lifetime commitment. She said in her Sambell oration:

"Of course I do not wish to assert that marriage is indissoluble or that separation and divorce are never justified. But the <u>intention</u> must be a permanent commitment" (4)

And permanent it remained - she and Davis were married for sixty-five years. Sarah Martin writes that people saw the strength of their relationship, their intellectual equality, and the chemistry between them that "was often fiery and compelling".

Her time at Ormond College, while Davis was Master, was a time when Jean extended her care and support beyond her immediate family -positively affecting the well-being and capacity of countless students and friends.

As her children grew older and had children of their own, Jean embraced her grandchildren and great grandchildren with the love and care that was part and parcel of her life.

Her practical eye for encouraging and supporting family life even extended to her tenure at Government House, when Davis was Governor. John Cain, Premier at the time, is said to have recognised her mental acuity, skill and capacity by telling people that we Victorians were getting two for the price of one. It was Jean who made the most noticeable changes in Government House itself.

Sarah Martin relates that Jean turned it into a home. She chatted with staff, she established a warm rapport, she suggested simpler meals and enjoyed the more relaxed dress code that she and Davis had instituted. Family and friends were warmly welcomed. In discussion with the cook, Jean discovered that no jam was ever made despite the abundance of

fruit from the orchard. By all accounts, staff enjoyed her presence in the kitchen. She was known to 'stomp off to the kitchen', in fact, to 'make jam whenever she disagreed' with Davis and staff decisions on managing the Governor's business. $^{(6)}$

From the 1970s onwards (Jean is now in her 50s) it is her work at the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, and then at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, in which we see this practiced eye for positive family life merging with her skilful research analysis and writing, her essential humanity, and her straightforward, practical hold on good public policy. For Jean, qualitative research based on interviews with families held an absorbing interest. She observed:

"Statistical classification can obscure the infinite variety of human experience and blunt our sensibility to the fact that each statistic is a human being" $^{(7)}$

Indeed, Jean's analysis and write up of qualitative family research material remains to this day, in my mind, as a former social research lecturer, an object lesson for those contemplating such a research task. She analysed and wrote with care, rigor, skill, humanity, without being judgemental and patronising, and all the while remaining faithful to her sources.

I mentioned that Jean gave the G.T. Sambell Oration at the Brotherhood of St Laurence in 1984. Her paper built on the family research studies at both Institutes and reflected her admiration for the work of Richard Titmuss in his book *The Gift Relationship*. She said:

"The family is a place of commitment, based first on the commitment of husband and wife in marriage and extending to include the children who (in a happy family) respond by an appropriate commitment to their parents. The commitment is, however, two-dimensional: to the well-being of the family, and to the values and ideals which exist beyond the family.

It is in the family that most of us learn to give and receive...children have to learn to share...we are not givers by nature: we have to learn it, and if we do not learn it as children it is even harder to do later.

Loving and being loved don't come naturally either...we have to learn to give and receive forgiveness.

Once children are begotten or conceived the life of the parents, both of them, will never be the same again; this is the great act of giving and receiving on which there is no going back.

Giving and receiving do not stop at the garden fence: they reach out into the world outside, and touch and are touched by the extended family, friends and neighbours and the local community" (8)

Jean did not romanticise family life. She understood its destructive potential as well as its positive power. She acknowledged that domestic violence, for instance, made a home unsafe for children, where they were denied the opportunity to learn to give and receive because they had to protect themselves from harm instead. With some disquiet, Jean warns how far our practice in relation to family support:

"falls behind our stated beliefs about the central importance of the family and the well-being of the nations' children... In spite of such statements, we tolerate a high and rising level of poverty among families with children. We are prepared to provide economic support when a family breaks down, but not the support services which might have prevented the breakdown. We expect the family to take the lion's share of caring for its dependent members without providing the support necessary for it to do so".

Jean did not spare the churches either - "their concern about poverty seems to be an optional extra, and the will to do anything about it curiously lacking" (9)

For her, the policy challenge was unambiguous - "the family has a unique role to play in the care and nurture of its members, a role which cannot be replaced by services. But the State also has its role to play in providing those basic services in health, education, and welfare for all. There needs to be a partnership between the informal networks of family, friends and neighbours and the formal network of services. Basically, we need a new understanding of the nature of the family which defines it neither in patriarchal terms nor in utilitarian Marxist terms but as a living, changing entity bound together by commitment, by giving and receiving" (10)

And so we come now to a second clue as to what sustained Jean in her engagement with public life:

Just as with family life, Jean's deep Christian faith and driving belief in the need for justice was a lifelong source of support and sustenance.

In another obituary (in The Age, 22 October, 2012), John Langmore, who knew Jean for over fifty years, spoke of the depth and strength of her Christian faith - suggesting it was, in fact, the foundation to every part of her life.

Sarah Martin suggests Jean's Christian faith reflected a strong ecumenical preference - she, like Davis, questioned their adherence to Irish Presbyterianism as practised in Belfast — they began to see it as too sectarian, too parochial and narrow-minded for their changing faith.

Her faith intertwined with a life-long sensitivity to injustices based on inequality of circumstances.

Sarah Martin also notes a number of instances that point to Jean's unswerving belief in social justice. One of Jean's earliest memories was of her father George Henderson weeping openly when the legislation dividing Ireland was passed. (12)

Active discrimination was high in her awareness from an early age in other ways. She was one of only sixteen women to study medicine out of a class of 180 students. Apart from noticing this striking gender imbalance, Jean discovered on her first day that Protestants were allocated the front seats in lectures and Catholics were directed to the back row. What was Jean's response? She chose the only Catholic in her year as her prac partner, and they worked together throughout her course. (13)

As a Christian, Jean was active in the SCM before she met Davis. Faith, combined with female solidarity, was to trigger a dramatic point in her life:

We are told the story of Jean being accosted by her friend Angie, who begged her to help make up the numbers at a talk that 'this chap from the SCM who is over from Cambridge' was going to give. Although a member of Queen's SCM and aware of the need to support visiting speakers, Jean was not at all pleased. She was tired, it was cold, and

she had planned to wash her hair and go to bed early. But solidarity among the few women in the medical course proved an overriding factor, and she reluctantly agreed to be in the Union at 8.00 pm to swell the audience. This was to be the beginning of her relationship with Davis. (14)

As a young woman in her twenties at the onset of WWII, Jean was outspoken about the horrors of war - including the devastation of Belfast by German bombs; and what she saw as few safeguards for those most vulnerable. (15)

In the 1960s, Davis campaigned publically against the hanging of Robert Tait and it is fairly safe to assume that Jean was in full accord. We might also assume that she shared Davis's opposition to the Vietnam War-which branded him a radical in the eyes of more conservative parts of the community. (16)

Certainly their embrace of equality led to them welcoming the reforms of the Whitlam era - the abolition of university fees, the expansion of student living allowances, the end of conscription, and the introduction of universal health care. (17)

Their embrace of gender equality motivated their active involvement in the planning of a new women's College at the University of Melbourne, St Hilda's; and if that wasn't enough, they both went on to be part of the introduction - despite resistance in several quarters - of co-residency at Ormond College itself in 1973.

Both Jean and Davis railed against what they saw in the 1970s as emerging signs of a greedy, materialist culture that elevated self-interest and material consumption at the expense of family and community bonds and social justice values.

Jean lamented the sale of the State Bank: "All those corporate cowboys of the 1980s are finished - unfortunately they took a lot of little people down with them," she wrote in a letter to her son Patrick in 1990.

She later described the Kennett Government's policies as exacerbating and exploiting the gap between the rich and the poor, particularly in the unequal provision of educational facilities. (19)

A third clue as to what motivated Jean and underpinned her contribution to community and society lies in the changing fortunes for women.

Jean's capacity to commit to both caring for her family and channelling her sharp intellect and interests into an ever expanding role beyond the family was made possible because she, along with increasing numbers of women of her generation, were daring to unlock their potential and dream of a life that was not axiomatically defined by a domestic role alone

It was still far from common for women in the 1930s to study in fields such as medicine, and I've mentioned the disproportionate number of women and men in the course. Gendered expectations as to what men and women should do, as distinct from what they can do, were marked.

When Jean married Davis, she was unequivocal about the need to support her husband and to take on the role as mother and primary carer. Ultimately, although trying several times to continue her medical course, she abandoned it - seemingly without resentment.

She was, as Sarah Martin points out, the first to concede that the domestic scene was not all that rosy. At times she resented the work that took Davis away, evidenced by signs of bitterness surfacing in their letters. Left with five young children to look after, Jean remembered long, cold silences when their individual preoccupations did not mesh well. She was irritated when Davis would bring home an overseas visitor and leave her to entertain him while he went off on another engagement. She spoke of the juggling of accounts, household accounts, feeding her family on war-time rations, and ill-health during this period, too. But, invariably, they weathered these bouts of stress and strain.

In all of this, Jean was blessed with a partner who respected her intelligence and capacity; and also strove for equality in their own marriage partnership. In an early letter around the time of their engagement, Davis wrote of her tremendous capacity and her brilliance, admitting that he was scared, in fact, that their partnership might prevent her from doing all the sorts of things she would do with great distinction in the medical profession. ⁽²¹⁾ Jean, in turn, was a constant source of critical feedback to Davis on his sermons and other work - she clearly did not hold back. In one of Davis's letters, he states: "I agree with you in thinking my technique is bad".

Jean's personal and professional life story had many chapters. As her family grew older, she fashioned further activities that satisfied her thirst

for learning and new ideas. It was on a trip to Britain with her daughters Mary and Brigid that she entertained doing a course in Renaissance history before espying a poster in a supermarket, I believe, about the computer revolution, which ultimately led her to become an early computer programmer. This was to be a decisive decision, because it enabled the move she made into the field of poverty and family research, in which she was to assume a significant role and make a special and lasting contribution.

Throughout her long life, Jean's intellect, passion for politics and social justice, warm interest in people, capacity for hospitality, and mental acuity, manifested in multiple and expanding roles as she combined home-making and child rearing with support for Davis and taking on numerous and wide-ranging activities outside of her family.

Her son Patrick recalls Jean writing her first book on the kitchen table almost without anyone noticing it, in between running a family, making non-stop meals for friends and strangers alike, providing a much appreciated informal counselling service to untold numbers of young men and women, and reading and critiquing Davis's speeches and articles. (23)

Like many women of her times, Jean was keenly aware of the demands and strains of being a woman in a marriage, with responsibilities for the children and yet desiring to make a difference elsewhere.

She considered the women's movement of the 1970s as having done much to raise the consciousness of our society to the subordination of women and the inequalities which pervaded almost every aspect of life. Slowly, she said, there had been a change in attitudes to the role of women both in the family and in society. Nevertheless, she observed, the responsibility for home-making and child rearing still rested mainly upon women. She said, they must choose between staying at home to care for their children or working in paid employment - a choice between economic independence and dependence on the husband. Moreover, she said, those who remain in the workforce, as well as taking most of the responsibility for child rearing, must compete on equal terms with men in a very competitive world. It is not surprising, she writes, that some feminists see the family as essentially patriarchal - the means of perpetuating the gender division of labour and the subordination of women. The answer is not, she said, 'down with the family' but 'down with the present organisation of the workforce and the sexual division of labour, (24)

Finally, we can think about another important clue that sustained Jean and underpinned her involvement in public life, and this is her commitment to a just and civil society.

About three weeks ago, I talked with a group of men and women in Williamstown. They ran a group called 'Conversations for the Curious'. They had little trouble expressing what they saw as the hallmarks of a civil society - respect, mutuality, decent public debate, living within the laws of the land, a sense of belonging, safety, security, respect for the rights of others, a capacity to listen to all voices, to serve the common good, respect for difference, being welcoming and accepting, being just and democratic.

Jean's deep, ecumenical Christian faith and palpable sense of social justice positioned her well to understand, at both intuitive and political levels, the essence of a civil, democratic society. For her, market values and economic efficiency should never dominate to the expense of other important tenets - access, equity, quality of care, catering for diversity of need, long term sustainability and democratic participation in an open and transparent system.

She knew from an early age that supportive relationships and the social relations set up by gift-exchange, in line with the Richard Titmuss ethos, are among the most powerful forces which bind a group together. She recalled:

"In the strife torn county of Northern Ireland where I was born, every town and village is divided between Catholics and Protestants, often bitterly so. Over the last twenty years many efforts have been made to bridge the gulf, through such initiatives as the Peace Movement, Women Against Violence and one which is simply called Friends and Neighbours. This group brings together at the local level, Protestant and Catholic families in acts of simple friendship and neighbourliness and so creates community where it did not exist before"

This framework of deeply held beliefs about a civil society helps explain Jean's preparedness to accept a busy and sometimes gruelling involvement, from the middle of the 1990s, in the contest of ideas that occurred after the Kennett Government came to power in 1992.

Remember, Jean is well into her seventies and eighties as this chapter of her life unfolds

Jean shared the alarm of many Victorians at one of the very early public policy responses of the new Government - one of many to come - that removed community services support for the most vulnerable in the community. In 1993, despite a strong campaign, the Government withdrew funding to the Grey Sisters' respite centre for struggling mothers in Croydon for an annual saving of \$45,000.

Jean readily became part of a Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) led community initiative that brought together community organisations, churches, philanthropic organisations and many individuals to the Victorian Community Summit in 1994. From this Summit emerged the People Together Project, which had the elegant aim of keeping before the people of Victoria the vision of a just, equitable and caring society and to seek ways of realising it. Jean and Ben Bodna became Co-Chairs.

The People Together Project was initially funded by the Reichstein Foundation, although later it also attracted funding support from The Stegley Foundation and the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust. In its own right, the support from these three progressive foundations in Victoria is an underestimated factor as to an important community movement that was occurring.

The People Together Project initiated public meetings and seminars. It explored and documented the social impacts of gambling, the adequacy of services for people with disabilities, electricity privatisation, council amalgamations, and competitive tendering of human service programs.

The Stegley Foundation made 7 grants totalling \$60,000 between 1994 and 2000 which funded community audits around Victoria to identify the impacts of Government policy, and funded a community audit kit and a Summit.

In 1998 the People Together Project - in conjunction with the Victorian Women's Coalition - established a public inquiry to look at the impact of Government policy on Victorian women specifically. This resulted in the release of *The Social Justice Report Card: Balancing Social Justice with Economic Efficiency* which was released in November 1999.

Funded by the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust, and based on an Inquiry that took place in regional, rural and city areas, as well as audits, Jean and co-author Carolyn Atkins' research confirmed that women

were doubly hit by service cuts and increasing 'user-pay' approaches in areas such as health and education. In a media interview in November, Jean was her insightful and forthright self:

"The pain has not been equitably shared. There are certain groups in society that are much more vulnerable to the changes being brought in by the Kennett Government...women are more likely to be poor, they are more likely to be single parents and they are more likely to be discriminated against...They are the main users of, and often employed in, human service areas so they have been doubly hit with cuts to services, user pays and the tightening of eligibility for assistance. A great many have lost their jobs and the ones that are left are pretty stressed out trying to shoulder the burden" (27)

Jean, along with Ben Bodna, provided superb leadership in this community response. What a respectable, revered and acutely intelligent team!

I loved re-reading their letter to The Age which appeared in May 1997. The context here is that Premier Kennett had been scornful of Jean's criticism of his Government's serious diminution of the role of the State's Auditor-General, stating that Jean was part of 'the baying crowd.'

Jean and Ben's letter to The Age on May 16, 1997, which I suspect was penned largely by Jean, read as follows:

"To bay or not to bay...Please heed that Kennett Bey [B-e-y, which is a clever satirical reference to a Turkish potentate] does not like baying. He had previously been irritated by a chicken scratching and had a well-known intolerance to resounding reports.

The latter reminds us of that other potentate, Keepemat Bey, who had an auditor-general drowned in mire as punishment for encouraging a hubbub. Regretfully, we must continue to bay and not obey Mr Kennett. We leave that to minions and those making a quick buck through his follies". ⁽²⁸⁾

In an interview with Chloe Saltau, published in The Age in July 2000, Jean is reported as saying she had no particular animosity for the man (Kennett) against whose policies she quietly and meticulously raged for six years...but simply, she said, he was a 'bit of a bully' whose politics threatened the things she held dearest - social justice and equality. (29)

Indeed, the Purple Sage Project, which was started in 1997 by the Victorian Women's Trust, built directly on this work led by Jean and Ben and their small but highly effective staff. Funded entirely by two private women donors, the Victorian Women's Trust formed a partnership between the People Together Project, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the Stegley Foundation, the YWCA and the Victorian Local Governance Association. Ben Bodna joined the Management Committee and provided me, in my role as Project Director, with inestimable support. Jean was there, always with words of support and affirmation.

As I closed in on the preparation of this material, which, naturally, has caused me to reflect more and more on the significance of Jean's life and contribution, I was struck earlier this week by a powerful similarity between Jean and another very strong and capable woman — the nation's first female Prime Minister in 112 years of federal parliament.

On ABC 1's Q&A (Monday, 5 May 2013), Prime Minister Gillard was asked by a Melbourne schoolgirl:

"As an individual and a leader who faces constant media scrutiny and occasional criticism, how do you deal with moments of self-doubt in your life?"

(Note the words 'occasional criticism'...This intelligent, young Melbourne girl clearly does not read The Australian and the Herald Sun!)

The Prime Minister issued the following response, which I believe could have been word for word Jean's as well:

"If you spend your life valuing yourself according to how others see you, you will live a life buffeted by a lot of extreme emotion...The best way of having some resilience in times of stress is to be very clear about who you are, what you are trying to do, why you are trying to do it, and the other thing is to have some really good mates that you can turn to in times of difficulty and I am blessed with some fantastic friends and a wonderful and very supportive family". (30)

Jean's vision of a just, equitable and caring society is a profound legacy.

In sustaining this vision throughout her life, she drew great strength, as I've sought to depict, from her husband, her immediate family and family

life, her kin networks, her deep Christian faith, her sense of social justice and her various communities of interest.

Most of all, however, she displayed what American Walt Whitman speaks of in his poem, 'Song of Myself' in Leaves of Grass:

"Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity, When I give, I give myself" (31)

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- 17.ibid., p. 240.
- 18. ibid., p. 253.
- 19. ibid., p. 328.
- 20. ibid., p. 332.
- 21. ibid., pp. 120-121.
- 22. ibid., pp. 94-95.
- 23. ibid., p. 111.
- 24. Sarah Martin, personal communication with Mary Crooks, May 2013. Jean McCaughey, Giving and Receiving: The framework of social support for individuals and families, op. cit., p. 13.

- 25. ibid., p. 10.
- 26. Marilyn Webster & Carolyn Atkins, Jeff's Agenda, Issue 3: Setting the Agenda, Insight, Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS), April 2011, p. 15.
- 27. Jean McCaughey, media interview, Metropolitan News, 17 November 1999.
- 28. Jean McCaughey & Ben Bodna, letter to The Age, Fairfax media, 17 May 1997, p. 30.
- 29. Chloe Saltau, 'Mrs M takes her leave', The Age, Fairfax media, 19 July 2000, p. 13.
- 30. Q&A, ABC 1, 5 May 201.
- 31. Walt Whitman, 'Song of Myself', Leaves of Grass, 1855, Gutenberg files, web, 13 June 2013. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1322/h/1322-h/1322-h.htm





Firstly can I just say that I'm very thrilled to have been invited to participate this evening, it's a great honour.

Can I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of this land that we meet on this evening and pay my respects to elders past and present. Can I, on behalf of everyone here, also thank Mary for what was a fitting tribute to the exceptional contribution that Jean made throughout her life. I think you've reminded us, and I remember when you spoke about this not long after Jean had died, about the need to celebrate, to come together again and really celebrate her contribution. And I think Mary's oration tonight had really reminded us that tonight really is about celebrating the extraordinary contribution of an amazing Victorian woman. A woman who contributed so much to the economic and social fabric of Victoria but also Australia. A woman who, I think, we all greatly miss.

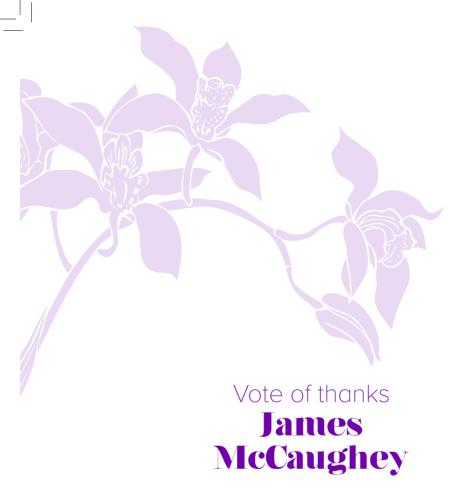
I first met Jean in 1994. I didn't grow up in Victoria, I'm a Queenslander, so I actually hadn't met Jean before, I just knew her by reputation, people would speak about her. When I first came here I was sort of engaged in student politics so didn't really follow those years that Jean and Davis were in Government House. So, the first time I met her and Ben Bodna was at a job interview, so I walk into a job interview and here's Jean McCaughey and Ben Bodna, two exceptional Victorians, and I was going for the job of the Executive Officer of the People Together Project. I don't actually remember what I said in that meeting. I'm not sure how you go into a meeting with those two great Victorians and talk about community with these two people who knew more about community than I'll probably ever know in my life. I must have done ok because they hired me and I'm forever grateful that they did.

The People Together Project was a very special experience for all of us who were involved - from local community members, right through to community leaders through to The Victorian Women's Trust. People from right across our community came together and I think that we all remember it very fondly and we also, as a result of that, remember Jean and developed a very close relationship with Jean as a mentor and a friend. Jean and I spent many days and evenings travelling through different parts of Victoria. We had many a dinner around a kitchen table on a farming property, many peas and corn were eaten and corned beef. But what became very clear to me during that period of travelling around and doing the community audit process was that Victorians from

all walks of life admired, respected and trusted Jean. She was able to energise local communities to take action, to stand up for what mattered, and she inspired those communities to speak out at a time - and I'm not sure if people remember how fearful people were to speak out at that particular time - and she gave them the inspiration and courage to do that.

After I was elected to parliament as an MP and then even more so when I became a Minister, her counsel continued and there were often times in the back of mu mind, as we sat around a caucus room or a cabinet table thinking 'What would Jean think about this idea or policy?' And often I didn't just have to think about what she would think because, in her gentle but very determined way, she never hesitated to challenge ideas or positions she thought missed the mark or didn't go far enough. She was obviously a bit more gentle with me than she was with Davis in criticising his sermons. But that was particularly ok and I remember many, many, many discussions about public education in Victoria and what we needed to do to improve public education here. I'm absolutely sure we never met the mark that she had set and I forever remember that we need to do so much better in this area, and how determined and how much she believed in the power of public education to change lives and how we all had to stand up for that and protect public education in Victoria

She was a strong advocate with the capacity to talk easily with people about the big issues individually and in groups. She had the ability to connect with people in community meetings, in small towns, or to bring community and religious leaders together over an issue. And I'll certainly never forget the standing ovation for a rousing speech that she gave to a packed Melbourne Town Hall. Jean was a woman of great integrity who brought intellectual rigor and honesty to any analysis or debate and was committed to social justice, to fairness, and to equality. Like many of you, I valued and now greatly miss her wise counsel and support and we miss her warmth and generosity, her humour and her very good company. The Jean McCaughey Social Justice Sub-Fund, which I'm honoured tonight to formally launch, is a wonderful way of honouring Jean and the work she did as an advocate, a social researcher and an author. The fund is a part of The Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust and will provide grants for social research on issues including homelessness, povertu, familu wellbeing and strengthening local communities, very much reflecting Jean's own work over many decades. I encourage people to support the fund, to talk about the fund, which we know will further assist us to help Jean's contribution to live on in our community and to further that contribution by enabling social research into these significant issues for our community. So on that note, I'm honoured to now officially launch the Jean McCaughey Social Justice Sub-Fund. Thank you.





Our family, and my mother, in memory of her, are in the receipt of kindness and generosity. We thank you and she would, I think, be enormously grateful, Mary and Lisa, for what you said. She held both of you in great regard.

I've only got one criticism, really, of your speech and that is you never mentioned the football! My mother's powerful preoccupations and passions for North Melbourne. I always remember that if one would come in of an afternoon just to see how she was going and see her sitting with the singular concentration, the concentration she could only bring to, say, a speech of Jeffrey Kennett's. As she looked at the screen, you'd say to mum "What's the score, mum? How's it going?" And if you heard the words, as you often did, "Well, North were heroic!" you immediately knew that North had staged a minor resurgence in the third quarter before being completely wiped off the face of the earth by whichever power of darkness they were up against. And this is somehow emblematic to me in my mind of my mother's passionate commitment to the underdog, which I think, despite some well known North supporters in this room, you'd have to agree they'd tend to be, but with of course excellent social values which we know that they have. And yes, a powerful and vocal commitment to that.

I've been thinking a lot today about mum, mostly of course because of this great honour that's been given to her, has been made to her. But also because it's her birthday and so it's the first birthday of hers that she hasn't been around for and as I've been sitting here, thinking 'Well how would she feel about being here?' and I think you'd come across a certain paradox in mum's character because in one way she would say "Oh you know, I don't matter all that much I shouldn't be there." But in another way, as a daughter of a politician, and a very great politician, George Henderson, with whom it would be quite important to honour his extraordinary courage. Unbelievable courage! And unbelievable commitment to the less privileged, especially when that was across the most dangerous divides in the north of Ireland, and a man from whom my mother got not only her passion but her courage, and I so much liked what you said about her unflinching capacity to say what had to be said in times of fear.

But the other side to her, as a politician, is she liked a good crowd and I certainly always remember that moment in the North Melbourne Town Hall. I thought, 'I'm not sure how many members of the family, my father or any other forbearers included, ever got everybody on their feet'. And she's standing in the middle and, it was quite funny, you know, a lot of people would be grinning sheepishly and she just stood there and took it.

And so tonight, as I see so many people in the room whom she loved deeply, whose work she admired and whose commitment she wanted to support and drew their commitment to them. I know that she would be moved and joyous, and maybe she is moved and joyous at the moment. As I have been thinking a lot about her in the last few months, some things slide away and some, the really important things, remain. One of the things that's come to me again and again is her as a story teller. She loved a good story, and not always a respectable one, I must say, and in whatever situation she was in she could bring back a story and tell it. And I think that with every single person in this room, my mother would think of your story and then she would share that story and weave it into all of our stories.

And so the family, if I may speak on behalf of it, is profoundly grateful to The Women's Trust for this initiative. Profoundly. And deeply supportive of it. I see it as a way in which many other stories will continue to be told. Stories that will be discovered and then made public and carried forward through the research that is funded by The Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust and my mother, I think, would be very pleased, very pleased indeed, that this in turn hopefully becomes part of, and adds energy and proper acclaim to The Victorian Women's Trust and the women it represents in all their remarkableness. So thank you very much indeed

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