



# Keep in Touch

*Sisters of Charity Newsletter – Partners in Mission*

Vol.5 No.3 September 2004

## GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

Our congratulations to the seven Sisters of Charity celebrated their Golden Jubilee of Profession on Thursday 5th August 2004 — Mathilde Harnischfeger, Margaret Mary O'Rourke, Nola Riley, Marie Bernadette Wunch, Margaret Mines, Helen Dearn and Margaret Scully. Celebrations were held in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane to mark the occasion. It was wonderful to welcome home Mathilde from Nigeria for a short to celebrate her jubilee with her family and friends.

### **Sisters Helen Dearn, Margaret Mines and Margaret Scully**

The first of celebration was held in Sydney on Saturday 7th August for Sisters Helen Dearn, Margaret Mines and Margaret Scully.

At the commencement of the Liturgy, in St Vincent's Chapel at Potts Point, Sister Laureen Dixon, Congregational Vicar, in welcoming said: *'We gather as Church and we do this with joy and overflowing gratitude to God as we celebrate with our golden jubilarians ... In preparing for today I have been reflecting on the abundant moments of grace given to each of us and in particular all the graced moments which God has lavished upon our jubilarians. The image I have is of a stream — flowing, swelling, curving, rippling, empty, full, moving, curving, continuing.'* Using this image of the 'stream', Laureen reflected on the graces given, received and shared in the jubilarians families, in the Congregation, in the network of their friends, among their colleagues in ministry, the primary source of the stream being God's word.

Bishop David Cremin was the chief concelebrant at the Mass of Thanksgiving and was joined by Fathers Steve Sinn SJ, John Macmillan SM, John Usher and



*(L to R) Sisters Helen Dearn, Marie Bernadette Wunch, Margaret Mary O'Rourke, Margaret Scully, Nola Riley, Mathilde Harnischfeger and Margaret Mines.*

Peter Blayney. In his homily, Bishop David gave a brief biography for Helen, Margaret and Margaret, as well as for their fellow jubilarians who joined them for the celebration, and the various ministries that each had been involved in during their fifty years of service. He then likened their lives of dedication to that of true followers of Mary Aikenhead our Foundress. At the conclusion of the liturgy Sister Margaret Beirne, Congregational Councillor, presented the jubilarians with a Papal Blessing.

Afternoon tea for the guests that included families and friends of the three jubilarians, many of whom had travelled from the country and interstate, as well as a large number of sisters. Prior to the cutting of the cake the three jubilarians each spoke, thanking those present for joining with them to celebrate the occasion and for their support over the years.

Two members of the August 1954 Profession group, Sisters Jane Francis Wall and Xavier Tier died some years ago. They were acknowledged in a special way with Jane Francis', sisters sitting right behind the





*Sisters Margaret Scully, Helen Dearn and Margaret Mines.*

*from page 1*

jubilarians and Sister Elizabeth Wall RSC reading one of the scripture readings at the Mass.

### **Sisters Marie Bernadette Wunch And Margaret Mary O'Rourke**

On Saturday 14th August, the Golden Jubilee Celebrations continued at St. Vincent's Fitzroy. The main guests of honour on this occasion were Sr. Marie Bernadette Wunsch and Sr. Margaret Mary O'Rourke. Both Sisters at various times in their lives had been in Ministry at St. Vincent's with Sr. Marie Bernadette currently ministering in the areas of Staff support and the St. Vincent's Foundation.

Marie Bernadette and Margaret Mary on this occasion were joined the other Golden Jubilarians, Sisters-Helen Dearn, Mathilde Harnischfeger, Nola Riley, Margaret Mines and Margaret Scully. During the Eucharistic Celebration all renewed their vows and later joined in the cutting of the Jubilee cake.

The Eucharist was celebrated by Fr. Edward Dooley S.J., who during his homily referred to the fact that he had a long-standing relationship with the Sisters of



*Sister Margaret Mary O'Rourke & Sister Marie Bernadette Wunch cutting the cake at their jubilee celebration in Melbourne.*

Charity through his Father, Mr. Dooley an orthopaedic surgeon at St. Vincent's. He recalled the times as a child that he visited the hospital with his father. Some years later he rekindled that relationship at the Sacred Heart Hospice in Sydney where as a young Jesuit student he met Sr. Marie Bernadette during his Pastoral experience there. His homily focused on the life-time commitment, faithfulness and service of Marie Bernadette, Margaret Mary and the other Jubilarians as women religious in our ever changing Society and Church.

The organist for the celebration was Mrs. Margaret Boyle, a very close friend of Marie Bernadette, who had also provided the music for her Silver Jubilee. Margaret Mary was joined by members of her family, including a number of young nieces and nephews.

Sr. Margaret Bierne proposed the toast, reflecting again on the faithful commitment of the seven Jubilarians who, between them over the last 50 years had provided the equivalent of 350 years of service to many people through our Mission in Education, Pastoral Ministry, Health Care, and Overseas Mission.

Many Sisters from Melbourne and interstate came to celebrate this wonderful occasion. They were joined by the friends and families of Margaret Mary and Marie Bernadette. Amongst these friends were a number of the staff from St. Vincent's both past and present who over the years have become good friends and colleagues of the Sisters and on this occasion of Marie Bernadette and Margaret Mary. Many interesting stories were exchanged during the celebration.

Both Sisters responded, thanking everyone for joining them in their celebration and for the support they had received from so many during their 50 years as a Sister of Charity.

*Sr. Leone Wittmack, RSC*

## **KEEP IN TOUCH (K.I.T.)**

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*Sisters Nola Riley Mathilde Harnischfeger Marie Bernadette Wunsch and Margaret Mines with Bishop Joseph Oudeman ofm Cap.*

### **Sisters Nola Riley, Mathilde Harnischfeger and Margaret Mines**

What would a year at Mount Olivet Convent be without at least one Jubilee? This year a possible record was made in the Congregation with 7 Golden Jubilees of religious Profession on August 5.

After two noteworthy celebrations in Sydney and Melbourne for the Jubilarians, a celebration for Sisters Nola Riley, Mathilde Harnischfeger and Margaret Mines was held at Mount Olivet, with the Eucharistic Celebration in the Giovanni Chapel and refreshments after in the Board Room. Sr Marie Bernadette Wunsch from Melbourne was also present.

Joining us with the three Brisbane Jubilarians were members of Nola's, Mathilde's and Margaret's families and friends, Sr Elizabeth Dodds, our Congregational Leader and Claire Nolan, a Councillor, sisters from the Queensland communities and other sisters from south of the border.

Bishop Joseph Oudeman ofm Cap. was the main celebrant, together with Frs Brian Burke, chaplain to Mount Olivet and Fr Quintin Culpeper. Sr Eleanor and two of her talented singers from Sydney added to the joy of the Eucharistic celebration. In her address of welcome, Sr Elizabeth Dodds spoke of the "fifty years of living faithfully in community and ministry of these sisters" reminding us that part of the concept of Jubilee is to "allow the land to lie fallow", that is to recreate ourselves, adding that "we as a community ask these three sisters to take some time out to recreate themselves on behalf of us all". Did the other four Jubilarians receive the same invitation??

After the Eucharistic celebration, afternoon tea, most lavishly prepared and artistically served by Kathy Dean and her kitchen staff, was enjoyed in the Board Room. Sr Leone Wittmack, the MC for the occasion, congratulated the Jubilarians and proposed a toast. The three sisters each thanked all those who had helped them on their journey to this point in their lives and those who had contributed to the preparations for the occasion, especially Sr Margaret O'Brien who masterminded the afternoon.

*Sister Elizabeth Dwyer RSC*

## LETTER FROM THE ARCHBISHOP

*The following is the text of a letter of appreciation sent to Sister Mary Felicia McCarthy RSC (pictured right) from the Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Rev Denis Hart, thanking her for her outstanding contribution to the St Paul's Overseas Aid. We as her sisters in religion, also thank Sister Felicia for her many years of faithful service to this ministry, one truly responding to the Gospel imperative to clothe and provide for those in need.*



Dear Sister Felicia,

On behalf of the Committee of the Melbourne Overseas Mission and myself I write to express our untold gratitude for all that you have done for such a long time in coordinating St Paul's Overseas Aid.

The great leadership that you have shown, the friendship, the packing of boxes, and the indomitable spirit will always be remembered by the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

As we gathered for our meeting last night, the Committee asked me to express their thanks, warm wishes and prayer.

Be assured of a remembrance in my Masses and prayers in the time ahead.



# DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

## SISTER MARY VERONICA DUFFY AND SISTER DOROTHY BARDEN



*(L to R) Sisters Mary Veronica and Dorothy leaving the Chapel.*

A celebration of love and thanksgiving was held at Caritas Christi Hostel, Kew, on Saturday August 29th 2004, for Sister Mary Veronica Duffy.

Father Laurie Leonard S.J., an ex-student of C.L.C., led those gathered, in the Eucharistic Prayer, to thank God for the blessings bestowed on Veronica over sixty years. He thanked Veronica for the gifts she has shared with so many, especially the gift of hospitality.

Sister Lauren Dixon chose to travel from Sydney, to represent the Congregational Council, because Veronica had taught her at St. Thomas' School Lewisham, N.S.W. when she was ten years old. She was also her school Principal. Some of the Sisters present lived with Veronica at Lewisham, in those days — early sixties — and they recall her energy, hard work and enthusiasm. She was not only the Principal of the school but an after-school dressmaker as well as the chief organiser of the Convent renovations. She dared to introduce pastel colours into the Convent — even the black wrought iron beds turned pale pink, blue or green. She transformed the garden and even moved St. Joseph's statue from the side to the front garden.

Still, today, Veronica continues to be a 'doer' and to 'move quickly', responding generously to the needs not only of her sister, Sister Eileen Duffy, with her visual disability, but for all who live at Caritas Christi Hostel. The Residents call Veronica 'an angel' because she cares for all of them, as well as their Chapel.

Veronica invited her sisters, Edna, Dorothy and Joan, and her niece Maureen and nephew Kevin, together with her Novitiate companion, Sister Dorothy Barden, from Sydney. It was a lovely opportunity for Veronica to thank Sister Dorothy for her inspiration and

companionship over sixty years and to thank her family, especially Joan for her consistent love and care of both Eileen and herself. Veronica also thanked everyone at Caritas Christi, especially Sister Patricia Grantham, Elizabeth Reid, Jan, Lyn, Monica and all the wonderful staff, for their loving support and generous care, on a daily basis, but especially in preparation for the Diamond Jubilee.

Everyone present had a story of Veronica's generous service during her sixty year Ministry as a Sister of Charity. Each one was delighted to celebrate and honour her and to thank and pray with her, for God's ongoing abundant graces.

Sister Dorothy Barden, the other Diamond Jubilarian chose to have a quiet celebration with her local community.

We congratulate Dorothy and Veronica on reaching this significant milestone as Sisters of Charity and we thank them for their outstanding contribution to the Congregation and to the wider Church. We also pray at this time for the late Sister Stephen Dowd who entered with Dorothy and Veronica.

*Sister Denise Hannebery RSC*



## ST. VINCENT'S HOSPITAL LAUNCESTON 6TH AUGUST 2004

It was on the 6th August 1944 that the then Archbishop of Hobart, Archbishop Tweedy welcomed the Sisters of Charity to Launceston to take over the running of St. Margaret's Hospital, to be known from that time as St. Vincent's Hospital. So on the 6th of August 2004 it was fitting that the present Archbishop of Hobart, Archbishop Adrian Doyle DD, together with a number of Sisters of Charity from Tasmania and interstate including Sister Elizabeth Dodds, Congregational Leader and her Councillors Sisters Laureen Dixon, Claire Nolan, Maureen Delaney and Margaret Beirne joined with the Sisters of Charity Health Service National Board Members, and the Local Board Members to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of St. Vincent's Hospital and the commitment of the Sisters, the staff, the doctors, the nurses and the volunteers who have provided health care to the people of Northern Tasmania over this time. A number of events and celebrations were planned to mark this wonderful occasion.

On the 5th August, the Sullivan family, who have been benefactors of the hospital since that first day in 1944, when they met the Sisters and helped them begin their ministry, to this present day, through Board membership with the current Chairman being Mr. Patrick Sullivan, were honoured for their contribution to our Mission in a ceremony where Sister Elizabeth Dodds officiated in naming the Function Room, The Sullivan Room.

On the 6th August, the new Day Surgery Unit was blessed by Archbishop Doyle and opened by Sr. Elizabeth Dodds. Quilters from the hospital made a personal mark in celebrating the Jubilee. The 3m by 1.5m wall hanging which outlines in 35cm blocks of fabric aspects of the lives of people connected with the hospital was unveiled by Sister Christine Henry RSC, who four years ago, with quilters Kay Bryce and Ellen Bird, suggested the wall hanging. A special luncheon was provided for the staff with the band from St Patrick's College providing the entertainment. Later that evening all the Sisters of Charity who had gathered celebrated together at a special dinner.

On the 7th August, the National Board held its monthly meeting at Launceston. On that evening a Eucharistic Celebration was held in the Church of the Apostles. Archbishop Adrian Doyle was the main celebrant. This was followed by a beautiful dinner held in

the Gorge Restaurant. Mr. Patrick Sullivan entertained all present by his humorous recall of all the Sister Administrators who had managed the hospital over the 60 years. Mr. Tony Killen, the Chairman of the Sisters of Charity National Health Board, paid special tribute to the Sisters of Charity for their contribution to Catholic Health Care in Australia and, in particular, in Launceston and took the opportunity to thank and congratulate Ms Kaye Gillespie Executive Director of St. Vincent's, her Executive and the staff for the committed way that have continued to promote the Mission and Values of the Sisters of Charity, through the obvious care that is given to the people of Northern Tasmania through the hospital community of St. Vincent's.

All who attended these celebrations came away refreshed and energised by the wonderful spirit evidenced in the hospital and proud in the knowledge that the Catholic Health Care ministry, the Healing Mission of Christ, is alive and well at St. Vincent's in Launceston.

*Sr. Leone Wittmack RSC  
National Director of Mission  
Sisters of Charity Health Service*

## EDITORIAL

Our congratulations to our sisters who celebrated their Golden and Diamond Jubilees. Such celebrations are times of thanksgiving and rejoicing for the whole Congregation.

In the last few weeks we have watched and read about, with a sense of disbelief and horror, the atrocious acts of terrorism in Beslan, and Djakarta, and on a daily basis we continue to see and hear about the bombings and acts of terrorism in Iraq. As Christians we need to have our voices heard in condemning such acts of violence and inhumanity by supporting those working to combat terrorism and war. Next Sunday 21st September is World Peace Sunday, it is a day for us as Christians to be united in friendship and prayer in showing the face of Christ to the world around us.

*Maria Wheeler RSC*



# SR CARMENA KELLY RSC



**M**y favourite story about Carmena tells us much about her approach to life: In the days when lights had to be out and everyone in bed by 10pm, there was a night when

Carmena was running late and wanted to have a bath before going to bed. Passing by the grandfather clock, she noticed it was almost 10 o'clock, so she opened the face, turned the clock back, had the bath, reset the time and went to bed! She was a practical woman and could turn her hand to many things. We all know of her gifts in the gardening department, her great love of flowers and skills in arranging them as well as painting them on cards for spiritual bouquets.

Lulitha Magdalen Kelly was born on 22nd July 1908, the feast of St Mary Magdalen as her middle name reminds us. The date is also the anniversary of the death of Mary Aikenhead, foundress of the Sisters of Charity, the congregation Carmena was to join around 1927. When she died on 5th August this year, she had attained the age of 96 years.

Born to parents Edward G Kelly (1875) and Madeline Madge O'Hare (1884), Carmena was the eldest of five siblings, the others being Marjorie Cecelia who became a Sister of the Good Samaritan, Thomas who married Jean, Mavis Mary (Sister Grata RSC) and Benjamin, who married Pat. Carmena survived them all.

Educated by the Sisters of Charity in Bega, Carmena moved with the family to Canberra in the mid 1920's after their dairy farm at Tanja had been flooded sever-

al times. The story is told that Edward herded the dairy cows all the way from Bega to Canberra.

Carmena spent her early years as a Sister of Charity teaching at Concord West, Liverpool and Ashfield, at St Anne's Orphanage, Liverpool and as Assistant Novice Mistress at Potts Point but she is best remembered from her twenty-three years in the novitiate at Wahroonga. We all remember Nicky the Labrador dog who really belonged to the next-door neighbours but followed Carmena everywhere. She loved the garden at Wahroonga and seemed to know every plant by name. There are many stories that former novices could tell about driving to the markets in 'Joseph' the truck or riding in a succession of cars all of which bore the number plate 'BVM 333'. Carmena believed in the principle of equity rather than equality — if a novice looked like she was in need of a boost, Carmena would be there with kind words and deeds. By the same token, she would be tough if she thought it was needed.

Carmena loved her family and took an interest in the lives of her various nieces, nephews and cousins. She enjoyed many holidays with Marj and Grata, usually driving down in the truck. They would go fishing at Bateman's Bay and spend time at Tanja and in Canberra.

Carmena chose as her motto St Paul's words: With Christ I am nailed to the cross, and she must have reflected on this many times in her life, particularly as each of her younger siblings predeceased her and she watched Grata's dementia worsen. She would often question why she was left to the last. Today, however, we can imagine the rejoicing that must be taking place in heaven as she is reunited with her much-loved Ben, Tom, Marj and Grata as well as her parents Ed and Madge.

## CONGRATULATIONS

**C**ongratulations to Sister Annette Cunliffe, who has recently been appointed Head of the School of Educational Leadership at the Australian Catholic University.

## AN APPEAL FOR ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

**R**eminder to Sisters, past graduates and other staff of St Vincent's Lismore, Anne Thompson, the Archivist at St Vincent's would appreciate receiving any material and other memorabilia suitable for the archives.



# SISTER KAREN VARKER

**S**ister Karen Varker recently returned to the Diocese of Gizo in the Solomon Islands, at the request of the Bishop, Bishop Bernard O'Grady O P to help with the organisation necessary for setting up a Catholic Education System for the Diocese. She was also going to help the Sunday school teachers to get the Diocesan Christian Education Certificate correspondence course going again, a course she had designed and offered in the Gizo Diocese on a previous visit in 2001.

The following snippets are taken from a letter Karen sent to Sister Elizabeth Dodds describing her journey to the Solomons and the conditions that exist there.

'On 8th June I set off for the Solomon Islands. The plane from Brisbane was packed. We had on it the Solomon Island soccer team who were celebrating their 2 goals victory in their match against Australia. When we arrived the airport was crowded with cheering fans and there was a band to greet the players .... The local Dominican Sisters were there to meet me.

'The next day I was to fly on a small plane to Gizo. It was obviously going to be overloaded and I saw them off-loading bags ... a possible disaster in this country as they easily go astray. ... Although it was supposed to be a direct flight it actually made four stops en route, and each time this happens one holds one's breath as the runways are mainly grass strips left by the Americans during WW II ... On landing at Gizo's airstrip, we couldn't get out of the plane because the door was stuck. Eventually someone outside opened it and when the bucket and log (because the cable attaching the stairs to the plane was broken) were in place we climbed out. You can imagine how delighted and relieved I was to see Beata, the Catholic Education Secretary and my friend, waiting for me. When luggage was unloaded, two of my three pieces were missing — the box containing the books I had made and brought for the teacher courses and my bag with all my vital clothing. The next part of the journey involved climbing into a small 'tinnie' for half an hour's sea trip to the town of Gizo. The next afternoon ... the missing luggage arrived.

'One works under great difficulties in the tropics. Everything technical seems to break, go mouldy or rust — computers, photocopiers, videotapes, radios, fans, and solar panels. Paper absorbs moisture and can't be printed on. Food is bland and always the same ... rice, fish, yams. Fish ... are presently plentiful and big, thank God, because this is the main source of food for all the people. However, the people are being exploited ... the

European Union recently signed an agreement with the Solomon's allowing them to do long line and drift net fishing, the price paid is minimal. Asian countries have also been permitted to come in and rape large areas of forest .... The average person's wage, if they have a job, is about \$A50 per week. The price of food and petrol is about the same as in Australia.

'The education of children deteriorated during the 2001 — 2003 civil unrest. Teachers were not paid for months and they, as well as the children, had little in the way of teaching and learning materials. ... The government is trying to get education back on track. It had taken all schools over at independence but now it has asked the various churches to take over the schools in the villages. The Diocese of Gizo ... is preparing to take over 13 primary schools and 3 community high schools in the Catholic villages.'

## ST VINCENT'S HOSPITAL LISMORE REUNION

**P**ast Nurses from St Vincent's Hospital Lismore gathered to celebrate fifty years of reunion meeting on Saturday August 28th and Sunday 29th August 2004.

One hundred and fifty past graduates travelled from Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and many parts of New South Wales to attend. Included among those attending were early graduates Phyllis Jones, Pat James and Mary Deegan, as well as some recent graduates and many from the years in between.

Saturday afternoon functions included tours of the hospital, convent, nurse's home and the archives with its displays of records and many photographs that caused much pleasure. The voluntary archivist Ann Thompson appealed for further donations of materials for the collection.

Mass was celebrated in the hospital Chapel on Sunday morning. The celebrant Father Dennis Carroll warmly welcomed all, mentioning specifically the presence of Sisters Nola Riley RSC, Anne Mary Reynolds RSC, Marie Bernadette Wunch RSC and Patricia Mary Ryan RSC who travelled to Lismore for the celebrations.

A grand luncheon was held at the RSL Sports Club at Goonelabah, it was a very happy function judging by the conversation and laughter, and it brought to a close a very successful reunion.

*Sister Patricia Mary Ryan RSC*



## VISIT TO GOOD SHEPHERD SEMINARY, BANZ, PNG

It was a great joy for me earlier this year to spend two weeks of leave at Good Shepherd Seminary, in the Western Highlands of PNG. I expected this to be an enriching experience in a totally different culture and I was not disappointed. It was certainly enriching and different and not exactly on the tourist track! Good Shepherd is the seminary where Moira O'Sullivan has been lecturing in Scripture for the last couple of years.

Having 'taught' PNG as a geography teacher in 'another life', I had some idea of what I was going to. I knew it would be the dry season so expected minimal rain. There were no mosquitoes and little risk of malaria, but no shortage of other bugs and insects. Everything grew lush and brightly tropical — an abundance of vegetation, but not much evidence of bird or animal life, despite the tree kangaroos and famous birds of paradise that I expected. Maybe the hunters had been busy. The rivers were wide and swiftly flowing. Coffee plantations were everywhere, as were vegetable and flower gardens planted and carefully tended by the women. Magnificent mountains, steep and blue, surrounded and towered over the beautiful and fertile Wahgi valley, where subsistence agriculture has been practised for centuries and where the pig is still a status symbol in the villages.

Good Shepherd seminary, built largely with European funds is conducted by the SVDs, who 50 years ago established the mission station, Fatima, comprising various facilities, inc. a primary and secondary school. The latter was originally run by Australian Christian Brothers and is today recognized throughout PNG for its excellent academic standards. There is also a parish center with an impressive church, a clinic, and a day

center for disabled children, run by Belgian-founded Brothers of Charity.

The seminary accommodates 86 young men from a number of Highland dioceses, as well as from the Sepik region. This includes many tribes, cultures and language groups. All, however, speak Pidgin and reasonable English, though tertiary studies are considerably challenging for many of them, not to mention their lecturers, a truly international group drawn from a variety of Orders and countries. Nationals are also among the staff, including a young priest, who is a Good Shepherd graduate, as well as Dutch, Italian, Polish and Australian missionaries. It is wonderful to see what the Church has accomplished in this developing country and to have our congregation contributing to this effort. Moira is clearly doing great work and held in high esteem for her personal qualities as well as for her teaching and scholarship. Her students are even beginning to appreciate her jokes!

A lasting impression for me is the delightful and charming local people, especially the seminarians, who were so genuinely interested in us and our way of life but at the same time, proud of their own customs and traditions and enthusiastic about sharing them with us. I found these young men truly remarkable. Despite the fact that some of their ancestors first made contact with white civilization only in the last 50 years, the seminarians were able to critique the gains and losses to their traditional cultures. They have an amazing ability to move confidently between two very different cultures with apparent ease and sophistication. It was a great pleasure to be among them and to witness at first hand the valuable contribution of the missionaries.

*Sister Helga Neidhart*

### PRIVACY STATEMENT

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Those receiving this Newsletter have their names on our database. The list is not used for any other purpose and will not be given to another organisation.

If anyone would like to have his/her name removed from the list please contact me.

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