

From time immemorial, the male of the species has moved hither, thither to hunt, to fight, to work — and the womenfolk have obediently followed; children clutching skirts when skirts were available. But few females seem to have had quite so much fun en route as our very nonconformist Club Secretary and also Administration Secretary, Sue Smith.

Not many Bridge Clubbers can boast going AWOL from the Army, or running half-marathons through Northern Territory wildlife or being headhunted by Rugby League legends. (Though she can take on practically any challenge in life, we must explain Ms Smith did not actually play in the team, but on the administrative sidelines.)



Born in Brisbane, starring in school tennis, the lady met her future intended at high school when the family moved to Kingaroy. Wayne Smith soon moved to an Army apprenticeship in Victoria. When the Cunningham family returned to Brisbane Sue

obeyed papa and took her first job with the Public Service. She was in charge of looking after teacher transfer applications. When asked how to deal with them, her superior replied : “Shove them in the bottom drawer of your desk.”



Photographed at age 15 by Wayne, who labelled her “A good sort”.

So she joined the Army, their youngest recruit, one week after her 17th birthday. Uniform was sacrosanct but it happened to be a very cold morning, everyone was in jumpers, so Sue also put a spencer under the dress. March, march, march, some girls got hot and discarded jumpers. One off, all off, uniform must be uniform ... and then there was Sue’s spencer on display, and then there was Sue marching alone for an extra punitive hour.

Off to Puckapunyal for recruitment training, she spent the first month waitressing in the delighted Officers’ Mess. Posted to Willoughby in Sydney, she was in the recruitment division, tasked with addressing school groups on the marvels of an Army career. Roughly her own age, the high schoolers enquired “What’s your sex life like in the Army?” Her superior officer hastily took over the dialogue.

Invited by Wayne to a party at Kingaroy, she began to find him her main interest in life and kept applying for transfers to Brisbane, where he was now located. Sue’s transfer requests ended up in someone else’s bottom drawer, so she begged him

to come and fetch her. Knight in shining armour, aboard his trusty ute he arrived with two mates to invade the Army HQ. Somehow Sue and her possessions got loaded on board and she escaped. Halfway to Brisbane they were stopped by a stern policeman. (*Good grief, he knows I'm AWOL !!*) The copper told the males to line up at the back of the vehicle with hands on the ute. He took Sue to the front and gently enquired if she was being kidnapped by these three men.

Monday morning she applied for six jobs, was accepted for all six, and chose an employment agency. The Army was a bit worried about her, and rang her family. Sue was ordered to report to Victoria Barracks in Brisbane. Under *open arrest*, she was told to mop floors. After three days with the mop she explained she had to be a bridesmaid on Saturday. So they gave her an Honourable Discharge with a document describing her as an '*exemplary soldier*'.



In 1974 she was working for an insurance company with 1974 Queensland views on womankind. If you got engaged, you were out. They didn't know Sue became engaged as Wayne had a cunning plan and gave her a sewing machine instead of a ring.

She took a few days off for the nuptials and everything was fine until stepmama rang the office urgently seeking Sue's number "because of her wedding tomorrow". So when she returned on Monday, instead of a casserole dish they gave her the sack.

Next came a radio stint with 4BH, (*"Until I was about ten months pregnant, oops, I mean eight months"*). Then there were a few years off to welcome Catherine and Timothy to the world.

Becoming interested in mining careers, Wayne took a job with Nabalco's big bauxite and alumina project at Gove/Nhulunbuy in the Northern Territory. It was a beautiful area with wonderful beaches and a very happy community life with loads



This one was known as
Little Bondi

of sport and partying. (If you went to a beach and found other people there, you just moved to another one.)

Our Ms Smith starred in the Hash House Harriers under the alias of 'Saucy Sue', completed three triathlons and five half-marathons and was the NT Cross Champion Runner in the Eighties.



She became Secretary to the mine's Commercial Manager, and when they asked her to upgrade to become Secretary to the Site Manager she would only agree if they let her keep the first job as well, to ensure she didn't get bored. The head of the traditional owners visited frequently, barefoot, to collect royalties and would carefully supervise Sue as she made his cup of tea in the kitchen, ensuring he received his full six spoonfuls of sugar.

By 1988 Catherine needed secondary school so they returned to Brisbane. Wayne went to Linfox and Sue ended up at Bernie Power's Power Brewing start-up, becoming HR Manager of the first Queensland company to achieve an enterprise bargaining agreement.



Kings Canyon,
when perms
were in vogue

Off journeyed the head of the household again, this time to Townsville, everyone else dutifully traipsing along. Sue shed another skin and became HR Officer for BHP's feasibility study for its massive Cannington mine.

Back to Brisbane ambled he who wore the trousers, the faithful trio trundled behind and one of the Brewery executives asked Ms Smith to help recruit the first 20 people for a food processing

plant. By the time they finished, she had recruited a total workforce of 150.

BHP rejoined her growing list of career suitors and she took a FIFO job to run their HR side, flying in tiny aircraft three hours from Brisbane to the Cannington Mine south of Mt Isa.

Then the Rugby League greats were panting after her. For days before her interview with star players John Robert and Chris Johns she studied the rules of the game. They didn't pose one question about rules, hiring her to help set up the office for Melbourne Storm.



Wayne got itchy feet again, heading for Darwin and a Defence Australia company. Sue decided to give up office work and establish a botanical garden on their five acres. She sold heliconias to wholesale florists and learned the fine arts of propagation by working in the Arnhem Nursery near Humpty Doo.

Social life in the Territory can be a wee bit different. When Sue lunched at the Humpty Doo Golf Club on Melbourne

Cup Day, half a dozen girls took to the stage and started to perform the can-can. Somewhat astounded, she realised they were dancing in the true traditions of the Moulin Rouge, where the ladies always mislay their underwear. She conveyed this in an amazed whisper to the lady next to her. "Yeah," the Territorian replied, "that's my daughter in the middle."

Back to Brisbane (making us all quite dizzy) went Wayne, still working in the Defence area. Sue decided to take golf lessons, and over drinks and lunches at Indooroopilly and Toowong was told about the joys of Bridge. She played for about six months and then of course they moved, this time to Noosa,

Sue had been visiting our slice of paradise since the Sixties when Hastings Street was a sand track, and the couple had bought a unit at Noosaville. Before making a final move to Noosa Banks, in Hygeita Street she met devout Bridge Clubber Bobby MacNee, who waxed even more lyrical about the joys of the game.



Sue came along, did Lizi French's course, and hasn't stopped playing since. She has been Club Secretary for three years, and took over the administration role two years ago. No longer playing follow the leader, our Sue is now flying solo, doing her cross country runs in all directions, and off to Africa for a jaunt with Lizi in a couple of months.

Apart from her amazing efficiency, the lady's friendly common sense has won hearts across the Club. Long may she reign.

by Susie Osmaston

Postscript : Sue is of course a doting grandmama and pleaded for her grandchildren to be included.

