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Abstract
Obituary notes read at the funeral of Irene Arrowsmith by her husband Neville Arrowsmith.
Her Last Hurrah

Neville Arrowsmith

On the morning of the 29th September 2006, the day after what would have been her 75th birthday, between 30 and 40 relatives and friends gathered at Wollongong harbour to take Irene on her final journey. As there were only 25 persons allowed on our charter boat, the Sandra K, those that had to miss the trip lined the breakwater and Flagstaff Hill to view the ceremony. Skipper Karl took us out of the harbour and turned towards the open sea until we were adjacent to the newer of the two lighthouses. When we reached a suitable spot over deep water, one from which those on shore could see what was happening, we hove-to and, while the boat rode the gentle swells, Irene’s ashes were scattered on the waters. She had always said that before she ever became a nuisance to anyone, she would walk the silver trail on the night sea. This and the fact that some of the happiest days of her young life were spent swimming beyond the breakers at this beach were the reasons why the decision was made to make the sea her final resting place.

The days she passed here were her halcyon days, her Days of the Kingfisher, though war was raging in Europe and in the Pacific. A wreath and several bouquets were floated on the water above the ashes. It was a beautiful sight as we watched them slowly drift out to sea. Irene has now completed her cycle of life. Her distant ancestors dragged themselves out of the primeval seas onto land. She has now returned there to wander hither and yon, at the behest of the tides and currents for all of eternity. She is now a part of that silver trail enhancing its beauty with her presence. Irene was well known for her love of both prose and poetry so I would like to end this tribute with a few of her favourites. This one from John Lennon:

“Life is what happens while you are making other plans.”

For the children – source unknown:
“He didn’t want to talk about it, didn’t want to think about how the death of a parent, especially a mother, made you realise that, ceasing to be anyone’s child, you had become part of a different generation.”

From C.S. Lewis:

“Happy people move toward happiness as unerringly as experienced travellers head for the best seats in the train.”

From Langston Hughes, the great black American poet:

“Hold fast to dreams, For if dreams die, Life is a broken winged bird, That cannot fly. Hold fast to dreams, For when dreams go, Life is a barren field, Frozen with snow.”

A gritty piece from Pablo Picasso:

“Painting is not done to decorate Apartments – it is an instrument of War for attack and defence against the enemy A good painting ought to bristle With razor blades.”

Shakespeare was also a favourite. The quotes Irene liked best were not, as may be imagined, from Richard seeking a horse, the doings of Henry Bolinbroke or even Portia’s dissertation on the qualities of mercy, but those to do with her love of gardens. They were from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*:

“I know a bank where the wild thyme blows, Where oxslips [Primrose] and nodding violets grow Quite over canopied with luscious woodbine, With sweet musk rose and with eglantine [Buttercups].”

Another from the Bard was also from the *Dream* and was Oberon speaking to Puck:

“Fetch me that flow’r, That herb I showed thee once The juice of it on sleeping Eyelids laid will make man Or woman madly dote upon The next live creature That it sees.”

The flow’r mentioned was Heartsease. There are many many more but I would like to close with one that was alluded to in the death notices – “The moving finger has writ.” While
not a direct quote it comes into being from the following section of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* as translated by Edward Fitzgerald:

“The moving finger writes; and, having writ, Moves on; nor all thy Piety nor wit, Shall lure it back to cancel half a line, Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.”

From an adoring husband, mate and comrade. *Vale.*

“Mrs Irene Arrowsmith of Warrawong with her sons Ted, aged 3 and Martin, 18 months, was one of about 100 women in the march: 24 hour stoppage on penal clauses, 25th November 1955”