

CHAPTER ONE

Art & Theatre

CONSTANCE HARVEY 1922 - 2004



BORN: 7 February 1922 in Dubbo N.S.W.

DIED: 6 February 2004 in Sydney N.S.W.

SCHOOL: New South Wales Institute of the Deaf & Dumb
School, Darlington Sydney N.S.W.

**COMMUNICATION
MODE:** Lipreading and fingerspelling

PARENTS: Roy Harvey and Dora Peacock

CONSTANCE HARVEY

ARTIST



I am affectionately known as “Connie”.

Before World War II began, I attended *Art School* at East Sydney Technical College in the old Darlinghurst Gaol. For three years I studied almost everything from murals to nudes, landscapes to still life; and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I have studied under many painters such as Hal Missingham, William Dobell, Lyndon Dadswell, Joshua Smith and others. Jean (Vassie) Gilmer was a fellow art student and a wonderful interpreter. When I attended an art class for the first time, I didn't know how to make myself known until I met Jean (Vassie) Gilmer.

One day Jean came in to see me to learn how to fingerspell from the alphabet cards that were distributed to people who wanted to learn the language. We learned to do artwork through interpreting, and learned lots of patience in dealing with the art teachers. Jean is now married and is living in the United States.

In those days I became friends with many actors and entertainers like Chips Rafferty, Quentin Rafferty, Harry Dearth, Emile Mercier (cartoonist), Willy Fenell, Hal Lashwood, and Jim Macdougall, to name a few. Many times they gave me tips from them on theatre work.

In 1940 I worked for Martin Boyd Potteries, painting pots for firing. Martin was one of the famous Boyd artistic family. He was the younger brother of Merric and Penleigh, Martin Boyd was perhaps the most famous of his siblings. He was born in 1893, and grew up to become one of the most successful writers of his generation. His many bestselling novels include ‘A Difficult Young Man’ and ‘The Cardboard Crown’ – from the ‘Langton Quartet’, based on the diaries of his grandmother, Emma. Martin lived most of his adult life in England, and died there in 1972. He is remembered in ‘Martin Boyd: A life by Brenda Niall’ (MUP).



In 1954, I sailed to England and stayed there for two years. I met many English Deaf people and marvelled at their advanced education and culture, and I learned to sign their English sign language. I visited many places of interest such as art galleries and schools of the Deaf where I told

people about my favourite art interests in Australia. After I returned to Australia I was with my mother for three-months. I found that the job I used to have had changed, so my father arranged for me to join the Snowy Mountains Authority in Cooma.

Living in Cooma I learnt to be a draftsman. Most of the weekends I explored the natural beauty of the mountains; wildflowers that grew in profusion on the slopes, some gum blossoms, trees, and mountain scenery were my favourite subjects to paint. I also specialised in painting wildflowers on scarves, blouses, pottery and ceramics that I exhibited. I sold many things for my daily living. I have travelled to many parts of Australia, mostly country towns, where I tried my best to sell or at least exhibit my paintings and crafts. One of the scarves I painted was presented to Queen Elizabeth when she officially opened the Snowy Mountains Scheme in 1974.



With the close of the Snowy Mountains Authority, the staff gradually dispersed and I bought a house in Cooma in the same street as the Court House where my father had been a Magistrate. I received many commissions to drive to remote villages and homesteads where I taught drawing and painting, mostly to the wives. Even though I moved, I maintained my involvement with amateur theatre in Cooma.

I designed and painted boards for the changes of background scenery for the stage productions at Cooma's little theatre. I'm proud to have had my name in the programme books that were sold by usherettes in the theatre - *Décor by Constance Harvey*.

In October 1962 at Cooma Little Theatre, I was also asked to produce theatre plays. My group performed five plays during the Festival of the Snows 'Only an Orphan Girl' – similar styling of 'East Lynne'. I often went to Sydney to help with Deaf performances at the Deaf Society at 5 Elizabeth Street, Sydney. I did background board painting for the stage where extra stage hands did their part changing boards between acts. I also had to correct the scenery of the play; it needed lots of paintbrushes and oils.



I received many congratulations and letters remarking on how imaginative my set designs were. Many Deaf people who attended the plays often commented on how wonderful the art décor was. I tried to use the colours, specially adapted to particular scenes, which were vibrant and exuberated. I often wondered how the audiences felt after shows.

I was the producer in many productions including: The Hasty Heart, Angels in Love, The Boy Friend, Only an Orphan Girl, Bob's Your Uncle, Dick Whittington and His Cat, Sweeney Todd, Rape of the Belt and Cinderella.



I was given awards for best set design, and also was nominated for a Churchill Fellowship. I was recognised by the Snowy Mountains Authority Commissioner Sir William Hudson for my imaginative and talented art work. The Commissioner also invited me to review and help judge 18 entries for a Museum design for Snowy Mountains Authority.

During that time, I did a lot of things such as little theatre, sketching, children's portraits and painting murals for the kindergarten. The small children at Cooma State School were delighted to have me teaching them how to paint with shapes, colour and form. I taught them how to mix with colours from several paint tubs. I find interesting and love painting with them.



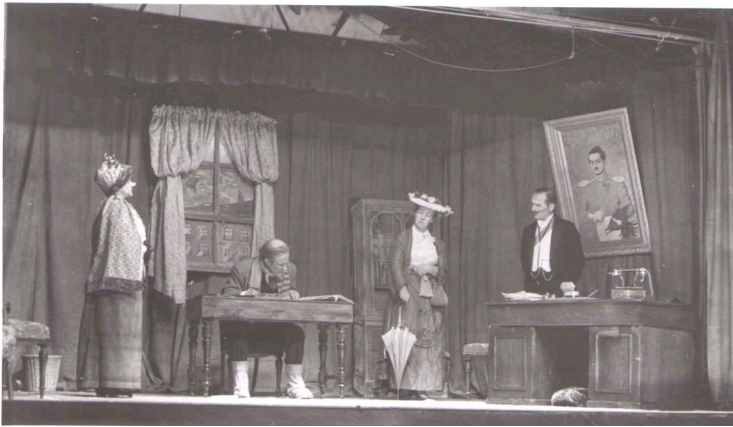
Peter Harvey - (brother of Constance)

Having left the Snowy Mountains Scheme, I took a part-time job as an art teacher for TAFE, visiting country towns to give art lessons. I also learned to do china pottery painting at the Martin Boyd Potteries in 1940 and gave lessons to students. I lived at the hostel with many friendly co-workers during that time. I was involved in art, theatre entertainment and sports. I won a prize for the best set design for Cooma entry 'Angels in Love' in 1968.

When all my activities in Cooma ended in 1979, my brother Peter offered me a job at his firm of architects Peddle, Thorp and Harvey in Brisbane. It was one of the largest firms of architects in Queensland with numbers of staff varying between 60

and 110. The office was responsible for the design of many of the major office buildings, hospitals, hotels and shopping centres in the city. It was also part of a national and international group with some 20 offices in Australia, Asia and England. Eventually I sold my house and moved to Brisbane.

I was involved as a draftsman in many of these projects and specialised in the co-ordination of the notation and lettering, which was added to the many technical drawings. My experience as an electrical tracer/draftsman on the Snowy Mountains project was of great benefit to the office where I worked.



Painting on wall on right side of stage – (Cooma 1971)

I joined the firm in 1980 and retired in 1989 having made many friends among the staff. I got on well with the staff members and went to many staff social activities, including dancing where I could feel the rhythm, although I could not hear the music.

I would like to share my postscript with you as follows:

AFTER LEAVING THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS HYDRO-ELECTRIC AUTHORITY

When I first joined Peddle Thorp & Harvey (PTH) on 30 November 1979, there were only approximately 20 employees.

Nothing much to do in the AMP Place office – I had to work sorting out the drawings and putting them in order so that Peter Harvey could get access to any of the projects easily. I hope he did? (Peter is my brother!).

I used to help with the printing, which was in Wesley House, for a while. PTH had a first break – getting the commission to do an extension to the Crest Hotel, Brisbane.

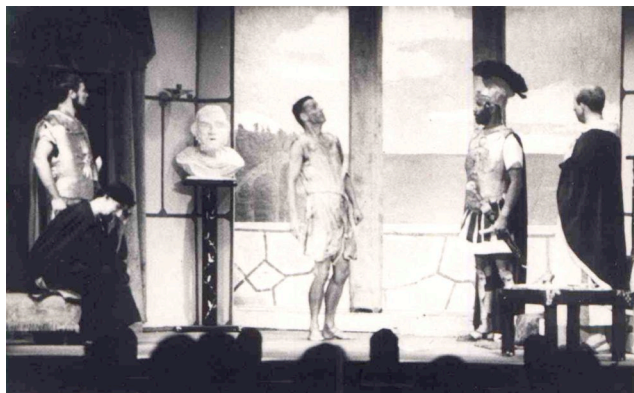
The next project, Comalco Place, was then a major project coming up. I'll never forget the wonderful time I had using the NC Scriber.

I have had a wonderful rapport with almost everyone over the years I have been with PTH.

Thank you for making it a very pleasant memory for me.

CONNIE HARVEY

In 1986 I flew to Los Angeles and then on to Syracuse, New York to stay with an old friend from Coogee days, Jean Gilmer, who had married an American serviceman during the war. Jean took me to visit famous sceneries such as Niagara Falls, Boston Connecticut, New York City and Toronto Canada. Many years later I visited Jean again to catch up on many happy memories of our work in art. We travelled to many places in New York to visited friends who are members of Art Galleries.



Stage – play “Gladiators” – Deaf actor

Then I left to travel to London and Oslo Norway to attend the World Seniors Table Tennis Championships in Lilliehammer Norway, where I played some competitions.

During the time I was in Brisbane, I joined the Queensland Theatre of the Deaf. For eight years I acted in several plays and was on the Committee of the Q.T.D. until I retired in 1989.

Aside from my roles as a draftswoman, I was nominated to do the secretarial duties for Queensland Deaf Lawn Bowls Club for several years and enjoyed my time playing and writing minutes and reports.

I also volunteered to give Deaf art lessons to the multi-handicapped Deaf people in Brisbane.

Despite my varying roles, I was an artist through and through!



Nola Colefax, Connie and Reg Harrison (1941)

ACHIEVEMENTS:

1981-1989	Queensland Theatre of the Deaf – actress, committee member
1980-1989	Peddle, Thorp and Harvey Architects – Draftswoman
Oct 1982	Queensland Warana Festival – Theatre of the Deaf for “The Man from Snowy River” – “Miss Harvey’s pencils miraculous power was universally appreciated”
1980 to 1989	Queensland Deaf Bowls – Secretary
11.10.1974	Retrenchment from Snowy Mountain Authority letter of notice referred to her excellent work and that had reached the top level of her salary scale.
1972	Dubbo Art Society – exhibited two paintings.
15.8.72	Cooma Monaro Express – Preserving our History *
21.12.1969	Bank of N.S.W. Bob Russell – Congratulations for the State Award for “Angels in Love” sets.
11.11.1968	Arts Council of N.S.W. & Cooma Little Theatre – congratulations on award for Best set designer.
11.9.1968	Cooma Monaro Express – Women’s Magazine “Cooma artist exhibits at local Raglan Gallery – refers to Connie’s gift to the Queen of hand painted scarf.*
8.11.1968	Bank of N.S.W. letter of congratulation on this award.
1968	N.S.W. Drama Festival – won award for best set designer for Cooma entry: “Angels in Love”
1969	New South Wales Drama Festival as Best-Set Designer (Sponsored by the Bank of New South Wales).
July 1966 to Dec 1967	Cooma Technical College – Part time teacher of Child Art
1965	Drama & Art Exhibition in Canberra. Submits 2 entries.
18.1.1965	Commissioner’s requests Connie’s opinion & review of 18 designs for a museum for Snowy Mountains Authority.
28.10.1964	Cooma Monaro Express – Photo of Connie at Art Show of local artists.*
9.9.1964	Festival of Snows – Exhibition
26.6.1963	Cooma Monaro Express – The Cooma Player – “Bob’s Your Uncle” - article for mention for set design. Dora Peacock appeared at this end of the play also a keen amateur theatre player and who passed on her knowledge to Connie.
12.3.1963	Daily Telegraph – photo presentation of Queen Elizabeth II of “Alpine Artists” gift to the Queen.
October 1962	Cooma Little Theatre – “Only an Orphan Girl” - Co-producer
23/24 Sept 1962	Cooma Monaro Express – Article success of “The Boy Friend” demonstrated artistic talent and excellent décor.
23.9.1962	Programme for “The Boy Friend” – listed for art décor.
1961	Cooma-Monaro Express – Photo of Connie receiving award from Manager Cooma branch Bank of N.S.W. for “best set design” for “Angels in Love”
13.9.1961	Everybody’s People “Crowded career for Connie in Cooma – 6 inch column and finishes with saying “You may not believe it but the New Australians have often come to ME for help with their English?”
27.3.1961	Cooma-Monaro Express - Cooma Little Theatre Group “The Hasty Heart” – mentioned good the production was the scenery being extremely good and attention to detail above usual country repertory in creating background.
20.2.1961	Cooma-Monaro Aquatic Club – an appreciation note for painting for Miss Eucumbene competition.
12.12.1960	Paper unknown - Play “Miranda” by Little Theatre Group Cooma. Received recognition for stage set, decoration, painting and lighting “Artistry in Stage Production”
12.10.1960	“A Nice Girl’s Triumph” – Story published in Cooma-Monaro Express *
17.3.60	C. Shelley (Teacher in Charge) of the Sub-Normal Children’s Welfare Association for the art designs for the Pine Lodge especially the animal’s study to delight the handicapped children.
4.12.1957	Festival of the Snows - October 12-20 1957 – presentation of art.
7.01.1957 to 11.10.1974	Snowy Mountains Authority in Alexandria, Sydney – Drafting Assistant Grade 1.
28.9.1954 to 12.11.1955	Ministry of Works, Lambeth Bridge House, London S.E.1
1955	Temporary Female Tracer.
1948	Stratford on Avon – attended performance of Shakespeare “Taming of the Shrew” as guest of actor Ron Haddrick who had a part in the play and later became well known in Australian Theatre and Television.
18.09.1947	From Principal W.E. Johnson of the New South Wales Institution for the Deaf & Dumb & Blind “Congratulations Connie for a great show last night.” - (aged 26).
1940	A.L. Lonsdale of the Adult Deaf & Dumb Society of N.S.W. for her work for artistry design on the set of the play held at the Deaf Centre in 5 Elizabeth Street Sydney.
1936-1938	Martin Boyd Potteries East Sydney Technical College – Art Certificate

*Permission by Regional Publishers Pty Ltd, Cooma N.S.W. (19.02.04) for various publications in Cooma-Monaro Express newspapers – 15.8.1972, 11.9.1968, 28.10.1964, 28.10.1964, 26.6.1963, 1961, 27.3.1961, 20.2.1961

Photo: O’Reilly, Harvey