

WOMEN WHO INSPIRE

SIX SUCCESSFUL WOMEN IMPART THEIR "GOLDEN" KNOWLEDGE TO INSPIRE AND ENERGISE YOU INTO "GETTING EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT OUT OF LIFE"

It's not everyday that someone in your life chooses to become your mentor through everyday happenings, like work and your relationships with family, friends and loved ones. While the mentor won't come knocking on your door they can enter your life when you open yourself up and put yourself "out there" – you attract great people by being the greatest you can be. Here are six women who have led successful lives in their individual ways and in different working fields. Use them as your mentors and be enriched and inspired by their stories.



THE FEMINIST: GERMAINE GREER

Professor Germaine Greer does not give print interviews, her London agent apologetically explains. It's no wonder really – the media has often painted this outspoken feminist icon as a mad woman, ever since she wrote her first book – *The Female Eunuch*, which came out in 1970 and changed the world.

In her book, Greer explained that both sexes deform themselves in order to conform to socially given gender roles, and the traditional, suburban, consumerist, nuclear family represses women sexually. Greer told *The New York Times* in 1971, "Women have somehow been separated from their libido, from their faculty of desire, from their sexuality. They've become suspicious about it. Like beasts, for example, who are castrated in farming in order to serve their master's ulterior motives – to be fattened or made docile – women have been cut off from their capacity for action. It's a process that sacrifices vigour for delicacy and succulence, and one that's got to be changed."

While many ridiculed *The Female Eunuch*, Greer used the wave of attention to her advantage, utilising her sexuality, good looks and cheeky wit to become a pop culture icon.

Despite her views, Greer was once married – for three weeks, during which she cheated on her husband seven times. Since then, Greer has remained single, writing more feminist books, which question marriage.

In her book *The Whole Woman*, she writes: "Women's increasing economic independence removed part of the rationale for marriage. If a husband is one who supports a wife and children he is fast becoming obsolete – not because of feminism but because it takes two pay packets to run a home with 'all modern conveniences'. The voluntary stay at home wife is now the prerogative of the rich man only."

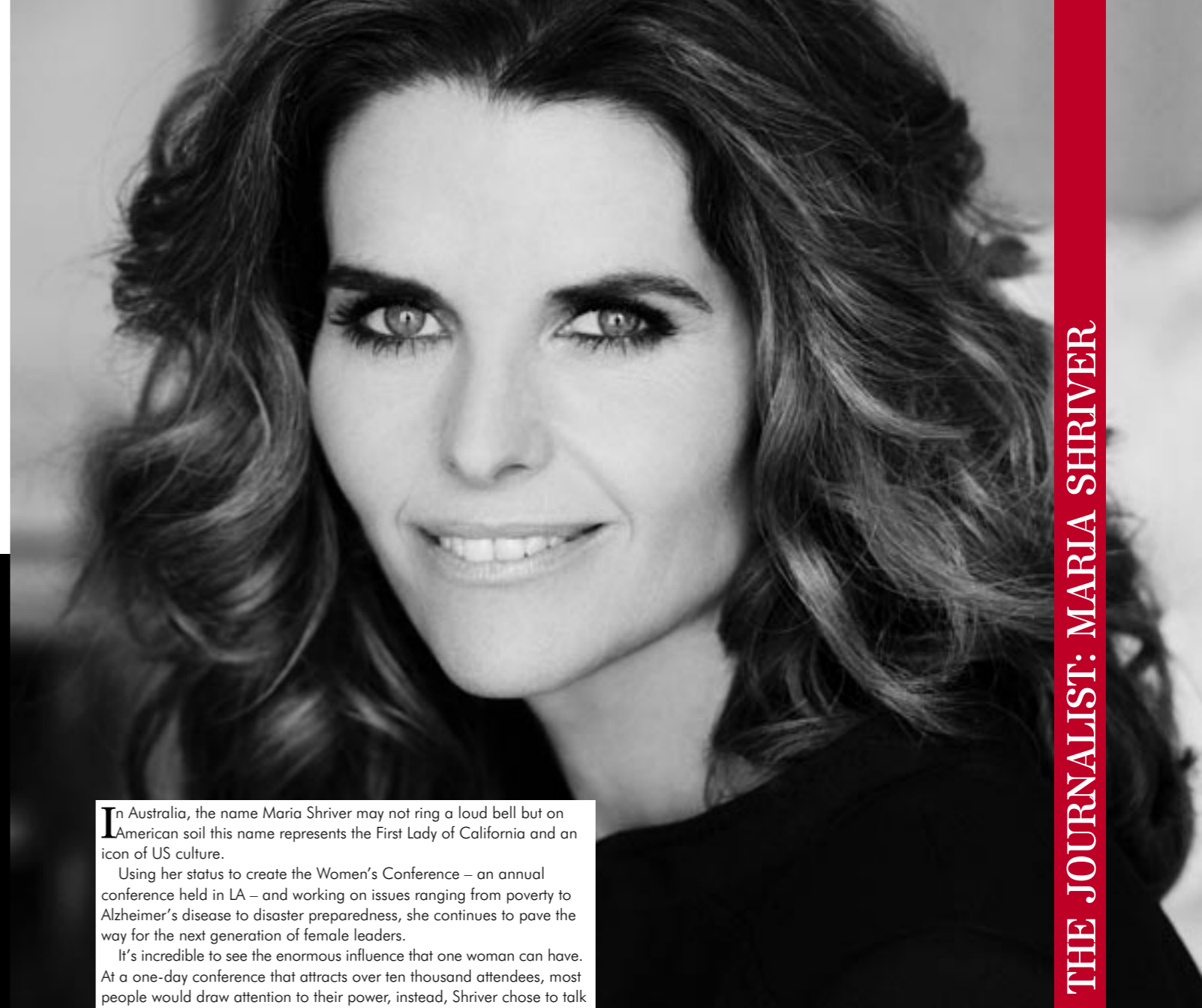
Greer also points out that the modern marriage, based on sexual attraction, is fatally flawed: "If the sexual attraction should lose its potency, if another attraction should eclipse it, the marriage is deemed dead. Such a system is bound to fail; no person can guarantee to be sexually attracted to another for as long as they both shall live."

So how are young women advised to maintain control when it comes to relationships with men? Says Greer: "The absurdity of the notion that there is someone 'out there' for everybody is obvious to anyone who has thought about it more than five seconds. Women's lives would be a lot easier if they started from the opposite premise, that there is nobody 'out there' and they might as well get on with life and work."

Greer insists that if we stop playing out the role of the submissive wife and take on some traditionally male attributes, we can begin to take control of our lives.

"The world will not change overnight, and liberation will not happen unless individual women agree to be outcasts, eccentrics, perverts and whatever the powers-that-be choose to call them. There have been women in the past far more daring than we would need to be now, who ventured all and gained a little, but survived after all." ☺

Profile by Anna Warwick Image AAP



THE JOURNALIST: MARIA SHRIVER

In Australia, the name Maria Shriver may not ring a loud bell but on American soil this name represents the First Lady of California and an icon of US culture.

Using her status to create the Women's Conference – an annual conference held in LA – and working on issues ranging from poverty to Alzheimer's disease to disaster preparedness, she continues to pave the way for the next generation of female leaders.

It's incredible to see the enormous influence that one woman can have. At a one-day conference that attracts over ten thousand attendees, most people would draw attention to their power, instead, Shriver chose to talk of her frailties and fears as a human being. Her honesty and humility is mind-blowing.

Shriver is linked with both the Kennedys and Schwarzenegger and as a collective they conjure up the perfect amalgamation of American ideals – politics, wealth, charity and fame.

"[I was] raised in a family where self-worth was equated to personal achievement. If you weren't doing, serving, accomplishing and accomplishing big, you weren't being. In fact you weren't even seen."

With these values deeply entrenched, Shriver was determined to work her way up the professional ladder graduating from Georgetown University and embracing the fast paced lifestyle of a journalist working on the frontline. Highly respected for her work and integrity, Shriver became a household name at the NBC network and as an author in the publishing world.

But soon enough, Shriver's career was put on hold when she met an unlikely match in a robust Republican named Arnold Schwarzenegger, with whom she would have four children and become the First Lady of California. Making the career sacrifice for the role of mother and wife, this seemingly temporary break soon became her life.

"I spent my time helping Arnold get re-elected and after his second term [I thought] I would finally, finally get back to the business of being a globe-trotting, money earning, hard driving, network journalist named Maria Shriver. Remember her? Well I barely could. I had dumped her by

Profile by Lara Hoffman

the wayside four years ago when Arnold became Governor and I knew I needed to go back and reclaim her. Why? Because I was lost." But time changes many things and in a desperate pursuit for ratings, the world of journalism had changed its focus to satisfy the hunger for sensationalised celebrity-driven "news" coverage.

"Anna Nicole Smith had just died and that story lasted not days but weeks and weeks and weeks and it grew into a media eating frenzy on every news outlet. It went on 24 hours a day. Day after day, I watched it unfold and I knew deep in my heart and soul, if I went [back] to the TV news business, I would be doing that same story too and it made me realise, in that moment, the TV news business I left had changed and so had I. So I picked up the phone, called NBC news and I said 'I'm not coming back'."

Making a stand for what she believed in, Shriver got to the essence of her true personal power. "Money, fame and success bring you a lot and it's wonderful but it's important to know that none of those things soothe a restless heart. They don't fill an empty hole and they don't satisfy a deep hunger that's inside of you."

From this moment on, she set the stage from which many inspirational souls were bared. Shriver-Kennedy-Schwarzenegger aside, this was one woman's desire to speak her truth and affect change. ☺

THE ATHLETE: LAYNE BEACHLEY

When we caught up with Layne Beachley she was in Hawaii, enjoying a Margarita and watching the sunset as she celebrated coming second in her qualifying heat at the Triple Crown of Surfing. Beachley has won seven World Championships to date and was inducted into the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame in 2006.

Growing up on the waves of Sydney's Northern Beaches, Beachley became a professional surfer at the age of 16 and by age 20, she was ranked number six in the world. But she didn't get there by hanging out at the beach. "I had to work 60 hours a week, doing two or three jobs – working in a café, making and delivering pizza, as a rollerblading instructor, in a surf shop – then I hoped to make enough prize money to cover the rest." Beachley's passion for the waves also helped her overcome Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. "Thank god I didn't give up. Many times I wanted to."

In 1998, Beachley's determination paid off as she recorded her first World Championship. Beachley has also ridden the largest wave ever by a woman, with a wave face 50 feet high.

Is she ever scared out there? "Yeah, fear keeps me sane. It prevents me from doing stupid things. If you disrespect the power of the ocean it can slaughter you."

"That's why I'm so drawn to surfing – because I'm a control freak on land," Beachley admits. "The ocean is one thing you can't control. It forces me to be free flowing and submissive, to relinquish control and let go."

So now that she's a World Champ, has Beachley slowed her pace? Not likely! "I run around doing so many different projects. I run a charity [www.aimforthestars.com.au], I run the richest women's surf event on tour [The Havaianas Beachley Classic], I have my own brand [Beachley Athletic – available in Kmart], and I have a relationship with a rock star

[INXS' Kirk Pengilly]... my one escape is to throw on a bikini, pick up a board and run into ocean and leave all those distractions on land."

Does competing all year round ever get to be too much? "When I lost at my own event in Manly I was so distraught and discouraged... I was balling my eyes out on the sand. I got a call from Cathy Freeman saying 'Are you ok Layne? Have you and Kirk broken up? Is there something wrong in your family?'"

"I told her I lost the event and she said, 'For Christ's sake, it's only sport!' You can become so consumed by it all you lose sight of reality."

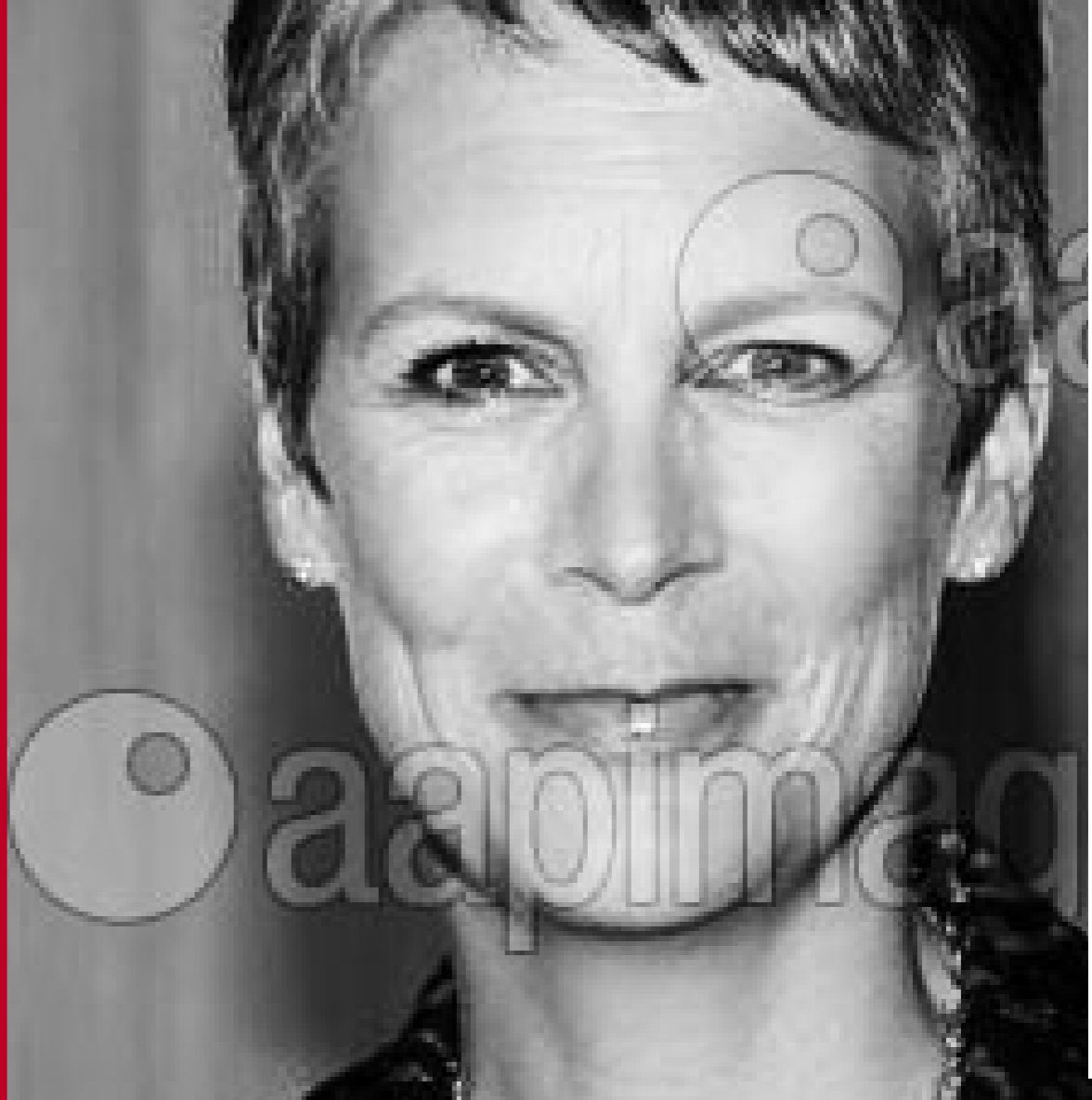
"I have a great network of friends and family all over the world who encourage and support me. I am very grateful for those individuals."

Throughout her career Beachley has worked hard to raise the profile of women in surfing. "Now it's more accessible and accepted for women to be in the water. My suggestion for women who are learning is to go surfing together. Guys get embarrassed, and they have to prove something. We just want to have fun – that's the power of oestrogen."

Beachley's support of young women now extends to her foundation – Aim for the Stars. "The girls all have enormous talent and have achieved so much but they've hit a brick wall or a no-go zone. I have the resources and power to make a difference and it doesn't take much. I'm proud of them for having the courage to ask for help. I want to remind them they are not alone, no matter how far they've walked along the path," says Beachley.

Beachley's message to these young women is that success doesn't come on a silver platter. "You've got to work hard and stay true to your dreams and goals." She embodies a shining example of the rewards: "I have worked hard for a life that I love to live." 📌

Profile by Anna Warwick



THE ACTRESS: JAMIE LEE CURTIS

Jamie Lee Curtis – actress, author and activist, agreed to a post-conference interview regarding the issues dominating the next generation of female leaders. True to form, she was candid, controversial and just so damn cool.

Born into Hollywood royalty, Curtis inherited a bloodline of fame, fortune and human frailty. On the long and winding road of life experience, her legacy continues to be defined by the search for a meaningful, personal truth as an individual, mother and wife.

"Legacy is truth, telling truth, exposing the truth... It is about change and the courage to dig deeper and deeper to expose the problems that you have."

From this perspective, it was no surprise when Curtis arrived on stage waving a copy of the *Los Angeles Times* in the air and delivered a hard-hitting message about the Californian bushfires that were spreading quickly outside.

"This is a conference of legacy and ladies and gentlemen of California, this is our legacy. We live in a drought, we build houses too close to brush areas and we're shocked when this happens! This is not an accident. This is not an act of God. This is an act of man!"

Predictably, the very next day Curtis was slammed in the press. However, this wasn't an act of jumping onto the popular environmental bandwagon; this was about sharing a lesson that has become her catch cry.

"Make good choices. Look at the choices in your life. You make good ones or bad ones. It's as simple as that."

As a writer of children's books and a regular blogger for the *The Huffington Post* (www.huffingtonpost.com/jamie-lee-curtis), Curtis's words move beyond the scripted lines of Hollywood blockbusters and into a more meaningful domain. Embracing online communication as the future, she utilises it as "a way to have immediate access to express your opinion."

Profile by Lara Hoffman Image AAP

Yet just as Curtis is open to evolving and changing with the times, she remains wary of the dangers that bubble beneath the surface. Taking the Facebook phenomenon as an example, she sheds her own non-preachy light on the issues surrounding body image and the ways in which young women today succumb to a need to idealise themselves online.

"The pictures that you put up on Facebook are the pictures that you want people to see. You are basically creating your person and it's completely idealised. We will idealise ourselves and I don't know if you've ever been in a relationship, but with relationships there is a comfort zone where so much of the time you don't look good – you don't look good emotionally, you don't look good spiritually, you don't look good intellectually and you really don't look good physically. It's a complicated world if you idealise yourself to the degree that you don't ever want someone to see the real you."

Camera up high, head tilted and signature smile – we are all guilty of this, but by deleting flawed images at the click of a button, are we really erasing a lot more?

"Again, it's the modern way of communicating, it's the modern way of promoting oneself but it doesn't allow for real human experiences – emotion, depression."

"It's a pretty Willy Wonka-type of world. A lot of happy party people."

So what advice does she have for the rest of us?

"I really try not to give advice because each person has to make choices based on their circumstances... I try to give advice by living the example myself. I've tried to be very open and honest about my own problems and hopefully solutions to them and if that's a legacy, that's a legacy."

If a legacy is as Curtis says, defined by truth, then these were the words of a living legend. 📌



With more than 100-years of history, the Nobel Peace Prize – a symbol of wisdom, honour and peace – has continued to pay tribute to the great masters of our time.

To many, the Nobel will always appear reserved for a select few – those quintessential professors and philanthropists whose life history has somehow geared them towards this honour. It will always seem like an untouchable dream, that is, until you meet someone like Jody Williams.

Born in 1950, Jody Williams' journey as a global activist had a late start when in 1981, she was handed a leaflet outside a local subway. A simple piece of paper impacted on her so profoundly that for the next 11 years she dedicated herself to the building of public awareness about US policy in Central America. This work introduced her to an entirely new world of global issues and like-minded activists. As fate would have it, soon she was exposed to a community of veterans campaigning against antipersonnel landmines and over the pursuing years she dedicated herself to this cause, becoming the founding coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL).

Overseeing the growth of the ICBL into over 1,300 organisations and 95 countries, Williams became a political force to be reckoned with and together with her organisation they were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.

In her acceptance speech she spoke of what drove her into the once unknown territory of landmines, a cause that quickly gained massive momentum with supporters including Princess Diana and Paul McCartney.

"Landmines distinguish themselves because once they have been sown, once the soldier walks away from the weapon, the landmine cannot tell the difference between a soldier or a civilian – a woman, a child, a grandmother going out to collect firewood to make the family meal. Once peace is declared the landmine does not recognise that

peace. The landmine is eternally prepared to take victims. In common parlance, it is the perfect soldier, the 'eternal sentry'. The war ends, the landmine goes on killing."

To be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize is undoubtedly a massive feat, but to actually win and do so as a woman goes against the odds.

"There are only 12 [female Nobel Peace Laureates] in the 106 year history of the Peace Prize and seven of us are alive today which lets you know how discriminated against we were until now."

In an effort to strengthen work being done in support of women's rights around the world, Williams together with her fellow sister recipients created the Nobel Women's Initiative (www.nobelwomensinitiative.com).

"... How come they never did the Nobel Men's Initiative? I think it's a reflection of how women do work differently, how women do think differently, how women recognise that together we do make a difference."

At the end of the day Williams still sees herself as an ordinary woman who is inspired by women who have gone unnoticed but continue to do extraordinary things: "The people who I really admire are the women around the world who work tirelessly everyday in the face of violence, whether it's in their home, in their community or in the midst of war, the struggle to keep their family and community together, to even work on issues that don't touch them personally because they have a sense of community."

Currently leading a High Level Mission on Darfur for the UN's Human Rights Council, Jody Williams embodies the enormous potential that women from all walks of life have to affect change from a local to a global scale. Her journey began as one small step for a woman and turned into one giant step for womankind. Take heed. ☺

Profile by Lara Hoffman

Profile by Anna Warwick

In November 2007, Maxine McKew became the first female politician to unseat a sitting prime minister in his own electorate. Residents of the Bennelong region in NSW, where John Howard had been the member for 33-years, voted for McKew and her dream of "Leadership that is imaginative, forward-thinking and visionary". Now the victorious Labor MP is in Canberra, looking after early childhood education and childcare. "Every child is entitled to receive a first class education regardless of ability, family income or geography," says McKew.

McKew is a skilled politician, yet she is new to the game. Despite previous offers from the Liberal and Labor parties, the award winning broadcast journalist only left the ABC in December 2006 and joined the Australian Labor Party. What brought about the career change?

"I had 30 wonderful years in mainly television reporting, but I got to that stage where I wanted to re-think how I [would] spend this next phase of my life. I made the decision to contest a Parliamentary seat because I believe that public life matters – full stop.

"Public life matters particularly at this point in our history. I believe the decisions we make now on issues such as climate change, the extent to which we invest in our educational institutions, and how we build the productive infrastructure of the 21st century – are going to profoundly affect us for a generation to come. Over and above that, I wanted to be part of the Rudd Labor team and help map the future."

It's not a new thing for McKew to use her public profile to make changes and raise awareness: "For the past decade and a half I've played an active role in Australia as an advocate for women's health – specifically the need for women to be conscious of their own health needs and to demand appropriate services. Hence my involvement with the National Breast Cancer Centre and as a patron of Osteoporosis Australia. If I can lend what profile I have to the cause of good health outcomes, then that's pretty good use of one's time."

McKew's message for young women who want to get into politics, is to look to the current role models. "When I started in journalism, in the mid-1970s, there were very few women in the Federal Parliament, and I think now there's about 30 per cent representation. There's certainly a sea change. And if you look at the Labor team there are some incredibly strong and talented women, including Nicola Roxon and Julia Gillard."

McKew herself drew inspiration for her own career from other great women. "Faith Bandler [campaigner for the rights of Indigenous Australians and South Sea Islanders] and Jessie Street [international 20th century human rights and women's rights activist] have always been such wonderful role models for me. If you think of what they did very early on, at a time when to talk about women's rights, let alone indigenous rights, was far from the mainstream – we owe them a huge debt. We walk on their shoulders."

As a great speaker, Maxine is living proof of the power of being able to communicate in public. She encourages young women to speak up too: "I asked Susanna de Vries, author of *Great Australian Women – from Federation to Freedom*, 'What message can young women take from the stories of women who have lived very heroic lives?'

She answered that one of the points among all the inspirational women in her book – Mary Gilmore, Annette Kellerman, Dame Edith Lyons and Sister Elizabeth Kenny to name a few – was that once they'd mastered the art of public speaking, regardless of whether they'd got academic qualifications or not, then their careers moved forward. Women on the whole do find it difficult to get on a platform initially and talk. And I think that's terribly important today for women." ☺



LET IT RIP Tell us who has been an inspirational woman in your life? SMS YEN on 0448 265 175

THE WOMEN'S CONFERENCE OF CALIFORNIA IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE LARGEST AND MOST DYNAMIC ONE-DAY GATHERING OF WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

Founded four years ago by the First Lady of California, Maria Shriver, this day has grown to attract over 14,000 people from around the world, with speakers including Oprah Winfrey, Queen Rania of Jordan, the Dalai Lama and Tony Blair.

The conference salutes women, who are using their position to help create change, inspire and empower the next generation of female leaders. As Shriver so candidly put it, "At the end of the day we realise that it's not about me, it's not about you, it's about what happens when WE come together."

The theme "Remarkable lives, remarkable legacies. What's yours?" became the underlying question throughout the day. In a time of unprecedented change, where positive role models are increasingly hard to find, I had the rare opportunity to get up close and personal with three amazing women – the First Lady, Maria Shriver, actress and author, Jamie Lee Curtis and the Nobel Peace Prize winner for clearing landmines, Jody Williams - in a bid to gather as much advice as possible for the YEN reader. I hope this inspires you as much as it did me. Lara Hoffman