

# Whoever Would Have Thought?



# the elul project

At the beginning of the year, life just seemed to be going along very nicely with my work as a Cruise & Travel Advisor – business was booming and 2020 was shaping up to be a bumper year as people were booking far ahead and getting ready to travel to amazing places in this fascinating world of ours. Cruises were at a premium with the whole world being covered by a variety of options and the future looked exciting.

In early January, I led a delegation of over 45 people on a Tour of Israel culminating in the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the formation of WIZO at an Enlarged General Meeting, where 1000 people attended from over 50 countries of WIZO Federations.

On the 26th January I was officially advised that I would be receiving an OAM for services to the Jewish community. As I sat at Tel Aviv airport waiting for my flight back to Australia, the messages of Mazel Tov began beeping on my phone. It was a very exciting time and I personally was still high following the success of the touring, the wonderful celebration and camaraderie of the centennial celebrations, all capped off by my award.

Already on the flight and in Hong Kong where we were in transit, there were signs of many more people wearing masks, passengers looking at each other warily and the feeling of something in the air – little did we know that what was in the air was the coronavirus that would bring down so many countries and decimate so many of our older people, world-wide.

I know this is to be about what I am thinking, what is inspiring me and what am I turning to, but gradually this COVID-19 has seeped into Australia, impacting and changing our very comfortable lives in such a way that we never could have imagined.

However, this time of various types of lockdowns has given me time to reassess my life. I was always so busy and exhausted with so many different commitments. I would have meetings at night, travel functions and a 'life' outside WIZO and work which kept me constantly so busy. I find that working from home has given me a new perspective on important things and spending more time with my husband of nearly 57 years has been one of these. I find that cooking a meal, baking a cake, and other simple things are not the chores they once were.

During this time, I have been able to reach out to friends and contemporaries who I never really had the time to just sit and chat with, and ask 'are you OK?', particularly some of my friends who are now on their own, as well as some of our older members.

WIZO has been my passion and saviour at this time. I have always had a passion for this work and a true belief in what WIZO stands for, and during this time I have been able to really become even more involved, with so much that needs to be done and I have the time to do it. This opportunity to do more WIZO work has truly inspired me. Many Zooms both local and with International people certainly keep me busy – almost too busy.

I feel I have more time to sit in the sunshine in the middle of the day and listen to some music instead of being in a lunch room wolfing down my lunch. My weekends are just that, for relaxing and so many simple things that could never get done previously. One thing I am not happy about is having to do the housework (not my Gesheft!). There are so many areas of change in my life, but when I analyse them, I see the benefits. Of course, not having to keep changing outfits also every day to go to work is much easier (even though I do get up in the morning and get dressed as if going to work) - no one notices or cares if it the same outfit for a couple of days.

The most I have missed is hugging my grandchildren and being with them and my kids. This has been extremely difficult even though we are all constantly in touch, there is nothing more inspiring that a huge hug from our little people and spending time with them.

As said by many, but here I quote Abraham Lincoln – 'THIS TOO SHALL PASS'.



## PAULETTE CHERNY OAM

Paulette Cherny OAM was born in Brisbane and moved to Melbourne on her own as a teenager. She was a founding member of the WIZO Masada Group and has been involved in all levels of WIZO in Victoria including President for 6 years.

She attended the first ever WIZO AVIV conference in 1979 and has attended many more over the years. In 2016 Paulette was elected as President of WIZO Australia. Paulette has been married for nearly 57 years to Ernie, has 3 children and 5 divine grandchildren.

## ABOUT THE ELUL PROJECT

**An initiative aiming to share stories and teachings from Jewish women leaders in our community. Whilst many of us are stuck at home, or isolated from family over Elul and the High Holy Days, we hope this project will serve to inspire, nurture, and uplift during this difficult time.**

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