SUE BROADWAY

She is a former Queenwood student who is an inspirational example of living a creative and exciting life. Amongst other career milestones, she was a founding member of Circus Oz and played a part in the Sydney and London Olympic Games opening ceremonies. Q News asked Sue about her influences and lessons learnt along the way.

What is the most valuable thing you learnt during your time at school?

I learnt how to work really hard for a desired outcome; that sometimes you have to do things you don’t like much to achieve what you want.

How have you applied this in your life?

In many of my positions since, I have had to push through difficult situations, the disdain of strangers, physical pain, bad working conditions and illness to achieve my aims. This has always been worth it in the end. Persistence pays off.

Describe your current position and what led you to this point?

I freelance as a director and creative producer in circus, outdoor and site-specific events and festivals. Currently I am directing the Moomba Parade – Victoria’s biggest annual free performance event – for the fourth time running. This comes after a long career as a performer in Circus and outdoor performance, followed by a transition to directing and creative production.

What have been some of your learning experiences since school?

I have performed and created events in many communities in Africa, South America, Asia and Indigenous Australia. From these experiences I have learnt to be glad that my life is so comfortable and to realise how well supported I have been. Hopefully I have learnt something about empathy and the importance of respect in dealing with all people no matter what their circumstances.

Have you had any significant mentors or people who have inspired you along the way?

Miss Medway was my first significant mentor – although I was too young and pig headed to realise how much she was doing for me at the time. Since then many women have taken great care to encourage me and support my efforts. Margaret Barr, an early dance teacher and creative mentor, Joan Clarke, who looked after me when there was trouble in my family, and Di Robson (UK) who taught me to have confidence in my own abilities, to name just a few. Working with Andrew Bleby, David Atkins and Ian Scobie on large-scale events taught me the difference between a good boss and a bad one. And of course my mother Shirley (who taught at Queenwood for many years) has been a constant inspiration. This year she directed King Lear for her local Dramatic Society. She is in her ‘80s and is often described as “a Force of Nature”.

What would you consider to be some professional and personal highlights of your life?

Sydney Olympics Opening Ceremony was a major highlight and shifted my position professionally. It was great to have a small part in this celebration of Australian Culture, and feel for a short time that the whole country was engaged. I have created cultural programmes at three Oxfam International conferences for young social activists – all very different, but all affirming a belief in the strength of young people and their amazing energy and vision. As a founding member of Circus Oz and Ra-Ra Zoo I learnt that being involved in the beginning of things is a privilege that cannot be equalled.

What are your interests outside work?

Yoga when I remember, walking when I can, reading fiction of all descriptions, bad television for relaxation. I have a partner – Richard – of 17 years and counting. I used to have a garden that I loved but we moved to an apartment in the city and I am very bad at keeping pot plants alive.

What are the challenges you look forward to in the future?

Finding new ways to engage my brain as the body inexorably falls apart. Retiring, and having time to applying the learnings of my career to other and possibly more important subjects. Conquering, or at least learning to manage more or less, the next confusing electronic device. Whatever that may be.

What do you wish for the current students of Queenwood and girls in general, as the next generation of women who will play their part in society?

I wish that appearance becomes less important so that the confusing, time-consuming, and demeaning behaviours that go with it fade into insignificance. I wish that all women be clever, focused, warm and playful. I wish that the planet survives long enough that they and their children have time to fix it.