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The standards of the school in producing well mannered, knowledgeable, confident young women had us going out into the world, although only 15, able to start our careers with an advantage - we could meet whatever was asked of us.

At age 12, first year in Canterbury Girls, I was put into the stream of commercial studies and typing - we were taught a standard of excellence, practice till 100% perfect - and that was backed up by a round of subjects, my favourites being English, Art and History, which set me up to travel the world, although I didn't realize it at the time.

At 15 I sat the Commonwealth Entrance examination, went to their training college to learn – yes, more typing – and then started work at the Commonwealth Taxation Office in the department, Investigations. More learning on the job included typing on a manual typewriter - a very large carriage - what would be called these days Excel spreadsheets, original plus six carbon copies, no mistakes because these were for evidence in court, no rubbing out allowed. Then out to work for one of Sydney's sporting clubs as receptionist/board secretary/salaries and start saving money to go overseas – thanks mum.

Skip from 15 to 23 for the exciting working holiday in the UK/Europe. Luckily I went with two friends and met many others, all of us never without a job in London. My first job was with British Airways where I spent lunchtime teaching myself Dictaphone to earn more money. The second job I taught myself how to control an electric typewriter and spent lunchtime taking all my failed attempts out of the waste paper basket to ditch them so no-one would know I'd never seen an electric typewriter before. Our first trip to Europe was to hitchhike to Paris, "April in Paris". I had been inspired by those studies in Art and History at Canterbury Girls and here I was in Paris with all its history and wonderful architecture and there I was at the Louvre with those magnificent paintings. The second summer was spent on a minibus tour, Europe in six weeks, and it was in travelling through Italy, Germany, Spain, Austria, et al, that I could appreciate other countries, their beauty, their language, the differences in the people, and the patience they had with these young Aussies.

Just back in Sydney at 27 a friend told me the United Nations were recruiting for Dictaphone typists and off I went to sit their tests. There was a big crowd but I got the lucky phone call and was offered the job of working at the UN Secretariat in New York. What a wonderful city and experience. We worked in typing all matters of the UN General Assembly meetings and special emergency meetings, and I made many new friends – one of the first, Australian.

At 29 I dearly wanted to return to Europe and learn French, so leaving New York I struck out for London again with a plan to study shorthand and then trot off to Geneva and get a job at the United Nations there. That all worked out, and I was given a pick of two positions, one in the Finance Department and one in the Division of Narcotic Drugs. Well, what would you choose – yes, it was the latter, and I became secretary to the Head of the Unit of Illicit Trafficking in Drugs. I took lessons in French to proficiency and was promoted to Bilingual Senior Secretary. The job was very interesting, a wonderful boss, and I made many more friends – one of the first, Australian. Then I was selected to travel to Turkey on two missions with a UN diplomatic team as their secretary – that was where I met my husband.

So at 37, I left Geneva to marry and live in Turkey for a while, and lived in Izmir for six years. My husband had a job with NATO as an interpreter/translator and this time I couldn't work. As before I made many new friends - and the first person I met there was Australian.

At 43 I returned with my husband to settle back in Sydney and within six weeks learnt I was pregnant. No more big travels around the world but wait – I did.

At 57 I retired from full time employment and took my son around the world to visit all the places I had worked, and countries I had travelled to. I wanted to broaden his horizons and outlook on the world and give him the desire to travel around himself one day.

So typing can take you far, education can spark your interest in the world. Whatever you are studying - go out there girls, and show them how.....

Julie-Anne Cagatay