

**HOW TO ADD TEN YEARS TO YOUR LIFE**  
**WRITERS FESTIVAL 2017 AT THE CARRINGTON, KATOOMBA**  
**AMERICAN WRITERS**  
**15-17 February 2017**  
**Organized by U3A Harbourside North**

by Nora Hinchey

“If I give up drinking, smoking and eating fatty foods, I can add ten years to my life. Trouble is, I’ll add it to the wrong end.” So said the American satirist and political commentator, P.J. O’Rourke. There is some truth in his statement, and besides, who wants to be the oldest person in the nursing home?

O’Rourke may not be the best-known American writer outside “the Land of the Free”, but he was introduced to us through a talk by John Ayling on American Satire at the *Writers Festival*, held at the Carrington Hotel in Katoomba over three days in February 2017. Probably quite a few of John’s audience at the time made a note to check out more of O’Rourke’s writings.

John also spoke about the bohemian Dorothy Parker, best known for her wit and one-liners, such as:

- “Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes clean to the bone.”
- “I’d rather have a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy.”
- “That woman speaks 18 languages and can’t say ‘No’ in any of them.”

There were also talks on Edgar Allan Poe, the father of the detective novel, the playwright Arthur Miller, Phillip Roth, who became a household name with his sensational novel *Portnoy’s Complaint*, William Faulkner’s obscure prose, Longfellow and his influence on composers of the day. There was also a talk on Black Music and its influence, and Jenny Wilson provided an excellent visual presentation on slavery and independence, demonstrating that sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words. As always, the Festival wound up with a keenly contested Trivial Pursuit session.

The Writers Festival, organized for the past eleven years by Kate and Andrew Caro, has become a fixture on the U3A calendar. It is not only a time to explore the world of literature, but it is also something of a holiday break with delicious food and company, and a great opportunity to meet up with people of like mind. The venue of the heritage-listed Carrington Hotel is ideal, as it can be reached by car or by train, and with its conference facilities and its elegant, spacious public rooms for coffee breaks and for dinner, so it is no wonder that the Festival is usually booked out within a fortnight of being advertised.

Kate and Andrew have now decided to hang up their spurs, but such is the popularity of this annual occasion, that a committee, convened by Cheryl Summers, was quickly formed to carry on the Caro tradition. All those who have been in any way involved with the Festivals up to date are grateful to the Caros for their wonderful contribution and commitment to U3A.

The event will be advertised next year as *The Readers Festival*, and the theme for 2018 (in February at the Carrington) will be *Crime Fiction*. Speakers are already being lined up to inform and entertain us on writers from Wilkie Collins and Conan Doyle to Dashiell Hammett and Donna Leon.

Details of next year's Festival and booking arrangements are expected to appear in the 2017 *U3A July-December Course Handbook*.