

A wealth of stories bursting with Joy

A gifted raconteur shares tales from her extraordinary and entertaining life

✦ Jacqui Taffel

YOU only have to spend five minutes with Joy Jobbins to realise she is the consummate story teller. Spend an hour with her in the narrow Darlinghurst terrace that has been her home for the past 34 years (formerly a brothel, as she is quick to point out), and the tales mount up.

Like the time she taught a young Rupert Murdoch a thing or two about newspaper advertising in his early days on the Adelaide News. Or when Leo Sayer sang *Fly Me to the Moon* at the Bondi Pavilion for her 80th birthday.

Or how she came to spend 10 years paying \$80 a week rent at Berthong in Elizabeth Bay, the harbour front mansion that has since been owned by Rupert Murdoch, Russell Crowe and lawyer Peter Ziegler, who put it back on the market last year for up to \$40 million.

Joy, who grew up in Bondi, celebrated her 90th birthday last month — with Leo Sayer among the guests again, as well as Leo Schofield and Amanda Keller — by launching a book about her time at Berthong, called *Life at the Palace: A Necklace of Anecdotes*.

In the same week, her daughter Sheridan launched her own book, *Wish You*

Where Here, a rollicking road-trip rom-com memoir.

It was Sheridan, the youngest of five, who convinced her mother to write her first collection of memories. Joy was 80 when *Shoe-string* was published, a book about her early married life, and how she became a high-flying advertising executive for the Wool Board while raising five young children in ramshackle splendour at Eltham, a country property in Victoria.

Life at the Palace begins in 1964 when the family moved to Sydney. They ended up paying peanuts at Berthong after Joy's husband Henry put an ad in the paper. "Wanted: family home in Sydney within 6 miles of the GPO — anyone's old white elephant."

Berthong was owned by the Albert family, of Albert Music fame. They also owned Boomerang, the mansion they built next door, but after Frank Albert died both houses were empty.

"So we were caretakers of next door, tenants to scare off the squatters," said Sheridan, who was 10 when the family moved in. Boomerang had dust covers over the furniture, with a guard occasionally checking in.

"We used to sneak in there with torches and tell ghost stories and run screaming when we thought we heard the guard," Sheridan said.

The Jobbins family: brothers Camden (top left) and Cobbitty with mother Joy (bottom left) and their sister Sheridan.

Picture: Sheridan Nilsson