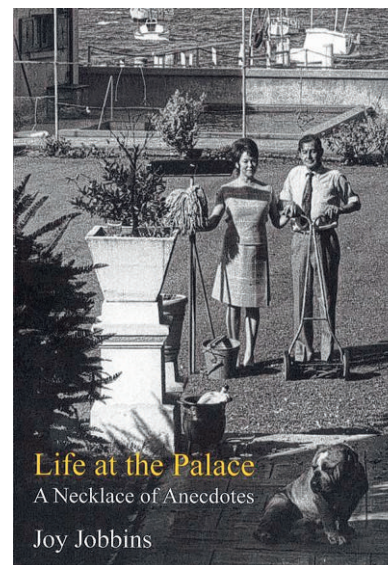
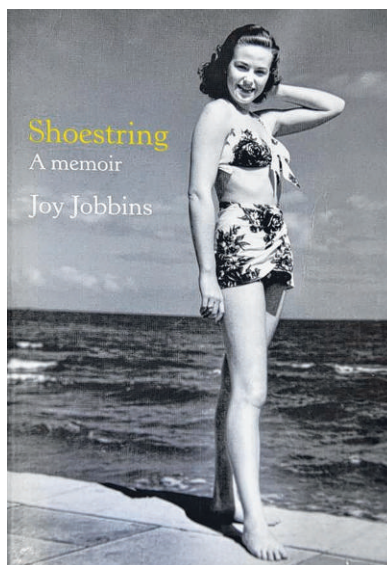




Aged 9, Sheridan Jobbins starred in her own cooking show, *Cooking with Sheri*, filmed by her grandfather George Malcolm, which screened for two years on Channel 7.



Joy at her 90th birthday party and book launch last month with guest Leo Schofield (left); her memoirs, *Shoestring* and *Life at the Palace* (below left).



publish her books, Sheridan has even more admiration for her.

“For all of that underpay and overwork—we didn’t get the money-making gene—she put us through Ascham and Scots, all the money went on our education. I think that’s an incredible priority and one for which I’m incredibly grateful.”

Joy also passed on her gift for entertaining story telling, which she in turn picked up from her father.

“There’s no joy in life like making my mother laugh,” Sheridan said. “That’s caused my sister to be a stand-up comic and my brothers to be great raconteurs. As the runt of the litter, I’ve had to publish rather than get a voice in at the table.”

Joy still works four days a week for a charity, and recently attended a destination wedding in Bali. Her 90th birthday book launch last month entertained 90 people (“a friend for each year”) at the Eternity Playhouse in Darlinghurst.

Sheridan says she’ll give her mother 18 months off, then it’s back to work on the third book, called *Snakey*. It will cover the period in the 1980s when Joy travelled the world with a Queensland prawn fisherman selling cured sea snake skins to haute couture houses, from Fendi to Gucci.

It will include the tale of a memorable evening in Paris at the Folies Bergère, involving a dolphin, bikini-clad girls, a table of Japanese tourists, a fist fight and the fisherman spending the night behind bars.

But that’s another story ...

In contrast, Berthong was full of life, with parties, extended family, long-staying guests, open house Sunday lunches and grand events such as a Christmas bash for the Merchant Navy.

This became another legendary family anecdote, when a felon on the run crashed the party with six police chasing him through the house. The unsuccessful police then saluted the navy admiral as he arrived—he thought it had been specially arranged and thanked Joy.

The neighbours included Rada Penfold Russell and Mary Fairfax “when she was still married to the lawyer”, Joy recalls.

“She used to bitch like crazy because our dog used to get into her garbage bins.”

Joy is a prolific note taker, diarist and letter writer, keeping copies of everything. It was after typing up her diary entries Sheridan first encouraged her to write

down all the anecdotes to get them on record for the family. It wasn’t as easy as telling funny stories. When Joy handed over the first draft, her daughter’s verdict was blunt: “It’s a bit boring.”

“So she had another go and then we recorded some stories as well because I think when she’s telling the anecdotes they have a life of their own,” Sheridan said.

Joy’s time working in the glory days of advertising, when expense accounts were ample and lunches long and boozy, is also a rich mine of stories.

Like the time she organised a fashion parade in the half-built Sydney Opera House on a freezing cold night with no heating, pumping water out of the basement as the tide came in.

Or another event in Melbourne after the 1956 Olympics, when she had newly-minted gold medallist Dawn Fraser dive into a swimming

pool covered in balloons. “We made the cover of the *Women’s Weekly*.”

As a working mother, Joy was extremely unusual in those days—during her time at the wool board, she said, “it was a totally male industry”. Though she was never paid nearly as much

“Berthong was full of life, with parties, open house Sunday lunches and grand events such as the Merchant Navy’s Christmas bash”

as the men and the hours were insane, her memories are fond.

“I see a lot of laughter, I see an awful lot of drinking, I see huge amounts of late hours and worrying about deadlines. I see myself hopping on planes when Sheri was a baby in a bassinet.”

The stories in *Life at the Palace* are not all Joy’s. Her children have also inserted their own, explaining what was going on back at home.

“She was working her executive arse off,” Sheridan said. “Gone by 7.30am, often out at night. Her mum looked after us and was in

charge of the house. So sometimes mum will tell a story and I’ll say this is what we were doing, or this was a result of that.”

Sheridan became a child TV star at 9, for instance, because Joy wanted to keep her father George busy. The former Cinesound camera-

man filmed 26 episodes of *Cooking with Sheri* with his granddaughter. It screened on Channel Seven and got Sheridan into the Guinness Book of World Records as youngest host in the world of a national TV show.

Sheridan describes her upbringing as “fabulous and completely fanciful and quite dark and mixed”.

Her father Henry was an alcoholic.

“It made him unemployed most of the time, so I had to work,” Joy said.

Sheridan recalls one occasion when her drunken father fell down the stairs.

“Mum had had enough. She took his pulse to make sure he was alive and left him there. When we came home he was still lying on the stairs, and a friend of my brother said, ‘Oh, we’ve got one of them at home.’ It never occurred to me that that’s not normal.”

In helping her mother