

**LAUNCH OF *CALL ME MARIGOLD* BY LINDY WARRELL –
Saturday 7th March 2026, Manson Towers, Glenelg**

Good afternoon. It is an honour and pleasure to be launching this very special book *CALL ME MARIGOLD* for my dear friend and fellow writer Lindy Warrell.

Thank you, Lindy for asking me to speak today and congratulations on another brilliant book which, I love for its honesty, its big heart, its soul and humanness.

Lindy and I go back to the days when Lindy was Chair of Adelaide PEN, an organization that rallies for the rights of imprisoned writers throughout the world.

This is the fourth book I have launched for Lindy. The first was on Lindy's 75th birthday, when I launched her chapbook – *Ol' Girl Can Drive* at the Goolwa courthouse. Then I launched two other books at the wonderful Greek café on Jetty Road. Lindy you are amazing. A role-model to me – and I can only hope that I have your energy, bravery and unfaltering writing ability in my latter years.

CALL ME MARIGOLD is the first book I have ever launched that is written by a deceased narrator... Marigold has written this memoir from the other side – and I love this quirky point of view. In this speech I vacillate between calling the author Marigold and Lindy – I make no apology for this, because it is a book about both of these women.

I will begin with the definition of Marigold:

Marigold - noun

- 1. Any of several chiefly golden-flowered composite plants, having strong-scented foliage and yielding an oil that repels parasites.*

2. *Marigolds are the ideal Companion Plant for fruits and vegetables. They are wonderfully beneficial for many other plants, making them the perfect companion for any garden.*

How perfectly this definition reflects the author. Over the years I recall Lindy as golden – her clothes, her aura, her golden Buddhas – and she is indeed the ideal companion, having been a friend to me and to so many others in writing circles and beyond.

And the definition states that Marigolds repel parasites – Once you read CALL ME MARIGOLD you will see how this statement rings true – although some parasites caused dreadful damage before they were repelled.

When I first picked up this book I was struck by the beauty of the cover, not only is it striking with the single flower laid over a background of handwritten text, but it feels good too. Lindy does not do things by halves – her website Wattleales, and all of her published works are classy and professional.

And inside this book is a memoir with a difference. I like how the stories are not chronological. Our memories don't work in chronological order, so why write in a linear fashion? Memory is the writer's most important tool – as Oscar Wilde said – 'Memory is the diary that we all carry around with us.'

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato compared the mind to a large cage in which a number of birds – or ideas – will be circulating. He added that we can only catch these birds when they are sitting on a perch, but that they spend much of their time agitatedly racing from one end of the cage to the other, leaving a bur of feathers ... Great ideas may pass through our minds and yet it is another matter – as Plato knew – to capture them. Lindy's memory is sharp and she has netted some rare birds in this moving and thought-provoking book.

I was riveted from the beginning, and as I read through, I made notes and underlined favourite parts – so many powerful passages and poignant moments. I was moved by the poem about Marigold visiting her father at Christmas in the War Veterans' Home:

...nurses dance around wheelchairs

serving food, pills and kisses
in red and white Santa caps.
The larrikin lost in the war
rises through glazed eyes
as faint memory
flickers in cheeky grins,
and faces brighten over ill-fitting
mothballed best clothes

In those few lines I was transported to this dining room, I could see it and almost smell it. When I read word-scapes like this I know I am in the hands of an accomplished poet and writer.

I was surprised that Marigold AKA Lindy has moved so many times in her life. She calculated that on average she'd moved every eighteen months throughout her life. I know she has lived in Glenelg and Aldinga for many years, so the turbulence of her younger days is obvious. Again, the Marigold flower metaphor rings true, with seeds blown on the wind to settle and grow in new earth, from Japan to Sri Lanka from Oodnadatta to Darwin. It was a relief to read the latter chapters and find Marigold settled and happy in coastal South Australia... even though originally, she felt intense animosity towards South Australia. I quote:

I never understood why I returned to spend my final years there. Still, I did, only to fall in love with the whole state, from the outback deserts to the inner city. Adelaide gave me so much: children, a tertiary education, travel and friendships through poetry and writing.

I know I speak for everyone here today when I say, we are glad you settled here and became part of Adelaide's literary fabric.

CALL ME MARIGOLD is a book that moves along with great pace, just as Marigold does in her life. The chapters are short and loaded, and there is a lovely thread running through the whole book, where Marigold writes letters to her dead mother. This thread weaves a memorable and moving dynamic between a mother and daughter who may not have seen eye to eye, but through hindsight, love and forgiveness the author has shown how society, life in different eras, marriage, and children can shape our lives in unexpected ways. I loved reading these letters and

thought of my own mother and of her mother, often stopping to contemplate how things could have been different depending on some small sliding-doors moment, such as who you meet and marry.

In this extraordinary memoir, I learnt more about Lindy than I'd ever known – that she lived in Japan after World War II, and as a child, saw the devastation of Hiroshima from a train window; that she lived in Oodnadatta as a teenager, and that she was in Darwin for Cyclone Tracy. There are gaps in time in this book – and that is a good thing, only the important parts are recorded. I love this quote by Lindy about childhood:

much of my childhood was lost to the winds of time, occasionally, faded images of innocence floated around me like pieces of frayed or tattered cloth, as did my memories of early childhood in Japan.

We can't include everything, and some memories may be patchy but there are some delightful scenes of when the family returned from Japan and lived in St Kilda. Marigold remembers her grandmother with chocolate in her pockets...in those days it was either a Violet Crumble, the oldest Australian sweet treat, introduced by Hoadley's in 1913, or a MacRobertson's Cherry Ripes. I love the rich description of St Kilda at that time. I quote:

I was lucky. My generation had the freedom to explore. The streets were safer with fewer vehicles, and we could stay out as long as we liked as long as we were home before dark. Those were the days of Clydesdale horses pulling bread carts, and delivering ice for ice boxes, milk in small metal cans left at the gate and bags of coal for heating. Cream was inches deep atop the milk. And there was room for self-generated creativity.

How the world has sped up since Marigold's childhood! And how Marigold's life sped up after these early days in Melbourne. The family moved from hotel to hotel...and Marigold recalls the New Albury Hotel where, I quote:

there was a piano in the ladies' lounge... and in the formal dining room tables stood to attention with starched white tablecloths and serviettes shaped like a pope's mitre.

Little did Marigold know then, when she rode her pushbike in the shade of giant Plane trees, that in the future she would find herself in an outback hotel 400 miles north of Adelaide. Here in Oodndatta, she says she loved the outback, the vast desert silence, the heat, the flies and the red earth and blue skies. However, this place had an underbelly of racism, sexism, drunkenness and rape.

This book is full of light and darkness, happiness and pain. And it is this dichotomy that powers it and makes it hard-hitting and memorable. I will let you, the reader, discover the highs and lows, but I must say I admire Lindy for writing it how it was...with no holds barred.

As a teacher of creative writing and in particular of writing memoir, I can't stress enough how important it is not to self-censor. Why? Because when we read honest, warts-and-all accounts of another person's life, we relate, we don't feel alone – we are grateful for shared human experiences. I have a friend in her 70s who travelled the world as a young woman, and she said that every one of her travelling girlfriends was raped. We need to know this. We need to learn from this. In my family there are sad mental health and suicide stories.

It is the job of a writer and a poet to tell the truth and share the pain that some people and families go through. And this is what Lindy has done in CALL ME MARYGOLD – she has shared stories that are universal, that are uncomfortable, and are so strong and memorable, because facts are not covered up or glazed over.

I commend you Lindy on this colourful, exciting story of vulnerability, of hope and drive, of brilliant successes, and of tragedies. The song 'I am Woman' by Helen Reddy came to mind while I was reading CALL ME MARIGOLD –

I am woman, hear me roar
In numbers too big to ignore
And I know too much to go back and pretend
'Cause I've heard it all before
And I've been down there on the floor
No one's ever going to keep me down again

If I have to, I can face anything
I am strong (strong)

I am invincible (invincible)

I am woman

Bravo Lindy for showing us what a strong woman can do – a girl who left school at the age of 15, married, travelled, worked hard, went through some dreadful relationships, and then went to university at 37, achieved a Phd and worked as a professional overseas and all over Australia. I have always admired you – but on reading this book, I admire you even more.

I will end by reading your poignant and philosophical poem ‘Who Knows’

When we cling to life
we fear

When we yearn for love
loneliness arises

When we smile over sadness
we hurt ourselves

When we cry for another
self-pity clouds our minds

When we reach for comfort
pain is inevitable

Could wishing for death
prolong life?

Marigold says at the beginning of this book ‘I am floating in limbo, unable to rest, until I understand my life.’ Marigold, you have not only shown you have a great understanding of life, love and humanity in this book, but you have gifted your readers with so many valuable insights.

Thank you, Lindy – thank you, Marigold – for this posthumous tale of unforgettable moments and stories.

It is now my pleasure to declare CALL ME MARIGOLD officially launched.