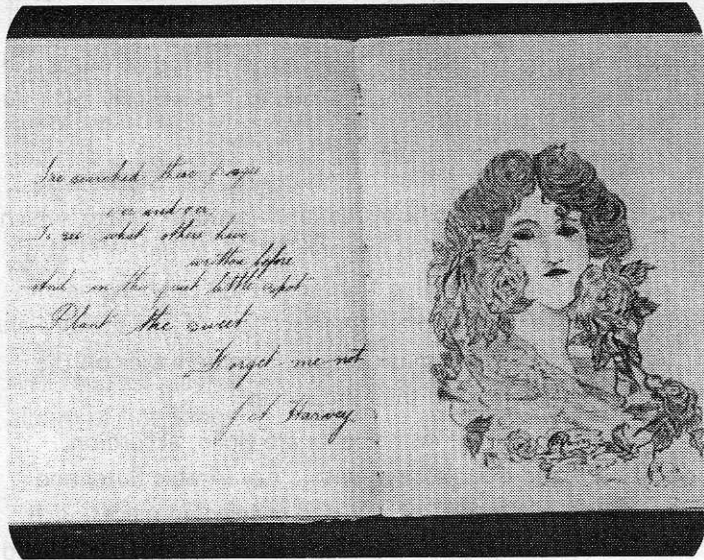


## Can I Have Your Autograph?

With the Sydney Olympic Games upon us, it seems timely to consider a tradition which will be a popular, if unofficial, part of the Games - collecting autographs. Autograph hunting in the year 2000 usually means collecting the signatures of film and TV stars, sports personalities, pop stars and other celebrities in a book, or on articles of clothing - a far cry from the activity of 50-100 years ago, when most of the signatures in an autograph album were gathered from the collector's family, friends and acquaintances.

Some fine examples of autograph albums of the 1800s and early 1900s are works of art, containing watercolour paintings, line drawings, poetry, quotations and humorous rhymes written with pen and ink - examples of the creativity of people known to the collector.



A page from Ida Sharpe's autograph album dated 1909-14, Australian Children's Folklore Collection, Museum Victoria.

Many autograph album rhymes are about love and marriage - these are from an album dated 1933-35:

..... is her name,  
Single is her station  
God help the little man  
Who makes the alteration.  
  
If 32 is freezing point,  
what is squeezing point?  
Answer: Two in the shade.

Love is like a mutton chop  
Sometimes cold and sometimes hot.  
Love is tender, love is strong,  
And so is mutton, if kept too long.

The request, 'Can I have your autograph?' is an invitation to leave your mark for future readers to see. The choice of rhyme is very personal, and says as much about the writer as the collector. The rhymes can be inspirational, clever, rude, and sometimes insulting. Others relate to the colour of the page, the ink used or the position in the book. These are from albums of the 1950s:

The night was dark and stormy  
The billygoat was blind,  
He backed into a barb wire fence  
And hurt his never-mind.

I'm writing on pink  
Because you stink

..... and a monkey  
were sitting on a fence,  
The only difference I could see,  
The monkey had more sense.

YY U R  
YY U B  
I C U R  
YY 4 ME

By hook or by crook  
I'll be last in this book.

By egg or by bacon  
I think you're mistaken.

Life is mostly froth and bubble,  
Two things stand like stone,  
Kindness in another's trouble,  
Courage in your own.

Judy McKinty ●