

Women's Day, a century on

PARIS (AFP) - Nearly 100 years old, International Women's Day on March 8, marks an ongoing worldwide battle to ensure equal rights for half the globe's population on issues such as work, voting and abortion.

Conceived in 1910, International Women's Day was recognized by the United Nations in 1977. The origin of marking a day for women's rights is actually American - although, like many such symbolic days, clouded in uncertainty and competing claims.

In the United States, the country's long-defunct Socialist Party of America celebrated a National Women's Day on February 28, 1909. But it was a year later, at an International Socialist Women's conference in Copenhagen, that the notion was born of an inter-

national day to celebrate the female sex - at a time of mounting anger over unequal treatment in politics and the workplace. On March 19, 1911, the day was commemorated for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, with more than a million women and men coming out onto the streets.

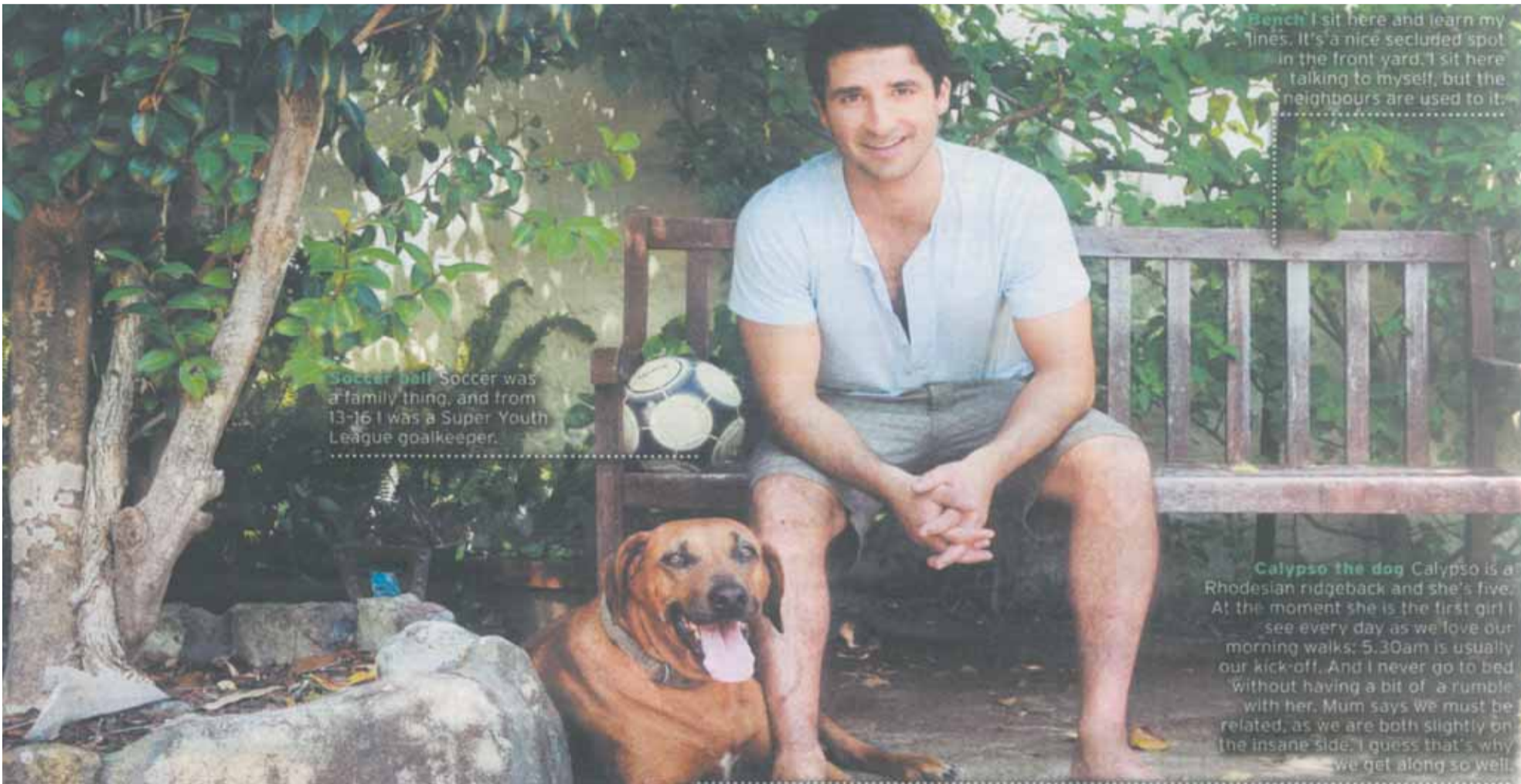
A massive women's protest in the Russian city of Saint Petersburg in 1917 to protest the price of bread and to welcome soldiers home from the World War I front on March 8 (February 23 in the Russian calendar) helped spark the Russian Revolution and cement the day in history.

Today, the March 8 tradition still remains strong in communist countries: in China, for example, female

workers are granted a half-day off. Elsewhere, it gained momentum alongside the broader feminist movements of the 1970s.

In 1977, it was officially declared by the UN General Assembly as the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. And at a 1995 UN Women's Conference in Beijing, representatives from 189 countries agreed that gender inequalities affected the well-being of all the world's population - both men and women.

Today, the day serves as a reminder of the fields in which women must still battle for fundamental rights, and where they remain victims of violence and enduring inequalities.



Soccer ball Soccer was a family thing, and from 13-16 I was a Super Youth League goalkeeper.

Bench I sit here and learn my lines. It's a nice secluded spot in the front yard. I sit here talking to myself, but the neighbours are used to it.

Calypso the dog Calypso is a Rhodesian ridgeback and she's five. At the moment she is the first girl I see every day as we love our morning walks; 5.30am is usually our kick-off. And I never go to bed without having a bit of a rumble with her. Mum says we must be related, as we are both slightly on the insane side. I guess that's why we get along so well.

Easy does it

Packed with warmth and good humour George Houvardas's residence offers a family focus and an uncluttered lifestyle.

As you step into the Longueville home that George Houvardas shares with his family, his father Michael warmly welcomes you while his mother, Anastasia, bustles to put a hearty meal on the table. The family's friendly nature puts guests instantly at ease, and the affable interction between George and his parents is endearing. It's little wonder Anastasia doesn't want George, 27 to move out.

"I'm thinking of moving out this year. I want to live near the beach," the packed to the Rafters star says.

"Mum just stared at me when I told her. She looked shocked. It keeps you grounded being at home still, but I need my space".

George's current space is his bedroom of 19 years and he describes it as spartan-like.

"I don't like a lot of clutter. I freak out when I see built in wardrobes with three drawers of socks. It's too much. I'm a very basic guy. I've got two pairs of jeans max. Actually, I do have three now, which means I have to make a decision", he jokes.

"The desk is the messiest spot. It resembles mayhem, but it's a controlled chaos".

Packed to the Rafters was George's first audition after acting college. He previously worked in construction but says he didn't feel fulfilled and so took the plunge into drama.

"I'm pinching myself all the time. Anything is possible. You've just got to keep focus and go for it".

Gemma Sutherland

FAVOURITE THINGS

Cast shot Packed To The Rafters is a really big moment in my life, and this is an everlasting memory of it. I still can't believe I'm there with them.

DVDs I'm a bit of a DVD buff. There's over 100 in the collection. It covers all genres.

Family pic This is a picture of my big brother Steven and I (top), and my little brother Anthony and I (above). It's a nice memory of where I came from.

Mum's cooking It's always good to have a home-cooked meal, and mum puts a lot of love and care into them. They're not pretentious or over the top.

Lemon tree I planted this 19 years ago and we always use the lemons from it. Calypso fertilises it for me. I would love to plant an orchard out the back.

Lord Of The Rings I've always loved this trilogy and I re-read it every five or six months. I love the fantasy of it. It lets my imagination run wild.