



Woden

SENIORS ROCK!!



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Front Cover

Archibald 2021 acrylics and mixed media entry by **Chris Simon**
of ex Federal Member, Julie Owens MP. Size: 101.6 × 101.6 stretched canvas

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SUE ALLEN...1971, A YEAR OF STATE-WIDE RELIEVING

After a number of years teaching in the Western District of Victoria, I applied for a position as State-Wide Reliever. The role of the State-Wide Reliever involved being sent to smaller rural schools to replace a teacher who had become ill, could not cope with the situation or - in the case of one teacher, simply telling the Education Department they were going home for winter. The placements usually lasted for at least a month and often for a term. My Principal at the time used to write lists of possible schools on my blackboard each morning including Genoa in the wilds of Far East Gippsland and into the isolated areas of the snow country near Bright. As it turned out a number of the schools listed did become part of my teaching experience that year.

So, in 1971 I started out taking up head teacher positions at a number of schools as the Education Department sorted out a more permanent solution for each school. It was challenging finding accommodation, usually boarding with a local family with children at the school which was interesting to say the least. In May that year I was sent to take up a position at Bonang Primary School, which is sixty winding miles north of Orbost through majestic mountainous forests where you might see lyrebirds, wombats and echidnas crossing the road as if they owned it. Which they probably did.

I had phoned previously to see if there was a hotel where I could stay till I found accommodation, but the General Store-come-Post Office owner just laughed, telling me they would find board for me when I arrived. The mail was due any minute, so there was a collection of locals waiting on the verandah as I pulled up after my two hour drive through the bush. As I stepped out of my mini I told them I was the new teacher and asked who I should speak to about the key for the school and the accommodation. I heard a not so muffled, "Not another bloody woman!" before Jeff, the store owner told me to wait till the mail arrived and was sorted. So, wondering what I had walked into, (I could almost hear the banjos twanging), I took a wander down the road to the local hall which I was later to realise was the heart of the community, even more than the school which was a little further down the road.

Shortly after this I was introduced to the couple who drove the mail car. It turned out they lived opposite the school and were usually willing to board the teacher. The first question they asked when we met was whether I was Catholic and on receiving a negative response agreed I could board with them. Apparently, the previous teacher was an elderly woman who had come out of retirement to return to teaching. Having little experience outside the Catholic system and none in a one teacher isolated school, she was totally unsuited to the position. She had no car and expected to be driven to church many miles away. Snow came early to the area that year so after trudging through snowy paddocks to reach the school, it was no surprise to the parents when she told the Education Department she was going home for winter. I could understand her concerns. There was no power in the area at that point although most homes had a generator. The room allocated to the teacher had a tiny fibro bedroom separated from the house and I used to get dressed to go to bed it was so cold. The toilet was a luxury – a twin pit situated a way past the vegie garden and wood heap. I soon learned to bring some wood back after each visit. But Jack and Vera were wonderful, they took me

under their wing, loved that I was happy to help with the farming and offered delicious meals and company over the time I was there.

The school was a typical rural school building which was well maintained by the parents, set in a large paddock. The building only had an open fire for heat and kerosene lamps for light and a long drop toilet. The school catered for children from Prep to Year 9 with 16 children in all, so quite a challenge for anyone. The children and I soon settled into a routine that suited us all. There was a large timber mill as well as farms in the surrounding area, and I have always loved the family feeling that these rural schools develop which makes teaching a joy. Because Bonang is near the Victorian /New South Wales border the children played a mix of Aussie Rules Footy and Rugby with an occasional inclusion of soccer as well just to make full use of the only flat area in the playground. As the days became shorter we were allowed to finish school at 3 pm instead of 3.30 as it was too dark to work in the building. This changed when, some twelve months after I arrived, we had the big "Switch On Ball" at the hall marking the connection of electricity to the area, which came in from New South Wales. Luxury indeed.

After a cold snowy winter, I was then told to report to Perseverance School on French Island in Western Port Bay. I was sad to leave Bonang as I had already met my future husband and was keen to stay but nevertheless headed off down the mountain to the sea. French Island was also isolated, but you could see the skyline of Melbourne from the Island. I had to leave my car at Stony Point, catch a ferry to Tankerton each Monday and return back on Friday afternoon. I was boarding some three kilometres from the school, and the school was 6 k's from the General Store at Tankerton. Locals had bush-bash, unregistered vehicles plus the usual farm vehicles. My transport was mostly shanks' pony along the sandy roads bordered with low coastal shrubs filled with tiny bird life, echidnas and occasionally snakes. Once again the school was set in a large paddock where the children loved to build cubbies and be outside as much as possible. There was a prison farm on the island and early one morning the siren sounded telling the locals a prisoner had escaped. The family with whom I was boarding rushed off to secure their boat and vehicles, as did all other residents. I was assured that school would take place as normal as there was nothing at the school an escapee would possibly want. (Note: this was twelve months before the Faraday School kidnapping, so that was not even a consideration.)

I walked nervously to school that morning, happy to hear the birds as it meant no one was nearby. The parents and children were waiting at the school gate with the parents anxious to leave and get home to their farms to continue with locking away all that had to be secured. The younger children were nervous, which was not helped by the oldest boy James, naming and describing each vehicle that went past, combined with a leap to the window to confirm his description. "Jim's tractor, towing a boat, Fred heading to Tankerton, Elsie going shopping." I must say he was always right and it did make me smile seeing his satisfaction at his own ability to correctly identify each vehicle.

Just before morning recess two policeman pulled up in the 4-wheel drive vehicle to talk to us about the situation. James of course was totally involved and when they offered me a .22 rifle for protection was disappointed that I rejected the offer out of hand, telling me how he could use it if I

couldn't. Sadly, I denied him this opportunity as we discussed going out for recess. They were to stay within eyesight and to come immediately if I rang the hand bell. James of course spent most of the time hanging over the gate, but it all got the better of him as the other children settled to play. He crept along the fence, jumping from behind a bush with loud cries and waving of arms at a group of littlies playing cubbies, scaring one enough to wet her pants. Once all that was sorted we headed inside for quiet work of art and stories for the remainder of the day. At 3.30 the parents started arriving to collect the children and when I asked about the prisoner the response was, "Oh they caught him after lunch, didn't anyone tell you?"

As I walked home through the scrub that afternoon I reflected on the varied work that the State Wide Reliever position had given me. But I must say I was happy to be sent back to Bonang following this event, as it was deemed, after my report that it might be better for Perseverance Primary School to have a male Head Teacher after all.

Footnote: I ended up marrying a local farmer from Delegate River and continued teaching at Bonang Primary School for a number of years until it closed.

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PAT BODEGRAVEN....MT. KOWEN ADVENTURE

My parents and I, together with my twelve-year-old brother and four-year-old sister, arrived in Melbourne from England on the "Orsova" on Anzac Day, 1958.

The ship then sailed to Sydney and docked at Circular Quay where we disembarked. We travelled on by train to Canberra where we stayed at the Ainslie Hostel for a few days before moving to the Forestry Station at Mount Kowen, near Queanbeyan where my father took up work.

Our family had been nominated under the Toc H scheme which had originated from World War I. Three of its guiding principles were friendship, service and fair-mindedness. In our case three ex-Australian soldiers had nominated us as my father had been a Grenadier Guard and Long Range Desert Group Soldier and later a prisoner of war in World War II.

We moved into a remote, three bedroom, beautifully painted, weatherboard pastel coloured house with a dunny and water tank outside. I found the house and its colours delightful as I had never seen such colour on a weatherboard house during my time in London, Shropshire and Oxfordshire as a child in England.

My brother and I were driven to school in a panel van, along with some other children from the forestry hamlet which was a few kilometres down the dirt road. We were all charmed by the driver, Bill, and enjoyed our journeys. We were dropped off at various schools on the way. My brother went to St. Edmund's College and I went to Canberra High School. I left six months later at the age of fifteen years to commence work in the office of a tiling firm in Braddon.

To get to work I had borrowed money to purchase a 125cc BSA Bantam motorbike. I was too young to have a licence so used ride down Mount Kowen and leave my motorbike behind a hedge and walk into Queanbeyan to catch the bus to Canberra. After a while, a man my father knew found out about this and kindly arranged with his wife for me to leave my bike in their back garden in Queanbeyan. The first time I did this I arrived early in the morning and I heard a voice say “Hello Pat”. This was repeated several times – my name is Patricia – but I could not see anyone and then I realised that the voice was coming from a cockatoo in a nearby cage. I had never seen a cockatoo in a cage before and had not realised that they could talk!

Other adventures were looking for yabbies in a waterhole with my brother and coming out covered with leeches. We did not know how to remove them correctly so just flicked them off. We went home rather bloodied but triumphantly handed over the yabbies to our mother to cook. She popped them into a pan to cook whereupon they began whistling and squeaking. At this point the local priest arrived and explained that they should have been put into a pot of boiling salted water but by this time we were all so distressed that we never ate yabbies again.

These escapades came to an end a few months later when my father’s work led to a family move to Stromlo Forestry Station. By this time, even though I was still slightly underage, I was able to get a licence to ride my motorbike.

Shortly afterwards though, I had an accident in Mort Street, Braddon when I misjudged a turning point and ran over the tiny flower bed in front of the glazier’s shop in Lonsdale Street. The owner rushed out and being a polite child, I apologised immediately, saying “I’m sorry sir, I think I’ve ruined your pansies”. He replied saying “I’m not interested in the bloody pansies, are you alright?” I was. He then helped me put the motorbike into his yard and I went to work. That afternoon at 5pm when I went to collect the bike his son was waiting for me and told me his father had instructed him to take me home. He hoisted the bike into his ute and took me home. So while I had a damaged motorbike, I did gain a good friend in the glazier’s son.

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MAUREEN BOURNE.....WHY I’M HERE

Over the last few years, the Woden Seniors Club has become a big part of my life. I first joined the Thursday Craft Group after an invitation from one of my sisters-in-law. I now usually attend three times a week. I joined the management committee as the Vice President the following year.

I like the multi-generational links that I have with the club.

My mother, Bridie Battisson, sang in the Woden Seniors Choir for many years.

My brother, Diarmuid, joined when he was 50 years old while he was still working, usually only attending the Club’s Christmas Party each year. In 2025, Diarmuid usually came and played cards with me at the club on Monday and Friday afternoons.

My two granddaughters hired the hall to teach calisthenic dance classes for a couple of years.

My First Great-Granddaughter has come with me to a few activities or meetings.

My First Granddaughter hired the hall for my Second Great-Granddaughter's Baby Shower in March 2026.

I have found support and friendship at the club.

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JANN BROWN...THE TRAIN and THE DASH

Life is like a journey on a train-
with its stations – with changes of routes ... and with accidents.
At birth we boarded the train and met our parents, and we believe they will always travel
on our side. However at some station
our parents will step down from the train leaving us on this journey alone.
As time goes by, other people will board the train; and they will be significant -
such as our siblings, friends, children and even the love of our life.
Many will step down and leave a permanent vacuum.
Others will go so unnoticed we don't realise that they have vacated their seats
which is very sad if you think about it.
This train trip will be full of joy, sorrow, fantasy, expectations, hellos, goodbyes and farewells.
Success consists of having a good relationship with all the passengers...
requiring that we give the best of ourselves.
The mystery to everyone is:
We do not know at which station we ourselves will step down, so we must live in the best way –
love, forgive and offer the best of who we are.
It is important to do this because when the time comes for us to step down and leave our seat empty
– we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who will continue to travel on the train of life.
I wish you a joyful journey, this year on the train of life.
Reap success and give lots of love. More importantly, give thanks for the journey!

THE DASH

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend
He referred to the dates on her tombstone
From the beginning ... to the end.
He noted that first came the date of her birth
And spoke of the following date with tears
But he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time that she spent alive on earth
And now only those who loved her
Know what that little line is worth.
For it matters not how much we own
The cars... the house...the cash
What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard - are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left
That can still be rearranged.
If we could just slow down enough
To consider what's true and real
And always try to understand the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger and show appreciation more
And love the people in our lives
Like we've never loved before.
If we treat each other with respect
And more often wear a smile
Remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.

So when your eulogy is being read
With your life's action to rehash...
Will you be proud of the things they say
About how your spent YOUR dash?

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RONI AND ADRIAN GIACOBETTI....MARIE BRAY'S AMAZING ACHIEVEMENTS

Many members of the Woden Seniors Club have met Marie Bray. She practices her ballroom dancing diligently every week in preparation for various examinations.

She commenced dancing in 2010 at Penny De Kauwe's School of Dancing, Canberra. In 2011 she completed Leisure 3 exams with Penny in Rumba, Cha Cha, Samba and Jive with Honours.

From 2013 to 2022 Marie completed Latin, Standard (Modern) Ballroom and New Vogue medals at the International Dance Studio with Highly Commended and Honours results.

Marie has also competed in South Pacific Championship, Crown International Dancesport and Blackpool competitions.

So far her achievements have been:

- 2019 – Modern – Silver, Latin – Gold (3rd award), New Vogue – Bronze
- 2020 - Modern – Silver Star, Latin – Gold Star, New Vogue – Bronze Star
- 2021 - Modern – Gold, Latin – Gold Star (2nd award), New Vogue – Silver

- 2022 - Modern – Gold (2nd award), Latin – Gold Star (3rd award),
New Vogue – Silver Star

Recently she represented Australia at an International Competition (the Emerald Ball Dancesport Championships) which was held in Los Angeles in May 2023.

Marie achieved the following results against other outstanding competitors from all around the world:

- Silver International Cha Cha (1st place)
- Silver International Samba (1st place)
- Silver International Rumba (1st place)
- Silver International Paso Doble (1st place)
- Silver International Jive (1st place)
- Silver International Tango (3rd place)
- Silver International Foxtrot (3rd place)
- Silver International Waltz (4th place)

If you see Marie in the club please give her a pat on the back and congratulate her for these truly amazing achievements.

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JENNY GREGORYLIVING IN THE OLYMPIC VILLAGES

This story began when, in 1974, I followed my husband into the sport of target pistol shooting at Canberra National Pistol Club. Over time, as well as competing, I moved into the officiating stream. When Sydney was awarded the 2000 Olympic Games, a number of our national officials underwent further training and processes to qualify as International Judges and allow us to officiate at the Games. I had also gained quals as a Paralympic Judge and was appointed to a position at the 2000 Paralympic Games. This proved to be a life-changing moment! However in this instance I am writing about my experiences as an official living in the Olympic Villages in Sydney 2000, London in 2012 and Rio in 2016.

In these three cases, the Paralympic Officials were able to be accommodated in the Olympic village. This doesn't happen for the Olympic Games officials because the village is already full of athletes and team support staff but the smaller numbers at the “Paras” mean that the official the officials can be included.

The accommodation and facilities in the Sydney Olympic Village – now part of the suburb of Newington - was an eye opener for me. We were accommodated in newly built cottages, houses and apartments which would be sold after the Games. The site covered a very large area and was served by mini buses and which zipped around the accommodation, food and service areas to take the residents to and from their destinations.

I was simply awestruck by the range and quality of the facilities we were able to enjoy. The huge dining hall was open 24 hours a day and served meals to suit people from the many different countries and cultures in residence. We were issued with a special token which

allowed us to obtain a myriad of items from vending machines around the site such as chocolates, ice creams, cool drinks, breakfast bars, toiletry items and so on. There was a hairdressing salon, a clothing repair facility, a range of specialist equipment repair shops, massage areas and gym and a medical centre.

A ten minute walk brought us to the Opening Ceremony!

The National Teams were accommodated in blocks, and we could easily pick the teams who had won medals that day by the decorations, flags and general excitement surrounding their accommodation areas.

My room-mate for the duration (Cynthia, another shooting official) and I were extremely amused when we first entered our bedroom. We are both on the lower end of the vertically challenged spectrum and the beds provided for us were obviously previously occupied by members of a basketball team! I think we could have slept end to end in one of the beds without bumping into each other. And we just dropped our washing into the laundry service in the morning and picked it up again in the evening, washed, dried, even ironed if required.

London was very similar in the fact that the accommodation was in newly built apartment blocks which would be for sale after the games. Ours was in the "Countryside" section; there were superbly designed gardens with lots of advanced trees, safe walking areas and areas for play, exercise or just relaxing. As teams entered the village for their stay they were welcomed in a lovely outdoor space with a ceremonial flag raising and anthem playing.

Each block of apartments had a Service Centre staffed 24 hours a day by volunteers who did everything from providing Games and tourist information and accompanying us on the walk to the Opening Ceremony, to making at least one bleary-eyed official a cup of tea at 6.00am every morning. The Village Green area had shops, post office, bank, tourist information, a room for religious observances and a medical centre. I loved seeing the groups of anything up to seven or eight vision-impaired athletes hurtling around the village, one hand on the shoulder of the person in front and led by just one sighted colleague and all with the happiest grins. And of course the trains of people in wheelchairs, each holding on to the one in front, and 'driven' by one powered chair at the front, making perhaps just a trip to the Post Office an occasion for much hilarity.

Feeding the thousands of athletes, team support staff and officials was a gigantic undertaking. The main dining hall covered an area about the size of a football field and was open 24 hours a day, serving an enormous number of ethnic meals as well as a large central section devoted to the "Best of Britain" and famously, of course, a Maccas which did a roaring trade. The daily Village Voice publication told us that 1.2 million meals were to be served during the Games, that 880 double-decker buses could fit inside the dining hall, and that 232 tonnes of potatoes, 19 tonnes of eggs and more than 1000 tonnes of meat would be consumed. All of course, free to Village residents.

Then there was Rio. Readers may remember that the Australia’s Olympic Chef de Mission, Kitty Chiller, was very critical of the standard of accommodation in Rio. Improvements were made but I have to say that it must have been pretty bad when the Olympic team arrived because it was still not great a month later when the Paralympic teams arrived. The accommodation was, as in Sydney and in London, all newly built apartment buildings and when complete they will be superb. On our arrival however our building featured unpainted walls, unfinished tile work, unsealed gaps, steep and probably temporary internal staircases with little or no safety features, dried plaster lumps on the floors, temporary fittings on doors, completely unfurnished other than with the minimum of beds, one small chair per room, and three vastly overstuffed beanbag lounge chairs per apartment. The lifts were functional and presumably safe but there was a large gap between the building floor and the lift floor and obviously no soundproofing because the sounds of the lift and those coming from the floors as the lift passed them were very loud and very disconcerting. Everything was seemingly hygienic enough; there were actually no dirty areas – ‘unfinished’ would be the best description. We were led to believe that normal building practice in Rio is for the contractor to build to the specific price, some way short of completion, leave the job and then negotiate a price to return to finish it. We fitted in between these two stages of construction.

An interesting feature in the Rio village was the little truck which drove around the village streets each evening sporting a fierce looking burner mounted on the back spewing out a 30 metre high cloud of citronella infused smoke to discourage the mosquitoes. Sadly the people we got to know in Rio were resigned to the fact that everything in Rio is done in spite of a greater or lesser degree of fraud and corruption and that there will be little if any discernible positive legacy for the city and its people from the conduct of the 2016 games. As has been widely reported, the biggest legacy will be an enormously increased burden of debt.

However, my most enduring memories taken away from what finished up as a 25 year stint officiating at Paralympic Games, and for me the most outstanding feature of the games, has been the feeling of excitement - the atmosphere - the constant ebb and flow of people living and enjoying an experience to the maximum. For all the competitors it is an amazing opportunity to be not just someone with a disability or even someone with a disability who can participate in a sport but for the period of the games to be amongst their peers as one of the world's elite sports people and to be celebrated for what they can do.

.....oh, and yes, its true... in the dining halls and accommodation blocks at every Games Village there are bowls of condoms, free to be taken by anyone who had a use for them.

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MAUREEN McALARY... MY RECOLLECTIONS OF THE DARWIN CYCLONE

We were told on the radio that there was a cyclone headed Darwin's way but didn't take much notice. We'd heard that same message once before, some weeks earlier, and it didn't eventuate. However it had been very overcast all day which was unusual for Darwin but then I was no expert, having lived there for only 11 months since arriving from Canada.

In the early evening the torrential rain seemed to increase and then came the thunder and lightning - the likes of which I'd never heard before or since. I can't say that I was alarmed at this stage. After all the cyclone - if it came - was said to be heading for the Port of Darwin area and that was miles away from the new suburb of Alawa in which we lived. I kept the radio on and I kept myself busy wrapping Christmas presents for the children whilst Gordon had gone off to bed. He thought I was being neurotic, but suddenly the thunder and lightning seemed to increase. The radio advised that we should head for the bathroom, fill the bath with cold water to be used in case of an emergency, and to stay there until the cyclone was over as the bathroom was the strongest room in the house. They also suggested that we roll up any carpets and place them in the centre of the room along with table, chairs, settee etc, and to close the louvres on the windward side of the house to prevent any rain coming in. All of which I did. I also decided to wrap up a necessary medication and a couple of nappies for Dione, my youngest, and a few other essentials and put them in my big leather handbag.

I was in the process of collecting a few other items when there was an almighty thunder clap, loud enough to make one jump, followed by lightning. The radio went off as did the lights and the rain came in a huge gush so forceful it broke the louvres. It gushed into the lounge and dining room and with a leather bag hanging from my shoulder I yelled Gordon to collect David whilst I rushed to Dione's room and collected her from her cot. Would you believe she was still asleep! As we rushed for the bathroom the sound was thunderous and through it all we could hear glass shattering and furniture falling all over the place. Or so we thought - in actual fact it was flying out into the backyard and beyond. Funnily enough I don't remember either of the children being scared through all this in fact I would say they were curious. So there we stood in this little bathroom watching the roof disappear, literally floating off in one piece and the water in the bath turning to a reddish colour with lots of dust floating on top. We stood there while the rain pelted down on us for at least five hours or possibly more - me holding Dione because she was smaller and Gordon holding David. David tells me that he saw birds in the rafters trying to find some sort of shelter after the roof came off. Neither Gordon nor I have any recollection of this but my son has a very good memory of things past, so I have no reason not to believe him. I have no memory of being tired but I must have been. I remember us all being soaked to the skin, but it was warm water and not unpleasant and thinking we could change into shorts and tops once we got out of the bathroom. All the while my little daughter lay fast asleep in my arms.

When the rain and the wind died down, Gordon put David on the floor and held Dione whilst I went outside to see how things were. All that was left of our lounge was a little bit of the outer wall flapping in the wind while in the kitchen and dining room nothing was left but floorboards. The same in the bedrooms. No dressing tables, the built in wardrobes had disappeared and hence no change of clothes! And more importantly NO FOOD OR WATER. It was time for me to take some medicine which was in the leather bag which was still on my shoulder and I managed to take it without water. We waited for another half hour and decided we should make a move. The bathroom door and the back door were adjacent and we - Gordon and I - walked out onto the landing of the top outside steps. Again we had to carry the children for whilst Gordon I and I had sandals on, I had forgotten to pack shoes for the children.

The very first thing I noticed, funnily enough, was that the pawpaw tree was no longer there. When we first moved into the house I was amazed by the fact that when one opened the back door the first thing one saw was this huge pawpaw tree. The top of the tree was level with the stairs with fruit ready to be picked. Now there was no tree in sight and then the utter devastation struck me. The backyard was piled high with furniture - not all of it ours – and I could see that everyone else was in the same boat. You could see for miles in all directions from the top of the back steps and there was not a single tree in sight. Everything was gone . There were no landmarks – no streets, no trees - so one lost one's bearings.

Many of our neighbours had left Darwin to visit families Interstate over the Christmas period. I wonder how they felt watching or hearing of the cyclone from wherever they were. Remember, the rest of the world heard all about the utter devastation of Darwin before the inhabitants of Darwin did. In my opinion that was probably a good thing. If radio reception had been possible in Darwin during the cyclone we'd have been scared to death and done some stupid things and many more people may have been killed. However the aftermath, from the day after the cyclone up until the day we left, is what I remember most.

David tells me that there were no steps from the house to the ground. They had all been blown away during the cyclone. I don't remember other than it was very hard to get to the ground but having made it we discovered that our car was still under the house. It was unlocked and the keys were inside! Had we known, we might have been safe and dry in the car.... but then again.... I can honestly say speaking for myself looking back that throughout the night I was not frightened or scared. I put that down to the fact that the cyclone happened at night and it was pitch black - the rain was torrential and we were in a small bathroom was definitely not torn to pieces like the rest of the house. Therefore, although we could hear all the banging and the almighty sound of thunder and lightning, we couldn't see all the things flying high in the sky. if I had, I would have been scared to death. Also to be honest I was more worried about the children. Dione has no memory of the cyclone whereas David remembers it quite well but not in a frightening way as do Gordon and I.

Funnily enough we rarely if ever talk about the cyclone and this is the first time I've thought about it in years. Other than the fact that I had to give an article for the memories group it's not something I think about often. Well it was a long time ago.

After the cyclone

So there we were on the ground. We decided we would go to the local shops which were about 15 minutes away on foot, and where we knew there was a second hand clothes shop. We hoped to find a change of clothes and also some food from the food store. As we were about to leave I noticed that our refrigerator was standing upright at the end of the garden. However getting to it was another matter. The overhead power lines were spread amongst everything else all over the ground everywhere. As there were still no means of communication we had to assume that they were still live. So muggins decided I'd give it a try. It took me about an hour to get to the fridge whilst Gordon sat in the car with the children. The fridge was no further than about 20 to 30 yards away, but every

step took 5 minutes or so as I had to make sure there were no electrical wires or glass to step on - not forgetting jagged wood and metal. Added to which the soil was sodden. I managed to get the fridge door open - no easy feat - and all the food was still very cool. I got enough provisions for our breakfast. A big bottle of milk, a piece torn off the turkey, and apples and pears - all thrown into a plastic bag that had held the fruit in the crisper, and made my way back to the car. On the way I saw my marvellous carpet I brought to Australia from Canada. It was spread out over the garden - but that's another story.

After we had our meal we readied ourselves for the walk to the shops. I had walked there almost every other day, it was good exercise, and a chance to meet other people. The usual 15 minutes took us an unimaginably longer time on that day. And it seemed others had got there before us. The little shopping centre was built on ground level so structurally had weathered the cyclone, although the windows had been shattered by flying debris. Unfortunately all the good stuff had been taken. We did manage to find shoes for each of the children and some old clothes I wouldn't have dreamed of putting on them in normal circumstances. Soaking wet but on they went. There were no women's clothes to fit me so found a pair of boy's slacks - although too big. I found a man's tie to keep them up and rolled the legs up to ensure I didn't trip over and topped it off with the young boy's school shirt. Gordon was equally poorly turned out but fashion was the last thing on our minds. We then went to the food store and that had also been raided before our arrival. The ice cream aisle was bare as were the sweets aisles. Finally enough nobody seemed to have touched the tinned foods other than the sweet stuff. So I took a couple of tins of baked beans, spaghetti bolognese, and the like. Dropped them beside the dirty clothes into the plastic bag I found in the second-hand shop. We didn't have a can opener, but I figured we could worry about that later.

Then we walked - or should I say shuffled - our way to the local school which I might add was built on the ground. David had been attending preschool there so I was familiar with it but as there was no signage it was much harder to navigate one's way around. All the usual markers were gone. Added to which was the fact that we had to move slowly because of the debris and power lines. Many others made the trek there too and already people were sorting out how we were going to manage until help arrived. We filled up school dustbins that had previously held children's toys with water, one marked drinking and one washing. However people took no notice of what was written and within the hour all the water was filthy.

So with a few others from the preschool we decided we'd just look after ourselves. We swept out a small room, then lo and behold others came marching in and making themselves comfortable. Very disheartening and that's putting it mildly.

But manage we did. The first people to reach us were from a furniture store bringing brand new mattresses -and the news that the power lines had been disconnected and that help would be coming ASAP. That meant that we could go back home to see if we could find anything of use. We were worried about identity papers. Gordon had his drivers' licence whereas I, as a non-driver, only had my passport. Our other papers were in storage in Sydney. Fortunately someone looked after the children whilst we went back to the house - or what was left of it. The way back was much

simpler now that we didn't have to look for fallen power lines. This time we noticed that a neighbour's house was hardly touched by the cyclone. Ours and the other neighbours' houses were gone but for the flooring and underfloor areas which were relatively untouched structurally.

We went into the back garden and tried to pull some of the debris away – no mean task. Everything was sodden. As luck would have it I saw the travel bag holding our passports and travel documents just under the edge of the carpet. We had been going to Thailand on Boxing Day for the school holidays! The documents were illegible but the passports although soaked were not too bad so we put them in the boot of the car to dry. We searched for some of our clothes but to no avail. I opened the fridge but although the food inside didn't seem too bad we couldn't risk food poisoning. We had no luck searching for a can opener either. By the time we got back to the school some of the ladies had prepared a meal for the three families – just fruit if my memory serves me right.

On day two – I think – the army arrived with meals and news of the outside world and that was the first we heard about just how bad the cyclone had been. The main hospital was in smithereens, and their backup system had been overwhelmed and failed. Acute patients would be moved out of Darwin first just as soon as they could get the necessary planes. All the planes at the RAAF base had been destroyed and the base, as well as the Army and Navy bases, had all been destroyed.

But you'd know all of this from the newspapers at the time. They also dropped off a couple of newspapers which as you can imagine we devoured when we could get hold of them. The men were provided with shovels to dig toilets. Men's and women's I might add. Oh and gas cylinders in barbecues to cook on as well as medical supplies.

The following day a Canadian couple with a bus arrived. They were from the brand new college some distance away and willing to take those who wanted to move. We were among the willing. So off to the college we went. It was in a wonderful state having been built on the ground and also was remarkably unscathed and presently being run by the academics working there. The place was orderly and clean. I think we stayed there for about a week though I can't be sure – it could have been less. Each day seemed to run into the next. We were each given tasks each day like washing dishes sweeping floors etc and keeping the children amused. David developed a sore throat that wouldn't go away which was very worrying and somehow nappies were found and supplied for Dione which was a godsend.

Gordon and the other men went out from the college and dug and filled holes for toilets carried pails of fresh water and the like and oh - I nearly forgot - cleaning up the roads.

I made new friends and we thought we'd be friends for life and we did keep in touch for a while. But then real life returned. I wonder where they are now?

Eventually an army bus came to collect us and take us to the airport which had finally opened. Major General Stratton had been appointed to clean up Darwin, and his first priority was to get the women and children out of Darwin as quickly as possible so that the cleanup could begin. However all able-bodied men were to stay behind and help with the cleaning up. So after many a tear, we women

were on the bus to the airport. On the drive to the airport we could see that the cleanup was underway. The debris on the major road into town had been cleared though the devastation was still there on the side of the road. For miles and miles as far as the eye can see everything was flattened. In the distance I remember seeing a water tank with what looked like a silhouette of a refrigerator on it. I wondered if the fridge went straight through? When we arrived at the airport there was no passenger building. Darwin's airport in the 70s had not been much more than a giant shed but that had gone. So there were all these women collected from all around greater Darwin on the tarmac with no protection from the heat. After what seemed an inordinate amount of time waiting a group of aboriginal women and their children arrived by bus and joined the long line waiting for the plane. Immediately some women moved away from them. I was disgusted but said nothing. Eventually government officials arrived and said that the plane would be arriving within the next 10 minutes and due to the extra people that arrived where possible we were to put our children on our laps. Some women called out "I'll not have an abo sitting next to me" followed by a chorus of other women in agreement. I was amazed. It was the first time I had witnessed racism up close and was disgusted but I didn't dissent. The officials looked disgusted but also said nothing.

And when the plane arrived women rushed to get in once the stairs had been put in place. Over a handheld loud speaker people were told to stand back until further instructed. It was announced that the aboriginals would get on the plane first. They were put into the first class class area on the upper deck and how they fitted them all in I have no idea. My children and I were in a window seat and we were packed in like sardines. I have never forgotten the racism I witnessed that day.

When we finally got off the plane we saw a row of people behind tables. We were offered food and drink for which we were most grateful and were also offered cash by the Salvos. I declined, not realising that I would not be able to access our bank account for many weeks. We were lucky enough to be given a government car and driver - just very posh - for the drive to my parents-in-law in Wollongong. The driver wanted to know all about the cyclone but he in fact knew more about it than I did. It was almost dark by the time we arrived at my in-laws' house but mum had dinner prepared for us and beds made up. David could hardly talk so I decided that first thing the following day I'd take him to the doctor. He needed his tonsils and adenoids removed straight away so my poor little boy went into hospital that afternoon. This was before Medicare but the specialist, on hearing that we had just come from Darwin, waived all the fees as did his as did his anaesthetist.

Because I had not accepted the money offered at Sydney I had to go to the Salvation Army and explain my situation. and a few days later to the bank. They had no proof that I was a customer and so were unable to help. They in turn sent me to the federal government office in town and luckily they were able to help out despite me not being an Australian citizen, not having working in Australia and having lived here for less than two years. I was mightily impressed. The only proof of identity I had were our passports, which I might add stunk to high heaven, as proof of identity. Also Gordon had no job now that Darwin was completely flattened. It was a very worrying time to say the least. I was given a fortnightly pension until we were able to access our accounts again or until Gordon had

a job again whichever came first, then the money was to be repaid. However it turned out that as Gordon was officially out of work I was entitled to a pension and therefore owed nothing.

I didn't hear from Gordon for about a month and then I got a phone call from Katherine to say he was on his way back to Wollongong by train. The car was on board so he could leave the train in Sydney and drive to Wollongong. We couldn't wait to see him.

Luckily, within weeks of coming back to Wollongong Gordon was offered a job in Canberra. My first impression of the place was one of amazement - I thought it was Shangri-La and I absolutely loved the place. That was 50 odd years ago and I'm still here. Also I've been a proud Australian now for 45 years. My memories of the cyclone had been lost in the passing of time, but my lasting memory was that people just got on with life as best they could until help arrived and I also very sadly remember the racist behaviours at the airport.

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KATHERINE McCARTHYMY FIFTEEN MINUTES OF FAME

In 2003 when we moved from Canberra to Lake Macquarie, it was only natural that my husband, who had retired, would join Newcastle Repertory Club. He had been involved with theatre from his childhood in Melbourne when his class had made up plays and acted in them. He continued to be involved in theatre in secondary school and university, and when he moved to Canberra he joined Alpha Theatre and Canberra Repertory Society. During the early part of our marriage in Canberra I was a theatre widow, my role being mainly to look after the children and provide hospitality for after-show parties.

In 2004 we were at an after-play party in Newcastle when the director of the upcoming show, ('When We are Married' by J.B.Priestley) asked me if I would like to help with the costumes. Thinking I would be in a group helping the costume designer, which I thought I would enjoy, I agreed. The next week I went to the production meeting to learn that I **was** the costume designer.

Over the next year or so I was to be the costume designer in all the shows put on by the Club. This led to some funny experiences. I remember that actresses would insist that they were a size 10 while I would look at them and know they were a size 14. Another funny experience was in performances of the Scottish Play. The actress who played Lady Macbeth's nurse would wear a different costume at every performance, while Lady Macbeth herself wore shorty pyjamas in her sleep-walking scene.

Much to my surprise, I was nominated for a CONDA (City of Newcastle Drama Award) – Newcastle's version of the Oscars. I was nominated for The Winslow Boy, a period piece set in the early 20th century. Off I went to the Civic Theatre after going to the hairdresser, buying a new frock, and borrowing jewellery for the occasion. The nominations for costume designer were announced, and much to my amazement I won the CONDA for Best Costume Designer. I made my way up the

backpackers who were promised an experience of Australian 'life'. Some had experience with horses some did not. A Veterinarian and a blacksmith were part of the crew and at any sign of a problem with a horse, they had to be consulted and the horse OK'd before they could proceed. It was heartbreaking for the few riders who were "vetted out".

Several pantechnicons were used to transport the food for both equine and human participants and the belongings of riders and equipment. The equipment was all that used for cooking, a large number of tents plus demountable yards for the horses and showers for riders. The yards were configured in a very clever ziz-zag pattern so that each horse had a small triangular yard to themselves. Along the route extra food and fodder were obtained plus access to water which was crucial.

Some of the employees offered to drive the cars and floats that had come from Canberra each day which meant a return trip to collect them was not needed. This was very handy when one night it rained very hard and with 4 people in a small tent it was difficult to keep dry, so I slept in the float which was a bit smelly but dry.

So off we went and the group of participants separated with groups and individuals getting the feel of the endeavour. Over the three weeks the group continued to spread out each day over a couple of kilometres as we rode along tracks and though wooded areas with few roads. There was one rule that everyone had to adhere to. If your horse was inclined to kick they had a red ribbon tied on their tail so that other riders did not get too close. As most of the riders were experienced everyone observed the usual rules when riding in a group. We were a motley assortment from young people used to riding in a Pony club to older riders who had been riding all their lives. Some people from a rural environment, others like the riders from Canberra more used to a semi-urban environment. On the whole everyone was considerate and followed the rule of putting their horse before themselves and there is usually a strong bond between them. It is also very sensible as the horse is your means of transport.

For the first few days I was very tired and thinking 'am I going to complete this' but I remembered some advice a vet in Canberra had given me. It was to vary my paces. Some trotting some cantering and some walking. This included me walking for short periods leading my horse. This stood me in very good stead as I gradually gained confidence and fitness.

There were some characters who still stick in my memory. One was an elderly lady who came from a property and had been riding most of her life. She was riding a large very lively Arab stallion and had one hand on the reins and one hand on her shoulder bag which was slung across her body. This posture did not alter even when the horse was prancing about. One day we came across her when the horse was trying very hard to reverse into a huge 2m high tangle of blackberry bushes. Her posture remained the same! In our tent we discussed it later in the day and the general consensus was that we would not ride that horse 'in a fit'. I did notice over the 3 weeks that most nights after supper she crawled into her tent but given her age that was understandable and we all admired her fortitude and horsemanship.

Some of the riders were from the mountains and we discovered that contrary to the rules some of them had access to more than one horse. This was frowned upon plus the fact that they tended to 'yahoo' obviously enjoying themselves but not considerate of others. When we entered mountainous terrain we had to ride very carefully, and the route often was zig zagging around to take account of the slopes and the treed environment. One of the 'yahoos' decided he was going to go straight down but didn't know that there was a sudden drop before the track below. They fell and the horse broke its pelvis and therefore had to be euthanised. He was 'persona non grata' with everyone even though he tried to complete the ride on another horse.

The country we rode through was undulating to hilly and we rode near towns such as Lake Eildon, Mansfield then into the Snowy mountains and near places such as Mt Beauty and Tumut. It was spectacular and very mentally invigorating plus the camaraderie became strong over the 3 weeks and there were many gestures of help and friendship.

We arrived in Canberra on 8 May 1988 the day before the Queen was to open the new Parliament House and camped at the Yarralumla Woolshed. When she was driven to the opening the participants in the Federation Ride lined Dunrossil Drive as a guard of honour. Both she and the Duke waved to us all as they drove slowly past.

Physically not an easy trip but a fantastic experience. As a migrant to Australia, it fostered in me a great sense of belonging, was mentally invigorating and by the finish a great sense of achievement.

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LUTANA McLEOD... Post-Retirement activities to keep the mind and body alert.

Retirement is a new lease of life:

- Explore a range of opportunities for social connections/community involvement
- Improve overall well-being and develop interests.

Health: Natural therapies, speakers e.g. Epigenetics, nutritionists, Chinese medicine doctor

Guest Speakers: Police (scamming information); Rostrum, Toastmasters, Community interests, special events.....

Excursions: Zoo, Aquarium, concerts, Art Gallery, Lake cruises, War Memorial, Tulip Farm, Book Fairs, Glassworks, Archives, Arboretum.....

Special Days (held at Woden Seniors): Melbourne Cup, Christmas, Club Anniversary, ANZAC Day....

Social Groups: MahJong, Rotary Club, View Club, Red Hatters, movies.....

Sport: gym, yoga, t'ai chi, table tennis, walking....

Music: choral singing, recorder orchestra, line dancing, ukelele....

Mental Pursuits: Book Club, writers' group, memoirs, movies and discussion, foreign languages

Manual Pursuits: art and painting, card making, pottery, knitting, jewellery making

ACT based activities are

Available

Accessible

Accepting

Venues: Seniors Clubs, U3A, COTA, CIT, Uni, Men's Shed.

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NEIL McLEOD...Post-Retirement activities to keep the mind and body alert.

Since my retirement I have been actively engaged in the following pursuits:

Mental

U3A – Uni of Canberra

Terrorism Course conducted by former Chief of Army, Prof. Peter Leahy

Forensic Psychology

National Security

International Relations

International History of the 20th Century

English Grammar

The World of Chance

Global Peace and Conflict Studies

Introduction to Digital Forensics

The Interwar Years and World War II

Woden Seniors

Introductory Latin (and later, Introductory Italian – freelance, not Woden Seniors)

Physical

Gym – daily where/when possible: variety of activities

Farming – about 3000 lavender plants on our northern NSW farm – planting, trimming, slashing, harvesting, distilling, pruning, fertilising, selling

Acting – various companies – Uncle Vanya, Trelawney othe Wells, Australia Day, Much Ado About Nothing, Fool for Love, Amadeus, The Seagull, Mary Stewart, Antigone, Oedipus the King (OTK scheduled for Canberra and Perth staging in 2026)

Podcasts - Over two dozen recordings since 2020 – broadcast throughout Australia and around the world, coordinated by Bart Meehan, President of ArtSound FM Recording Studios in Manuka.

Podcast recordings (monologues and character roles) include:

The Tractor Actor; The Bush Undertaker; An Eventful Journey; A Grocer in the Somme; The Signalman; The Forced Marriage; Wind in the Willows (3 roles – magistrate, engine driver, gypsy); The Case of The Blue Carbuncle; Death Pops In; The Masterpiece; The Big Game; Romeo and Juliet; Lawsons’s Christmas; I Went to the Doctor; Gertrudes’s Sweetheart; Little Red Riding Hood; After All; The Sherrin; The Case of Silver Blaze; Paging Mrs Gavin; Mapp and Lucia; Hamlet Rearranged (me Sir Toby) Don Juan’s Confession; Homeward Bound; The Forced Marriage; The Goal; A Gumboot for Molly Buckley.

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PAULINE MAGER...WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Generations and generations
Many lives behind each beautiful
door
So much happiness and
desperations
Grannies and new-born babies
So many stories to be told

All the faded smalls of the past
All the flowers in opened windows
How much longer will it last
Knock, knock, who is there
Are they friends or don’t they care

Generations and generations
So much shelter and feeling safe
So many secrets and frustrations
So much laughter, so much pain
Would you mind to shut the door

I am free to go in or to go out
But where to go from here
Can’t you see what it’s all about
Just because you disagree, you
think
You can take all that history from
me.

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AL MASTERTON.... WODEN SENIORS MONDAY MORNING

... to the tune of Carolina in the Morning. Just sing along!!

Nothing could be finer
Than to be at Woden Seniors
Monday morning.

Nothing could be better
Than just going out together
On each Thursday.

Nothing could be sweeter
Than to be there for rehearsals
Monday morning.

Wonderful to be here too
To sing again some songs for you
This Thursday.

When the morning glories
Light our practice hall,
We learn the golden oldies
To sing for you once more.

If I had Aladdin's lamp for only a day
I'd make a wish and here's what I'd say
Nothing could be finer
Than to be in Seniors Choir
Monday morning.

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BERNADETTE OAKES....ADVENTURES OF A PUBLIC SERVANT

I worked for AQIS (quarantine) for seven years in the live animal imports section.

I processed applications and oversaw a number of animals entering Australia. These animals included the first cheetah to Canberra's National Zoo and Aquarium, and silver handed gibbons to Mogo Zoo. One year, I stayed up until 1.00am to welcome twin polar bear cubs from Canada and organise their quarantine at Sea World in Queensland.

The following day the Sea World staff let us into the adult polar bear's exhibit where we hid food all around for enrichment purposes. I was caught under the waterfall when it "accidentally on purpose" switched on.

As part of a Melbourne Museum experiment, one of the space shuttles took orb spiders with them to space to see if they could or would spin webs in zero gravity. I had to process the application for the re-import of the 'spiders from space'. My memory is a bit fuzzy, but I think they failed to spin any webs.

My biggest claim to fame was building a database to track the temperatures of the horses here for the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000. An elevated temperature was the first indication of illness and possible equine 'flu. I took three trips to Sydney before and during the Olympics where I was lucky enough to observe most of the equestrian events – my favourite sports. My

A “Learning” Curve - then the Crop!

My Mother.

“Mum? Do you remember your wild ride down the track from the mailbox?”

No flash ladies’ bicycles for us in those years. A fixed wheel, no brakes, handle bars UP sort of monster, with a ‘tear your leg off’ chain and high seat for long legged males, and NO mud guards. A basic contraption.

Mum thought she would avail herself of the opportunity to take a leisurely ride up the track to get the mail, plus the few loaves of bread left by a kindly deliverance chappy.

The view from the top of the gate was wondrous – the wheat crop a sea of waving green, the blue hills providing a backdrop for the spring lambs playfully leaping near the cool waters of the underground spring.

Watch then, ye young’uns, as Mother comes sailing down the hill, gathering momentum with each passing fence post. Four baker’s loaves lodged between the handlebars, legs thrashing as she steers the monstrosity into the crop to escape the wheel ruts, clods and stones, not to mention the fence on one side.

She hits the gully – bread, envelopes, bike and rider taking different directions. The dust settles. She raises herself and looks out of the wheat crop. “Geez kids – I walked from there – too dazed to get back on that machine”.

This story was repeated often, with slight variations to speed, height of crop, amount knocked down and damage to the ‘two stroke’, rider and loaves of bread.

We’re Moving!

1950 – my ninth year – an ‘end of year’ baby. Started school early because I was too keen, inquisitive or just too smart-arsed, and needed to ‘get some learning!?’ Too much for Mum? All of that!

“Hey youse kids! Get up on that truck and stay there!” Okay, several of us, with assorted goods, onto the back of Uncle’s army truck, plus an additional vehicle.

Uncle Rolie, with a poddy calf, it’s tail twisted over it’s back to keep it ‘steady’ as we take off from “Granova” at Naraburra to “Contour” at Trungley Hall. A house and property change.

Our dolls in boxes placed in a chosen bedroom, soon turfed out by the older brothers. “This room is ours!”

No screens on windows, no curtains, no gauze doors. Wild cats skittering down the linoleumed hall, yowling loudly, pursued by laughing brothers. Mice, cockroaches, bed ticks,

snakes, lizards, possums, birds. All demanding residency in a dwelling that had remained empty for some time.

Strange, flapping noises from matching palm trees planted at the front of the house. Rustling night noises, foxes yap-yapping in the distance.

No bathroom, just a 'washroom', a long-drop toilet 50 yards up that way... and yet, being young, we thought it was paradise. No electricity, no hot water – a tilly lamp, some kerosene lamps with glass bases and smoky glass covers.

We had moved so we could catch the school bus into Town. Dad took us that first day. Mr Clarke interviewed me. "Now Enid, what's 3 x 9?" "27 Sir". "Good, now what's 9 x 3, Enid?" "Hunh??" "I haven't learned my 9 times table Sir". "You pommy" sez Dad. Lip out, head down, how was I supposed to know it was the same as 3 x 9!! So, into Class 3B – the only B class I was ever in – ha ha. Our teacher, Miss Marnie, and her speech lessons. "New shoes", spoken with the lips protruding like a cow's bottom.... red and green and bloo shoes – strappy, tappy toe shoes – which shoes will you choose?"

It usually took a few moments to re-align the lips after such excessive 'oo-ing'!

The Third Class Play, where I played the Queen, dressed in a long frilled garment, treadled by Granma near the hall door. Such an exquisite frock – gold cardboard crown and all! Hair frizzed up!

"Geez Angie – she was only on stage for ten minutes!!" What would you expect? Class 3B, lowest class in the primary school. As I recall, I did get to speak a few lines. (Wonder where that photo got to? Ronnie? Do you still have that shoe box filled with old snaps and negatives from the Box Brownie?"

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JENNIFER PRATTEN...WHAT AM I DOING HERE?

I had lived in Canberra in 1969-70, so when in 1981 found myself divorced and the mother of two children, I realised Canberra would be a great place to bring up my two boys.

I worked in Real Estate until my second husband, and I bought a courier business. The boys had left home by this stage, and we went on to operate the business until retirement.

Once retired I played a lot of tennis, volunteered at Red Cross and played bridge. My body was not happy with the tennis, and I decided that bridge was to be my main interest. It was at the bridge club that I met a lady who said to me "You look like a beading lady"! I had no idea what she meant, then learned that Woden Seniors Club was holding a 4-week course on making necklaces and pearl knotting. I enjoyed this so much that I went on to making beads, necklaces and other handmade

jewellery items. As time went on I was spending more time at the Club, and the wonderful people I met there were a lifesaver when I lost my son in 2008.

I went on to lead and teach the beading group, and in due course I was invited to be on the Club Committee which gave me the chance to meet more wonderful people and so my life was changing.

I lost my husband in 2016 and again Woden Seniors and the people there were a big part of my journey going forward. To my surprise, the then President asked if I would consider being the Treasurer and now, ten years later, I'm still the Treasurer.

I spend a lot of time at the Club (not *quite* every day) and the best part of that is that I have met so many interesting people. Young and old, from all walks of life, and all with their stories to tell.

Woden Seniors Club is a registered charity and I'm very happy to be part of such a great organisation. I hope I can give other people the support and friendship that I have been lucky to receive.

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KEVIN ROWE ...The Eisteddfod

Goodness knows why Kevin put up his hand to represent the school at the State poetry eisteddfod. Perhaps it was some misplaced need to show loyalty or a sense of responsibility. It certainly wasn't for the love of poetry or the need to make an idiot of himself on stage. He had already done that in grade two. Whatever evil inside him that pushed his hand up didn't matter anymore. He had volunteered and now it was on.

He turned up at the after-school meeting that was to tell competitors what the poem was and to set out the schedule for learning the lines and rehearsals. The Nun who was assigned the task of bringing glory to the school was a harsh, cranky woman sent by the Divine to terrorise the living being out of you.

The six girls who had also volunteered were given their poem. Kevin was then given his. 'A Dappled Horse'. He forgot by whom. The battle plan was screeched out to the group. The eisteddfod was to be held in three months. The first two weeks were to write the poem out until you can remember it. This would be followed by weeks of rehearsals to make sure you know the lines. Well, that was how it was meant to be.

So for two weeks Kevin sat down, after completing his homework, to write out this poem. The competitors were told to keep the sheets each time the poem was written and hand them in at the meetings. Each time he wrote down the poem he still couldn't remember it. He tried and tried but no matter how many times he wrote it, he still couldn't remember it. Why had he subjected himself to this catastrophe?

Came the day of the first meeting of the competitors on the mount. The tablets were handed in. The girls copped a spray. They, too, had failed to fully learn the lines of their poem and

when they made their first group attempt it drew the fury and scorn of the holy coach. Kevin fared no better. He had misspelled 'horse' with 'house'. He too failed to complete the recitation of the poem. The girls, at least, had each other for support but Kevin was on his own. The competitors, now admonished, were cast out to walk for a further two weeks in the desert until they learnt their lines.

For Kevin, there some some glory for competing in the event. In the intervening days leading up to the final performance, the other boys on the school were lashed with scorn for being too cowardly to come forward to compete. The teachers would praise him for his bravery and his willingness to sacrifice his time to bring good Karma to the school.

The walk in the desert complete, Kevin and the girls fronted the holy coach on the mount. The school stage. To his horror, Kevin saw that he had again spelled horse as house. What foul spot had replaced the 'r' with a 'u'? He apologised profusely but at least he was able to recite the poem. So too the girls. But it wasn't enough to just recite it. Kevin and the girls were told you must feel it. Take it to your soul. Encapsulate the meaning and essence of the poem. Bring it to life!

Kevin was more worried about whether or not his haemorrhoids could withstand any more strain than worry about bringing a poem to life. As part of the learning and melding process, the holy coach had arranged recitals for the competitors in front of the school assembly. Nerve wracking events. He was told to "Speak up! No-one can hear you!" He thought he was shouting.

With visits to the mount becoming more frequent, Kevin and girls melded. Eventually, like a kite in the wind, he recited the poem. Not confidently though. He still had trouble remembering some parts of it. On occasions he would mix up the rhymes. The girls were more confident and sure of themselves. They had no trouble performing. Still the holy coach lit the torch of scorn, blasting individuals for every mistake.

After two and a half months it was time for the penultimate performance in front of the school assembly. The formal performance on the mount. The day started well. Kevin made it to school. He went to the stage room to prepare. The girls were already there. Excited, but Kevin sensed that, just like him, they would be glad when the ordeal would be over. *Their sacrifice metastasised.*

The holy coach gave the last sermon. Fire and brimstone until she remembered this was not a religious education lesson. With the students seated in the stalls the show went on. The girls went first. A flawless performance. Then Kevin. Surprisingly good. Room for improvement.

Two days before the final performance the competitors met with the holy coach on the mount. They were given their place of execution. One place for the boys, him. Another for the girls. A final recital of those infernal lines followed.

The place of execution was a small public suburban hall. It was an Art Deco era museum. Dark wooden walls lit by a few windows and bowl-like lights hanging from the ceiling like hunting spiders. It smelt of polish and cigarettes. Metal folding seats lined the hall in three neat rows. A small contingent of seats set aside for the prisoners. The firing squad lined up in front of the stage.

At the appointed time, and not one minute earlier, everyone made their way into the hall. Kevin took his place with the other prisoners. His mum made her way to a seat in the audience. The prisoners were then assembled in the order of execution. They were to move to the side of the stage in groups of three as each group completed their recital.

Butterflies punched Kevin in the guts. But, like his fellow prisoners, some were here like him. He could see it written on their faces. "Why did I do this?" Still, he tried to remember the lines. The rising fear numbing his brain. He began to panic that he was forgetting the lines. "Just keep calm" he told himself. Luckily he wasn't in the first group.

Finally it began.

The compere announced the start of events. Gave the usual thank yous. Praised the boys and the parents. "For goodness' sake hurry up" Kevin thought, growing ever more panicky that he was forgetting the poem. Then it started. The first boy. Then the second. As each boy rose to the microphone and fell, Kevin listened to the words. He could tell the ones who took this seriously. They pranced about like mannequins on a string. Singing the lines. Kevin grew closer to the stage. All he could remember was "be heard".

Then Kevin rose to the microphone. The audience a blur. The lines of the poem like bullets whizzing past. He recited the poem like a loose fence post rocking about in the wind. Loud. He was loud. The last word passed his lips. He bowed. The audience clapped. He left the stage. He didn't care where he placed. It was over. His bullet riddled body had survived. No more poetry. No more volunteering. The sweet, sweet, feeling that it was all over.

In the days that followed, Kevin began to forget the lines. Tossed the memories away. He enjoyed the freedom of not having to perform that poem again. At school, teachers praised his bravery and that of the girls. He couldn't remember where they placed. But the results were in for the boys. He had come fourth. It surprised Kevin. The report said he was just a little too loud which impeded his performance. He didn't care. Forget the whole catastrophe.

And yes, he could have. The holy coach gave a sermon to the combined classes he teaches and other guests who were seated in the church. The sermon on sacrifice and achievement. Of being brave and prepared to give the school a good name. Kevin and the girls were led to the choir at the top of the church. He looked down on the congregation as the holy coach introduced them. Then the final bullet. "Each will recite the poem they took to the eisteddfod".

Encounter with the Alien – a short story

The science fiction movie 'The Time Machine from Neptune' had just finished on the television. All the excitement of the Earth versus the Aliens from Neptune had slipped Jack and Alex into a science fiction frenzy. The brothers, aged seven and five, flung themselves from the lounge chair and raced downstairs to the backyard to recreate what they had just seen.

Each argued with the other as neither wanted to be the alien. Aliens always lose when they have a war with Earth. They eventually landed on both being an integral part of Earth's defence against alien invasions. Jack called himself The General while Alex was to be Field Marshall. Although neither of them knew what that rank meant. So they dressed up for their roles. Armed with torches for ray guns and umbrellas for laser shields, they set out looking for aliens in the backyard.

After running around the yard for half an hour they determined that they would have to pretend there were aliens. Practice in case one should eventually land from Neptune. Then, from the side of the house, came the alien. "Woof woof" barked the alien. "It's here" shouted Jack excitedly. "It's a foxy alien". He described the terrier. "Welcome to Earth" Alex bowed. The alien continued to bark excitedly to see them. "It doesn't understand English" commented Alex. "Of course not Field Marshall", shouted Jack. "It probably can't understand us either" he added.

The poor alien just kept barking and running around in circles. "What should we do General?" asked Alex.

"I think it might be wanting to take over the Earth" mused Jack. "Alien! Speak in English. What are your intentions?" demanded Alex. The poor alien just kept barking and becoming more perplexed. "How did you get here?" questioned Jack. The alien was bored now. It couldn't understand why the boys were not happy to see it. So it ran back to the house". "Follow it. It's taking us to it's leader" Jack shouted. They checked the doors. Locked. "Must have some special code to open it, General" explained Alex. They stood examining the spaceship. Red. Four doors. A bonnet and a boot. Big exhaust pipes. Four landing wheels.

They peered into the cockpit. One row of two single seats in front and a single bench seat in the back. It had a steering wheel and an instrument panel. "Wow! It's out of this world General"! Alex exclaimed. "I don't think the alien drove the spaceship here Field Marshall" said Jack with concern. "The alien had four legs and was too small to operate this machine." "You mean there's another alien?" shouted Alex.

"We need to protect Earth" Jack decreed. The front door opened and the alien rushed out. "Stand by to fire!" The alien raced excitedly down the stairs, heading straight for them. As the alien jumped on to the landing pad Alex screamed "Fire!" They fired their torch lasers at the

alien. “It’s impervious to our defences!” screamed Jack. It’s time for hand-to-hand combat. They grabbed the alien and fell to the ground as it licked them profusely and barked excitedly. Alex shouted “Surrender, Alien – surrender or we’ll capture and take you in for interrogation.” The alien just kept barking and started doing zoomies. “It’s trying to escape, General,” shouted Alex. “Quick, chase it” ordered Jack. They chased the alien around the house. “We cannot catch it. We’ll lure it into our headquarters”. They ran to the back door followed by the alien. “It’s after us” shouted an excited Jack, feigning terror. “It’s going to eat us” screamed Alex. They banged on the back door as the alien made its way up the stairs. Mum opened the door and they rushed in.

“The foxy alien is going to eat us” they screamed in alarm, bursting past Mum, heading for their bedroom. They jumped on the bed, torches ready as the alien rushed in and jumped up. “AAAAHHHH it’s got us! We’re trapped!” They fired their torch lasers while the alien continued the excited barking.

“Alright boys, stop defending the Earth and come and have some cake. Uncle Jim is here” Mum called. “Bring the foxy alien too” she added with a giggle. The boys negotiated with the alien. “Cake soothed the alien beast General” proclaimed Alex. They ran into the kitchen. “Hello Uncle Jim, they chorused. The alien followed. “Hello boys. Come here Ramsey” replied Uncle Jim. “Ramsey is a foxy alien. He landed on the launch pad at the side of the house. He came in a spaceship” explained the boys.

Uncle Jim and their mother laughed at the boys’ description of Ramsey as a foxy alien. “First time I’ve heard of a 1972 Toyota Corolla described as a spaceship” said Uncle Jim sheepishly. They laughed aloud as Ramsey barked and the boys tucked into cake.

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CHRIS SIMON....FROM TURANDOT TO FOOTROT

After happily raising two children on Sydney’s Northern Beaches, Chris’ family moved back to England due to his pursuit of his professional dreams. He is now a proud grandfather of three. Advertising and multimedia work had taken him over most of the world. His favourite quote is “Be careful what you wish for.....”

In 1989 John Bevins won the New Zealand Tourism advertising account and produced a series of soaringly beautiful television ads backed – improbably but perfectly – by Nessun Dorma, the Luciano Pavarotti signature Turandot piece. Four years later an agency that wasn’t an agency with the improbable name of A Couple of Cowboys took Dave Dobbyn’s “Real Slice of Heaven” from the cult NZ movie *Footrot Flats – A Dog’s Life*. In doing so they created a follow-up campaign about as different from its predecessor as the All Blacks are from the Wallabies.

NZ Tourism had run nine different campaigns in ten years, but none had succeeded in creating a realistic and lasting positioning for the country. Bevins captured the simple, back to basics one feels

when confronted by that grandeur, spectacle and vista which makes those little hairs on the back of one's neck stand up and pay attention. The combination of the Mount Taranaki, Puccini's aria and the end frame: "Stay where you are New Zealand. I'm coming over" reversed the downward trend of in-bound tourists and earned the agency an inaugural AFA Effectiveness Award in 1990.

Just as the ATC Paul Hogan campaign predated the success of Crocodile Dundee, so too Bevins' use of Nessun Dorma came two years before the extraordinary popularity Pavarotti enjoyed via the Three Tenors.

But – as too often proves to be the case – success doesn't always guarantee security, and the best of moments can turn sour. And in 1993 a trio of unlikely lads had their moment of glory. After Bevins resigned the account an eager field of 80 contenders lined up for the \$2million account with the announcement of the winner causing more than a ripple across the Tasman.

The strategic, media and creative components of the account were awarded to a television production company known as the Cowboys, headed by *ex-Simon Townsend's Wonder World* personalities Brett Clements and Phillip Tanner. They weren't invited just to produce the commercials, but to pitch based on an 82-page research report handed to their marketing director, Chris Simon, who responded with a detailed strategic and brand re-positioning document. This in turn led to their creation of the Real Slice of Heaven campaign, written by Clement, produced by Tanner and based on Simon's strategy.

Pre-dating reality television by a decade, this colourful and contemporary campaign comprised not only real holiday makers having real fun accompanied by the classic Footrots song. It went on to shape all promotions, commercials, trade films, press and radio ads, direct marketing and display for a number of years. It won PATA gold and an Australian Marketing Institute Effectiveness Award.

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MARGARET WRIGHTEARLY MEMORIES

June 1940.

World War 2 was raging in Europe. I still have the back page of the Sydney Morning Herald, kept by my parents, where my birth was announced. It is interesting to read the war news, and to learn that families in Australia were arranging to receive and care for children from Europe, to remove them from the dangers. Murwillumbah families offered homes to 100 children.

I think that children don't remember much (anything ?) before the age of about 4.

THE AISLE WALK

My earliest memory is of frustration.

It was 1944, and I was four years old. I was the flower girl, resplendent in apple green tulle, to my aunt Evelyn (mother Marian's 6th sister, the first born in Australia) as she married soldier-on-leave Selwyn Metz in St Anne's, Strathfield. That little dress was in our dress-up box for years. I wish it had been kept in pristine condition, but I expect it went out, in the fullness of time, as a rag after all our dressing-up games.

There are photographs and even a home movie of my walking up the aisle, but I have no memory of that walk, either way.

I was not to know that such a walk in 1944 was to be the only aisle walk I would ever make in my life. Never again a flower girl. Never a bridesmaid. No one ever asked me, not even my oldest friends. They were all correct, of course. I would have tripped over a mat, dropped the train, walked inelegantly, or my hair would have escaped from its French roll.

I even knew that aisles were not for me in 1966 when I married Paul in a far country. That was five minutes in a registry office - 1,2,3 – you're married.

Next!

No, the memory of frustration was not in anticipation of future non-walks down the aisle; it was right there, on 28th October, 1944, in the vestry (not that I knew that word then) of St. Anne's.

The minister and the bridal party were standing around a table writing in a large book. Someone handed me a pen and asked if I could write my name.

'Yes, I can!' I reached up, and the nib touched the page - up and down, up and down. That's M. Now what comes next? I'll think of it in a minute!

'No, I don't think she's learnt to write yet, ' someone said, as the pen was whipped from my little poised hand.

Too late, the chance was gone.

Perhaps I should go back and belatedly sign my name.

This must have been the trigger for a lifetime of signing visitors' books.

From the top of Ayer's Rock (now Uluru) to any stately home around the world that has one ready, to the condolence book at Westminster Hall for Winston Churchill in January 1965, and the WW1 cemeteries on the fields of Flanders, my name is inscribed. The latest, as I write this, is at Mon Plaisir, Peter the Great's summer retreat at Peterhof on the Gulf of Finland in Russia.

PENFRIENDS

I had a number of penfriends in my teenage years, and yes, we had to write by hand, fold the paper to put into an envelope, seal and address it, and attach a stamp before posting it in one of the many letterboxes scattered around the town.

My penfriends during the 1950s were in Finland, Iceland, Paris and Berlin. This was all part of my great plan to one day visit the world, and have friends to show me around their places. I found my penfriends in Finland, Iceland and Paris through a penfriend agency that advertised in magazines in Sydney. I also asked for a penfriend in Tristan de Cunha and Easter Island. What was my 13-year-old self thinking? Apparently, none was available in either place, so I was happy with European friends. We exchanged photos and I have them all still – clean-cut beautiful teenagers smiling across the years.

My penfriend in Berlin was found by my Sunday School teacher who had been to a Lutheran-Methodist conference there in 1953. She arrived back in Sydney with a wad of names and addresses of teenagers she had met in schools in West Berlin. All were learning English.

I wrote to Erika Winter in Charlottenburg, a suburb in West Berlin, at the time when the whole of Berlin was encircled by East Germany. She described West Berlin as “like an island in a dark ocean”.

My letters about my siblings, pets, bush walks and school must have been very tame to a girl in that great divided city, observing the rebuilding after the wartime damage.

We wrote until about 1958, when we both became busy with tertiary studies and life generally. Our letters petered out. This happened with Liliane in Paris, Magnus in Iceland and Matti in Finland. Our late teens caused us to become lazy correspondents. What would I do when I finally reached Europe?

Finally, in 1964, I was in Europe, travelling by car with my school friend, just as I had planned back in 1953. Somehow, Iceland and Finland seemed impossible, and Liliane in Paris was just a distant memory.

All that forward planning had come to naught. Berlin was not in our itinerary, much as we would have liked, as Museum Island with the Ishtar Gate and Nefertiti in East Berlin beckoned with memories from our high school history of art classes. However, knowing how constrained our finances were, we had our consoling mantra when things were missed: “Next time!” Waiting at the poste restante in Athens was a letter from the English Pools lottery to say that my friend had won a nice sum. We had a celebratory retsina to toast “Berlin, here we come!”

At the Australian Embassy in Bonn, we applied for visas and were given sheets of instructions (which I still have) about the perils of East Germany and East Berlin, and advised us that Australia had no diplomatic representation there, so we were going at our own risk.

I remembered Erika’s name and address in West Berlin so had written from a village in Bavaria with our expected date of arrival. We made it!

On her parents' apartment door was a note from Erika's mother saying Erika had married the boy upstairs, Jurgen Schnackenberg, and moved away to Bavaria, to the village from which I had written. Her mother had gone to visit them that day. So that was that.

Still, there was a museum to see, so we braved Checkpoint Charlie to cross into East Berlin, with our little Mini thoroughly searched – engine and boot – and even a mirror was poked underneath on our departure, checking that we were not hiding hapless East Germans wanting to escape to the West.

A chance meeting...When I returned to London, I married and had children. We moved to Canberra at the end of 1969. Then in 1999 when my husband and I, happily retired and travelling again, were in Palermo, Sicily, I joined a couple in a tiny lift in the hotel. I laughingly said "You travel light" as I compared their very small bags with my away-for-two-months-sized bag. The reply was "Well, we are only away for one week." It was impossible to miss the strong German accent, so I asked where they were from. On hearing "Berlin", I asked which suburb. When they answered "Charlottenburg" I replied that the only person I knew in Germany was from Charlottenburg, in Steifensandstrasse, that I had a penfriend there in the 1950s named Erika Winter who had married Jurgen Schnackenberg, but that by 1958 we had lost touch. They were astounded, stopped in their tracks, and said that they were their very good friends. The only person in Germany that I knew!! We exchanged addresses, and I added my maiden name and Sydney address to remind Erika.

A letter was waiting for us when we arrived back in Canberra, beginning "It is a miracle that we have met again..." After details of life and children, the letter concluded "This letter is being written by my son because I have multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's and can't talk, can't write, can't eat, can't walk".

So through this chance meeting, because I am a chatterbox, we re-established contact and we began a renewed correspondence. We were invited to stay with them in a small town south of Mannheim when we visited Germany in 2003, a detour on our way to Dublin for our son's wedding.

We were met at the railway station by Jurgen and grandson, and driven to their lovely spacious house. Across the front was a banner reading WELCOME MARGARET AND PAUL. We were thrilled to finally meet and Erika, on her hospital-style day bed, overlooking their own lovely woods, was holding the first letter I had written to her, 50 years before.

We didn't stop talking, and Erika was able to listen and obviously enjoyed every moment. When we left the following day, Jurgen hugged me as he said "Yesterday I didn't know you. Now I feel I've known you all my life."

Erika died several years later. We still visit Jurgen when we are in Germany, and their children and grandchildren are fascinated as to how two families, from opposite sides of the world, have such a close friendship.



Rio Olympic Village 2016



Pat McGinn 1988



Federation Riders 1988



Margaret and Paul Wright in Mannheim, 2003



Marie Bray- Medal Day

Patricia Anne Passant age 16 at our home at Mt.Stromlo .
Forestry Station. The house burned down in the fiirestorm of 2003.