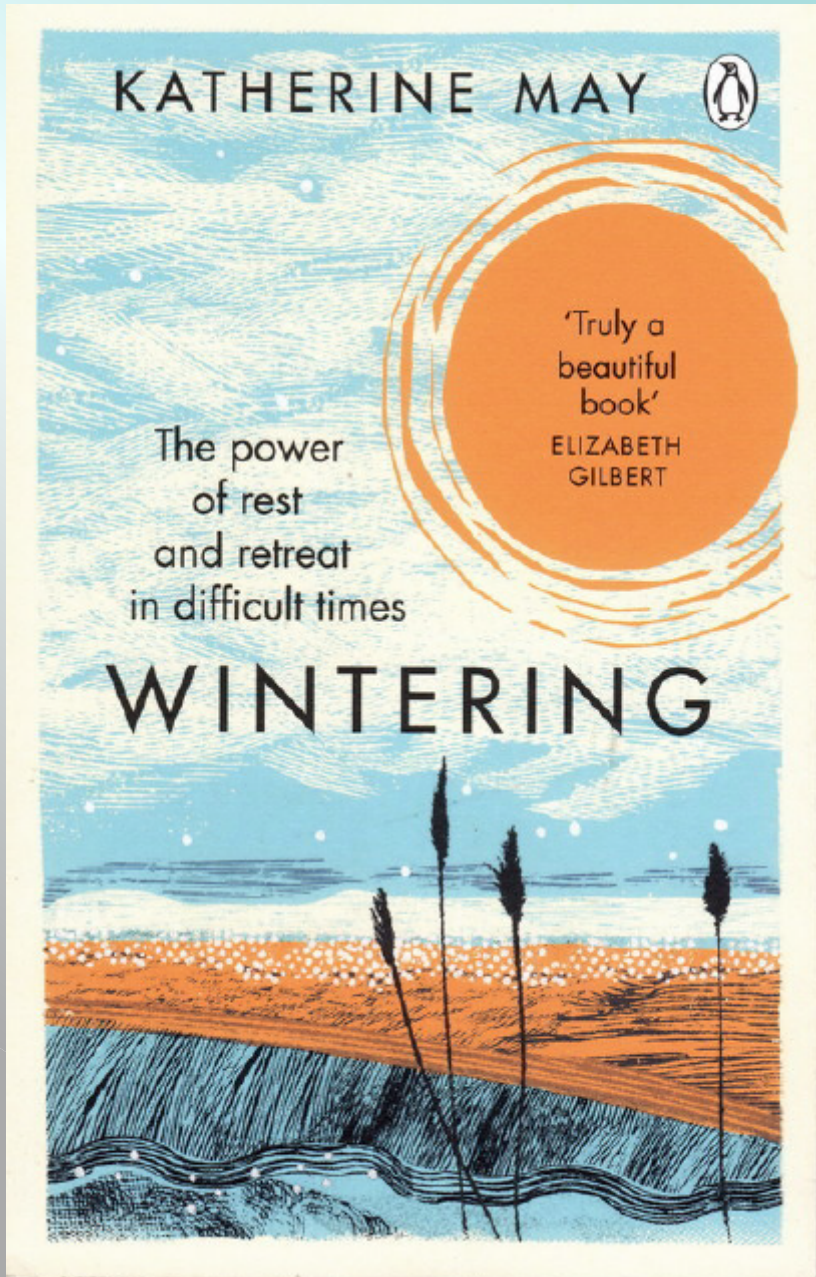


Cat's Eye Weekly

alias *The Ferret*

No. 138

29th May 2021



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One in a million

Motoring Memoirs: 1925
Sunbeam 3 Litre

<http://users.tpg.com.au/genetree/catseye7.html>

Email: genetree@tpg.com.au



Any excuse for stirring up the universe

Edited by
Graham Price

Once was weekly now highly irregular in more ways than one

HIGHLIGHTS

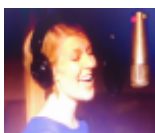
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The editor's desk

Shooting itself in the foot! China's vindictive trade sanctions against Australia have back-fired to a point. Due to intensive trade negotiations by the Australian government, the loss to Australian exporters has mainly been recovered, with the exception so far, of the wine industry. While there has been an approximate \$10bn loss to Australian industries, urgent trade negotiations with other countries has now reached a welcome \$14bn. Meanwhile, the economy in China is hurting the average person in the street. But the Communist Party of China doesn't care about that as long as their ideology is promoted worldwide. China will continue its belligerence as long as it can, regardless of the hurt to its own citizens. We can expect more harsh rhetoric and sanctions from the CCP in its attempt to denigrate Australia and any other country that dares to speak up against their bullying. But China needs to be wary also of upsetting the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan and Thailand, which eventually will form a pact in regard to China's extended expansion within the South China sea and the South Pacific. Given time, the Dragon may yet find itself on the other foot.

Life is not about luxury — it may well be about comfort when you need it, but certainly not about luxurious living, collecting the latest iPhone or smart phone, the latest portrait, the latest furniture, the ultra-designer dog or cat. Some families got one hell of a shock when the Covid-19 restrictions set in. Not being used to almost any form of containment or deprivation as previous generations had, they initially floundered and went into shock. Back to basics — a new form of learning arose, a learning immersed with difficulties that simply had to be overcome with initiative — a learning that life was never going to be all lollipops and roses during this period and certainly not within the foreseeable future. If ever! And the country is now emerging from that shock better for it, better for having to go through trying times where kindness became the salient feature. There was change, and much of it for the better.

Illusions and delusions. American economist and social researcher of black African-American descent, Thomas Sowell, wrote on his Twitter page last year: "We seem to be getting closer and closer to a situation where nobody is responsible for what they did but we are all responsible for what somebody else did." — a sentence which fits the looming woke/cancellation movement. What he sees is the ludicrous assertions that somehow current generations are responsible for what some have done in the past. This attitude is like a rolling stone and has infiltrated some of our schools of recent time, where in at least two Victorian cases, white 'Christian' boys have been told to stand up and be shamed for what they represent. So, what do they represent? At their age while they are still forming in growth they virtually represent nothing political and very little culturally! Elite progressives are picking on the wrong people.

Political correspondent, Mercury O'Proud highlights the problems with China's continuing sneaky *Belt and Road Initiative* ensnaring small and naive countries, which after they cannot pay up, China takes the infrastructure (often a port) for their own. This then gives their military a leg in. Much the same as a finance company will do to you if you cannot continue to make payments. And then there's the Victorian state government! See pages 10-11.

Feedback to Cat's Eye Weekly
is always welcome.
Click onto my purrfect nose!





Restoring Hope

It's all about cooperation and not competitiveness, so Hugh Mackay in his new book *The Kindness Revolution*, writes. We are competitive only within certain factors, but naturally enough, we are designed as cooperating human beings most of the time. Our nature is that we simply cannot help being kind.

Mackay ventures into the recent Covid-19 pandemic, where observations and statistics state unequivocally that humans were more kind to each other — whether family or strangers — than during previous historical upsets. Disasters change things for all and bring people closer together. On a personal scale, drastic interruptions to lifestyle both medical, physical, including property loss, bind humans to one another in a manner not usually seen during times of rose-coloured days. Blue skies are not always there, no matter how much we wish. In actual fact, blue skies tend to lull us into living dangerously, in that we take everything for granted. Storm clouds are a natural part of living, and storm clouds roll into our lives almost every day. We don't like change, yet change is good for us. We don't like the shadows that pass over our lives, but shadows may also be useful to us, challenging us to move forward; to accept that there is no way things can remain as they were.

A blue sky with no clouds is a sky of illusion. Enjoy it while you may, but accept that the clouds will soon come to remove the fantasy that life is all roses and without impending change. All life is change, regardless of how we view it. Mackay points out the fact that even within religion, everything changes. pp33-34 *The Kindness Revolution*: "The multiplicity of Christian denominations attests to this. Martin Luther's rejection of Roman Catholicism and the resulting Reformation and counter-Reformation are the best known of those upheavals, but in lesser ways, splits and schisms are going on all the time. The lack of tension and disputation would be a sign of atrophy. How could it be otherwise when interpretation is the essence of doctrine, and doubt is faith's oxygen? If the truth were self-evident, we wouldn't need to argue; if I knew, I wouldn't need to believe. Faith is like a shoreline endlessly washed by tides of doubt."

Competition, competing, seems to be the way of human life and gives the illusion within sports, education, science, that this is very much life at its best. But not so. Cooperation instead, is an innate fact of the human brain. Without cooperation, football teams would be in a mess. Teams agree upon the rules of competition by cooperating with officials, with umpires, other team members, etc. Sports are really times of co-operation, more so than competition. As this seems, it is a fact of human nature.

We need each other. A salient phrase indeed, but so true. Without the help of kindness the human race would fall apart, fall into a mess of selfishness. That's not what we are programmed to do. Dr. Fiona Kerr, a neuroscientist with Adelaide's NeuroTech Institute, considers that we do have a 'cooperative centre' within the brain, which doesn't surprise us, but at the same time there doesn't appear to be a 'competitive centre' within the human brain. So, cooperation seems well established in human beings, whereas competitiveness comes in second.

But cooperation isn't simply just that. Cooperation doesn't require kindness to affect itself, because even cynical people can be cooperative when it suits them. It is kindness that makes cooperation blessed — the kindness that has no thought for itself, but for the mere act of giving without reward. Mackay has written a whole chapter in his book about cynics who offer their services but at the same time make it know that they feel tiresome about it. Yes, the world is full of people who cast doubt on almost anything and everything, while at the same time giving the appearance that they are a cheerful soul. The outer performance is somewhat spectacular, while inside they are undoubtedly very miserable persons. Cynicism, however, is not the same as scepticism. Sceptics are folk who delay their decisions about fairly certain about a judgment. Cynics, on the other hand — as Mackay ruminates, are those who cherish their own points of view, regardless of anyone





else's, who consider that they are above and beyond the rest of society. *The Kindness Revolution* p137: "The title of this chapter brackets cynicism with indifference. They don't always seem like bedfellows, but each can easily lead to the other. Cynicism is a distancing state of mind, and indifference can morph into *cynical* indifference in the blink of an eye. If I don't care—about you, about the organisation I work for, about the neighbourhood I live in—then cynicism lurks as a real possibility. *Not caring* is tantamount to disengagement, and it's a short step from disengagement to that sneering denigration that refuses to believe in the value of other people. And, of course, it can also work in the opposite direction: *because* I don't believe in the value of people—in their potential for goodness—why should I bother getting involved with them?"

Mackay mentions one of my favourite authors, Nikki Gemmell, columnist for the *Weekend Australian Magazine*. "Nikki Gemmell spells it right out: 'Those friends who don't spark joy—ditch them! Slide away from their world, especially the ones who don't lift you but diminish you in some way.' The same view is expressed with equal force by Julia Baird in her 2020 bestseller, *Phospherence*. Describing competitive, gossipy people, along with jerks and bullies, Baird urges us to run from such people."

Vex King in *Healing is the New High*, Hay House publications, goes a little gentler with this advice on speaking up and setting boundaries: "It's important to understand that setting boundaries isn't a way to get rid of people, but a way to keep them in your life without destroying your inner peace." He goes on to state "Communicate your assertive statement to the person concerned with a calm, clear mind. Avoid throwing it out there in the middle of an argument or when you're already feeling triggered." And "Stick to the boundaries you've set. If you've known the person concerned for a long time and have never built healthy boundaries before, initially, they may test them. This is normal, but it gives you the opportunity to make it clear that you are serious — you don't want your needs to be neglected any longer, and overstepping your boundaries comes with a consequence."

Back to Hugh Mackay. Institutions hold us together. They are there to help, even when family or friends cannot. We are blessed as humans that we have evolved within society to have numerous institutions of care, whether they are religious, cultural, sporting, legal, or medical. Mackay calls these the scaffolding that holds us all together. *The Kindness Revolution* p156: "We normally think of scaffolding as something that can be removed when a construction project is complete. In the case of a society, the project is never complete; societies are like organisms that are constantly evolving and maturing, decaying and reviving, reforming and rejuvenating. So the need for the protection of institutional scaffolding never ends, as long as we continue to fall short of perfection."

Later chapters deal with the knowledge that our life is imperfect and that our influence endures long after we have gone. It is a timely book, published amid the continuing Covid-19 crisis. It's about courage and hope in the face of what appears to be threatening doom. It is about spreading kindness. It's about carrying on, realising that whatever comes we still have a future to look forward to. And though many of a youthful age may not realise it, it is about your presence after you have gone. *The Kindness Revolution* p229: "We are all a work in progress and, curiously, the work does not stop at death. Life's work—especially love's work—goes on; mainly in the influence we have exerted on those whose lives we have touched. It is the recollection of our presence in their lives, rather than any particular achievements, that people will carry with them after we've gone." •

The Kindness Revolution

Allen & Unwin paperback

Publication date May 2021

The Animal Rehoming Service

***Please only apply if you fit all of the criteria. Thanks.**

Buddy (male) and

Lola (female) are 10 year old, 5kg desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped Maltese x Miniature Schnauzer siblings, who are looking for a loving home together. Sorry they can't be separated as they love each other. They're very affectionate little pooches who love to eat, sleep and play together. They also love their daily walks. Buddy and Lola would suit a relaxed all-adult home or one with older, gentle, dog-savvy teenagers. Buddy has had 14 teeth removed but regardless of this, he still eats perfectly well. Lola's teeth required no work. They've lived with a cat and are usually fine when out and about with other dogs, although Buddy does sometimes overcompensate thinking he's a bit of a macho man and will try to take on the occasional big dog. They enjoy an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Regular grooming would also be required. Buddy and Lola's combined adoption fee is \$1000

Microchip Numbers: Buddy: 953010000388197 and Lola: 900088000312412 Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709 If interested, **please call Michaela on 0409213131** (Eltham North based, but we go to you).





The Animal Rehoming Service

For further information, please log onto <http://www.tars.org.au/>
The Animal Rehoming Service Inc. is a registered charity.

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible. (ABN: 51 275 837 567)



Leo is a 12 month old desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 20kg male Blue Heeler who's looking for a loving home. He's an active, playful, affectionate, loyal and intelligent boy who loves a cuddle as well as playing with his toys, playing fetch and going on his daily walks or runs.

Leo would suit an active all-adult home or one with older, dog savvy children. He loves people and would thrive as a cherished member of the family.

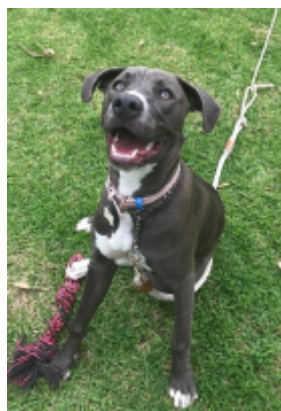


He's lived with other dogs and would really love a home with another playful dog for company. He's also lived with a cat.

He enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors.

Leo's adoption fee is \$850 Microchip Number: 991003000525809 Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709 If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131

Happy is an 8 month old desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 23kg female Blue English Staffy x possible Weimaraner who's looking for a loving home. She's much taller and leaner than a typical Staffy and given her silver coat and eye colour, we suspect somewhere along the line a Weimaraner was involved. She's a playful and loving girl who can be shy around strangers but is fine once she trusts you. She would suit an all-adult home or one with gentle, dog-savvy, older teenagers.



Happy needs a home where she can be an integral and beloved part of the family. Someone who's home during the day would be a bonus. A garden is essential. Happy is an active girl who goes on two walks a day — we would like this to continue in her new home. She loves other dogs and enjoys playing with them at the park. She would thrive in a home with another dog for

company. She's never lived with a cat but is afraid of the one over the fence. She enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. She knows basic commands and happily sleeps all night in her covered crate. Please note all adoptions involve a meet and greet, property inspection and a trial period. Happy's adoption fee is \$1200. Microchip Number: 953010004369232. Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709 If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Malvern based, but we go to you).

Readvertised: I'm still looking for a loving home!

(Please only apply if you fit all of the criteria below).

Nully (pronounced like 'woolly') is a 4 year old desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 16kg female Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, who's looking for a loving home.

A very experienced dog owner is required. Someone with Wheaten experience would be ideal.

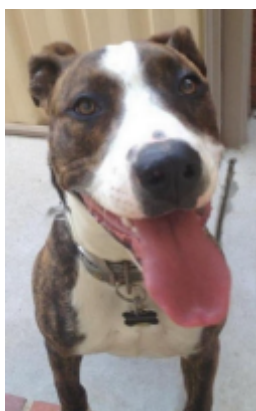
She's a very playful girl who enjoys her daily walks and is also very affectionate towards people. She would really love to be an integral part of the family, in all-adult home or one with older, dog savvy teenagers.



Nully has anxiety as she was attacked as a puppy, so she requires an experienced and patient owner, committed to helping her socialise with other dogs. (She's aggressive towards smaller dogs, having drawn blood twice). She's much better with larger dogs, Labrador size and upwards. She would suit being the sole pet of the home or living with a confident, large desexed male dog as a companion. She's not good with cats or other small animals. She enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Regular grooming would be required. She's also just had her teeth cleaned. Nully's adoption fee is \$950. If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Thornbury based, but we go to you).

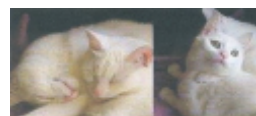
Jax is a 9 year old desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 27kg male American Staffordshire Terrier, who's looking for a loving home. He's a very loving, active, playful and cheeky natured boy who would suit an all-adult home or one with older, dog savvy teenagers. Despite his age he's still very fit.

Jax has happily lived with two female cavalier spaniels, but is otherwise not good with dogs that he doesn't know and will occasionally lunge at other dogs when on lead. He therefore needs an experienced, calm, patient and physically strong owner who can help him to socialise. (This method is great for dogs that pull and he's started to use it with some success.



https://youtu.be/E_oJoyaHr4)

He barks at very tall men with beards, so we suspect he may have been abused in a previous home. He spent a lot of his life as an outside dog, so now that he's allowed indoors, he likes to lay next to you and sometimes on you... yes, he thinks he's a lap dog! Jax enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Jax' adoption fee is \$450 Microchip Number: 953010000124508. Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE10070. If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Altona North based, but we go to you).



We are now much loved in our new home and very grateful to TARS Inc. Such a new lease of life!



Cover picture: *Wintering*

There are times during one's life when things come out of left field and hit you like an icy blast. You are frozen. You weren't prepared for it, didn't want it, and hoped it would disappear fast. But it didn't. It stuck to you like a leech, its vice-like jaws clinging to you seemingly forever.

This is not a book for everyone. The immediate chapters are slow and almost cumbersome in their description, but the book blooms and flowers as one reads into the heart of it. Earlier chapters could have been drastically edited, but once the reader is one third of the way through, the author gets to the nitty gritty, which is metamorphism. Change.

Winter sometimes brings solitude, but it also brings the opportunity to re-assess one's life. Where are you going? How are you going to manage the bad times? Katherine May has gone through deep trauma during the summers and autumns of her life. Some of her friends, also. It's something that young and 'innocent' folk seem not to know, that all people eventually go through some form of trauma in their lives, and sometimes not once but twice or more. There are no guarantees.

But winter now foreshadows a quieter time, a time of recuperation. All the hectic living and shocks during the previous seasons has been replaced by contemplation and an observance that she has been virtually living in two worlds. What she needs to do now is find the join.

Wintering pp78-80: "We are . . . in the habit of imagining our lives to be linear; a long march from birth to death in which we mass our powers, only to surrender them again, all the while slowly losing our youthful beauty. This is a brutal untruth. Life meanders like a path through the woods. We have seasons when we flourish, and seasons when the leaves fall from us, revealing our bare bones. Given time, they grow again.

"The tree is waiting. It has everything ready. Its fallen leaves are mulching the forest floor, and its roots are drawing up the extra winter moisture, providing a firm anchor against seasonal storms. Its ripe cones and nuts are providing food in this scarce time for mice and squirrels, and its bark is hosting hibernating insects and providing a source of nourishment for hungry deer. It is far from dead. It is, in fact, the life and soul of the wood. It's just getting on with it quietly. It will not burst into life in the spring. It will just put on a new coat and face the world again."

Which is what most of us can and will do, come the winter and the following spring. We have learnt through summer and autumn, that like nature, everything has its time. We have learnt that trauma and sickness is not the end of the world. *Wintering* p83: "I am sent to a dietician, who provides me with a few simple new rules for eating, to which I react with bad grace. 'It's only for a few days,' says the dietician, mystified. 'It's not forever.' "

It's not forever! Trauma is not forever, it will change again, morph itself into another form of life. Acceptance of a time through the winter of our lives is sometimes necessary so as to get through it. A time of wintering.

Wintering by Katherine May — an interesting book, perhaps not for all, but certainly for those who think deeply and have some understanding of trauma and the sudden changes in their life. •



Rider/Penguin paperback

Long listed for the Wainwright Price 2020

\$AUD18.25 — our copy from *The Avenue Bookshop*

Trauma recovery help: <https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/recovery/>

MS Australia

**Multiple Sclerosis
needs your help**

Log in for the latest news at:
<http://www.msaustralia.org.au/>

Wire

Women's Information Referral Exchange

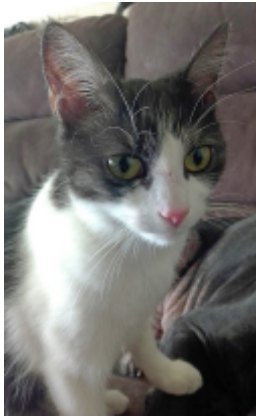
One in three calls WIRE receives from women are related to family violence. Wire: 372 Spencer Street, West Melbourne 3003. Telephone Support Service Line 1300 134 130 Mon-Fri 9.00-5.00. <http://www.wire.org.au/>



Pet medical crisis

from Jennifer Hunt

Schmellybelle:



Schmellybelle' - Funny name but not funny when you can't help her. Logan adopted the 10 week old kitten with the funniest name we have run into for quite some time, 'Schmellybelle'. 'Schmellybelle' is now 18 months old and the gifted mouse hunter is best mates with her canine pal Grimm. The two pets that mean the world to Seven are barely apart and the three of them have a beautiful bond.

Logan noticed his cat hadn't urinated for a few days and seemed strangely lethargic and quite ill. Logan is on a pension, but knew that the little cat would need veterinary help to see what the issue was with her health. "Schmellybelle means the world to me. She is best friends with my staffy and the 3 of us all cuddle up together on a cold night. I don't have any friends or family to support me so my cat and dog are why I am still alive today. Please help me." Logan wrote via the

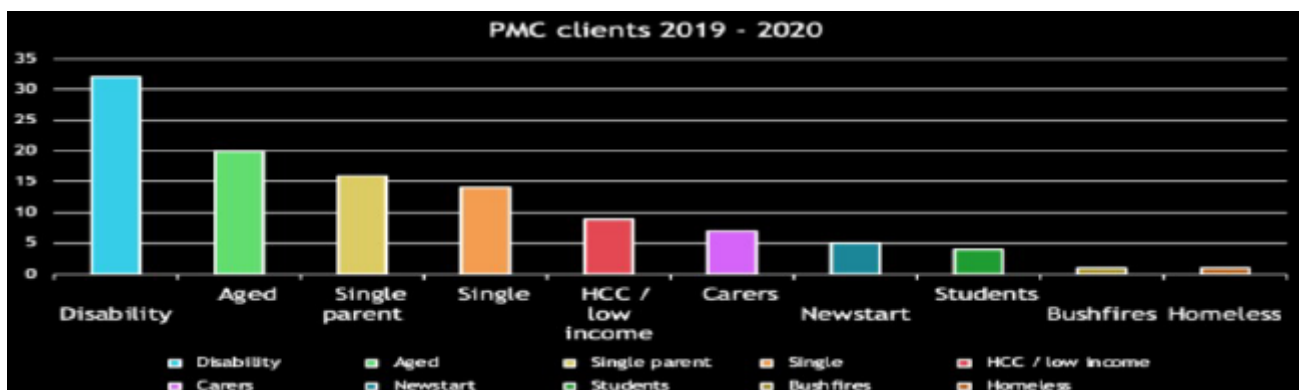
PMC website application.

Thanks to the help from PMC and the wonderful team at the Terang Veterinary clinic, "Schmellybelle" was diagnosed with a urinary tract infection and was given the antibiotics and treatment needed for a full recovery.

The awesome threesome are back together as the female cat recovers and gets back to her duties hunting rodents and loving her staffy buddy along with her dad Logan. **Thanks for the support for what we do and who we help, people like Seven rely day to day on the love and assistance of their loved pets and they make the world of difference to their health and well being.** •



A breakdown of where PMC is helping out within the community 2019-2020



Pet Medical Crisis

A not for profit fund to save pets whose owners cannot afford their emergency care.

www.petmedicalcrisis.com.au

Email: petmedicalcrisis@gmail.com

PMC is now on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PetMedicalCrisis/>

Also, a walking harness — 'Dog-A-Long' — is available to assist your dog to become more mobile — supports dogs with hind leg problems associated with ageing, arthritis, hip & spinal problems. For suitability check with your Vet.



A Bridge over Troubled Water

“When you’re weary, and feeling small, when tears are in your eyes I will dry them all. I’m on your side Oh, when times are rough, and friends just can’t be found, like a bridge over troubled water, I will lay me down.” Remember? Almost a lifetime ago, yet extremely relative to today’s age.

And when life brings hits and knocks that make it difficult to carry on, what we all need is for someone to take us by the hand and inject some help into us.

This is what happened to Jen Malenke in 2015. Jen, struggling to make it on Broadway and helping out as a drama/singing teacher for children at Long beach, California, had been devastated by an accident to her mother — hit by a drunk driver going through a red light and which then meant some months in rehabilitation. Previously, Jen’s father had donated one of his kidneys to her brother, Brian, but this was now in a state of rejection. Jen was found to be a match and offered her kidney to Brian, but their mother didn’t survive and died as a result of the crash injuries to her body. This heavy blow to the family put the kidney transplant on hold for a time.

The operation was eventually carried out and was successful at the time, though there were complications in future years. Jen’s career on Broadway was also put on hold.

A short video turned up at the headquarters of *The Power of Music* — an organisation dedicated to helping struggling singers — which caught the eye of the producers, and in particular singer Josh Groban. What would be revealed to Jen later on, was that it was her brother, Brian, who had secretly nominated her.

Jen who had done so much for others was now about to receive a push from those in the industry who knew how to promote. Josh and a colleague from *The Power of Music* turned up at the California Distinguished School where Jen was acting in front of a classroom full of young people. A complete surprise!

Jen, with tumultuous cheering from the children, was whisked away to a recording studio, where after numerous false starts, she recorded *A Bridge over Troubled Water* . . . but that was not all. It was arranged — again as a surprise to her — for her to sing a duet with Josh Groban in concert. So, for all her goodness and the sacrifices she had made over the years, came the reward. Jen has gone on from strength to strength on Broadway and at other venues. Her dream is fulfilled, all because of that bridge over troubled water. •



Jen Malenke in tears when discovering that it was her brother, Brian, who nominated her. Images courtesy Youtube/Jen Malenke

2015 Bridge over troubled water.
Josh Groban, Jen Malenke
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lca0wYLFmtg>



The Power of Music, 5 May
2015, Josh Groban & Jen
Malenke
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7rb2-GI98I>

The Council to Homeless Persons

Established in 1972, the Council to Homeless Persons is the peak Victorian body representing individuals and organisations with a stake or interest in homelessness. Our mission is to work towards ending homelessness through leadership in policy, advocacy and sector development.

<http://www.chp.org.au/>

See our Consumer Participation Resource Kit at:
http://www.chp.org.au/public_library/cpkit/index.shtml



Survival

A re-interpretation of *Yes to Life*
originally from CEW 134, July 2020

The author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl, gave several lectures in 1946, nine months after being released from a concentration camp in Germany.

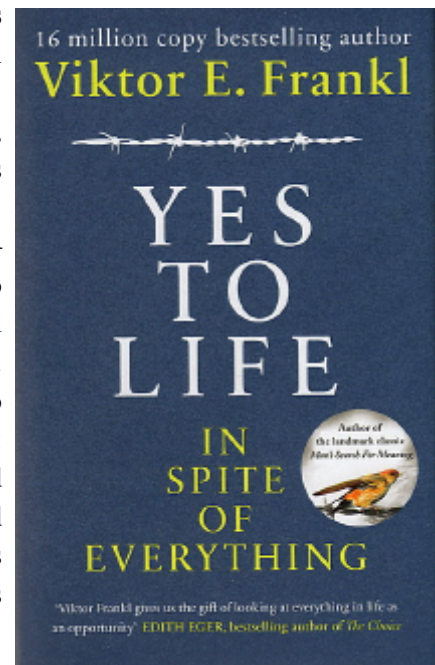
It is somewhat of a miracle that this book, now published in English by Rider, is available to world readers. It was apparently published in German during the 1940s or 50s, went out of print and was largely forgotten about.

Frankl speaks of his experiences in concentration camps. The book affirms — as did *Man's Search for Meaning* — that in the midst of suffering there is life, no matter what terrors are before us. While undergoing severe illness there is still meaning to life. It doesn't disappear simply because we are in pain or are incapacitated.

When speaking about the usefulness or otherwise of the elderly who enter into what may be determined by some as an unproductive era of their life, Frankl states: "Just think how the existence of an old woman is, sitting there at home, dozing and half paralysed in the armchair by the window, and yet: how she is surrounded and cosseted by the love of her children and grandchildren! Surrounded by this love she is this particular grandmother — no more no less. But, as such, within this love she is as indispensable and irreplaceable as another person who is still working."

Frankl goes on to illuminate the courage and strength that often comes through suffering. *Yes to Life* pp111-123: "Many of you who have not lived through the concentration camp will be astonished, and will ask me how a human being can endure all the things I have been talking about. I assure you, he who has experienced and survived all of that is even more amazed than you are! But do not forget this: the human psyche seems to behave in some ways like a vaulted arch: an arch that has become dilapidated can be supported by placing extra load on it. The human psyche also appears to be strengthened by experiencing a burden (at least to a particular degree and within certain limits). This is how, and this is the only way we can understand it, many a weakling was able to leave the concentration camp in a better, stronger state of mind, as it were, than when he had entered it . . . The most important thing I want to say regarding him concerns something that will, no doubt, greatly astonish you: it is the fact that it takes many days before the liberated persons is able to enjoy his liberation. He must actually and literally relearn how to be happy . . . And in spite of everything, no human suffering can be compared to anyone else's because it is part of the nature of suffering that is the suffering of a particular person, that it is *his or her own* suffering — that is 'magnitude' is dependent solely on the sufferer, that is, on the person; a person's solitary suffering is just as unique and individual as is every person . . . On average, people are too sluggish to shoulder their responsibilities. And this is where education for responsibility begins. Certain, the burden is heavy, it is difficult not only to recognise responsibility but also to commit to it. To say yes to it, and to life. But there have been people who have said yes despite all difficulties. And when the inmates in the Buchenwald concentration camp sang in their song, 'We still want to say yes to life', they did not only sing about it, but also achieved it many times — they and many of us in the other camps as well. And they achieved it under unspeakable conditions, external and internal conditions that we have already spoken enough about today. So shouldn't we all be able to achieve it today in, after all, incomparably milder circumstances? To say yes to life is not only meaningful under all circumstances — because life itself is — but it is also possible under all circumstances."

Victor Frankl was released from his concentration camp on 13 April 1945, taking over the management of the neurological department of the Vienna Policlinic, while at the same time writing two books. He lectured on suicide and the meaning of life; set up youth counselling centres, and contributed much to a society reeling from the disastrous effects of war. He led many people out of the path of misery into light, simply by affirming his own experiences behind barbed wire that life was always better than the alternative. •

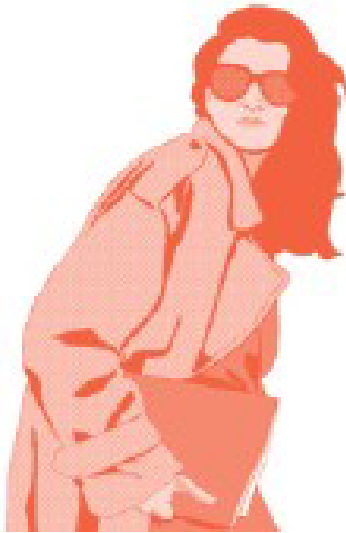


*Yes To Life
In Spite Of Everything*
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Mercury O'Proud

Political correspondent



We may not like to think about it, but there is always something waiting in the wings for us to lose, for loss is a significant part of being human — it is the way of nature to ensure that change occurs. How we cope with it is always an individual response, depending mostly upon what kind of an upbringing we had. Change is embedded in all of nature, human or otherwise. We cannot escape it. Jodi Mitchell's folk song *I've looked at life from both sides now*, comes to a conclusion with "But something's lost but something's gained in living every day."

To gain out of loss is everyone's opportunity. It's always there, staring at us in the face, but sometimes requires the sudden shock of possibly dramatic occurrences to awaken it. Numerous people have learnt that lesson during the recent Covid-19 debacle. They turned to new directions; no point snivelling about what they could not control. What they could control, however, was within the home. Thousands of people learnt new skills while in isolation; skills that they will carry with them for the remainder of their lives. They left certain losses behind them and in a sense, evolved. No longer the same people. What was initially perceived as a heavy hurt, became in fact, growth.

Pardon me if I muse about my own profession. People often think to themselves there are journalists and then there are journalists. These days there seems to be a widening gap between the two. Something very weird seems to be occurring with Australia's own ABC, but I'll get to that later. There are some journalists in this country who seem to have a hold on sensitivity — an openness to explore the lighter and more pleasant aspects of life. These are rare birds, who whistle elegantly into the fragrant breeze, who savour the life that has been given to them without moaning, and who selflessly pass it on to their fellow humans. If I was in charge of honours, I would be handing out valuable medals. But, they would probably look me in the eye and say "that's totally unnecessary."

Here we go: Monica Dux, who writes now and then for *The Age* newspaper; Nikki Gemmell, who has a weekly article for *The Australian Weekend Magazine*; Anson Cameron whose editor's at *The Age*, give him a prime spot just inside the main page of a Saturday. There are others of note, but I have chosen these three for my specific praise because of their lightness of being. But, we need more in these difficult times.

So, the ABC is being sued left right and centre for errors, even blatant unwarranted attacks upon the character of people. Why should we be surprised? Dear old Auntie, who meant so much to Australians in past decades has lost the plot. People shake their heads in amazement; what used to be steady and reliable news and commentary seems to have fallen victim to minor influences, or horror of horrors, an inbred group mentality of woke/cancel culture attitude that has perhaps insinuated itself into the sacred bowels of the corporation. Apologies and payments of large sums to those who have been slandered by the ABC have been issued by the ABC management of recent times, but the front-line journos do not seem to have received the message. The blood-letting continues. They keep getting their facts wrong. So, we have to ask, what kind of a culture is brewing within the grey and once hallowed halls and offices of Auntie these days? It reminds me of the red witch from *The Wizard of Oz* who sneered at Dorothy: "I'll get you, my sweetie!" This appears to be the ABC's current affairs attitude these days where presenters are acting like Don Quixote tilting at windmills — out to get anyone who steps out of what the ABC considers, a set (and to us almost invisible) line. One recent incident was their slandering of the indigenous social worker and deputy mayor of Alice Springs, Janita Nampijinpa Price. Totally uncalled for, and Auntie had the honesty (after a time) to admit it, apologise, and offer compensation. But it should never have gone that far. An atmosphere within Auntie these days seems to forget that human beings as individuals have a right to opinions without being slandered by journalists who have other slanted opinions and an attitude that they are always right.

Auntie is certainly not what she (or he) used to be, that is absolutely certain. Can it get worse? Possibly so if they do not learn any lessons from their continuing errors.

When you run out of money and cannot continue to pay off your car, the finance company will re-possess the vehicle. It is no longer yours. You have defaulted on the loan. This is virtually what occurs to countries that have allowed China to build infrastructures such as ports, railways, etc. under the *Belt and Road Initiative* on their land, and cannot continue to pay China for the cost involved. This is what has occurred in Sri Lanka and other small countries — where China has said 'Thank you very much, you can no longer pay so we shall now take control of your port,' and so on. Therefore, with that control, China can infiltrate its military under the guise of civilian employees. China can dock its warships at that port — no problem, easy as slicing into a tomato. This is why the Australian Federal Government has torn up Victorian State Government's *Belt and Road* agreement with China. Definitely not in Australia's interest, security-wise. Victoria was, to put it bluntly, bloody naive in accepting such a proposal in the first instant.

A blind beggar could have seen that decades ago, but not the Victorian Labor government under the leadership of premier Dan Andrews who is borrowing and spending as if there is no need to pay anything back. Now, the Communist Party



of China is swinging its *Belt & Road Initiative* into Australia's South Pacific neighbours, such as Vanuatu and more closer to home, Papua New Guinea. Beijing intends to build a large port city and associated fisheries park at PNG's Daru Island, a mere 200km from the tip of Australia, where quite simply, China's military warships may dock. And where, when the day eventually arrives that PNG cannot pay back the loan, China will be in the perfect position to take over the port and any associated infrastructure, which in reality would change the island from a civilian port to a designated Chinese military port. And PNG would have absolutely no jurisdiction on that for what is usually a term of 99 years. It seems to be Christmas tidings for PNG at the present moment by accepting China's seemingly benevolent offer, but it may well be Armageddon in a few years to come. The eye of the Dragon will be sitting almost on the tip of Australia.

While the Communist Party of China spreads itself around the globe using considerable devious means, back home in China it is playing with fire. Chinese scientists are playing God with their blending of human and monkey cells in an attempt to create a combined monkey-human being. Why? Previously, former American Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, says he suspects — though has not the exact evidence — that Covid-19 originally escaped from an experimental laboratory in Wuhan, China. There are too many unanswered questions that China is not willing to share. It is well known that China has been experimenting with viruses for a long time, well known that Chinese virus scientists are connected to the military, well known that China represses much information that attempts to be released from laboratories. Scientists are continuously watched. The greatest weapon of all time would be a virus that would wipe out much of your enemy, and the Communist Party of China is fully aware of those implications for its military.

While to our horror, virus experiments within the laboratories of China will still continue, the leaked information that China is experimenting with the blending of cells in order to produce a monkey-human hybrid is more than shocking — it is a horror story. So far, only hybrid embryos are involved, but . . . ? The ethics of this are simply non-existent. It may seem far fetched and the subject of science fiction, but here is a beginning that could end in our worst nightmares — an army of laboratory raised monkey-humans implanted with microchips to act on military command. And if you think that Covid-19 didn't come out of Communist China for reasons to us unknown, then think again. •

It's not okay

Under the heading of 'The Kids are not all right,' Rosemary Neill calls for a halt on television programmes slanted toward teenagers, which in reality are so close to porn, it is hardly humorous. Writing in *The Australian Review Magazine* April 17-18, Rosemary outs so-called innocent television and Netflix shows as downright violent and ultra sex-laden programmes — all designed for the teenage market. Welcome to the hypersexualised world of the Elite, writes Rosemary. Welcome to some of Netflix's current teenage dramas where wives can have sex with their teenage lovers. It's all there for the viewing. Better believe it.

Do parents know about this? Obviously not, so drugged into their own lifestyle and their own drama likes, never much questioning what their teenage boys and girls are watching.

Subtle sexual programming by Netflix and other video and film-makers, encourages acting out in real life, only for the teen to find that it doesn't really work that way. Life is not the dreaming of the luscious screen, but hard and sometimes cruel reality. Rosemary continues: "Wealthy teenagers who insist on their right to practice incest; religious school-kids having sex in public places and high school students who look 25 (because they are being played by 25-year-olds) involved in explicitly depicted threesomes . . . are found across cable and streaming networks.' Believe it!

"As the huge audience reach of dramas like, *Elite*, *Gossip Girl* and *Sex Education* demonstrate, if sex sells, then explicit teenage sex can be a goldmine. Freed from the expectations of advertisers that free-to-air networks must adhere to, cable and streaming dramas know that notoriety drives views and revenue in a crowded drama field.

"In raunchy teen dramas, girls are presented as having insatiable sexual appetites and the same clinical approach to casual sex and young men who are, equally reductively, always up for it. We see this in *Tiny Pretty Things*, a recently launched Netflix show, which is set in a ruthlessly Chicago ballet school. This superficial series is propelled by an attempted murder mystery, elegant dance sequences and a subplot about sleazy, wealthy donors who prey on young dance students. . . in one scene, the ambitious but misguided 16-year-old dancer Bette attempts to start a threesome with her boyfriend and a world-renowned choreographer. The choreographer is dating her sister and has a secret affair with another school-age student, while Bette's boy-friend is also having sex with his gay room-mate."

Is this the type of viewing that you wish for your teenager? Yes, it's all getting out of hand and so easy for teenage girls and boys to access. And, be warned, this is trickling down to even younger children. How far can it go in this libertarian world of ours where morals are not what they used to be?

So, what are your teenagers watching and are you bothering to protest?



One in a million

an exceedingly remarkable man

My pal Laurence would have been 104 this day 16th of May, but sadly he didn't make it by a couple of months. The angels took him on the 11th of March, when he was only 103 and ten months. He was a rare bird, a remarkable man — who, with only primary school education turned himself into an engineer without having further technical or university training. That is a rather extraordinary situation, the likes of which we shall not see these days.

Laurence James Dick was born in 1917 during the First World War. There appeared to be nothing unusual in his parentage — his father was of Scottish descent and his mother, Germanic. But both were long time residents and descendants of Australian soil so there appeared to be no resentment from any of his mother, Eliza's, neighbours on that score during Australia's entry into two world wars with Germany. Laurie, as he was usually known, was brought up in the lower-to middle-class back streets of the suburb of Prahran, Victoria, and later at Windsor. And like all Prahran kids of the 1920s he was a street kid and proud of it. His mother introduced him and his younger sister, Dorothy, to skating at the long defunct Palais skating rink in St. Kilda, where Laurie and Dot would eventually win prestigious prizes for high speed skating. Laurie often spoke with pride about those days when Dot would spin toward him on the rink and he would lift her high as they continued to zoom and whiz around to the amazement of spectators.

Laurie's earliest obsession was organ music and he wished to become a professional organist, but his Scottish father had other ideas. We'll put you into a boot and shoe manufacturing apprenticeship. A daunting prospect, thought Laurie. The surprising result was that Laurie excelled in this work and eventually came to set up his own boot and shoe workshop in Inkerman Street, St. Kilda, which prospered almost beyond belief, then in time expanding into a retail outlet in Sandringham which continued for almost 10 years. And all of this was accomplished with the vision of one eye, for Laurie had lost the sight of his right eye in an accident before he was 21.

While he was still young, the love of his life had come along — June Goon, introduced by his sister Dorothy. June was from a mixed Chinese/Caucasian family and the instant Laurie set eyes on her he decided that she was the one for him. Such a beauty. And so it was, they were married Dec 12 1942 at the St. George's Presbyterian Church, Chapel Street, East St. Kilda. After living in a flat above Inkerman Street, East St. Kilda, for a time, Laurie and June moved into 2 Byron St., Elwood, which he had purchased in 1944. This was to become something so wonderful, not only for a happy and dedicated marriage, but also as the site for some engineering feats that Laurie set his hand to over the next 50-60 years. At the rear of the property Laurie had built an engineering workshop and a garage. Under the tutelage of several friends, including Charlie who was an engineer at Luna Park, Laurie's gift for almost instant photographic memory bloomed. If he saw it, he could produce it. It was almost as simple as that. Give him some workshop manuals and he would turn almost anything to a physical conclusion.

When World War II presented itself, Laurie turned up at the recruiting office in Melbourne and passed the physical examination with flying colours. He would have been drafted except for one thing — apparently he popped his right glass eye out and said something to the effect "What about this!" As the war drew on, Laurie with his small group of employees, was in a position to supply the defence forces with boots for troops.

One of his great loves, apart from skating, was motorcycle dirt track riding. Laurie re-built and modified racing motorcycles to suit and ploughed around his friend's dirt track at Tracey's Speedway, Maribyrnong. The thrill and exhilaration of the dirt track riding, together with his earlier skating episodes at the Palais rink, somehow imbued him with taking calculated risks. This was to come with a sudden halt when working on a motorcycle with his cousin; he accidentally popped out his right eye. So, the end to most things in his life? Not so, thought Laurie and for some reason known to nature alone, all his other senses were intensely highlighted.



June and Laurie (front row right side) a night out with an organ recital at Caldwell's Music Centre, Melbourne



During the war years Laurie served the war effort by allowing his treasured Packard 120 Touring Sedan to be used for emergencies, which meant that the army could take the car for their immediate use at any time. The upshot of this was that Laurie was to keep the car full of petrol 24 hours a day with the express supply of extra petrol coupons, supplies of which were handed out by administration to him, which suited him immensely. Times were hard; almost everything including petrol was rationed. Many vehicle owners had resorted to installing 'charcoal gas producers' on their cars as a large canister or two, which generally sat on either on the front or rear bumpers, with most buses having the balloon like bag on the top. The gas was pumped into the engine, so taking the place of petrol which was rationed. You only had so many ration tickets per gallon of petrol. With the lack of petrol coupons, the easy way out for the old cars, was to install a gas producer spewing out noxious gases behind as they rolled along. The performance of the vehicle wasn't quite the same, but most managed.

It was during this period that Laurie began to consider expanding his business enterprises, and shortly after the war he became a repair agent for Morris and Austin cars. He had also accepted a deal with a South Australian agent to receive, repair, and re-sell cars that had failed high purchase agreements. Not to be left puzzling what to do next, Laurie had taken on as an agent, Victa mowers, to repair same. He had also built his own motor lawn mowers and was proficient in modifying and repairing them to suit his own requirements and any purchasers who might be interested. He built a lawn edger and may have patented it but seems it was lost among his various enterprises of the time. Next, Laurie's ever burgeoning curiosity turned itself to wondering if he could build caravans. So, with the help of his son, Douglas, he commenced what was to become Elwood Caravans, where for numerous years during the 1950s and early 1960s Laurie would build and advertise them for sale or for hire. These two berth and four berth caravans were advertised regularly in *The Argus* newspaper and *The Weekly Times*. According to Laurie, most of the business went well, but there were times when people attempted to defraud him by virtually disappearing with the rental caravans. Keeping an eagle eye out for change, Laurie noticed an opportunity to patent a safety-chain connecting link for caravans. No stopping our Laurie. Where there was a need, he was onto it like a panther. Meanwhile, June kept the house and didn't interfere in Laurie's professional life. Laurie bought her a car which enabled her to have freedom of movement, then he upgraded it to a Morris 1100 which June loved driving. Laurie's father-in-law kept market gardens around the Moorabin area and Laurie often told tales of how after supplying the Melbourne Market, June's father-in-law would fall asleep in his cart while the horse would nose its way back home under its own steam. Laurie always said he had a great love for his father-in-law and took him to dine in what may well have been the first Chinese restaurant in the City of Melbourne.



But his great love during all of this time was for organs, especially the electronic Wurlitzer, and the day of pride which came when he installed a one into his own home. Eventually, he became an organist with the Regent Theatre in Melbourne, where he reckoned that the favourite tune of the time was *The Teddy Bear's Picnic*. But Laurie was not simply content with playing these organs, Wurlitzers included — he decided that he could rebuild them. So it was. He became proficient in rebuilding organs, and installed one in the Dendy Theatre in Brighton, among others in the city of Melbourne and in Adelaide. Old black and white photos show re-built organs being loaded for transportation onto heavy semi-trailers outside his home at 2 Byron St., Elwood. Laurie didn't deal in half measures. Of course, there was a downside to all of this. According to Laurie, organ society members rang him continuously for re-installation projects, which eventually he had to reject due to the availability of time. It's a wonder he had any time left for himself and June during those days! But he and June managed it well, raising both Douglas and his younger sister Beverly.



Organ photos by Lisa Beaumont

Apart from Laurie's boot and shoe factory in East St. Kilda, he had set up a paint and spray panel works named Elwood Auto Finishes. Was there no stopping this man? In his private time he had also organised a recording studio named *Pagoda Recordings*, which was mainly used for recording organ music. He had appeared on radio Southern FM, where he compeered the *Theatre Organ Show*. At home he had re-designed the solid brick villa by knocking out a wall to make two rooms into one, completely built a set of kitchen cabinets — wall to wall — which are still in immaculate order to this day and other refinements to the home, including changing bathroom fittings — no doubt with approval of plumbing authorities. One of his major changes to the home was to install under-floor ventilation where it



Laurie's modification two rooms into one

was missing. There was to be no mould in Laurie and June's house. Noting Laurie's expertise in home renovations, other people called on him for advice. Several times during later decades Laurie's home had been burgled, so he set to designing improvements to windows and doors that eventually made the home impregnable. Laurie had again put his engineering workshop to good purpose. His design for security doors for the rear and front of the property was substantial and absolutely burglar proof. Check out the photo of the front security door!



Still in prime condition from 1944 — 77 years



The writing was on the wall. During the 1970s Laurie could see that Australian industries could not compete with the cheap imports coming in from China, so he sold his boot and shoe business and commenced a lawn mowing, tree lopping and gardening business with his nephew, Dot's son Robert. This continued for 10 years or more with some fascinating experiences. Sometimes when there was trouble on the ground with insidious people approaching the now elderly Laurie, he would have a code that he would call out to Robert up in the trees. "There's someone down here who wishes to speak with you. Bring your stripping axe with you!" Robert would slide down his ropes with his stripping axe in his hand and awkward situations would brighten immediately. Laurie told of the time a transvestite came up behind him as he was working. The transvestite with lips rouged rosily and a dress that floated in the wind and carrying a flagon wanted Laurie to have a drink with him/her. Laurie, as a teetotaler

refused and the transvestite pulled out a large kitchen knife and came at him. He said he never had swung over a fence so fast in his life. Apparently the police came by later and found that the transvestite had taken his own life with the knife he held.

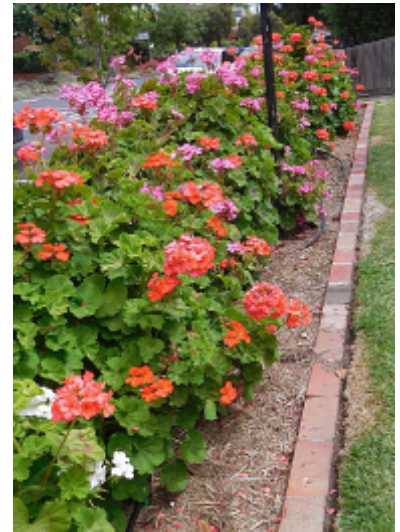
Tragedy stuck Laurie with the death of June in 1988, due to Alzheimer's. He was also to lose his only son to the same disease in later years. Laurie carried on. He re-married in 1999 to Michelle and they spent some time travelling Asia and America. Laurie continued to play his Wurlitzer until recent years when his eyesight left him almost unable to read scores, or to ascertain certain keyboard functions. He'd apparently had a cataract removed from his left eye in previous years and never recovered perfect sight. Something had gone wrong. His words to me about the surgeon were not what would wish to see in print. It was a situation which he had decried but didn't look back upon with too much regret. It was sort of "What the hell . . . I'll manage." And he did. He continued to manage very well over the age of 100 with one eye. And as his grandson Tim reckoned at Laurie's funeral, "I thought you'd reach 110 old fellow!" Well, we all did. But an infection saw him brought to the Alfred Hospital where there were complications, and where he lingered only a few days. And it did seem strange that he succumbed so fast. Even so, his demise was calm and peaceful.

Several years ago I said to Laurie "How about we look into your family history? I'll do it for you." He knew some considerable details, including relatives who had lived in the St.Kilda/Windsor/Brighton district and he was keen to find out more. He also knew of his grandfather, John Dick, whose burial and monument was in the St. Kilda cemetery. Some official told him years ago that it didn't exist, but we found it sitting placidly and surprisingly in good condition. So, it was up and running and within a short time we had found much of his Scottish ancestry and some of the Germanic. There was a firm connection with the Scots Church in Collins Street, Melbourne. His great grandfather, Alexander Dick, had emigrated from Scotland in 1853 at the age of nineteen, gone to the goldfields as a contractor and eventually settled in Melbourne where he rose in society with the firm of McGee Dick and Co. In 1870 he married Isabella Machlachlane the daughter of another Scotsman, of Bonhill, Scotland. Alexander Dick was a regular member with the Collins Street Scots Church and donated large sums to the Church's aid for neglected children. In December 1913, as he was walking down Collins Street after an evening service, he was struck by a bolting horse and killed. By that time it was known that Dick was extremely wealthy and his will left large sums to numerous charities, including the Alfred Hospital, the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum, the Women's Hospital, Little Sisters of the Poor, the Children's Hospital and the Royal Institute for the Blind. In later years Laurie followed in his great-grandfather's footsteps by regularly donating to the Alfred Hospital, where much to his surprise he ended up in later years with a 5-bypass heart surgery, to which the surgeon at the time reckoned Laurie would have an extra ten years of life. Turned out that that ten years eventually was an extra thirty! Apart from that, Laurie always seemed in fairly good health. Even with a couple of falls after he had passed the 100 mark; breaking his right hip twice and spending much time in rehab where others seemed to wither away and perish. It seemed that for most folk, they were there in rehab to die. He hated that time, but gave due credit to the nurses. In fact, he was their favourite. He charmed them with his vibrant



personality and they loved it. Told them stories and held their hand, gave them cheek.

Because he had come out of deep anaesthetic at The Alfred somewhat confused and shouting, as many of us would, some medical authority had deemed that he be sent to a ward at Caulfield Rehab Hospital that was a secure ward. My experience when I visited was that it was a place for 'loonies' and he certainly did not belong there. Several people were attacked while I was visiting, and I was uncertain of my own safety at times. After a few weeks it was managed for him to be moved into a more quiet section away from the rather disturbed 'inmates'. None of us were amused at what had occurred. Laurie returned home from that beneficence care to carry on in his garden. Made of tough stuff was our Laurie. He was stuck with a wheely-walker, but that didn't prevent him from continuing to maintain what he could within the home and in the garden. His grandson, Tim, tells that Laurie's original walker was lacking in braking power, so Laurie returned to his engineering workshop and made two new wooden hand-brake grips for the walker, fitted them instead of what he termed plastic rubbish, and simply carried on.



Laurie's geraniums and pelargoniums along the front fence

Laurie's family history was fascinating. On his mother's Germanic side there was also English connections with the surname Crutch, which gave a little sparkler into the history, for John Crutch was a convict. He had been sentenced in England for machinery breaking, which simply meant he was part of a youthful group of men who were angry that the new industrial factories were taking away their manual jobs. So they had entered these factories and smashed up some of the machines.

John was sentenced in Buckinghamshire 1831 for seven years incarceration at Van Dieman's Land and spent most of those years in Australia as a convict. Then with time served he began as a farmer in the Geelong district, eventually building and managing a local stone pub. John showed that he was a good citizen of Australia and became interested in local history and local government. His son George married Mary Sharness, an immigrant from Lancashire. This was the Germanic connection traced back to the surname Scharnoss, having been Anglicised to Sharness, no doubt to help fit in with the Liverpool society in Lancashire. The immigrant father from Germany to England, Frederick Sharness, had been employed in the sugar milling business in Liverpool, which meant extremely back-breaking work feeding the sugar boilers. In 1847 he had married Mary Logan the daughter of Michael Logan, who appears to have been an engineer with the same sugar company. After their arrival in Australia their daughter Mary Sharness married John Crutch's son George. Laurie's mother, Eliza Jane Crutch was born 1890 in Hillston, New South Wales, which meant that she wasn't completely Germanic but had English blood in her as well. Laurie often described his mother as a 'very fierce' woman.

I said to him one day, "You should leave your brain to science!" He agreed, but it never came to pass. He said a doctor once told him he should have gone to university and he smiled at this, apparently replying "I want to be me, not someone who conforms." Laurie was always a sharpshooter, never backward in what he thought. Laurie wasn't religious, but he always said that he stood by the 10 commandments. His reply often was "That's all we need, every one of us." In business Laurie was again a sharp shooter and competitor and he was very fond of some of his Jewish business friends. He used to say "If you want good immigrants, bring in Jewish settlers. There might be the odd crook among them, same as in any society, but all in all they are hard working reliable people." Laurie's modus operandi in business dealings was to carry large wads of cash around with him, which apparently gave him the edge doing deals during the 1930s-50s. No one had to wait for a cheque to be cleared, or even wait for the possibility of it bouncing. He told the tale of what was apparently a relative of his, who was a printer in Melbourne. The man was caught up with some shady characters and supplied special paper for the printing of forged banknotes. The scheme fell apart and his relative went to jail for ten years. I checked the story out and found that it was true. Laurie wasn't one to tell stories unless there was a certain amount of truth behind them.

Around the turn of Laurie reaching 100 it became obvious that he would need some home care. The local shire supplied people for cleaning, bathing etc., but seems most were not up to scratch and Laurie (as we also were) was becoming frustrated with what appeared to be almost untrained people. Laurie was not amused by their lack of proper cleaning and their seemingly lack of care. Nor was he amused that when some did attempt to clean, they broke things—toilet fittings, light fittings. Something had to be done. His grandson, Tim, organised a package with the Federal Government, which saw the expertise and care shoot up dramatically. The mind boggles how things improved so fast! The company chosen to oversee Laurie's health and care was Bolton Clarke, and they were magnificent. I met numerous carers each week in Laurie's home and all were tops. Fabulous people! There was Heidi, Lizzie, and in particular Mayer who saw to Laurie's physical and mental health, bathing, and Michael who came once a week for shopping and general sight-seeing around the town in his



vehicle. Michael took him to some of his old haunts and some more and even received a history lesson from Laurie. This was like some miracle to Laurie after what he had experienced from the local shire's helpers. And without a doubt these new friends and carers simply loved Laurie. Mayer in particular, had developed an affectionate bond with Laurie and Michael was so fond of him that he attended his funeral.

I remember several years ago, after Laurie had been to Caulfield rehab while his right hip was mending, when a visitor came to his home to assess Laurie's mental well-being. The lady was polite, gentle, but the questions directed to Laurie (perhaps they were a standard psychological selection for elderly folk) never fazed him. We were sitting in the living room and the gentle visitor asked him something like "Well, Mr. Dick, you were born in 1917, so what year is it now?" I tried not to smile because I knew what was coming. He replied with a straight face. "I don't care what year it is because I am retired. It is of no interest to me. Why should it be?"

There were similar questions about date and time and Laurie answered them much the same. Does it really matter? Of course it didn't matter to one who was 100 years or more. I felt some sympathy for the interviewer, but she seemed not upset by Laurie's answers. Been around the traps too much, I guess. Bless her.

Naturally enough, the local shire council had sent around folk to ascertain accident prone areas within the home. And no doubt in general, they perform a much needed function within our society, but it didn't go down too well with Laurie — especially when the suggestion according to Laurie was that they remove the bottom lip of his shower recess as a precaution. Apparently, his answer to that was, "And where do you think the water will go? On the floor, out into the hallway?" We'll probably never know who was correct in that situation, but it seems that Laurie was one step ahead of things.

At his farewell funeral his grandson, Tim, whom Laurie had substantial interest in upbringing, described Laurie as "known to be tough, a bit stubborn, but was also persuasive, tenacious, resourceful, self-motivated, understood risk. He was very versatile, passionate, and boy, was he able to network!" He described Laurie as an entrepreneur, far ahead of his time. And that is how it was.

It is how I always found him over our six or seven years of comradeship. How can I say it . . . Laurie . . . you are missed more than heaven and earth. R.I.P dear old friend. And no doubt you will be giving the angels some curry! That's for certain. I can see you saying, "Now, hang on, just a minute . . .!" •



Photo by Laurie's friend, Lisa Beaumont.

"See ya later!"



Saigon Sunset

A saga in several episodes by Graham Price
Chapter 7

Jean-Baptiste Lacroix, Bishop of Saigon, leaned back in the rear seat of his black Packard as it swung out of the driveway. The military guard of the Presidential Palace had saluted and opened the car door for him. The Bishop's Vietnamese driver, Duy, frowned slightly. Being Catholic himself, he was dedicated to his Bishop, though he couldn't help but feel something untoward was going on here. Why all these trips to the Presidential Palace? There had been three in as many weeks. And the number of military generals and air force officials who also attended made him wonder. Was there a crisis for Saigon occurring? The guard around the presidential palace had been strengthened three times over and he noticed the mortar and extra machine gun emplacements on the roof. Something's not right.

He swung the car out into the traffic, narrowly missing a pedi-cab driver and several pedestrians, but the Bishop had not noticed. Obviously deep with his own thoughts, considered Duy. And the Bishop was. All he said to Duy was "You might speed it up; I'm a little late for a meeting."

"Yes, my Lord," said Duy, and stepped on the accelerator.

Jean-Baptiste Lacroix patted the red Zucchetto on his head and considered the meeting he was late for — the preparation for the wedding of James McKinnon with Phuong Duval, and also that inspector of police Claude Bastein with Charmaine Curtaine. He smiled; he was light of heart — two Protestant men marrying two Catholic women, most unusual during his time in Saigon, and how to counsel them? They would have to agree that any forthcoming children be baptised and brought up in the Catholic faith. There was no question about that. And a double wedding, eh? That would set the social pages of Saigon alight, both Vietnamese and French, and perhaps the English language ones also. Of course, it would have to be a celebration without the Mass, but as all were baptised in both Protestant and Catholic churches, it was quite legal according to the Vatican. At the same time he was thinking, do we need these complications? They will not be able to marry before the main altar, due to these mixed religious marriages, but would it not be a desirable thing for them to do? Would they not live their lives wondering whether the Catholic Church had been fair to them on their most precious day, or not? Marriage in a side altar without the Mass . . . perhaps things need to change? Why must it be this way? But I would be incurring the wrath of Rome if I dared marry them in front of the main altar. That is a risk I dare not take. Ah, why am I thinking this way? What is it to me, as long as these lovely folk are married in the sight of God and registered with the state? Why should I query age old Vatican religious laws and cause myself a ton of worry? Why indeed! But when Duy dropped him off, he entered the presbytery with these thoughts still on his mind.

Pierre Marchand watched the National Liberation Front cadre under the command of Commissar Chu disappear into the jungle. He could not believe his luck. He turned to where his female Vietnamese first aid assistant was attending to Chun Li. The doctor had long gone but had left medication and advice that Chun Li required hospitalisation. The big Chinese shook his head. "Not necessary. I am strong, stronger than anyone here. It is nothing."

"That may be," said Hinh Thuy, as she dressed the wound. "You are fortunate that bullet went right through you, so there no damage to bone or nerve as far as known. But you need expert opinion. It will take long time before you can use your arm. Must keep still long time. If you foolish enough not go to hospital or doctor again, nothing we can do but pray to ancestors for healing. You need to understand not so strong as think you are."

Chun Li laughed. "I come from long line of warriors. Ancestors were war lords of old China, never ran away from fight or sickness. Me the same. Never weak like most these people rubber tappers sit around half the day after work, do nothing. Sometimes get drunk. No good people, lazy."

Hinh Thuy finished the dressing and turned away. "Maybe you learn lesson from all this. Why you supply liquor just to keep peace, eh? That also no good! My husband says wrong."

"You Vietnamese are weak, see how easy these men drink up? Anyways, it keep them satisfied after day's work. What wrong with that my little white magpie?" alluding to her fair skin. She blushed; she felt like slapping him, but that would only cause ructions. Perhaps she should talk to her husband about this man who seemed to rule over all and possibly, if the Liberation people came back there would be a time . . . after all Chun Li was not popular with the rubber tappers and seemed to over-reach his authority at times. He should go, she thought. Pity the bullet hadn't hit him in a more sensitive area.



He would not be missed. She wondered, considering how things would be on the plantation if Chun Li and his Vietnamese second-in-charge might somehow be dispensed with. It seemed that the owner Pierre Marchand had also been in some trouble, not only with the Saigon police, but also walking on a razor's edge with the Liberation army for some reason. Could they come back . . . would they come back, if a message could be sent to them about conditions within the plantation? The tappers had been too frightened, she thought; too scared to say anything when the cadre was here, but perhaps there could be a means of bringing the Commissar back? She would talk to her husband, Bao, about that tonight. Things could not go on as they were.

Cuc slung her AK47 over her shoulder and trudged behind the cadre as they made their way through the jungle. Everyone had gone ahead of her and she was last in line. That suited her, it suited the mood she was in, for she was furious, not only with Commissar Chu for what she perceived was his weakness, not once but twice in a matter of days, but also having lost the opportunity to execute that Chinese overseer at the Loyer plantation. Then there was that French inspector of Saigon, whom she suspected of having something to do with the torture and eventual death of her beloved, Kim. They will all pay, she considered. I will have my time. It's early days yet.

Linh looked back at the line of men and the one woman at the end. She wondered why Cuc had suddenly decided to remain as scout at the rear. Previously, Cuc had been close to her in all their travails, up front, but she seemed somewhat distant ever since the day they had intercepted the French at the helicopter clearing. She cared for Cuc, having brought her under her wing and knowing full well of the suffering that Cuc must have gone through, losing her beloved Kim. There was an ache in her heart as she looked back at the young girl lugging the AK47. Well, thought Linh, she had toughened up very fast, very fast indeed. And oh, she is so beautiful, perhaps so much a waste of that beauty out here in the wilderness when she could have been on stage in Saigon, or even married to a high official. But then, we are committed, we are not to be concerned about beauty or comfort or any of those things. We are here to serve Ho Chi Minh and bring about unification of the country under one leadership. And we shall not fail.

The cadre under the command of Commissar Chu reached their camp in the deep forest outside of the village of Cho Lat. After a small meal of rice and fish, Cuc lay on her ground sheet, pulled a grubby blanket over her body and fell asleep. She dreamed. It was a dream that would change her life.

She was walking past the Quan Âm Pagoda in Saigon, hand in hand with her beloved Kim. He kissed her on the cheek and said "We should go and talk to the priest about getting married."

"I'm not sure I believe, but if it's your wish." The statue of Guanyin loomed up before her, towered over her with the index finger of the right hand pointing at her like a sword. She was confused. It could not be a sword because Guanyin was the Goddess of Mercy. The goddess's fingernail widened and widened until it became a sheet of sharp edged steel. Cuc cowered back, turning to Kim for support, but he was gone. The sheet of steel swung toward her, she ducked and ran further into the temple and there, before her, was the bodhisattva Manjusri in female form mounted on a lion. The lion swung its head around and roared at her. She could smell its breath, powerful and stagnant. The flaming orb in the bodhisattva's left hand suddenly exploded and flames shot out toward her. And out of the flames came a male face . . . the face of the inspector of police, Claude Bastein. She screamed.

"It's all right," said Linh, shaking her by the shoulder. "It's just a nightmare. Easy now. Easy."

"Oh. So real . . . so . . . Oh Linh, where am I?"

The elder woman caressed her cheek. "It's okay . . . you're here with me . . . you're safe."

Cuc smiled. "You are such a comfort to me. It's never been the same since I lost Kim to those torturers in Saigon. Oh, that dream . . . he was there, you know, that inspector. He had something to do with Kim's death I need to go to Saigon to find out more."

"But you can't," said Linh. "You are part of us now and comrade Chu will not allow it. We need you so much. You are a credit to our cause and an example to other young women to come and join us." She wiped Cuc's forehead with a damp rag. "You have to stay . . . we will find some other way for you . . . there are many undercover men in Saigon who will be only too glad to help out."

"I don't need men. Anyway, it would take only a woman to infiltrate and discover the truth . . . one who could go undercover as a dance hall girl, or bar girl."

Linh looked shocked. "You would not want to lower yourself to that level. Surely not!"

Cuc stared at her, thankful for the attention and the soothing touch. "I would do anything to revenge Kim . . . anything. Even if I had to sleep with the ugliest official in Saigon."



Charmaine was fussing about in the kitchen, but not wishing to interfere with the Vietnamese cook, Ngan, she kept her distance. She sat at a small table, fishing through some notes she had made the day before. This was going to be awkward. How was she to reconcile inviting the writer Isabelle Tran and her husband Victor Moulineaux without upsetting the diplomatic crowd that James often moved with? It was difficult. The novel by Isabelle, *La Belle Officielle*, had stirred up quite a reaction among Saigon's elite. She knew some of the Generals were not particularly happy with the way Isabelle had portrayed them — much too close for comfort, though when she overheard General Dao's wife, Trinh, laughing about it, she felt some relief. "So true . . . Oh, so true," Trinh had said when they had met for coffee downtown the other week. "You know, some of the exploits in that novel are really happening at the highest levels of government in this city. I am no fool. I know what some of the wives are up to, sleeping with other men. Isabelle has only produced some facts disguised as fiction. I told Loc to read it, but he sniffed and said it was only for you girls . . . a lot of tripe, he called it. Oh, I do wish he wouldn't use those stupid Western words. He's becoming too much like the Americans, but, you know, I wouldn't mind living in California or some place just as nice if things go wrong here. But you and Claude are moving back to France, eh? So, the McKinnons will be looking for someone to take your place?" She flashed her carefully manicured pink fingernails and nodded sagely. "My gardener has a sister who is looking for a position. She may well suit . . . twenty or so, unmarried, not all that pleasant looking, but I think honest enough, comes from a good family. Let me know if you would like to interview her."

Charmaine had thought about that, but she was in no hurry for anyone to replace her. Besides, it was a few weeks yet before the wedding. And she must concentrate upon the forthcoming dinner. James's boss Justin and his Vietnamese wife Nguyet were still in Saigon, so they would have to be invited. That, with Phuong and James, myself and Claude, Victor and Isabelle makes eight. Another couple? Oh, why not invite the Bishop? Nine would surely be enough around the table. Then there was a new man in town, talked about by Claude who had met him at a security conference — an American Captain in the Military Assistance Advisory Group that had been set up in 1954 by President Truman and recently re-named with the extension of Vietnam. A young man, mid twenties, said Claude . . . seemed a little lost in Saigon . . . didn't wish to go partying with his comrades, but appeared to have some understanding of Vietnamese culture. Why not? He would perhaps give a fresh insight into the American aid community. A round ten, then! Settled. She picked up her notes, smiled at Ngan, and went to check on the children. As she passed through the door, the old Vietnamese cook shook her head and muttered in French: "Why you leaving . . . why you leave . . . no good."

Charmaine was sure that is what she heard, and paused in the hall. Yes, it was going to be very difficult. She knew that. The children knew that, but there was no way she could hide from them the fact that she was leaving them for the love of a man. She'd had them come to her in tears over the past few days, and it hurt. It hurt her so much that she wondered how this pain could last so long, and whether or not it would ever depart from her heart and soul. Her nights had been sleepless and she noted the bruising under her eyes when she awoke and looked into the mirror. Something's not right, she thought. I am torn between two loves . . . the love of a man I would give my life for, and the love of these children who have meant so much to me over the years. It's not fair. It's not real. Something has to break. Why can't we all leave together? Be together for years to come? But that was not going to happen. James was centred here in Saigon for a very long time . . . she knew that. He and Phuong had a life together in Vietnam and would never leave, she was sure of that. She stumbled into the drawing room, slipped down onto a divan and began to cry, the heavy tears and the shuddering of her lungs only met by the chick-chack of the tiny lizards on the ceiling. And there was no one to hear or notice the agony that issued from her mouth as she gripped the side of the divan, digging deep with her fingernails and gasping in pain.

Colonel Khuu Anh was annoyed. He'd only just woken at 6.17 on Sunday morning when the phone beside his bed rang. He slowly picked up the receiver, still somewhat groggy from the effects of the party last night. His wife, Truc, stretched in her sleep and uttered a low moan. He looked at her slim body and shook his head. They had overdone it somewhat last night, he thought. The Saigon air was still cool, but not for long. Wearily, Anh snapped loudly into the phone "Yes!" And the words that came down the line made him shiver. "Dragonfruit peel at ten. You know where." Silence. The caller had hung up. He cursed . . . on a Sunday! He and Truc had planned to go to Mass, but then she would understand — it was army business or other. Let her go with the children, the chauffeur and the bodyguard. It was all for show, anyway. He didn't have any belief in a supreme being, but went along with it anyway. The time would come when all that would be supplanted by the leader's regulations. Meanwhile, let them have their illusions. He placed the phone back into its cradle. Things were spinning out of control. He wondered how he had got himself into such a situation? It was blackmail, of course.



His philandering ways had not gone unnoticed by the National Liberation Front, and now to his despair they had the evidence of proof. The photographs he had been sent in the mail some months ago had shocked him. How could he have been such a fool? But then, the money that also came with them and the extra bank accounts in his name, was of great interest . . . it would help keep his lifestyle of partying on the go, for there was one thing in life that Anh loved above all things, and that was parties and the liquor and female benefits on the side that went with it.

Slowly he swung himself out of the bed. His corpulent body growled at him as he made to stand up. Not getting any younger, he thought. Not sure about all of this, where was it heading? He grabbed the light dragon motif dressing gown from a chair and swept into the bathroom, heavy feet thudding on the shiny timber floor. One thing about these old French colonial villas, he thought, was decent bathrooms, unlike the shit holes out there in the suburbs. Still, the room could do with an upgrade. He thought that the shower recess needed re-tiling . . . couldn't stand those tiny green and lemon tiles, some of which were cracked and breaking away from the wall, and the shower-head was rusty. Not unusual, he thought, with the humidity that reigned in Saigon much of the year. A gecko ran across the ceiling and crawled into a crack. Paint's peeling, he thought, but we won't be here to be bothered about that . . . no, not much longer. There's only two ways out of this for me Huyen and the kids, Hanoi or Paris. My troops are weak, don't have the dedication of the NLF, and are not popular with the villagers. I am caught with nowhere to go, except perhaps to quit. He stepped into the shower and reached into the small alcove in the wall. No soap! No bloody soap! I'll murder that bloody Nguyen! What in hell do I pay him for?

Cholon on a Sunday was wild with people. The warmth of the sun was high, but a breeze had sprung up which helped to negate the heat. The Colonel hadn't been there for several months. The last time was with Truc when she wanted some furnishings for the children's rooms. It was fine to shop in Saigon, but if you wanted good quality at a low price, then the Cholon market was the place. Anh didn't like it . . . it was too Chinese and there were numerous gangs about but worse, he thought, his meeting had to take place in one of the seedier districts. You could finish your business, come out and find all the wheels of your car gone.

He'd told his chauffeur to take the family to Mass while he had gone to the rear of his garage and fired up the little Fiat 500 which had seen far better days, and which was unknown to most of his staff and certainly unknown — hopefully — to anyone in the NLF. By the time he had negotiated the main streets and swung into minor alleyways, looking for the Tiger Monkey bar, it was well after ten. He was late. Would the contact wait for him, or would he or she give up and return to the North?

He had parked the Fiat several shops away, handing a small Chinese boy a few đồng to watch it for him and walked the distance, turning now and then to scan behind him. Apart from the usual people going about their daily business and children playing in the alleyways, nothing suspicious came to him. Eventually, he turned the corner and stared at the bar. It was a typical small Chinese bar and restaurant, two stories, living quarters above. All the signs were in Mandarin . . . he noted that there was a total absence of Vietnamese signs. He was on unfamiliar territory and he wondered why the invisible people had picked this place for a meeting. Sure, he had known about it previously due to earlier contacts, but he had never set foot in the place until now. There were three small tables out front with rattan chairs around them, but totally empty of persons. Would he have to enter what was perhaps a dark and unknown bar to find his connection? Anh had never been a nervous person, but now he felt that the whole world was coming down upon him like a crushing weight. Go back, he thought. Quit this and go back. Get your family out of here before it is too late. He wiped the perspiration from his forehead and looked around. It was strangely quiet, totally different from the rest of Cholon that he knew about. And of course, no one would know that he was a senior member of the cabinet, a Colonel of distinction, simply because of his bright shirt and cheap flared trousers. He could be taken for a tourist from Hue or anywhere. He paused. There seemed no reason in hell that he should enter that bar, but he saw no alternative. He gripped the small Beretta pistol in his right-hand pocket and headed for the front door.

The Vietnamese at the very end of the bar, slowly toying with a straw within a tall frosted glass of Coca Cola looked up as the large man settled in front of him. The cracked red vinyl seats were in pairs, shades separating, as if designed for other than normal eating, which reminded the Colonel of prostitution parlours in the capital. The man in front of him was thin, immensely tanned, clean shaven and narrowed of eyes, and Anh felt the perspiration on his right hand, nestling hard against the weapon in his pocket.

"Dragonfruit peel," he said, as he slipped into the firm seat.

And the answer, as expected, came back "Jackfruit leaves. You can take your hand off the gun. That won't be needed."

There was silence. They were staring at each other, both knowing what this meeting meant and desperate for it to be completed and to be out of there. The young Vietnamese smiled, a hard fixed smile without it seemed, any sympathy, and



said: "This is from Hanoi command and you are invited to agree or not. There is no requirement for you to assist. We understand your delicate position and the instability of your living. But . . . but, you have agreed in the past that you wish the corruptions of your leaders is diminished, no? This is why you have been chosen. We are not here to harm you or your family, though your cooperation is much appreciated and valued. General Giap, himself, sends greetings to you."

"What is it you want? I assume you need something from me?" said Anh, easing his hand off the pistol in his pocket.

The young man laughed: "It is not a matter of what we want, but it is a matter of your cooperation. You are satisfied with your new bank accounts, eh?"

Anh shrivelled in front of the slim young man almost half his weight, but bony, muscular, and perhaps not to be trifled with. Caught. Just like a fly in a spider's web, he felt himself being drawn into a web of darkness. The young female waiter came up and asked his pleasure. He looked up at her, perhaps not even fifteen, and ready perhaps to give her favours for more than food or drink. "Whisky," he said, "If you have some. For both of us."

"Good choice," said the young Vietnamese. "My name is Sinh, of course you will forget that very fast, no? What we now have to discuss is for you to agree or not. We have selected a young intelligent woman from the provinces to come to Saigon for infiltration into your military and presidential discussions."

Anh sneered. "What you expect a female from the provinces to have any idea of military or even of Saigon?"

Sinh smiled, "It is not for you to question that. The Liberation Front decides what is best. Besides, this person was born in Saigon, so she is no stranger to your evil capitalist ways."

"I don't understand."

"You will introduce her to one of your most senior colleagues, perhaps the Air Marshall Vuong or that liberal mongrel General Dao whom you work for. You will organise for her to be infiltrated into one of his departments as a secretary or other. She is exceedingly accomplished and will fit in without any problem. I will leave it up to you to use your imagination as to how she will fit in with the current bureaucracy, but she has to be very close to the General. Is that clear? Very close! You may ask any questions of me but all of this has come from Hanoi, so I would expect that you would understand the grave importance of this and would comply. No?"

The Colonel felt his hand again touching the pistol in his right-hand pocket. He was of two minds. Perhaps he should kill this messenger, return to Saigon, arrange for his family to be shipped out to France? That would be an end to it all.

But then, the cold thought of the reach of the National Liberation Front hit him like a sudden hammer blow to his head. They would kill his family before he had a chance to organise anything! Of that he was certain. Their reach was far and somewhat brutal. So, for the time being, he would accept a meeting of this unknown NLF female spy and attempt to find some way of working it all out.

The cadre under the command of Commissar Chu Lam Long had attacked a convoy of the Army of the Republic, with what Cuc considered were excellent results. She had taken down several AVRN soldiers with her Russian manufactured AK47. The ambush had taken place within Binh Tuy province, where an AVRN supply column was moving onward to re-supply one of its divisions. Commissar Chu's people had come off reasonably well with only two wounded and then as they made their way back into the mountainous region forests away from the activity Linh had slapped Cuc on the back and smiled at her. "Sure did well, my lovely. Congrats." And the Commissar, Chu Long, also gave blessings to Cuc for her fine performance. So, she was feeling on a high, happy that things had gone well and now that they had trudged back towards their camp at Cho Lat. The sun was setting, but she was kind of wired up and couldn't settle, so she grabbed Linh by the shoulder and said: "Let's go for a walk, perhaps into the village. Might be able to help out. After all, they don't have much more than we have and the last time we were there Lung wasn't very much helpful with that old man. I'd like to see if he's still around. After all, our elders are to be respected, and if I remember well, that was Chu Long's decision, that the old man be looked after."

Linh kissed her on her cheek. "You know, you should be back in Saigon as a mother of ten children or more. You are so compassionate, so caring. Oh, I know you have your fierce problems with some of the Saigon police and all of that, but really, you are more important to this country than any of us. Your strength is unbelievable. When all of this is over, you and I could set up a hospital or a first aid clinic somewhere. I have had visions of being a teacher, but I think that healing the physical wounds of this country might come first. Worth thinking about, eh?"

Cuc bit her lower lip. "You are so kind. You have taken me in and made me what I am. Of that, I am so, so very grateful. But there is a war to be fought and a long way to go before we can even consider setting up a hospital or such. But yes, a great need. A very great need."



Later, Commissar Chu had called for her. Cuc came out of her make-shift shelter and walked to the meeting place. The night was cold. She wrapped a worn blanket around her shoulders and looked at the three people sitting around drinking heated coconut water. There was Commissar Chu, his 2IC Linh and her boy-friend Lung, the Commissar's brother. They seemed subdued. Linh handed her a steaming mug.

"Come," said the Commissar. "We have news."

She squatted on the ground beside Commissar Chu. She placed the mug on the ground, rubbed her hands together and glanced querulously at him.

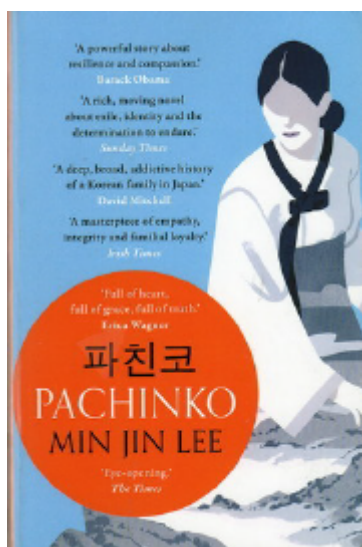
He stared at her and then smiled. "We have received a courier from Hanoi, and it seems that you, for some reason . . . perhaps because of your earlier background, have been chosen to go to Saigon and work for the cause."

"What do you mean?"

Long laughed. "Need I spell it out? You have been chosen to infiltrate the highest command in Saigon. Our organisation will get you so close to the president and his lecher rats that will so delight you, fill you with pride and hopefully give you some satisfaction for the loss of your loved one, Kim. Such an opportunity is not given to all, and you should be very grateful for this. You are no longer Tang Cuc . . . your new identification papers state that you are Nhan Lien, born to a respectable Saigon family, who for obvious reasons are dead, with the exception of your sister Tai, whom you will be living with." He grinned. "Your new name is very appropriate, no? Lotus flower! Our national symbol."

Cuc was stunned. She could not believe it. Her mind swung everywhere it could possible go, until it centred upon the last time she had seen Kim. Oh, his smile, his touch, his look! She lowered her head and turned away from Chu, lost in her own remembrance of those last few days with him. She could almost reach out and touch him on his face, smooth his brow, kiss his cheek, murmur her love for him into his soft ear, while at the same time tickling him with her tongue. Oh Kim! Kim! Yes, she would go to Saigon, no matter what it was that they wanted her to do . . . she would go. She had a mission to fulfil; she had Kim's death to be revenged, and if this re-visit to Saigon was to help that, then so be it. She was ready for what she considered might just be her last chance, even if it meant her death. •

To be continued . . .



This is a ripper of a novel. Min Jin Lee is outstanding as an Asian novelist. The narration commences with the Japanese colonization of Korea in 1910.

This is the story of a Christian family, some of whom move from Korea to Japan due to the immense poverty in Korea. Though not accepted in Japan as citizens, love blooms between the two races and fascinating liaisons are made.

The author weaves a stunning image of the two countries before, during, and after World War II. Her characters are so alive, so real and being human as such also open to faults and mistakes. The novel shows the emergence of women's roles in society — how they draw upon their inner strengths to survive and grow in character, despite cultural and political differences.

The title 'Pachinko' lurks in the background and doesn't make itself known until almost mid-way through the book. Min Jin Lee weaves an addictive yarn that we simply ask for more. Her in-built sympathy for Korean and Japanese culture is real and visible within the various chapters. It is a story that simply had to be written. •

Pachinko

Head Zues paperback 552 pages

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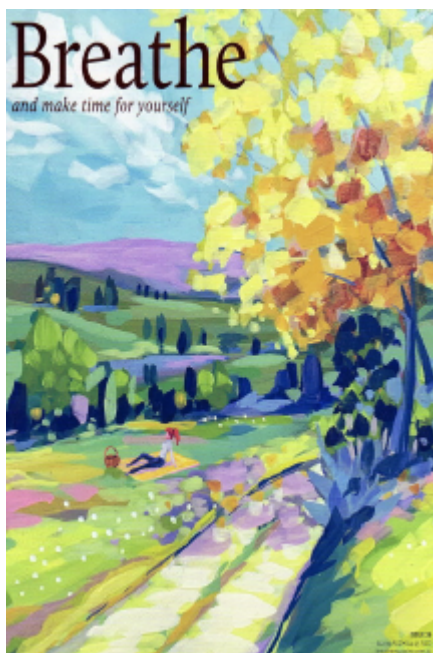
Pebbles in the Stream

**An Australian saga in several episodes by Graham Price
Chapter 2**

Held over for CEW 139



Breathe Magazine



CEW has reviewed this magazine in the past and found that it is a necessary adjunct to almost anyone's life. It is primarily directed toward the feminine side of life, but that doesn't mean that the articles and lessons within are not to be ingested by the male.

In fact, numerous articles within *Breathe* are exceptionally suited to the male side of life — that is, once you can tear yourself away from the footy and the rugger and come to terms with the more sensitive side of your psyche. *Breathe* is all about getting in touch with yourself, especially when times are rough and you find you are not coping.

Issue 26, available from your newsagent, concentrates on making time for yourself when the world closes in on you. The numerous articles, if read with consideration, bring valuable gems not only to mind, but also to body. *Breathe* is a natural accompaniment to life — indeed, a life worth living.

And, believe it you blokes, among the numerous editors and writers of female persuasion and 'board' members, there are a couple of male gender persons in attendance.

The magazine is dedicated to health and well-being and on page 10 through to page 13 there is an excellent article about our hips and the punishment

they take, holding up the body. Simone Scott writes up a fascinating tome, giving a ton of information supplied by physiotherapist Monique Sanders. Monique states that our hips are "the gateway between the upper and lower body, with the muscular structures attaching to the knee and back to make sure you're able to do flexion, extension, abduction, adduction, internal rotation and external rotation moves." Sounds complicated? Not really, it merely explains the full range of bodily motions available to us. The remainder of the article goes on to explain how we can put into practise exercises that will help to restore hips to their normal function.



Sarah Rodrigues writes two-page article on how to connect with strangers, without the ubiquitous interference of iPhones. Humans thrive on connection. "When a person connects with someone in a real-life setting, the interaction takes on a richness, endowed by body language, eye contact, visual cues, intonation and inflexion. It has an authenticity that screen-based interactions can't replicate. Again, this is possibly why some social-media users report feeling lonely or disconnected, despite spending time with people in a virtual sense."

Sarah gives good advice when chatting with strangers. There is a certain wariness to be expected, and if the talk doesn't go the way you think it ought, then Simone says to present a boundary. Such as "Nice talking to you, I'm going to watch a movie now," or "Could you excuse me while I go and catch up with my friend."

Carol Anne Strange greets us with a page of making a fresh start. We all make mistakes, and need a second chance to restore things. Carol writes about Danielle, a life coach, who says "I'm a big believer that everyone is always doing the best they can in the moment, with whatever knowledge and understanding they have at that time." Danielle conducts sessions over the phone, Skype or in person. "Some days, you get things really right, and other days, you just don't. There's always an opportunity for a fresh start . . . I like to remind myself that life is seasonal and we're constantly growing and evolving. What felt challenging yesterday may feel easy today. In the same way, second chances may feel easier on some days than others. What's most important is that you start to tune into what feels best for you."



Breathe comes up with some amazing recipes by Katrina Meynink, out of her book *Slow Victories*, published by Hardie Grant. One-cup Triple-Choc Brownies with Raspberry Sale; FenuGreek Cauliflower curry; Wild Rice with Mushrooms, Rosemary & Cranberries; Heirloom Pumpkin & Saffron Stew with Barley, Green Harissa & Haloumi.

The numerous articles in *Breathe* are a delight to read. The magazine is centred on quality paper, more semi-matt rather than glossy, which gives a good feel to it. *Breathe* belongs on your shelf, next to your favourite books. •

Breathe Magazine

\$12.99 AUD, \$14.95 NZD



Motoring Memoirs

1925 Sunbeam 3 Litre



A small number of this model were imported to Australia during the late 1920s-1930s, where some were fitted with locally-made bodies. Known for their robust construction, most of the vehicles were imported for farmers covering the rough roads of the outback.

The Sunbeams had proven themselves on the race-tracks of Europe, where one came second during the 24 hour Le Mans competition. The vehicle shown, was imported by the uncle of ex-prime minister Malcolm Fraser, being the earliest surviving model in Australia.

The six-cylinder engine of 2,920cc featured inclined valves with adjustable tappets on two over-head camshafts, which was a fairly new innovation of the 1920s. In 1929 a supercharger was added to the engine, which increased the brake horse power to 135.

This vehicle is now owned by Paul Lawson of Victoria. •

